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The Body as Mass Media in the Livestream Regime

Keywords
biopolitics, necropolitics, gore capitalism, livestream regime, gender, sexuality

Abstract
In the article we discuss the meaning of the body in its material dimension in relation to its transformation in the current context, which is determined by the multi-layered convergence of biopolitics (Foucault 1978–79), necropolitics (Mbembe 2003), digital psychopolitics (Han 2014), and gore capitalism (Valencia 2010). It is an inquire of the ways in which the contemporary body becomes a form of mass media for certain populations who choose to consent to the mandate of making themselves entrepreneurs of their own bodies within the livestream regime (Valencia 2016, 2018). The author analyzes a variety of representations of femininity taking physical form g-locally in bodies, which—in an effort to comply with capitalist mandates and with binary choreographies of gender and sexuality—become businesses themselves.

Telo kot množični medij v režimu prenosa v živo

Ključne besede
biopolitika, nekropolitika, gore kapitalizem, režim prenosa v živo, spol, spolnost

Povzetek
Članek obravnava pomen telesa v njegovi materialni razsežnosti in v povezavi z njegovo transformacijo v kontekstu, ki ga določa večplastna konvergenca biopolitike (Foucault 1978–79), nekropolitike (Mbembe 2003), digitalne psihopolitike (Han 2014) ter »gore kapitalizma« (Valencia 2010). Izraz »gore« se navezuje na filmski žanr, ki prikazuje izjemno, brutalno nasilje, Valencia pa z »gore kapitalizmom« reinterpretira hegemonsko globalno ekonomijo v (geografskih) mejnih prostorih, zlasti v Tijuani na meji med Mehiko in ZDA.

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V članku raziskuje načine, na katere sodobno telo postane oblika množičnega medija za določene populacije, ki se odločijo privoliti v vlogo podjetnikov lastnih teles znotraj režima prenosa v živo (Valencia 2016, 2018). Avtorica analizira različne reprezentacije ženskosti, ki prevzamejo fizično obliko globalno-lokalnih teles, ki v prizadevanju, da bi ustregla kapitalističnim zahtevam ter binarnim koreografijam spola in spolnosti, postanejo sama po sebi poslovni subjekti.

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Translated by JD Pluecker

Introduction

The body is the cornerstone of the history of struggles, resistance and subversion. At the same time, it is the object of plunder, fascination, and unequal relations in a Western culture that finds surplus value in the denial of the materiality of the bodies that it exploits.

I begin this section with a series of questions: are our bodies really ours? What is the value of the body in contemporary societies outside the markets of beauty, fitness, and wellness? What do we know of our own bodies? Where might we find the cultural, social, political, economic, and symbolic frameworks to interpret them?

When it comes to the body, we find more questions than answers, because in our present time and ever since the mid-twentieth century, the individual body has been over-represented as a highly profitable aesthetic-cosmetic image.

We live in extractivist societies that obtain their economic, symbolic, political, cultural and gender benefits (among others) through the spectralization and alienation of our individual bodies, but also through the erasure of the relationship between the social body and nature.

This kind of separation inhibits the potential of the body in its relation to other bodies and to nature, reducing it to mere labor power that is transformed into capitalist surplus value. In this regard, then, the subject of the body is broad,

compelling, and multifaceted, and its meanings are dependent on geopolitics and culture.

To this end, there is no single version of what a body is or can be. Western narratives about the body, however, have given shape to its history and intensely limited the body through discriminatory codifications. This is particularly evident during the various colonial periods where laws of exclusion and inferiorization of others were constructed, particularly in relation to polarizing narratives of race, class, gender, language, body diversity, etc.

In this sense, we must remember what Silvia Federici argues in relation to the history of the body:

The history of the body is the history of human beings, for there is no cultural practice that is not first applied to the body. Even if we limit ourselves to speak of the history of the body in capitalism we face an overwhelming task, so extensive have been the techniques used to discipline the body, constantly changing, depending on the shifts in labor regimes to which our body was subjected to. Moreover, we do not have one history but different histories of the body: the body of men, of women, of the waged worker, of the enslaved, of the colonized.[1]

I quote Federici's words because they describe the body's political history and its relation to the world we have inherited, that is to say, they speak to us of a capitalist world, which, beyond a system of production, has been a process of confinement and amputation of bodies.

In this sense, I connect this historical and situated perspective of the body with the contextual analysis of phenomena linked to neoliberalism and what might be called "a death regime" in the contemporary moment occasioned by necropolitics. Achille Mbembe defines necropolitics as the governing of populations through the routine massacre of the colonial era, extended in the present day to border areas and vulnerable communities.[2] This massacre produc-

[1] Silvia Federici, "In Praise of the Dancing Body," *Gods and Radicals* (blog), *A Beautiful Resistance*, August 22, 2016, https://abeautifulresistance.org/2016/08/22/in-praise-of-the-dancing-body/.

[2] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 11–40, https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11.

es surplus value through the conversion of exchange values into necro-values (necro-surplus).

In this essay, I'll pay particular attention to the connection between necropolitics and violence in Mexico as produced by the necro-state and organized crime. I have attempted to identify this connection using the term "gore capitalism,"[3] which I use to refer to explicit and unjustified bloodshed as the price to be paid by the Third World (understood as spaces of neocolonial plunder, that is, intensifications of the material dispossession of the colonial period into the present day). The Third World clings onto ever-more-onerous logics of neoliberalism, leading to a large quantity of dismemberings and viscera, frequently intermixed with organized crime, the cis-tem of the gender binary, compulsory heterosexuality, and the predatory uses of the body, utilizing extremely explicit violence as a tool of *necroempowerment*.

By necroempowerment, I mean the processes that transform contexts and/or situations of vulnerability and/or subalternity into situations of possibility for action and self-empowerment, reconfiguring them through dystopian practices and a perverse self-affirmation through the practice of violence.

As I mentioned earlier, gore capitalism is not simply a criminal economy, but it reinforces certain logics and social choreographies around gender and machismo in which the cisheterosexual binary grants cisheterosexual men the power to wield violence upon other populations considered vulnerable: feminized people, children, and other men who are neither cisgender nor heterosexual, among others.

The contribution of gore capitalism is not only to describe the predation of neoliberalism, but also how it links up with colonial logics of subhumanization of certain populations and typically crystallizes in a cishet masculine subject who must be subsumed within these logics in order to become a modern, civilized "provider." This is what I call necromasculinity.[4] It is part of the subjectivities

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3 Sayak Valencia, *Gore Capitalism*, trans. John Pluecker (South Pasadena, California: Semiotext(e), 2018).

4 See Sayak Valencia, "(Necro)Masculinidad, Estado-Nación y democracia," paper presented at the conference Proyecto Ballena, "Vida y Política," organized by Centro Cultural

produced by a reinterpretation of the logic of the modernization/colonization project that has led to a kind of necro-narco-modernity in Mexico, because it is linked to racism and processes of racialization that make certain bodies disposable and convert them into "minority becomings."[5]

Another important aspect of gore capitalism is its predatory use of bodies, with a particularly sensationalist violence wielded upon the bodies of cis and transwomen and also upon those bodies that express themselves as feminized, in which human trafficking is converted into a market niche of the underground economy that maintains the formal economy.

This predatory violence is, in addition, cosmeticized[6] since it is not just a space of work, but also a space of socialization, consumption, and construction of a cultural imaginary linked to the normalization of death and to the processes of extraction of life generated by necropolitics.[7]

The concept of gore capitalism is a critical argument that emerged out of transfeminism,[8] an attempt to make explicit the dystopian alliance between racist, colonial, military, capitalist heteropatriarchy and necropolitical masculinity or

Kirchner, Buenos Aires, December 4, 2020, YouTube video, uploaded by Centro Cultural Kirchner, December 16, 2020, 54:48, https://youtu.be/MDrw_D_5AKA.

5 Felix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Micropolítica: Cartografías del deseo*, trans. Florencia Gómez (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2006).

6 By "cosmetics" I refer to those processes of beautification and standardization of contemporary taste linked to the cultural products of narcoculture, in which there is no longer an appeal to aesthetics alone, a discipline associated in the West with ethics and politics, but which uses elements of design and digital beautification to present its images without ethical costs to delimit its meaning to a mere cultural consumption based on a supposedly beautifying and captivating neutrality.

7 Mbembe, "Necropolitics."

8 From our perspective in the Global South, the term transfeminism is understood in a broad and intersectional sense, recovering the political potential of the prefix "trans," which etymologically signifies movement, transit, displacement. For this reason, our transfeminism considers populations beyond self-identified cisheterosexual women as subjects of feminisms, positing strategic alliances with collectives of diverse subjectivities: trans people, undocumented migrants, people of functional diversity, sex workers, environmental leaders, people looking for their disappeared family members, politicized feminized subjects in the search for justice in cases of feminicide and transfeminicide, and other issues not considered by traditional agendas of institutional feminism that limit their discussions to a politics of sex and gender, leaving out pressing problems like the ones already men-

necromasculinity, which is understood as a widespread form of governance in the Mexican context (which is neither exceptional nor exclusively related to the model of narco as a business). This argument can also serve as a category for reading the necropolitical forms of governance in Latin America that appear more or less openly in the geopolitics of the Global North, as in the United States and its camps (that are called concentration camps)[9] for migrant children, or in the European Union and its policy of death, which are applied live and in real time against undocumented migrants who are shot at prior to reaching European shores or who are left to drown in the Mediterranean.

This normalization of death that is transmitted "live and from the scene" through mass media and social media has led me to think that this transmission of killings "live" represents a shift from gore to snuff. These two cinematic genres differ from one another in that gore is bloody spectacle (made with a low budget and a kitsch aesthetic), while snuff is basically founded on the idea that the killing shown is not fake, but rather that its value lies in the fact that it is produced in order to film the killing of someone "live and from the scene" for the consumption of the viewer.

While gore films work with the idea of representation, snuff films are grounded in the power of killing directly and transmitting it with impunity. In this displacement, I find a successful metaphor to explain some forms of *Realpolitik* in contemporary necrodemocracies.[10]

With this in mind, I propose that gore capitalism has not only become a snuff politics in Mexico, but also that it inaugurated a new genre in the representation of g-local violence. This shift from the spectacularized violence of gore to the practical and intimidating violence of snuff leads to a didactics of cruelty that nor-

tioned within the framework of the fight against neoliberalism, which in many territories extracts profit through gore capitalism.

9 See Gerardo Lissardy, "Por qué están llamando 'campos de concentración' a los lugares de detención de inmigrantes en Estados Unidos," BBC News World, June 27, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-48781955.

10 Xavier Brito-Alvarado and José Capito Álvarez, "Neoliberalismo como necropolítica zombi," *Argumentos: Revista de Crítica Social*, no. 22 (October 2020): 252–79.

malizes a regressive sensibility.[11] Through undisputed agreements, these buttress violence against certain bodies constructed historically, socially, economically, and politically as others: migrants, feminized people, sexual and gender dissidents, racialized people, etc.

Snuff politics[12] is enacted in an increasingly open way, becoming a form of state governance and emotional anesthesia for the viewer, who concurrently reproduces images derived from this snuff politics, creating a set of iterations that lead to a social imaginary in which minoritized bodies are read as disposable or as bodies destined for death.

I use the term "livestream regime" to refer to this continuity between gore capitalism and its pragmatic transfer into the legal snuff policies of the First World, which kills live at the scene and disseminates the killing through newscasts and digital media.[13] I maintain that this practice is grounded in a fascination with violence of all intensities generated by necro-pop as an aesthetic that normalizes violence, destruction, and murder through cultural products disseminated by mass media and—especially over the last two decades—by virtual social media and by entertainment platforms in the era of e-communication.

From my perspective, the livestream regime is a form of governance of sensibility that is no longer limited to the cinematographic imagination, which inspired me years ago to propose the term gore to explicate the capitalist system we inhabited in the border space of Tijuana and which rapidly veered into snuff. This regime has now transcended the division between fiction and reality and is grounded in the pre-production of reality through aesthetic and cosmetic mon-

11 Sayak Valencia and Liliana Falcón, "From Gore Capitalism to Snuff Politics: Necropolitics in the USA-Mexican Border," in *Necropower in North America: The Legal Spatialization of Disposability and Lucrative Death*, ed. Ariadna Estévez (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International, 2021), 35–59.

12 By "snuff politics" I mean a modality of governance of emotions that operates through the construction of social consensuses that appeal solely to the feedback of feelings of individual grievance, where narratives presented by the media and selective digital folklore tend to confirm pre-existing prejudices within an axiology inherited from racism, misogyny, and the cishet norm.

13 Sayak Valencia, "Psicopolítica, celebrity culture y régimen live en la era Trump," *Norteamérica* 13, no. 2 (July/December 2018): 235–52, https://doi.org/10.22201/cisan.24487228e.2018.2.348.

tages in order to re-elaborate visual-social consensuses and challenge the truth pacts with which images of reality are read.

The livestream regime is not only a dystopian audiovisual genre of hypermediation, but also the diffusion of a form of governance of populations that is disseminated through digital, psychopolitical means[14] and normalizes extreme violence, injustice, and dispossession directed at historically vulnerabilized populations like cis and trans women, sexual and gender dissidents, racialized people, and migrants, among others.

I propose that the livestream regime is a mechanism of governance that produces not only ultra-cosmetic images and imaginaries of violence in order to render them profitable, but also hijacks the meaning of images of social resistance in order to undermine them through extreme banalization.

This is achieved through at least two means: 1) The decontextualized and unparalleled bombardment of images of murder, that is, the over-exposure of victims in newscasts and tabloids converting these people into a kind of trash, as well as re-victimizing them through newspaper headlines or comments on news stories on social networks. 2) The production of a fractured narrative and its distribution through cultural products like television series or e-series, movies, advertising, fashion, and design, which together cosmeticize violence and de-center the real meaning of resistance or social indignation held within these images or stories, a sort of gentrification of the struggles to produce official codes of reading violence and its cooptation and institutionalization, along with its distortion and/or the emptying of meaning of notions like "gender equality," "sexual diversity," or "LGBT rights."

We have moved from a biopolitical regime of the living[15] to a "regime of the live,"[16] from biopolitics to a digital psychopolitics[17] that does not exclude nec-

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14 Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*, trans. Erik Butler (London: Verso, 2017).

15 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

16 Valencia, "Psicopolítica."

17 Han, *Psychopolitics*.

ropolitics[18] but rather normalizes it through the creation of necroscopies,[19] that is of the production of "scopic regimes,"[20] accepted by society in a de-literate and hyperconsumerist way.

I believe that the openly explicit aesthetic—in which everything can be depicted in the most violent and extremely engrossing ways—allows us to think about the shift from gore capitalism to snuff politics.

This transformation is disseminated through necroscopies (fascination with and normalization of violence at all its levels), which leads us to process images as in a "cross fade"[21] in which contradictory and dissociated images govern contemporary life.

I propose then that this normalization of violence goes unnoticed because there has been a rewiring, a redesign of the *sensorium*[22] and of the mechanisms of perception and the sensibility with which we approach reality through the popularization of audiovisual devices and virtual social networks that challenge and restructure the regime of truth. What is produced in this process is a bio-hypermediated subjectivity in which the material elements of the body are combined and are repeatedly modified with virtual prostheses like facial or corporeal filters that lead to a desire for cosmetic transformation.

The goal is to create a certain likeness and a verisimilitude with the biopolitical ideals of gender, sexuality and class through the creation of a body that becomes a screen incarnate. The screen is no longer reduced to the mobile communication device but rather appropriates the user's bodily materiality, in which

18 Mbembe, "Necropolitics."

19 Sayak Valencia, "Necroscopía, masculinidad endríaga y narcografías en las redes digitales," in *#NetNarcocultura: Estudios de género y juventud en la sociedad red. Historia, discursos culturales y tendencias de consumo*, ed. Virginia Villaplana Ruiz and León Olvera Alejandra (Bellaterra: Institut de la Comunicació, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2022), 39–60.

20 Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 1988), 3–27.

21 Cross fade is the cinematic editing technique in which the last image of a shot dissolves while, superimposed onto it, the first image of the following shot takes shape.

22 Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of the End; Sensibility and Connective Mutation* (South Pasadena, California: Semiotext(e), 2015).

the embellished image seems to exhaust the political possibilities of the body and to ontologize its image. This leads to a reduction of the images of resistance to varying violences to mere bloody anecdotes that cannot compete for the attention or social empathy attained by the emotional gentrification produced by the "beautified" images of engrossing violence, thus stripping the images of their capacity for resistance.

The Body as Mass Media

Just as images become objects of consumption themselves, the body in the current moment has become not just a receiver/reader of images and audiovisual cultures, but also a living techno agent that produces grammars and processes experiences of hypermediation, becoming, in addition, a platform that in-corporates new mandates of gender and consumption.

I will attempt to clarify this point: I am drawing on the idea of the architect Beatriz Colomina who argues that after World War II, architecture and buildings become mass media themselves.[23] In her book *Domesticity at War*, as exposed by Hilde Heinen's review, "Colomina's introduction evokes the strange contradictions of postwar architecture, which was 'aggressively happy.' Modern architecture borrowed the techniques and materials of the military, but turned them into tools to shape a new sense of domesticity."[24]

That is, Colomina posits that theories of cinema and advertising are crucial to undertake a contextualized decoding of modern architecture. We see how those same elements of cultural reading in conjunction with all the gadgets and virtual platforms of the internet—in order to represent the body—construct and utilize the body itself as a corporealized screen that retranslates content from the mass media and becomes a kind of human poster. What is merged together are the various logics of advertising, surveillance, aesthetics, gender binaries and racist, sexist, and aporophobic politics, in addition to contemporary resistances.

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23 Beatriz Colomina, *Domesticity at War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).

24 Hilde Heynen, review of *Domesticity at War*, by Beatriz Colomina, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 67, no. 4 (December 2008): 623, https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2008.67.4.623.

The body then is the medium and the message, since it produces semiotic, technical codes that customize content on social networks and produce market niches that feed neoliberal economies that, at multiple levels, have the body as primary producer and consumer.

One could say that in these new "economies of attention,"[25] the meaning of the body shifts and is redefined in relation to the cult of consumerism, becoming mass media that simultaneously reconfigure what Colomina referred to as a sense of a new domesticity.[26]

In this context, the rise of the regime of sensibility and the "creation of a neoliberal common sense"[27] in relation to cosmeticization (clearly delinked from ethics and politics) is disseminated through culture, art, architecture, and mass media. An example of this objectivization of the body in the new society of consumption is apparent in the world of art: one of the first recorded instances of corporeal intervention was undertaken in the 1960s by the US American artist Andy Warhol in his photographic series tracking his facelift operation.

This is just one instance of how the body became mass media from the 1960s onwards. With cosmetic surgery, it becomes an object of desire and consumption among the US American masses. In this sense, Warhol is a pioneer in the exhibition and transformation of the body as mass media in accordance with the construction of a capitalistic subjectivity and also as an entrepreneur of his own self.

Warhol is a direct antecedent of the contemporary celebrity culture, understood as focused on the production of cultural icons out of individuals whose merit and notoriety are produced through the exhibition of their intimacy and their eccentric way of acting. One of the artist's most accurate statements was the following phrase: "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes." What he foresaw was that access to media and people's appearance within it would be an ordinary activity in the hypermediated societies of our day.

[25] Marta Peiraro, *El enemigo conoce el sistema: Manipulación de ideas, personas e influencias después de la Economía de la atención* (Barcelona: Debate, 2019).

[26] Colomina, *Domesticity at War*.

[27] Irmgard Emmelhainz, *The Tyranny of Common Sense: Mexico's Post-Neoliberal Conversion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021).

However, the transformation of the body into a disruptive message that has been undertaken in performance art and its crystallization in extreme body art has been disputed by new actors, especially feminine actors, who are making their bodily matter not just into objects of transformation, but also entirely reconfigured bodies. Their message is related to the new appetites imposed by the (neoliberal and heteropatriarchal) market, and their transformation speaks to us of a fluidification of the meanings of the categories of the eccentric and of gender as performance and plasticity.

I find that in the contemporary practices of capital production, femininity as performance has become labor, a space for self-production in which social capital has been replaced by erotic capital,[28] in order to transform itself into economic capital and to confront the demands for hyperconsumption within contemporary neoliberalism.

As an example of this, I will analyze a variety of different representations of femininity embodied g-locally by bodies that—in their efforts to comply with their mandate to hyperfeminize themselves—displace the scopic regime of corporeal intelligibility of the human and become plastic bodies, mannequin bodies, chimera bodies that proliferate across the Western and/or Westernized world.

But above all, it shows us that the relationship between ciswomen, body, and work will unfold in our own day in a hypermediated way through a renegotiation and profiteering off of the hyperfeminized ideal that converts femininity into a market niche and a job for people like Kim Kardashian or the Mexican *buchonas*.

Kim Kardashian is a celebrity who has transformed herself into a business-owner and main character in a reality show focused on her life and on her family titled *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*. The figure of Kim is paradigmatic for our analysis, insofar as she has become a sociocultural phenomenon, evidence of a complicated relationship between the body as a mechanism of mass communication and the construction of a hypersexualized and hypermediated femininity as a form of work. In fact, her launch to fame took place in 2007 with the viral-

[28] Catherine Hakim, *Erotic Capital: The Power of Attraction in the Boardroom and the Bedroom* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

ization of a homemade sex tape transmitted by Vivid Entertainment Group, a production house for pornographic films.

What is emblematic about this celebrity's triumph in the media is that her physical attributes and hypersexualized voluptuousness intersect with questions of race and class. Although she is the daughter of a prominent, multimillionaire attorney of Armenian origin and a friend of Paris Hilton, her physical characteristics link her to a racialized phenotype, which is reassembled through plastic surgery and makeup in order to establish models of non-Caucasian beauty in the US American context. It should be noted that her bodily characteristics are similar to those of the Mexican *buchonas*[29] or the Colombian *prepagos*[30] (escorts).

In both cases, the bodies of these ciswomen—incorporated into neoliberal logics and in the latter case clearly linked to gore capitalism and narcoculture—become entrepreneurs of their own selves. With their corporeality, they transmit and reaffirm certain stereotypes of hypersexualized femininity, reproducing sexist fantasies and the objectification of women, while at the same time embracing the logic of entrepreneurship and upending moralizing, traditional readings of aesthetics and the autonomous and profitable use of sexualized bodies that has been historically denied to women.

Of course, my analysis does not seek to celebrate the perpetuation of macho gender stereotypes that deposit desires for thingification on feminized bodies. On the contrary, I am looking to show how a practice that could be read in a simplistic way and connected solely to superficiality and the celebrity culture industry actually has many features that connect it with a wider political and economic cartography that speak to us of the restructuring of the concept of work, economic stability, profiteering off the body, the materialization of binary biopolitical ideals of gender and sexuality, the embodiment of cosmeticization disseminated by the mass media, and the physical safety of many women today.

[29] See "¿Qué son las buchonas? Emma Coronel y las mujeres del narco," Fuerza Informativa Azteca, February 24, 2021, https://www.tvazteca.com/aztecanoticias/notas/buchonas-quienes-son-mujeres-narco-emma-coronel-especiales.

[30] Gloria Franco, "'Las convenientes', la dura competencia de 'Las prepago,'" *El Tiempo*, February 27, 2013, https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-12623834.

In the g-local context, these figures are paradoxical because they are both objects of desire and nodes of influence for populations that identify with them to different degrees, but they are also morally controversial because they are ferociously criticized from a classist perspective that bases its argument on a common sense educated by White, heterosexual, and bourgeois taste. Thus, the arguments against them intensify when the phenotype of the desired woman is not in line with the Caucasian model.

All of these investments in physical optimization are indicators of the power and influence held by erotic capital, since as Catherine Hakim argues, "A major reason why erotic capital has been overlooked is that the elite cannot monopolize it, so it is in their interest to marginalize it."[31] Or even more so, "patriarchal ideologies have systematically trivialized women's erotic capital to discourage women from capitalizing on it at men's expense."[32] In other words, if women charge for it, it is to the detriment of patriarchal power, since their economic, social, and symbolic rise provides freedom of action and movement, since it is proven that "there is a noticeable ten to twenty percent 'beauty premium' in earnings across the whole workforce."[33] Nevertheless, there is no questioning of neoliberal logic, and this gesture of feminine autonomy is re-absorbed within it.

This extreme intervention of the body connects these habits of the feminine body—which at first glance seem docile, submissive, and conservative—with a radical rupture with the intelligibility of the body as human, linking them to a kind of self-produced cyborgs, a new twist for the market in desire and sexual consumption.

It does not seem an exaggeration to make this argument, if we compare the images of Kim Kardashian, the Mexican *buchonas*, the Swedish Pixee Fox[34] (who has removed most of her ribs in an effort to imitate the body of Jessica Rabbit, the famous cartoon character), Valeria Lukyanova[35] (the self-described human Barbie) in Russia, and the next-generation sex dolls of the US company Abyss Creations (RealDolls) that already feature artificial intelligence, voice,

31 Hakim, *Erotic Capital*, 17.

32 Hakim, 6.

33 Hakim, 5.

34 See Fox's Instagram profile @pixeefox.

35 See Lukyanova's Instagram profile @valeria_lukyanova21.

and movement in some parts of their bodies. These dolls embody and share the same prototype of a hypersexualized body that turns itself into a company.

On platforms like Instagram or YouTube, these women become trendsetters who, through hashtags, make their own images go viral, as they reap the benefits of sponsorship by a variety of companies looking to promote their products.

Thus the figure of the *buchonas*, celebrities like the Kardashians, and living Barbies call into question the power of money and the transformation of subjectivity that influences different populations, above all racialized groups. This transformation of public figures who create aspirational ideals through which their bodies represent and provide evidence of forms of entrepreneurship that include choosing the body itself as a type of work and company-of-the-self conceal the unpleasant consequences of surgeries and the negative aspects on physical and emotional health these can lead to, without mentioning the implicit risks involved, in the case of the Mexican *buchonas*, of having direct connections to criminals.

The aspiration for racial Whitening through surgery does not always realize its goal, and, on the contrary, the excessive use of these procedures feeds a scopic regime of intelligible bodies as post-human.

The expansion and standardization of the aesthetics and prosthetics of global gender with local retrofits based on cultural, racial, religious, and economic features provides us with a frame to think through the seizure and the transformation of the sexed, gendered, racialized, sexualized body into a form of mass media. This body is assembled according to new market needs and provides pointed messages about the political and relational use of materiality or the new plastic materialities produced in laboratories and operating rooms and their relationship to the system of bio/necro/psychopolitical management.[36] Within this system, freedom has been reduced to the freedom to make a body for oneself, not for one's life but for the market.

[36] Sayak Valencia and Katia Sepúlveda, "Del fascinante fascismo a la fascinante violencia: Psico/Bio/Necro/Política y mercado gore," *Mitologías Hoy* 14 (December 2016): 75–91, http://doi.org/10.5565/rev/mitologias.395.

This regime of the production of the live connects biopolitics—as a technique for population management—and the maximization of all the processes associated with life with the regime of the "live."[37] In this regime, what is maximized are the processes of exhibition of intimacy, the proliferation of images, and the production of reality through the visual mediation that makes use of the regime of sensibility and establishes a common sense and a scopic regime around the biopolitical ideals of body, sex, sexuality, value, merchandise, and entrepreneurship.

Before I close, it is worth mentioning that certain counteroffensives—which are also part of this media-morphosis (a play on the words "mass media" and "metamorphosis")—use the tools of communication and distribution through social media to create dissent and to produce communities of meaning that are not only post-lexical (based solely on images), but also articulate critiques through the use of images and cultural mechanisms. All of this is in the search for a collectivity of critique and constant transformation that places agreements about reading in accordance with transfeminist social justice. Examples of this are technopolitics,[38] memepolitics, activism 2.0, digital folklore as represented by feminist memes, and hacking of images to produce dissent with other content. All of this shows us that even in the ultracosmetic space there are artifacts of anti-design that are not anchored in authorship, but rather flow in networks and drifts in which what is more important are the atmospheres and ecosystems that they produce through their many layers of meaning.

In addition to their semiotic message that has been media-morphosed, these speak to us of the need to create other categories that reflect this complexity, that is, to take into our own hands the possibility of constructing urgent and situated knowledge through self-organized epistemic creativity that shows us that creativity and the production of critical discourse do not always go hand in hand with grandiloquence or the Western certification of lexicons for the discursive, visual, auditory, sensory, and political revolt. In this revolt, the collective, collaborative, and interpersonal realms have a crucial role to play, as they open up

37 Sayak Valencia, "Psicopolítica"; Sayak Valencia, "El régimen está (transmitiendo en) vivo," *Re-visiones* 9 (2019), https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7211193.

38 Javier Toret and José Pérez de Lama, "Devenir cyborg, era post-mediática y máquinas tecnopolíticas. Guattari en la sociedad red," Tecnopolítica, April 15, 2013, https://tecnopolitica.net/content/devenir-cyborg-era-postmediatica-y-maquinas-tecnopolitica-guattari-en-la-sociedad-red.

possibilities for dissent and autonomy in a world that appears to not have other options beyond a collective *emotional anesthesia* in the face of this ultra-cosmetic capitalist conservative regime that broadcasts and profits from its atrocities live and in real time.

In the end, this is what I understand by the materialization of virtual networks: the inverse movement toward the body's spectralization that can be organized in social media but which materializes in collectivities and online and offline potentialities. This is because both worlds work in conjunction like a DNA chain that constructs contemporary subjectivity and reproduces certain government projects on populations through gender, sexuality, class, and race, etc.

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