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Queer-Cripping Spanish Disability and Feminist Activism: A Critical Analysis of Andrea García-Santesmases's *El Cuerpo Deseado*

Abstract

This article explores the Spanish queer-crip alliances in the 15-M movement that took place in 2011, through which bodies that had previously been marginalized in the sexual-affective realm (including disabled and queer individuals) began to claim their place in public space. Against this background, the article critically examines the book *El Cuerpo Deseado: La Conversación Pendiente entre Feminismo y Anticapacitismo* [*The Desired Body: The Unfinished Conversation Between Feminism and Anti-Ableism*]. The book offers a concise overview of Andrea García-Santesmases's last ten years of research on the convergences and divergences between queer, feminist, and crip activisms in Spain. Drawing on intersectional Feminist Disability Studies, *El Cuerpo Deseado* invites us to wear both feminist and anti-ableist, queer, and crip lenses simultaneously to better navigate the complexities of contemporary issues of interest to feminist, queer, and crip activists—such as heterosexist and ableist violence, sexual assistance, euthanasia, abortion, the care crisis, or the politicization of marginalized identities. The book opens up relevant conversations for academic, non-academic and activist audiences beyond Spain. Yet, gender and sexuality issues are still more politicized than those surrounding disability. This creates an asymmetry between feminism and anti-ableism that might prevent such important conversations from happening.

Keywords: Spain, disability, ableism, feminism, queer, crip.

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INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALIZING FEMINISM AND ANTI-ABLEISM IN SPAIN

Back in February 2023, Telmo Irureta won the Best New Actor Goya Award for his performance in *La Consagración de la Primavera* ([*The Rite of Spring*], 2022, dir. F. Franco). This Spanish film explores sexual assistance through the story of an eighteen-year-old able-bodied university student who decides to become a sexual assistant for a young man with cerebral palsy, played by Irureta, who, in real life, shares the same condition as his character. At the ceremony, Irureta advocated for the "right to sexuality for disabled people." In a later interview, Irureta stated that "he has never resorted to [sexual assistance] because he has opted for prostitution ("Telmo Irureta").[1] In another interview, he clarified that "he has not always had sex by paying for it" (qtd. in Sánchez-Gento). These statements sparked controversy in certain circles, where critics such as Mabel Lozano, speaking from an abolitionist feminist position, retorted, "Sexuality is not a right; it is a desire" (qtd. in Otero), along with ableist accusations and insults such as *putero* [whoremonger] directed at Irureta (Prieto). Amid the uproar, the actor was forced to clarify in an interview for the Spanish National Radio Station: "I have never paid a woman. I mean, I am gay" (Asencio). Silence followed. Mainstream abolitionist feminists were lost for words before crip-queerness.

The anecdote raises some questions beyond the debate regarding whether all sex work is exploitative. Are disabled people, like Irureta and myself, truly considered sexed, sexual, and individuals? Would Irureta feel legitimized in claiming the right to sexual assistance and sex workers' services for disabled people, if he was a (lesbian/queer/trans) woman? What made Irureta feel the need to clarify that he had not always used sexual services because someone genuinely desired him? What led abolitionist feminists to assume that Irureta's desire was heterosexual? What is the connection between non-normative sexual orientations and disability? Can a disabled body be sexually desired? Can one desire to have a disabled body?

When this happened, García-Santesmases's *El Cuerpo Deseado: La Conversación Pendiente entre Feminismo y Anticapacitismo* [*The Desired Body: The Unfinished Conversation Between Feminism and Anti-Ableism*] was already at the printers. Had it been in the making, it surely would—I am allowing myself to imagine—have analyzed this anecdote. The book invites us to wear both feminist and anti-ableist, queer, and crip, hats simultaneously to better navigate the complexities of contemporary debates not only around sexual assistance but also euthanasia, abortion,

[1] Unless noted otherwise, all translations from Spanish are mine.

and the so-called "care crisis." These seemingly unrelated topics are, in fact, all linked by one invisible ethical and political thread; namely, the question regarding which lives deserve to be lived (Agamben; Morris) and enjoyed rather than merely endured (Centeno), reproduced (Malacrida), and grieved when lost (Butler). These debates have long preoccupied feminist and disability studies scholars and activists alike. However, as disabled feminist Jenny Morris argued thirty years ago in her introduction to her edited volume *Encounters with Strangers*, these traditions have not always engaged in dialogue with each other. *El Cuerpo Deseado* prompts them to return to this "unfinished conversation."

To understand both the reactions to the film starring Irureta and *El Cuerpo Deseado*, we must consider the events that took place in the Spanish context over the past decade. In the following section, I will outline the rise of queer-crip, feminist, and anti-ableist alliances in Spain at the time and review *El Cuerpo Deseado* in light of these developments. Finally, I will conclude by presenting what I believe are the book's main contributions and the conversations it leaves open for the future.

Before moving on to the next section, for the sake of situating this text, I would like to give a testimony both to the Spanish queer-crip alliances and to the birth of *El Cuerpo Deseado.* I met García-Santesmases in late 2017, when I was just acquainting myself with Critical Disability Studies and the vibrant queer-crip activist landscape that was shaking Spain at the time. Over the last decade, Andrea and I have built an intellectual and personal bond that has greatly shaped our perspectives on gender, sexuality, and disability. Thus, what follows is nowhere near a neutral account of Spanish queer-crip alliances or García-Santesmases's book. On the contrary, I aim to sketch my embodied journey through both in the hope of drawing some theoretically rigorous conclusions regarding the coalitions between these movements.

FROM THE CITY SQUARES TO *EL CUERPO DESEADO*: AN EMBODIED JOURNEY THROUGH THE CRIP-QUEER ALLIANCES IN SPAIN

La Consagración de la Primavera is not the first film to address sexual assistance or, more broadly, the sexuality of disabled people in the Spanish context. In fact, over the past decade, numerous cultural products dealing with this topic have emerged in Spain, including documentaries, such as *Yes, We Fuck* (2015, dir. R. de la Morena and A. Centeno; see the discussion of the film in this issue) and *Jo També Vull Sexe!* ([*I Want Sex, Too!*], 2017, dir. M. Armengou and R. Belis); feature films, such as *Nexos* ([*Links*], 2014, dir.

Post-Op et al.), *Vivir y Otras Ficciones* ([*Living and Other Fictions*], 2016, dir. J. Sol), and *La Consagración de la Primavera*, and plays, such as *Supernormales* ([*Supernormals*], 2021, dir. I. Rikarte), *Lectura Fácil* ([*Easy Reading*], 2022, dir. A. San Juan),[2] and *Mare de Sucre* ([*Sugar Mother*], 2021, dir. C. Cedó).

One of the most notable works due to its impact is *Yes, We Fuck* (*YWF*). Structured around six stories regarding disability and sexuality—several of which focus on sexual assistance—this documentary is the result of so-called *alianzas tullido-transfeministas* [crip-queer alliances] forged in Spain in the early 2010s.[3] As Centeno, co-director of *YWF* and activist in the Spanish Independent Living Movement, explains: "In the 'we' of the title, we have identified with and found different groups who engage in political work about and from the body (feminists, transfeminists, queers, people with functional diversity, fat activism. . .)" (110).

To understand the emergence of crip subjectivity within queer-crip alliances and *YWF*, we must first examine how a politicized disability subjectivity took shape in Spain. Historically, the Spanish disability advocacy movement has followed a service-provision approach. This has contributed to neutralizing its activist side (Guzmán-Castillo 100). As Moscoso-Pérez argues, "[i]nstead of promoting self-advocacy or empowerment for their users, these organizations . . . treat disabled people as service recipients and fail to foster further initiatives to support personal autonomy or political endeavors" (93). Against that trend, the *Foro de Vida Independiente y Divertad* (FVID) [Forum for Independent Living and Diverty[4]] was founded in Spain in 2001 by physically disabled activists. The FVID was inspired by the American and British independent living philosophy, and can be seen as the materialization of the independent living movement in Spain.

One of the FVID's core goals since its inception has been advocating personal assistance as an alternative to family care and institutionalization. After years of activism, the FVID succeeded in having personal assistance included in the so-called Law for the Promotion of Personal Autonomy

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[2] This is an adaptation of Cristina Morales's novel under the same title, published in 2018 and awarded two of the most important literary prizes in Spain. The plot revolves around four women with intellectual disabilities who share a supervised flat in Barcelona during Ada Colau's mayoralty and who were among the leaders of the 15-M anti-austerity protests in 2011. *Lectura Fácil* portrays the protagonists' everyday lives, including the anarchist assemblies and dance classes they attend, as well as court testimonies regarding the forced sterilization that one of them underwent.

[3] While the queer-crip alliances in Spain have never ceased to exist since their inception, it could be argued that, especially after the pandemic, they transformed significantly. I delve into this in the last section of this text.

[4] FVID activists invented the term *divertad*, a mix of *libertad* (liberty) and *diversidad* (diversity). I have chosen to translate it as *diverty*.

and Care for Dependent Persons (LAPAD), passed in 2006. That same year, pilot personal assistance programs for physically disabled people were launched in several Spanish cities. Although two decades later, they are still in place, they have never been fully developed or expanded nationwide (López-Pérez and Álvarez-Nieto).

It is important to remember that Spain has historically been a familialist state, "one that sees the family—and not society—as primarily responsible for ensuring the well-being of its members" (Guzmán-Castillo 108). While societal changes have pushed younger generations in Spain to advocate for state-oriented solutions to a greater extent, social services in Spain still tend to assume that such solutions *only* need to be in place when the family cannot provide care work (Sánchez-Castiñeira 113). Undoubtedly, what *family* really means in this context are *the women in the family*. This is why the FVID quickly recognized personal assistance as a form of care organization that could potentially align with feminism. As early as 2007, the FVID began building alliances with the *Agencia de Asuntos Precarios* [*The Agency for Precarious Issues*], a feminist collective focused on dignifying care work. This collaboration resulted in the publication of *Cojos y Precarias Haciendo Vidas Que Importan* [*Crips and Precarious Women Making Lives That Matter*] (Agulló et al.), one of the earliest precedents in Spain of the kind of dialogue called for in the book *El Cuerpo Deseado*.

When examining queer-crip alliances, it is important to place them in the context of the *Indignados* [The Outraged] movement, which emerged during the 15-M (15 May) anti-austerity protests of 2011—a massive mobilization that spontaneously evolved into a long-term encampment in the main squares of Spain's largest cities. Robert McRuer, who was staying in Madrid at the time, describes the 15-M as follows: "Unruly bodies occupying public spaces, bodies—as it were—out of bounds, were challenging the guardians of capital and short-circuiting the official consensus that those guardians urgently needed to forge about the 'necessity' or inevitability of drastic austerity measures" (*Crip Times* 8). Before 15-M, many queer activists saw personal assistance programs for disabled people as a source of politically aligned and welcoming jobs. Austerity measures and the 15-M protests brought "unruly bodies" together in new ways.

Although disability was not at the center of the protest, in Barcelona and Madrid "functional diversity[5] committees" emerged. These committees

[5] *Functional diversity* is a neologism promoted by the FVID (Romañach and Lobato) as an alternative to the negative connotations associated with the term disability. The phrase faced strong opposition from traditional Spanish disability rights organizations. As a result, functional diversity operates as a distinctive marker of the FVID's identity. Although in recent years it has been incorporated into some legal texts, its use in everyday language has declined in favor of newer terms, as will be explained later.

were made up of FVID activists and street protesters who were engaging with the movement for the first time (Arenas Conejo and Pié-Balaguer 237). While the so-called "financial crisis" of 2008 extended precarity to the entire population, it hit disabled people particularly hard, as the crisis was used to socially justify significant cuts to the aforementioned LAPAD, usually misnamed as the Law of Dependency. As Arenas Conejo and Pié-Balaguer point out, during the 15-M,

> The debates and events that arose in the squares reflected a social knotting mediated by a new kind of precariat and a collective sense of fragility. This awareness created space for functional diversity and moved vulnerability away from hiding or shame. At the same time, it also opened up space for other meaningful issues. (242)

Among those "other meaningful issues" was the sexuality of non-normative bodies, including those of disabled people. As Centeno explains, up until that point, both the biomedical system and the independent living movement had dismissed sexuality as an object of intervention. Both had been prioritizing other issues—whether the rehabilitation of the body or tangible gains in terms of accessibility or labor and educational inclusion. However, in a context of the financial crisis when the movement's modest achievements in dependency management were collapsing, sexuality emerged as the truly important pillar that would secure future gains in urgent matters:

> The desexualization of people with functional diversity is one of the pillars of the ableist system that has oppressed them since the beginning of times. By eliminating or reducing sexuality, desire, and pleasure to something anecdotal, it becomes easier to limit the life horizons of people with functional diversity to mere survival, infantilize them (with the connotation of "dependent individuals" this entails), remove them from any notion of full citizenship, and ultimately, convince them that they are broken, that they are not supposed to be as they are, that they must withdraw from the central lanes of all social, cultural, and economic processes. (Centeno 102)

In this way, the queer-crip alliances forged during the 15-M completely challenged common-sense notions about the place of pleasure in the political landscape. For access to education, employment, housing, or personal assistance to be secured, disabled people needed to be seen as desiring and desirable.

With the spirit of the 15-M alliances still thriving, young anthropologist and sociologist Andrea García-Santesmases Fernández arrived in Barcelona

in 2012. During her undergraduate years in Madrid, she had already met several prominent FVID figures from across the country. That experience, combined with her active involvement in feminist activism, had led her to question what gender does to functional diversity—and vice versa. Thanks to the networks she had woven within disability activism in both Barcelona and Madrid, Antonio Centeno invited her to participate in creating the famous documentary *Yes, We Fuck!* (*YWF*, 2015). She conducted an ethnographic study of the film production, developing it into her doctoral thesis (García-Santesmases Fernández, *Cuerpos (Im)pertinentes*).

YWF had a notorious impact in several areas. It was screened at ten film festivals between 2015 and 2016, winning the "best documentary" prize at four of them. In academia, several Spanish as well as international scholars besides García-Santesmases have analyzed the documentary. Not all of them concur in their interpretations of what *YWF was* or *did*, particularly in terms of its position in the "sexuality as a right or a desire" debate. Calderón-Sandoval and Sánchez-Espinosa emphasize that "[i]n their sexually explicit images, the filmed subjects enact their performative *right to appear as both, desiring and desirable*" (12). In contrast, Castelli Rodríguez argues that what characterizes *YWF* is the absence of "certain 'authorized' figures: the doctor, the expert, or the politician. In this way, common topics such as medicalization, care, and *rights* are left aside" (5). Indeed, while "sexuality as a right" appears explicitly in the story regarding sexual assistance, most authors agree that the documentary's main goal was to change social imaginaries around sexual desirability. *YWF* had a major impact on the social arena. According to Gómez-Prada and Bote Díaz, by 2020, it was clear that "[w]hat was initially conceived as a documentary with an explicitly political, pedagogical, and sensitizing intent, kept growing and turned into a social movement under which new work is being done" (61).

After her pioneering work on *YWF*, García-Santesmases continued to examine the evolution of queer-crip alliances in Spain, the forms that gender-based violence takes in the lives of disabled women, representations of sexual assistance, and the metaphors used to conceptualize personal assistance. With regard to queer-crip alliances, as García-Santesmases, Vergés-Bosch, and Almeda-Samaranch already pointed out in 2017, despite the undeniable impact of *YWF*, these alliances were at times problematic (277). Most disabled people in Spain were nowhere near as politicized as their queer counterparts, and many did not identify with the terms "crip" or *tullido*. Also, queer activists organized some events in physically inaccessible venues and soon became aware of their ableist privileges (García-Santesmases, "*Yes, We Fuck!*" 235). As a result, many events that were advertised as *queer-crip* were not attended by visibly disabled people (234). Despite this, the alliances continued. In the remainder of this

section, I offer an embodied journey through three events that attested to the (troubled and productive) continuation of queer-crip alliances in Spain after *YWF*. By doing so, I aim to set the background against which *El Cuerpo Deseado* has come to exist. The first event was the *Jornada Cojas, Transfeministas y Otras Rarezas* [*Crip, Queer and Other Oddities Assembly*], held in Madrid in 2018. While it was influenced by *YWF*, the assembly was the result of the long-lasting alliances between transfeminist activists and disabled people forged before and during 15-M. During the *Jornada*, queer-crip activist Elena Prous launched the performance *Aguanta Tú Que Puedes* [*You Can Hold It In, So Do It*], where Prous was catheterized by a personal assistant who followed her poetic instructions. The performance was initially intended to bring the audience's attention to the fact that many disabled people cannot access queer, activist spaces that do not have an accessible bathroom or other accommodations that help disabled people use them. In a dialogical text written by García-Santesmases, Prous, and me, the performer shared that, in that version of the performance, only her disabled body was under the spotlight. A more recent version of the piece, staged at the ONCE 8th Biennial of Contemporary Art, held in Madrid between 2022 and 2023, included significant changes. As Prous explains:

> As time went by, we concluded that the other bodies in the performance also matter. At the beginning, they were completely covered and wore a ski mask [sic]. In the latest version, Eco [a queer person who is catheterized] comes out naked, blindfolded, and she also begins to show her dissident body. We were like, "great, because this means you also want to tell a story by exposing your body." And, Sari, who is the personal assistant (PA), did nothing besides catheterizing me. In the latest version, she opens the performance with a short speech. . . . *This performance has brought an alliance to the fore and has become a journey through the history of our bodies*. (Sanmiquel-Molinero, García-Santesmases, and Prous)

In January 2019, both García-Santesmases and I had the chance to watch Elena Prous and Patricia Carmona, another crip-queer activist and star of the aforementioned postporn film *Nexos*, as they staged a new performance. In *¿Quién puede Desobedecer?* [*Who Is Allowed to Disobey?*], they played sensually together with *shibari* ropes while Prous recited a poetic provocation. The performance was part of the conference *Lorenza's Way: Artistic Practice, Functional Diversity and Epistemic Disobedience* held in the Virreina Palace in Barcelona. In that venue, queer philosopher Paul B. Preciado, Antonio Centeno, and the aforementioned performers discussed and honored the work of queer-crip artist Lorenza Böttner. After the event, art curator Veronica Valentini, who had learned about

YWF while it was being produced but had not participated in it, decided to approach crip activists Antonio Centeno and Maria Oliver. Out of that conversation, the project *Diversorium* was born (Valentini 18).

Continuing the idea of linking disability with a joyful life, *Diversorium* intended to create party spaces where crip-queer alliances could flourish as disabled and non-disabled people met and had fun together. *Diversorium* launched its first event in late February 2020 at Apolo, a famous nightclub in Barcelona. García-Santesmases, Prous, and I were fortunate to dance to the eclectic sets of Marikarmen Free, a queer sex assistant who had featured in *Vivir y Otras Ficciones*, and served as the event's DJ on that occasion. We were completely oblivious to the fact that the pandemic was about to put the project on hold and further problematize queer-crip alliances. In the virtual roundtable *Sexualidad en Tiempos de Coronavirus* [*Sexuality in Coronavirus Times*] that took place in May 2020, queer activist Urko, one of the protagonists of the postporn story in *YWF*, noted: "What worries me is, how are we talking about the sexual lives of people with pre-existing conditions if they are not even entitled to live? How can you see yourself as a desired and desirable body when you are in fact an easily disposable body?" ("Sexualidad" 28:32–28:45). Here, Urko was discussing an opinion article (García-Santesmases, Sanmiquel-Molinero, and Prous) that we published some weeks earlier and that addressed the necropolitics[6] that our governments were pushing against people "with pre-existing conditions." We argued that not only did pandemic necropolitics open a personal and political breach in queer-crip alliances, but also, more importantly, in the affective bonds between disabled and non-disabled people.

In August 2021, just as we were beginning to leave lockdown behind, the independent publishing house Kaótica Libros released the Spanish translation of Robert McRuer's *Crip Theory*. García-Santesmases and I had the opportunity to launch the book in Barcelona alongside Robert McRuer. In the informal conversation following the event, we expressed our frustration over the lack of Spanish-language texts on Critical and Feminist Disability Studies—particularly ones written in accessible, non-academic language. In March 2023, Kaótica Libros helped fill that gap with the publication of *El Cuerpo Deseado*. The book synthesizes the author's research from the past decade through global and local cultural vignettes, recognizable to both Spanish and international audiences.

[6] Mbembe's necropolitics, largely overlapping with Agamben's tanathopolitics, reverses the mechanics of the biopolitics that Foucault explored. If biopolitics involves *making some subjects live while letting others die*, necropolitics involves *making some subjects die so that others can live* (cf. Foucault 240–41).

The book was so successful that, only seven months after its initial release, its second edition was published, featuring a foreword by Bob Pop, a Spanish crip-queer writer and comedian. Finally, by the end of 2024, *El Cuerpo Deseado* transcended borders with the release of its Argentinian edition, introduced by Carolina Ferrante—a key figure in Latin American Critical Disability Studies. As of April 2026, a third edition has made it to bookstores. In the next section, I will explore the main contributions of the book in the hope of convincing English-speaking audiences of its relevance on an international level.

CRITICALLY EXAMINING *EL CUERPO DESEADO*[7]

El Cuerpo Deseado strikes a difficult balance between scientific rigor and accessibility, Social Sciences and the Humanities, ethnographic anecdotes and analyses of pop culture and audiovisual products, as well as balancing Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, and Disability Studies. Academically, we could classify it first and foremost as a contribution to Critical Disability Studies (CDS). Dan Goodley suggests that CDS does not necessarily imply a clear-cut departure from disability studies. The diverse approaches he considers to be part of CDS share the fact that they de-center disability to explore its connections with other issues and identity markers. What makes *El Cuerpo Deseado* part of this trend is precisely the types of desires that shape its five chapters, which address gender, care, violence, sexuality, and identity. Some of these desires would be unintelligible when viewed through the prism of the social model of disability—the "big idea" that underpinned traditional Disability Studies—and thus demonstrate the need to transcend it without disregarding its significance.

The book's introduction begins by examining the case of Chloe Jennings-Whyte, a *pretender/transabled* woman.[8] To appear or to become disabled is indeed an abject desire both to the left-wing traditions that underpin the social model of disability—aimed at overcoming *disability* as oppression—and to some (ableist) streams of feminism—aimed at overcoming *womanhood* as *disability*. With this rather "clickbaity" start, designed to catch the unsuspecting reader's eye, the author establishes the

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[7] This section is an extended and adapted version of this review: Sanmiquel-Molinero, Laura. "Reseña de *El cuerpo deseado: La Conversación Pendiente entre Feminismo y Anticapacitismo*." *Revista Española de Discapacidad*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2023, pp. 267–70.

[8] *Pretenders* are non-disabled people who desire to appear as disabled in all or some circumstances (for instance, by using a wheelchair). By contrast, transabled people desire to transform their bodies in order to become disabled (for instance, by severing their own limbs).

book's main premise. Drawing on crip theory (McRuer, "Crip Theory"; Sandahl), García-Santesmases argues that patriarchy and ableism are mutually constitutive. She urges both feminist and disability movements to rethink their political subjects and practices through intersectional lenses. While previous studies have already explored these ideas, the main strength of *El Cuerpo Deseado* lies in its ability to unpack them in a rigorous, accessible, and engaging way.

In Chapter 1, "Las Ruedas del Patriarcado" ["The Wheels of Patriarchy"], the author delves into the idea that the hegemonic binary notion of gender is inherently able-bodied—being a socially acceptable man or woman requires certain abilities. For this reason, disability disrupts gendered performances—while the default disabled subject is male, disabled men are "symbolically feminized"; disabled women are, in turn, de-gendered but still expected to perform feminized roles. In an argument reminiscent of Butlerian analyses of drag performances, García-Santesmases disrupts the reproduction/resistance dualism by proposing that even when a disabled body desires to fit into gender mandates, it ends up subverting them by performing them incorrectly, thereby exposing their constructedness. However, as I point out elsewhere (Sanmiquel-Molinero, "Los Estudios" 10) and as Asun Pié also noted in the book launch in Barcelona ("#enprivat"), what remains to be discussed is the question: should we regard those that seek to destabilize the patriarchal and ableist system—such as queer/crip activists—*and* those that simply try to conform to this system and fail equally as resistance? Following Butler's non-voluntarist stance, we might argue that, regardless of the intention behind the act, what seems most important is what these strategies *do*. Conforming to the desired current normative order legitimizes it even if one fails to conform. A runway is no longer exactly the same exclusive space it once was when a person with Down syndrome is allowed to walk it. Yet it remains a site where bodily norms—those to which bodies are expected to aspire—are produced. Queer-crip activism, in contrast, seeks to generate a new order in which the difference between the normative (desirable) and the counter-normative (undesirable) ceases to make sense.

In "Afectos, Deudas y Alianzas" ["Affects, Debts, and Alliances"] (Chapter 2), the author introduces Feminist Disability Studies as a branch of Critical Disability Studies that allows us to overcome two ableist desires regarding care. On the one hand, the book questions mainstream feminism's desire to "other" dependency by conceptualizing care (always for others) as an oppressive burden. In this sense, while both academic and grassroots feminism in Spain is deeply concerned with the so-called global "care crisis," the book argues that feminist texts and venues in Spain often still address care only from the perspective of the caretakers,

completely neglecting those who are "cared-for." On the other hand, the book problematizes Independent Living Movement's desire to turn personal assistants into "disembodied tools" and assisted individuals into rational *cogitos* who are undoubtedly capable of managing and supervising their own care. The chapter celebrates the *Marchas por la visibilidad de la diversidad functional* [*Demonstrations for the visibility of functional diversity*], advocating personal assistance as a feminist and anti-ableist care alternative, which used to take place in Madrid between 2007 and 2016. Yet, following crip-queer activist Elena Prous's groundbreaking text on her complicated embodied relationship with personal assistance (Prous), García-Santesmases argues for the inherently bodily, affective, and contentious care work. The chapter concludes with a feminist and anti-ableist critique of the supposedly "progressive" consensus on disability-related abortion and euthanasia—two practices that concern bodies requiring "excessive" care. García-Santesmases discusses the processes of cripwashing (Moscoso-Pérez) by which the Spanish conservative Catholic party used disability rights language to restrict abortion rights in the aftermath of 15-M. In her article, Melania Moscoso-Pérez points out that cripwashing was facilitated by the fact that, "unlike the American Disability Rights movement, forged in a common struggle with other progressive forces, such as LGTBQ and feminism, Spanish disability activist claims have found support in the disciplinary area of bioethics, which in Spain is strongly influenced by the Catholic Church" (101). In spite of that convergence, FVID activists are well aware that Spanish conservative parties are not in favor of their rights but against women's rights. In turn, García-Santesmases urges left-wing parties, unanimously in favor of abortion and euthanasia, not to frame them as mere "individual decisions" but as bio/thanatopolitical practices informed by the ableist and patriarchal forces that dictate which lives are worth living and sustaining through care.

In Chapter 3, "Heridas y Silencios" ["Wounds and Silences"], the author presents a chilling narrative illustrating the necessity of an intersectional approach to understanding the desire to enact violence. She examines both the desire to harm disabled people that comes from able-bodied individuals (caregivers, partners), as well as the desire to harm that disabled men express toward feminized bodies (whether disabled or not). One of the book's greatest strengths is its effort to shift reflection on the conditions that enable violence away from bodily abilities and into "a material . . . and symbolic context of possibility" (119) created by the intersection of ableism and patriarchy. In other words, a person is not violent because they *can* physically overpower another, but because they have the spatial, temporal, and symbolic environment that enables

them to do so. This is crucial for both feminism and anti-ableism and for their respective struggles to denaturalize violence against the political subjects they represent (women and disabled people). Moreover, such denaturalization of violence also renders otherwise unintelligible forms of violence visible—such as violence perpetrated by female caregivers and disabled men. In this regard, García-Santesmases quotes the *faux* fanzine *Yo también quiero ser un macho* [*I want to be a macho, too*] included in the aforementioned novel *Lectura fácil*, where Cristina Morales ridicules the naturalized forms of violence in the film *Yo, también* ([*Me too*], 2009, dir. A. Pastor and A. Naharro), which features a young boy with Down syndrome who affirms his masculinity by "going whoring." As FVID activist Elena Prous remarked during McRuer's book launch in Madrid (Traficantes de Sueños), the analysis could have been expanded to contextualize the violence that both disabled men and women also enact against their caregivers. This violence is legitimized by the ableist paradigm of personal tragedy, which culturally sanctions the "villainization" of disabled bodies: the stereotype according to which bodies struck by tragedy turn "bitter" and seek revenge.

In "Las Prótesis del Placer" ["The Prosthetics of Pleasure"] (Chapter 4), García-Santesmases agrees with Centeno's aforementioned approach to sexuality. That is, far from being a hedonistic call, advocating for sexual desire by and toward disabled bodies is a "far-reaching political project" (155). The reason is that sexuality helps reclaim the disabled body from being reduced to "bare life" (Agamben 18), limited to mere biological survival. Once again, García-Santesmases disrupts the reproduction/resistance binary. She demonstrates that disabled sexuality both disrupts and reproduces ableist and patriarchal norms. While these norms mandate the sexual and reproductive undesirability of disabled people, reclaiming sexual desirability is also a rite of passage into ableist normalization: if you have sex and are desirable, you are human. García-Santesmases critiques the discourse framing sexuality as a universal human need and examines its ableist and patriarchal underpinnings, particularly regarding the right to sexual assistance. While she does not dismiss sexual assistance outright, she invites us to rethink it through an intersectional lens.

Making references to several Spanish and international films, the author explores two models of sexual assistance, one based on individual models and the other based on social models of disability. As regards the former, *The Sessions* (2012, dir. B. Lewin) serves to illustrate the "therapeutic" iteration of sexual assistance. The aforementioned documentary *Jo També Vull Sexe* is also examined to problematize the ableist and patriarchal trope of "mothers who are forced to masturbate their disabled sons" (García-Santesmases Fernández, *El Cuerpo* 159), used to justify

the *biological need* of sexual assistance for disabled men. As regards the other type of sexual assistance, García-Santesmases also problematizes *YWF* and its vision of sexual assistance, which is modelled upon personal assistance (the assistant is a "tool" that helps the disabled person access their own body or that of a disabled partner). Finally, distancing herself again from the social model, García-Santesmases asserts that disabled people are not merely waiting for barriers and discrimination to disappear before allowing themselves to desire and enjoy their sexuality. Rather, what we may observe is not so much "a latent or nonexistent sexuality," but rather "a sexuality that is mostly closeted, stigmatized, invisible, or even pathologized" (184). Using the portrayal of disabled relationships at Camp Jened in *Crip Camp* (2020, dir. J. Lebrecht and N. Newnham) as an example, the author urges us to explore how existing disabled sexualities already break normative codes.

In Chapter 5, "Una Identidad en Disputa" ["A Contested Identity"], the author emphasizes the liminality of ability and disability, arguing that while they seem to be fundamentally distinct categories, they are separated by "porous boundaries" (249). Within these boundaries, bidirectional, desire-driven transitions occur. García-Santesmases questions the conditions under which disability can become a desirable identity. She contrasts the desire "to pass as able-bodied" of those newly disabled—who still see themselves as "recovering" and are ashamed to identify as disabled—with the experience of those who proudly claim a crip identity—such as some participants in *YWF*. García-Santesmases also brings to the fore two initiatives stemming from the queer-crip alliances forged in the past decade in Spain that transformed how crip activists interpreted their embodied identities. First, she mentions the expansion of disability arts companies such as *Liant la Troca* [*Entangling Threads*];[9] second, the project *En Torno a la Silla* [*Around the Chair*], where FVID activists and "makers"[10] that had met at 15-M demonstrations co-designed and produced technical aids aimed at "activat[ing] other possible relations with [disabled people's] technical and affective environments" (Criado, Rodríguez-Giralt, and Mencaroni 30). García-Santesmases then examines ableist and patriarchal frameworks that shape the so-called abject desires, such as *wannabe/transabled*, *pretender* identities, and *devotee* desires

[9] While *El Cuerpo Deseado* does not mention this, in 2017, Barcelona's local TV launched a series devoted to disability arts called *Trèvols de quatre fulles* [*Four-Leaf Clovers*], where many Spanish crip-queer activists appear. The first episode features the dance company *Liant la Troca.* The series is available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7PmkAE7rdc&list=PL2rLjs4qtscwhMqVwByWXqRACEl-jGDBK

[10] "Makers" are people who participate in "maker culture," which can be defined as an extension of DIY culture that heavily draws on technology.

(where primarily able-bodied men find sexual attraction to disabled bodies precisely because they are disabled). Ultimately, she demonstrates the importance of distinguishing between ableism—the system that makes desiring disability unthinkable by equating it with sub-humanity—and disablism, which refers to the material and social barriers that oppress disabled bodies (Thomas 73).

Finally, the "Epilogue" provides an emotional close, in which García-Santesmases not only reveals the personal, relational, activist, and academic trajectory that shaped her book but also explores the complexities of constructing the subject of feminism and anti-ableism today. Just as transfeminism has expanded the discussion of feminism beyond cishet women, the disability movement has also influenced Spanish feminism in recent years. While physically disabled activists used to lead the way when 15-M took place and *YWF* was released, recently, more and more people who identify as neurodivergent or have mental health issues and other invisible health conditions, have started politicizing their struggle via social networks. While *El Cuerpo Deseado* does not explicitly point this out, many of these young activists have abandoned the term *functional diversity* and tend to identify as *disca*.[11] Many *disca* activists are themselves queer, which gives a whole new meaning to the crip-queer alliances that deserve to be explored in the future.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Desire is a driving force that arises when reality is not yet—or no longer—what an individual or collective subject wants it to be. Thus, desire fuels transitions toward new structures or identity positions. *El Cuerpo Deseado* reveals a paradox: fixed structures, such as patriarchy and ableism, can only be apprehended through what escapes fixity—the shifting norms of desirability they enforce and the unthinkable desires that exceed them. In this sense, the book is an important academic contribution, insofar as it breaks with some of the classical dualisms in the social sciences, such as the structure vs. agency dualism or the subversion vs. reproduction of the structure binary.

At the same time, the book is relevant for activists. It challenges some of the main political slogans—both of the anti-ableist movement (does "Nothing about us without us" really include women and all queer

[11] *Disca* is short for *discapacitado/discapacitada* (disabled). The term is mainly used on social network platforms, usually by queer-crip activists. As opposed to *functional diversity*, the term *disca* also has some currency in Latin American contexts. For instance, in Chile, one of the main Critical Disability Studies centers is called *Núcleo Milenio Disca*.

crip subjects?) and of the feminist movement (when feminists say, "The police don't take care of me, my friends do," do they think about the kind of care a disabled person might require?). At the same time, the book reminds us that we cannot assume that the long-overdue conversation between feminism and anti-ableism is symmetrical. While feminist and queer movements have gained political visibility in Western countries in recent years, disability continues to be too often relegated to the realm of the "natural" and the "apolitical"—even within feminist and queer movements.

Even those who think they have nothing to do with disability are only "temporarily able-bodied" (McRuer, *Crip Theory* 197; Kafer 27). Far from the uncritical cliché of "we all have a disability" (after all, not everyone is systematically discriminated against because of their body-mind), the temporality of ability reminds us that society as a whole (including activism) must move away from what García-Santesmases calls "trench essentialism" in identity politics (*El Cuerpo* 261) in order to sit with alterity and recognize sameness within it. Only then can the long-overdue conversations outlined in the book truly take place.

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