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# Improper Body Guide to somato-political models and their possible deviant uses

Director: Beatriz Preciado

Date: 2nd, 3rd, 4th November 2011

Venue: Universidad Internacional de Andalucía (Monasterio de La Cartuja, c/ Américo Vespucio 2, Sevilla)

Seminar (attendance by prior registration) and Discussion

## INTRODUCTION

Far from being a biological blank slate, a natural resource on which power can then act, the modern body is above all a dense and stratified somatic mechanism, always being interfered with by biopolitical techniques that both subject it and enable it to act. The body is not natural but a somatic library, a political archive of languages and skills. The alliance of capitalism and biopolitics comes into effect when, on top of the appropriation of common land, we have the enclosure of the social body, of collective production and ways of life. The naturalisation and privatisation of the body contrasts with the invention and differentiated distribution of organs and fluids (uterus, breasts, semen, blood, facial expression, muscle mass, fat, skin colour&hellip;) and with the growing influence of technology on reproductive functions, &ldquo;wellbeing&rdquo; and health. At the same time, the hegemony of sexual reproduction, of binarism in gender, vision, speech, mobility and immunity, creates marginalised bodies, pariah-bodies in a democratic space that covers up a contract between healthy reproductive bipeds.

What can we learn about colonial and capitalist development when studied through a history of the systems of somatic production and its specific methods of exploitation? What are the social, economic and political conditions that allow the invention of organs and let body fluids circulate? How do we introduce agency into the normative processes of somatic production? How do we make a body capable of resisting the arguments of neoliberal enclosure, naturalism and privatisation? Is it possible to turn vulnerability and disablement into an eco-queer model for political action?

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While feminist and gay movements have expressed themselves for the past century in the politics of identity, the activism

that emerged in the wake of the AIDS crisis, the denunciation of inter-sexual protocols and the politicisation of incapacity, has turned physical vulnerability into a platform for action and common resistance. The queer, transgender and cripple movements reject the model of somatic adequacy that lays down continuity between sex, gender and sexuality and demand recognition of multiplicity as a permanent foundation for a new democratic contract between bodies no longer defined by their independence and sovereignty but by their relativity. Men without penises, women with beards, cyber-feminists, zero-positive bodies, body hackers, fathers who give birth: they appropriate the body's production methods and the subjective guidance of law and medicine and demand a critical approach and a collective redefinition. This is a molecular revolution, as dreamed of by Félix Guattari, which goes beyond the politics of identity and representation and demands new strategies for the invention of a queer body, with its own science and institutions.

Through a critical history of capitalism as a system of re/production and an analysis of the performance of medical and biotechnological practices, this seminar looks at the invention of the biological body as a political body and at the relations between zoe and bios, organism and machine, private and public, normal and pathological, able-bodied and disabled, animal and human, healthy and sick, sex and gender, sexuality and work, reproduction and production. It uses analytical tools from feminism, queer theory, transgender politics, the battle against HIV/AIDS and cripple campaigns to test the Foucaultian notion of somato-politics and trace a cartography of the methods of power, networks of subjection and possible means of empowerment.

The seminar will take the shape of discussions around each of a series of sessions, including a series of conversations in which various guest speakers involved in the political and cultural life of different parts of the country will take part.

## PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY 2nd NOVEMBER 2011

- 10:00 a.m.

Seminar introduced by Miguel Benlloch

- 10:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Session 1, led by Beatriz Preciado: Somato-political genealogy and frameworks of corporal understanding: from the sovereign body to the biopolitical body

Using a reading that combines Foucault with post-marxist and queer feminism, the first session of the seminar explores

the shift from the sovereign, patriarchal body, a body meant for death, to the biopolitical body, a dense body full of organs that is sexually and racially differentiated and that functions as an organic mechanism of national reproduction. We look here at the appearance of the "uterus" as an incarnation of the female organ in the hands of the state and the privatisation of the vagina, breasts and milk as ways to exclude women from the productive economy and naturalise the sphere of reproduction. In this political analysis, the colonial and psychiatric idea of fetishism and the invention of the homosexual, native and syphilitic body as improper bodies play an important role.

- 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Discussion of session 1

THURSDAY 3rd NOVEMBER 2011

- 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Session 2, led by Beatriz Preciado: Pharmaco-pornographic control and the neoliberal condition: the body for capital

The second session explores the changes in government methods for dealing with the body and sexual differences which took place after the Second World War, with the transformation of methods of warfare into methods of somatic production and communication. We shall look at the emergence of the computer model of the body, the invention of the "hormone" affecting sexual identity, the appearance of the medical-psychiatric idea of "gender", the chemical separation between heterosexuality and reproduction, the invention of the first techniques for handling transexuality and intersexual bodies and the transformation of pornography into popular culture.

- 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Discussion of session 2

- 7:15 - 9:00 p.m.

Presentation by María Ptqk and Nicolás Malevé: GenderArtNet

Both language and maps are epistemological tools. They codify accumulated knowledge and set the boundaries for areas of territory and meaning. As pointed out by the feminist geographer Irit Rogoff in *Terra Infirma* (2000), maps, historically linked with the emergence of colonialism, have been used – and still are – to naturalise frontiers, regimes, states, models of government and systems for managing the population. They are not only geographical signifiers, but also signifiers of culture, economics, politics and identity. Similarly, according to Nuria Valera, we can see language not only as a reflection of reality, speech or the world, but also of the power of those who produce it. Maps, languages and historical, cultural or political narratives are systems for the organisation of knowledge that, by objectifying the structures of power, normalise them.

GenderArtNet is a project of experimental cartography, mapping artistic practices which explore the relationship between

gender, ethnicity, race, class and sexuality in contemporary Europe. It is the result of collective work, from 2008 to 2010, by an international team of artists, curators, theorists and researchers from a variety of disciplines. It is organised around 17 thematic galaxies, made up of an icon and a series of key words, which try to capture, both semantically and conceptually, a whole range of issues and viewpoints. The key words, the galaxies with which they are associated and the reference points are linked by dynamic relationships which rule out the possibility of a stable - naturalised, normal, objectified &ndash; meaning and open up flows of constantly moving and ever-changing meaning. The key words can be interpreted in infinite ways, depending on the desires, experiences or sensibility of the individuals taking part in the process. The thematic galaxies therefore take on the elastic, shifting texture of work in progress. The geographic, conceptual and semantic territory derived from them becomes a space for narrative exploration, in which there is no single meaning but rather a range of possible meanings to be sought out, ceaselessly being created and falling apart again. <http://www.genderartnet.eu>

FRIDAY 4th NOVEMBER 2011

- 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Session 3, led by Beatriz Preciado: Somato-political revolutions: feminist, queer, trans and cripple-queer bodies

The final session of the seminar explores different strategies of resistance and struggle through an analysis of the relationship between subordinate movements and the various regimes of somato-political production. We shall revisit here the emergence of feminist and anti-colonial movements as the first exercises in criticism of the power of sovereign and biopolitical authority over the body, so as then to analyse the different models of the body in the feminism of equality and difference, liberal and abolitionist feminism as well as in the queer, transsexual, transgender and post-porno movements. We shall explore the strategies that grew out of the politics of the battle against AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s and those generated by the cripple-queer movement, as possible post-identity models for the invention of methods of resistance to normalisation and subjugation in the context of neoliberalism. Lastly, there will be a call for the establishment of an assembly of somatic workers and a broad alliance of vulnerable bodies in order to rethink and dislodge the democratic pact and mindset of the traditional left.

- 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Lecture by Susan Stryker: A history of transgender activism in the United States: from the politics of identity to biopolitics

This talk will survey the history of transgender/transsexual/genderqueer activism in the United States from its 19th-century roots to its most recent 21st-century manifestations, discussing the shift from the medical and legal construction of an identity category to a critique of that identity's biopolitical implications. We will discuss the main theoretical questions that transgender studies are raising in relationship to feminism and queer theory, and how contemporary transgender activism intersects with broader anti-capitalist and anti-oppression movements and struggles for social and economic justice.

- 7:15 - 9:00 p.m.

Discussion

## PARTICIPANTS

Miguel Benlloch was involved in setting up the gay liberation movements of the 1980s and took part in the anti-Franco and anti-NATO campaigns. He was a co-founder of the arts production group BNV and is a member of the team providing content for UNIA arteypensamiento. A performance artist, he designs his acts for the contexts in which he is called on to appear. His work centres around the cultural construction of identity and the methods of breaking down and building up on which it is based.

Nicolas Malevé Nicolás Malevé is an artist, free software programmer and data activist. He has developed multimedia projects and web applications for and with arts organizations. His current research is on cartography and ways of seeing the structure of information and metadata. In collaboration with the Constant collective (Brussels), he has created projects about intellectual copyright (Copy.Cult & The Original Si(g)n), subjective and collective cartography (Towards), gender and its relation to contemporary art (GenderArtNet) and the reclamation of the archive (Active Archives). His essays have appeared in such publications as Zehar, Magnet Reader, Les Cahiers Marxistes.

Beatriz Preciado Beatriz Preciado is a philosopher. Having won a prize for excellence on graduation and as a Fulbright scholar, she first studied Philosophy and Gender Theory at the New School for Social Research in New York, where she was a pupil of Jaques Derrida and Agnes Heller, then gained a doctorate in Philosophy and Theory of Architecture from the University of Princeton. She contributed to the emergence of queer theory in France, as part of the Rayon Gay group of writers led by Guillaume Dustan that marked a literary and political turning point in Europe. She then published her first book, Manifiesto Contra-Sexual (Counter-Sexual Manifesto, Balland, 2000), acclaimed by French critics as the Little Red Book of queer theory and translated into five languages. She is also the author of Testo Yonqui (Espasa Calpe, 2008) and Terror Anal (Anal Terror, epilogue to El Deseo Homosexual by Guy Hocquenghem, Melusina, 2009), as well as many articles in magazines such as Multitudes and Parallax. In 2010 she was a finalist for the Anagrama Essay Prize with Pornotopía. Architecture and Sexuality in Playboy durante la Guerra Fría (Pornotopia. Architecture and Sexuality in Playboy during the Cold War). She currently teaches political history of the body and queer theory on the MACBA Programme of Independent Studies at the University of Paris VIII.

Maria Ptqk is an independent cultural researcher. She trained as a lawyer and economist specialising in international relations and has worked professionally in the arts since 2000. Her work is to be found where new media, social communication, gender studies and practice and the economics of the arts meet. She works in production, as a curator and project director, for the media, advises public panels and institutions on cultural policy and heads Soft Power, a programme of cultural activities dealing with biotechnology and life sciences. She has been writing the blog Ptqk\_blogzine since 2003. <http://ptqkblogzine.blogspot.com/>

Susan Stryker Susan Stryker is Director of the Institute for LGBT Studies and Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Arizona. She earned her Ph.D. in United States History at the University of California-Berkeley in 1992, and over the years has held distinguished visiting positions at Harvard University, Stanford University, University of California-Santa Cruz, Simon Fraser University (Canada), and Macquarie University (Australia), as well as a tenured professorship in the Department of Gender Studies at Indiana University. She was a founding

member of the direct action group Transgender Nation in 1992, and is former executive director of the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco. She is an award-winning filmmaker (*Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria*) and author/editor (*Gay by the Bay*, *Queer Pulp*, *The Transgender Studies Reader*) who has played a central role in the development of transgender studies as an interdisciplinary academic field.

## TALKS

Laura Bugalho Sánchez is a teacher and social pedagogue, secretary for social policy of the Confederación Intersindical Galega (Trades Union Confederation of Galicia), coordinator of the Colectivo TransGaliza and member of the Asamblea Soberanista Causa Galiza.

Sandra Fernández is a feminist activist and since 2000 has taken part in several LGBTQ campaign groups. She has a degree in biology and did her postgraduate work on gender and participative methodologies. She has published *Healthcare rights with reference to the recognition of diversity. Alternatives to the brutality of the psychiatricisation of trans identities* (in *El género desordenado / Disordered gender*, Egales 2010) and is co-author of *Guide to Good Practices for Medical Treatment of Trans Patients in the National Health System* (2010), published by the Red por la Despatologización Trans del Estado Español (Network for Trans Depathologisation in the Spanish State).

Itu (Josebe) Iturrioz Itu (Josebe) Iturrioz belongs to the Medeak collective and describes herself as a dyke, drag artist and transvestite. She began as an activist over ten years ago, in Plazendreak, Donostia. She has a degree in philosophy from the University of the Basque Country and earned her DEA (final diploma) with an essay on *Gender and the Self*. She is interested in organic epistemology and feminist criticism of science. She did a Masters on Equality and Gender at EHU-UPV and currently works as an equality officer for the local government of Tolosa. She is an activist in the feminist movement and devotes herself body and soul to the transfeminist revolution.

María López Ruiz is a feminist activist involved in the autonomous feminist movement in Barcelona, as well as the collective for social and anti-capitalist criticism *La Cruda* (*Raw*). She is currently part of the 15M movement, as a member of the commission of *Indignant Feminists* in Plaza Cataluña. This works to spread feminism throughout the whole movement, also giving higher visibility to other (subjective) subjects while introducing reflections and analysis imbibed from feminist and post-feminist tradition.

Lucrecia Masson Lucrecia Masson has a degree in political science from the University of Buenos Aires. She is an activist on gender and sexuality, currently a member of the assembly organising Trans October in Barcelona. She helped organise the Queer Transfeminist Days of Sexual Disobedience in Castelló de la Plana in 2010. She also channels her energies into the abolition of Internment Centres for Foreigners.

May Mora May Mora is an activist at the Arts and Social Community Centre La Casa Invisible (The Invisible House) in Malaga, is a member of Feministas Nómadas (Nomad Feminists. Moving from creativity, with nomad and feminist subjectivity, to action to prick the conscience of the critics). She has organised workshops in care and for drag kings, street protests for the rights of sex workers and days such as &ldquo;Bodies in Action&rdquo;. She is a member of the Office of Social Rights (ODS) in Malaga and the micro-political analysis group of La Casa Invisible. She spoke at the State Feminist Days (Granada), giving a talk entitled &ldquo;Squatting, as a process of disruption and antagonistic empowerment, will come to nothing if it is not feminist&rdquo;.

Eco Salinas Eco Salinas has belonged, since 2009, to the transfeminist collective Acera del Frente, associated to the Self-Governing Community Centre Patio Maravillas. Acera del Frente works for sexual and gender liberation, through both the development of its own theory and social struggle. Since 2009 Salinas has taken part in the annual assembly in Madrid and is in training for the alternative to the official Pride march, variously known as Alternative Pride, Critical Pride and this year Indignant Pride. He is also a member of Madrid&rsquo;s Trans October Assembly, which plans a month of activities and marches around the demand for the depathologisation of trans identities.

Miriam Solá has a degree in philosophy from UMU and a Masters in gender studies, women and citizenship from the University of Barcelona. She is an activist in Trans-block and the Transfeminist Assembly of Barcelona. She has spoken on courses, at seminars and congresses on philosophy, gender and sexual diversity and has published articles in various media. She is a co-founder of the association Interferencies. Recerca i transformació de gènere (Interferences. Research and transformation of gender), where she teaches, researches, and spreads the word. She has recently co-directed the seminar Movimiento en las bases: transfeminismos, feminismos queer y despatologización (Movement at the roots: transfeminism, queer feminism and depathologisation) at UNIA arteypensamiento. She currently has a research grant from the Institut Catalán de la Dona (Catalan Women&rsquo;s Institute) to analyse the impact of queerness on social movements in the Spanish state and an additional grant from the Área de Igualdad de la Diputación de Barcelona (Equalities Department of the Government of Barcelona).

Equipo re is a cross-territorial and collaborative research platform set up in 2011 using critical action in the interests of art. It sees research as a political activity based on building partial, contingent and temporary connections between people, knowledge and places. The group is currently made up of Aimar Arriola, Fabián Crovetto, Nancy Garín, Diego Marchante, Pilar Muñoz y Linda Valdés. [www.equipo-re.org](http://www.equipo-re.org)

## REGISTRATION

In order to attend the seminar prior registration is required, and it is intended for members of feminist movements, researchers, people working in institutions, artists and anyone else who is interested in feminism.

Maximum number of participants: 30

To apply, please fill in the following online form or send an email to [uniaarteypensamiento@unia.es](mailto:uniaarteypensamiento@unia.es) before 12.00 on 24th October 2011, including your personal details (name, surname, postal address, telephone number and email), curriculum vitae and your thoughts on why you would like to take part. Candidates will be selected by the directors of the workshop and those chosen to attend will be informed.

### Certificates

Registered students who attend at least 80% of the sessions and pass the evaluation for the course will receive an attendance certificate recording the number of hours of its duration (24 hours).