

Eroticizing the Struggle against Precarity*

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Abstract

In this article we consider bodies that are in protest: we believe that protests are moments of alliance that offer a potential to think about eroticity and its possible circulations. To this end, we analyze Butlerian notions such as the ecstatic condition of all bodies and the possibilities for action that this allows. We use these notions to reflect on legal mechanisms that regulate public space. We thus analyze not only eroticity *in* the space of appearance, but also the space of appearance *as a consequence* of erotic bonds, of this *between* sexed bodies in alliance.

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In a recent interview upon the publication of a new book, feminist philosopher Judith Butler insisted on the need to think of mobilizations and assemblies in the street. Moreover, she rejected the criticism made of these manifestations as if they only occupy space, without raising demands. In her words:

There was also another debate related to the Occupy movement where some people were saying “they don't have any demands, they are just occupying space”, so I was trying to say: “No, that is a way of making a demand, it is a way of saying this space belongs to us or this space should be public”. But it does not have to be verbalised for that claim to be made; I thought they were making it with their bodies or through the way their bodies were occupying space. I wanted to make the case that bodily action or gesture is also politically significant. It occupies the space to which it lays claim, and so embodies the claim (Butler, 2016).

In keeping with this thinking, in this article we are interested in casting a series of reflections around bodies that are found in protest, without emphasizing a discussion (which is certainly crucial) about the articulation of their demands. To do so, it appears important to us to revive the Butlerian intuitions and problematize them in tension with a reflection on legal mechanisms that regulate public space, as is the case of the Protocolo de Actuación de las Fuerzas de Seguridad del Estado en Manifestaciones Públicas [Protocol for the Action of State Security Forces in Public Demonstrations](PAFS). In relation to the regulation of public space, we are also interested in questioning the sexualities produced, particularly concerning the erotization of bonds between bodies found in this space and that configure it.

Following some Butlerian intuitions, we affirm that it is necessary to examine the bodies in their interdependence with others and with the world, which requires us to reformulate understandings that we have of political action. This interdependence will thus be understood as a condition for the possibility for political action, to the point that it becomes a fundamental part of the analyses of this action. As a consequence, the study of a political action such as social protest implies an examination of the bodies that participate in it considering their vulnerability and their inevitable exposure to the encounter with other bodies, either through harm in violent contact or through desire in sexual contact. Due to the latter contact, therefore, we argue that all normativity that falls on social protest, as long as it is understood as a regulation of bodies in public space, redounds, although not always explicitly, in a regulation of the possibilities of bodies to encounter each other erotically. To test this hypothesis, we organize the work in five parts. First, we present the case of the Protocol for the Action of State Security Forces in Public Demonstrations (PAFS) as a legal mechanism that is emblematic of the recent regulation of social protest in Argentina. Secondly, we review the Latin American literature that has studied these regulations. Thirdly, we study the Butlerian reception of Hannah Arendt's reflections so that we can study the case from a perspective that examines the body in its interdependence. Fourthly, we problematize the postulation of this interdependence by paying attention to the bodies and their erotic possibilities; and finally, we present a political action that will help us to think more explicitly about the connection between regulation of public space and regulation of sexuality.

First, a brief introduction to the Protocol is necessary that will serve as a starting point for considering the distinct mechanisms of regulation of public space. In February of 2016, Minister of Public Safety Patricia Bullrich announced the implementation of the Protocol for the Action of State Security Forces in Public Demonstrations. This measure was part of a set of repressive tactics that are framed within a shift to the right that the region has taken in recent years. Repression by security forces has always existed in our country, and since the return to democracy has persisted in the form of arbitrary police actions, which abuse the portion of the population that is left most precarious because of its class, race and gender. The paradigmatic case is perhaps the so-called *gatillo fácil* [quick trigger], which refers to shots that police agents take against subjects without justification, in an abuse of their discretionary powers. Nevertheless, at the moment of writing this article, the Argentinian government had officially *legitimated* these violent acts which previously seemed to be hidden; not only are these repressive gestures not condemned, they are rewarded and encouraged. In this sense, the Ministry of Safety constitutes a focus of problems, which is not afraid of toughening

the discourse, promising increasing impunity to security forces, a stronger role to the armed forces, and intensified criminalization of social protest. In the current neoliberal format, the state cuts budgets and rights and leaves living conditions more precarious, while supporting these forceful repressive measures. In this sense, it is a particular modulation of neoliberalism since it represents a conservative turn, reviving old racist, classist and discriminatory prejudices against the LGTB+ community and other minorities. This turn to the right is not, as is known, exclusive to Argentina today, given that various countries in the region have adopted similar mechanisms for adjustment and repression, as is the case of Brazil, as intended by recently elected President Jair Bolsonaro. As we began this investigation, the repressive formulas were beginning to be drafted; unfortunately, the violent nature of the model is increasingly evident.

In this context, in 2016, the Protocol for Action before mentioned was drafted, with indications about how security forces should operate precisely in popular demonstrations, marches and other alliances in the streets, which had increased because of the growing precariousness and retraction of rights. The launching of the Protocol signed by P. Bullrich was based on Law 24.059 for Domestic Security and Decrees 1273 of 21 July 1992, 6 and 13 of December 2015. It is clear that the Protocol violates the right to protest, liberty of expression and exercise of journalism (Cf. Chillier and Litvachky, 2016), criminalizing, in this sense, specific forms of inhabiting public space, meetings, “mobilizations” and “picketing”, and this position is also affirmed by groups such as the Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) [The Center for Legal and Social Studies].

Although at the beginning of the Protocol it declares that it is based on the human rights “of all people” (PAFS 1), the question we raise, following the intuitions of Butler when she asks what counts as life (2009a), is: who counts as human under the Protocol for the Action of State Security Forces in Public Demonstrations? According to the standards expressed throughout the measure, it appears that it separates those bodies that can make use of rights, such as the right to circulation, and that have a place in the productive-consumption chain of the current system, and other bodies indicated as not fitting in those categories, who do not enjoy the same rights and can be read as threats. Can it thus be understood that it has delineated two statuses of citizenship, of *humanity*? And here we must ask if it does not involve, in fact, a status that also points to bodies as (sexually) desirable.

The Protocol limits forms of circulation, in name of a “liberty” that it does not define and establishes the disposition of bodies in space and time, granting them rights in relation to that location. The first rule established by the Protocol demands the following:

Whether the negotiation [with the demonstrators] is resolved positively or negatively the Chief of the Security Operation will issue the order through loudspeakers, megaphones, or by speaking loudly, that the demonstrators must stop blocking the circulation of transit in the streets, should withdraw and locate in a specific place to exercise their constitutional rights, always guaranteeing free circulation. It will be advised that failure to comply with this instruction will be considered to be subject to article 194 of the Penal Code, and in this case, to the penalties called for in each jurisdiction (PAFS 4).

The rule does not clarify in what cases a protest should be broken up. Read in this way, it appears to be a general order. The guarantee that is protected throughout the document is above all that of “freedom of circulation”; however, the circulation is explicitly limited by the Security Forces. To the extent that in the above citation they seem to establish “zones” in which the population can exercise its constitutional rights, and others in which it cannot, according to the order of the Security Forces at the time of the operation. Finally, we see an effort to articulate the Protocol with local legal measures, which do not always conform to the Penal Code, as is the case of the Códigos Contravencionales [Misdemeanor Code] in each jurisdiction.

In the same line as the Protocol, these legal mechanisms, such as the Código de Convivencia en Córdoba [Conviviality Code in Cordoba] (Law 10326), sanctioned in March 2016, also regulate public space and criminalize certain uses and configurations of it. For instance, in article 63, the code presents a sanction for those who

express in public space any type of verbal demonstration that has discriminatory content based on an idea or theory of superiority of one race or of a group of people for reasons of nationality, ethnic or racial origin, color, religion, ideology, age, sex, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, different abilities or social, labor or economic conditions, which constitute contempt for the human person or an affront or offense to the feelings, honor, decorum or dignity of people.

Indeed, as affirmed by the *Kit de Resistencia al Código de Convivencia* (2016) [Kit for Resistance to the Conviviality Code], drafted and promoted by the Colectivo de Jóvenes por Nuestros Derechos [Youth Collective for Our Rights], the article lacks a paragraph that articles from other regions have, which would protect the right to protest. In this sense, imprecise and broad aspects such as *feelings, honor, decorum*, would prohibit any demonstration in public thoroughfares. On the other hand, along with these elements appear others like “indecent touching” (art. 53), “acts against public decency” (art. 52), “scandalizing and being annoying to third parties” (art. 81), which are also ambiguous and permit the regulation and criminalization of what we can consider *sexual gestures*, also in public space.

It appears to us, in this sense, that this proximity suggests something and appears to be interesting to consider. In effect, both operations of the laws, when they intend to regulate social protest or the exercise of sexuality, appear to work simultaneously and through the same legal mechanisms by establishing what can and cannot be done in public space. Thus, what these legal mechanisms do is related in some way to the legitimacy of certain corporal situations in the street, which invites us to ask: what public space is configured by the prohibition of certain actions? Which bodies appear there? And in regards to Protocol for State Security Forces in particular (which does not appear to explicitly regulate sexuality), what kind of sexuality is produced when the right to protest is violated? And in contrast, does the criminalization of sexuality in public space limit the right to protest? How are the bodies that appear in the regulation of sexuality and in that of social protest? Are they the same? In what sense? Is all protest always *sexual*? Can sexual gestures be configured as a complaint? What causes a sexual gesture to be recognized as an act of protest?

In the lines that follow we want to test some responses and risk the use of some critical tools for the analysis of these questions. To develop these reflections, in the first place, we review Latin American studies about social protest to indicate the particularity of our contribution to the discussions. Secondly, we examine the Butlerian formulation of a social corporal ontology, which points to rethinking ethical obligations and agency through a common vulnerability of bodies. For this formulation, Butler used various theoretical proposals, including those of Arendt, which we consider to theorize about protest in the street and the bodies involved in one way or another in it. Finally, we problematize this reading to address the possibility of the erotic bonds between bodies that are found in protest.

Some backgrounds

To situate our investigation, we have analyzed Latin American studies that examined different aspects of social protest. There are many sociological studies related to this theme, and which provide a contextual description of more or less parallel processes in various countries of the region, after the recent military dictatorships. In general, the studies map the problematics of protest during the post-dictatorship democracies of the past three decades, analyzing their typologies, the social actors involved and their relationship with the state. In fact, many of the studies are oriented towards rethinking the possibilities for action **by** the state, as is the case of the publications *Cuadernos de Seguridad* (issued by the Instituto Nacional de Estudios Estratégicos de la Seguridad [The National Institution of Strategic Security Studies], of the Ministry of Security, during the Presidency of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner). In this material produced in Argentina, referents in the theme focus on forms of strategic planning of security, conceived in relation to crime and police action. In turn, other possible ways of thinking of the police are questioned, which allows articulating it in a more “communitarian” manner. In this sense, a specific antecedent in our country was the drafting of the *Acuerdo para una seguridad democrática* [The Accord for Democratic Safety] (2009) in which

various actors linked to the state address possibilities for “non-violent police administration in the public realm”, always in the framework of confronting social protest as one of the challenges for the strategic plan for public safety. Although it is a document with a clear focus from a state perspective, it is strongly dependent on the government in power, and it would be interesting to complement the work with perspectives from social processes and movements. We find the same focus in studies such as *Protesta Social en América Latina* (Calderón, 2012), which offers specific historical analyses examined in their sociopolitical context, but always from a perspective external to the protest itself.

Meanwhile, there are not many studies about the action of security forces in specific situations of social protest or mobilizations. Rather, explanations are based on the cause-effect model and typified according to the populations involved, the complaints and the agendas. What is recurring in all of the studies is a problematization of the role of the media and social networks in relation to public safety and social conflict:

There is in this entire Latin American process, as is seen on a global scale [...], a very important change: that of the space of the public. All political and social forces tend to redefine themselves in this realm. This change is the result of the development of the information and communication society. A very significant fact (...) is the presence of a new communicational platform (Calderón, 2012:102).

The treatment of public space in this type of study considers that the most significant change is currently related to the virtual space and the platforms of social networks and communication media:

These changes in the definition of public space, both real and virtual, contribute to the reconfiguration of the forms of conducting politics and of collective action. If in Latin America the typical trend has been a combination of “palace politics” and “street politics” [...], the situation now becomes more complex and communication policy and “internet politics” become important (Calderón, 2012:118).

Considering this context, in this study we would like to contribute to an expansion of the concept of public space, which includes a concern for the virtuality of telecommunications but does not forget the importance of what is called “street politics”. In relation to this, and to the actual congregation of bodies in alliance, we appeal in this sense to the notion of space of appearance coined by Arendt and revised by Butler.

Moreover, this study tries to account for another unexamined aspect of collective struggle and that is related to a problematization about sexed bodies and participants in erotic bonds. We consider that these bonds do not merely shape specific demands of different groups (“women”, “gays”, “lesbians”) but shape in a fundamental way **any** alliance of bodies in protest.

In relation to regulations of public space, investigations into police decrees also appear as background, although we do not work with this type of measure here, it is part of the state of the art. In previous works we have also analyzed the vast and case-based bibliography in relation to the study of police decrees, given that these measures call for repressive actions that are even illegal according to the National Constitution, considering an immanent criticism based on law. The cases of the Código de Faltas of Córdoba Province (the Misdemeanor Code in force from 1994 until 2016, which was partially reformulated in the current version) serve as a sample of many other edicts that still coexist in Argentina: while specialists warn of an “absence of indications of the basic guarantees for the realization of an organic law – such as a code – with a punitive content” (Juliano, Etchichury, 2009:76). The edicts and the misdemeanor codes allow the provincial police to arrest a large number of citizens, without any judicial order, and even treat them violently due “to the vagueness of the behavior described as misconduct, and the possibility, in general, to act ex officio and to make ‘preventive’ arrests” (Etchichury, 2007:2). Thus, we begin to find a differential distribution of precariousness in relation to rights. According to a definition given by Zaffaroni, a study in Cordoba found that the application of the Code “advances by mainly affecting the vulnerable sectors of our society, understanding them to be those sectors with ‘poor defenses’” (Cappellino, 2011:65). This evaluation does justice to the Butlerian criticism, which examines the

differential economy of precariousness; the unequal distribution of vulnerability in bodies reveals that not all of us are exposed in the same manner to violence nor do we run the same risk of lacking protection from it.

As shown by a study of the misdemeanor laws in our country, and following Zaffaroni, “due to their classifications, and through the notion of repeat offense, the misdemeanor codes incur in what in the doctrine is known as an ‘authorial’ penal law, that is, the punishment not of prohibited conduct but of subjects and living conditions” (Parchuc, 2008:3). Parchuc led an important study that revealed the violences against LGTB+ people in various provincial decrees in Argentina. Córdoba continues to have in force an ambiguous article that condemns “indecorous touching” leaving understanding of this description to the discretion of the police. In contrast, one of the more important negotiations over the modification of the code was the removal of art. 45 that condemned “annoying or scandalous prostitution”, and art. 98 concerning loitering, changes made thanks to local alliances of resistance such as the *Marcha de la gorra*¹ [The Cap March]. The presumption that certain subjects are dangerous results in a sanction that does not address the harmful consequences of the act but is based on its supposedly “amoral” character; and rather it is about “the repression of certain subjects not so much for what they do as for what ‘they are’” (Sabsay, 2009:242). Sabsay’s doctoral thesis works with the subject of performativity; and offers an analysis of the discourse of the law from a feminist perspective. Sabsay thus revises certain mechanisms from the legal discourse found in decrees from Buenos Aires (which have already been repealed) and in new laws concerning the decriminalization of prostitution, and indicates how debates about prostitution led to a debate about sexuality in general, and what is “morally acceptable”. Sabsay frames her analysis within the issue of “urban security”, a concept that she finds ambiguous per se, while “it allows an appeal to the protection of citizens’ rights and simultaneously the repression of those who by not fulfilling their responsibilities as citizens, violate the freedoms granted” (Sabsay, 2009:234). In regards to the regulation of spaces for sexual commerce, it is important to mention the pioneer work of Josefina Fernández (2004) about the organizations of transvestites in the dispute that prompted the sanction of the new conviviality code in Buenos Aires in 1998, or Martín Boy’s (2015) study about Buenos Aires’ “red light district” as an urban and moral conflict also based on this sanction. These authors have revealed the connection between an ordering of public space as a moral problem that subjugates in a specific way and organizes bodies in the city through daily police action.

What we propose to consider here, differently from these authors, is the exercise of a regulation of public space particularly when the situation is one of social protest: in these protests, space is claimed to be public in a strong sense, and the dynamics of security include other measures, as expressed in the Protocol for State Security Forces as an example of the many mechanisms activated at the time of handling protests, demonstrations and marches. On the other hand, as we mentioned, the study will extend to all protests by the precarious, seeking to identify in them ways in which the erotic occurs and is distributed, and not only in specifically LGTB+ protests. The reading intends to expand to the dynamics of protest in general. We will see, with Butler and in dialog with Arendt, the ways in which precarities are interlinked in *alliances*, and how this implies ways of *appearing* in space.

Butler reads Arendt: plurality of precarious bodies in the street

Butler revives the crucial character of plurality to consider political life and Hanna Arendt’s concept of *space of appearance*, to address street demonstrations. We will reflect a bit on each one

¹ In Córdoba since 2007, annual marches known as the “*Marcha de la gorra*” have been held. Their objective is not only to denounce the exclusion that youth with scarce resources suffer in our society, but also to make visible the resistance to the application of the Code, and of police harassment. The first march was convoked under the slogan “Why is your cap OK and mine not?”: which illustrates the positive evaluation of the police (who use a cap in their corresponding uniform) make of those subjects who, considered “dangerous”, are identified negatively – for the use of caps – and other traits. Thus, a characteristic that condemns these youths, who are stigmatized by police harassment and discrimination, is resignified as a slogan in this public and collective apparition.

of these concepts and on the criticisms that Butler makes of them to address regulations of public space.

Firstly, it should be said that Arendt describes three activities to which correspond three fundamental conditions of human life on Earth²: life itself corresponds to labour; to work, worldliness; and to action, plurality. The latter is realized without any mediation at all and corresponds to the condition according to which the various human beings live on Earth and inhabit the world, as equals but different in their singularity. Arendt distinguishes alterity from plurality, given that the first implies singularity and the second accounts for how these singularities conjugate with each other. Human alterity, in fact, can communicate through action and discourse, and this distinction results in the uniqueness of each human being. Thus, plurality, a *conditio per quam* of political life, is defined as “the paradoxical plurality of unique beings” (Arendt, 1998:176). On the other hand, action is linked to the unexpected, with the new that each newcomer brings and that is ultimately unique. No other activity needs discourse as does action, because it is discourse that allows revealing it. This revelation, however, is not voluntary, there is no control over the response to the question “who are you?” and it is likely, according to Arendt, that others have greater precision than oneself when responding.

The revelatory capacity of action and the discourse associated to it come to the forefront when one is with others in contiguity. On the other hand, and given the plurality that is the condition of action, this is unpredictable: impossible to control, it cannot be regulated or hidden. For Arendt, this fails when one is not with others but for or against others, as in the case of war, or genocide. Thus, when human beings join together through action and discourse, when they are truly with others, what Arendt calls the *space of appearance* comes into being and precedes any institutionalized form of the public sphere. This space does not survive the movement which it constitutes, disappearing once those who initiated the activity or stop it are dispersed.

Butler assumes this idea of plurality and its importance for political life. From a critical perspective, which leads her to think with **Arendt against Arendt**, Butler’s proposal is to “think about this space of appearance and to ask what itinerary must we travel to move from the space of appearance to the contemporary politics of the street” (2011:3). In effect, the phrase *space of appearance* is essential for thinking of political action, to the degree that the author affirms that “to be deprived of the space of appearance is to be deprived of reality” (Butler, 2011:6), considering that reality is also delimited by a mark of what appears and in what conditions it does so.

Butler is also curious about the link that the sphere of appearance has with material supports, which sustain the concerted action but also, paradoxically, can coincide with the supports to which they make claims. All political action in a public space requires an existing infrastructure that exists before the concertation of bodies, but while the space is public, it is the result of the dispute that these bodies carry out there. Thus, the “publicness” of space arises as a result of a performative exercise, in the claims of these bodies in the street producing the space of appearance with their action and discourse. In Butler’s own words:

As much as we must insist on there being material conditions for public assembly and public speech, we have also to ask how it is that assembly and speech reconfigure the materiality of public space, and produce, or reproduce, the public character of that material environment (Butler, 2011:1).

Having that said, the non-codified exercise of the right to appear publicly that these bodies exercise in the case of social protest and that results in the space of appearance, and which is even resisted by the state, causes to emerge a fundamental Arendtian concept: *the right to have rights*.

² There is a reason that Arendt limits her analysis to the “terrestrial”: “To avoid misunderstanding: the human condition is not the same as human nature, and the sum total of human activities and capabilities which correspond to the human condition does not constitute anything like human nature (Arendt, 1998:9-10). To explain her argument, she uses an extreme situation: if we emigrate to a nother planet, the conditions would be totally different. In this case, “[n]either labor nor work nor action nor, indeed, thought as we know it would then make sense any longer” (Arendt, 1998:10). There are thus no affirmations about a supposed human nature, nor anything like an essence, but considerations based on conditions that could be others; what persists is the property of being conditioned.

For Arendt, this right is not the consequence of a metaphysical stipulation or of a natural law but involves the persistence of a body against the forces that seek to monopolize its legitimacy. Butler describes it like this:

The right to have rights predates and precedes any political institution that might codify or seek to guarantee that right; at the same time, it is derived from no natural set of laws. The right comes into being when it is exercised, and exercised by those who act in concert, in alliance (2011:8).

Arendt postulates a series of basic rights needed for the survival of the human community, and whose condition is that they are not based on any type of social institution or government. They involve prelegal rights, not authorized by the state, and not natural, and that are related to a civil rights community with a guarantee-based agenda: the right of belonging to an organized community, and the right to have rights (cf. Arendt, 1973:296-297). In regards to this, Butler offers a post structuralist consideration that clarifies its political foundation (cf. Mattio, 2012) when in *Who Sings the Nation State?* (Butler and Spivak, 2007), she philosophically discusses marches by illegal residents in California in the spring of 2006. In this context, the immigrants sang the national anthem of the United States in Spanish, exercising a right to congregate against what the state itself allows them to and questioning the monolingual requirement for national identity. Thus, through a collective exercise in translation, they articulated a series of rights that they do not enjoy but that, in any case, exercise in an incipient form. In effect, Butler understands that this a performative exercise, to the degree that “she is establishing through her writing the right to have rights, and there is no ground for this claim outside of the claim itself” (Butler, 2009b:6). In this sense, it is not a case of being born as equal, but that this equality is the result of the performative and collective construction.

Now, when we analyze the Protocol for the Action of State Security Forces in Public Demonstrations we observe that there is a delimitation of the forms of circulation, and therefore of the opportunities to congregate and to shape the space of appearance. The circulation of some bodies is considered and certain activities are linked to them, notably in relation to the dynamics of commerce and consumption. Lets examine the following passage:

those who do not participate in a demonstration on a public street, do not see their rights to circulate freely affected, to work and exercise any legal industry, to engage in commerce, education and other constitutionally supported rights (PAFS 1).

Some questions must be asked, following the Butlerian concern: whose rights are preserved? Who “circulates” and who “loiters”, or affects circulation? The right to protest is also “constitutionally supported”, and yet it seems here to be contingent to other rights such as working to allow consumption, to exercise industry, etc. In this way, the Protocol is a measure in which differences are reflected in the forms of distributing liberty – circulation – and equality – when balancing rights. For this reason, we can consider that in this framework a demonstration of bodies in alliance can signify a performative exercise that subverts the conditionings embodied in the Protocol, and that instead affirms a way of exercising the *right to have rights*. In fact, the possibility of a policy of radical change depends on this exercise of the performative contradiction. In Butler’s words, “To exercise a freedom and to assert an equality precisely in relation to an authority that would preclude both is to show how freedom and equality can and must move beyond their positive articulations” (Butler and Spivak, 2007:66-67).

In synthesis, through the Butlerian reading of Arendt, we can think of social protest in the street as the performative act of exercising the extralegal right to exist without possessing it. Or, of possessing it with restrictive conditions, as those revealed by the current Protocol for the Security Forces. This action takes place in a realm of precariousness, which takes the shape of a precarious exercise to shift the temporal categories against the precarity. Butler understands **precariousness** to be one of the consequences of corporal life, that which points to its unsurmountable risk of disappearance. It is an ontological concept, more or less existential, which refers to the impossibility

of guaranteeing the persistence of life: anything can eliminate life as it is known, voluntarily or accidentally and this threat of disappearance is irrevocable. Butler understands **precarity** to be the social and political conditions that maximize the risk that this life will not continue. In this way, precariousness as an ontological condition is politically and socially modeled. In this sense, the experience of protest appears to make evident the fact that we are precarious in struggle for better conditions, which supposes a minimization of the precarity.

Butler's thinking thus confesses to be heir to Arendtian thinking about action. Nevertheless, the US philosopher wields a criticism from her feminist perspective. For the German author it appears that there are bodies that are completely excluded from the political sphere, relegated to a **sphere of need** that also appears to be eminently depoliticized. Thus, a pre-political or extra-political realm is configured that coincides, in the scheme of the Greek polis that Arendt assumes, with the sphere in which slaves, women and children move. In Butler's words, "the body is itself divided into one that appears publicly to speak and act, and another, sexual and laboring, feminine, foreign and mute, generally relegated to the private and pre-political sphere" (Butler, 2011:12). This leaves out political agencies that are not reduced to this space, which is preconceived as public, and disregards the exclusions that constitute this space. In other words, those who, in principle are excluded from the public sphere, still act. The fundamental questioning implies a gain in this respect: Butler is in fact challenging the classic distinction between the public and private. The author revises the spheres that Arendt takes from classic antiquity and relocates the sphere of need within politics: the material supports, as well as the bodies that make demands and struggle for these conditions, are also part of the action, they have their part in politics and can appear in public.

These bodies, in effect, are precarious, exposed in an exacerbated manner to police, military and private violence: they are made precarious as their vulnerability is maximized. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Protocol for State Security Forces includes figures such as "children, adolescents, pregnant women, older adults and people with disabilities" (PAFS 3,4), who would be protected from exposure to the violence supposedly implied by street demonstrations. The preferential attention that the Protocol foresees for these bodies, carries two implicit suppositions: first, that the security forces can act violently, having to confront these precarious bodies in a special way; secondly, that the bodies indicated are marked by power, at the same time that it appears to consider them as *less political* than the others, if not extra or pre-political as in Arendt's understanding. This mode of subjecting them leaves them at the margin of recognition, and as part of this at the margin of their erotic potentialities – in this case, in a situation of protest. Through this operation they would be denied the existence of their bodies in the demonstrations, constitutes them as *the other* of the bodies in protest. This does not sound strange considering the risk of damage to which these bodies would be submitted. The Protocol intends to offer protection from violence that it itself enables and maximizes.

Moreover, returning to the Butlerian reading of Arendt, by excluding labor from the political sphere, the author is ignoring that this activity is a constitutive part of it, and very often mobilizes the conflicts of political life. The bodies of those who are aligned in the streets have a potential that Butler finds,

not only claiming the public domain for themselves – acting in concert on conditions of equality – but also maintaining themselves as persisting bodies with needs, desires, and requirements. Arendtian and counter-Arendtian, to be sure, since these bodies who were organizing their most basic needs in public were also petitioning the world to register what was happening there, to make its support known, and in that way to enter into revolutionary action itself. The bodies acted in concert, but they also slept in public, and in both these modalities, they were both vulnerable and demanding, giving political and spatial organization to elementary bodily needs (Butler, 2011:22).

Through an analysis of the demonstrations in Cairo, but which we can also use to think of local protests in the form of encampments, Butler thus brings into politics the "sphere of need", which includes a realm of the corporal: in this sense, we can affirm that the eroticism of these bodies

also enters, politicizing them and making them part of the protest, when not of the claims that these protests can raise.

The notion of action that Butler returns to, implies, as mentioned, that of plurality. The US philosopher reads another possibility in Arendt's texts, in relation to the possibilities of living with others. In this sense, it is necessary to go beyond Arendt, because while she insists that liberty requires acting in concert, she does not consider with greater clarity and emphasis the unfreedom that conditions cohabitation. Cohabitation, as the lack of choice of with whom one shares the earth, indicates the involuntary dimension of freedom, that which functions as its condition of possibility and that, nevertheless, can result in aggressive or violent bonds. It is precisely this unfreedom that can lead to the temptation to kill the other with whom one did not decide to cohabit the earth. Thus, the proposal of an ethics of cohabitation can contribute to limiting and complexifying Arendt's proposal. Butler's critical reading of Arendt's journalistic and philosophical coverage of the trial of Adolf Eichmann for his crimes during the Nazi regime: *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A report on the banality of evil* (1999) should be recalled here. In this work, Arendt accuses Eichmann of having intended to decide with whom he would cohabit the earth, and affirms that this pretension is prohibited and that this prohibition in fact constitutes the possibility of politics and freedom, because these are based on plurality. This plurality is interrupted by genocide, or more generally by the deliberate selection of which population should live and which should not. In Butler's words: "Without that plurality against which we cannot choose, we have no freedom and, therefore, no choice" (2012:143). This is a notion of freedom that differs from and disputes the meaning of the concept as it appears, in fact, in the Protocol which has liberal individualist roots: "That this state should offer the certainty that all members of society can enjoy the same rights, therefore, the freedom of an individual or group ends where that of the other begins" (PAFS 1).

In a quite different sense, a Butlerian reading of Arendt allows thinking that it not only involves not choosing with whom we cohabit the earth, but also taking action to help preserve the life of those who we do not choose and with whom we do not share any sense of social belonging, to thus preserve the plurality that allows freedom and politics. Butler adds that it is not only a commitment to the other inhabitants but also to the environment itself, to the Earth, seeking to offer an expanded perspective to the well known Arendtian anthropocentrism: the "alliance happens precisely between those who participate in it, and this is not an ideal or empty space – it is the space of support itself – of durable and livable material environments and of interdependency among living beings" (Butler, 2011:9).

The Erotica of bodies in the street

In the exercise of the repoliticization that Butler seeks, we can also consider the erotization of the bonds between the bodies in the street and how this is linked with those bodies that theoretically and very often practically are prevented from configuring the space of appearance. Butler warns that "The 'true' space then lies 'between the people' which means that as much as any action takes place somewhere located, it also establishes a space which belongs properly to alliance itself" (2011:3). This *between* involves a body that is always ecstatic, interdependent, fundamental and fundamentally related to other bodies in different ways. We can postulate, in this sense, the idea of an erotic dimension (and in its political regulation, that is, eroticism) as one of these modes of corporal ecstasy. In this way, it is interesting to analyze the perspectives that are enabled if we think not only of eroticism in the space of appearance, but the space of appearance as a consequence of erotic bonds as well, of this "between" sexualized bodies.

Firstly, we should insist on Butler's general ontological affirmation that bodies are persistently cast into their exteriority and dispossessed by it, an exteriority on which they depend for existing, and that is, in turn, a permanent and insuperable threat of destruction. It involves constitutively vulnerable bodies, which does not merely point to the possibility of suffering damage, but points to the proximity of the others and the circumstances which a body should invariably confront. Consequently, corporal exposure allows for the possibility of undesired contact that involves coercion, physical harm and violence, which we have previously defined as precariousness, but also the possibility of passionate encounters, desire, yearning and even pleasure. Another tie between the

body and the world is possible, one that is also the result of the fundamental corporal exposure and that refers to the erotization of the link between body and world. This, in other words, is the experience in which the world becomes erotic to the body, affecting it through sexual pleasure. We call the dimension that becomes evident with this experience, the erotic dimension of the body. Now, if social protest in the streets reveals the vulnerability of the body as precarious, in what sense does it also appear as erotic? Perhaps we can speak of a risk of harm and a risk of erotization in an encounter between bodies in the street? We will examine a bit more a conceptualization of the erotic dimension to consider these questions.

The corporal erotic dimension appears to make itself evident in a sexual experience that Butler herself called *sexual passion*, named as one of those that manifests the fact that bodies are cast into their exteriority, that is the ecstatic condition of the body (cf. Butler, 2004a:34; 2004b:20). The author does not identify what this experience consists of but affirms that the subject is cast “beyond oneself” and in this sense is characterized, by a dispossession, a questioning of the self-centered, self-sufficient subject. In this way, Butler insists that this involves an experience that happens with us, in which in some sense we are in a passive state. In her words:

You might decide on what kinds of sexual relations you want; indeed, you might decide who enters you and whom you would like to enter, but even then, you are not deciding on the passion. You are deciding about what to do about something that is in part already decided for you, something that is prior to deliberation and never fully within its control. You are given over before you decide where and when to give yourself over (Butler, 2009b:12).

Going a bit beyond what Butler affirmed about passion, we can agree that we are affected by other bodies and that one particular way in which this affectation can occur is through an erotization of the tie. In this sense, in the 38th of her “58 indications about the body”, Jean-Luc Nancy affirms: “Nothing is more unique than the sensible, erotic, affective discharge that certain bodies produce on ours (or conversely, the indifference which we have for certain others)” (2007:24).

Nancy thus proposes a scale of singularities, in which that which would be first, which does not compete with others, points to something that *happens* to a body. Something that falls upon it, not something it produces but that it suffers. What the body suffers from is produced by other bodies; is the result of the activity of others. Thus, the body in question is not oriented to them but suffers something that is the work of alterity. Not all bodies produce it; some leave it, in fact, in a state of indifference. Those that are not indifferent, thus produce something that is described in terms of discharge; a discharge that is simultaneously sensitive, erotic, affective. Nancy then names a series of characteristics of bodies that can provoke this singular discharge:

A conformation, a lightness, skin color, an appearance, a certain distance between the eyes, a movement or shift in the shoulder, the chin, the fingers, almost nothing, but an accent, a line, an irreplaceable trait (Nancy, 2007:24).

Thus, the body produces a discharge through a peculiarity that can be tiny, which cannot necessarily be explained but that manages not to be indifferent and that, moreover, is *irreplaceable*. This body produces a discharge on this other body and this discharge is unique, a singularity that is established in the connection. Thus, it becomes ambiguous in terms of whom it belongs to: it is there in the “between” bodies; it is not merely in the affecting body, but also not only in the body affected.

We place the focus simultaneously on everyone, yet our attention is not modeled in the same way for *all* the “elements” of the experience. Thus, according to a scheme of foreground and background, certain “elements” of the experience appear to be more or less delimited and delimitable. This delimitation, moreover, is charged with meaning and affection. Now, it can be that certain “elements” that were either part of the background or the foreground but in a desexualized way, *suddenly* appear as elements that provoke sexual excitement. Suddenly, something that was part of my “there” or that entered it, *interrupts* me through sexual excitement, detains me and requires me, in any case, to conduct an effort to recover my state before this interruption – for now, I will place between parentheses the possible conditions for this element to appear sexualized. We use

the term interruption just as Valeria Flores does in her work, although she does so in another context and with other purposes. Thus, sexual passion is related to an interruption, a suspension, and in Flores' words consists in

inserting a cut in a conversation, a model, an act, a movement, a stillness, a time... and opening the possibility for other becomings or events, to other lines of thinking. This disrupts the linear order of the discourse, altering the immobility and astonishing inertia of what is considered obvious (Flores, 2013:22).

In this way, can we think of the risk of sexualization, of sexual interruption, when bodies are found in the space of appearance? Perhaps the regulation of public space is also a regulation of sexual bonds between bodies? We ask precisely for the bodies that are considered extrapolitical, if by chance this does not also involve bodies that are not permitted spaces for socialization like the street, and in this sense, produce in them a certain type of sexual exercise – probably because of its impossibility. We think, in this sense, for example, of bodies with functional diversity, which are presumably “protected” by the Protocol for Security Forces. With this supposed protection, two operations are realized: on one hand, the political agency of people with functional diversity is ignored, those who are already found participating in the public sphere and configuring the space of appearance; and on the other, there is a reinforcement, at least discursively, of the difficulties of participation in mobilizations of the bodies that do not respond to a model of corporal ability. This results in a regulation of the possible (and impossible) sexual bonds between bodies with and without functional diversity (and of all the bodies considered extra-political by the Protocol) which are found in the street.

It is thus clear, that the ways in which the body and world are linked (they cast themselves beyond themselves, they question and affect each other) are also found to be strongly regulated. There are norms that distribute in a different manner the ways in which these links become eroticized, conditioning the indifference or the insistence of the discharges that Nancy proposes. There are norms which distribute differently the ways in which these bonds are eroticized, conditioned to the indifference or the insistence of the discharges that Nancy proposes. In other words, if we want to trust that all the bodies can affect us through pleasure or make us feel a sexual passion, it is also true that there are symbolic and material mechanisms that cause that certain bodies to eroticize us more than others. We suggest, in this sense, the concept of *eroticity*, that is, the operation of the norms through which are regulated the opportunities for these bodies to be considered sexually desirable. In this way, regarding the Protocol for action, and other mechanisms that regulate public space, the eroticity of bodies increases or decreases to the degree that these bodies can effectively participate or not in this space.

Eroticity, in this sense, requires us to conceptualize a notion of *erotic justice*, inspired by the concerns of Gayle Rubin, one that contemplates an “exciting, innovative, and articulate defense of sexual pleasure” (1985:302) in a democratic context of sexual ethics. In Rubin's words:

A democratic morality should judge sexual acts by the way partners treat one another, the level of mutual consideration, the presence or absence of coercion, and quantity and quality of the pleasures they provide (Rubin, 1985:283).

This concept of justice is, in fact, what requires placing two rights at the same ranking: the right to sexual pleasure and the right to protection against sexual violence. In terms of the right to sexual pleasure, we understand the need and the ethical urgency to produce social conditions in an egalitarian manner so that the bodies can be involved in sexual experiences. Thus, bodies that cannot be grasped as sexually desirable run the risk of not being able to exercise this right when they want to. We are thinking here of the conditions of recognition that allow this exercise so that fat or old bodies, those with functional diversity, ill ones, those living with HIV, intersexual, those that are considered ugly and so many others that do not appear in the public realm as worthy of arousing sexual excitement, those unable to configure the space of appearance through legal mechanisms such as the Protocol for the Action of State Security Forces in Public Demonstrations.

On the other hand, in terms of the right to protection, it should be considered that if it is certain that, as Butler affirms in her dialog with Athanasiou, “Although not all forms of exercising freedom are focused on the freedom to live, none of those exercises can take place without the freedom to live” (Athanasiou and Butler, 2013:130), it is also certain that the body in its erotic dimension supposes a living body. In other words, a body that is able to be involved in sexual experiences implies a body that is supported by social networks that allow its existence and that offer it some type of protection facing the risk of harm, that is to say, that minimize its precarity even when they cannot undermine its constitutive precariousness. In this way, sexuality and the right to protest meet again, now not only in terms of the bodies that constitute the space of appearance (as participants and “constitutive outside”) but also as the struggle for an erotic justice supposes the struggle against precarity.

Final considerations

The body is a fundamental part of politics: its ecstatic and interdependent condition reminds us that relationality is fundamental, and not left to an individual will. Butler’s rereading of Arendt allows us to rethink the moment of bodies in alliance in terms of plural action and at the same time re-introduces the “sphere of need” to politics. Not only the demands, but the modes of protest involve the body, its needs, its tie with others, its sexuality.

For their part, measures such as the Protocol for the Action of State Security Forces in Public Demonstrations analyzed here suppose an exclusionary and violent ordering of bodies as sexed, for which reason it is necessary to return to thinking of the relationship between protest and eroticism. It is in this sense that we sought to raise questions that allow critically reviewing the norms that configure public space, and the consequences that they have in the processes of (de)subjectivation. In particular, we proposed to reflect that public space is configured through the production of certain bodies as “extra-political”. We recall Butler’s unease in her criticism of Arendt “how do we make sense of those who can never be part of that concerted action, who remain outside the plurality that acts? How do we describe their action and their status as beings disaggregated from the plural?” (Butler, 2011:6).

Thus, we have tried to retrace the question of how this production and deproduction of bodies affects the possibilities for circulation of their eroticism. Who counts as a sexed body? What sexualities count as such? This is the question from Butler’s inheritance, cast to Arendt’s public space. We thus invite thinking about sexuality in the plurality.

Normatization of the right to protest also circumscribes public space and the possibilities for the bodies that circulate there. The regulation of this public space is also a regulation of the sexual ties between bodies, it is also part of the performatic production of the sexuality of these bodies, where some will be read as too incorrect, weak or fragile to *appear* publicly. Therefore, given the question, *is all protest sexual?* We would say yes, since, beyond the specific slogans of each case, all demonstrations of bodies in public space also imply their sexuality. There, in the web of forces that weave in and out of the alliance of bodies, circulates eroticism, allowing that some sexualities appear and others to be relegated, as ominous, unprotected, and precarious. In any of these cases, by placing emphasis on the sexual character of the congregated bodies, an aspect of politics is illuminated that allows rethinking the potential of protest, considering a performativity that can subversively resignify the established norms.

A recent experience in the city of Córdoba, in which the police tried to arrest two girls who were kissing in the plaza³, once again highlighted how security measures continue to operate in relation to dissident sexualities. The measures clearly function productively in the iterative formation of subjectivities, but it is no less certain that the repression also functions, in an obvious and daily manner, establishing violent frontiers of who and how they can appear, which eroticities can be expressed publicly and which are denied or impeded from this space of appearance. In response to this unfortunate event, a demonstration was called in Córdoba to repudiate the persecution of certain kisses while others are considered normal and suitable to be seen. The protest consisted in a

³ <http://www.lavoz.com.ar/ciudadanos/convocan-un-besazo-masivo-contra-la-lesbofobia-frente-la-jefatura-de-policia>

Besazo [loosely a Kiss Off]⁴, a demonstration of bodies in alliance in front of the central police station of the city, where everyone kissed each other, thus taking a public space and converting it into a space of appearance of dissident sexualities, crossing oppressions such as gender, class, race, age, functional diversity, etc. There, in a visible and key place, before a police barrier, a diversity of kisses appeared to claim the same right to be able to appear. The bodies allied and protested, as they celebrated an alternative eroticism, to that proposed by the conviviality code of the city of Córdoba. El Besazo, took place while we wrote this text, helping us to think of the possibility for a movement, of *one more step* in this concept of erotic justice, in a dual claim for the right to sexual pleasure and the right to protection against sexual violence.

Butler reminds us that “No one body establishes the space of appearance, but this action, this performative exercise happens only ‘between’ bodies, in a space that constitutes the gap between my own body and another’s” (2011:5). The alliance between bodies, sensitive to each other, and exposed to harm and to eroticity, enables action whenever it considers and contributes to plurality. For this reason, and given the situation of increased precarity as strong as the current one, it is essential to rethink erotic justice as a form of fighting against precarity, as concrete and corporal possibilities of being able to *appear*.

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⁴ <http://www.cba24n.com.ar/content/masivo-besazo-frente-la-jefatura-de-la-policia>.

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