

New ways for nursing inspired by the works of Michel de Certeau

Juan D. Gonzalez-Sanz¹, Manuel Amezcua², Ana Noreña-Peña³.

1. PhD, RN, CNM. Professor. University of Huelva (Spain). 2. PhD. RN. Professor. University of Granada (Spain). 3. PhD. Professor. University of Alicante (Spain).

Author for correspondence

Juan D. Gonzalez-Sanz

Nursing Faculty. University of Huelva.

21071 Campus El Carmen. Huelva (Spain)

Tlf. 0034+959218372

juan.gonzalez@denf.uhu.es

Abstract

The focus of this article is the life and work of the French thinker Michel de Certeau, here presented as a philosopher of special interest for nursing. Although in some countries he is relatively unknown, international authors from scientific disciplines regard his texts as a fundamental source in the opening of new intellectual perspectives on current global problems. Some nurses have also considered his ideas as an useful aid for reflecting on their professional activities, and their most important research is cited. Over these pages, we also examine how Certeau's work can enrich nursing philosophy in regard to three specific issues: resistance practices in nursing in the face of pressure from health institutions; the social configuration of nursing knowledge; and the importance of the body in current nursing practice.

Key words

Michel de Certeau, nursing, philosophy, epistemology, resistance practices, body.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to outline the key areas of the life and work of Michel de Certeau and to propose a new way forward for nursing philosophy on the basis of a systematic appraisal that builds new rational arguments sourced from philosophical discourse.

In this sense, we firmly believe that one of the main intellectual needs facing nursing is that of constructing its own philosophy. Only through genuine engagement with major thinkers, such as Certeau, will we manage to find solutions to the key questions raised by our profession, such as its invisibility, its reluctance to acquire power, and the lack of a collective professional memory. Our aim in studying Certeau's works is simply to find answers to these difficult issues.

The first part of this article presents a short biography of Certeau. In the second part, we explain his key works and themes. The third stage, following a selection of sourced peer-reviewed and grey literature, we detail the key papers in which different authors expounds certaunian ideas on the field of nursing. In the final part, we describe the main nursing issues where a study of Certeau's ideas can have a successful impact.

A brief biography

For a more detailed study of Michel de Certeau's life, readers are directed to the extensive biography by the French historian François Dosse (Dosse, 2002), while this may be complemented by consulting the texts of Luce Giard (Giard, 1976-2015) who, due to her status as Certeau's colleague, friend, and executor, is a key authority when it comes to understanding the work of this French thinker, and the figure himself. It is not our purpose here to deliver a comprehensive description of the path of Certeau's life, but rather a

summary of what we judge to be the essential information for a contextualised understanding of his works.

Michel de Certeau's entire career was influenced by his Christian faith. He was the first born of four children to a comfortably-off family steeped in traditional instead Catholic piety and marked by the presence of a stern, authoritarian father. At boarding school from early childhood in a Catholic school, he was around 14-years-old when he clearly foresaw his vocation in the priesthood, entering the Parisian seminary of Saint Sulpice in Issy-les-Molineaux in 1944. He underwent his training at this centre over the following years, and at Lyon seminary, before entering the Society of Jesus in 1950.

In 1956, he was ordained a Jesuit priest after completing his ecclesiastical training and a thorough education in classical languages, history, philosophy, and theology, taking the latter subject at the Faculty of Theology of Lyon-Fourvière alongside the man who would become his mentor, Henri de Lubac. From then on, following a course to a career as an erudite historian, Certeau turned to studying the founder members of the Society of Jesus. The edition by Certeau of *Mémorial* by Pierre Favre (Certeau, 1960), one of the first colleagues of Ignacio de Loyola, led to his obtaining a doctorate in Religious Studies at the Sorbonne in 1960. From this point on, he began a new phase as a historian of mysticism and religion in general.

At the end of the 1960s, a series of events coincided with a marked personal and academic change in Certeau. In addition to the Second Vatican Council (this was and in many ways still represents or marks a rupture in Catholic thinking because open the doors to a new and greater understanding of the modern world) and the tragic death of several of Certeau's most direct family members, one of the most decisive elements behind this change occurred in Paris in May, 1968. From the end of 1967 to the summer of 1968, the protest movement against the French university system led by University of Paris students took the centre of French life by storm, above all when the protest spread to numerous

factories and workplaces. At the same time, many miles to the east, the Prague Spring movement was challenging the rigid structures of Soviet power over Czechoslovakia and, by implication, all the communist countries of East Europe. The student demonstrations initiated in Paris took on a European dimension, and led to the proclamation of a need to establish an alternative society.

The analysis Certeau produced on this social turbulence, which was expressed in his book *The Capture of Speech* (Certeau, 1997a), made him a leading intellectual in the eyes of the French public, and one with his own watchword:

'Last May [thinking in the protests of May, 1968] speech was taken the way, in 1789, the Bastille was taken' (Certeau, 1997a, p. 11).

His focus would soon veer passionately towards the dynamism of social activity, and he developed a very personal way of dealing with the problems of his time. During this period, Certeau nourished his discourse through the key tendencies in social sciences.

Firstly, he maintained a tense contact with Michel Foucault, one of the major exponents of French Structuralism. His connections with nursing have recently been studied by Clinton and Springer (2016). It was a tense contact due to the fact that although it is well known that Foucault and Certeau have common ground in subjects and interests, the latter's perspective is quite different. Rather than Foucault's focus on studying systems of power, Certeau preferred to concentrate on forms of resistance that people can use against power. Thus making Certeau the thinker of the other side of the control system described by Foucault. For this and many other reasons, although Certeau greatly admired Foucault, he always kept his distance.

'First of all, Foucault is far from "boring". In fact, he is brilliant (a little too brilliant). His writing sparkles with incisive formulations. He is amusing. Stimulating. Dazzling. His erudition

confounds us; his skill compels assent; his art seduces. Yet something in us resists' (Certeau, 1986, p. 171)

Meanwhile, during these same years Certeau moved so close to psychoanalytic theory that he took part, alongside Jacques Lacan, in the founding of the Freudian School of Paris. Psychoanalysis was not seen by Certeau as a world view to revoke his own personal, religious, and intellectual history but, first and foremost, as an investigate tool.

'To begin with, psychoanalysis is heuristic. It is an interpretation that brings forth new problems in its own particular way in the whole field of language, and its starting point is the negation of the distinction between normal and abnormal, as well as the division between individual and collective' (Certeau, 2002, p. 202).

Finally, we must highlight the third of Certeau's great passions and intellectual mainstays: the fresh approaches to history enshrined in the journal *Annales*. What Certeau admired in this was how the periphery gains importance over the centre (studying not only the history of the great cities or of the important people), the concealed over the visible, the tiny facts located in the serial development of the quotidian as opposed to the headlining events in the life of the nation. This implies a new way of writing history, one that redefines the position of historians, taking them away from the search for an overall historical synthesis to pay more attention to the hitherto ignored details of the everyday protagonists of history. His participation in this movement to renew French historiography is especially brilliant in original and daring historical publications such as his work of microhistory, *The Possession at Loudun* (Certeau, 2000b) and *The Writing of History* (Certeau, 1992), a highly original and profound essay on the epistemology of history.

Despite the institutional difficulties his ever-critical intellectual position created in the different scientific disciplines in which he took part, Certeau began his teaching career and

rose to become professor of a doctorate-level seminary in the Paris VII Jussieu University (now Paris Diderot University) from 1974 to 1978; to take part as visiting lecturer in Geneva from 1977 to 1978; and from 1978 to 1984, to teach education at the University of California, San Diego. Throughout these years, he was aware of the growth of his academic kudos, although he refused to found any kind of school or group of followers around his own ideas and figure, preferring to remain at all times as a critic of social institutions.

Just two years after returning to France in 1984, already established as head of the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS), Michel de Certeau died in Paris on January 13, 1986 as a result of pancreatic cancer.

Major works and themes

Certeau's work is well-known and studied above all in two main subject areas: cultural studies and history, although his influence can be found in other disciplines, such as theology and philosophy.

His most quoted work in the field of cultural studies is *The Practice of Everyday Life* I. (Certeau, 1988). This text and the second volume which followed it, *The Practice of Everyday Life. Volume 2. Living and Cooking* (Certeau, 1998b) were the result of a group study of everyday life practices which was carried out at the end of the 1970s jointly with Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol. The work features the principal categories of Certeau's social analysis, such as the identification of the polemological nature of human coexistence and, with this dynamic of conflict between subjects with different powers, the difference between strategies and tactics.

In Certeau's theoretical scheme, society is a conflictive space prone to imbalances of power, imbalances which the weakest members cannot combat directly, so they take recourse to subtle acts of resistance which are difficult for the powers to identify and

obstruct. Certeau labels these practices of resistance '*tactics*', while he calls the processes of control by the stronger members of a society '*strategies*' (Certeau, 1988, p. xix). Using a military analogy, he describes the latter as actions that imply the possibility of deploying and mobilising in open battle, while tactics can only be employed on the quiet.

These '*tactics*' are actions that are carried out within the framework of a game determined by the structures of power but which, nevertheless, serve to achieve different objectives to those the social system has assigned for them. In other words, it is not easy for the powers to identify when a practice is being used as a resistance tactic since it is externally identical to normal practices and only differs from them in the aim for which it is carried out. To give an example from the linguistics sphere, Certeau would say that these resistance practices reside in 'the construction of individual sentences with an established vocabulary and syntax' (Certeau, 1988, p. xiii) (in this way the social game is similar a *Scrabble*, where the gamer build his own words with the tiles that he have, always respecting the rules of the game).

Hence, Certeau would point out that the key to their success as resistance tools of the weak is not so much a question of what is used but how it is used, and from this comes his denomination of these '*tactics*' as '*ways of using*' (Certeau, 1988, p.xii). These '*ways of using*' amount to the different ways open to consumers of receiving products imposed by the economic, social, cultural system, giving them a specific and creative 'usage'. This 'art of practice', concept that has been freed from the burden of determinism, allows for an interpretation of Certeau's work which brings in consideration of subjects and their freedom (Certeau, 1988, p.xxiv).

From this same area of analysis of social relations within the framework of inequality, we can also highlight his books *The Capture of Speech* (Certeau, 1997a), which we have referred to previously, and *Culture in the Plural* (Certeau, 1997b), which brings together diverse texts devoted to the analysis of culture.

With regard to the historical field, a division can be drawn between his contributions to the history of spirituality and his reflections on the epistemology of history.

Meanwhile, the key reference of Certeau's work in the field of historical epistemology is *The Writing of History* (Certeau, 1992), in which he develops the hypothesis that history is basically historiography, in other words, writing about history. The book contains his principal analysis of the process of the writing of historiographical texts, raising doubts about the supposed capacity of historical science to recount reality and even, in particular cases, its scientific credentials.

In terms of his purely historical works, we would particularly highlight the two volumes of *The Mystic Fable* (Certeau, 1995; 2015), which cover Christian mysticism in the 16th and 17th centuries (although the second volume could only be published posthumously). Also of much interest is one of the previously mentioned texts: *The Possession at Loudun* (Certeau, 2000b), in which he dissects the social conflict produced in the French town of Loudun following a demonic possession in the year 1632. Both books could show to nursing philosophers a lot of interesting subjects about the relation between religious, politics (including professional definitions) and language. This relation is essential in order to understand nursing protagonist as Florence Nightingale or Saint John of God.

During September of that year, bizarre phenomena were to break the strict silence of the Ursuline convent of Loudun (a small town slightly to the west of Poitiers). The resident nuns were tormented by ghostly apparitions which took different, ghastly forms, evolving to even take human form, more specifically the figure of one of the town's priests: Urbain Grandier. The following months would see an epoch-changing scene develop and transform life in Loudun, as a vast ecclesiastical, medical, and political apparatus descended on the locality. It proved a period in which all the resources of a society were stretched in an effort to provide a credible explanation of what was occurring. In less than two years, the alleged

guilty party was tried and sentenced. On August 18, 1634, Urbain Grandier was burnt in Loudun's town square, officially bringing the possession episode to a close.

With judicious vision and technical mastery, Certeau shows in his book how the possession jeopardised all the social bonds (economic, political, and cultural) that made up the life of Loudun, laying bare a package of previous underlying vexations. In addition, taking this and many other similar episodes as a basis, he shows how medicine was becoming the perfect substitute for the theological discourse that had been standard up to this time, imposing the undeniably tangible proximity of the body over the now outdated belief in the invisible condition of a faraway celestial reality. This medicine raising, based in the property of a social discourse, is so interesting for nursing and could be a help for the reflections about the social relevance of the nursing professional discourse (for example but not limited to NANDA-NIC-NOC).

These pages reveal in particular detail Certeau's intense and lasting interest in the subject of the body. For him, corporeality was one of the changes in thought produced in the transition between the Middle Ages and the modern era, when the materialism of the human body became the central focus of philosophical and social aspects for which, up to that point, God and theology had been used as explanations. This is known as the anthropological turning point of the 17th century, whose major exponents was René Descartes, who initiated the metaphysics of subjectivity, situating the individual as the philosophical, epistemic, and social protagonist of Modernity.

Implications for nursing

1. Response to date

The response to Certeau by nursing in recent years has led to the publication of several studies, though not a great number, and they are works of varied quality.

With regard to geographical areas, Certeau's ideas received a notable welcome in Latin American nursing in general, and Brazilian nursing in particular (a clear reflection, in our opinion, of the intense presence Certeau had in the region in the 1960s, years when he made a great effort to work in and about Latin America). References to Certeau are practically non-existent, however, in nursing publications written in English (be they North American or European) and in Spanish nursing literature. With regard to the works so far cited in this article, the majority of works found have limited their references to *The Practice of Everyday Life*, above all to its first volume.

In respect of subject range, Certeau's ideas are used above all in the history field (Buchanan, 1999; Padilha & Nelson, 2011) and in nursing theory (Buchanan, 1997; Michel et al., 2012), with special interest in the field of the study of the everyday life (Tello-Pompa et al., 2003; Soares-Santos et al., 2014; Arias-López, 2015). It is in these areas where we find outstanding work by two authors who, in our opinion, incorporate Certeau's ideas with great depth: professor María José Coelho, in Rio de Janeiro, and Australian nurse Tanya Buchanan.

The Brazilian author is acknowledged in the most recent studies (Soares-Santos et al., 2014) as one of the leading figures in embracing Certeau's ideas in nursing in her country. In one of her most important works, *Caring gestures in nursing*, she employs Certeau's term 'ways of doing' to outline a theoretical model of nursing based on 'ways of caring' (Coelho, 2006). In this work, she defends the value of creativity (p. 747) and the apparently invisible (p. 750) as key elements of nursing (these are two of the main Certeau's ideas in *The practice of everyday life*). In the utmost detail, she describes the different ways in which acts of caring carried out by nurses can be established, building an impressive list of 46 different ways of caring, among which we can highlight examples of social caring

(‘collective caring based on social commitment’, p.747), electronic caring (‘linked to information networks’, p. 747), solitary caring (‘helping patients to find a meaning in their own lives’, p. 748), and looking after (near) dead bodies (‘caring for the whole body or its parts in the event of death’, p. 749), among many other types.

In another of her texts (Coelho, 2009), she makes use of the term ‘production’ (also one of Certeau's key ideas, linking with the Marxist tradition although in a critical way) to propose far greater focus in nursing on designing, implementing, and displaying ‘nursing products’ that emerge from professional caring practice. These products, which often take the form of ‘improvisations’ (among which different uses of such a humble instrument as the surgical bandage is just one of many examples) appear in all health institution settings, but their authors usually remain anonymous.

When we study works by Tanya Buchanan, we see how she treats Certeau's contributions with genuine skill, underlining the fact that she is the English-speaking nurse who have worked most intensely with his ideas. Buchanan's texts display a clear affinity with Certeau's intellectual interests, a purposeful and thorough use of his essential concepts, and great knowledge of his theoretical references (among which we can number Pierre Bourdieu, Roger Chartier, and Roland Barthes).

In *Nightingalism* (Buchanan, 1999), Buchanan questions the stories behind the vision nursing has of itself and the social image it projects. She does so by taking advantage of Certeau's idea of political manipulation of history through historiography, thus rethinking the figure of Florence Nightingale. According to Buchanan, many texts on the history of nursing are effectively ‘hagiographies’ when they deal with the founder of modern nursing, converting Nightingale into a ‘mythological’ figure (Buchanan, 1999, p.31). This process, through which certain characteristics of Nightingale are exaggerated, while others are avoided or disguised (those that do not fall into line with the ideas about her at this particular moment in history), allows Nightingale to be appropriated (p. 31) as a model for present-day

nurses to follow, yet at the price of surrounding her with a saintly halo that places us out of reach of the real woman she was, preventing us from seeing her true legacy.

If we move on to *Nursing our Narratives* (Buchanan, 1997), here Buchanan puts forward a truly lucid and original reworking of narrative texts on nursing. It is an idea that is inspired by the linguistic approach that Michel de Certeau so carefully focused, and it means not only analysing the images of nursing figures who have appeared in literature but also the acts these personalities perform and their relationships with the other characters in each storyline. In this respect, one of the most interesting of Buchanan's conclusions is that the roles nurses tend to have in literary plots are not those of protagonists, although they are essential elements in the development of the stories. And their roles are key because the nursing characters stand out for contributing the resources needed by protagonist-heroes so that they might fulfil their purposes within these stories. So, nursing in literature (and this can aid consideration of social perception of their professional performance) will in many cases develop what is known as the 'donor' function: a role principally considered of a secondary nature, but without which the story could not be narrated.

II. Other areas of development

Beyond these areas in which Certeau's work has broken through into nursing, we believe there are at least three other philosophical areas which could be enhanced if his works in relation to politics, epistemology, and corporeality were taken on board.

Firstly, from a political perspective, a study should be carried out of practices by which nurses might resist attempts by the health system to dictate to them.

Secondly, from an epistemological standpoint, Certeau's works could illuminate analysis of the social configuration of nursing as a scientific discipline in both the health sphere and the academic community.

Finally, in the interests of a much deeper theoretical understanding of corporeality in nursing, we believe that Certeau offers us very valuable elements through which to question the dominant notion of the body in present-day Western nursing.

Let us now explore in more detail, although briefly, each one of these three areas.

A. Resistance to power.

To study this question we must begin by accepting as true a premise based on the work of the French thinker Michel Foucault that asserts that health institutions have been historically configured as 'curing machines' (Foucault, 2014, p. 123). In these 'machines', the development of the mechanisms that makes them function is given greater importance than the people who inhabit them or who use their services. Furthermore, Foucault maintains that over recent centuries, many closed-off institutions, following prisons as a model, have developed within them a huge amount of surveillance and control apparatus, thus creating what he calls a panoptic institution (Foucault, 1991). Therefore, from the perspective of Foucault, a hospital is an institution that is set up as a 'curing machine' and organised for the surveillance and control of its occupants, both patients and professionals.

Michel de Certeau accepts the greater part of Foucault's investigations although, as we have outlined earlier, he declared his carefully nuanced departures from Foucault's ideas. Nevertheless, he did concur with the latter in underlining the importance of power conflicts as a constitutive element of social coexistence, and he fell in line with the claim for a 'polemological analysis of culture' and the call to 'lend a political dimension to everyday practices' (Certeau, 1988, p.xvii). Nevertheless, Certeau moves beyond Foucault's interest in the institutions of power to emphasis the way in which people resist these institutions. Certeau held up a second premiss which we also accept as true, namely that however strong the control of panoptic institutions is over people, there is always a space for the exercising

of one's own intelligence and freedom. This space is found fundamentally in the way in which people use the devices (procedures) imposed by the institution, bringing them into play in accordance with the institution's rules but with 'other interests and desires that are neither controlled nor captured by the systems in which they develop' (Certeau, 1988, p. xviii).

On the basis of these two premisses, we put forward a theory that will need to be developed in future studies: nurses, both as a collective and as individuals, play the same role within the health system that Certeau attributed to consumers within the economic system as a whole, in other words, that nurses working within closed-off institutions (such as hospitals) are capable of resisting the power of these institutions, using 'tactics' to violate the rules through which the biomedical system manifests its control.

When we study nursing practices as a collective concept (Certeau, 1988, p. xi) we are accepting that there is a common element that connects a group of people that are different from each other in many aspects: historical moment, sex, ethnic origin, geographic location of residence and workplace, cultural and religious backgrounds, etc. Addressing nursing practices involves a certain degree of generalisation, and it is worth keeping this in mind. From our point of view, we take as nursing practices all those currently carried out as part of the professional exercise of caring by those with an academic qualification that facilitates their working as nurses.

Faced by a hypothesis such as that we have outlined, Certeau's work seems to us to be an especially useful resource for exploring and describing the way in which nurses working in highly hierarchical situations develop subtle resistance behaviour against the power of the 'curing machine' that institutions represent. This question could be identified through what the word empowering expresses, but in our opinion a more exact word is achieved by saying that we are dealing with resistance practices.

B. Social place.

We move on now to the question of epistemology, another of the areas of such great interest for Michel de Certeau, which emerged in his analysis of the relation between science and the society in which it originates. His basic idea in this respect is the premiss that scientific knowledge is the result of a process of production, therefore 'we now have to recognize in every scientific result the value of a product -such as what comes off the conveyor belt of a factory- relative to institutions, to axioms, and to procedures' (Certeau, 1997b, p. 125).

So the results of science can be analysed in the same way as any other production process. That is to say taking into account the raw material (data obtained), the way in which this material is obtained (observation, experimentation, bibliographical revisions, etc.), and the processes it suffers to give rise to the final product (data analysis rules, norms that regulate the writing of articles, etc.). Secondly, a second premiss proposed by Certeau would add that science is subject to rules that are not separate from those that govern the rest of the social and economic system, because in several times 'scientific practice is based on a social praxis independent of knowledge' (Certeau, 1992, p. 44). So, the elements that determine this social praxis make up what Certeau has called the 'social place' of a scientific discipline (Certeau, 1992, p. 121). In his opinion, it is only the clarification of the characteristics of this 'social place' that will permit a discipline called science.

'A discourse can maintain a certain scientific character, however, by making explicit the rules and conditions of its production, and first of all the relations out of which it arises' (Certeau, 1988, p. 44)

Pursuing the line of this argument, we reach a position from which we may assert that, since nursing is a discipline that claims to be scientific and which offers society products similar to those of established sciences, then nursing is ripe for the application of the idea

that its development is firmly bound to a 'social place' that conditions it. We do not enter here into the discussion of whether or not nursing is a science. Rather, it is a question of applying Certeau's epistemological reflections to nursing, insofar as it seeks to be called scientific (at least on the part of its members).

Applying Certeau's observations in this sense (González-Sanz & Barquero-González, 2015), we are armed with a good tool with which to carry out a detailed study and to reveal the mechanisms of production and the intrinsic limits that make up nursing - especially the three aforementioned elements- and those which make up the social place: institutions, procedures, and values.

With regard to the first of these, we must point out that Certeau paid intense attention to the subject of institutions (or authorities, as he also labelled them), considering them an essential part of social dynamism.

'In the broadest sense of the term, the authorities signify a reality that is so difficult to determine, but nonetheless necessary: the air that allows a society to breathe. They allow for social communication and creativity because they furnish, on the one hand, common references and, on the other, possible paths of pursuit' (Certeau, 1997b, p. 3).

In the case of nursing, there are several institutions of obvious relevance that fit the common references which Certeau mentions in the quote above. These are, for example, professional associations, academic centres, and health authorities, among others. However, despite their being quite clearly identified, what has not been examined from the perspective of production (in line with Certeau's work) is the way in which their influence is present in both the building of nursing knowledge and the professional practice of nursing. It is of great interest to us to explore the relation that allows this influence to exist, as well as its intensity and directionality, above all in the academic sphere. Within the framework of

higher education, it is necessary to ask who is in charge of producing nursing know-how, as well as what connections they maintain with the other institutions that hold up the profession.

Meanwhile, to define the limits of the social place of nursing science, it is essential to also explore the field of procedures used by nurses in the process of knowledge production. Although there are many recent studies that attempt to show how nursing science is constructed (Bluhm, 2014; Lipscomb, 2014; Granero-Molina et al., 2015), it is a classic example of the work of John Paley (Paley, 1998). In this text, Paley offers a detailed analysis of the fact that when nurses venture into any qualitative research (despite quantitative research still being the majority in the nursing collective), certain authors and theories, sometimes in non-critical fashion, dominate the theoretical framework of these investigations, as occurred with Heidegger and phenomenology.

Paley points out that much of the research carried out by nurses on the basis of phenomenology, misreads Heidegger, poorly interpreting him. On the other hand, Paley highlights Certeau as one of the interpreters of Heidegger who did not twist his works, and he asserts that nursing has no reason to continue to research on positivist or hermeneutic lines, and that it can also successfully employ a realist perspective.

In addition to these studies, which seek to identify predominant methodologies and the way in which they are used, it would also be essential -moving more towards the hidden details of the production of nursing know-how- to know on what data and what theoretical resources nurses base their arguments and scientific texts, and to what rules of production they adhere for these (Amezcuca & Reina-Leal, 2013). Despite the difficulties involved in this analysis, Certeau encourages us to search with patience when he asserts that 'every society always manifests somewhere the formal rules which its practices obey' (Certeau, 1988, p. 21).

Finally, the third aspect to deal with would be values, in other words those ideas that mark out the roadmap for nursing because they are considered worthy of achieving. In this

sense, once we have described the institutions holding up nursing knowledge and the procedures by which they have been produced, we would need to identify the predominant values in nursing in our times and stand them up in relation to the other two aspects, much in the line of analysis pursued by P. Krol & M. Lavoie (2014) on neoliberalism and its relation with nursing, or by P. Snelling (2016) on the British ethical code for nurses and midwives.

Taking as an example the value of the scientific approach, which is widely extended in present-day Western nursing, an analysis in line with Certeau of the kind we wish to propose would have to find the institutions that support this value and identify the procedures through which they introduce it into professional nursing practice. The NANDA-NIC-NOC taxonomy could be a good example to refer to in this sense, since it emerged from specific institutions that aim to help nursing reach a greater scientific level, and its presence has grown in everyday nursing performance worldwide. Its spread and implementation has, indeed, reached such a point that the use of this taxonomy has on many occasions served as a standard for measuring the level of scientific approach of various nursing practices. We think that, on many occasions, at least in a European context, the institutional promotion of the use of the NANDA-NOC-NOC taxonomy is intended to show more that nursing has a high scientific level than to provide a useful communication tool among nurses.

Through his writing on the subject of the conquest of social power by the doctors of the 17th century, Certeau teaches us that one of the essential factors in the consolidation of a scientific discipline is the creation and use of its own language. In *The Possession of Loudun* (Certeau, 2000b), Certeau uses great accuracy in describing the process by which medical science replaced theology and its representatives (priests) in the role of interpreters of reality -a role which they had fulfilled since the beginning of the Middle Ages- laying bare the importance in this process of the use of medical language to explain the events taking place around the possession.

In our time, we continue to be immersed in this paradigm in which medicine, hand-in-hand with psychotherapy (Illouz, 2008) is postulated as an argument that can explain human reality in its own language. So today, when nursing -which has had a subordinate role in medicine since the 17th century- also attempts to equip itself with a differentiated linguistic code in order to consolidate its professional position (as might be the case using the NANDA-NIC-NOC taxonomy), it comes up against serious difficulties in achieving its objective. It is, in fact, arriving 400 years behind medicine in the challenge to establish itself as a scientific discipline.

C. The body.

In the present, despite the changes brought about by the meteoric expansion in technology, we still find ourselves within a framework of thinking about the human body that places it as the central notion of our self-understanding as human beings. This is why it is fundamental for nursing to describe its philosophical conceptions of corporeality, in order to delve deeper into them in a critical sense and thus adapt its caring method to the needs of people in the 21st century. Other studies (Gadow, 1980; Marchetti et al., 2016), can help us to find out whether the way in which we understand and experience corporeality may be related to the identities taken on by nurses. In the same way, it could clarify whether there is a relation between the use of the body and gender roles, relations of power between social collectives and the health sphere, and, finally, the social image nursing has of itself and the image it projects forth.

From our point of view, there are at least two ways in which Certeau's work can be of help in this respect: that which investigates the use of spaces by people; and that which studies the body as a point of expression of the conflict between the values of a society and those of individuals, since 'the law constantly writes itself on bodies' (Certeau, 1988, p. 140).

With regard to the first question, this would involve some thought on the bodily movement of nurses in relation to the physical space in which they work (in health workplaces such as hospitals and health centres, the homes of the people they care for, the urban space in general, etc.). This is a line of research excellently covered by works such as that of Halford & Leonard (2003), which is based on Certeau's distinction between 'place' and 'space'.

'A place (*lieu*) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence... A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability... Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities... In short, *space is a practiced place*' (Certeau, 1988, p. 117).

Observing the movements of nurses practising in two English NHS hospitals as they construct their own spaces in these institutions, Halford & Leonard noted down such diverse aspects as the decoration of nursing wards, displacement by nurses from one area to another within the hospital, and visual contact made between nurses and doctors in corridors. After analysing all this information, Halford & Leonard concluded that nurses are conditioned by the way in which hospital organisations distribute their spaces but, at the same time, these same nurses are 'active agents who use organisational space in constructing identities and communicating these' (Halford & Leonard, 2003, p. 208).

The second question would involve exploring the way in which social conventions and political planning impose certain conditioning on people through a certain way of treating their bodies, and above all through the way in which nurses act as instruments of this social imposition or resist it.

The fact of there being a relation between politics and the body would not be difficult to see in an example such as the recommendation of several Latin American countries for women to avoid becoming pregnant due to the Zika virus infection. Looking more specifically at the world of nursing, interesting interesting work by Kallio (2008) shows how Swedish nurses behaved physically with children who had to leave their homes for safer areas during World War II. Absent from the bodily attitudes highlighted by professionals in his surprising description are the tenderness and delicacy one would expect to find in contact between nurses and children. The conclusion he extracts from his study has more to do with the body -also the bodies of the children- being the battlefield for a political struggle, and the nurses often have an unpleasant role in this struggle.

This same line might also include a study of the limits established by both society and nursing on bodily contact between nurses and their users. The permissiveness applied to nurses to go beyond the usual limits of bodily contact is clearly evinced in the now classic iconographic relation of nurses to prostitutes, which some authors claim is related to the fact that both nurses and prostitutes are the only women, with the exception of wives and lovers, who have been authorised traditionally to manipulate the male genitals (Buchanan, 1997, p.81), something that could equally be applied to male midwives with regard to female genitalia.

Conclusion

There are three basic ideas taken from Michel de Certeau's works that stand out as useful concepts in explaining the reality of nursing: tactics, social place, and the body as a paper upon which the law of society is written. They are ideas that are rigorously put forward by Certeau in his texts, and they relate to some the most interesting philosophical proposals of the 20th century, such as Foucault's biopolitical vision or the epistemological theories of

J. Habermas. In enabling the application of these ideas of Certeau by nurses to the political and epistemological aspects of their professional practice, and their academic and research activity, we believe we are helping to open up a new pathway towards a better understanding of nursing.

We are certainly convinced that in order to achieve this it is necessary to delve deeply into the areas of investigation here laid down: resistance by nurses to the power of the health system; the way of setting up the social institutions that sustain the professional and academic activity of nursing; and the notion of corporeality held by present-day nurses, as well as the way in which the body has a role to play in professional work. We trust that in this way the contributions of the work of Michel de Certeau to the philosophy of nursing will be clearly evidenced.

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