

# Feminist biopolitics and subversive aesthetics

## *Biopolítica feminista e estéticas subversivas*

IVANA BENTES<sup>a</sup>

Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Programa de Pós Graduação em Comunicação. Rio de Janeiro-RJ, Brasil

### ABSTRACT

We address the political and aesthetic issues that emerge from the feminist activist practice, expressed in the case study under analysis: the images/photographs/memes posted in the Instagram profile of character/performer Ex-Miss Febem, created by artist and activist Aleta Valente. We use Beatriz Preciado's notions of "gender technologies" and "counter-sexuality" in the construction of a post-feminism.

**Keywords:** Biopolitics, gender theories, aesthetics, networks

<sup>a</sup> Professor of the PhD Communication Program at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Orcid: 0000-0003-2859-2012. E-mail: ivanabentes@gmail.com

### RESUMO

As questões políticas e estéticas que emergem da prática ativista feminista, expressa no estudo de caso que vamos analisar: imagens/fotografias/memes postados no perfil do Instagram da personagem/*performer* Ex-Miss Febem, criada pela artista e ativista Aleta Valente. Nesse contexto, refletiremos as noções de Beatriz Preciado de "tecnologias do gênero" e "contrassexualidade" na construção de um pós-feminismo.

**Palavras-chave:** Biopolíticas, teorias do gênero, estéticas, redes

## GENDER TECHNOLOGIES

EXPERIMENTATION WITH BODY limits and its positive valuation in biotechnological capitalism could not be understood if dissociated from biopower in its hyper-productivity. The cognitive, technological, informational capitalism, which is superimposed on disciplinary regimes, the new forms to control the bodies, surpass the discipline through a biopower (Foucault, 1988). That which comes to be invested by the capital is life itself in all its potential. Rather than predetermined molds, modulations, and variations, the biopower operates in stream and becomes capable of dismissing the binary disciplinary thought itself, opening the boundaries between public and private, legal and illegal, living work and dead work, work, and entertainment.

It is in this context that we observe new thresholds and modulations, in which the same technologies serve the production and consumption, work and entertainment, biopower and biopolitics. We live a time of transition of submissiveness technologies and we also see the emergence of resistance policies across the different fields. The new dimensions of the living work, the aesthetics emerging in the networks, the narratives of gender and/or identity get confused with this between-time, entertainment, producing bodies at the same time hyper-stimulated and exhausted.

The contemporary culture and its visibility regimes have been much analyzed, based on a narcissistic individualism, founded on self-exposition, on the narration of self, which says “I am seen, therefore I am,” in processes that would be inherent in a logic of spectacle and of spectacularization. But we can follow another path, led by the propositions of Michel Foucault who presents us – in the constitution of his ethics – the concepts of “care of self” and “aesthetics of existence” (Foucault, 1985) to describe a subject who produces a distance between the self and the world, and turns to self to act better. This reflexive author subject – who makes the self, body, and life the matter of a continuous aestheticization – becomes increasingly more distant from the figures of the artist, of the author, which are marked by the logic of the spectacle and of the *work* to be converted into celebrities or influencers. Figures that in this flowing aestheticization of their lives do not need a *work* and present processes with disruptive or normative potential.

The emergence of the youtubers, instagramers, celebrities, influencers and microinfluencers in social networks gradually unravel these complex processes of production of images, positionings, communities. Life – understood itself as a work of art and aestheticized – can follow paths that differ from the standards and norms of society, market, religions, etc. To this end it is necessary to conduct

a work of self-reflection and self-performance, the care of self that will produce subjectivation processes in which it is possible to make see what we did not see, create the own rules of existence.

According to Foucault, the aesthetics of existence is a result of the care of self, this work on oneself that produces lives-languages (Bentes, 2015), modes of life, moments of freedom, rules of existence that are distinct from the social standards and norms. Far from speaking of an *internalization* or plunge into the depths of the self, we consider the concepts of care of self and aesthetics of existence in Foucault to be consistent with other contemporary definitions that describe the subject entangled in webs of relationships, networks of significations, agents, devices. The subject emerges as an *effect*, constituted in and by language.

What interests us here is to connect the Foucauldian concepts to the theories of networks to think how the aesthetics of existence serve in the construction of another activism, which even making reference to the issues of identity, gender, ethnicity, use the network effect and the processes of subjectivation in network to produce disruptive discourses, images, and narratives that point to non-essentialist experience and propositions of subject.

This type of production of self, using networks, platforms, processes of construction of communities, niches, swarms, instead of being read in the reducing key of narcissism, exhibitionism, spectacle, essentialism, can be read as an intensified modulation of social relationship. It is not simply presenting to the world a hypertrophied representation of the self, marked by identity traits, but producing disruptive subjectivation processes and going from the microcosm of performances to the competition for territories and cities.

A second part is necessary in order to analyze the political and aesthetic issues that emerge from the feminist activist practice, expressed in the case study that we will analyze: the images/photographs/memes posted on the Instagram profile of the character/performer Ex Miss Febem, created by artist and activist Aleta Valente, who lives and works in Rio de Janeiro. Here we use Beatriz Preciado's notions of "gender technologies" and "counter-sexuality" (Preciado, 2014).

Preciado uses the concept of counter-sexuality to question the devices that normalize heterosexuality, the processes of submissiveness between the bodies and the heterocentered system that characterize what we understand for Nature. Her objective, beyond the classical theories of designation/distinction of female/male, points to a theory of the performances established as biological truths and Nature. The coercion of gender, the coercion of sex and sexuality,

the coercion of desire that were established and built linguistically, discursively and culturally, being susceptible to replacement by the talking bodies, speaking bodies, and by a possession of the body and claim of the body as a producer of other discourses.

Preciado's greatest provocation with the concept of counter-sexuality is then the radical denaturalization of the idea of Nature and of a single truth about sex that breaks every order that legitimizes a system of oppression, of subjection over the bodies. Founded on Foucault, she shows how this Nature is a built and normative device and how the notion of Nature is the very base of a heterocentered system of normatization and prohibition. Preciado conducts to a radical understanding in which both sex and gender and sexuality are presented as effects of devices within a complex sociopolitical and technological system that functions by dualities: man and woman, homosexual and heterosexual, and even categories such as that of transsexual are products, effects, uses and deviations that relate to the bodies.

The *talking bodies* no longer recognize themselves as men and women, but are able to accept as many sexualities as possible. The proposal of a *counter-sexuality* stems from the Foucauldian proposition about the processes of resistance to the modern sexuality that are not reduced to the fights against the prohibitions. According to Preciado, counter-sexual practices must be understood as resistance technologies and as a form of sexual counter-discipline.

Counter-sexuality falls into the discussion of Queer Theory and into the decisive problematization of the Gender category that has as one of the references the publication in the United States – in the 1990s – of the book *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*, by Judith Butler (2003). In this book, Butler deconstructs the sex/gender division (sex as natural and gender as construction) – the foundation of feminist politics – and questions the concept of woman that served feminism. According to Butler everything is construction: such that the distinction between sex and gender becomes inoperative. That is, sex has never been natural, but a discursive and cultural construction similarly to the notion of gender. Butler problematizes the concept of woman and of women (foundation of identity politics) and proposes thinking the gender as something fluid, socially constructed, performed, as an “effect.”

Accordingly, the Queer Theory moves away from the classic identity-based, essentializing feminism and is a post-identity politics, which deals with transvestility, the transgenerity and inter-sexuality and sexual cultures characterized by subversion or rejection of socially prescribed standards of sexual and/or romantic behavior. Line into which Preciado

falls. The evolution of the term LGBT to its continuous transformations to the open acronym LGBTTQQAAP (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersexual, asexual or allies – or supporters –, pansexual) clearly shows the idea of fluidity and performativity of sexual orientations.

We must highlight that Beatriz Preciado (now under the name Paul B. Preciado) declares to be transgender or queer. Rejects the distinctions between man and woman, homosexual and heterosexual, intersexual and transsexual. Is a philosopher and essayist, whose theories about counter-sexuality are directly related to their experiences of producing a disruptive body and subjectivity inconsistent with their biological sex. Is the author, among others, of *Manifiesto contrassexual* (Preciado, 2014) – uma referência na teoria contemporânea e para os movimentos transgêneros e queer – and *Testo yonqui* (Id., 2008), in which are explained the effects of self-administered testosterone on their sexual, social, activist life. Their essays and conceptualizations are part of a process of experimentation and *political fiction*.

Based on Preciado's provocations – and even without addressing the many issues brought by Queer theory – we can shift their questions to a disruptive feminism, present in the work of Aleta Valente, who questions: How much disruption can a woman's body still cause? The contemporary possibility of maximum visibility, post digital media, and the continued exposure of intimacy in a regime of public privacy, in social networks, have produced reactions, comments, judgments, interactions, which function as a veritable collective exorcism before pictures of the bodies of women, making emerge topics and issues that still cause violent reactions.

This fear, ban and censorship that acts especially *against the autonomy of all that is feminine* and is conventionally called *women intimacy*, is a particularly controversial field of narratives and rules in dispute.

The photographs, images and memes that we analyze here produce this “talking body” and express this “counter-sexuality” to which Preciado refers. Images of a female body functioning as a counter-discourse, utilizing a maximum visibility, an *aesthetics of scandal* that uses seduction, eroticism, humor, inversion, shock and consumption to deconstruct taboos, invent new places of discourse.

Aleta Valente's photo-performance published on Instagram and Facebook with the phrase “patriarchy is leaking, misogyny is leaking. We won't be censored” is the image we chose for analysis and which produced one of these cases of major buzz when she performed, using the profile of her

character Ex-miss Febem, a scene of this public intimacy and performance of the female body.

### IMAGE-BODY



FIGURE 1 – Febem Ex- Miss' publication

What we see in this frontal posted on the Instagram profile of Ex-Miss Febem is the blood of menstruation marking an immaculately white leggings, while Ex-Miss Febem/Aleta Valente puts – in a contortionistic effort – one leg behind the head and lets a braid fall between the maximally spread legs.

There is nothing to hide, says the image, purposely explicit in its intention of showing that which is socially hidden: women's menstrual flow. Which even in advertising, in ads of sanitary pads, is represented by graphic shapes, drawings and/or blue drops. The red blood and flow of women's menstruation are nonexistent as public image, as are many other taboo images involving the female body.

What we literally see in Aleta Valente's post is a woman who strives to produce a pose and look at the camera, with the gym clothing marked with blood in a scenario without glamour: stained walls, cement floor, white object and a piece of paper on the floor.

What we read in the comments that follow the image, republished by the profile "Moça, não sou obrigada a ser feminista," is another flow: of insults, misogynist discourses, deprecation of every order that together form a kind of compendium of hate discourses related to women. But that is not all, since the images of Ex-Miss Febem also circulate not only in social networks, but in an artistic, activist, feminist and media circuit in which they are celebrated.

In this page, anti-feminist, the comments function as a sort of doxa, current opinion on everything that may or may not be said about women's sexuality, their desires, their menstruation, their hair, their pregnancy and abortions, their maternity, their butt, vagina, their flows. What parts of the body can be shown and in which places?

What vocabulary should be evoked to talk about a broken limit, rule or taboo: the hygienist, medical, psychoanalytic, sociological, advertising, artistic, feminist discourse and ultimately simply the hate discourse. Everything is evoked. The woman's body, the feminine and the feminism emerge as a controversial field.

## LOVERS AND HATERS. THE ECONOMY OF LIKES

More than a character, Ex-Miss Febem is a place of discourse that uses self-irony, mockery, transgression to produce a short circuit in the discourses and win lovers and haters.

My name is Aleta Valente I am a visual artist, instagrammer, single mother, feminist, suburban. Ex-miss Febem is a character, performer, performance, we share the same body. [...] Ex-miss Febem has never been committed to the former Fundação Estadual do Bem Estar do Menor (Febem – juvenile detention center): the nickname comes from the song 'Kátia Flávia,' a hit of Fausto Fawcett.

Ex-Miss Febem was born in January 2015 and died in January 2017 in social networks, when her profile on Instagram was removed due to excessive complaints. A political, activist, and artistic project aborted and censored by part of the public who denounced it and by the policy of violation of Facebook/Instagram's network standards that censors mainly the female bodies and nudity.

**AESTHETICS OF SCANDAL**

Ex Miss Febem builds serial self-images, mocks self-representation and reinvents the self-portrait, resignifying the selfies, staging the body and its image as medium, media. She uses shifted and *out-of-place* seduction and eroticism as a way of problematizing the public consumption of the female body.

The overexposure, aesthetics of scandal and subversion are used against the censorship, shame, and vulnerability of the bodies and their market-oriented exposure, in a society in which women's bodies are used to sell tires, beer, food, car, detergent, washing powder, house, everything.

When they *do not sell anything*, what is the disruptive power of these female bodies? Before the image of menstrual flow, the comments in the anti-feminist site focus on the literality of the image, on its crudity. They disregard the image and the person who speaks through it. They ignore whatsoever activist or aesthetic proposal and reinforce the misogynistic and patriarchal discourses.

What we can observe, following Preciado, is that the norms of gender produce vulnerability, make some bodies more targeted and controlled than others, produce invisibility and abjection. These female bodies become available to be violated by this same abjection produced by gender.

We could highlight here the groups of comments in some tags that express the discourses about the female gender and the female bodies with their flows: those who speak of disgust and revulsion before the image itself, of the “disgusting” view of blood to the “smell of butcher” that is supposedly exhaled and “can be smelled.” The image is considered “traumatic,” abnormal, and unnatural. They use a hygienist discourse and accuse the body, the image, the character of abjection: “filthy, gross, disgusting, sloppy.”

The image is also associated to a second level of “abjection” and repulsion: the very feminist and gender discourse is considered “radical” and unnatural, a discourse in which women are regarded as “feminazis, troubled, crazy, mentally ill, don't look like a woman, destroyer of the family, evil plague, blasphemous, needing sex” and a whole lot of clichés that are anti-feminist and that demonize not only the image, but the discourse and theories of gender.

In addition, there are those who accuse the image of exposing the privacy and intimacy of women, producing a “shame of being a woman,” who reaffirm the belief in a Nature of the feminine that is dismissed by the transgressive and fabulating power of the image.



FIGURE 2 – Comments about the Febem Ex-Miss' behavior on social networks

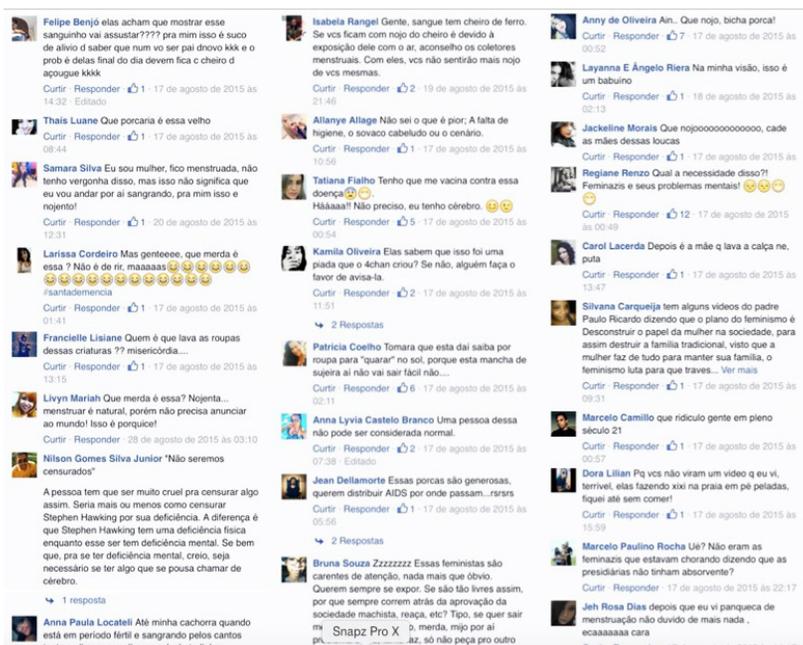


FIGURE 3 – Another comments about the Febem Ex-Miss' behavior on social networks

# D

## Feminist biopolitics and subversive aesthetics



FIGURE 4 – More comments about the Febem Ex-Miss' behavior on social networks

### THE CATEGORY OF GENDER

Whether in artistic and aesthetic theory or practices, the category of gender is not a magic word or concept that comes to explain everything. It is, rather, that which needs to be explained. Accordingly, Beatriz Preciado tells us that the category of gender was not born with the feminist agenda, but was invented in World War II, in the context of the Cold War and in a normalizing way for the production of docile bodies, masculinities and femininities (Preciado, 2014).

The production of gender is a technology that as all technologies of capitalism must be hacked from within the system. Neither sex nor gender have any biological fundament. In other words, even the classic feminism produced an abstract and essentialist woman. Gender technologies come to make this shift in the very feminism.

### FABULATIONS OF THE BODY

Ex-Miss Febem's narratives extrapolate the political discourse of traditional feminism and approach Beatriz Preciado's pharmacopornographic regime and Foucault's aesthetics of existence through the production of hybrid, fictional

genders, non-normative and performing sexualities, linguistic and aesthetic procedures that rival the theoretical discourses and the essentialist common sense that only see Nature.

The few assertive comments, in this profile, allude to the aesthetic and disputing character, a politics of the image: “they bleed in art to not bleed in life” and perceive the image beyond its literality, see the bodies in their performativity.

### MADE IN BANGU

In other profiles, in Instagram and Facebook, Ex-Miss Febem is celebrated and followed by commentators who encourage, admire, celebrate each post. They are her *lovers*. In social networks one can speak to niches of those who share values and repertoires, but also to the *disorganized*, those that are not the public of art galleries, cultural centers and react with violence to the break of codes.

The networks produce a deterritorialized circuit for image consumption. Aleta Valente also plays with these shifts when she tattoos on her butt an ironic “Made in Bangu” as a parodic form of distinction and place of origin. In an increasingly closed circuit for arts, the networks circuit, a sort of public sewer of images and discourses, is also the opportunity to dive into a new economy, measured in likes, comments and followers and that dialogue with new mediators.

This is a new cover of the massive pop culture and not necessarily of mass, but that reaches segments, niches, creates new spaces and circuits where we saw only places of instant interaction and communication. Youtubers, instagrammers, performers use images, memes, videos, photographs and selfies to produce hot experimentation and trigger subjectivation and submissiveness processes of every order.

The free circulation in the environment of networks and in the viralizing logic of Memetics produces noises that make us suppose – parodying Andy Warhol – that everyone will have in addition to their 15 minutes of Fame their 15 minutes of virtual lynching.

There are many images that produce violent reactions, whether of lovers or haters. Ex-Miss Febem touching the tongue on her own armpit with hair, sunglasses, turban, headphone and with the arm raised in a bus, in a paradoxically alluring and provocative way, as the animals that lick and love one another, but that shocks due to the election of object of pleasure and to the public place.

Many images function as statements. The frontal scene with spread legs showing pubic hair coming out of the shorts with the hashtag #freepentelhos (#freepubichair). The vagina wide open and smeared with blood in the same

position as Courbet's "The Origin of the World" (1866) and the text "it remains a controversial and taboo image. Nothing has changed, or little" followed by a comment of a woman that reinforces the proposition: "it's crazy thinking that I've never seen my own vagina when I menstruate."

Another demonstration selfie shows Ex-Miss Febem with pink wig, sunglasses, sexy poses and a t-shirt with the medicine Cytotec, used as an abortifacient by many women, and entitled: "Abadá of abortion," makes explicit a common practice among women without purchasing power to pay a private abortion clinic. They take risks, sicken the body, victims of a prohibition and taboo that criminalizes and penalizes poor women.

### PHARMACOPORNOGRAPHY

The self-ethnography conducted by Aleta Valente through Ex-Miss Febem's profile leads us to another strategy of Beatriz Preciado, the sexopolitical perspective, which shifts the center from politics and economics to sexuality and the "use of pleasures." Stressing and radicalizing Deleuze's concept of Society of Control, Preciado speaks of a "pharmacopornographic" society (Preciado, 2008) in which the control itself occurs in flux, as modulation, a *soft* control, made of agencies and networks.

Medicines are also present in Ex-Miss Febem's images explicitly, as well as pornography, conceived as a regime for maximum visualization of sex, sexuality, the body and its uses. Pharmacology and pornography are two poles of transit and transition between the legal and the illegal, between the permitted and the prohibited and that are present massively in the contemporary culture that Preciado defines as "narcoticosexual" (Preciado, 2008).

The proliferation of massive pornographic practices in sites, images, videos, advertising, the proliferation of medicines, natural drugs, synthetic drugs, the massification of hormone use, the self-administration of all sorts of medicines for counter-natural purposes are constituting a living polysexual body and with a new orgasmic force that cannot be reduced to the traditional, genital, normative forms of pleasure.

Thus, pharmacopornography, according to Preciado, is a type of radicalization of the submissiveness and power forces present in the Foucauldian theories of biopower and their developments: the biopolitics and the forms of resistance, the technobiopower as defined by Donna Haraway (1991), which in Preciado will constitute a technobody connected in networks. This is the planetary, pharmacopornographic management of bodies excited to their maximum power or until exhaustion.

However, we are not simply talking about docile bodies. But about this pharmacopornographic body under test, in permanent beta state, a new governability of the living in flux, or what is called polysexual body, base of an overflow, base of a properly contemporary unfathomable and measureless.

Pharmacopornography is a biotechnology, a technology that produces gender. Accordingly, we can look at Ex-Miss Febem's images and find a performance of gender beyond an essentialist and identitary feminism and that speaks of these technologies, networks, agencies, in a process of hot experimentation.

Ex-Miss Febem makes the female nudity, the exposure of blood, of flows, of the body, in their raw forms, a shifted and parodic eroticism, performing each scene with facial expressions, lips and poses of a standard sensuality that is reproduced by the millions with the advent of selfies, a process of self-representation, narrative of self, which reached a massive stage. This is clearly a shift of the pornographic discourse, but also of the essentialist feminist discourse. Our hypothesis here is that this shift of the discourses would be impossible without the technological networks, platforms, interfaces that connect this polysexual body with a multitude of other bodies, technologies and devices. The use of social networks, of visual self-ethnography, the incorporation of platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are part of this other discursive ecology.

## MY SELFIES

In 2013 the word *selfie* entered the Oxford Dictionary as the word of the year. In 2015 it was said that worldwide more than 1 million selfies were taken every day. It would be very simple to simply reduce everything to a culture of narcissism. It is more productive to talk about a culture of self-narrative and a massive *aesthetics of existence* made in daily interactions.

From pictures in front of mirrors, of young people posing in the bathroom, we advance to the use of selfies in broad processes of sociability. As a way of belonging and acceptance in groups, in building reputation, as a form of activism and expression of position.

The advent of front cameras in smartphones and the proliferation of selfies produce a multitude of intentions and meanings, in which does not matter what is photographed, but rather the fact of performing the image: in front of works of art, landscapes, groups, in museums, in situations of risk and in intimacy, fan selfies, political selfies, parodic selfies, at parties or funerals. Numerous meanings are produced and the image becomes a way of expressing a position.

### THE PLACE OF EROTICISM AND EROTICISM OUT OF PLACE

Beatriz Preciado speaks of a counter-sexuality, as a line of resistance to the disciplinary processes described by Foucault and the very control technologies analyzed by Gilles Deleuze. By proposing possible sexualities she moves away from the prohibitionist views criticized by Foucault and discusses alternative forms of power-knowledge in relation to modern sexuality. Counter-sexual practices understood as resistance technologies and sexual counter-discipline, which move away from the dualisms and binomials male/female, normal/pervert, heterosexual/homosexual, etc.

In some images Aleta Valente/Ex-Miss Febem plays with gender marks, wearing a fake beard in a swimsuit pose, donning *masculine* postures, poses, and clothing, transiting genders.

Another shift is conducted in relation to the scenario of this pharmacopornographic fabulation. Ex-Miss Febem, this “mermaid from Bangu,” as they say in an affectionate comment, uses the neighborhood where she lives in the western part of the city of Rio de Janeiro to produce an affective and political geography of the suburbs. She amplifies the selfie’s power of expressing a position by using as a setting for her shifted eroticism these anti-postcards: the streets, shops, shop windows and advertisements of Bangu’s businesses, images of vacant lots, squares, backyards, roofs, debris, demolitions, untidy rooms, bathrooms, kitchens, desks in everyday mess. Territories silenced in the city’s disputes of popular imagination.

In many images Ex-Miss Febem evokes this contrast: a young, seductive, sexy woman flaunts and poses glamorously and provocatively in a scenario of poverty, as in the series “eu e Claudinho” (me and Claudinho), in which she poses on hoods of shabby cars beside a poor man, or when she puts a lunchbox of rice and beans between her legs or two pieces of beef on her breasts, deconstructing part of the eroticism or causing instantaneous astonishment.

The image with the caption “Equilibrium sobre Entulhum” in a fake Latin illustrates the strategy: a huge bikini butt toward the sky in a contortionistic effort amid the trash.

The images echo positions and statements from the field of art and activism. One of them “women’s bodies don’t exist for public consumption,” but going far beyond it and producing other forms of enjoyment and consumption based on an aesthetics of gender.

Aleta Valente also dialogues with the provocation of artist Rupri Kaur, who produced the series *Period*, in which one of the images shows exactly a woman lying on her side wearing a gymnastics sweatshirt with a small blood stain from menstruation.

An image that *naturalizes*, through the pose, framing, and aesthetics the fact that women menstruate. An image that produced a similarly violent reaction in social networks, to the extent of being removed from Instagram.

The artist Rupi Kaur uses a different strategy in relation to Aleta Valente, without any kind of seduction strategy. It is a naturalizing aesthetics that is distinct from the aesthetics of scandal, as in Ex-Miss Febem's image showing a close-up of a spectacular butt marked with menstrual blood. In both cases, the fact is that these images become *unconsumable* at first. And even need the aesthetic or activist discourse to be imposed and circulate. The bodies need to speak. The bodies need to be denaturalized, as proposed by Preciado with the "talking bodies."

Aleta Valente establishes with her profile and images an affirmation and self-legitimization process that seems intent on surpassing concepts and discourses and relates to this new stage of activist and pop culture, the viral memetics producer of instantaneous lovers and haters and that produces its own economy, a distinct market of subjectivities and lives-languages, which emerge from the everyday life, from the territory, from a doubled attention and care of self.

Ex-Miss Febem's set of images forms a disruptive, subversive, disturbing encyclopedia that addresses virtually all the issues that matter. From issues of self-representation, self-legitimization, self-exposure, gender, to consumption, glamour, poverty, resistance, sexuality, seduction, sexism, feminism, patriarchy, feminism and post-feminism, urbanism, maternity, menstruation, abortion, masturbation, marginality.

These images also mark the emergence of new subjects of discourse that produce their place of discourse: the *pobre-stars* (poor stars), minorities, who are related with an entire Brazilian pop and popular culture, ironic and devastating.

A relationship that spans the marginal/behavioral cinema of the 1960s/1970s, the contemporary memetics, figures of a feminist pop such as Tati Quebra-Barraco, Luz Del Fuego, Helena Ignes, Márcia X, Cindy Sherman, Rupi Kaur, the divas of pop, and a plethora of cross-references within the context of the suburb of Bangu.

The female and feminist discourses become increasingly pop, in the sense of the popularity, but also of the attitude and aesthetics of pop art, that ignores cultural boundaries and produces an aesthetics that at the same time denies, subverts, deconstructs, but dialogues with the shameless consumption.

And most importantly, Aleta Valente's uniqueness emerges from this collective, anonymous production, in which each one with their repertoire receives a load of thousand references that produces a singular effect.

# D

## Feminist biopolitics and subversive aesthetics

A refined or cult repertoire is not required to understand and perceive the images's impact, level of self-irony, sarcasm, humor also demolishes and neutralizes the discourses of hate, in a way. But the load of violence, misogyny in some comments is a reversed mirror of how much the images are disturbing and shocking.

### ALETHEIA AND THE FLOWS

Aleta reminds us of the Greek word *Aletheia*, truth, unveiling, game of appearance and concealment. What can really be shown in the new regimes of public privacy? What flows? “It breathes, it heats up, it eats. It shits, it fucks”<sup>1</sup> as Deleuze and Guattari say in *O Anti-Édipo* about the desiring machines we are. They speak of this “full body without organs” that is “the unproductive, the sterile, the unengendered, the unconsumable,” as proposed by Antonin Artaud. “The desiring machines are always out of order, ceaselessly getting out of order” (Ibid.: 23).

<sup>1</sup> Deleuze; Guattari. 1976, p. 15.

Deleuze and Guattari quote writer Henry Miller to speak of the flows barred and banned by capitalism:

I like everything that runs, even the menstrual flow that takes the unfertilized eggs [...] flow of hair, flow of saliva, flow of sperm, of urine or shit, which are produced by partial objects, constantly crossed by other partial objects that produce other flows, crossed by other partial objects. (Ibid.: 20)

And what is the question after all? “The problem of the social has always been this: encrypt the flows of desire, inscribe them, register them, see that no flow runs, without being capped, piped, regulated” (1976: 50) reaffirm Deleuze & Guattari in *Anti-édipo*. When the images feature these flows in their crudity and disruptive power they explode the codes and also make leak all discourses of control and ban.

Accordingly, Aleta Valente's images perform a dispute that is vital, asymmetrical, violent, emotional, of outburst and overflow. These images fall into an experimental process, both on the theories of gender and on the practices of an aesthetics of existence in a context of a polysexuality in performance. ■

### REFERENCES

BENTES, I. *Mídia-multidão: estéticas da comunicação e biopolíticas*. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X, 2015.

- BUTLER, J. *Problemas de gênero: feminismo e subversão da identidade*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2003.
- DELEUZE, G. *Foucault*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 2005.
- DELEUZE, G.; GUATTARI, F. *O anti-Édipo: capitalismo e esquizofrenia*. Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *História da sexualidade III: o cuidado de si*. 8. ed. São Paulo: Graal, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *História da sexualidade: a vontade de saber*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1988.
- HARAWAY, D. A cyborg manifesto: science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century. In: \_\_\_\_\_. *Simians, cyborgs and women: the reinvention of nature*. Nova Iorque: Routledge, 1991. p. 149-181.
- PRECIADO, B. *Testo yonqui*. Madri: Espasa Calpe, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Manifesto contrassexual: práticas subversivas de identidade sexual*. São Paulo: N-1 Edições, 2014.

---

Article received on June 4, 2017 and approved on August 18, 2017.