



## **Aesthetics of the Flesh: curricular insurrection of the ugly body**

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**ABSTRACT – Aesthetics of the Flesh: curricular insurrection of the ugly body** – The essay aims to think the existence of an ugly body as a curricular insurrection against the embellishing capitalistic strategies and take bets on the possibility of questioning the beauty. Despite of an organizational curriculum policy that praises the aseptic, pretty and seducing body, this writing proposes to think the body beyond the aesthetics capitalistic enslavement. If it is an aesthetic imperative, the body mocks on ugliness.

Keywords: **Curriculum. Insurrection. Beauty. Capitalism. Ugly Body.**

**RÉSUMÉ – Esthétique de la Viande: insurrection curriculaire des corps laid** – Cet essai vise à penser l'existence d'un corps laid comme une insurrection curriculaire contre les stratégies capitalistiques d'embellissement et parier sur la possibilité de questionner la beauté. Malgré les politiques curriculaires organisationnelles qui louent le corps aseptique, joli et séduisant, cette écriture propose de penser le corps au-delà de l'esthétique servitude capitaliste. Si c'est un impératif esthétique, le corps se moque de la laideur.

Mots-clés: **Curriculum. Insurrection. Beauté. Capitalisme. Corps Laid.**

**RESUMO – Estéticas da Carne: insurreições curriculares do corpo feio** – O artigo objetiva pensar a existência de um corpo feio como insurreição curricular frente às estratégias de embelezamento capitalísticos e aposta na possibilidade de indagar as belezas. Apesar de toda uma política organizacional curricular que enaltece o corpo asséptico, belo e convidativo, propõe-se pensar o corpo para além da servidão estética capitalística. Se o imperativo é estético, ela faz zombaria na feiura. Palavras-chave: **Currículo. Insurreição. Beleza. Capitalismo. Corpo Feio.**

And, the closer it gets  
to the periphery of the system,  
the more the subjects  
are taken in a kind of  
temptation  
(Gilles Deleuze, 2016, p. 19)

### *Smart Life, Fit Life*

The dynamics of the body have been reduced to the terms of an empire of aesthetic flesh, healthy appearance, and happy health. Everywhere, bodies are invited to explore themselves, to become more beautiful, happier, more vigorous, more energetic, and more functional. And what can the appearances do in a body about to disappear? What can a body do in its rebellions? Do appearances produce flesh that sticks to a body? Do all bodies matter and become worthy of humanity? Are there precarious bodies? Or it is precisely the precariousness that makes it the target of investment and curricular questions? We move through questions that make us want to understand the scratches that some bodies can assume when confronted with the agency of aesthetics and health that sticks to a body-shape.

In this obsession with a body-shape not only more *fitness centers* are created on every street corner and even in peripheral neighborhoods, but also *smart* fitness centers aimed at “[...] a generation composed of people identified by smart choices that value their time and money, take care of their health and, at the same time, amuse themselves” (Propmark, 2017, n.p.). Not only more beauty salons, but also *aesthetic clinics* with their multiple “[...] professionals who perform capillary, aesthetic, facial and body hygiene and beautification activities on individuals” (Brasil, 2012, n. p.). Not just more diets, but intermittent fasts, healthy, balanced, and rich bio-nutrient meals.

For each body-shape there is a promise up to the hands, the eyes and the stomach! And the saying *you are what you eat* appears as a binary desire that permanently affirms inclusions and exclusions. Without this logic, the aesthetic of the body-shape desired in the production of desires does not find grounds. It is annihilated. We have no doubts that the school curricula – the intended target in this writing – permanently affirm an ideal body-shape. We look at didatised images in schoolbooks and they show us, with-

out difficulty, the body that one seeks to curricularize. It is no longer just the body of the slender good soldier that is on the agenda! In the functioning of population biopolitics<sup>1</sup> in its relations with capital and health structures, a fat body will tend to produce losses in the government agencies (Sant'Anna, 2016). It is said that a fat body lives less!

The weight measurements, the glances at the mirrors and the aesthetic pages become our constant companionship. Individual scales have become popular and they are everywhere – in our homes, in the offices and in the drugstores that multiply incessantly. Balanced food is distributed in all schools, closely monitored by nutritionists and sometimes by psychologists. The school assumes the task of teaching about healthy food, about aesthetics of the body. Nutritionists with their menus spread through education systems and enter our homes in different ways. By television programs with their gurus of good shape, their balanced combinations, and their magic portions; they tell us what we should eat and be, eat and live. Sugar, lactose, gluten, and carbohydrates have become toxic substances. *Pear, grape, apple, mixed salad (children's game, similar to 7 Minutes in Heaven)* is not smart child's recreation anymore to become a primer on good nutrition and saving of bodies.

The body, Denise Bernuzzi de Sant'Anna (2014) suggests in her study on the history of beauty in Brazil, has been increasingly marked by the naturalization of the aesthetic of the flesh and asserted on a tripod of beauty, happiness, and health. And, before such great strength, such an *improvement* of the body, who would dare to be against such ideals? As the author herself suggests, the policies of the beauty are intensified, and with that, a sentence becomes central: *it is ugly who wants to be so.*

And, perhaps, that is the question.

The advertisement of the largest Latin American fitness center chain, *Smart Fit*, speaks unabashedly of the well cared body as an intelligent body, of the body “that prefers to sweat on the bicycle instead of sweating in a traffic jam”, and that, as such, cares little about the location or the era of the birth of the body. It is previously necessary, as the advertising says, to unite a generation and invite all bodies to think of themselves as members of a *smart* generation, not in terms of birth but in terms of concern for lei-

sure, health, and body care. “Because we believe that smart choices can and should be made by everyone” (#SmartGeneration, 2017, n. p.).

And because the advertisement aims so indistinctly at a *whole* – “smart choices can and should be made by *everyone*” – they could not, in no way, to leave out the curricularized bodies, the bodies inserted in the school logic and spaces.

And we are at school with this task! We cannot let children and young people neglect a body-shape made by attention measured in *kilos*, *beauty*, and *well-being*, we cannot let them forget or neglect the function of the body. The schooled curricularized bodies, parade through the schools under a pretense equity. We teach in our classes to do the accounting of the body. This plus this is equal to that. From the 1990s, the body mass index (BMI) has allied to the weight and to the size of the clothes; “it became another numerical data invented to integrate the personal identity” (Sant’Anna, 2016, p. 141). It is good to remember that, in this perverse logic of inclusion without limits, the beautiful bodies – created in the exercise of conversion and embellishment – will always be the reference of what one should be or become. It is necessary to convince and convert the ugly body, the flesh-body, and deformed-body; and when nothing else affects this deformed body, let us call, via biopolitics, the risks of ugliness, obesity, and sadness. Not feeling good about your own body is the risk that the productivist machinery of capitalism cannot afford, so, measures are taken to improve corporal happiness.

But the deformed body, with its skins that detach from the flesh, will be there. Object of attention, vigilance, and eternal repairs. And yet, producing *meat*, in the Deleuzian concept, disassociating itself from the bone, albeit in the form of witness. In this sense, we propose to think of the curricularized body and the evidence of a carefulness that is nothing more than what Lazzarato (2014) called *machinic enslavement*, but at the same time, think of the insurrectional bodies that appear in the midst of capitalist aesthetic that drags us. As Deleuze (2016, p. 19) pondered:

Any social formation always seems to be working out. There is no reason why it should not work. And yet, there is always a side by which it changes and falls apart. You never know if the emissary will arrive. And the closer it gets to the periphery of the system, the more the subjects are caught in a

sort of temptation: either to submit [...] or to be dragged along, beyond, crazy vector.

Also at school, the body is invited to the logic of an imperial *smart life*, *fit life*. The slogan is from *Smart Fit*, but it is not just about a fitness center chain, a set of aesthetic legislations, or the cheapness of beauty treatments. We are facing a limitless expansion of the policies of the body – which have always been there – but now, in the *smart* era, links intelligence to beauty, to health, and to the body, that is, links the marked factor of the *smart* era of the so-called *smart* generation, to the flesh.

This is how we entered in a municipal public school in Viana, in Espírito Santo state (ES), and put the aesthetic of the flesh into the conversations with the teachers. Methodologically, we conducted a survey from the *conversation networks*<sup>2</sup> with teachers, placing the discussions about the body as a central theme. The meetings were recorded and transcribed and, subsequently, analyzed<sup>3</sup> together from the relevance to the extracts presented herein, that is, the relation with what we started to call *ugly body*. We simply wanted to give ourselves the experience of thinking about the productions of the body at school and, at the very limit, provoking the existence of almost anti-aesthetic bodies, or, as we call here, *ugly bodies*. And, with overwhelming force, teachers – and, indirectly, students – also threw us to another endless bodies that went viral in the wave of *memes*. A teacher, as soon as she starts talking to us about beauty, makes a comment in a falsetto tone and jokes: “It’s cute but...”

Immediately, from the reference to the *memes* that spread with the slogan “It’s cute but...” the four dimensions of the *smart* generation restarts, and its limits seem confused with the teacher’s tone of voice. Once these limits between health, beauty, body, and intelligence have been blurred, we are interested in nothing else than asking about the rebellions that the body makes to these machinations. Apart from the beautiful and intelligent body, we make the ugly body to be born as an affirmation. *It is ugly who wants to be so*, shout the advertisements in a generic way.

Before the imputation of one or more internalized faults in the generic statement *I am ugly because I want to, that is, because I have been relapsed, lazy or careless*, a small insurrection emerges: *I want to be ugly*. Certainly, there

is, in relation to ugliness, an unspeakable and insurrectionary *will*. But, after all, why to reject beauty?

### **From Beauty as Great Servile Machinic Agency: esthetic capitalism**

“Capitalism does not enjoy the best of images”; this is what Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy (2015, p. 11) imply at the first page of the book *The Aestheticization of the World*. Almost consensually, the lefts – whether located at any point – tend to point to the atrocities of the capitalist machine and, consequently, to its depreciation. We do not say the opposite, however, there is something that bothers us in this generally accepted prelude: *capitalism does not enjoy the best of images*. And we questioned, together with the authors, the premise that the Capital machine is, irrevocably a machine that destroys the aesthetic of the world. And asking the question that the authors ask themselves, does capitalism effectively “[...] reduce itself to this machine of aesthetic decay and world-messing?” (Lipovetsky, Serroy, 2015, p. 13).

And in the form of a short circuit, it is imperative to say a loud *no*.

It would be very easy for us to take the capitalistic machine as a machine for the emptying of beauties, as a machine that deprives sensory and happiness senses for a rigid and grotesque moral. The Capital machine does not aim at destitution, but rather, the complete *control*, the machinic enslavement for beyond the individual body, the subjected body. “Codes do not act firstly through verbal language and its functions of representation”, rather, the productions operate for beyond and before the individual, precisely to produce the body. “The semiotic efficacy of the non-verbal discourse is extraordinary because it affects and primarily directs to the body” (Lazzarato, 2014, p. 113-114).

This is the principle that Lipovetsky and Serroy (2015) would call transesthetic capitalism, that is, the force that produces non-verbal semiotics as the operative principle of the Capital as we have today. As the authors remember, the aesthetic has always been linked to the production of a beautiful life, a way of life that extrapolates the most immediate of life. They point out that the aesthetic has to do with life, and, to a certain extent, is also confused with it. The curious thing is that, in the way the Capital Machine operates today there is no limit between art, aesthetic and life in any

aspect: if at any moment art moved away from the body to become present in rituals, with the productive imperative of Capital this distance seems to disappear. Or, as they point out without modesty, “[...] with the creative and transesthetic capitalism, what is installed is less the retreat of the beauty than an excess of art, an aesthetic animation without frontiers, an unlimited cosmetization of the world” (Lipovetsky; Serroy, 2015, p. 33).

Thus, in the dialogue between Maurizio Lazzarato (2014) with Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy (2015), we can state that not only does the Capital Machine assiduously work in the aestheticization of the world, but also proposes the beautiful as a-signifying semiotics, that is, as a language beyond and before any verbal utterance, and therefore as a well-defined limit of what may or may not work.

This is precisely the beautiful as a machinic agency.

If we find ourselves today in a mode of functioning of the Capital in which aesthetics are produced in large scale, and integrate everything and everyone, the beauty is desired in capitalistic productions at full speed. Not only do we consume aesthetic objects, but also images, lives, and, as we are concerned here, *bodies*. If the current Capitalism establishes itself in “[...] an economy centered on the constant innovations of well-being, fashion, leisure, and amusement (Lipovetsky; Serroy, 2015, p. 328), it also makes our lives to be affected by this economy.

And, long before we speak of ways of life, we speak of what is most tangible in life – the body. “For the first time, the masses have access to a more playful and individualized type of consumption, a more aesthetic way of life (fashion, gadgets, leisure, games, recorded music, television, holidays) formerly a privilege of social elites” (Lipovetsky; Serroy, 2015, p. 328), but also, for the first time, they were charged with a body compatible with these aesthetical brands of flesh. The cinema leaves no details outside; magazine covers not only display the decent body but also help to produce it; the textbooks emphasize, together with the journalistic headlines, its importance to health, to a – perhaps – eternal life.

In this sense, therefore, *beauty* – the beautiful in its final mark of the aesthetics of the flesh – becomes an important factor for the capitalistic production, but not for a specific kind of beauty. In the modes of an a-signifying semiotics, the *beautiful and the beauty* act “[...] directly on mate-

rial flows [...] regardless of whether they mean anything to anyone or not” (Lazzarato, 2014, p. 40). In short, the beautiful is taken away from any tactile need to become a multifunctional sign.

It’s funny that you never know what you’re talking about when you talk about beauty, right? The girls can talk about the handsome guy in their classroom; I, as an art teacher, I can talk about some painting, some work I know ... these days, I was planning with the students to watch a movie ... and what was the question they asked? ‘Is it beautiful, teacher?’ Beautiful! Even the movies should be beautiful, you see? It’s not just the body! (Teacher talk, personal research collection).

And because it presents itself in a point of abstraction without limits, beauty is also one of the major forces of / in the production of the body. In this limitless abstraction on the idealized body-shape in the beauty that is sold on every corner and not recognized in ordinary mirrors, every investment and personal effort is relegated to the inability to reach the Promised Land. The more one walks in this direction, in an endless investment, the more the distance is enlarged, making it impossible the conquest of the promised land. The Snow White Stepmother is aware of the dissatisfaction with what it is seen, or not, reflected in the mirror. But there is more. Narcissus finds ugly any surface not mirrored! Examples of deforming bodies, of skins and masks that detach from a shapeless subject – none of this is lacking. With good scalpels the body is trimmed and manufactured in aesthetic clinics, Barbie bodies, pageant bodies, etc. They sell beautiful bodies that guarantee happiness and promise, given their disposition, peace with the mirror. The great power of this mirror is that it works with a single goal: to make you happy with expiration dates.

The teacher – perhaps because of the art – reminds us of the desiring force of the beauties. The class sees no problem in watching a movie for whatever it is, but rather, they should ask, *Is it beautiful, teacher?* And in this quest, there is an infinite production of a commercial aesthetic, of a *beautiful* that anesthetizes, that produces the necessary effects for momentary happiness. After all, as Lipovetsky (2016, p. 10) quotes in another work, the concept of happiness still relates very much to that of *love*, of *peace* and to the relationship one has with life. The issue today, he points out, is that there is “an accelerated supply of fugitive moments of happiness”.



Thus, perhaps, the question is more Huxleyian than Orwellian: there is an endless control, but before the Capital machine gives rise to fear of the great eye, it brings happiness to the anesthetist beauty.

Every other year, the municipal government changes the design of the uniform of public schools ... we keep wondering why they do so, you know? Wow, there's so much to be improved, that could be bought ... But, no, the mayor thinks it is better to improve the look. You see, our school is in new paint on the outside, new kids uniform this year, with a different look from the last one... but if you enter the classrooms... It has a white board that cannot be called white anymore! The mayor only wants to know about appearances ... (Teacher talk, personal research collection).

It is, therefore, articulating this visual control of the world that we also think the body at school. As the teacher highlights, there seems to be, to a large extent, a concern focused on what is expressive to the eyes. To the eye level, investments are valid, understandable, and necessary.

Or, in the words of Deleuze's reading (2013), beauty has become a necessary figure for the body to be able to circulate in control societies. Beauty – and an ideal of beauty produced by the most diverse networks of biomedical knowledge and powers – transforms us into good and/or bad guys. There is a geometry of the body with its numeric passwords. They want us skinny, healthy, responsible for all actions on our body; they want us busy with body practices. We cannot even avoid this worship of the body when we are born. Cheeky baby is no longer synonymous of health! The magazine *Pais & Filhos*, in a 2013 edition, stamped on its cover *Meu filho não come nada!* (*My child does not eat anything!*) (2013) And in its articles a lot of tips on the problem of relating food to pleasure, to fun. A pregnant mother today should not only be concerned with the appearance of her body – speech is no longer just for them, it is no longer a matter of taking risks with stretch marks. No. Today it is expected an even more precocious preoccupation with the unborn body. Weight control measures are created when the body is still in the womb of its mother. A chubby baby may have difficulty being born, breathing, exercising; may have, in the future, cardiovascular problems, complications with the respiratory system and, of course, be inserted in some social problem. Babies nowadays, necessarily, need to be born slim and stay thin. A teacher evokes in her speech a contemporary fear:

A girl who left the school a short time ago is pregnant and she is already afraid of it ... I met her on the street and asked if she already knew if it was a boy or a girl. And she said she did not want to know, she prefers not to try to know the child's gender for now ... but she already knows the weight of the child, she is already talking with her grandparents to help put the child in swimming as soon as the baby is born because she read about it and she knows it is healthy... (Teacher talk, personal research collection).

At stake, the inevitable: the enforcement of the rules of the enslaved body is up to the mother and the parental relatives. The Capital Machine puts all the gears to run around that control of the body; it is that simple, it is a machinic agency. Nothing should be left out! Any additional grams, and a danger alert is triggered; any health risk, and all safety mechanisms are put to work on the body. The health of an aesthetically healthy body is what matters.

Fearful of all bodies, the capitalist machine fragments the aestheticization of the world into tiny, apparently disconnected parts. But here, looking at its operations, we realize how well engineered this agency is.

Following the traces of Denise Bernuzzi de Sant'Anna (2014) on the history of beauty in Brazil, we easily find a distinct conception of beauty that was very distant from our current one. It does not mean that, for them, the beautiful was another body radically different from how we conceive it today. Our own inability to define the *beautiful* would make it difficult for us. However, there is something very noticeable concerning the beauties that differentiate us: the *in natura* and the *contranatura*.

A Brazilian doctor, Hernani de Irajá, in his writings from the 1920s and 1930s, advised women eagerly not to make “profound and irrevocable changes” (Sant'Anna, 2014, p. 52), since embellishing served “for prescribing and highlighting the original traits or the natural gifts” arising from the body. The issue here is a conception of beauty that can only be *natura*, that is, from birth. As Denise Sant'Anna implies in her book, there would be, then, artifices for beauty which could not be used exaggeratedly because, after all, beauty was from the divine or from genetics, and therefore, incomprehensible or unalterable. For this very reason, from the apex of the cinema, for example, beauty begins to be propagated on a large scale, but still

“[...] as a powerful talisman to gain prestige, *status* and wealth” (Sant’Anna, 2014, p. 66).

However, it would not be long before the differentiation between *in natura* and *contranatura* was broken. Pointing to the beginning of the pharmaceutical industry heyday, Denise Sant’Anna (2014; 2016)<sup>4</sup> highlights a linguistic turn to make beauty not just an artifice – or, in Lazzarato’s terms, beauty is no longer just a practice of subjecting – to become a *modus operandi* itself. To invite the body to beautify itself, nothing fairer than beautifying the invitations. Thus, although weight loss and beautification were “[...] an objective present mainly among the *wealthy young people of the urban milieu*” (Sant’Anna, 2016, p. 69, emphasis added) in the 1930s, the narratives of the advertisements began to assign to the bodies their own possibility of freedom. Explicitly, “[...] caring for the personal body – including its weight, health and appearance – became the proof of its autonomy; acquired or because they needed to be” (Sant’Anna, 2016, p. 78).

Without further ado, this is the *smart* statement of the well-cared body, of the embellished body: its perfect autonomy articulated to the constant search for pleasure and happiness.

With the paradigmatic changes around beauty, which, in the past marked an artifice to hide the ugliness, the body is gradually invited to beautify itself. The very *nature* of the body requires embellishment! The advertisements, on the linguistic and ontological turn, not only became inviting, but also began to assume, for the body, the character of highlighting its maximum potential. “Cosmetic brands boast their effectiveness under the sign of pleasure. The saying ‘one must suffer to be beautiful’ has already lost its aura of truth, giving way to the exaltation of the quality of sensations, of the voluptuousness of taking care of oneself”. (Lipovetsky; Serroy, 2015, p. 349).

We rarely cross paths with those who struggle against basic principles of hygiene, however, the overvaluation of hygienic culture marks its intensification with the eugenics of Renato Kehl (Silva, 2012). We fight without power against eugenics, but somehow the imperative of beauty continues to pass quietly through us without disturbing us. There is an eugenics, as André Luiz Silva (2012, p. 216) implies, in the “[...] fitness culture that reveals

a fascination about beautiful bodies and, by choosing them as health symbols – the ultimate expression of self-control, discipline, and commitment – it puts aside the others not so beautiful, not so thin and not so young”.

There is, as they say, an unspeakable pleasure in taking care of the body, in going to the gym, in eating healthily, and when pleasure is not enough, the commands of the good health emerge. Or, as Debora Coelho and Tânia Mara Fonseca (2007, p. 67) say, from Deleuze, when happiness is not enough, a dominant and controlling health<sup>5</sup> comes into action, and “besides being sticky, it sticks to our skin” and helps “to maintain a certain control over the becoming of life”.

After all, where else do laboratories act if not on the molecules?

In summary, for the sake of infinite health and imperative happiness, the body can do little more than allow itself to be guided by these two world benefactors of numbers and figures of health, of the great pharmaceutical, cosmetic and laboratory industry. Who dares not want to submit to full health, to constant well-being, to infinite happiness? Who does not want to keep the body healthy and live the maximum longevity of a functional body?

A certain care with the body assumes the priority place in the conversations.

The perfect body of the great capitalist machine is nothing but a beautiful, thin, healthy, and *greedy* body. The body is no longer *subordinate*, but a *smart* body (Comitê Invisível, 2016) that actively participates in its own production, which is not *imposed* – in the painful sense of the word – but is *invited* to generate ideas, services and solutions for what is precious to them, that is, the body itself.

Forgive us, though, since certain skepticism is needed when we think of the productions of beauties and their worship. The teacher tells us about the body-of-the-gym student, and when she finishes, her challenging posture says more than the speech that ends in an excusable tone: she defies its own beautifying logic. And it’s a bit of what we discuss here.

The capitalist aesthetics reigns in the ceaseless production of the beautiful. Beauty, before saying of rites, of passing through lifestyles, has more and more talked about a single rule that must be followed. The beauty,

with the help of cosmetics, medicine and utopian health, was once an artifice or part of a ritual, a practice of existence, and today colonizes bodies.

We have reached the limit of saying, as Denise Sant'Anna (2016) highlights in her studies, that the obese is the unethical – a commensal beyond the limits of the available resources! – and that the ugly shall be punished for its existence. After all, as Berilo Neves pointed out in the 1930s (apud Sant'Anna, 2014, p. 74), “Nothing more natural [...] than ugliness paying tax”.

The most curious thing is that in this colonization, each body still sees itself as a happy free body. We continually feed the expectation of exterminating every trace of ugliness, of spare and ill-treated flesh.

### **Curricular Insurrections**

Now, it is also in this big servile machinic agency of aesthetic capitalism that curricula are produced. If it is impossible to think of a politics without a body (Safatle, 2016), it is equally unthinkable to speak of curricula that are not materialized in bodies, of curricula that do not produce an aesthetic of the flesh.

Educational games reaffirm beautiful characters, lean bodies, and even processes of skin aesthetization under the law of makeup, skin cleansing, removal of blackheads and demonization of pimples. School movies follow, almost always, the ideal of the impeccable body or in the process of becoming impeccable after a good bath and a touch-up in the hair to become genuine beauties. School murals tell stories of impressive healthy bodies full of adventures to tell because, after all, they were always bodies fit for healthy food. A History teacher, at one point in the conversation, utters a very loud laughing – and we all stared at him. “Have you ever noticed how all the supposed national heroes are presented? Or, even worse, how anti-heroes appear in textbooks? Hitler is going to have that face of old bastard forever!” (Teacher talk, personal research collection).

And, at a time when Nazism is attributed to the Left, Communism, and Marx<sup>6</sup>, possibly any non-capitalist idealized body will suffer in its tactile aesthetics.

In a way, just the possible aesthetics are put into play. It is not necessary to say what it should look like or what it is necessary to avoid. Like the propaganda of the early twentieth century, textbooks and endless other pedagogical images have learned to link the aesthetics of the body to happiness or depravity, to the antihero.

It is funny that, when you talk about Hitler and that disgusting little mustache, I remembered here my childhood days there in 1900 back at the stone age ... I remember that Zumbi (a Brazilian History character) was not handsome, he was a black man with strange cheeks, with drooping eyes, and an angry face. And then, today, you look how it's being presented to children ... there is even a very cute children's book, sometimes his eye is drawn with a happier aura. And those who are a little older just wonder, why is one person embellished at one time and made so ugly in another? (Teacher talk, personal research collection).

And, quite simply, we may remember that the curricula, the modes of their organization, talk about *nation projects* (Cossio, 2014), talk about permanent negotiations within its financial sphere, financialization of education and its economic conflicts, as Nilda Alves (2014) proposes when talking about the financial dispute around curricular regulation. In the wisdom of her question, the teacher recalls the antiheroes and asks about their body, but at the same time, investigates the projects of nation linked to the generically produced curriculum proposals.

Have you watched the movie *The Boy in Striped Pajamas*? There is the book too, but the film is easier to watch ... the Jews appear and what is the reaction of the Germans to their image? 'The Jews have destroyed us! The Jews have destroyed our people! 'And Bruno, the German boy, what does he find strange? The caricatures of his teacher! 'But the Jews are not all like that, are they?' It's funny you talk about Hitler and you ask what are the bodies printed on the curricula because it's very clear, right? (Teacher talk, personal research collection).

According to this logic, Carvalho (2016, p. 27) points out that "[...] school curricula deal with large social agencies defined by specific codes that are characterized by a relatively stable form and by a reproductive functioning", however, as the author also proposes, it is always necessary (and possible) "[...] to break with the passionate illusions that bring us back to the morally constituted image of the beautiful".

We bet that, in this possibility of *investigating* the beauties.

In spite of the whole curricular organizational policy that enhances the aseptic beautiful and inviting body, in spite of the infinite images of beautiful children stamping books in education (whether they are didactic, academic or even literary), we can still think of the body beyond the vile machinery of enslavement. If everything “[...] that exists in the present is the realization of one of the preexisting possibilities” (Carvalho, 2009, p. 66), it is certain that the beautiful body (ruled by capitalist aesthetics) is beyond and before the body itself, yet at the same time, the *ugly* body is long before or after the individual formations. In spite of saying, yes, of nationalized projects framed in an organizational plan, curricula are at the same time *communalized* (Carvalho, 2009; 2015) in a time that is none other than that of life itself.

In a text in which all forces seem to be in the coercion of the body, in the massacre of their possibilities to exist, there, in the last pages, the authors put laugh and conversation to the disservice of the entire correctional imperative, of the whole reign of the correct body (Carvalho; Roseiro, 2015). Where we saw before a body constantly penalized to conform to the logics of the student-body, we also see the collapse of a coordinator-body, teacher-body, which shows, precisely, where bodies leak and insurrect.

They are brief insurrections, indeed, but concise.

In front of this bet with a slight insurrectional air is that we turn our gaze and listen to the school itself. “As paradoxical as it may seem, resistance precedes power”, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2016, p. 99) stated, and with it nothing else is at stake but the fear of regulatory machines. It is not the common, the chaotic, the open or the infinite that *resist* – in the strict sense of the word, that is, *to react* – against control; but, it is the control that, fearing this force that seeps through every pore, tries to limit its possibilities.

As far as we are concerned, we are not ugly bodies that try to affirm our existence. To tell the truth, we are little – or nothing – concerned about it. We know that, in the wave of inclusion, to be recognized is to be counted, measured, controlled, and, therefore, act in a moderated manner. The advertisements and the curricular invitations are so intense because they – the curriculum regulators – know this; they know there are bodies that

simply *pass* without much concern for the seduction of infinite health, boundless happiness, and magisterial beauty.

Other bodies rebel against the ceaseless production of beauty as the rule for the existence of a body. Bodies inoperable due to the beautifying logic take to school little food that go unnoticed before the eyes of the teacher who does not let them eat during class; a young boy, at the peak of the epithelial volcanic eruptions, not only ignores his skin but also tortures younger children with the threat of contagion; a little girl, says, clearly, that she knows she is stinky but there is nothing she can do because, after all, she does not like to take a shower in the morning before going to school. The bodies proliferate. The machines find them, in fear of an infinite difference, rush to control them, threaten them with the nonexistence, no record, and somehow the body laughs and remains a paradoxical point.

At the edge of an insurrectional possibility, curricula do not account for being *just* a nation project. In the same way that ugliness coexists with the machinations of aesthetic capitalism – or precedes and *non-exists* at the same time – curricular insurrections also follow these movements. Somehow, ugliness and curricular insurrections fight for the simple fact that they know that, there, where they want so much an inviting peace, there is in fact an anesthesia of life itself (Comitê Invisível, 2016), there is simply the reaffirmation of an inner peace that wants us according to the global references.

The epigraph of this text always seems to come back with more power: “[...] the closer it gets to the periphery of the system, the more the subjects are caught in a sort of temptation: either to submit [...] or to be dragged elsewhere” (Deleuze, 2016, p. 19). And, against the empire of beauty, of dominant fat health, of boundless happiness, of the world peace order and of curricular nation-projects, the ugly body lets itself be dragged by other forces.

The ugly body certainly exists, and at any moment it calls into question the existence of the capitalistic beauty. And that is why the advertisements and curriculum projects are so effective – they do not address the already beautiful ones, but, before and always, the ugly ones. The agencies of the embellishing machine want to disarticulate us as ugly bodies, they want us beautiful and invisible, beautiful and governable.



I think that, now, the teasing that you made starts to make sense, you know? At the time you said 'But now what? Where is the ugly child?', I was already on the defensive, but I think it has this ... if they want so much everyone beautiful, there's something wrong, right? We have never been the same, my pupil who comes from that awful place, from a periphery very far from here, who only comes because his uncle brings him when he goes to work, is not the same as any of the children here from this neighborhood, from here 'downtown'. But he also knows the deodorant Axe that the boys like, he also wants an expensive perfume, he also wants to start working to buy branded clothes ... then I repeat the question for you now: where is the ugly child? Do they exist or are they already gone? (Teacher talk, personal research collection).

The teacher repeats: "Where is the ugly child? Do they exist or are they already gone?" Without question, we answer: yes, they exist, they are here, there, over there. They still persist, still fight. They make the body itself a way of coping with the machinic enslavement. If the imperative is aesthetic, they make fun of ugliness. Beneath the fabrics, makeup, plastic surgeries, and beauty operations, the ugly body stains the limits of its existence.

### **Giving Birth to the Ugly Body**

In an exquisite work, Suely Rolnik (2016) marks the existence of a body-knowledge that breaks with any immediate learning, which goes beyond the experiences of the social order. In the order of body-knowledge, what is known, what is perceived and what can affect you, is the very living dimension of the world. "The world effectively 'lives' in our bodies" (Rolnik, 2016, p. 11), and for this very reason we chase the threads of its entanglements, its operations. In the ways of David Lapoujade (2015), this living body is allowed to be pushed to the bottom and there it finds a clear purpose: to make its own bottom collapse.

Maybe there – at the edge of the deep – we find the ugly body.

Lost in the midst of so many inviting rules, the ugly body delights in worldly life and remains "[...] faithful to the valuation of some laziness, little submissive to the alleged training of gymnastics" (Sant'Anna, 2014, p. 65). And idleness, as Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons (2014) remember, is the very creation of the school that, at all times, they try to regulate, try to eradicate. Idleness hurts the despot beauty; it hurts the body that must keep busy to be well cared.

Idleness, fear the experts, would make us all a body of flesh that can feed without feeling remorse, look in the mirror without looking for the slightest defects, talk to the other without expecting a sepulchral distance from the bodies.

Before the bodies that find happiness in the consumption of an ideal body, the ugly body finds in laughing a possibility of insurrection. Before the bodies that take the *Self* as an imperial order and ignore everything else, others, because they are ugly, give themselves to friendships; give themselves to an unprecedented occupation of their own lives. “To dwell fully is all that we can oppose to the paradigm of government” (Comitê Invisível, 2016, p. 197).

Let us begin, then, by dwelling our bodies and making them *flesh*.

And, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2005) suggest, *flesh* is elemental, that is, an informed force of life that, from the point of view of political order and control, presents itself as something desperately ephemeral, since it cannot be fully encased. One or more ugly bodies – bodies that do not form peoples, nations, or even communities – are symptoms of insecurity and disorder that present themselves to power as monsters. The monstrous flesh, in turn, bears witness that we are all singular, that we cannot be reduced to the beautiful unitary body.

The initial speech of one of the teachers again haunts us with anxieties and paradoxical conditions of the body. We asked about how the beauty brands spread in school and – as we said before – a teacher jokes: “It’s cute but...”.

And maybe with that, just with this paradoxical *but* of the sentence, is that the ugly bodies find means to make the certainties of the beauty imperative collapse.

The girls that started with this ... I did not even know it, I did not even know what a meme was, they told me. But there it is ... I ask there, I ask here ... I see that they are laughing when the security guy left, and I had to ask, right? ‘So, guys, what’s up?’ And they laughed more. I tried again: he is a hunk, isn’t he?’ Then they could not stand it and they said laughing: ‘Huuuuunk ... but he is that thing, he is cute but...!’ Now I could understand (Teacher talk, personal research collection).

As the teacher herself made it clear, it did not matter what was to come after *but*. She did not realize that, the girls did not want to go further. The causes could be infinite. “He is cute, but...”, they play the *memes* that go viral on the Internet and at school, among students and teachers. “He is cute, but...”, ‘talks incorrectly’, ‘is a male chauvinist’, ‘opens his mouth and stops being’, ‘enjoys being straight’, ‘thinks it is the victim’s fault’, ‘and sensualizes in the picture, philosophizes in the legend’, and so on.

A teacher shouts: “Folks, this fashion really caught on! I even said that to my husband at home!” (Teacher talk, personal research collection).

And there is an air of insurrection, of *aberrant* in it. “It is the trademark of aberrant movements: bouncing like a demon beyond the limits that the judgment assigns to individuals” (Lapoujade, 2015, p. 63).

If it is for us to accept that *memes* cause the real to fuse<sup>7</sup> and they end up declaring war against the static image of life, it is also possible to think of the ugly body as this simulacrum that undermines the servile agencies of the aesthetic capitalism.

I think there’s a danger in that, right? To say that everyone is beautiful, that everyone can be beautiful ... I have always been fat, I have always had trouble getting clothes for myself. But now there is this plus size fashion and it is great to be able to find clothes with less difficulty, but the funny thing is: have you seen how the price went up? It’s no longer any costume, now it’s fashion clothes! (Teacher talk, personal research collection).

Together with teaching, we are not apart from the productions of the capitalistic machinery, but at least unfocused. In the manner of Deleuze (2007) or Francis Bacon (the painter), we think of the *aesthetics of the flesh*, that is, of the disfigured body, of the body that perhaps still occupies the center, but does it as meat, as flesh released from its significant structure. “Meat is the state of the body in which flesh and bone confront each other locally rather than being composed structurally” (Deleuze, 2007, p. 30).

Acrobat flesh, ugly, aberrant body.

Everything runs away.

A teacher says: “I think the question is how to dribble the beauty at stake...”

Nothing could leave us more to the skin, or perhaps to the ugliness of the flesh.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The concept of biopolitics, coined by Michel Foucault from his genealogical works, refers to the strategies of population governance. Biopolitics, in its most practical sense, speaks precisely of policies about life, of policies that dictate how bodies can and should live.
- <sup>2</sup> Conversation networks are ways to guide conversations between groups from general themes. It is important to emphasize that the conversation networks do not presuppose structured or semi-structured questions, only thematic ones to be approached.
- <sup>3</sup> Throughout the text, the clippings of the speeches are presented without any mode of identification, be it nominal (fictional or not) or ordinal. We chose this mode of presentation of speech because we believe that the statements are not referring to an identity, but to a discursive formation, as Foucault proposed. There is always the possibility that a statement may be said by another person and thus we bet on research with this changing possibility. What matters is the places of discourse, the practices that make these statements possible, but we are also interested in the possibility of an enunciation applicable to other bodies.
- <sup>4</sup> In both books, Denise Sant'Anna alludes that, along with body production, the pharmaceutical industry and advertising also grew.
- <sup>5</sup> The term coined by Gilles Deleuze is that of *Fat Dominant Health* implying, in this, a health that would spread to all directions, to the ways in which Michel Foucault also worked with the history of medicine and with the limitless expansion of that knowledge in medicalization. However, since the fat body is almost a pity for health, we have chosen to change the term and maintain its dominant and controlling sense of health.
- <sup>6</sup> From the neo-Nazi movement in Charlottesville, Virginia (USA), the social networks resumed discussions about the relationship between Nazism and leftist movements, and somehow some Internet sites and public figures managed to bring together Nazism and Communism, generating, as it might be expected, a lot of memes and discussions on Twitter and Facebook.

- <sup>7</sup> And in this respect, no example is as evident as that experienced by us Brazilians in May 2017, when the Special Secretariat for Social Communication of the Presidency of the Republic sent an e-mail to the humor page *Capinaremos* prohibiting “[...] the disclosure of images of the president [Michel Temer] for purposes other than journalism without prior authorization” (FORUM MAGAZINE, 2017).

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