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Capturing and sending nudes: the moral twists, pleasures and dangers of producing and exchanging erotic images online

Beatriz Accioly Lins[1]

> bia.accioly.lins@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-3749-5698

[1]University of São Paulo
São Paulo, Brasil

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Abstract: In this article, I reflect on the polysemy involved in the registration, sending and circulation (authorised or not) of nude digital photographs. I propose that this practice the discourses it entails should be thought both in terms of "a new twist in visuality regimes, a transition towards new ways of seeing, living and symbolising one's own and others' bodily nudity" (Sibilia, 2015, p. 42) and as an articulator of the "limits of sexuality" (Gregori, 2016). This involves flexions in the social classifications that organise sexual norms as acceptable or reprehensible and a complex dispute about the expansion of, and restrictions to, the boundaries between consent and abuse, norm and transgression, legitimate and immoral, healthy and violent.

Keywords: leaked nudes; Internet; sexual rights; sexting; nudes.

Capturar y enviar "nudes": las torsiones morales, placeres y peligros de producir e intercambiar imágenes eróticas online

Resumen: En este artículo reflexiono sobre algunos aspectos de la polisemia involucrada en el registro, envío y circulación (autorizada o no) de fotografías digitales de desnudos. Propongo que esta práctica (así como los discursos que conlleva) sea pensada tanto en términos de "un nuevo giro en los regímenes de visualidad, una transición hacia nuevas formas de ver, vivir y simbolizar la desnudez corporal propia y ajena" (Sibilia , 2015, p. 42) y como articulador de los "límites de la sexualidad" (Gregori, 2016), al flexionar las clasificaciones sociales que organizan las normatividades sexuales entre lo aceptable y lo reprobable. Esto involucra una compleja disputa entre la ampliación y la restricción de los límites entre el consentimiento y el abuso, la norma y la transgresión, lo legítimo y lo inmoral, lo sano y lo violento.

Palabras clave: nudes filtrados; Internet; derechos sexuales; sexting; nudes.

Capturar e enviar nudes: as torções morais, prazeres e perigos de produzir e trocar imagens eróticas online

Resumo: Neste artigo reflito sobre a polissemia envolvida no registro, envio e circulação (autorizada ou não) de nus fotográficos digitais. Proponho que esta prática e os discursos que ela implica sejam pensados tanto em termos de "uma nova reviravolta nos regimes de visualidade, uma transição para novas formas de ver, viver e simbolizar a própria nudez corporal e a dos outros" (Sibilia, 2015, p. 42) e como articulador dos "limites da sexualidade" (Gregori, 2016). Isto envolve flexões nas classificações sociais que organizam as normas sexuais como aceitáveis ou repreensíveis e uma disputa complexa sobre a expansão e as restrições às fronteiras entre consentimento e abuso, norma e transgressão, legítimo e imoral, saudável e violento.

Palavras-chave: nudes vazados; Internet; direitos sexuais; sexting; nudes.

Capturing and Sending Nudes: the moral twists, pleasures and dangers of producing and exchanging erotic images online[1]

Your phone buzzes. It could be anything: your family WhatsApp group, your phone company spam, but it's a compelling request: SEND NUDES! We would dare to say the vast majority of us yearns to send and receive nudes all day long, every day.

We believe the privacy of your communications is a right and that the decision to have them published or not should be exclusively yours. With that in mind, we picked a few tips and practices that can help you to send your nudes online in a safer way.

...

If this guide stopped you from working to send some nudes, remember these humble words: pose, photograph, encrypt and ask for the protection of our lady of perseguidas.[2]

Coding Rights, 2021 [2015]

Introduction

After long months of chatting and exchanging messages via *Messenger* or *WhatsApp*,[3] Anne and I would finally have the chance to meet in person again. She, an articulate, successful 30-year-old writer from Rio de Janeiro, was one of the most active administrators of a *Facebook* group in which I participated for over a year and whose activities were central to grasp the complex polysemy and power of *nudes*. Unintendedly, Anne had become one of my main research interlocutors. Her status as a *digital influencer*,[4] a term that she either vehemently

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[2] In standard Brazilian Portuguese "persecuted," *perseguidas* is also a slang term for "pussy."

[3] I use italics for emic terms and expressions common to socialisation mediated by digital communication platforms. I point out, whenever possible, nuances and limits in their meanings.

[4] Digital influencers are people who enjoy some popularity arising from the production and

repudiated or embraced jokingly, had given me access to new and different ways of thinking about nudes, by transporting me to a space populated by women and girls extremely willing to talk about the diverse and varied aspects of that practice.

My PhD research followed the ways in which the issue of unauthorised dissemination of erotic images of women online—or *leaked nudes*—has been defined in the different contexts in which it is triggered. I paid attention to the symbolic and classificatory disputes at stake in its simultaneous construction as a problem of internet times and as an attempt to associate it with violence against women.[5] In broader terms, the object of this project are classification systems, in the form of category disputes around notions of violence and crime. That involved controversies about gendered practices and sexual morality, the meanings of and ways of dealing with new communication technologies and the role of legislation and of law professionals in discussions about women's rights, as well as the transgressive political-erotic potential of nudes.

The term *nudes* describes the more or less common practice of digitising and sending erotic images, something made possible by the recent popularisation of digital communication technologies, such as internet-connected smartphones, front-facing ("selfie") cameras and social media. Nudes are both a product and a hazard of the interactional and communicative potentialities of new digital technologies. They can be easily leaked and may spread out of the control of those who produced them, skyrocketing at unprecedented speeds and scales, with sometimes virulent consequences, including moral condemnation, persecution and the attack of reputations. *Nudes* intertwine multiple senses of satisfaction and enjoyment with the (very real) risk of their unwanted propagation. Moving across varied (and sometimes contradictory) discourses, constructions, and perceptions about gender and sexuality, *nudes* plead for the expansion of what is considered permitted and desirable, disputing complex, fluid, and moralising perceptions of gender and

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circulation of content on digital platforms, whether texts, images, or videos. In general, the term is used to describe users who feed the network with materials that deal with lifestyles, consumption, fashion and humour. Quite often, these activities serve as advertising for products and services. Away from advertising interests, some digital influencers openly express political positions and sympathies, which brings them closer to activism. This was the case for Anne.

[5] Between 2014 and 2019, I carried out my doctoral research in different environments, with immersions and variable durations, through different forms of communication and transiting through a multiplicity of relationships and scales, inscribing this initiative as a "multi-situated" ethnography (Marcus, 1998), "with" and "between" subjects and relationships (Hannerz, 2003). Social networks, Bills, NGO reports, feminist events, hacker rounds, internet rights debates, legal literature, outbursts, requests for guidance, conversations, reports, campaigns, justice system initiatives, notions of violence, violation, rights, crime and reputation.

sexuality that establish hierarchies among behaviours, sexual desires and moralities attributed to men and women.

In this paper, I propose that the practice of capturing and sending *nudes* be thought, on the one hand, in terms of "a new twist in visuality regimes, a transition towards new ways of seeing, living and symbolising one's own and others' bodily nudity" (Sibilia, 2015, p. 42). On the other hand, as an articulator of the "limits of sexuality" (Gregori, 2016), i.e., the social classifications that organise sexual normativities between acceptable and reprehensible, in a complex dispute about the expansion or the restriction of the boundaries between consent and abuse, norm and transgression, legitimate and immoral, healthy and violent.

Nudes in the museum, *nudes* on the internet

That September, Anne would come to São Paulo for work and suggested that we meet on Paulista Avenue, a place with relatively easy access for people who need to move around the vast and complicated city, especially when it comes to "outsiders," as was the case for Anne. So she asked me to go to the São Paulo Art Museum Assis Chateaubriand (MASP), one of the postcards of the São Paulo capital. She also wanted to take advantage of the opportunity and "be a tourist." When I arrived at the museum café, our meeting point, Anne handed me a bag. "Go ahead, look," she said excitedly, referring to the gift she had got me. At the time, a retrospective of the work of the Guerrilla Girls, a group of anonymous artist-activists from the United States, that since the 1980s has produced humorous, ironic and profoundly critical interventions on racial and gender inequalities present in the world of art, politics and pop culture.[6] One of the best-known Guerrilla Girls' works is a 1989 poster featuring a photograph of a naked female body, in a pose common to what is called an "artistic nude."[7] Moving away from

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[6] The Guerrilla Girls exhibition, a retrospective of the collective's thirty-two years of activity, featured 116 works, and was on display at MASP from September 29, 2017 to February 14, 2018.

[7] Different representations of the nude—or partially nude—body are a constitutive part of established artistic conventions. A privileged theme, for example, in Greco-Roman sculptures of classical antiquity, the nudity of human bodies gained new aesthetic breaths from the Renaissance onwards, establishing itself as one of the main repertoires of figurative production of modern pictorial art, and, later, photography and cinema. The nude, especially of female bodies, is one of the central topics of canonical artists of the 20th century, many of whom are associated with the so-called "modern avant-gardes." MASP has some of these works in its permanent collection. More than a preferred theme or revered genre, the artistic nude is usually projected as "the explanation or the very reason for being of Western art: that point

the classics, however, the body features a head adorned by a gorilla mask, and a provocative message in bold letters: "Do women need to be naked to enter the Met Museum?"[8] Below, in smaller font, the Guerrilla Girls respond: "Less than 5% of the artists in the modern art section are women, but 85% of the nudes are female." The gift I got from Anne was a reproduction of the Guerrilla Girls classic, this time in Portuguese, showcasing printed statistics adapted to the Brazilian museum. The answer to the question shows a reality as disproportionate as the numbers of the New York counterpart: "only 6% of the artists in the contemporary art section of São Paulo are women, but 60% of the nudes are female."

"I thought it was a great idea since we're going to talk about nudes and exposure," Anne explained to me with one of her infectious laughs. "When an artist paints a naked woman, it's art and a museum exhibition; when a woman takes a picture of herself on her cell phone camera it is acting like a bitch, an immoral exposure of intimacy," she continued. Anne opposed the nudity found in the museum ("art") to the internet nudes. The comparison worked as a productive contrast to highlight the "hypocrisy"—in her own terms—in both the meanings and the moral and social consequences of the nudity of women stamped in a digital self-portrait. Anne reminded me that, when contextualised, nudity takes on quite heterogeneous meanings.

In museums, the reproduction of women's bodies—produced mostly by men, as evoked by the Guerrilla Girls—gains the contours of ethical and aesthetic legitimacy as "artistic nudes;" whereas *nudes*,[9] images of naked bodies produced by women themselves with their cell phone câmeras, are often seen as potentially dangerous and often understood as a vulgar, risky and tasteless practice. On one hand, the erudition of institutionalised Art, proper noun, in its main space of sacralization, the museum. On the other, the obscene, the unwanted behaviour, the joke with ulterior motives and the imminent (and justifiable) moral persecution. "Can you imagine, one day, an exhibition of nudes made by women themselves in a museum?" laughed Anne, "no fucking way."

As we walked along the museum building, I realised that although technology

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or dramatic intersection between the natural and the celestial, between the ideal and the real, between the carnal and the spiritual, between the body and the soul" (Calvo Serraller 2005, p. 61, originally in Portuguese, translated by the author).

8   The Metropolitan Museum of Art, located in New York City, is one of the largest and most visited museums in the world.

9   In Brazil, *nude* is an Anglicism that can also designate colour, generally describing shades that approach beige or other pastel tones. This use of the term, which implicitly alludes to the naked body, brings along a naturalisation of light-coloured skin, obliterating the diversity of human skin colours, especially the black complexion.

had allowed extensive conversations between two women who lived in different cities (me in São Paulo and she in Rio de Janeiro), internet-mediated dialogues had not evidenced, with the same nuance, the pleasures of the non-verbal communication of our bodies, especially the exuberance in Ann's charismatic speech. She likes to present herself as a "beautiful, black, curly, favela" woman, who "came into the world to make noise, just like those Guerrilla Girls, I was just born not as well located."

Anne and I had met two years earlier, in Brasília, during an event about public safety. On the occasion, I presented some reflections about police work in specialised Women's Police Stations in São Paulo and Anne gave an instigating speech, chronicle of the military occupations of favelas in Rio de Janeiro. She lived in one of the largest slum "complexes" in the city and, given her role as a local leader, she was involved with sectors of the Black Movement and women's activism, as well as with groups that demanded the eviction fo the military police from their territory. During this process, Anne had begun to post texts with biographical notes on social media about "living and surviving" in the favela. "That's how I came into the world," said Anne, reconstructing her personal trajectory, listing elements that indicated her "voice gains" with the possibility of digital online communication. "Being in the world," in her perception, implied speaking and being heard, or rather, writing and being read. During the period in which this research was carried out, she became a professional and started to write about her personal experiences, contextualising them in analyses of the broader political and social conjuncture.[10]

> *I'm a writer above all, I don't want to be limited to a favela woman who writes. I am a writer who is also from the favela, the two things are not mutually exclusive. Same with feminism or the Black Movement, you know? I don't want to be just a feminist, to be defined by it. This generates expectations that I position myself in relation to everything. So I chose not to identify as a feminist, but I support it. Look, I'm just a writer. Of course these things are important, but it's not my label. I write.*

Sleeping and waking up to the sound of gunfire, the frequent *unrolling*[11] with

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[10] In order to protect the anonymity of my interlocutors, I deliberately omit or "cloud" (Cf. Archambault, 2017) pieces of information that could identify them. To this end, I allowed myself an exercise in combining, suppressing and exchanging characteristics. In this textual tangle, none of the characters in this research exactly match any of the women I interacted with. In some cases, such as that of Anne, who is now a relatively public person, the strategy proved to be trickier and more challenging, despite being fundamental to the ethical standards pursued.

[11] Rio slang for interactions and resolutions with groups associated with drug trafficking.

the boys of the *movement*, dealing with police brutality everyday and the racism and prejudice faced by favela residents are common themes in her texts. As frequent or more than comments about collective social issues are the outbursts related to her own love/sexual involvements, family relationships and personal matters: "exposing myself is my livelihood, I cannot have limits and frills with privacy and intimacy, just like some people out there." Operationalized as a tool for the occupation of, and an attempt to transform, a world "not prepared for women like me to want to appear," in Anne's life, internet exposure is voluntary, politicised and, many times, inevitable. As a political strategy, it became a profession and activism: "I give flesh, face and feeling to statistics." Writing, publishing, being read and establishing contact with readers also sharpens her self-awareness, already extremely attentive to the differences and inequalities that cross her as a black and "*favelada*" woman. Anne's body, not only in its physical and material format, but as a discursive configuration entangled in power relations, is deliberately highlighted as an act of manifesto, rebellion and resistance. No wonder Anne was one of the women with whom I interacted who most emphasised a certain positive quality of *nudes*, highlighting their transgressive potential for bodies and subjects that occupy unequal material and symbolic space in society. Anne's *nudes* shift parameters previously established in the recording and circulation of images of women like her.

> *I'm a big-butted black carioca, man. There are postcards with the asses of girls like me being sold to gringos. Who took this photo? Why doesn't that ass have a head? Is it for gringos to see? When I capture and send my nude, I'm saying how I want to be seen. I don't know, I've never elaborated on this much, but thinking about it, I'm also saying: look, I'm a person, I have a face, a head, desires, and opinions. I look at the faces of these women in the museum paintings and they look sad to me, don't you think they are sad? I read somewhere, I think on the internet, that most of these women in the nudes of classical painters were prostitutes or badly talked about. Then you see, how absurd, we see it written 'nude of so-and-so', so-and-so being the artist. The nude belongs to the woman, gee, and we don't even know her name or if she wanted us, two hundred years later, to stare at her ass. My nudes are taken by me, not some cocky European man who will be called a genius. In mine, I'm happy and fulfilled, unlike those girls with gloomy faces.*

In Anne's *nudes*, gender and race are inescapable dimensions of the composition of the images. In criticising a stereotype that hypersexualizes Brazilian women—especially black and "mulatto" women (Correa, 1996)—as one of the main attractions of the country as an erotic olympus, a kind of "sexual paradise"

(Simões, 2016) for foreigners,[12] Anne emphasised the voluntary, active and pleasurable quality involved in the production of their own nudes. Making decisions about her own image, for Anne, would remove her from the unwanted position of a still object of someone else's desire. Making women a subject of themselves, *nudes* stress the nexus between female sexuality and passivity. "Have you noticed that everything about this issue shows a woman with her hands over her face, all cornered and dying of shame? I want to die… They never show an all-powerful woman, but that's how I feel."

When we first met—and "our saints clicked,"[13] she joked—Anne and I exchanged contacts and social media profiles, occasionally liking and commenting on each other's posts. A few months after the first meeting, Anne read a post on Facebook in which I commented on the topic of my research. Excited, she sent me private messages: "Do you work with *nudes*? I am the admin[14] of a group of women who like to talk about it, do you want to meet them?" I already knew about the existence and popularity of online *nudes* exchange groups. Most of them were introduced to me by men who, after discovering my research interests, tried to elucidate for me that these spaces would not be essentially bad or predatory, since they would not have as their objective women's harassment, objectification and moral condemnation. For these men, many of whom are homosexual, the exchange of *nudes* would provide the relaxed and exciting circulation of "more real" erotic content than professional pornography, seen as "fake," "forced" or "uninteresting." Despite several requests on my part, and the fact that these groups are "mixed" (made up of both men and women and people of different sexual orientations), I was never admitted to any of them.

The invitation to participate in "Pimentinhas" (Portuguese for Little Peppers)

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[12] According to Simões (2016), there are two recurrent stereotyped versions of the exercise of sexuality in Brazil. On one hand, the country would be invested by senses of lasciviousness as an erotically permissive place, marked by the availability for erotic transgression. On the other hand, it would take on the contours of a locus intrinsically crossed by intense discrimination, moralization, violence and brutalization directed at sexuality, especially of women and LGBT people. These images, although conflicting, do not exclude or cancel each other out. On the contrary, they would precisely highlight the complex and changeable tensions structuring the possibilities of sexual pleasure and danger, since there would be no cultural convention immune to dissent.

[13] "Saint" here refers literally to a person's guiding deity in the Afro-Brazilian pantheon. Metaphorically, "saints click" when two people spontaneously find a mutual affinity that they deem transcendental..

[14] At the time, when a *Facebook* user created a group, he/she became its *admin*. In addition to the features allowed to any participants, the admin can: remove posts, block members, add other admins, as well as edit group descriptions and settings.

came in handy. I had been researching the topic of *leaked nudes* for some time, living with the constant fear that the ethnographic and analytical approach that started with demands and discussions about *leaks*—both initially established in my project and biassed by my first insertions in the field—were eclipsing more polysemic and polyphonic of the the relationships between new information technologies, women, images and eroticism. Such annoyance took on practical contours, for example, when I found myself searching for images that could accompany presentations of versions of this work at conferences and events. Whatever the terms used in the online search engines, most of the results brought images that illustrated media approaches—journalistic or even feminist—that seemed to want to highlight the shameful, dangerous, violent and violating potential of *leaks*. In Anne's words, "a woman with her hands on her face, all cornered and dying of shame" and not "powerful."

Anne's excitement about capturing her own *nudes* served as a trigger for me to finally decide to approach the practice of creating digital erotic self portraits with different eyes. I had already noticed that, in the midst of narratives of leaks marked by suffering, shame and regret, almost all the women with whom I interacted also stressed the fun and the joy , albeit ambivalent, involved in producing and sending those images. One vented:

> *It's complicated. I stayed with my ex for a long time out of pure fear that he would leak my nudes. He has thousands of pictures of me. It started with a little joke, "let's have a photoshoot", "send a picture of your bra", "how are you dressed now?". There were times I liked it, there were times it was annoying. He was ridiculous, he would send me a picture of a dick. Oh, sorry, but that's it, a dick pic, when I was in class. When I sent mine and he said it drove him crazy, I liked it. I like it... When you're dating, you trust the person and it's good. I am afraid, but I only send nudes to my boyfriend. Taking a naked photo doesn't make anyone a whore. I already thought so, but today I know I'm not, because I'm not, I've only had two boyfriends in my life, and I send nudes. Whew, I said it!*

If, for this girl, talking about *nudes* involved the admission of a secret that brought relief and doubts about the moral meanings of capturing and sending erotic images, other interlocutors showed less modesty when associating the practice of photographing themselves with highly pleasant sensations. "I feel sexy, powerful and beautiful. I now know what my best profile is, what angle favours me, how I can get prettier. It's great!," another woman told me, as she slid her fingers across the screen of her cell phone, excited about showing me images in which her body appeared in front of mirrors, in different poses and adorned with makeup, lace and silk.

However, as soon as we started talking about the leaks and episodes of exposure, the positive or ambiguous aspects of the practice of exchanging *nudes* lost prominence in the face of narratives that highlighted the emotional upheavals that those experiences had brought to them. Often, those statements were accompanied by reports of other painful personal experiences. Invariably, these were situations that could be described in terms of domestic and sexual violence. From the interactions that I experienced and witnessed in "Pimentinhas," I felt prompted to explore the varied contours of the production of these erotic images. After all, before a photo is sent or eventually *leaked*, it is captured. The way the women and girls of "Pimentinhas" talked about *nudes* was full of references to the satisfaction, daring and rebellion in the capturing and sharing images of their naked bodies. On their own terms, of course.[15]

Who points the camera: control, ruptures and continuities in capturing images

Our desires make a mess.
French feminist slogan[16]

Presenting itself as a heavily moderated (and therefore safe) space where women could openly address, without constraints or fears, any topics considered taboo by society, "Pimentinhas" featured content about contraceptive methods, menstruation, masturbation and (mostly) sex. Configured as a "secret" group, that is, one in which participants would only have access to any information about the group after being invited by one of its administrators, "Pimentinhas" had a strict evaluation procedure to accept new members. On the occasion of my entry, for example, I had to commit to faithfully complying with all the pre-established guidelines, the most important of which was an absolute ban on printing. This prohibition was

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[15] Petrosillo (2016) addressed the potential of *nudes* as a form of flirtation, among other forms of communication, especially for youngsters socialised in digital environments. However, she also approaches nudes as an ambiguous object and recognizes the pressing possibility of their vexatious exhibition.

[16] "*Nos désirs font désordres*" was printed in buttons and magnets distributed by French Canadian hacker activists during the 2016 "Internet Governance Forum" (IGF), held in the Mexican city of Guadalajara. In the face of the moralization of nudity and sexuality of women on the internet, they challenged government and technology company representatives (almost all men) who debated network regulations, guidelines, and protocols.

intended to make the much-feared *leaks* unfeasible.[17] The group's internal code of conduct, a fixed publication tha, also included the prohibition of commercial exchanges as well as the non-tolerance for comments considered discriminatory or prejudiced. "This is a place where no one will judge you or expose you," read the introductory post. The statement explicitly acknowledged the popularity, on the web, of comments hostile to both the morals and the appearance of women, the so-called "court of the internet." As far as I could tell, most of the "little peppers" were in their 20s and 30s. Few knew each other personally (on or offline, since such differences did not seem to make much sense between them). It was not known who the creators of the group had been.

On Fridays, the "praise tours"[18] took place, themed publications in which participants sent photos of themselves so that the others could make flattering evaluations. Highlighting what they considered "of good taste," the "little peppers" exchanged tips on angles, poses and tricks, especially for *nudes* or *semi-nudes*. The latter were images of partial nudity in which the areola of the breasts or the genitals were usually covered as a way of trying to circumvent the censorship potential of some online social media platforms. With set rules, these conversations took place during a specific period of time and the contents of the praise tour were completely removed once the stipulated time for its duration had passed. In these interactions, the capturing and sending of *nudes*, in addition to being linked to seduction or flirtation, functioned both as an exercise in self-worth and self-esteem, strongly connected to positive perceptions of one's own image, as well as a way of questioning moralising messages directed at women.

One doesn't send a *nude* to just any person. Nudes create a moral economy of affection, that evokes expectations of reciprocity and respect. The exchange of erotic images involves a complex erotic, affective, political and moral economy, since these images have a recipient/interlocutor and a particular use in mind, even if it is the self or a group that offers compliments. By inserting subjects into relationships of mutual and lasting obligations (in view of the durability of the digital material, the ease of its circulation and its harmful potential), it is expected that the one who receives them will reciprocate the trust that has been granted.

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[17] By answering the mandatory questions, I declared myself an academic researcher and gave a brief description of my interests. I was accepted on the condition that I would never identify or approach any participant without their express authorization. Whenever I interacted with the "little peppers," I repeated the circumstances of my presence in the group. I am not unaware of my position as an 'academic leaker'. To all these women and girls, I offer my most sincere thanks.

[18] In Portuguese, "tour de elogio."

Part of the interviewees in my research associated the capturing of *nudes* with sending these images to people with whom relationships of trust and affection had been established. In this context, *leaking a nude* would be a breach of a tacit agreement that directly affected emotional expectations. I frequently found an association between *leaks* and betrayal. In the context of flirtation, seduction, love and romance, such formulations seem to reproduce romanticised views of sex, associated with affection, intimacy and love. Behind this connection, there is the assumption that sex involves the deepest and most internal aspects of the subject, therefore it should not be approached casually or as mere erotic pleasure.

In "Pimentinhas," *nudes* gained other meanings. "I used to judge those who practised *nudes a lot*, I thought it was really a slut thing, until I joined the group," Rebeca, a 20-year-old from Rio de Janeiro native and an active participant in the "praise tours," told me. Though inappropriate, whore, slut, tramp, slag are symbolic expressions to designate and attack stigmatised femininities. Despite that, the "pimentinhas" were often proud of being part of a space that questioned "the squareness of society." Rebeca was a great example of transformation resulting from group interactions. "I started to like it a lot. I'm not even going to send nudes to anyone, it's for myself. I kind of feel horny about myself," she told me. Like Anne, Rebeca associated the practice of *nudes* with significant changes in the appreciation of herself as a woman "different from beauty standards," as well as in the way she evaluated other women's behaviour.

Before the selfie camera, I didn't even like having pictures taken of myself. I didn't even look at myself, I didn't like my body. I'm huge, black, with big, black hair... I look dark in the pictures. But now, I'm the one taking the picture. I know which side of me looks better, how I should put my nose, my chin... The more I kept capturing nudes, the sexier I started to perceive myself. I started to feel my body as beautiful, but a beautiful one that I control, not a beautiful one because a guy whistles in the street.

Rebeca's words announced elements common to the description of the process of capturing these images among different interlocutors of my research. Creating and exchanging *nudes*, they said, presupposes looking at oneself: testing angles, poses, lights, shadows, cuts, and editing; evaluating oneself in aesthetic, political and erotic terms, flexing (often) socially shared notions of beauty, attractiveness, vanity, and self-esteem.

Rebeca had contacted me via *Messenger* to report her own experience with a leak, when nude photographs of her ended up on *Twitter.* The person responsible for disseminating the images was an ex-boyfriend that she described as "crazy, aggressive, controlling and dissatisfied," who had recorded them without her

consent. At the time, he had hidden his cell phone. Rebeca only found out about what happened after some friends sent her screenshots of the images via *WhatsApp*. Angrier than scared or embarrassed, Rebeca chose to personally hold her ex accountable.

> *I do a lot of nudes, I post here, I love to see myself, enjoy myself and he threw me in this depraved scenario I didn't even know existed. Honestly, it bothered me more that they were such ugly pictures. It's all a print of me moving. If it was a nude I had captured myself, at least it would be beautiful because I made it.*

In the production of *nudes*, people, bodies and behaviours are evaluated, ranked and disputed. However, for an image to be worthy of the nude title, in general, the person portrayed must have actively participated both in its making and in the approval of the final result. Taken without consent, as explained by Rebeca as well as other interlocutors in this research, erotic images become "pornography" or even a form of sexual violence. As one of the "little peppers" explained to me: "If a *nude* I sent is *leaked*, it's horrible, wow, tragic. Now, if they film me without my knowing it, it's like they're raping me. Both things are serious, but I think one is more."

Perceiving oneself as beautiful and "in control" of the images of oneself were meanings regularly attributed to the production of *nudes*, not only among the participants of "Pimentinhas." Pointing the camera and recording one's own image aroused strong sensations of pleasure and control, since the *nudes*, as erotic self-portraits made with the front cameras of smartphones, allow the simultaneous occupation of the position of "photographed" and "photographer." One of my interlocutors was so enthusiastic about digital self-portraits—erotic or not—that she stated that she did not even like to be photographed by other people: "every photo that is not taken by me is ugly."

According to Preciado (2018), the invention of photography gives the technical production of the materiality of the body the value of visual realism, exposing the body to the gaze of the camera operated by a hand outside the frame. In this context, the subject cannot be the agent of its own representation, creating a power relationship between the object and the photographed subject. Associated with will, autonomy and satisfaction, *nudes* enhance the look at oneself, allowing the realisation of choices as well as the establishment of limits related to the ways in which one wants to be perceived. Not "being photographed," but photographing oneself seems to point to an important inversion in the vector of power in the "political economy of representation" (Kappeler, 1986) of female bodies and sexuality.

That dominant sexual order establishes the male monopoly over the production and meanings of erotic images of women.

Many women who identified as "fat" or "non-standard" claimed to have begun to admire their own bodies after they started making erotic self-portraits. Rebeca, for example, emphasised the importance of practice in transforming her self-esteem, "I'm black, if I don't think I'm beautiful, who will?" Both Rebeca and Anne, "black, big favela women" (in their own terms), attributed to the *nudes* new and positive articulations between gender, sexuality and corporeality,[19] elements that, when intersected, tend to rank women in patterns of desirability materialised in the aesthetic, social and moral value of white thin bodies.

If *nudes* can be claimed as a way of questioning hegemonic patterns of representation of women's bodies that are restrictive and prejudiced.[20] The practices around them can also engender positions and discourses that point towards the maintenance of those same values.

One of the busiest praise tours took place when one of the participants introduced herself as a *camgirl*,[21] offering suggestions to improve the quality of the *nudes* evaluated there. The girl argued that, knowing some techniques and tricks of photography and body modelling, "ordinary" women could produce better images of themselves. The group's participants reacted enthusiastically, and the tour, scheduled to last just a few hours, spanned two days.

Tricks were taught about clothes ("wear lace lingerie, you have to have a part of your body covered, but don't go overboard with red!"), hairstyles ("hair always loose, tied up is chic, but not sexy"), poses ("pout or opening the lips slightly, but not too much, otherwise it looks like a slut," "legs crossed in front of the torso is a classic"), angles ("photo always from top to bottom, please"), lighting ("the shadow creates a mood, try to stay against the light"), sets ("in front of the mirror is beaten, be creative"), image editing programs ("Facetune removes double chin and reduces noses") and aesthetic conventions ("black and white gives a more artistic tone, there is no black and white porn.") The artifices suggested by the

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[19] Anne McClintock (2010 [1995]), a reference in contemporary debates on "intersectionality," states that "race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience," but "exist in relation to each other and through this relation—albeit in different ways contradictory and in conflict" (2010, p. 19).

[20] In Connel's formulation (1987), competing discourses and practices promote both the maintenance of gender values and norms, while they also resist, change and challenge them. Nevertheless, a hegemonic model would prevail that determines and influences alternatives.

[21] The term camgirl usually refers to women who produce and circulate erotic materials on the internet. Some "camgirls" offer sexual services. Therefore, being called that is often negatively associated with prostitution (Senft, 2008).

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camgirl mobilised a rhetoric that I often find in formulations about *nudes*, which often encourage the use of techniques to simultaneously highlight and hide parts of the anatomy, valuing both the modification of the original image and greater "naturalness" possible; balancing on a tightrope between resorting to tricks to disguise undesirable elements and not mischaracterizing itself.

Among my interlocutors, the *Facetune* app often appeared as an important ally in capturing images, especially facial close-ups. A cheaper alternative to *Photoshop*,[22] that app is used to edit/alter photographs in order to slim bodies and disguise supposed imperfections (pimples, stretch marks, cellulite, freckles and moles). In the use of image editing applications, the search for increasingly beautiful *nudes* also underlined the enhancement of whitened racial phenotypes, perceptible from the incessant pursuit of artifices to reduce the nose, thinned faces and softened features. The desire for a "sharp," "upturned," "small" or "arrogant" nose was one of the most common themes in the interactions of the "Pimentinhas" group.

It can thus be seen that, in an ambivalent way, the practice of *nudes* also evidences the strength and prevalence of certain shared notions of beauty, fiduciary of hegemonic standards of desirability, as explained in practices that privilege young bodies, endowed with racialized characteristics, as well as, ideally, "no folds and no visible flakes."

All nudity will be punished: why are nudes so bothersome?

After spending twelve months with "Pimentinhas," the "invasion" took place: an event that definitively interrupted the "praise tours" and consequently led to the dissolution of the group, at least in the format in which I first knew it.

From the moment I joined, I noticed that the concern for the safety of the participants was so high a priority for the administrators that they went into lengths at stressing it in multiple ways, in the "public configurations" chosen, in the rigorous selection process, in the requirement that all members be women, as well as the strong ban on prints. There, security was synonymous with anticipat-

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[22] An instrumental emblem of the new times" (Sibilia, 2015), *Photoshop* is often accused of being primarily responsible for a "purification of body images," censoring and tampering with attributes considered uncomfortable: wrinkles, sagging and adiposity. The obsession with retouching, however, would not be new in digital times. Corbin (1987) argues that, as early as 1855, crowds were excited by the possibility of transforming the record of physical appearance using techniques that hid "traces, spots, redness, wrinkles, inconvenient warts disappear from smooth faces, haloed by an artistic delicacy" (1987, p. 397).

ing *leaks*, given that erotic photographs of women can be branded as morally rep-
rehensible. By adopting such conduct, the administrators and group participants
recognized that the practices associated with *nudes* could be in disagreement with
some basic premises of a dominant morality, according to which women who
adopt certain sexual behaviours are liable to be judged, blamed and attacked.
Because they anticipated the possibility of violation, they imagined they were
protected from such an incident. "This is a space free of 'machismo'," read one of
the group's descriptions.

In "Pimentinhas," "machismo" described the unilateral valorization of sexual
behaviour: the predilection of virility in men combined with the disqualification of
the same behaviour in women. If, for men, the exercise of sexuality is something to
be praised in public, bringing prestige and personal value; for women, that exercise
requires to balance sexual desire and pleasure with the maintenance of respectabil-
ity, as opposed to promiscuity. For the "little peppers," however, defending *nudes*
as a practice did not exclude the recognition of the (very real and harmful) possi-
bility of losing control over those images. Because, within the hegemonic morality,
leaks could be used to reprimand a perceived misconduct by women from whom
modesty and modesty are expected.[23] As a way of punishing behaviour, *leaks* were
widely known ubiquitous hazards. Many of the group's participants had already
been exposed or knew someone who had gone through similar situations.

The risk of losing power/control and suffering moral sanctions did not abso-
lutely prohibit the practice. "I know that a lot of people think it's wrong to post
and take a naked picture, but if I don't think so, if I like it, I won't stop doing it,
right," as Rebeca rhetorically put it. "I'm not an active feminist, but I think it's
important to ask. Otherwise I wouldn't even have sex, you know, if I were only
thinking about what people might say." Similar to what they did when exchanging
tips and information about "safe sex" and sexually transmitted diseases, the "pi-
mentinhas" looked for ways to make doing *nudes* less risky. They firmly believed
that, by creating a space "without men" and "without prints," they would be pro-
tected. The group's "invasion" shattered this illusion. Anne told me:

> *Suddenly, several strange posts began to appear, posts offending every-*
> *one, saying that there were only sluts, whores, and lesbians here. Someone*
> *had printed a lot of the conversations. We think it was a girl's boyfriend,*
> *because a girl came to us saying that he sent prints to her family. I don't*
> *know if she left her profile logged in and he went in… Everyone knew*

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23 It is relevant to mention that the exposure of misconduct by companies, governments and
other powerful groups is the premise of Wikileaks' political leaks.

that what happened here couldn't be leaked under any circumstances, it couldn't get out of here.

This changed the dynamics of interactions from then to a degree that, eventually, the group began to be abandoned. Talks about sex were often replaced by discussions about the future presidential elections and political party preferences, alienating a significant number of participants. "It has become a place to complain about Bolsonaro,"[24] joked Anne, who left her administrator role. Rebeca also left the group: "Now it's just feminist and left-wing talk, I really liked that it was about sex." However, none of them abandoned the practice of capturing and sending *nudes*: "There will always be a risk, there's no way around it, but I'm not going to stop doing it," said Anne.

But why does showing certain parts of the human anatomy cause such a stir? Although its definitions are contextually, historically and politically contested, nudity made visible is, as a rule, associated with obscenity, deemed immoral. Within hegemonic parameters, the revelation of the naked body is considered tainted, indecorous, infamous, insolent and corrupting of collective morals. Bared female bodies, in particular, are even more invested in accusations of indecency.

The laws that classify public nudity as a crime illuminate the social moralization of the display of bodies. In Brazilian law, for example, the criminal definition of "obscene act" is considered too intangible even for professionals in the area.[25] In a field as normative and pragmatic as Law, the statute of the obscene is invested with instability. "In everyday practice, one tries to define an average modesty," a judge told me, "a certain thermometer of both what would or would not be adequate and what that would consist of in a public place, for example. Generally speaking, 'obscene act' would be an unseemly bodily expression, whatever that may be."

"A lot depends on the interpretation of the magistrate authority. It is an open criminal type that accepts several interpretations, which creates legal uncertainty, I admit," explained to me, in another situation, a public prosecutor. And she continued: "There are some typical cases of 'obscene acts', such as taking out the penis to urinate in public or showing the breast in a political demonstration. There are women who have already been arrested in Brazil for this."

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[24] Jair Bolsonaro (originally PSL-RJ), then was federal congressman and presidential candidate. In many of his speeches, he took public stands against women's and other groups', such as the LGBT population, the Black population and indigenous peoples' rights. In late 2018, Bolsonaro was elected president of Brazil.

[25] Art. 233 of the Brazilian Penal Code: "the practice of an obscene act in a public place, or open or exposed to the public" (Cf. CP, 1940).

Questioning the controversial removal by *Facebook* of photographs of breast-feeding women—identified by the platform as sexually explicit images—,[26] researcher Paula Sibilia (2015) proposed to reflect on the historical and semantic links between naked bodies and immorality. Sibilia points out that moral meanings attributed to the nudity of the human body are historically variable, related to different "visuality regimes:" hierarchies and norms that organise the ways in which we visually and morally see the world. Using traditional Christian iconography, whose "Madonna" is one of the most prolific features in imagery and semantic repertoires, Sibilia walks through mediaeval, Renaissance, and colonial art, to find several representations of the Virgin Mary in which she appears in acts of lactation. For a long time, the author argues, paintings, frescoes, stained glass, and sculptures showed the naked breast of the mother of Christ, clothed with an aura of sacredness. Therefore, it could be understood that the association between the naked breast and eroticism would not be evident or universal.

Part of the "pornification of the gaze," the moralization not only of the female breast, but of naked bodies, would be the result of complex historical processes that associated the naked body with sexuality and secrecy. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, nudity was gradually associated with sexuality, the erotic and desire, spheres considered private, forbidden and subversive. The naked body, seen as sexually explicit, came to be understood as something that should be protected and hidden, under penalty of serious sanctions. Thus, exposed nudity symbolically moved from the sacred to the order of shame, modesty, and secrecy. Sibilia shows how, despite the various transformations and twists that took place over the last few centuries regarding the moralization of naked bodies and the prescription of modesty and secrecy with regard to sex, nudity and eroticism, the quip of breast-feeding mothers censored by *Facebook* indicates that the association between nudity, sex and depravity is still in full swing.

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[26] In 2018, *Facebook* became involved in controversies regarding the moralization of nudity by challenging photographs of Suruwaha Indians recorded by the celebrated photographer Sebastião Salgado and shared by Brazilian filmmaker Roberto Gervitz. In the images, the Suruwaha bodies wear their own traditional clothing. However, breasts and parts of genitalia are visible. In the same year, the FUNAI (National Indian Foundation) account was blocked due to a commemorative post on the occasion of the month of indigenous women. The images showed Waimiri Atroari women with their breasts exposed. Again, the people portrayed were adorned with necklaces, headdresses, body paintings and headdresses. For *Facebook*, Suruwahas and Waimiri Atroari were considered physically and morally naked. Although the platform apologised on both occasions, the situations show the maintenance of inflexible and ethnocentric notions of nudity/obscenity.

"The biggest problem is the family:" the feared consequences of leaked nudes

Talking to me about the "Pimentinhas" invasion, Anne later reflected: "we managed to suppress it here in the group. Apart from the girl who was *exposed* by her ex, it had no major consequences. I think that's why it didn't turn into a tragedy. It wasn't a *leak* at all." In Anne's perception, *leaked nudes* are ranked in terms of their importance and severity according to the social harm they cause. This reminded me of other interlocutors who pointed out, with some frequency, that their greatest fear in the face of possible *leaks* did not come from the generalised publicity of their erotic images on the internet, but from the circulation of those images amongst particular groups and people, especially members of their families. They expressed concern, above all, with the impact of a potential family scandal and its consequences for parents, children, husbands, and boyfriends (current or future). "I was very ashamed, my biggest fear was that my parents would know;" "I couldn't even sue because I would have to let my father know;" "Actually, my biggest fear is my father and my current boyfriend finding out;" "It would be my father's biggest disappointment knowing that I did *nudes*;" "I was quite shaped by what my father and my ex-boyfriend expected;" "My problem is my ex-husband, he says I tarnished his honour";[27] "Nobody in my family even imagined that I dated women, the worst was my family;" "My son never forgave me." Those were some of the painful confessions I heard in the field.

Rose Leonel, perhaps the most famous "victim" of unauthorised dissemination of erotic images over the internet in Brazil, repeated in her recollections—some made directly to me— how much that event had affected not only her professional life, but especially her son's well-being: "A crime on the internet is not just against the victim, it's against the family. It destroyed my son's life, he moved to another country and moved away from me." Her words show the shame she felt when she deviated (albeit against her will) from the ideal of sexual behaviour expected and demanded of women. Rose's case happened before the popularisation of social media and smartphones. It unfolded when an (ex)boyfriend uploaded intimate images they had made together to pornography and prostitution websites, together with Rose's phone number.

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[27] In Social Anthropology, the language of "honour" and "shame" has been a privileged model for thinking about social and moral order in Mediterranean societies where the prestige and power of men depends on the sexual control of women (Cf. Lowenkron, 2012; Fonseca, 2000). In a formulation considered canonical, Pitt-Rivers (1965) highlights the complementarity between "male honour" and "female shame," since the honour of a man would be linked not to his sexual purity, but to that of his mother, wife, daughters and sisters.

Similarly, the case of Júlia Rebeca reveals how normative ideals of femininity subordinate and often condemn the sexual behaviour of women and girls. In 2013, her suicide—one among others—served as a trigger for debates on the subject in Brazil. Julia felt so disqualified in the eyes of her family by the disclosure of her sexual acts that she took her own life. The girl said goodbye to her mother in a message on *Twitter*: "I love you, I'm sorry I'm not the perfect daughter, but I tried." This shows how *leaked nudes* cause more fear and are taken more tragically when they reverberate among people whose moral evaluations impact the constructed image of the photographed women. However modern the wrapper may seem, women's sexuality is still an issue of family "honour." This led one of my interlocutors to confide to me that "at these times it is so good not to have a father present and to be separated from the family, because I don't care about my evangelical uncles who were shocked."

The emic use of the term "image" here both describes nudes empirically and, as a metaphor, is a moral category for "reputation," a central element in the construction and perception of self-worth. The British anthropologist F. G. Bailey (1971), in his classic study of a village in the French Alps—where everyone knew each other—reflected on the "politics of everyday life," that is, the power relations present in the exchange of information and interaction between people trying to manage complex behavioural expectations. Looking at day-to-day politics means being aware of the strategies people recur to for managing "reputations," situations in which people make choices aimed at maintaining an image in accordance with ideas and ideals of behaviour articulated by the "moral communities" to which they belong.

Having a reputation (not necessarily a good one) means being subjected to others, it concerns the opinions of others. Those opinions are informed by a heterogeneous repository of moral values that organise what is considered acceptable, reprehensible or praiseworthy. Built on the relationship with and dependent on the perception of others, reputations are uncontrollable. At most, one could try to manage them. Offences and gossip are useful ways to highlight those who failed in reputation management strategies. For Bailey, succeeding in this endeavour means maintaining the desired image, especially among those who really matter:

> (...) only the opinions of those with whom I am likely to interact are important to me. If people on the other side of the world learn from a newspaper what a fine fellow I am (or what a cad), this is of no concern unless I come into contact with those people (Bailey, 1971, p. 4).

My interlocutors' formulations about situations of *leaked nudes* are usually associated with narratives that trigger ideas of "shame" and "humiliation" as

stains on "reputation" (what they think of you). Those emotions come as a result of the failure to perform the expected modesty related to female sexuality and to control and regulate information about themselves in a way considered adequate and efficient. One can only ask if the motivations behind those who circulate these images with defamatory intentions are not performing male violence as a reaction to their loss of control over women's bodies and sexuality, a loss of control that affects their honour. In this sense, *leaks* act as a moral accusation that seeks to maintain a certain order.[28]

As real as in that village in the French Alps—where everyone knew each other—in the multiple and varied interactions of the digital age, the management of reputations has resounding effects on self-perceptions. An ambivalent power is invested in nudes regarding interpersonal bonds, intimacy and uncontrolled circulation of information. Therefore, contrary to the common depiction of the internet as an anonymous space where relationships are impersonal and detached, as regards to nudes the network works as a privileged space for the construction and dispute over reputations, where family and affective relationships remain central.

The right to capture and send *nudes*

> (…) no erotic act has an intrinsic meaning. A particular sexual activity may symbolise one thing in the majority culture, another thing to members of a sexual subculture… the context within which an erotic act occurs can also alter its meaning.
> Pat Califia, 1980

The scene was curious. The intensely blue sky, the temperature above thirty degrees and the salty humidity from the sea air contrasted with the formal and sober clothes of the dozens of people lined up in front of the Poeta Ronaldo Cunha Lima Convention Center, in João Pessoa, capital city of the state of Paraíba, in the northeastern Brazilian. The opulent construction of reinforced concrete sits next to the beautiful beach of Jacarapé, where the sea of light green tones meets the

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[28] In her research conducted among adolescents from public schools in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Petrosillo (2016) addresses humiliation, shame, gossip and the regulation of female sexuality connected to the exchange of *nudes*. According to the researcher, the circulation of *nudes*, when accompanied by vexatious and humiliating speech, becomes more problematic insofar as it "contaminates" family and affective networks.

waters of the river of the same name. The junction of fresh water with the ocean makes the place especially attractive for leisure and relaxation. Nevertheless, the small crowd huddled under the sun without any prospect of recreation.

Trying to remedy the heat, the men—the absolute majority in the line—took off their elaborate jackets. The few women present pointed their umbrellas at the sun's rays. Others disputed a share of their shadows. Every minute, people in ceremoniously formal attire descended from large, luxurious automobiles and gathered to wait. Street vendors offered bottles of mineral water and some goodies, but their trade was complicated by the variety of languages and foreign currencies among the potential consumers. This was the routine for four days, in November 2015, at the gates of the Internet Governance Forum (better known as IGF). The entry process was slow and rigorous, which explained the swarm of people uncomfortably crowded in the scorching heat.

Similar to procedures adopted at airports, borders and customs, admission to the event space was only allowed after careful searches of bags and luggage, passing through metal detectors, proof of identity by the show of passports and rigorous certification that the applicants had been registered and authorised to participate in the meeting. After the complex "security" rituals, which signalled the official character of the event with pomp and solemnity, the participants received an elaborate plastic badge that featured their photograph and credentials stamped next to an elaborate hologram of the logo of the United Nations, the main sponsor of the event.

After struggling through admission, perhaps as consolation, the participants were guided to a sumptuous lobby and greeted with free doses of caipirinha and milharina couscous, a rare Brazilian Northeast delicacy. As they walked by the stands of various NGOs and other organisations, participants accumulated gifts and trinkets, some popular and disputed and some less useful: brochures;, mobile phone chargers and pendrives, stickers, bags, candy and chocolate bars, the latter offered by the Belgian government delegation.

Inaugurated in 2006, the IGF presents itself as a multi-stakeholder forum that brings together representatives from governments, companies, universities and civil society organisations with the aim of promoting debate about the regulation, legislation, public policy and guidelines that apply to digital technologies, at the international, national and local level. That is, in the terms agreed for the event, "digital governance." The themes around which the 2015 edition of the IGF: accessibility; security; economic potential; inclusion/diversity and human rights. That year, three sessions addressed violence as related to gender (here understood synonymous with women) and digital technologies.But, unlike other spaces that I was used to where issues of women and violence were discussed—even the most

formal, endowed with a certain power mystique, common in the justice system—the IGF is an essentially male place. That amounts both to the mass of men who are the protagonists of its activities and to the topics considered of greater urgency and relevance. Relegated to a niche of interest, the debates on gender and the internet were vastly different from the rest at the event, either because they were conducted and attended almost exclusively by women or because they were considerably empty.

At the IGF meetings, as in other spaces where technology and rights were debated, I was struck by the number of people who walked around with their personal computers adorned with colourful stickers that, as a rule, stamped slogans dear to the claims about the internet. Before long, my own personal computer became an example of that, covered in images that I received and exchanged with different individuals and collectives. In 2015, however, my computer still didn't identify me as someone used to those spaces. It didn't show any adornments minimally engaged with technological agendas. This is what led a young woman from Malaysia and another from the Philippines to approach me. They were *APC*[29] and *Take back the tech*[30] representatives whom I had met at one of the women and technology sessions.

Upon noticing my *faux pas*, they engaged in a search for feminist stickers, something they considered essential as appropriate political attire for the event. For my baptism as a digital activist, they chose stickers printed with slogans of the "Feminist Principles of the Internet,"[31] such as "consent," "sexuality" and "expression." As I affixed the decals to the back of my rickety laptop,[32] I asked about those principles. Instead of an answer, I received an invitation to an informal meeting with "IGF feminists."

On the night of November 11, 2015, I went to a residential address in a neighbourhood close to the Federal University of Paraíba campus. The house, a greenish

[29] Acronym for the "Association for Progressive Communications," a network of non-profit organisations founded in the 1990s with the aim of promoting debates on technology and human rights, which includes associations of different nationalities, such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, Nicaragua, Sweden, among others.

[30] Philippine organisation that aims to bring women closer to the technical ICT resources (programming language, knowledge of hardware and software, among others), as well as preventing forms of violence against women on the internet.

[31] Manifesto launched in 2014, in Malaysia, by fifty women activists with the purpose of scrutinising basic non-sexist principles for the network. In 2015, the material was revised and adapted. Currently, feminist principles include seventeen slogans.

[32] The rudimentary personal computer I used during my field research was the subject of jocular comments that referred to my poor technological skills.

two-story residence with a large veranda decorated with wicker chairs, belonged to a local activist who had lent her home for a women's get-together. Nicknamed the "Feminist Off-IGF," the #FemHackParty was treated with some secrecy and invitations were made only by indication. At the #FemHackParty, we had access to feminist internet design initiatives, strategies to deal with online attacks on women in a playful way, techniques for data protection and privacy in intensely male spaces. Those tools were based on the argument that the architecture of the Internet reproduced repressive, violent, sexist stands, given that it was designed, programmed and carried out by a homogeneous group of white men from a few countries, something reflected in the composition of the IGF, with the exception of sessions where diversity was addressed and discussed.[33]

It was the official launch of the "Safer Nudes" brochure, produced by Coding Rights,[34] written by members of a women's collective. Subtitled a "sensual guide to digital security," the zine-manifesto compiles strategies and tools aimed at protecting "privacy" and "security" in the "registration and sending of erotically suggestive images." That is considered a practice as common as it is desirable, that facilitates ingenious and productive ways of experiencing sexuality in the digital environment. Questioning the commonsense hysteria about the proliferation of self-imagery as a futile cult of personality, the Safer Nudes brochure advocates for nudes and selfies to be interpreted as "political gestures," "a pleasurable resistance against machismo, conservatism, racism and heterosexual normativity" that gives visibility to a diversity of bodies, behaviours, aesthetics, acts and desires.[35]

Nudes and *selfies*, in that view, allow bodies to be looked at by those who inhabit them, they have a potential for self-affirmation and resistance by subjects whose identities place them in unequal situations of power and representation. Black bodies, LGBT, women who do not obey a certain aesthetic standard (fat, flaccid, old) vie for the status of deserving of being looked at, desired, loved and admired. Playing with the meme "*Manda Nudes*" (Send Nudes), the booklet moves between debauchery, humour and provocation, aware that it is challenging certain values and morals. Inciting technology-mediated imaginative exercises, the guide

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[33] *Facebook*, created by then university student Mark Zuckerberg, is a crass example of the extent to which the design of the internet is associated with the values and behaviours of those who create it. Zuckerberg had previously invented another online tool, *Facemash*, which hacked images of female Harvard University students to assess their physical attractiveness.

[34] Founded by Brazilian researcher and digital rights activist Joana Varon, Coding Rights presents itself as a "think tank" oriented towards the promotion of human rights on the internet.

[35] Responsible for the content of the material are: Natasha Felizi, Joana Varon and Fannie Souza (texts), Galatea La Llorona (art), Ana Pands (illustrations), Fannie Sosa, Carrie Mae Weems, Aleta Valente and Ana Mendieta (photos).

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includes an exhortation to "self-enjoyment," described in terms of creative and uninhibited experimentation with bodies, images and photographs ("be confident that there are no judgments or aesthetic constraints at play, "in the dual role of camera or model, you say what you're worth," "feel comfortable and sexy"). In the booklet, *nudes* are celebrated in their potential for experimentation and playful-erotic-moral daring.

Behind the maxim "every *nude* is a right" lurk assumptions and arguments that intend to demonstrate that registering, sending and receiving erotic images is a healthy, satisfying and legitimate activity, both for individual pleasure and for political and moral transgression. The use of *nudes* is invested with plural meanings. In addition to legal-political demands made to the State, claiming the right to the practice of *nudes* invokes demands for changes in behaviour and mentalities that recognize and guarantee autonomy over one's own body and the non-condemnable exercise of sexuality. In order to provide *nudes* practitioners with a more elaborate technological arsenal, the booklet presents possible preventive measures to unwanted surprises in the form of *leaks*. It is recommended to use "anonymization" strategies ("do not show your face, tattoos, birthmarks, scars, furniture in your home") combined with a preference for tools that provide more rigorous resources in content control (encryption, self-destruction, blocking the print screen function, hiding information and "pixeling").

By stressing that privacy, in digital times, would consist of the "power to choose who has access to our personal information and under what circumstances," the booklet takes special care not to associate any leak with negative experiences ("having your *nudes* published may not necessarily be bad, as long as it is your decision"). According to this argument, the boundary between healthy and desired *nudes* and the violation presented by the *leaks* (also called "exposure" and "revenge pornography") is controlling the circulation of content, that is, being able to ensure that information digital images serve the purposes stipulated by those who produced them and/or who is portrayed in them. The measure of the good *nude*, therefore, would be the power, control and autonomy produced in consensual relationships, trust and respect between people and technologies.

Although not explicitly presented as material aimed at women, the Coding Rights zine-manifesto indicates, in its aesthetic, political and linguistic choices, that the imagined interlocution is essentially female. *Nudes* are challenging precisely because they subvert certain erotic gender conventions: giving women the possibility of being the subject and not just the object of sensual imagery, evidencing bodies and practices distanced from the standard of thinness, youth, whiteness, heterosexuality and, why not, of a certain performance of modesty. Splashed with humorous illustrations and erotic photographs, the material features on the cover

the drawing of a female body from the back, whose face we cannot see, but whose buttocks are provocatively highlighted. Elsewhere, an illustration of a woman in a sensual pose, her facial expression suggesting a harmonious coexistence between her female body, her full breasts and her penis. The illustrations distance themselves from images that usually illustrate journalistic articles or campaign materials that deal with the topic of nudes. Broken cell phones, hidden or covered faces, body language alluding to suffering, shame and humiliation are illustrative choices much more present and represent cornered, demoralised, destroyed women.

"Safer Nudes" is a strategic example of the attempt to twist hegemonic conventions on eroticism and gender norms: defending the practice of nudes as a way of experiencing and symbolising nudity and sexuality, both others' and one's own, beyond modesty and shame. To posit nudes as a plausible manifestation might disturb the tolerance zone of the erotic, subvert the rules of integrity, as well as suggest rearrangements in current moral tabulations. This betting on *nudes* as an erotic alternative that can challenge the restrictions imposed by the moralization of female sexuality (prescribed to relationships of affect and a certain modesty) is affiliated with a broader social movement demanding greater acceptance of more plural eroticisms. In this direction, the defence of the practice of *nudes* can be understood within a context of demands for "sexual rights," the result of an intricate social path of dispute for understandings and positions that conceive the search for sexual pleasure as something necessary and fundamental for the well-being of women and contemporary subjects.

Debates about *nudes* and *leaked nudes* are part of the broader historical, political and social context of emergence, elaboration and diffusion of "sexual rights" (Carrara, 2015), bringing an agenda of claims and interventions in which gender and sexuality work. as primary sources of political, legal and moral discussions. Faced with the intensification and diversification of debates on "sexual citizenship" (Béjin, 1985), the right to exercise sexuality—whether in terms of pleasures, bodies, practices or sexual identities—is one of the nerve points of current legal-political clashes. In light of the current concerns and anxieties, *nudes* and *nude leaks* highlight disputes, changes and negotiations triggered by these regimes of moral regulation, often contradictory and conflicting. Moving through various—and sometimes contradictory—discourses, constructions and perceptions about gender and sexuality, nudes plead for the expansion of what is considered permitted and desirable, disputing the complex and fluid moralising frontiers of the erotic, pornography, the obscene, the indecent and the vulgar.[36]

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[36] Note the existence of pornographic possibilities other than the mainstream commercial type,

In various contexts it is advocated that *nudes* be understood as a healthy and inescapable erotic language of the present day. An attempt is made to keep the nudes away from practices considered clandestine or immoral of affective, loving and erotic interaction and expression, negotiating and disputing expansions and transformations in the moral status of sexuality according to which women must hide their sexuality or perform it from modesty. The practice of nudes challenges notions of appropriate femininity, posits a hegemonic sexuality and morality conventions that relegate women to the position of true repository of restrictive and limiting moral values (Moore, 1994). Contrary to that, it shows the tense coexistence of competing discourses that are not necessarily exclusive about sexual moralities.

Are 100% nudes possible? A conclusion of sorts

The tone on "Safer Nudes" is cheerful and optimistic—albeit sarcastic. It is remarkable the effort made by the authors to not indicate, at any time, that the safest thing would be not to capture or exchange *nudes*, thus recognizing that the practice involves excitement, pleasure and risks. However, the material does not fail to explain that, in the digital world, the only absolute guarantee of security would consist in "accepting the ephemerality of life and erasing everything immediately after using it." Its name, after all, is "*safer* nudes," not totally safe *nudes*.

In the edited volume "Pleasure and Danger" (1984), Carole Vance proposes that women's sexuality be understood in its paradoxical nature by simultaneously articulating possibilities of pleasure and danger. For the author, women's sexuality is marked by moments of tension and by the opposition between elements of violence, brutality or coercion and situations permeated by gratification, intimacy, sensuality, adventure and excitement. Those moments and situations exist in juxtaposition; although contradictory, they are not mutually exclusive. Pleasure and danger are therefore two sides of the same coin; satisfaction and risk are not either-or alternatives. Ambiguous and intertwined, they bring to women's lives the need to carry out daily risk anticipation calculations, as well as self-preservation strategies.

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where hegemonic and normative pattern of bodies, desires and sexual acts, prevail. Contemporary pornography includes "dissident sexual practices" (Benitez, 2010). An example of this would be the emergence of "altporn" (Parreiras, 2015), the advent of new technologies, generically definable by its attempts to twist the pornographic industry's mainstream pattern, bringing other bodies, desires, pleasures and sexual practices.

In the light of Vance's arguments, the Brazilian anthropologist Maria Filo-
mena Gregori (2016) points out that eroticism, when viewed from a gender per-
spective, must be understood as intrinsically bound by the pleasure-danger dyad,
which is evident in the tenuous borders and inescapable transits between enjoy-
ment and risk. Pleasure and danger, however, are not absolute essences, but a
reality insofar as relationships between men and women are permeated both by
asymmetries of power and by distinct and contrasting norms of gender and sexu-
ality. Likewise, I see the attempt to guarantee completely safe *nudes* as a paradox.
Like all erotic interactions, *nudes* make one vulnerable in relation to the other
and that invariably involves risks and dangers. On the one hand, one wants con-
trol over one's own image, to feel as the subject of desire, to play with the moral
limits attributed to women's sexuality. On the other, one fears the possibility of
bearing harsh consequences.

The meanings of *nudes* are disputed between the complex, heterogeneous
modes of moral regulation over erotic-sexual practices. Their meanings and effects
are being defined by the confrontations and coalitions between different moralities
and perceptions of the world. As a common practice and erotic language today,
nudes dispute the expansion, restriction or displacement of the subjects, sexual be-
haviours and practices conceived as acceptable or normal and those that are made
the object of persecution, discrimination, medical care or criminal punishment.
Making, sending and receiving *nudes* involve articulating experimentation, self-
perception, flirtation, pleasure, danger, claim, questioning, disobedience, daring
and humour. Consensually produced in private contexts of intimacy, desire and
pleasure, these intimate digital entities can be thought of as "libidinal stressors"
(Perlongher, 1987), erotic triggers linked to transgression, which articulate lust,
desire and pleasure, but can also be used for violence against women from the
moment they are taken out of context and mobilised for humiliation, persecution
and attacks. Invested with multiple meanings, nudes entangle values, affections,
desires, relationships and expectations that operationalize gender and sexuality
notions, discourses and norms which, in turn, hierarchize behaviours, sexual de-
sires and moralities attributed to men and women.

Made possible by the interactional and communicative potential of new tech-
nologies, it is also by means of those technologies that *nudes* can be easily spread,
leaving the control of those who produced them and circulating at the unprec-
edented speeds and scales inaugurated by the times of the internet. *Leaks* inter-
twine these "homemade" materials with sexual/sensual senses of excitement and
bliss and with the inherent risk of their unwanted propagation, its virulent con-
sequences of moral condemnation, persecution and attacks. Alternating risks and
pleasures, this swinging motion within the risky limits of secrecy illustrates the

permanence and strength of a norm that postulates the moralization of desire, of nudity and of women's sex while, at the same time, it challenges notions of appropriate femininity and hegemonic sexual and moral conventions. *Nudes*, as a visual and technological language, means either a dangerous pleasure or a pleasurable danger—or both—articulating hierarchies, norms, prohibitions as well as attempts at semantic, moral and political twists.

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