

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM – UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA
SCUOLA DI LINGUE E LETTERATURE, TRADUZIONE E
INTERPRETAZIONE

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in
MODERN, POST-COLONIAL AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURES

CURRICULUM: WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES- STUDI DI GENERE E DELLE
DONNE (GEMMA)

**HEGEMONIES OF POWER VS AFFECTIVE RELATIONAL ANARCHIES: 4+ SELF
CASE STUDIES.**

Tesi di Laurea Magistrale in
STUDI DI GENERE

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ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER'S DEGREE IN WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

**HEGEMONIES OF POWER VS AFFECTIVE
RELATIONAL ANARCHIES: 4+ SELF CASE STUDIES.**

Master thesis

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September 2018



Universidad de Oviedo



Hegemonies of power vs affective relational anarchies: 4+ self case studies.

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Abstract:

This dissertation examines the exercises of power that reside inside locations that are constructed in the bias of counter-hegemonies and subversion. Through the remembrance of past embodied experiences I have revisited how power appears at the base of four different settings: Critical theory, the lesbian couple, activist spaces and processes of social inclusion. From my personal situatedness, tracing the presence of these spaces in four "self" case studies, I have argued for other forms of relationality which need to be explored in order to understand not just identity but the place of the body in ways that can work in the friction of accounting the materiality of their locations at the same time as explore the vertigo of their potentialities.

Keywords: Failure, queer, potentia gaudendi, affect, embodiment, hegemonies, power, performativity, assembly, activism, artherapy, lesbianity, masculinity, violence, anarchism, polyamori, fiction, heteronormativity, temporalities.

Riassunto:

La presente tesi di laurea analizza gli esercizi di potere che risiedono all'interno di posizioni che sono costruite nell'ideale di contro-egemonie e sovversione. Attraverso la rimemorazione di esperienze incarnate passate ho rivisitato come il potere si manifesti alla base di quattro diversi contesti: la teoria critica, la coppia lesbica, gli spazi attivisti e i processi di inclusione sociale. Dal punto di vista personale, ho discusso su come altre forme di relazionalità debbano essere esplorate per comprendere non solo l'identità ma anche i luoghi del corpo in modi che possano funzionare nell'attrito di contabilizzare la materialità delle loro posizioni.

Concetti principali: fallimento, queer, potentia gaudendi, affetto, incarnazione, egemonie, potere, performatività, assamablea, attivismo, arteterapia,lesbianismo, mascolinità, violenza, anarchismo, polyamore, fizione, heteronormatività, temporalità.

Acknowledgments:

I want to thank the GEMMA programme, which has been the starting point of the openings to all these expansions. I want to specially thank Rita Monticelli who has given me the confidence and trust to write in freedom and who introduced me into the fascinating world of critical theory in the most critical way possible. I want to thank her for being there for me at the impossible hours. Thanks to Rosemarie Buikema, who was fundamental in her guidance on how to think about this project. To Cristina Gamberi and Trude Oorschtot for their patience and for coming to my rescue with the many bureaucratic slips I have made. To Vita Fortunati and to Jasmina Lukic for their love and support years before I even dreamt of doing GEMMA, for their conversations in which I was first a listener and now an active part.

Thanks to all my family, specially my mum. She has engaged me in a feminist life with her unique enthusiasm and generosity. To my dad, who has taught the pleasure of irony. To my Spanish grandparents and English grandmother, who have been the main characters of all my loving and funny stories. And to my uncles with whom I could visit Chueca well before I needed to speak about lesbianity.

To all my friends and companions, who are the main inspirations for the infinite problematizing of the world. Especially my GEMMA friends, in Bologna and Utrecht, to whom I have attached in the most caring ways. And above all, to my friends that are still vigilant of feminism but, nevertheless, engage in the most encouraged conversations with me. To one-night-stand conversations that exceed the correctness of books.

To Mrs Pi. for her great tastes and the mix-avocado toasts.

And finally, thanks to the many antagonists of these stories, to whom I owe the connections between theory and experience.

1- Grasping queer critiques from the rhizomatic selves: genealogy of 4+ identities.

The present work is a narration of the fiction of being. It is an interaction between narrations and the real world where it clashes materially. It is difficult to cut into specific sections such a corporeal and experimental work, where theories have come to signify by their application onto personal experience. It is following this conception that the sections that divide these pages are informing of, and embedded in, each of its parts, giving shape to the (re) collection of stories and theories of the past years in this final composition.

The body, my bodies, is the only standpoint epistemology (Harding in Alcoff, 1993) that this work will recognize. This location is still another fiction which here takes the form of a strategic account for the start of these narrations. It is a location that, as Thomas J. Csordas would put it, "accepts the interpretive consequences of being grounded in a particular embodied standpoint- the consequences of relatedness, partial grasp of any situation, and imperfect communication" (Csordas, 1994: 2). Whether we choose to label its context as late capitalism (Jameson, 1991), neo-capitalism (Derrida, 2004) or neo-liberalism (Klein, 2007; Harvey, 2005),¹ the location becomes extremely important to consider when there are bodies that are "not allowed *not* to have a body, a finite point of view (...) [*and are marked as*] any collective historical subject that dare[s] to resist the stripped-down atomism of Star Wars" (Haraway, 1988: 575). The bodies that live in this work relate to constellations which, unlike and far away from wars, grow together through vulnerable sites of being. The creation of asterisms² that break the narratives and boundaries of hegemonic constellations throws into discussion a (re) application of dissenting positionalities, such as Sara Ahmed points out while speaking about socially settled ways of living feelings:

¹All these theories deal with social and economic ideologies linked to hegemonic systems from their specific angles: a special interest in postmodernism in Fredric Jameson's case; the intertwining of neo-capitalism with new-born and more recent systems of ideology from Jacques Derrida's position or the hidden plots of neoliberalism, as the construction of the concept of crisis by current politics, and their devastating effects in the works by David Harvey and Naomi Klein.

² Asterisms differ from constellations in the way they do not have marked boundaries since they are not officially recognized in their conjunction. Asterisms have a bigger connections to the way stars are viewed in groups that are not recognized.

These conversion points between good and bad feeling do matter; some bodies are presumed to be the origin of bad feeling insofar as they disturb the promise of happiness, which we can re-describe as the social pressure to maintain the signs of "getting along" (....) There is a political struggle about how we attribute good and bad feelings (Ahmed, 2007: 127)

Working through and from dissident, political and stigmatized affects, such as vulnerability or the place of the body, can illuminate the conception of queerness that is applied to these stories. Queer is interpreted in this essay as a radical state which does not only relate to the world outside the body, but also means a way of engaging with its own multiplicity To relate to the different figurations of the *self* points out the radical critique to hegemonic ways of thinking and being, in this case from a European position. Breaking with this western system of knowledge can also bring the possibility of thinking outside the psychoanalytical conception of a singular identity (Freud, 1978)³, and endorsing, instead, the "split and contradictory self [*as*] the one who can interrogate positionings and be accountable, the one who can construct and join rational conversations and fantastic imaginings that change history. Splitting, not being", as Haraway argues (1988: 586).

Hence, my proposal is to work through the radicalization of the *self* into the different identities that conform it. The combination of affect and the breakdown of the conception of identity as singular, does not just speak from its queerness, but also sums up in its parts the relational and anarchical perspective that informs my analysis. It is relational because this story has only been possible through the practice of *assemblies* between bodies, subjectivities and other non-living agencies. And it is anarchical because constant checkmating on hegemonic ways of power has finally led me to the conclusion that being intrinsic to associative structures and having a life of its own, hegemony needs to be counteracted by breaking with systemic exercises of power and keeping the tension alive. The tension between such different, still coexistent, elements has found in these anarchical positionings forms of hierarchies and organization that have exceeded and expanded its explorations.

³ The id, ego, and super-ego that Sigmund Freud explains in his work are the three distinct apparatuses of the psyche, the explanation of our mental life that relates both to our inner and to our social activity. Even if they respond to different psychological functions, they are still interacting agents which relate to a sense of singular identity that has influenced not only psychoanalysis but also modern psychology and which has, subsequently, determined identity politics and their application in social sciences and critical theory.

All the conjunctions that conform this personal approach to self-ethnography have been especially informed by what Teresa del Valle calls "memorias encarnadas" (that can be translated as "embodied memories") in *Procesos de la memoria: cronotopos genéricos* (1999). In this excellent contribution del Valle speaks about memory that "goes beyond what would be a simple reconstruction of the past through data that other people provide" (1999: 8)⁴, suggesting that memory can be read as material that might allow us to identify symbols, as well as to take distance and re-experience different emotions and affects attached to them.

In parallel to this exploration through "embodied memories", another work that has been primarily influential to these stories is the concept of "Antropología encarnada" ("embodied anthropology") used by Mari Luz Esteban in *Antropología encarnada. Antropología desde una misma* (2004). Through this concept, Esteban speaks about the necessary vindication of embodied analyses that do not depict a binary account of the world, dividing between "us, anthropologists, intellectuals or feminists, on the one hand, and the rest, on the other. Between us, subjects, and the others, victims"⁵ (Esteban, 2004: 15).

The body, as mentioned above, is a site of vulnerability. But not only. It is also a site of resistance. I take my flesh, that are not one but multiple, as material locations where I have become conscious of pain as well as pleasure, emotions that I had considered contradictory until now. The sel(f/ves)-caring practice of this work has been actioned through the practice of self-ethnography. The importance of self-exploration, self-reflection and other introspective processes can make us realise how our subjectivities are contaminated from the outside. It is taking this into account that affects can be of radical importance in these processes of critical introspection, because they give us the chance of a more reflexive and authentic analysis. As Carmen Gregorio explains, while speaking about the importance of self-ethnographical examinations, "we are always part of what we study and, in one way or another, when we define our relations with what we choose to study we are also positioning ourselves" (Gregorio, 2014: 299)⁶.

⁴ My translation. The original reads: "va más allá de lo que sería la mera reconstrucción del pasado por medio de los datos que aportan las personas" (del Valle, 1990: 8)

⁵ My translation. Original: " nosotros, antropólogos, intelectuales o feministas, por un lado, y resto, por otro. Entre nosotros, sujetos, y los otros, víctimas" (Esteban, 2004: 15)

⁶ My translation. Original: "...siempre somos parte de lo que estudiamos y, de un modo u otro, al definir las relaciones con lo que estudiamos tomamos postura" (Gregorio, 2014: 299)

Therefore, the decoding of how we do so and of what it implies is the only way of liberating ourselves of constrains that seem to be intrinsically attached to us.

Following Teresa del Valle, I have given central importance to the processes of memory that has evoked in me what she calls "hitos", which could be translated as milestones, i.e. particular moments that mark future experience and have significant weight upon the becoming of embodied living. Here, I want to theorize these "hitos" not as specific moments where life changes, but in combination with the concept of "cronotopos" (chronotopes), used also by del Valle, after Mikhail Bakhtin (1981). Chronotope refers to the conjunction between time and space, a time that does not need to be linear and spaces that exceed materiality. It is upon the importance of non-linear timing that I want to focus, because this work will speak about violence, gender violence, and the construction of the immersion of my bodies in the rivers, oceans and currents of its struggles. All these speak about "hitos" as processes rather than as fixed determining instants. This evocation has only been possible through the construction of safe(r) spaces, created in seminars, friendships, assemblies and inner dialogues that were critical enough to question their positionalities and relationalities with respect to the system that upholds us. I use the concept of "safer spaces" because, as the topic of this work argues, I deem it impossible to escape power. I am convinced that only through a constant reflection about what is reproduced inside what are considered "subversive and non-hegemonic spaces" can we enact resistances that keep us in the move towards an ongoing deconstruction of normative sites.

Going back to the importance of relationality, I want to acknowledge the methodology of feminist caring spaces where the assembly of bodies reflect on self histories. As del Valle notices,

Evocation is both individual and collective. It is not simply memory, but in many cases it unchains memory. Evocation is dynamic because it implies going further from the activation of the past and can conduct to an intensification of a memento, to sharper focusing on it. It can also generate a creative process (...)
There resides the game that links past-present (del Valle, 2018: 35)⁷

⁷ "La evocación es tanto individual como colectiva. No es la memoria en sí, sino que en muchos casos desencadena la memoria. La evocación es dinámica porque potencia ir más allá de la activación de un pasado y puede conducir a intensificar un recuerdo, a enfocarlo más detalladamente así como a un proceso creativo (...). Ahí está el juego que enlaza pasado-presente" (del Valle, 2018: 35)

To speak about *evocations* does not only voice the relational necessity that self-introspective processes have in critical approaches, but also, forces a rethinking of how the construction of narratives that have as their base methodology self-ethnographical analysis break with the normative conception of theory and canonical understandings of knowledge. The breakdown of these official constructions of theory also relates to a decolonial and postcolonial critique that can give account of the "epistemic violence(s)" that take place in these legitimized hegemonic knowledges, as Gayatri Spivak (2010) and other postcolonial critics have evinced in their work.

Some months ago, I had the pleasure to follow a course taught by Jack Halberstam, where the use of "low theory" was contextualized in a space where a resistance to neo-liberal narratives was the symbolic glue⁸ that made us stick together in that specific shared chronotope (del Valle, 1999). Halberstam, on a revision of Stuart Hall's concept (1990), speaks about low theory attesting that it

tries to locate all the in-between spaces that save us from being snared by the hooks of hegemony and speared by the seduction of the gift shop. But it also makes its peace with the possibility that alternatives dwell in the murky waters of a counterintuitive, often impossibly dark and negative realm of critique and refusal (2011: 2)

This ambivalence also speaks about the contradictions that low theory finds and works through, which is an additional methodological understanding that impregnates this thesis. Self-histories are low as they have been banned from conforming theories, genealogies and other determining factual narratives.

I want to assemble, in this point when talking about the refusing act towards hegemonic theories and epistemologies, to the development of the concept of *failure* that Halberstam carries throughout his book *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011). *Failure* is framed here as a "way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and as a form of critique" (2011: 88), but specially in this dissertation that combines theory and life, *failure* is considered a "practice, [which] recognizes that alternatives are embedded already in the dominant and that power is never total or consistent" (2011: 88). *Failure* as a way of non-production, non-reproduction, non-

⁸ Following Andrea Peto, Eszter Kováts and Weronika Grzebalska's (2017) way of speaking about "gender" as an umbrella term.

assumption, non-function, non-consumption, non-action, but also yes-affection, yes-attraction, yes-irruption, yes-fraction, yes-friction and mostly yes-fiction. *Failure* as a yes-fiction. Yes to fiction as a low narrative of telling one's own life. Yes to the fiction of accepting the vulnerable state of being when speaking about self-ethnography. Yes to fiction as the only way I have personally been able to redirect memories into the shape of words, trauma into the form of theory and collective landmarks into public accounts. Yes to fiction, finally- for now- as a way of engaging in characters that give voice to my different identities, characters that have helped me realise how much I was lacking identity politics in a polymorphous sense, relating to times, spaces and other figurations to whom relate.

The fictional dialectical conversation between "domination and subordination" (Chías, 2013: 9) forces a constant change of the interlocutor's position, that exceeds more than a simply fixed category inside the exchange. It rather speaks up for the configuration of more subtle and intertwined categories of control⁹, or, following BDSM vocabulary, as a fictional performative potential, how vanilla can sometimes go kinky.¹⁰ It is in this excess that also monologues of these two counter-parts can be acknowledged and worked through since standing in single and fixed positionalities can only speak about *god tricks* (Haraway, 1988) that escape the vulnerable locality of flesh. Grasping vulnerability, then, has been another element for approaching the affects that I discover here. Embracing vulnerability together with stigmatized affects. To work with sets of failure or with, as Sara Ahmed remarks

unhappy effects [*which's exposure*](...) is affirmative, which gives us an alternative set of imaginings of what might count as a good or at least better life(...) If anything we might want to reread the melancholic subject, the one who refuses to let go of suffering, and who is even prepared to kill some forms of joy, as offering an alternative social promise (Ahmed, 2007: 135)

Fiction because I am out of time, in performative temporalities (Edelman, 1998; Esteban Muñoz, 2009; Berlant, 2011) that do not simply fake the straightness of timing

⁹ "we know immediately what we detest and it is hard for us [at the same time] to understand what we long for" ("sabemos de inmediato qué repudiamos y nos cuesta trabajo entender lo que anhelamos.") (Chías, 2013:10)

¹⁰ Kinky and vanilla are two terms used in BDSM practices for opposite sexual positionings, where kinky designates those non conventional and non-normative practices that are systematized in vanilla relations.

but, as a matter of choice, appreciate inner otherness of relational durations and atemporal assemblies. It is through these disruptions that the division of the thesis itself suffers a breakdown that forces fresh theory arrangements. Life stages are also entangled in this breaking of straight temporalities, in a fiction of time that allows a conjunction between past and future in the present material writing, such as Rita Monticelli points out when speaking about memory, which "as a process, also includes the future as one of its dimensions" (Monticelli, 2011: 136).

I have been reading about trauma, from books that narrated the images of my dreams, and the final reason why the methodology of this thesis is fiction and its consequences has to do with the way fiction constitutes an excess. As Slavoj Žižek affirms in his studies relating to cultural traumas, this "excess of represented content over its aesthetic representation has to infect the aesthetic form itself. What cannot be described should be inscribed into the artistic form as its uncanny distortion" (Žižek, 2012: 25).

2- The epistemological self: Academia, lesbianity and power and non-of-the-above.

Probably this is the piece that has more presentness in its borders. No limits, only borders - of some kind. Delimiting slices that try to expand without having first soaked in flux. Probably this is the border with some limits. Maybe because it is present and maybe because it stands quiet.

This chapter starts with a personal pilgrimage towards the understanding of the infinite conceptions that power embodies in contemporary stages. The sacred component of this trip responds to my acknowledgment that the different powers that are discerned in this work have been nothing else than dogmas which I have, not so unconsciously, followed throughout my life. The theatrical stages on which these powers take place speak more about their performativity than about specific material locations.

The spine conception of power that this thesis takes as its leading stance is Michel Foucault's project of an understanding of modern power as escaping the individuality of its existence in favour of an understanding of a multiplicity of power(s) that is/are imbricated not only in the very notions of life and the action of living bodies but also in the inaction of the non living, such as dead bodies, silenced ones or things (Foucault, 1995; 1998).

Writing about and against hegemonic power and power hegemonies from inside academia can be considered an oxymoron. Their conjunction (a counter-hegemonic vision within academic locations) seems antithetical and still I have wanted to explore its contradiction in the belief- following the conception of this thesis as a whole performative act- that systems of knowledge, such as Universities and research spaces, need to confront the power that is re-enacted inside their landscapes of production. As Foucault states,

power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative

constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (Foucault, 1995: 27)

Hence, it is important to analyse knowledge -and other systems of power- in this light while, at the same time, doing it in parallel to the study of other theories of power that are grounded in more specific and practical terms. As will be seen later on in this thesis, the Foucaultian understanding of power means a shift in the "power" paradigm as it transfers its existence from an individual persona to a system of "strategic situations", a power that "is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1978: 93). This understanding has potential applicability to critical realms of socio-political action in analogy to other approaches to power and hegemonies, such as the work by Antonio Gramsci. Indeed, a number of scholars have put forward the interest on bringing both approaches together in a complementary reading since, as Joan Cocks suggests,

There are certain striking thematic repetitions [*between Gramsci and Foucault*], certain similar analytical obsessions – certain ways, too, in which their arguments and insights are reciprocally illuminating. What is flawed in each argument alone, moreover, is improved by the selective combination of the arguments together. (Cocks, 1989: 26)

Following this impulse, the understanding of knowledge in equation with power and its direct connection with academic contexts, Gramsci's thoughts regarding the importance of consciousness and critique in revolutionary processes throughout history become of radical importance when speaking from the above-mentioned contradictions of attempting to write a counter-hegemonic discourse inside academia. The possible lack of direct practicality of Foucault's criticism on the "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1995) that are intertwined in systems of knowledge, can be found in Gramsci's consideration about how disruptive actions have taken place throughout history. In an article written for the socialist paper *Il Grido Del Popolo* in 1916, Gramsci expresses how:

every revolution has been preceded by a long process of intense critical activity, of new cultural insight and the spread of ideas through groups of men initially resistant to them, wrapped up in the process of solving their own, immediate economic and political problems, and lacking any bonds of solidarity with others in the same position (Gramsci, 1994: 10)

If critical activity and knowledge is a form of hegemony, it seems as if Gramsci addresses a strategic necessity to break with this hegemony from the inside. Hence only being part of hegemony at some stage can one help generate a revolutionary movement that can break with the dominant hegemonic status. It is in this light that the praxis between the two authors finds action. As Gramsci writes in 1917 for the communist newspaper *La Città Futura*,

By subjecting oneself voluntarily to a discipline, one becomes independent and free. Water is pure, free and itself when it is running between the two banks of a stream or a river, not when it is messily spread on the ground, or when it is released, rarified, into atmosphere. Anyone who does not follow a political discipline is, precisely matter in a gaseous state, or contaminated by foreign bodies: that is, useless and harmful. The discipline of politics sloughs off this waste, and refines the pure metal of the spirit. It gives an aim to life; and, without an aim, life is not worth living. (Gramsci, 1994: 26)

Nevertheless, the summative parts that Foucault's theories regarding power mean to Gramsci's political thoughts are as important to complete these practical considerations as they are subjective and ethereal to reality action when reading them isolated. Remaining conscious about how power is everywhere is the alchemic touchstone practice in this analysis. It is so because the constant divisions between subalternity and hegemony that Gramsci speaks about, throws the idea of the possibility of escape from oppression by an included in the same system that perpetuates this domination. As Joseph A. Buttigieg reads in Gramsci's study of subalternity, "one of the greatest difficulties that subaltern social groups face in challenging the prevailing hegemony is finding a way past the barriers that prevent them from being heard" (Zene, 2013: 41). But it seems as if the barriers that allow the subaltern subjectivities and groups to be recognized is the same hegemonic force that oppresses them. It is this drive for recognition that often makes subaltern subjectivities come together, this being, according to Gramsci, the only way to escape their situation. Buttigieg makes this clear by stating that the distinguishing characteristic in Gramsci's writing on subalternity is the importance of fragmentation and that

Not only are there multiple subaltern social classes or groups, but they are also disconnected and quite different from one another. While some of them may

have achieved a significant level of organization, others might lack all cohesion, and within the groups themselves there exist various degrees of subalternity and marginality (Zene, 2013: 36)

It is interesting how Gramsci conceives these subaltern groups as a great multiplicity of differences, and goes side by side with Foucault's ultimate tone that it is power, rather than oppression, what permeates every realm of social reality and it is in this shift that its critique also changes. In order to escape essentialist considerations of oppressions, that fail to recognize more ambiguous and hidden relations of power, it is important to understand the omnipresent state that hegemonies have reached in contemporary capitalist contexts. This state of power, as both theorists determine, speaks more about positionalities than of positions and this, at the same time, brings us to consider how power is relational, a perspective that can allow fresh considerations of how power works inside places that are constructed as "counter-hegemonic", that is the aim of this thesis.

Finding a base in the combination between these two theorists together with other complementary readings also reinscribes agency as an active force that erases the idea of power as a naturalised element of social life, allowing the uncovering of how it is reproduced and produced in every action that takes place. As Foucault warns,

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "censors", it "abstracts", it "masks", it "conceals". In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault 1995: 194)

Power inside the specific context of capitalism is productive. Consequently, power is not enacted by someone or something in particular but is rather imbricated in the system and intrinsically involved in every process of production. Power does not equal lack, even if it produces it. Power is not negative, even if it produces negativity. Power produces and is imbricated in every process of life and is informed in and informs every realm of society. As can be read in Bruno Latour's theories,

This model of diffusion may be contrasted with another, that of the model of translation. According to the latter, the spread in time and space of anything-

claims, orders, artefacts, goods- is in the hands of people; (...) there is no inertia to account for the spread of a token (Latour, 1986: 267).

According to Latour- and hand by hand with Gramsci's and Foucault's considerations of the execution of power- Western history has treated the notion of power as a process of inertia, of what he calls *diffusion*, a transmission without active agents that perform and produce this power in their daily action. Proving the damaged quality of this consideration of power, Latour explains instead that "when you simply *have* power- in *potentia* – nothing happens and you are powerless; when you *exert* power – *in actu* – others are performing the action and not you" (Latour, 1986: 264-265). Power, then, is neither individuated in singular bodies nor natural and inert to social life.

Henri Lefebvre can also be introduced here when speaking about the constitution of models or Latour's tokens through the concept of *Dressage*. The concept of *Dressage* also creates an incision in the concept of *diffusion* or the essentialised understanding of power as something performed by singularized bodies and *translation* acts. Lefebvre relates the concept to a process of repetition that is linked to a training process (*le dressage*) where the subjects commodify themselves from an action of agency rather than a reaction to a particular force. As he explains,

One can and one must distinguish between education, learning and dressage or training [*le dressage*]. Knowing how to live, knowing how to do something and just plain knowing do not coincide. Not that one can separate them. Not to forget that they go together. (Lefebvre, 2004 :39)

The innovation in Lefebvre's work is the importance that he gives to rhythm as a new way of analysing bodies in society and how these are marked by constructed timing, in particular the rhythm of repetition, when speaking about dressage. "It is through rhythms that this model establishes itself" (Lefebvre, 1992: 41) and the way we adapt and learn how to live suitable to particular norms is marked by a rhythm and, hence, by an active movement. It is important to bring this consideration of time in relation to the notion of *impasse* which is treated in general theories regarding power. Specifically relevant in this respect is the way it commodifies bodies in contemporary societies based upon production. The impassivity of normativity is located not only in particular places but also in constructed timing. This acknowledgment is a new step of recognition

of the agency that the subject has in the reproduction of these systems of power and truth that help perpetuate the existence of a body in a particular social token.

The commodification of bodies in these (localized) societies through space, time and relationality, as will be analyzed in the next part, have their ultimate example of agency when these performative actions become and produce reality. The postmodern concept of *simulacro*, forged by Baudrillard, is based on this materialization of the hyperreal construction of contemporary life.

As has been said in the previous paragraphs, the contemplation of contemporary forms of power through these diversified theories also exposes the way power is relational, i.e., it does not exist as a reality in itself but it is rather enacted and performed by the relationality of two or more elements which don't necessarily have to be living bodies or material entities. However, I would like to bring into discussion *Affect theory* as a way to engage with more specified tools of power which sometimes get blurred inside master theories. I want to engage with affect theory as a personal consciousness of how power, in the first place has affected my own life through affects- as I will disseminate in the case studies chapters.- and of how I have, step by step, become conscious that affect is used in contemporary productive locations to filter dispositifs (Foucault, 1978) of power into bodies. As Ben Anderson writes in his book,

it is not enough simply to claim that affects are relational, and/or are emergent from relations and/or take place in relations (...) Whilst I do not disagree with the basic proposition, arguing that entities are 'relationally constituted' has become automatic, (...) it tells us nothing specific about different affects and what they do. The initial task for an analysis of affective life is, then, to attend to differentiated "capacities to affect and be affected"; exhaustion, pain, greed, and so on. The second task is to trace how affects emerge from and express specific relational configurations. (Anderson, 2014: 10-11)

The "capacities to affect and be affected" that Anderson uses as an initial definition of affect already gives us a relational formula of how affective life, and the apparatuses sustaining it, are bidirectional and, somehow, relational. Taking Deleuze's¹¹ notion that the body can be anything, Anderson follows his concern with researching in affect by

¹¹ "Affect is a body's 'capacity to affect and be affected', where a body can in principle be anything" (Deleuze in Anderson, 2014: 9)

this principle, that, however, he does not reduce to a closed pattern of analyses but rather uses as this basis to speak about how power operates through affects in certain bodies, marking them. I would suggest to call these operations "hegemonies of affects".

The dynamism of the theories that Anderson revisits in his work is directly connected to the concept of "free radicals" that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has used to speak about the radicality of affectivity seeing that affects are continuously moving throughout bodies and, at the same time, they "become attached to ... almost anything" (Anderson, 2014: 6). The defence of an *affective turn* comes then after this type of considerations, considerations which observe that affect is involved in a peculiar double bind, a *potentia* that has a radical possibility of social action but that, at the same time, needs of deep analysis and reflection in order to escape the parts where it establishes itself as *potestas* (Spinoza, 1958).¹²

Following Anderson's line of thought regarding the importance of finding the friction between relational considerations of affects and attachment theories, I go side by side with the critique that Claire Hemmings makes on the generalized application of affect in this analytic turn as the "only path" to liberate bodies living under oppression. As she remarks, "[w]e are effectively caught in culture. Critics viewing poststructuralism in this way advocate not a material return but an ontological one, a revaluing of individual difference and capacity for change over time" (Hemmings, 2005: 554). The critique to elitism inside these post-structural theories, theories that seek to find a working material tension that could ground them in a practical terrain, also brings into question the based-on positive affects that these theories have mainstreamed. It is here that the engagement with Lauren Berlant's work is primordial in the challenge to normative and hegemonic ways of living affects. The concept of "cruel optimism" that she uses to describe "multiple modes of attachment, endurance, and attunement to the world and to the contemporary world of spreading precarity and normative dissolution" (Berlant, 2011: 13), different searches for fulfilling attachments in the organization of the present that entail a social desire that commodifies the self and simultaneously brings a body near to this object of attachment that "is actually an obstacle to [*its*] flourishing" (Berlant, 2011: 1). Escaping from an essentialist consideration of attachments, Berlant works in a

¹² The distinction between both concepts resides in the possibilities that each offers, *potestas* being linked to a prescribed understanding of power, that consequently tends to restrict, and *potentia* as an intrinsic force that can generate expansions of this located power.

relational consideration of these *dressaged* bonds, arguing that the cruelty of these approximations does not reside in its optimistic component in itself but rather "as the very pleasures of being inside a relation have become sustaining regardless of the content of the relation" (Berlant, 2011: 2). The cutting-edge of Berlant's considerations of affects, such as "cruel optimism", finds force in the turn towards relationality that she introduces in her thought. Without using relationality as an alibi to narrow down the infinite discussion about affects, and parallel to Anderson's rejection of this kind of docile critiques, Berlant allows affect a certain power: that of excess. Affects, in Judith Butler's terms, can take the shape of performative *drag* happenings. Drag is here understood as a mode of "queer performance that subversively 'allegorize' (...) heterosexual melancholy, thereby revealing the allegorical nature" (Salih, 2002: 96) of, in this case, affect hegemonies. This doesn't mean I think of performativity as a representational theory that can be applied to different critical thoughts from an intersectional perspective¹³. Aware of the many needed critiques on the construction of performativity, that is drawn from privileged locations that do not acknowledge more than one sense of agency incapable of finding situatedness, I do find a potential refusal of normativity in performative acts, such as my writing of this thesis, not as a resolute action to escape *dispositifs* of power, but rather as a strategically located fictional tool, that can help unveil these *dispositifs*.

So as to bridge to the next component of this personal analysis, I would like to speak about the concept of *happiness* as the clashing affect and term with that one of *failure*, that I have followed to pollute the application of queer as dissident in this work. In the light of Sara Ahmed's theories regarding cultural affects and happiness in particular, affects are directly linked to the fantasies of living a "good life". As Ahmed indirectly reveals through a number of questions, "[d]o we consent to happiness? And what are we consenting to, if or when we consent to happiness?" (Ahmed, 2010: 1), the imperative call to be happy in contexts that are informed by the basis of neo-liberalism and productivity speak of the attachment to normativity that then manifests in material consequences as those of oppression towards dissident bodies. This can take place in a deliberated way, as happens with the subject of killjoy that she exemplifies through the

¹³ For example, I am quite sceptical of its generalization to race and gender as if there was a conscious act of theatrical interpretation behind it.

feminist individual, or from a forced positioning that is constrained by the social order. As Ahmed explains,

These conversion points between good and bad feeling do matter; some bodies are presumed to be the origin of bad feeling insofar as they disturb the promise of happiness, which we can re-describe as the social pressure to maintain the signs of "getting along". This is why I do not describe the sociality of affect in terms of transmission or contagion, where feelings pass between proximate bodies, but in terms of the politics of attribution and conversion. There is a political struggle about how we attribute good and bad feelings. (Ahmed, 2007:127)

Affects have an active role in marking bodies. The possibilities to escape the hegemonic paradigms that we inhabit in our daily life through "duty" affects find location in the questioning of the attachments that make life "bearable". *Affect aliens*, the concept that Ahmed uses to speak about dissension of this kind of user's guide to be *in* life, are creative sights that can allow the excess, the stress, of these tense bonds. As she points out, "[p]ossibilities have to be recognized as possibilities to become possible (....) This is why affect aliens can be creative: not only do we want the wrong things, not only do we embrace possibilities that we have been asked to give up, but we create life worlds around these wants" (Ahmed, 2010: 218). By doing this, Ahmed positions herself challenging affirmative theories, such as those from Rosi Braidotti, that maybe lack the tracking of the privilege of their locations when they claim generalized solutions to issues that need to be narrowed down to concrete situations. Nevertheless, Ahmed states that it is not that "feminist, anti-racist and queer politics do not have anything to say about happiness other than point to its unhappy effects" but that "it is the very exposure of these unhappy effects that is affirmative, which gives us an alternative set of imaginings of what might count as a good or at least better life". (Ahmed, 2007: 135)

Through an intersectional approach, I would like to see how two works written by Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* ([1994] 2011) and *The Posthuman* (2013), can not only interrelate with each other but also be read as, and applied to, the performativity of the fiction that this thesis sustains. From this stance, I am proposing a transfer of terms so as to talk about "subjective nomadities", applying the posthuman theory in the latter work to the

theories of subjectivity and embodiment in the former. With this swap, I want to discover in the mobility of the nomad, the trace of its embodied subjectivities and its material groundings.

With my own experience to relate to, in their fictional shape, the borders of subjectivity become nomadic in time, in a posthuman mode of understanding the framing of reality. The encounter between the possible readers of these pages and the atemporal characters leads to a rethinking of space and time which I would like to address under the light of Teresa del Valle's "chronotopes" (1999), that was mentioned previously.

Going beyond the normative conception of the *self*, these narratives engage subjectivity with an infinite amalgama of possibilities, which, ultimately, break the borders between reality and fiction, past and future, self and other, destroying, at the same time, the binary system of understanding the subject. The oniric, subconscious, surreal and latent world of the mind is presented in these performative memoirs through characters that are not always identities, and psychic material which exceed the frontiers of the self, the boundaries between reality and imagination. This crossing of boundaries calls to mind feminist positionings, accounting for the complexity of any fixed category. Gloria Anzaldúa's politics of location (following Adrienne Rich's text, 1986) proposes the breaking down of borders and paradigms which she argues through the conceptual persona of the *mestiza*, showing how the duality subject-object, which keeps her a prisoner, can be transcended (2012: 80).

In addition to the above, I would like to interact with the concept of yearning (hooks, 1999), which I find extremely illuminating when it comes to the bridging together between social encounters, such as the ones that inform this study, and critical theory. Only by reconnecting activism and personal-collective experience with theory can critical theory be kept as its name itself demands, critical. In this sense, I would like to review bell hooks's critique on the traditionally monolithic reading of academic practices. hooks intends to criticize what, already by then, was the normative tradition of the postmodern movement, recognizing in art and artistic expression a space for

critical exchange [...] that reflects passionate engagement with popular cultures, because this may very well be 'the' central future location of resistance struggle, a meeting place where new and radical happenings can occur. (hooks, 1990: 6)

I choose this quote because I think it contains the umbilical cord between the performative experience that I analyse and the theories I connect them to. This cord is a continuous feedback between the two spaces. The passion of yearning through this reciprocal flooding can generate the resistance and critique that is needed so that theories as postmodernity, following hooks's example, can be applied without the boundaries that normativity imposes. Braidotti herself, finds in hooks an example of passionate and affirmative yearning to explore when she writes that the use of yearning in hooks is linked to the "affective and political sensibility that cuts across the boundaries of race, class, gender, and sexual practice" (1994; 2011: 22).

Extrapolating multiplicity beyond the above presented reality vs imagination dichotomy, the narratives of this thesis become a rhizomatic whole, where the self and the other, the characters and the identifications and reality and imagination are melted and become fluid and nomadic. I use nomadic in Braidotti's sense as "self-reflexive and not parasitic upon a process of metaphorization of 'other' " (1994;2011: 11). Following this position, I intend to provoke and sustain "a critique of dominant visions of the subject, identity and knowledge" (1994; 2011: 7-8). In this regard, it also creates narrations, situations and chronotopes as a strategy -as Teresa del Valle puts it (2000: 12-13)- where every subjectivity that comes across these narratives is also involved with these nexuses that synthesize more extensive significances and constructions. Chronotopes is understood by del Valle as

Places where time and space appear as a dynamic convergence. As powerful links full of reflectivity and emotions, (...) temporal enclaves with complex activities and significances where identities are negotiated and can be in conflict, open to new interpretations of actions and the symbols that create inequality (del Valle, 2000: 12)¹⁴

The sort of "fourth dimension" created in this scenario does not only cross the boundaries between dichotomic concepts as mind-reality, memory-present and fact-fiction, but it also breaks the frontier of the human, clashing the binary between human and everything else. This collapse of binary restrictions links with a nomadic figuration

¹⁴ "puntos donde el tiempo y el espacio [...] aparecen en una convergencia dinámica. Como nexos poderosos cargados de reflexividad y emociones, [...] enclaves temporales con actividades y significados complejos en los que se negocian identidades, donde pueden estar en conflicto nuevas interpretaciones de acciones, símbolos creadores de desigualdad" (del Valle, 2000: 12).

which "implies the refusal to separate reason from the imagination, [...] it also alters the terms of the conventional pact between the writer and her readers" (Braidotti, 1994; 2011:18)

Travis Collins's application of memory is very pertinent here, as he proposes that "[t]he present self is able to return virtually to the past self, which ability in turn shapes both the subject's self-conceptualizations and future becomings" (Collins, 2009: 8). By means of this process of becoming, the subjectivities that come across this fiction are mobilized and turned into drifting, nomadic and conceptual personae.¹⁵ Still, the memory in scene is built as a whole constituted reality. The conventional main character(s) that enact memory in each one of the chapters of the dissertation lose control of their own self/ves in a locus that reminds us of Braidotti's nomadic notion of subjectivity. But as she herself adds, subjectivity has to be pushed further, "connecting it to two other crucial ideas: the positivity of difference and posthuman ethics." (2016: 25). The fiction certainly encounters the posthuman/nonhuman/transhuman+ . The posthuman space in this thesis as a whole is finally created by the introduction of the subjectivities that clash into it: readers, characters, antagonists or identities of the present, as nomadic subjects, and the decoded material of time, space and bodies.

The theories connect the oneiric, reminiscent and subconscious phenomena to "reality", they sail memories to the "authentic" physical world. The ruling movement connects not only with that idea of nomadity but also with Zygmunt Bauman's liquidity, vulnerability and fragility of modernity. These fragmented stages testify to the fact that "[w]hat has been cut apart cannot be glued back together. Abandon all hope of totality, future as well as past, you who enter the world of fluid modernity" (Bauman, 2000: 22). The assemblage of subjectivities that clash here enter the world of fluidity, fragmentation and uncertainty of the posthuman. Following Judith Butler's theories regarding bodies in alliance, this assemblage of identities acknowledge a sense of vulnerability that affects each of them, putting in danger the normativity of the self since the alliance of identities is re-enacted at each stage of the text. As Butler points out,

¹⁵ A concept that I intend to explore further in the future. As Deleuze and Guattari understand it, is "not the philosopher's representative but, rather, the reverse: the philosopher is only the envelope of his principal conceptual persona and of all other personae who are the intercessors, the real subjects of his philosophy" (Deleuze, 1991: 64). Braidotti will use it in the application of figuration. As she argues, "Some readers have suggested that in my writing I activate the 'feminist theorist' as a working figuration or *conceptual persona* in order to innovate in both philosophical form and content" (1994; 2011:22)

[N]ot only [as] a future social form; sometimes it is latent, or sometimes it actually is the structure of our own subject-formation [...] [It] is not that I am a collection of identities, but that I am already an assembly, even a general assembly, or an assemblage, as Jasbir Puar has adapted the term from Gilles Deleuze. (Butler, 2015: 68)

The posthuman project is created by that breaking of the unitary understanding of the human and all the categories that this system implies. Intersection and assemblage come together in a frictional relation where, as Jasbir Puar puts it, "intersectional identities are the byproducts of attempts to still and quell the perpetual motion of assemblages, to capture and reduce them, to harness their threatening mobility" (Puar, 2007: 213).

In addition to all this, the breaking of unitary understanding cannot be fully grasped without looking at memory as one of the categories affected by the posthuman matter in this fiction. It is inundated by, and in turn inundates, the last scenario of the "real known" world. As Braidotti argues in *The Posthuman*, the "posthuman time is a complex and non-linear system, internally fractured and multiplied over several time-sequences, [where] affect and memory become essential elements." (Braidotti, 2013: 167).

The allegories and symbols that are created throughout these pages respond also to an interest in semiotics. Semiotics, another posthuman category that works in this becoming, connects to the idea of the maps/territory of memory. Semantic and episodic memory could be understood, as Luis Moutinho puts it, as

[T]he store of knowledge of the world [...] knowledge base that we all have and much of which we can access quickly and effortlessly. Semantic memory includes meaning of words [...] [and] the rules and concepts that let us construct a mental representation of the world without any immediate perceptions [...] On the contrary, episodic memory enables individuals to remember their personally experienced past. (2014: 154)

Semantic and episodic memory codes are deconstructed in these chapters. I try to exceed the limits of linguistics, translating these narratives into a new affective lexicon. As Braidotti describes this nomadism in communication, "[t]he non-semiotic codes [...] intersect with complex assemblages of affects, embodied practices and other

performances that include but are not confined to the linguistic realm." (2013: 158). This transmutation of memory, the disruption of time and the movement of the different bodies that enact these memories, speak about this rhizomatic posthumanist cartography.

The figurations of these different personas also squirt in. They appear as an alternative manner of understanding the human fiction, nomadic bodies in assembly/assemblage. As Braidotti explains,

A figuration is the expression of alternative representations of the subject as a dynamic-unitary entity; it is the dramatization of processes of becoming. These processes assume that the subject formation takes place in-between nature/technology; [...] local/global; present/past- in the spaces that flow and connect the binaries. (Braidotti, 2013: 164)

Bodies act and are enacted upon in a Fluxus¹⁶ aesthetics, creating an *intermedia* space in the use given to the term by Dick Higgins as an in-between space. As Braidotti has it in *Nomadic Subjects* the potential of this in-between space is "the itinerary, rather than the final destination" (1994; 2011: 3).

Being in this middle space is already a condition that helps understand this new concept of border. The border fulfils two paradoxical functions: on the one hand it could be the site of exclusion while on the other it could also be a central panoramic viewpoint from which to contemplate all the diversity of settings. Dance and theatre, jargon and semantics, reality and fiction, individual and assemblage figurations, get removed to that middle stage, from where everything, and thus nothing, is possible simultaneously. This vindication of the border and the nomadic posthuman subject also echoes rhizomatic non-hierarchical structures. As Scott Jeffrey portraits also following Eve Tuck's ideas,

Unlike trees with their roots and central trunk, rhizomes possess no fixed origins [...] A rhizome is non-hierarchical in structure, it has "no roots, no starting place, no sequence, no ending place; only multiple sources,

¹⁶ Artistic movement organized by George Maciunas in 1962 and strongly influential during the 60s.

interruptions, interceptions, foldings, mergings, partings, multiple entry ways"
(2016: 14)¹⁷

The rhizomatic building of the conjunction of theories that are arranged in this work is performed in a constant tension between fixed categories of location and material accountability while, at the same time, it imagines unfixed becomings. This friction also applies to the queer position that I want to work from, which has to do with a constant analysis of how concrete situations can become a pretext of new theories rather than affirmations of what queer is and who inhabits its domains. Envisioned more as a pathway in constant change, I want to engage with the critique to queer forms of normativity and oppression that can be found in critically constructed places. Queer's rejection to *normalcy*, as will be further explored in the next chapters, has become somehow claustrophobic. Maybe exceeding the norm simply means ways of finding survival through it, or maybe it's under those circumstances of survival that I could realise that queer was becoming, in many cases, the *angel* of the sacred dogma.

Queer theory tries to position itself in the margins, where it finds the dissidence of the model. As introduced earlier on in this thesis, Jack Halberstam's queering of failure can help the breaking free from normative ways of being affected. To Halberstam the act of failure is a choice, a "performance of dissent and refusal", a manifestation of one form of the existence of queerness (Halberstam in IPAK Center, 2014). Queer as a range of realities links to the ambiguity not only of its form but, from an ontological perspective, of its logic of identity as both a recognition of the body as well as the embodied norm that we should fly off from. Thus, in order to embrace queer theory in all its possibilities we need a constant revision of critical theories so as to situate it in a context that frames a time, a location and the relations that occur in its location. In this sense, queer theory directly relates to identity politics, given the similar questions posed by both which are, nevertheless, answered in radically different manners. Because of the openness of its responses, queer theory positions itself in a more frictional understanding of identities not only as free bodies capable of escaping the demonized norm, but also as marked ones: bodies which in some contexts are capable of refusal and in others have a need to

¹⁷ The rhizomatic model created by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari is ultimately a critique to identity processes. As Braidotti reminds us, this critique is posed "[n]ot on any one identity, but on the very concept of identity, with the inbuilt logic of recognition of sameness and dualistic relocation of otherness" (Braidotti, 2005)

respond to the materiality of their situation. This is the position I want to stand from, a frictional response "beyond the 'binary stalemate' of having to choose between resisting the hegemonic fantasy of the homosexual or acceding to it" (Nyong'o, 2008:107). And still, as with Tavia Nyong'o on the multiple critiques of the sometimes normative approaches that queer theory also establishes, I have a special interest in these counter theories that stand next/against/behind/before the "beloved queer".

I revisit queer in a specific relation to this thesis as a whole, engaging with both queer critiques and critiques to (dominant) queer. In this light, chronotopes and utopian affirmative theories are problematized through queer temporalities through the readings of theorists such as Lee Edelman's *No future* (2004), Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* (2011) or José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* (2009). In the clash between the negativity of Edelman and the more "radical hope"- following Jonathan Lear's concept (2008)- that Muñoz adopts in his work resides the resistances to single positions with respect to queer theorisations. This makes this dissertation again a fiction that works through the performativity of theories, which here take form and are applied in a practical, relational and situated way that refuses what I understand as the ontologisation of epistemologies, the way in which certain ways of knowledge are taken as what there is, giving them an ontological character.

These dissidences adopt failure as a way of disrupting the constrains of normativity, adopting very different shapes. These move from activist perspectives, as those of anal theorists as Paco Vidarte, with his inspiring *Ética Marica. Proclamas libertarias para una militancia LGTBQ* (2007) or Javier Saez and Sejo Carrascosa with a brilliant book such as *Por el culo: políticas anales* (2011); to more theoretical positions such as Judith Butler's *Notes Toward A Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015) which carries out a fortunate and localized revisitation of performativity through the notion of precarity. Still, in this thesis, this book works in contradiction with other theories that find a clearer tension in the revolutionary consciousness that triggers broader understandings of existence of the subjects under precarious circumstances, as the texts by Peter Drucker, *The Politics of Some Bodies* (2017) analyse.

From this polymorphous perverse queerness, following Del LaGrace Volcano (1991; 1999) I have revisited not only romantic love (Lagarde, 1998; Esteban, 2011), but also its critique from relational anarchist positions such as the work by C.B. Daring, Deric Shannon, J. Rogue, Abbey Volcano and others in *Queering Anarchism: Addressing and*

Undressing Power and Desire (2012) or less know writings that appear in cyber-locations as those by Luna Caleb (2018). Through these theoretical polymorphities I engage in the breaking down of heteronormative conceptions of romantic love (Butler, 1990; Puar, 2007), not so much because of the gender division that it establishes as because of the compulsory binary, paring, grouping in two, that it settles. In this sense, I do not fully recognize polyamory as an unquestioned liberation practice, unlike relational anarchy, that attains a deeper deconstruction by questioning the hierarchies present in the different modes of relationalities between bodies.

In this practice of situatedness, Alexander G. Weheliye's work *Habeas Viscus* (2014) has been highly inspirational to my rethinking of the importance of material acknowledgment and accountability of the experiences that intersect in these stories. While speaking about the construction of the notion of modern humanity, Weheliye challenges its construction while questioning canonical theories such as Giorgio Agamben's or Michel Foucault's, which I am also using in this thesis. Through the discourse of *Bare life* and *Biopolitics*, respectively, both theorists tend to underestimate the intersections between race and the creation of the "human". As has been considered before, the configuration of this type of theories, to which I add others as *nomadic subjects* (Braidotti, 2011) or the *border method* (Mezzadra & Nielsen, 2012)-that will be discussed in the next chapters- would find a better awareness of the positions from which their voices and theories are exercised, and of what these locations entail, in more frictional debates and arguments. In my work, I speak about resistance, about agency, about vulnerability and about many other affective activities that I take as subversive to my previous experiences. Still, I do try to admit the privilege from which these actions come, possibilities of chosen motions that I am able to enact. Looking at the construction of the nomadic move or the chances that are seen in the border (Braidotti, 2011; Mezzadra & Nielsen, 2012) helps make clear the assumptions, systematizations and misrepresentations that these settled logics tend to put upon the produced "oppressed" subject, as Weheliye contests arguing that

genres of the human I discuss in *Habeas Viscus* ought not to be understood within the lexicons of resistance and agency, because, as explanatory tools, these concepts have a tendency to blind us, whether through strenuous denials or exalted celebrations of their existence, to the manifold occurrences of freedom in

zones of indistinction. As modes of analyzing and imagining the practices of the oppressed in the face of extreme violence -although this is also applicable more broadly -resistance and agency assume full, self-present, and coherent subjects working against something or someone. Which is not to say that agency and resistance are completely irrelevant in this context, just that we might come to a more layered and improvisatory understanding of extreme subjection if we do not decide in advance what forms its disfigurements should take on (Weheliye, 2014: 11)

Viscosity and the flesh have a leading importance in this work, since there are sites of locations that can relate to the specificity that Weheliye attests as the only path to follow beyond the human spectrum. The posthuman project that Weheliye proposes, and that I line up with, speaks more about transitions in a queering action than of middle spaces of nomadic borders that can sometimes constrain the humans, or at least fleshes that inhabit them.

3- The hegemonic dyke: power through lesbian masculinities.

When my radicals come to visit Granada I warn them: 'my friends are sometimes *hegemonic lesbians*', but then I am one too so, what do I expect?

Every now and then, I remember when I started kissing girls and detesting guys. This division is now one of the most problematic memories that constitute the identity I claim, not only because it implied a cisgender division between both sides, but also the dichotomic attitude towards their categories made me search in "dykes" the salvation to the sexist surroundings of my adolescent body.

December 18, 2008 has been the password for all my accounts until not so long ago. As its powerful virtue to lock and unlock, so was the offering of all my *self* to the "greatest romance that's ever been sold".

Cesara, that is not her name, told me to jump on her motorbike. I remembered my mum with a scared face and some of her first wrinkles prohibiting me to ride on one. But after that other night getting into that drunk guy's car, I already knew the orgasm of breaking rules. On top of that was the adrenaline of knowing that a girl was going to try and kiss me and that she would actually do. With the air leaving all my hair behind, Cesara found gas in touching my knee making her moto move at a speed such that I could hear my poor mum's shouts mixing with the air while I getting into my helmet. After that night, Cesara asked me to be her girlfriend. After that night, Cesara asked me to be hers. After that night, Cesara asked me to see her on Wednesdays, then Thursdays and weekends and then she asked me to move in with her. After those days, Cesara asked me to stop talking to that friend of mine. After some other lot of friends, Cesara asked me to be more masculine, and after that more feminine, and then Cesara asked me to feel happy ever after and it was the first time I realised I couldn't fulfil her wishes. I dared say no_____

_____ Cesara told me to get up from the floor and smile.

The lesbian character that I sometimes reinforce in myself has been nascent of a political rejection towards the constant misreading and misconstruction that I have suffered by the gaze of (cis)men. Maybe theories regarding romantic love have been consuming "our"¹⁸ texts and energies while reflecting upon how, even as feminists, it was sometimes hard to escape what Mari Luz Esteban (2011) would term "pensamiento amoroso", i.e. a "romantic frame of mind", a sort of "romantic knowledge, the dressage of learning how to live love. At the same time, it is interesting to see how thinking about heteronormative structures has been a form of resistance in my criticism towards romantic love, convincing myself that, as someone who kept reaffirming her sexuality as a lesbian, I was safe from the traps of romantic love. And now it comes to mind that maybe the iconic *Bechdel test* was misreading what *Dykes to Watch Out For*¹⁹ was achieving to destruct: hegemonic conceptions of love. While I find some problematics in the sketching of the comic, I do not intend to conduct a deep analysis but merely recollect the ecstatic tones of the comic which deconstruct previous conceptions of relationships. It is at this point that I think the Bechdel test has not achieved its full potentiality. Maybe, the focus in analysing films from a feminist perspective should not only be the constant presence of a man, either physically or as the main topic of conversations, as the test claims, but also the constant reaffirmation of love as monogamous and romantic..

Always keeping in mind the contexts that I analyse from my own experience, love has not only been "the opium of women" (Millet in Falcón, 1984), but a way of social functionality in western capitalist societies. Hence, Esteban's work has come in very handy. She uses the concept of "pensamiento amoroso" ("romantic frame of mind") to recall a

specific cultural ideology, a peculiar way of understanding and practicing love that originates in modernity and has constantly been transforming and reinforcing itself until our days. A symbolic and practical configuration that has a direct influence upon the production of symbols, representations, rules and laws, determining the configuration of social and generic identities, the

¹⁸ Following Adrienne Rich's *Notes Toward a Politics of Location* (1984), the use of inverted comas is to acknowledge that the collectivity in the possessives I sometimes use in the text responds to a relational and potential collectivity, not to fixed groups of belongings.

¹⁹ Comic by Alison Bechdel from which the test got its name.

processes of socialization and individual, social and institutional action²⁰
(Esteban, 2011 :47)

This precept is extended to the idea that "love singularizes the other and, thus, gives them a place in the world. And vice versa, if someone loves me, they recognize me, they give me a place"²¹ (Esteban, 2011: 86). This consideration of love as recognition bridges it directly to the construction of identity. Even remaining conscious of how romantic love constructs social apparatuses of relationality, it is important to acknowledge that bodies which have been socialized as feminine, have also been affected by this reading, positioning them inside the schemes attached to their construction as women, including their relation to love and its romance. Marcela Lagarde describes how the imprisonments that women are victims of are linked to a structure that "politically [*resides*] in the specific relation of women to power"²² (Lagarde, 2011: 175), rather than to their direct relation to specific actors that counteract their identity, that are correspondent results to these structures.

But the counteraction in a lesbian couple is performed by the fiction of the role. I don't want to claim at this point that all homosexual relations -of two, and thus, suitable for a binary configuration- are structured by a gendered hierarchy of the two components. What I do claim, in parallel visions to feminist and queer theorists as Jack Halberstam, is that the normativity of relationality establishes monogamy as a trend which simultaneously invokes the gender binary that heteronormativity performs (Butler, 1990; Puar, 2007). My reaction to this is an exploration to other forms of relationality that exceed monogamous pairing. And here, more than a practice, I am claiming a critical position. Even if polyamori, open relationships or relational anarchy have meant for my own way of living sex and love an utopian site of imagination, they have not always carried a so docile (easy) body of application.

²⁰ "determinada ideología cultural, una forma particular de entender y practicar el amor que surge en la modernidad y va transformándose y reforzándose hasta nuestros días. Una configuración simbólica y práctica que influye directamente en la producción de símbolos, representaciones, normas y leyes, y orienta la conformación de las identidades sociales y genéricas, los procesos de socialización y las acciones individuales, sociales e institucionales" (Esteban, 2011:47)

²¹ "el amor singulariza al otro y, por tanto, le otorga un lugar en el mundo. Y viceversa, si alguien me ama, me reconoce, me da un lugar." (Esteban, 2011:86)

²² "políticamente en la relación específica que tienen las mujeres con el poder" (Lagarde, 2011: 175).

Affects have a radical caring component in this respect and have been the core to new formulations of living through vulnerability, as will be explained later on in this chapter.

Breaking with the theoretical conception of monogamous love and affective life has led me to focusing upon both relations on the one hand and their affects on the other. This has helped - and it is still helping now as I write these words - to put into practice the theoretical frame that was, at other times, impossible to imagine. Esteban reads from Ahmed how

[j]ust as in our culture there is a hierarchy between high and low emotions, emotions to be preserved or to be discarded, there is also a classification, a gradation, in the definition and ranking of every possible kind of love, where relations and affects like the ones that occur in the form of friendship (and also of proximity), are relegated to the last position or even to oblivion, or are less appreciated.²³ (Esteban, 2011: 71)

It is through affect and sharing/caring ways of relationality that the *solo* voice dears to be accompanied by an orchestra and choirs that can finally create polyphonic actions. I want to highlight affective theory because I find it essential to speak about new ways of relationality and, consequently, of love, that even based in counter-hegemonic views are not always working from a turn towards affects that is based in a caring and sharing of vulnerability (Rogowska-Stangret in Revelles-Benavente, 2017). As Zigmunt Bauman would already warn us of nearly 20 years ago, postmodernity has given rise to the utility of transient dimensions that respond more to dialectical bonds that change over time than to deplorable understandings of solidity. Since "[b]eing modern came to mean, as it means today, being unable to stop and even less able to stand still" (Bauman, 2000: 28), relational bonds have become another site of vulnerability.

The leitmotiv of liquidity has changed its forms to fit different containers through time. These last decades have witnessed a radical shift in relational conceptions of love, as polyamori or open relationships, that could be sometimes more representative of the gas

²³ "De la misma manera que en nuestra cultura hay una jerarquía entre emociones altas y bajas, cultivables y desechables, hay también una clasificación, una graduación, en la definición y rango de todos los tipos de amor posibles, donde relaciones y afectos como los que se dan bajo la forma de amistad (pero también de vecindad), quedan relegados al último lugar o incluso al olvido, o son menospreciados" (Esteban, 2011:71)

state of evaporated liquid. Brigitte Vasalló, one of the main theorists related to polyamori in Spain, does a strong critique to liquid, fragile and consumerist ways in which "free love" is being practised. Using Bauman's critique on the liquidity of modernity, Vasalló reflects upon how finally the neoliberal trend of individualism wins in a way that leaves bodies isolated on desert islands of vulnerability, incapable in their loneliness of making of this vulnerability a possible tool of resistance. I find strength in Vasalló's words when the contradictions of my own loving practices come to mind, as she denounces that

we deconstruct romantic love, [...] [*but at the same time*] we dismantle loving structures and support bounds, that helped us, precisely, to confront capitalism and other violences. The couple has always been a shelter, specially to those lives which are migrat, precarious or with non-heterosexual desires. (Vasalló in Iborra, 2017)²⁴

As she remarks, the ambition for new forms of relating to love should imply widening up "desires, but not dismantling deep and compromised relationships for the sake of it"²⁵ (Vasalló in Iborra, 2017).

In this construction of love also resides an unconscious reproduction and reinforcement of specific stereotypes that again makes clear the reproduction of specific gender roles performed in the relational binary that I recall from my own experienced couples. Here, I find an analogy in other virtual platforms such as Tinder, a dating App released in 2012. Cyberspace is not a monolithic environment and, because of this, it needs a specific analysis in order to understand the processes and dynamics that stand behind its infinite intra-activity. In this case, the correspondence between Facebook and Tinder, regarding the importance of image-based identities, finds a relevant fissure in the kind of relationships that are enacted in each one. Following Shanyang Zhao's terminology, "anchored relationships", that do not respond so much to the liquidity of (post)modern relationality, are normally absent in the Tinder app, even if the established connections are nominally meant to be materialised in a physical encounter that would create this

²⁴" deconstruimos el amor romántico, (...) [y al mismo tiempo] desmontamos las estructuras amorosas y los vínculos de apoyo, que nos servían, precisamente, para hacer frente al capitalismo y a otras violencias. La pareja ha sido siempre un refugio, sobre todo para las vidas migradas, precarias o de deseos no heterosexuales." (Vasalló en Iborra, 2017)

²⁵ "los deseos, pero no desmontando las relaciones profundas y comprometidas porque sí" (Vasalló,)

"off-line" based relations. Even so, the identity foundation is inaugurated in a way that its fiction becomes the central mode of experiencing the App. Examining my interaction in Tinder, I consider that this difference between both Apps (Tinder and Facebook) is crucial in order to grasp the operations of reproducing and performing through them social-stereotypes- in my case gender and sexuality.

The fact that Tinder is framed as a dating App installs a romantic scheme that also implies a sexualisation of its members. Due to the unknown new people I come through, the identity that I construct seems to need strong markers that can be recognized by the persons who come across my profile so that they get the right impression to *match* me. This recognition is not an innocent one, but rather finds its base in social norms, such as gender and sexuality. My profile is personified to meet lesbian or bisexual (normally cis)women. The reproduction of a *femme* gender role becomes clear when I present myself through a profile that is mainly configured by images. Without any description, these images perform an over feminized identity which is founded, more than on an emotional self-recognition, on a tradition of ways I have engaged in *off-virtual* relations. The way I commodify my own body as a hyper feminized- and sometimes hyper sexualised- one becomes a strategy in order to establish these sexual-affective encounters. The heteronormative paradigm I follow online has to be performed in the consequent dates with people that I have matched, for my part, because of the identity reading I do of the other person. This "identity placement" usually follows the binary narrative in which I, as a femme-presenting cis-woman, search for a counter-part, that *can't be other* (irony intended) than a masculine-presenting (in most cases) cis-woman. These stereotypes reproduce, at the same level, an idea of romantic love that permeates my understanding of my own sexuality and affective life. Still, the fluidity of the virtual universe checkmates these traditional ways of engaging at the time that we acknowledge the multiplicity of persons we can "choose from". As in a catalogue of an online flash sales company, I have noticed how I reproduce the model of romantic love though, at the same time, destroying the compromise and affective bonds. Marina Garcés speaks about how the individualistic trend of neoliberal societies has an impact upon the way we understand responsibility and the sense of community, where the individual is conceptualised as a client who lives through a consumption practice that allows them to "come in and out of the world with indifference as if it were a supermarket or a website"

(Garcés, 2015:16)²⁶. As if speaking about a product, the *match/unmatch* action makes clear how *our* idea of romantic love is sustained from a selfish narrative that only tries to reproduce an engendered understanding of how to kinship in life, rather than follow a desire that is founded on a specific passion for some particular person, as it is read in the mainstream. This does not mean that other alternatives of affection and love become the solution- as I have already pointed out with polyamory or open relationships- since the basis would still be the same individualistic one -as can be seen in the fluidity of encounters in Tinder. We should rather work through its frictions and contradictions and perform inside the diffractive space of relations in a way that can enact a "cutting together apart" (Barad, 2014: 176), or in other words, not essentialising the alternatives but rather working through them. This has to be applied in the way we understand the virtual space in the binary connection/isolation or possibility/limits and rather keep an ongoing critical view of it that can work in this intra-active space.

Bringing into discussion my own persona constructions in these pages directs me to the critical understanding of the Internet as an utopian post-space and highlights the commodification operations that become intensified in these virtual spaces. The depiction of the Internet as an infinite interactive free space of choice has contributed to this idea. Speaking about "identity tourism", Lisa Nakamura quotes Zabet Patterson claiming that "we often find this compensatory rhetoric and narrative of free choice, a cornerstone of American cultural ideology [*and other capitalist societies*], inhabiting precisely those situations that, on a basic structural level, admit of little or no choice at all" (Patterson in Nakamura, 2008: 1676). I would like to rescue and twiddle the idea of "identity tourism" emanating from Nakamura's analysis -which is based on a postcolonial critique of how race is reproduced in the digital era/spaces- and apply it to the construction of my own sexual and affective identities. The fact that the virtuality of Tinder offers me the possibility of creating a new identity, a drag exaggeration of my own femininity, is not based on a free utopian agency, but rather on the lack of recognition that I would find in my daily life -which also includes these types of interactions- if I were to break with stereotyped modes of identity based on an heteronormative pattern. My identity is tenderness, it sometimes appears as fragments

²⁶ "entrar y salir con indiferencia del mundo como si se tratara de un supermercado o una página web" (Garcés, 2015:16)²⁶.

that I cannot put back together but through these normative depictions of self, singular, isolated and untruthful.

The contemporary space of virtuality, which is an example of the performative scenarios where relations take place, re-claims a certain normativity that is hidden by these narratives, to an extent that it is the same person, in many cases, who self-commodifies herself, sometimes in an unconscious way. Far from being a post-space, the virtual is in assemblage with the "off-line" dimension, becoming a setting of intra-actions that destabilize the binary understanding of possibility/limit and deals more with the frictions and contradictions that appear in them. A critical diffractive analysis of digital era can also bring to light contemporary forms of surveillance and power which, as Nakamura states do "more than simply watch or observe bodies. It remakes the body as a social actor, classifying some as normative and legal, and some as illegal and out of bounds." (Nakamura, 2014b: 1). This becomes even more paradoxical when control over bodies is enacted by the body itself, creating ways of self-commodification and self-surveillance. Social platforms as Facebook or Tinder, then, become liquid scenarios where important processes of identity (re)formations take place. These virtual places become sites of clash between binaries, since they appear simultaneously as places of submission and resistance. The use of a diffractive perspective *queers* the understanding of identity, enabling "attention to ontology in tandem with epistemology, affect in conjunction with representational economies, within which bodies (...) interpenetrate, swirl together, and transmit affects to each other", as Puar points out in her conceptualization of assemblage (2005: 122). The conjunction of ontology and epistemology breaks free from "geometries of absolute exteriority or interiority (...) remaining resolutely accountable for the role 'we' play in the intertwined practices of knowing and becoming" (Barad, 2003: 802).

The rupture of the binary online/offline, another fictional fissure, and the recognition of identity as not singular and co-dependent on the intra-activity with others can open up a space to rethink the Internet, and the physical spaces generated from it, as places of possibilities. There is an urgency in recognizing and examining identities through the virtual, since, as Nakamura puts it (2008: 1831) what "people need to learn is how to coordinate their behaviours in these two realms". This also calls for a responsible way of living the digital era, which does not speak inside the utopian discourse of the Internet as a post-oppression landscape, but rather remains critical of it, while exploring

the possibilities that can be inhabited. The fluidity of possibility is then distanced from the liquidity of limits. The virtual space cannot only reproduce liquid engagements and relationships, but should envision a critical framework from where to speak about fluidity. Fluidity deconstructs in a diffractive operation, working within the in-between spaces of binaries as exteriority-interiority, transitory-permanent or immediate-continuing. Fluidity *queers* the traditional understanding of identity that can enable a more compromised use of the Internet and a more situated way of living though the digital. Deconstructing *te(i)nderness* doesn't mean negating vulnerability, but engaging in a *potentia* that "cuts together apart", acknowledging the hegemony of *potestas* and working diffractively in the middle space where action takes place²⁷.

With the framing of the hegemonies that inhabit the understandings and doings of love and its affective effects, what comes to mind is the hierarchization that social relations are submerged in. As has been thrown in the way of an example through the case of the Tinder based relationality, even the fluidity that free and open understandings of sex and love still gives them a meaning and power that is very different from other kinds of relations, such as friendship or communal/familial associations. This fluidity, which most probably falls, therefore, in the liquidity of the individuality of neoliberal tendency, is misread as *potentia*. What, then, can be the answer to dismantle covered forms of *potestas*? Anti-authority desires, aka anarchism.

"That night they made love, the kind of love-making that is another country, a country
of its own, not yours or mine

With the acceptance of love there comes the authority to impose conditions. They have never said the worn old words to one another, for her they are bourgeois clichés left behind; or perhaps it is because each would need a different vocabulary in their two languages" (Nadime Gordimer, *The Pickup*, 2001: 96 - 97)

²⁷ Following Baruch Spinoza's philosophy, *potentia* stands against *potestas*, which needs a referent (institutional) to dominate or be dominated in order to produce its power of action. *Potentia* would be the counterpower, a power that is fluid and constitutes through a dynamic process.

Anarchism breaks the isolation by treating "individuality and community as mutually constitutive, rather than as in opposition to one another (...) [and] freedom as a *social product*, rather than as a value/goal that is necessarily in tension with community." (Daring, 2012: 2). The ultimate challenge for social ways of life is then relational anarchism. Gordimer's extracts above mark two transitions: that between two chapters in the novel and also the transition of requirements in the classification of love. High love, involving sex with romanticism, requires a marching in the new couple. In only one transition, one half page in black and white, we see the modern cultural consequences of loving. The queering and anarchizing project that I propose for loving practices does not stand in opposition to polyamori or open relationships regarding their propositions, as we will examine in the following chapters, but rather fights against the power with which these practices tend to live. Against any kind of social contract, relational anarchism draws from the conception of queer from where I position myself, one that is anti-assimilationist, celebrates failure, works through vulnerability and acknowledges precarity (Shildrick, 2001; Halberstam, 2011; Butler, 2004).

4.- The polyamorous activist: vanilla goes kinky.

4.1. Side A: Disidentifications.

It would be unfair, in this text as a whole, if I didn't reserve at least a chapter to think, with the same strength I have devoted to romantic love, about the limitations/violence in polyamori links and active queer loc(k)ations. Also, as the intention of this dissertation is to think about hegemonies that are produced by/in spaces that are constructed as counter-hegemonic, I am eager to do so through the acknowledgement of the great job done by most of the spaces I talk about in the chapter. This is merely a reminder that, since we are all embedded in a system that controls us, there is an important pending task to rethink the liberatory spaces that we inhabit. We must face that, even if we are dissidents, the system-atic reading we are given is still based in the potential "prodigal sons" that we are desired to become some day. We are expected to go back, at some point, to normative livings. We are wanted in return.

I got fed up with identity politics when I discovered how limiting my experience was since I relied on the constant search for the persona I had chosen to look for in myself. As in a videogame, I had been selecting what aspects I would like to assemble in it, including the physicalities that would allow its perfect reading, as I have already examined in the previous chapter. Then, queer hacked my programme and I started to tear apart singular ideas of the self that didn't respond to all my living and nomadic identities. Then I got trapped into the dilemma where I rediscovered the movement in queerness and nomadity not only as a middle-space but also as a setting of privilege that I was not counting on. As I have previously analysed, the depiction of the border, and its nomadic subject, as a site of possibilities is based in its *potentia* as a station for becoming, where identities, subjectivities, resistance, hegemonies of power and intersections are stressed and intensified in a way that reveals, *drags* and performs all these processes. My dissidence regarding the nomadic border is not related to the understanding of a necessary breaking of the "wall" metaphor (even if its dystopic image-metaphor is actually being materialised) and a questioning of the processes that are performed in that motion. Instead, I am concerned with the responsibility that is placed upon these assigned nomadic subjects.

I actually want to problematize this depiction of the border, and other middle spaces, as resistance sites that project two ideas which are open to big misunderstanding: one

comes from the fact that it seems as if this "nomadism" comes from one's own agency of being in an "in-between" space. The other follows some of marxist György Lukács' theories, as Peter Drucker reflects upon in his text *The Politics of Some Bodies* (2017), where the responsibility is placed upon the person under oppression who reproduces the idea that a struggle "guarantees revolutionary consciousness" (Drucker, 2017: 3).

I have found the exploration of these two limits- and the possibility of a critical assemblage view- in the disidentification theory that Jose Esteban Muñoz performs in *Disidentifications* (1999). While reading the text from a diffractive methodology of examination, the dissing, dizzing and dissident aspects of Muñoz's motive has its mean in the negotiation of the contradictions and paradoxes that appear when talking about disruptive identities. Muñoz brings new light to the worldmaking of (some) queer identities through disidentifications, examined by queer performances as case studies.

Muñoz himself queers identity theories by means of disidentifications, that go "a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture." (Muñoz, 1999: 31). Disidentifications shift the idea of identity formation and speak about intra*active²⁸ entanglements of agential cuts, "which do not produce absolute separations, but rather cut together-apart" (Barad, 2014: 168). This diffractive understanding of identity also allows for a rethinking of the contradictions of being outside*within, breaking the binary position between identity and counter-identity.

The counter-identity approaches proposed not only by Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Nielsen through the "border method", but also, as I have already discussed, by Rosi Braidotti in her "nomadic theory", are important sites of reflection that problematize in-between chronotopes, but still need an ongoing conversation that remains critical of the dregs that become sediment through theory and discourse. In the nomadic space of the border "there is a certain intensification of political and even existential stakes that crystallize relations of domination and exploitation, subjection and subjectivation, power and resistance." (Mezzadra and Nielsen, 2012: 60). From a queer analysis of identity formation, it is interesting to see how the border can be read as a place of

²⁸ I will use the asterisk (*) to talk about these intra-actions and deal with the frictional way of their relation and the new meanings that it generates, breaking with the oppositional system of the dash (-).

concentration of power hegemonies that work on the subjects that occupy it. The border is drawn as a locus of possibilities, "as parameters that enable the channelling of flows and provide coordinates within which flows can be joined or segmented, connected or disconnected." (Mezzadra and Nielsen, 2012: 59). Still, this possibility, the *potentia* for new becomings, is framed in an uncritical way that permeates and establishes the border as a place where agency and consciousness are the variables of the equation that sustains the action occurring in it. The subject on the border is here understood as a (singular) subject in struggle, as a hybridity that "def (ies) notions of uniform identity or origins [...] [and] catches the fragmentary subject formation of people whose identities traverse different race, sexuality, and gender identifications" (Muñoz, 1999: 31-32). A critical disrupture is found in disidentifications, as it recognizes the struggle and sometimes inertia that the nomadic position implies. As Muñoz examines,

Disidentifications is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship. (Muñoz, 1999: 4)

The way Muñoz depicts the disidentification system of identities as a strategic negotiation that minority subjects have to perform in order to survive breaks with the uncritical style that nomadic theories have to speak about this oppressed position as a site of possibilities. The acknowledgement that the agency in this motion identity comes from a struggle does not only revisit the normative spaces from where these subjects are diasporically thrown out, but also those where they are sometimes thrown in:

[D]isidentification is not always an adequate strategy of resistance or survival for all minority subjects. At times, resistance needs to be pronounced and direct; on other occasions, queers of colour and other minority subjects need to follow a conformist path if they hope to survive a hostile public sphere. But for some, disidentifications is a survival strategy that works within and outside the dominant public sphere simultaneously. (Muñoz, 1999: 5)

This recognition of a variety of possible strategies of resistance from the minority subject also generates a space to talk about normativization as one possible strategic means of survival. As I have said before, in the last few years, I have grown very interested in critiques and counter-critiques on politics of identity. Concepts as

homonormativity (Lisa Duggan, 2002) or *Homonationalism* (Jasbir Puar, 2007) have become very popular in queer theory. Criticism to the privileges that stand behind these discourses is, in my opinion, more than necessary, and it should be directly connected to the privilege that also stands behind the depiction of the border, the nomad and the queer as the radical possibility of breaking apart from the system(s) of power. As Peter Drucker elaborates, "many queer critics of homonormativity are middle-class, and many working-class lesbians [*or other queer identities*] are attached to gender roles and family" (Drucker, 2017: 3). Disidentification stands in the diffractive positionality from where to encounter these terms in a rhizoma of possibilities, calling into recognition the complexity of anti-capitalist struggles that the dissident identity might encounter (Drucker, 2017: 3). Moreover, di(zz)ssing these theories calls attention to a revision of how these possibilities are also connected to a sense of responsibility which is imposed over the subject under oppression, hence reinforcing the power structures that stand behind the struggle itself.²⁹ In a crisscrossing mode, the oppositional binary helps to break, and is broken by, these standpoint critiques, problematizing and recognizing the subject inside a system of control from where there can be a possibility of re-imagining the fiction of identity.

Muñoz goes along with Michel Pêcheux's work in breaking this oppositional understanding of inside-outside the system while talking about the political determination of the subject inside the ideological system of representation. Pêcheux builds over three ways in which the subject is constructed (The "Good Subject", the "Bad Subject" and the "Disidentifying Subject")³⁰. The danger that the "Bad Subject" presents

validates the dominant ideology by reinforcing its dominance through the controlled symmetry of "counterdetermination". Disidentification is the third

²⁹ Drucker, following György Lukács's theories, goes deeper in the analysis of the imposed responsibility upon the subject of oppression by stating that "no subject position under capitalism guarantees revolutionary consciousness [...] [and as such i]t must be possible to defend same-sex couples' right to marriage equality and, at the same time, recognize and resist the homonormative pressures that restrict their freedom to shape their own relationships." (Drucker, 2017: 3)

³⁰ "Pêcheux built on this theory by describing the three modes in which a subject is constructed by ideological practices. In this schema, the first mode is understood as 'identification', where a 'Good Subject' chooses the path of identification with discursive and ideological forms. 'Bad Subjects' resist and attempt to reject the images and identificatory sites offered by dominant ideology and proceed to rebel, to 'couteridentify' and turn against the symbolic system." (Muñoz, 1999: 11)

mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology. (Muñoz, 1999: 11)

Identity is a complex assemblage of tensions between the subject and its relation to what it comes in contact with. As such, identity cannot be framed as a monistic cause from where the subject enacts. Following Michel Foucault's theorizing of power in *The History of Sexuality* (1978), these tensions also speak about how hegemonies appear in a multiplicity of chronotopes. This dislocation of power, which takes place in disidentifications through the tension between cut*stick in respect to the system of representation, is a claim for the recognition of the privilege that stands behind theorizing.

It also reclaims the necessity of remaining critical about how to imagine utopian futures outside normative systems of identity, while at the same time attending to the material conditions of the location from where these possible becomings are imagined. Using queer performances as examples (in this case Marga Gomez's *Marga Gomez is Pretty, Witty and Gay*, 1992), Muñoz speaks about how these minoritarian subjects come into the fiction of representation, stating that "Spectacles such as those that Gomez presents offer the minoritarian subject a space to situate itself in history and thus seize social agency" (Munoz, 1999: 1). The danger of the fiction of representation is then getting trapped in the system - as expressed by Jack Smith's sentence at the start of the book: "Normalcy is the evil of homosexuality" (Muñoz, 1999: ix). Disidentifications confront this trap as they propose, from a privileged state of consciousness and agency, a fiction in drag that brings together survival and resistance (for those who find it possible). Activism has to be informed by these diffractive theorisations and a disidentificatory optic that turns "to shadows and fissures within the text, where racialized presences can be liberated from the protective custody of the white literary imagination" (Muñoz, 1999: 29). Disidentifications, thus, are methodological strategies that I find primordial in order to bring together theory and activism in a way that can queer the oppositional dash (-) into an asterisk (*), that keeps the border as a critical place from where to act in

friction, talking of how not only does light have to be brought into shadows, but also of how, sometimes, shadows need to permeate lights.³¹

And precisely this is what E. Patrick Johnson criticizes while subverting queer into *quare*, that tries to "jettison its (queer's) homogenising tendencies" (Johnson, 2001:3). *Quaring* queer is committed to a theory of border and middle spaces that allows "complement notions of performativity, [*by including*][...] theories of performance" (2001:10). Queer theory lacks a broader reading of the different kinds of agencies that can be performed by these nomadic bodies, or bodies that happen to be in middle spaces, but which are not always read as subversive acts of change. This speaks of the normativity that queer falls into when it hierarchizes ways of resistance without a deeper analysis of the privileges from where these actions are born. Johnson walks alongside theories of the flesh that "not only describe the ways in which it is brought into being, but what it does once its constituted and the relationship between it and the other bodies around it" (2001:10), specifically criticizing how some bodies, in this case racialized and class marked bodies, are excluded by exemplary ways of being queer. Inspired by theorists such as Cathy Cohen, Johnson calls the attention of bodies that have important sites of resistances, but also of affirmative living, in the construction of communities. As Cohen herself reflects in *Punks*, "Queer theorizing which calls for the elimination of fixed categories of sexual identity seems to ignore the ways in which some traditional social identities and communal ties can, in fact, be important to one's survival" (Cohen, 1997: 450).

The friction that has already been mentioned between going beyond identity politics and remaining critical and conscious about situated material realities cannot pass as a double bind issue that has to be answered, but rather must engage in it with the specificity and relationality that each context offers. Following the precepts of Intersectionality and the conviction that identity can never be claimed as monistic, I follow Cohen's concern of individualities that "consistently activate only one characteristic of their identity, or a single perspective of consciousness, to organize their politics, rejecting any recognition of the multiple and intersecting systems of power that largely dictate our life chances" (Cohen, 1997:440).

³¹ Following Barad when she talks about the diffractive pattern, "illuminating the indefinite nature of boundaries displaying shadows in "light" regions and bright spots in "dark" region" (Barad, 2003: 803)

Jasbir Puar's approach on the "frictional" relation between Intersectionality and assemblage also enables new approaches to the different aspects of personal experience, considering that, as Butler reads from Puar, we are not a "collection of identities, but [...] already an assembly, even a general assembly, or an assemblage" (Butler, 2015: 68). In Puar's words, "intersectional identities are the by-products of attempts to still and quell the perpetual motion of assemblages, to capture and reduce them, to harness their threatening mobility" (Puar, 2007: 213). This connection of assemblage with movement introduces the ontological aspect that traditional intersection has failed to notice, remaining located in an epistemological perspective. This ontological part speaks about how subject classifications are induced by movement, rather than the other way round. The consideration of assemblage "enables attention to ontology in tandem with epistemology, affect in conjunction with representational economies" (Puar, 2007: 205).

Nevertheless, following the importance that these texts, and the experiences they recover, have for communal relationalities, I do distinguish between assemblages and assemblies. While assemblages are the conglomeration of ways of being in life, assemblies permit a more communitarian sense of coming together which does not respond so much to an identification with the Other as to the connections from where to work vulnerable locations and liquid bonds. As Butler articulates from her reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* while speaking about human desire, the subject "wants to know itself, but wants to find within the confines of this self the entirety of the external world; indeed its desire is to discover the entire domain of alterity as a reflection of itself" (Butler, 1987: ix-x). Assemblies, in my interpretation, have the peculiar shift that these critiques to queer also include: the importance of remaining conscious that the unification of bodies in activist/politics/protests acts/movement should not respond to a sense of monistic identitarian clue that makes them gather in symbolic glues, but rather to specific transgressions/demands that we find in our identities envisioned as assemblies.

Assemblies find analogy in queer not as a promise of happiness (Ahmed, 2007; 2010) but as the recognition of vulnerabilities, oppressions, desires and other living happenings that intersect formulating infinite experiences, different from each other, and still, with the sense, the interest and sometimes the need to gather along. This is essential if we want to create fair equal systems that still have a foundation on difference, and adopt a consensus-model to allow agreements and disagreements among

groups that make our gatherings movable and changeable in time-space-relationality. The hierarchical cut we find in this move works in analogy to anarchist political practices, such as *affinity* politics, that form "coalitions that can negotiate a temporary common ground, and moving beyond divisive identity politics" (Daring, 2012: 79). The disruptive vision of the promise of ideological agreement inside political movements involves a transgression of straight temporalities. These normative temporalities maintain us attached to ideas of futurity which interrupt the dynamism of our movements. Without falling into anachronism, as Eliana de Souza Ávila suggests, that "remains dominant in the temporal coding of queer sexuality" (de Souza, 2017: 40), the critique to temporalities from queer theory has been determining in order to dislocate temporal expectations of all kinds, as progressive politics, reproductive futures and so on. And in the cases in which there has been a continuous critical position of not falling in this anachronic trap, queer-quare temporalities have also found the friction between these imagined timings and the material presentness of contexts. As José Esteban Muñoz remarks, "[q]ueerness's ecstatic and horizontal temporality is a path and a movement to a greater openness to the world" (Muñoz, 2009: 25).

My interest in queer critique does not come from a further analysis or more accurate political consciousness as such, but from personal struggles inside spaces that have been (de) constructed from queer sites. My interest in the anarchist element that combines with queer stands against the hierarchical systems that also inform "our" spaces. I am concerned with the times when gender is equated with sexuality, and sexuality, at the same time, is sexualized in a way that normativizes our sexual experiences. In a mixture between inspiration and encouragement, I found in Abbey Volcano the material words to express the impatient ideas that were invading me. As she states, it is important to acknowledge that "the ways we fuck, love and gender ourselves are not inherently revolutionary. But [*rather create*] a politics that refuses the hierarchical arrangement of people because of their sexual and/or gender practices" (Daring, 2012: 35). By this, I want to emphasize the importance that sexual liberation has, among so many other radical practices, when the experience also includes those bodies or an infinite amalgama of experiences, which don't necessarily live sexuality in a sexualized way. As she notices "[a]t times, folks will assume that, of course *I* want to go to make out with my radical queer friends, of course *I* want to go to the play party, and of course *I* wouldn't have an exclusive relationship with only one other person" (Daring, 2012: 37).

The "unspoken *assumptions* which inhibit the radical political potential" of queerness, as Cathy Cohen remarks (1997: 451), give voice to the Foucaultian idea that hierarchies tend to get reproduced independently of the critique that stands behind any arrangement.

4.2. Side B. A.C.A.B.

ANAL COALITION AGAINST BORDERS.

It's a group of 20- maybe even 30 if we count their very few friends. They all look tough. But tough is nice, in a way that makes me want to be the 21st of them, or at least one of the friends they can bring along. They look tough but also tired, as they have been occupying for 2 and a half days, fighting against an eviction signed not only by the government but also by the rest of the city, those who were their companions in the olden times but who, today, have surreptitiously rejected their queer reality

In a polyvalent voice, I say *hello*, trying to mix with each one of the faces and humours that are resisting at 4 a.m. waiting for the blue lights that will finally put an end to this no longer abandoned garage. To be fair, it is quite big. There is at least space for 15 cars or 120 radical bodies. The next two hours go by quite fast and without thinking that the moment would actually arrive, the homonymous cars park next to the poster, where you can read the transfeminist queer name which for them is only a meaningless code. We have decided we will stand for a passive eviction, trying to avoid the violent reactions that other (non-queer) squats have had lately. We receive them sitting down, watching how the blue lights are off and the helmets are still sleepy in their hands. We are ready, or I am trying to convince myself we are, to respond to their aggressiveness, to their mean faces forcing us to immediately leave this place.

I am scared, but I am still able to put my best face. With a defiant expression I follow the songs that we are singing as a way of rejecting their eviction. Some are laughing, and there is one yawning. It is still very early and he didn't have a

coffee and by the looks of things, he didn't even need one. When his mouth is closed again, there are 9 more people out of the place. I have also been moved by two gentle uniforms. Our body weights are not as important for them as the light amount of resistance they have found in the street where we are. Our anal pleasure, and its applied passivity have again made them silence us. *Them*, not (only) cops, not (only) lawmakers, but our (non-queer) radical *comrades*.

Political feelings have never grown up from the infantilized vision over which they have been constructed. As Lauren Berlant observes, it is something “made of and for children.” (Berlant in Nyong'o, 2008: 104). Developing from the normative constructions of kinship, in this respect, politics have been thrown out the backstreet. The front door, in the meantime, remains tranquil in a straight temporality that not only determines what relationships are to enter the alliance of kinship but also how and for how long these 'other' associations should exist. The straightness of the temporalities that sustain these alliances entail both a sense of longevity and reproduction. These translate in the cultural notion of the family, that especially during adulthood converts all the relational possibilities to normally singular and permanent alliances that become the ones to care for. Jack Halberstam points out how outside these confinements that work through "an authenticating notion of longevity renders all other relations meaningless and superficial [*the family*](...), by virtue of being early bonds, seem more important than friendships" (Halberstam, 2007: 317). The effects of a productive surrounding is felt in the notion of futurity that is implicit in our political temporalities. In this futurity, besides the procreation sense of reproduction, stands the hope for replicas of the ideas that conform our understanding of our own identities. They are identities that are marked by location, desires, demands, shapes and other circumstances. As Lee Edelman proves in his analysis of futurity, as partners of straight temporalities, "we are no more able to conceive of a politics without a fantasy of the future than we are able to conceive of a future without the figure of the child" (Edelman, 1998: 21). Forcing myself away from the inimical feeling of these analyses, I continually recognize the way in which political bodies are infantilized, dramatized and patronized following the fantasy of the child. This concentration of the child imaginary and its family signifier becomes "misleading and mistaken, and, ultimately, it blots out a far more compelling story about cooperation, collectivity and non- heterosexual, non-

reproductive behaviours" (Halberstam, 2007: 315). The triviality applied to these political bodies depends on how these bodies are marked, not only singularly but also as they participate in collective imaginaries. As Butler wonders in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015),

[W]hen bodies gather as they do to express their indignation and to enact their plural existence in public space, they are also making broader demands: they are demanding to be recognized, to be valued, they are exercising a right to appear, to exercise freedom, and they are demanding a liveable life [...] How do we understand the form of signification that such protests seek to convey in relation to how they are named by those they oppose? Is this a political form of enacted and plural performativity, the workings of which requires its own consideration? (Butler, 2015: 26).

And, indeed, we were performing a form of resistance that had nothing to do with the long debates during our infinite circles or the shared beers after hours of consciousness raising. "Us" as a marked sexual identified group; as a feminized and, consequently, disempowered group; as unequal to the real squatting scene; as an "us" without power within itself. Maybe claiming for violence would not be the best way to put it, because it would be another way of ontologising our collectivity into concluded parameters. Still, to be accountable in a state of violence is to be exposed to these risks when, as Butler also remarks, at this moment "the body risks appearance not only in order to speak and act, but to suffer and move" (Butler, 2015: 87). Our exoticized bodies read as monistic existences of sexualities, as if there were nothing more to them but the ways we fuck, as if fucking was the only mark of our gendering, as if sex was implicitly sexual.

Our openings to the world also imply anal coalitions that are not only sex-making but also, as Paco Vidarte coined, *anaethics* (Vidarte, 2007), converting our rectums in "our political instrument, the fundamental slogan of another LGBTQ militancy, to design a very basic anal politics: all for the inside, to receive everything, to let everything penetrate you and only throw shit and farts to the outside, this is our eschatological contribution to the system"³² (Vidarte, 2007: 20). Raised fists and ass openings that

³² "Otra vez la Analética se cruzaba en mi camino. Hacer del culo nuestro instrumento político, la consigna fundamental de otra militancia LGTBQ, diseñar una política anal muy básica: todo para dentro,

work as a resignification as they are "not marked by gender or sex" (Saez, 2011: 111), that are not only understood as sex markers but as black holes capable of absorbing great amounts of matter(ings). We were read as passive, we were constructed as passive, and we actually were. But it was the kind of passivity that rejects a systemic participation, the kind of passivity that seeks an ongoing penetration of intersecting existences, the kind of passivity that refuses to be kind anymore. We were wanted isolated in our own gathering, and in some way, we were wanted and expected to be docile in our transfeminine manner. We were denied violence. More than a claim to violence, I call for a further and wider opening of the understanding of its presence. Violence, that is not ontologically opposite to pacifism, has been created as its opponent, giving singular epistemological readings of violence that have achieved its hegemonic use. When inverting violence into pacifism, as Peter Gelderloos does, it can be noticed how pacifism

an ideology comes from a privileged context. It ignores that violence is already here; that violence is an unavoidable, structurally integral part of the current social hierarchy (...) Nonviolence refuses to recognize that it can only work for privileged people, who have a status protected by violence, as the perpetrators and beneficiaries of a violent hierarchy. (Gelderloos, 2007: 24)

As passive, as unproductive, we were also equated to futile devices, to sterile movements that didn't find signification in the city, not as a political threat- in the face of authorities- but neither as radical allies- with regard to comrades. Working through queer failure means facing the dissidence we sometimes choose in our movements, the constant rejection of accountability and the way we, still as radical queers, acquire to identities which we receive from the outsiders, from them who construct our passivity not as a refusal to the state we day by day denounce, but as a rejection to the outrage of our responses. But, again, who is "us"? There is a choice in wildness, in a guerrilla organized back action that answers their violence, their way of imposing us their futurities, their destructive way of reading our fiascos. There is a choice in our BDSM exchanges, in our submissive relations, based upon outgoing conversations, in spans that find strength in shared words and spaces. There is a choice to reinvent places again

recibir todo, dejar que todo penetre y hacia afuera sólo soltar mierda y pedos, ésta es nuestra contribución escatológica al sistema" (Vidarte, 2007: 20)

and again, to speak up the violence that we continue to suspend in our comrades, to reproduce identity norms that keep our movements full of borders. There is a choice in renouncing to cops and their patronizing smile, and there is also a choice to find this same smile in the middle of our occupied utopic locations.

5.-The feminist artherapist.

It's one contradiction after another. I just asked him to wait at the end of the session, and he actually has. He has that kind of intimate look that you can only escape from if you are confident enough.

-*"So, Silvia has told me you're reaching the point. How are you feeling?"*

-*"The point for what, for being kicked out, you mean?"*

-*"Well, the point for starting the life you have been slowly creating everyday of your time here".*

-*"I have been slowly creating? You are always so artistic in everything you say, aren't you?"*

-*"Not much else to expect from me, no"-* I try to sound ironic and laid back, but I know he has promised not to smile. I try again.-*" I am just trying to make you understand how we all feel about your growth since you got here".*

-*"No, A, I was already old enough. I had already created a life"-* He has suddenly rushed his words- *"But at least now I'm included, as you always say, aren't I? But, included where? Oh yes, I am contained now, contained in your way of living and contained in my way of feeling. I can't wait to be thrown out from here, a domesticated cat into the wild"-* He full stops. Like spitting on the ground while walking, I see his body ready to leave.

-*"It makes me very unhappy to hear you saying these things"-* I keep the silence for one more second thinking of what to say next but he's got the rhythm.

-*"Well, if it makes you sad, then I will stop. I wouldn't want you to feel sad"-* Then he smiles.

In an attempt of learning from Marcela Lagarde (1998), there are breaths I have now started to practice, learning how to cope with a frictional arrangement of being active in realities that don't necessarily have to do with my experience, and at the same time self-

caring, learning how to be for myself. Far from an individualistic covenant, the self-caring perspective that I try to practice in these frictions is grounded in a "[c]ommunitarian anarchism- which treats individuality and community as mutually constitutive, rather than as in opposition to one another (Daring, 2012: 2). The embodied memories that occupy these paragraphs have a direct connection with "memorias encarnadas" ("embodied memories"), the concept used by Teresa del Valle (1999) which has already been used in the previous sections.. The memories that she speaks about are more than just a reconstruction of the past from data created by other people³³. Instead, she explains, they are personal memories that might allow us to identify symbols, as well as to take distance and re-experience different emotions attached to them, such as love, fear, hate or vulnerability (del Valle, 1999: 8). I have practiced "embodied memories", sharing and reworking corporal experiences and personal interiorizations of past memories inside disciplines that are connected with social inclusion work and projects, sharings that have allowed me to reflect about different emotional processes. Embodiment and critique combine in other works, such as *Antropología encarnada. Antropología desde una misma* (2004) by Mari Luz Esteban where she merges both terms by acknowledging how from social and critical disciplines, such as anthropology or social intervention, there is a drift towards the division between "on the one hand us, anthropologists, intellectuals or feminists, and on the other, the rest. Between us, subjects, and the others, victims" (Esteban, 2014: 15)³⁴.

As has already been introduced, the idea of embodiment and memory from and for a self-ethnographical analysis is directly related with affect theory. When my embodied experiences find analogy with other experiences that were shared with me, there was a certain movement of these past events towards the present, leading to what Sara Ahmed would call "the radicalisation of our relation to the past, which [is] transformed into that which lives and breathes in the present" (Ahmed, 2014: 180). Wondering how certain emotions and affects tend to shape bodies, the rush towards the present meant an exploration in the ways my body has been oriented "towards objects and others, which [has] shape[d] individual as well as collective bodies" (Ahmed, 2014: 15) in my past

³³"La memoria de la que hablo va más allá de lo que sería la mera reconstrucción del pasado por medio de los datos que aportan las personas o de los datos que podemos recoger e interpretar de las mujeres" (del Valle, 1999:8).

³⁴ "nosotros, antropólogos, intelectuales o feministas, por un lado, y resto, por otro. Entre nosotros, sujetos, y los otros, víctimas." (Esteban, 2014: 15)

practices. From here, I started realizing that the recurrent shared feelings of hope, fear and vulnerability are directly entangled with the systemic practices that are attached to this type of professional interventions. Those emotions have been shaped by an institutional system of hegemonies of power which, as I have already discussed, is inevitably intersectional and relational.

Following affect theory, Lauren Berlant has offered a key concept, that of "Cruel optimism", which has helped me take critical positionings in the analysis of my past memories and experiences. I came to think about what I was reproducing inside my practices and the only thing I could detect was a great amount of critical judgement but I somehow lacked a self-situated approach that could actually start uncovering the reasons sustaining these problematics. Affect and attachment has enabled new visions of how not only me, but the people I worked with, were located in a very specific system that upheld all of us absorbed inside its normative existence. Here, I situate in the specificity that Berlant makes aware of by talking about the presentness of contexts, not by refusing further temporalities (Muñoz, 2009) that can be as transgressive as they can be potential (Berlant, 2011), but as a first step of recognition of self-location and as a practice of breaking monolithic understandings of subjects inside narratives of social inclusion.

When thinking about affects in a social inclusion field, hope comes to mind, as the construction of these spaces deals with the aspirations of people for being (re) inserted in society. Nevertheless, as I will explore further on (with the concepts of crisis and inclusion), the action of "including" and being "included" sustains the impasse of normativity and a model of production which takes as its object of commodity a subject who, intoxicated by the notion of social hope, awaits a final moment of insertion. The colonial traces that transpire in this kind of interventions need to be unveiled. Indeed, coloniality and its effects diffuse in the present and reproduce a model of modernity shaped as the "promise of rational existence as well as a promise of freedom, of equity, of solidarity, of the continuous improvement of the material conditions of these forms of social existence, not of any other." (Quijano, 1989:153). Even if the effects of colonialism cannot be equated between different locations, as Latin America and Spain in this case, their legacy does exceed historical borders, where a caste system apparatus determines the inclusion of bodies in the system, recognizing some of them and conquering those which need to be contained.

Who includes and who is being included also speaks about a conception of passivity in which the absent sense of agency is directly proportional to the inaction of the subject, and this, in turn, relates to a system of production. Perhaps we should explore other ways of hope from more critical positionings, like that of Jonathan Lear coining the concept of "Radical hope" (2008). The radicality in this concept, following Berlant's theory of transgression, is related to a situated understanding of hope which rather than disrupt the material conditions of its contexts, it exceeds them, maintaining the consciousness of its own location.

Thus, the interest in the deepening of past practices has the basis not in a pure analysis of social programmes but more declaredly the relations of power that tend to remain uncritically silenced even in spaces that are raised opposing these hegemonies. Following a Foucaultian understanding of power³⁵, critical theory and other critical approaches need to emphasize the analysis on how hegemonies are intersectional and relational, meaning that I, as a practitioner of critical approaches also find myself wrapped up in these exercises of power, as actor and reactor at once. As Cathy Cohen formulates in her famous *Punks*, the concern should be directed to "any political analysis or theory which collapses our understanding of power into a single continuum of evaluation" (Cohen, 1997:452). My interest in how I (re)produce a system from which, paradoxically, I try to distance myself has made me reflect on how we are all held by a commodification of bodies, subjects and identities inside these practices that works as a *dispositif*, and as such involves every body that comes into its realm. I wanted to understand how not only the subjects who I work with are affected by the normativisation of social practices, but how my own individuality also becomes part of this dogmatic procedure. Through affect and relational theory I have been exploring the possible resistances that we can apply to these social practices, not as closed circuits of actions, but rather as radical hopes that are born of situated locations. Because of all this,, I have also become very sceptical of concepts that are applied into this kind of approaches, such as those of "crisis" or "inclusion".

³⁵ "Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true." (Foucault, 1984: 72–73).

From the location from where I was experiencing my social practice exercises I could notice how specific marked bodies, such as those from immigrants, women or people with mental diversity were the most affected with regards to the so-called Spanish economic crisis, that burst forth in 2008. Hence, my position has been very much influenced by what was sold as an economic crisis situation. This discourse has had a direct impact on the funding allocated to social inclusion programmes, where public and social services have been drastically cut. Also, it is in their friction that both concepts, inclusion and exclusion, take shape as specific actions. These actions, following the tenets of cruel optimism, citing Berlant "[*turn*] toward thinking about the ordinary as an impasse shaped by crisis in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on" (Berlant, 2011: 8). Crisis is then not an exceptional state but, as Berlant says, "a process embedded in the ordinary that unfolds in stories about navigating what's overwhelming" (Berlant, 2011: 10). Rather than transform the situation, the actions intended to palliate the crisis become part of the neoliberal narrative of exception. The crisis has positioned some bodies (racialized bodies) as unusual and unstable for the system, as the cause of tension and as the cause of the crisis. As Ahmed (2014) points out:

Once someone or something is agreed to be the cause of tension, then shared feelings are directed toward that cause. Something "out there" which is sensed and real, but also intangible, is made tangible. In "finding" cause, feelings can become even more forceful. Political discourse is powerful as it can turn intangible feelings into tangible things that you can do things with. If we feel nervous, we can do something by eliminating what is agreed to be making us nervous. (Ahmed, 2014: 227)

A very particular and ambiguous nationalist narrative of belonging has raised since the so called economic crisis. The "ordinariness of crisis" that Berlant speaks about (2011) has implied very specific accounts of precarity that have framed the "ordinary subject" who has been constituted as, following Ahmed, "the real victim" threatened by "the imagined others whose proximity becomes a crime" (2014: 44) against this "national ordinary belonging subject".

Together with one of the persons with whom I have been exploring these experiences and texts, my colleague Ana García López, I have also investigated new terms, such as

the notion of autonomy from which Marcela Lagarde (1998) speaks about independence and inclusion of women. Going further from these expectations, Ana and I have been looking into the use of autonomy in social inclusion practices which has been a common denominator to the personal and professional experiences of both of us. The strength of the use of this notion in this particular context stands in the importance that Lagarde gives to the distinction between "procesos vitales económicos" [(vital economic processes (1998: 8) and "procesos vitales culturales" (vital cultural processes (1998: 9)]. This differentiation is radical because only in the friction between both sides can there be a specific accountability of material conditions that can help a transformative engagement in the autonomy of the subjectivities emerging within these inclusion spaces.

Inclusion/exclusion dynamics create the impossibility of breaking with the networks of power relations (Foucault, 1977: 26), which keep reproducing the same culture that excludes some bodies. Therefore, it could be said that social inclusion agents configure an idea of autonomy based on economics, the economy=autonomy formula. Hence, I want to critically propose a new transformative feminist perspective of autonomy, one that could be constructed within this kind of practices and which will also question the network of relations that sustains power hegemonies.

Perhaps this is a paradox and perhaps there is a need to work through contradictions. On the one hand, critical social intervention can only be effective when isolated from any connections within institutions inserted in the neoliberal system. However, on the other, as I am conscious of the fact that it is impossible to break these relations from inside. I want to propose, therefore, that rather than aiming at a utopian total general transformation of the system, we should work towards producing more humble critical, situated, contextualized feminist toolboxes that could provide fresh new models based on affect approaches.

Our toolbox could include, for instance, the forms of hope I was indicating at the beginning of this chapter. "Radical hope, is an exciting choice since, in Jonathan Lear's words "it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is. Radical hope anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it." (2008: 103). The radicality in this concept, following Berlant's theory of transgression, is related to a

situated understanding of hope. One that rather than disrupt the material conditions of its contexts, it exceeds them, maintaining the consciousness of its own location. Exercising radical hope doesn't emerge from a sense of optimism, that lacks an understanding of location, but comes from the acceptance of vulnerability. Vulnerability not as an ontological shared condition of being in life, but rather vulnerability as a shared exposition that we all suffer from through cultural epistemologies. The differences in vulnerabilities respond to this ontologized shape of life that marks and constrains bodies in very specific and divergent ways. The breathing spaces that I refer to at the start of this chapter slowly acquire the form of "combat breathing" (Fanon, 1994: 65), a systemic individual surveillance that decides over bodies. The intersections that are found in the many forms of vulnerability are determined by specific paradigms that perform in various situations and mark embodied experiences. Only by unveiling the rhizomatic expansions of experiences will the friction between critique and the survival of these criticized forms of assimilation be imagined. Imagined in fictions, in visions and genres that allow an ongoing movement in their creation. Drawn from our understanding and application of "Radical hope" to this analysis, Ana García and I have proposed located micro-(en)actions of power as resistances that give shape and inform relational toolboxes at strategic moments of our practices.

Power needs to be decolonized and explored from new perspectives that do not necessarily imply its equation with domination. This is what we are trying to imagine and shape (or we would rather say sketch) from these plural toolboxes, that are relational since they are created at specific moments of our practices and are meant to give response to specific contexts where the singularity of those meet the multiple identities that come together in assemblage and assemblies (depending on a different idea of agency). The horizontalizing of relations in a performative understanding of strategic and located micro-enactions of power also links to fresh models based on affective approaches, such as relational anarchy which I have discussed in this thesis. Remaining critical and aware at this still early stage of research in its regard and involvement with Critical Dissability Studies and critical approaches to different relational possibilities, we should remember the location of the micro-enactions that I propose so that these moments can be performed in ways that de-demonize power, the kind of power which overcomes domination and oppression. One of my favourite readings during the process of writing this thesis has been the work by Boaventura de

Sousa Santos. Santos denounces the *epistemicides* (2014) that have informed the colonial constructions of epistemologies around the world. In his work, and following this decolonial reworking of theories, Santos searches for counter-hegemonic forms of power that are plural and contextual, relational to the specific settings of every situation. As he describes, "[w]hat is hegemonic in globalization is not necessarily global, and the same applies to counter-hegemony. Hegemony and counter-hegemony can only be determined contextually" (Santos, 2018: 26-27)³⁶. Following this line of thought, and as he further explores in this book, human rights have also been determined from monistic positions that lack a relational response to each situation. Social inclusion programmes and, in my specific case, Artherapy, are born of these dominant conceptions of justice and, as has been said above, they also permeate contemporary forms of colonialism. In this sense, and as I propose through micro-enactions of power, located strategies should be found in the different contexts "we" come across. And this "we", let us not forget, will remain a site of privilege, a vantage point from which "our" voices are spoken.

³⁶ "Lo que tiene de hegemónica la globalización no es necesariamente global, y otro tanto cabe decir de lo que es contrahegemónico. Lo hegemónico y lo contrahegemónico solo pueden determinarse contextualmente" (Santos, 2018: 26-27)

6.- Prosaic and prozaic conclusions and other transitions.

Open as in reflections, the infinite space behind my face when I look into the mirror. Open but contained, locked in the promised room of one's own. Not able to walk all the space of possibility at the back of my own gaze. A *potentia gaudendis*, an infinite scope that already implies endless limits.

This dissertation has built upon transitions, of all kinds, also in its conclusive parts. The present section opens more than what it resolves and moves through the orgasmic force that Paul B. Preciado proposes through the concept of *potentia gaudendis* in his *Testo Yonki* (Preciado, 2008). It transitions spaces the moment it chooses to acknowledge the spectrum of reflections.

These reflections can be recognized as a *modus operandi* throughout the thesis, starting in the first part, from the entanglements of the fictions of my various identities that attach to memorable narratives. These narratives take a certain shape in this dissertation but, as the chronotopes they are, they could also adopt a totally different shape elsewhere. This way of doing responds to the frictions that appear between the positions from where the theories that relate to this analysis emerge, considering the middle spaces as sites of possibilities to occupy different critiques. I hence depart from a certain conception of power following Foucault and Gramsci's theories, reviewed in the second chapter. We have seen that their understanding of power is one that exceeds singular locations and rather speaks about how it permeates every realm of life in a more relational understanding of its existence. Drawn from Latour's own notion of power, I have considered how this prevalent character responds to a translation model, which breaks the idea that power gets reproduced in inertia and without a constant enaction of everyday doings. Arriving from this potentiality of the doings of power, the work by Lefebvre with his consideration of the notion of Dressage has also been of great importance in this chapter so as to relate with the impasse of normativity, which finds hegemonic forms in the way we live affective life. This has constituted one of the primordial parts of this chapter, engaging in affect theory texts, like those by Ben Anderson, Sara Ahmed or Lauren Berlant, which relate to other ways of living through affects. We have also examined to what an extent, as in the case of Ahmed and Berlant, there is a tendency to examine the normativity of "good affects", such as happiness, or

optimism, that ultimately appear as the promise of preferable ways of living. In this sense, I have highlighted that affirmative theories are essential to consider but new light should be thrown on them so as to accomplish a situatedness from where to specify and relate to the complexity of stories, especially those which are produced under precarious circumstances or appear on the move. This last part of the chapter argues how nomadic theories, as those by Rosi Braidotti, find connecting intersections in theories such as that by Jasbir Puar, which deal with the importance of acknowledging these assemblages, or as I choose to call them, assemblies. Assemblies take account of the relational way in which bodies happen to appear and meet in different crhonotopes. The end of the chapter takes off from these intersections of the body and speaks about queer theory and its critiques, to the breaking of time and future. Through queer temporalities, I dialogue with Lee Edelman and José Esteban Muñoz, and the normativity of understanding of time. I also put into discussion the subverted quare, by E. Patrick Johnson, or the viscosity of Alexander G. Weheliye, favouring the fleshes rather than corporealities. Hence I claim for a reading through bodies that are not always read by discourses of representation and accountability. These carnal theories have uncovered the hegemonies that reside in queer, which as a critical approach sometimes lacks ongoing revisions. I then conclude the chapter with a finding: failure and a queer application of anarchism to relationality as the forms of attachment that suit the following rememorations.

With this fictional arrangement, I move to the third chapter where I discover, through a great amount of experiences and some imagined memories, the power that inhabits also non-heterosexual parings. In this case, the lesbian couple is the material location where I have found a reproduction of heteronormative assignments that have, at the same time, envolved specific physicalities, roles and affects. Through Mari Luz Esteban's idea of romantic "frame of mind"/ knowledge, I have tracked down, from experiences of violence involved in my past lesbian relations, the way heteronormativity should not be concerned so much with the binary of the heterosexual promise and norm that informs- in many cases- non-heterosexual coupling, but more readily, with the duality of the binary itself. I have shown that the power that resides in heterosexuality and, therefore, its heteronormative vindications, responds mostly to the compulsory way of relating in romance and sex in groups of two, that sustain an equation of consummation that then jumps into our beds and desires. Other forms of relationality have appeared in the course of this writing, taking on Brigitte Vasalló's polyamory project that engages in an

expansion of desires without losing affective and solidarity bonds that more traditional relationalities are supposed to represent. I line up with this conception of desire in an anarchical move, in which relationalities do not need a constant distinction and delineation that consequently determines existing hierarchies between sexual, romantic, loving platonic, familial or political associations. Throughout the chapter I come back and forward to romantic ideas and I flashback, as the virtual constructions of my sexual/romantic identities, and confess the troubles of adhering to antiauthority desires and practices, making clear the friction between particular locations and expansive possibilities, between rooted livings through *potestas* and the immense sceneries of *potentia*.

This tension between *potentia* and *potestas* is used as the counter-force for chapter 4, that works besides José Esteban Muñoz's disidentifications, with a new materialistic input, following Karen Barad's ideas. This perspective allows the disident(ificatory) project to work through diffractive positionings, divergences that I have used to speak about the hegemonies of power that inhabit subversive and activist spaces. Speaking always from a personal perspective, and remaining not only conscious of but also thankful to the people that invent these counter-locations every day, I find just as radical as these actions, a critique that can open conversations of what loc(k)tations we, nevertheless, still inhabit and how to work towards the construction of safer spaces and more conscious engagements. In my personal experience, I have found problematic the construction of sex-positive spaces, that are very much affected by positivity of sex without engaging in other sexuality expressions, including the non-expression. Following the considerations that Abbey Volcano makes from an anarchical point view, I have found inspirations to live in the failure of sometimes being read as not-queer-enough, discovering that these standards respond to assumptions inside subversive landscapes, as that of queer. The second part of the chapter allows a more outsider construction and reproduction of narratives of passivity and anal desires, moving out of the movement itself but still uncovering the way queerness is treated from other left wing movements. The treatment of passivity is still based on a feminine conception that marks certain bodies as non-productive not only to the system but also to its counter-actions. I then pin down the monistic consideration of violence and try and find a response to this non-accountability of passivity. This response is based on how the passivity of anal coalitions means a refusal to reproductive actions, but still backs up in

radical reactions, that also include violence as a possible answer. This acknowledgment, by means of Peter Gelderloos's work, denounces how non-violent acts do not come from agential enactions but from the narratives of concessions, which establish what bodies and what fleshes have access to what actions. This is how non-violence actually protects and cooperates with the state and other authority arrangements. I have found in BDSM practices, based on relational agreements, other readings of violence, that exceed the limitations that immobilize "us".

These supremacist arrangements are also questioned in the fifth chapter that rips a gap in another monolithic narrative: social interventions. The chapter takes as its basis a article in progress being written with a great GEMMA companion, Ana García, where there is an exploration of how from social inclusion projects, as in the case of Artherapy, my field of intervention, there is a reproduction of promises of living a good life, of reproducing the "good subject" and of assimilating any subjectivity into a recognizable identity. Concious about the race component in colonialism, I do find traces of colonality in social interventions which the tradition of assimilation in certain countries, such as Spain, reproduces in the subjects under intervention. It is an idea of modernity that can allow their social existence, as Anibal Quijano points out. Frictions lead to what we termed micro-enactions of power, that try to respond to material necessities at the time they criticize any sediment intervention, forcing an ongoing revisitation and relocation of the specificities of each mediation in this kind of practices. I have linked this reinvention of power through Boaventura de Souza Santos's theories, squatting new conceptions of power that can escape its equation to oppression. In this sense, in "radical hope", a term taken from Jonathan Lear, and "cruel optimism", from Lauren Berlant, we have also discovered the basis for new toolboxes for anti-hegemonic social work practices which go beyond these models of social and cultural adjustments.

Ultimately, the frictions that happen in this thesis are embedded in a potential capacity which, in the shape of *potentia gaudendi*, cannot always escape the traps of commodification. I use the term in the sense Preciado does, considering it an orgasmic force which

is the sum of the potential for excitation inherent in every material molecule. Orgasmic force is not seeking any immediate resolution, and it aspires only to its own extension in space and time, toward everything and everyone, in every

place and at every moment. It is a force of transformation for the world in pleasure—"in pleasure with." (Preciado, 2008: 38)³⁷

In constant extensions, *potentia gaudendi* remains aware of its own limitations. It reflects on how its desires operate in *dressage* through repetitions that adjust to a straight and normative conception of time. Still, the automatism of these rhythms find localized enactments of queer temporalities which capture temporary orgasmic forces that are not-yet privatized and commodified through a capital logic of production. These transitions are what I have called micro-enactions of power, which confess the ambivalence of their existence but also admit their passing strategies as necessary to respond to located issues that not only take shape in abstract settings, but also in material ones. As such, my flesh has been the principal operating theatre of analysis to respond through these micro-enactions of power. My experiences, which have sometimes crystallized in the forms of trauma, have now found in *potentia gaudendi* the fiction which helps them escape conformative representations. What I mean by this is that, as the orgasmic force that Preciado contemplates, the narrations of these stories through these imagined writings doesn't aspire to resolutions but, on the contrary, to further expansions. These expansions have offered a personal critique to the routinized notion of agency, that places the subject under the oppressive setting inside the responsibility of responding and adapting to a better future.

I refer to experiences rather than traumas because I have refused, in most cases, to give shape to these relational histories, assembling with the polymorphous perverse queerness that Del LaGrace Volcano represents from *herm's* rereading of the psychoanalytical notion of deviant sex practices (Volcano, 1999). I use this polymorphy to stand against narratives that assume collective imaginaries. I have chosen grotesque representations where I can identify with my unlimited identities.

I have chosen, full stop.

I have had the privileged possibility to choose the frictions and contradictions and those are the only fixed features that I have tried to adhere to in this thesis.

³⁷ " La fuerza orgásmica es la suma de las potencialidades de excitación inherente a cada molécula viva. La fuerza orgásmica no busca su resolución inmediata, sino que aspira a extenderse en el espacio y en el tiempo, a todo y a todos, en todo lugar y en todo momento. Es fuerza que transforma el placer-con". (Preciado, 2008: 38)

The performativities of the polymorphic perversions negotiate with the friction of a *potentia gaudendi* that adheres to a force without orgasm. Or at least, performativities combine with different ways of living desire. There is more to gender than sexuality, and even more to sexuality than sex. The tension that I have found here is to claim a broader reading of the possibilities of sex, not only based on its positivity, but also on the radical negativity that can be extracted from its (non)existence (Berlant & Edelman, 2014).

The pharmacopornographic era leads to the understanding on how this "architecture (...) transforms inner space into exteriority and the city into interiority and 'junkspace' by means of mechanisms of immediate auto-surveillance "³⁸ (Preciado, 2008: 37). These technologies of power do not only arrange social commodifications but also self-adjustments. Preciado speaks of the impossibility to recognize the effects of these regulations stating that the success of "technoscience is to transform our depression in Prozac, our masculinity in testosterone, our erection in Viagra (...) without it being possible to know what comes first" (Preciado, 2008: 33)³⁹. My intention in this dissertation has been to speak about *prozaic* depressions, that help me identify yet another friction. Deconstructing the pharmaco element in Prozac, I want to give it a more common reading, one that can claim public feelings and affects, such as depression or anxiety (Cvetkovich, 2012), without depathologizing them. What I mean by depathologizing is the way in which many critical texts claim dismissed affects by applying a normativization of their existence. These public feelings are hence assigned an individuality which prevents engagement with the rooted collectivity which underlies their fabrication. Claiming a depathologization of rejected public feelings is tantamount to revisiting the subject under oppression as the potential disrupter of the system. It involves a claim for their own existence as a state of transition which could, and should be overcome.

³⁸ "un modo particular de transformar el espacio interior en afuera y la ciudad en interioridad y 'espacio basura' a través de dispositivos de autovigilancia" (Preciado, 2008: 37)

³⁹ "El éxito de la tecnociencia contemporánea es transformar nuestra depresión en Prozac, nuestra masculinidad en testosterona, nuestra erección en Viagra (...) Sin que sea posible saber quién viene antes" (Preciado, 2008: 33).

Depressions and oppressions, as many other public feelings and positions, are derived from verbs (Luna, 2018)⁴⁰. They respond to actions, to an everyday stigma in the making. Not acknowledging the material conditions in which any subjectivity lives is an act that comes from the privilege of critique. Imagining these new possibilities is only an option when there is no immediate struggle to keep on living. It is a choice only when there is something beyond the mobilization of what could be considered *combat breathing* (Perera, 2011).

Expiring so as to find new inspirations behind breaths, so as to keep them going. To transition from vanilla to kinky and back again is to find positive force in the non-orgasm, to discover *jouissance* in the negativity of sex. No promises of radicality or disruptures. No promises of future or happiness. No futures, that's the only promise.

⁴⁰ "depressed is a verb. I consider my depression to be the result of social positions and the inevitable history of colonization, of racism, of fat stigma, discrimination and antagonism. I am on antidepressants, but they can only reprogram my brain chemistry and not my social-material reality. They cannot reprogram the ones I love to give me the care I need" (Luna, 2018)

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