

# Disorientation: A Queer Phenomenological Approach to the Matter of Sexuality

By  
Rebekka Leitlein

Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

Supervisor: Anna Loutfi & Adelina Sánchez Espinosa

Budapest, Hungary  
2012



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## ABSTRACT:

In this paper I apply the queer phenomenological concept of disorientation, as developed by Sara Ahmed (2007) to the study of sexuality. The topic is approached through narrative interviews with Maria Llopis and Diana J. Torres, two referential figures of the Spanish Post-Pornography scene. Disorientation is understood as being caused through proximity, zooming in, loss, touch or the 'becoming object'. I argue that sexuality, as being the central axis of Post-Pornography and the issue under scrutiny, is a phenomenon full of disorientation, slipping away or becoming opaque when looked at, of which we lose sight no matter how fragmented or wide the approach becomes. On the other hand sexuality itself can be disorienting. Post-Pornography is a particular way of staging sexuality and making sexuality matter. Instead of following a straight line, making an experience fit into a given structure, following an orientation in things that take shape, the potential of sexuality in Post-Pornography lays in causing a moment of disorientation that can provide new perspectives, new activities or a new slant to be inhabited. In these terms Post-Pornography, being a provocative reflection on sexuality, is particularly interesting as it combines affect, emotions and pornography, through which obscenity, here functioning as proximity and touch, gets played out in twofold way; emotionally as well as sexually. In this way sexuality matters and comes to matter, through/in disorientation.

## RESUMEN:

El hilo conductor de este trabajo es el concepto de "desorientación", en un sentido fenomenológico queer, tal como es desarrollado por Sara Ahmed (2007). El concepto se centra en la proximidad, enfoque en primer plano- zooming in, el tacto y toque, y el devenir objeto. Sostengo que la sexualidad es un fenómeno lleno de desorientación, causando momentos en que se pierde la orientación por demasiada desfragmentación teórica o que se vuelve oscuro cuando intentamos arrojar luz sobre sexo/sexualidad. La Post-Pornografía es un modo particular de poner la sexualidad en escena, o de manifestar sexualidad, y a la vez le da forma y significado/importancia. Al inicio utilizo teorías de la sexualidad vinculadas con la Post-Pornografía para probar el potencial desorientativo de la sexualidad. Prosigo mostrando entrevistas narrativas, con artistas post-pornográficas, María Llopis y Diana J. Torres, dos notables personajes en la escena de la Post-Pornografía Española, para acercarme al impacto corporal/ incorporado/ encarnado y el significado contemporáneo de la sexualidad. Aunque la desorientación que la sexualidad y en particular la Post-Pornografía, contienen, causa confusión, repugnancia o náusea, son ejemplos que demuestran cómo la misma desorientación ofrece nuevas perspectivas que empoderan en vez de ofrecer una orientación. Así la sexualidad toma forma y significado a través de la desorientación.

## Acknowledgements

I thank everyone who has ever touched me, shifting my horizon, adding a new slant. This also includes all the people and places that made this intellectual journey possible, here I want to mention Maria Llopis and Diana Torres for the emotive interviews and their work which touched and inspired me, my friends and family, and all the strangers that contributed in one or the other way beauty to the world that comes proximate to me.

By name I want to mention family Dard-Dascot for their hospitality, Laelia for her beautiful mind and hands, my mother for her interest in me, my father for the way he supports me, and the Radical Queer Affinity Collective and its members for the future unlike the present it/they inspires me to see.

I also thank the GEMMA for the wonderful feminist network and knowledge it provided me with, the Centre Pompidou for its wonderful light and view I enjoyed while writing and thinking.

I also want to acknowledge my supervisors' willingness to accompany me in the process of making sense of the topic that intrigued and still intrigues, disorients and inspires me so much.

Thank you!

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The following material contains explicit accounts of sexual expression. As everything can be considered political, also this text has a political side. Yet it is written in an exploratory mode, out of curiosity, and with enthusiasm, with the intention to provoke a respectful discussion. It is at no point my intention to cause offence.

## Introduction

The problem of feminism is not the problem of women's lack of freedom, or simply the constraints that patriarchal power relations impose on women and their identities. If women are not, in some sense, free, feminism could not be possible. The problem, rather, is how to expand the variety of activities, including the activities of knowledge-production, so that women and men may be able to act differently and open up activities to new interests, perspectives, and frameworks hitherto not adequately explored or invented.

(Elisabeth Grosz, 2010, p.154)

Even though feminism in theory and practice, enabled me to think differently, about the world, which in turn, opened up the way for new activities, I agree with Grosz, that there are interests, perspectives, and frameworks which are hitherto not adequately explored and or eventually in need to be invented. In my eyes, sex/sexuality, as studied in different disciplines, is usually dealt with in an erotophobic way, as McNair (1996) calls the dryly and pedantically way of writing about sex. Certainly, since he wrote this sex research has changed, though most often drifting off into a hypertheorization; like how the transgender studies critique of queer theory voices it (Preciado 2002, Davis 2008, Salamon 2006). In this turn, Judith Butler with her fundamental texts *Gender trouble* and *Bodies that matter*, is often criticized for side stepping the material effects of practices of imitation and their effects over the body/their embodiment that accompanies performance (Preciado 2002, p.74), while Salamon worries that "everyday instances of embodying transgressive gender that might at first seem far removed from academic

discourse ... are rendered invisible if we understand them as simply opposed to a theorizing" (2006, p.578).

Post-Pornography is a practice, which is based on contemporary bodily experiences of and in relation to sexuality. It shifts between avant-garde art and trash, merges experience and academic discourse, yet without aiming at an academic or avant-garde status, but oriented towards finding multiple forms of expression, through merging contradictory positions and objects. From a political angle, Post-Pornography is an artistic strategy for a subcultural resistance against hegemonic representations of sexuality, invested in eroding certainties, between 'art' and 'trash', public and private, normal and pathological, sexual and nonsexual; basically any boundary or separation that keeps a hegemonic idea of sexuality in place. Post-Pornography is a contemporary phenomenon, situated in time and locations, where boundaries are constantly negotiated; therefore it is much broader than what is labeled as post-pornographic by the art world, academia or the individual as such. It produces expressions of disorienting moments that are related to and associated with sexuality. It is those moments Sara Ahmed (2006, 2010) is assigning a special importance, as they shift our horizon and open up a space that supports different actions and activities, hitherto not recognized, impossible or forgotten. In order to study sexuality, how it comes to matter in Post-Pornography, the form and meaning it acquires when the boundaries that defines it are challenged and put into question, I will focus on the work of Maria Llopis and Diana J. Torres, two Spanish artists, who are classified and classify themselves as post-pornographic. With Post-Pornography I argue that it is through disorientation that sexuality comes to matter.

Though, having expressed my discontent with the study of sexuality, where sexuality is generally looked upon with a specific goal or orientation that should lead to a clear concept, most often removed from its embodied meaning and practice, the following question arises: how should sex be studied? Which social and historical facts are important without fixing it too much to its history/historicization, should distance be kept or rather engaged in practice; in which way would either one influence the

research? Beatriz Preciado (2002), philosopher and queer theorist, also asks herself those questions in her philosophical approach to sex. Even though Preciado facilitated one of the first post-porn workshops in the MACBA (museum of contemporary art) in Barcelona, which Torres and Llopis both attended, “The Countersexual Manifesto” reads to me as a hypertheoretization of sex, despite presenting concrete examples and exemplary practices. Still, it forms part of the horizon and background of Post-Pornography. Inspired by Foucault, who suggests “counter-productivity” as the most effective resistance to sexual discipline, Preciado defines sexuality as a technology (p.19) that serves the production of different forms of pleasure-knowledge, opposed to modern sexuality; not in the sense of a sexuality to come or a sexual revolution but to read what is there through a different lens, which automatically leads to a different practice. Countersexuality, is based on decentering the sexual charge on the penis and the vagina, and claims the anus and dildos as the center of sexual action, where basically any body part can become a dildo, where all bodies are considered as “speaking” bodies<sup>1</sup>, rather than nature or biological truth. Preciado’s concept gives a clearer view about the use of sexuality in Post-Pornography. Yet rather than a purely philosophical approach or developing an alternative power-knowledge-pleasure-technique, I am interested in the activities, practices and respective meanings of sex in the work of Maria Llopis and Diana J. Torres, how sexuality come to matter in their work and which forms it takes in a post-pornographic perspective<sup>2</sup>.

The theoretical framework consists of queer theory and phenomenology, which come together in queer phenomenology. In the first chapter I introduce queer theory and how it informs Post-Pornography. Furthermore I built on phenomenology as a philosophy and a methodology. Out of this vast field I pay particular attention to Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenological concept of disorientation, which she develops out of classical phenomenology and queer theory, with the intent to grasp

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations from non-English, as well as the excerpts from the interviews, are my translation.

<sup>2</sup> For a more visual idea of the work of Llopis and Torres, as used throughout this thesis, please turn to my analysis of Post-Pornography, especially sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2.



phenomena that are “queer”, that are twisted, that become oblique through proximity or appear while slipping away. From a (queer-) phenomenological perspective, a phenomenon takes shape through the orientation it has/ the orientation that is taken towards it. In this way sexuality can materialize in concrete embodied experiences, for example through sexual orientation. If orientation is understood as a structure that holds things in place, disorientation challenges this structure. Looking for the forms disorientation allowed in regard to sexuality is another way to phrase my research question about how sexuality comes to matter in a more general way. The second part of the chapter presents the concrete mechanisms and aspects involved in causing disorientation, and the disorienting aspect of sexuality.

Ahmed shows the crucial role of the horizon and the background for things to take shape, to become real. Therefore, the second chapter is a review, of different areas that contributed to the field of sex research; reaching from the physicians from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who medicalized sexuality, to Kinsey who turned sexuality into a classifiable behavior rather than a moral issue, to the contributions of anthropology that emphasized the social and cultural meaning of sexualities and its situatedness, to the historicization of sexuality, as initiated through Foucault, that shows the constructed and discursive character of sexuality, to queer theory that questions the notion of the “normal” in general but especially in relation to sexuality. This outline is followed by different perspectives on and about sexuality, that form a dialogue between queer theory, selectively represented by Preciado, Freccero, Berlant, Warner and Dean, and parts of the *Phenomenology of Perception* by Merleau-Ponty, and at times also psychoanalysis. What becomes evident from those approaches to sexuality is that, despite the effort of taking it apart into its smallest elements, or to frame it in a wider context/history, sexuality remains vague for either being too fragmented that it becomes indistinguishable, or too big that it can hardly be seen, let alone the opposition between practice, embodied experience and theory those approaches to sexuality foster. Yet I intend to take the multiple orientations of making sexuality matter transversely, where proximities, pornographic visibility, and disappearance, form together a background and horizon of sexuality.

The third chapter is characterized by its rather descriptive exploratory nature. On the conceptual background of sexuality, as established in the second chapter, I apply the queer phenomenological toolkit to Post-Pornography. The case study builds on narrative interviews with Maria Llopis and Diana J. Torres, conducted during my fieldwork in Spain in April 2012. The narrated content is complemented by their artistic expressions in form of books, blogs, videos and performances. In the first section I contextualize their work by situating Post-Pornography as a phenomenon in a wider debate on pornography and politics, and by mapping out the theoretical orientations and strategies. The second part is headed by the presentation of Torres and Llopis and their work. I will identify thematic fields, recurrent motives or exceptional moments like rape, maternity, emotions, medicalization and body practices, and divide them into four main sections of analysis. These are hard-core rhetoric, referring to the mechanisms of pornography and their meaning in Llopis and Torres' post-pornographic work; shifting visibility, dealing with intimacy and touch in relation to new technologies like the Internet and programs such as Chatroulette; the section on art deals with the distinction between art and pornography and the labor of love, in terms of emotions/ affect and remuneration; and finally the impact/aftermath of (dis)orientation and the potential their work has.

## Chapter I

### □ Disorientation

Disorientation, as understood by Sara Ahmed is the lens through which I look at Post-Pornography, particularly the work of Maria Llopis and Diana J. Torres, in order to understand its impact and potential for the study and understanding of sexuality. This chapter establishes the theoretical framework for my thesis by first introducing Queer Theory and how it informs my research project, second by analyzing the basic premises of Phenomenology on which Queer Phenomenology builds and at the same time distinguishes itself from. Third Queer Phenomenology as developed by Ahmed (2006) gets under scrutiny, especially focusing on zooming in, slipping away, loss, proximity, touch and becoming object, all central mechanisms of disorientation. The subsequent part deals with sexual disorientation. It develops sexuality, as concept and practice that is disorienting as well as disorientation. The last part deals with how orientation can be understood in the frame of Queer Phenomenology and disorientation.

#### 1.1 Queer Theory

As a pornographic expression and practice, Post-Pornography is a reaction to commercial mainstream pornography, which is assumed to be normative in multiple ways (specific bodies represented, sexual practices, gender roles). The work of Llopis and Torres is strongly influenced by their personal life histories and their commitment to activism around issues of systemic violence, transsexuality, pregnancy, and SM practices to mention just a few. They see Post-Pornography as a practice to queer theory. Both artists draw from activism and personal experience and carnal practices, while queer theory emerges in the realm of gay/lesbian studies, which focuses on the socially constructed nature of sexual identities and acts, and the generation of theory from and through activism, to which

again the former contributes. Therefore the following puts the understanding of “queer” and its use in and for Post-Pornography under scrutiny.

To define queer theory for my research I find Michael Warner introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (1993) very insightful and instructive. He states as a point of departure for queer theory that “broad visions of social change do not follow from sexuality in any way that seems obvious and necessary to all those affected by sexual politics” (p.xi). Visions of social change connected to sexuality seem the basic inspiration for the work of the artists who are both, though in a distinctive way, strongly affected by sexual politics. The topics they highlight in their work are for example pregnancy, miscarriage and abortion, transsexuality and the discourse of medicalization, or non-normative sexual practices like SM.

On the example of sexual identity Warner shows how a heterosexual sexual order is deeply embedded in social institutions and social ideologies. The conservative-libertarian way of arguing is to put sex as a private matter, while the post-modern, post-identitarian emphasizes the fact that gays and lesbians have nothing in common as a group as such besides their sexual object choice. Both ways lead to an anti discrimination stand, the only possible political interest gay and lesbians could have, while the heterosexual sexual order remains untouched (p.xii). Warner positions queer theory and its political agenda (“What do queers want?”) against this view.

Queer becomes a self-understanding of being queer. Similar to this identification is the awareness of a stigmatization connected with “gender, the family, notions of individual freedom, the state, public speech, consumption and desire, nature and culture, maturation, reproductive politics, racial and national fantasy, class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display terror and violence, health care, and deep cultural norms about bearing of the body” (p.xiii). In other words Warner defines queer as the ability to challenge “more or less articulately” common understandings of the meaning of categories and concepts. The activity, the practice that follows from this stigmatization is a practical social

(self-) reflection to find ways to be queer (p.xii). Warner characterizes these reflections as often reactive, fragmentary and defensive, which leads to a permanent disadvantage, though other authors I rely on in my work like Ahmed, Muñoz, Sedgwick, Dean or Grosz, the latter without a queer self-naming, emphasize in the same fragmented manner potentiality, hope, and possibility, an openness towards the future, active rather than reactive and defensive.

However, following Warner's definition of queer, the reaction to stigmatization caused by a heterosexual social order of which the particular individual feels excluded or is being identified as not fitting, becomes central. This makes me wonder about the direction of the desired social change. To me it seems as if it suggest a binary opposition. There is either overcoming stigmatization, which would mean to blend in with the norm, the social system or remain stigmatized. However, in both cases the social order seems to remain unchallenged. I find Llopis' and Torres' life and work very inspiring in this aspect, as their starting point is a social unfitness, due to their life history and/or physical conditions, though it is an integration of stigma and a crossing of multiple borders that dislocate and disorientate the straight line that social change is expected to follow.

Though which action or reaction can be considered a practice that causes change rather than building on the oppression, hence depending on it? What characterizes such an alternative practice? What is the idea of "teaching" alternative practices such as vaginal fisting, by showing them in a performance for example?

One point of orientation towards a being other than the hetero-normative order could be Michel Foucault's suggestion developed in "Friendship as a way of life", where he suggests the invention of a different way of being together outside the pre-given set of marriage. By suggesting friendship as a way of life he claims the space outside of the "narration of connubiality", which is central to western nations like the U.S.A. (Abelove, 1992). Tim Dean (2009) offers another example that helps me to think about a queer approach to practice/ a queer practice. He deals with cruising, a sexual practice that centers on the

encounter with strangers. It links to the examples of Foucault and Abelove, as it also claims a space outside of domesticity. Central to his idea is an ethics of cruising which means to remain open to the strange. His suggestion calls for decoupling stranger and enemy, and to reconfigure anonymity, which is generally seen as a threat to domesticity.

In the concrete case of Post-Pornography, it seems that the emphasis lies on practice, on making and having sex in order to challenge the normal. The most provoking performances show live sex, e.g. squirting (female ejaculation) in public. In my opinion this is very much in line with Warner's take on queer as "against the normal rather than the heterosexual" (xxvi). Of course it is also threatening domesticity, by not respecting it through placing sex in public. What will become more clear throughout the next chapters is that Post-Pornography, especially as practiced by Llopis and Torres, are not guided by subversion with the idea of subverting and overthrowing everything, but in creating a space, or in Ahmed's words a new slant, though transgressing the boundaries of the normal that restrain them in their proximity. Henceforth, not in all settings it has the same effect, it might be considered subversive, and at other points just arousing, tender or shocking.

Leo Bersani's (1987) critique of a "gay activist rhetoric" which politicizes "having sex" points out an important point between sex as a political tool and subversion. Indeed, a strategic value lies in the gay activist rhetoric, however he argues that a distinction has to be made between the effects a certain "style" has on the "heterosexual world" which provides the models on which the styles are based in the first place. Also the significance these styles have on those individuals who perform them needs to be considered (p.207). He concludes that a sexual practice that generates sexual excitement and pleasure is not necessarily subversive. What is intended to be subversive can easily be read as a perversion, neither would work a parody, as it is an "erotic turn-off" (p.208). I think Bersani's argument really challenges the idea of subversion, as it is nothing that can be planned and then implemented. If Warner's vision for social change and Bersani's subversion are taken together, the reflection on how to be queer gets complicated.

There is always the risk of achieving exactly the opposite as intended, depending on the situation and concrete historical moment that is stage for the performance.

David M. Halperin (2003) concludes from his reflections on the normalization of queer theory that it is supposed to help us think what has not yet been thought (p.343), hence to find a different way, a space outside the familiar, different approaches that enable activities of knowledge production. He outlines the motive of introducing queer theory into the academy was to transform what could count as knowledge, as well as the practices by which knowledge functioned within it. In this regard, the normalization of queer theory is ironic as it turns exactly into that type of knowledge that was supposed to be challenged. This is an important reflection as it shows, that what is gathered under queer theory changes its meaning depending on where it is practiced or applied. There is for example the cleavage between inside and outside academia. Queer practices are not necessarily coherent with the theory about them, as well as theory can only account for one aspect. Furthermore, there are differences according to the contexts of each space. Warner grasps this partiality by characterizing queer politics as a local fight of piecemeal character centered on dispersal rather than localization.

Compared to Warner who mentions desidentification, in reference to Hanna Arendt, to place queer politics in opposition to society (p.xxvii), I see Muñoz' (1997, 1999) approach much more inspiring. He analyzes a performance, "Vaginal Davis's terrorist drag". Muñoz calls Davis's terrorist drag an applied intersectional strategy. It is an idea of co-presence of "identity differentials as particular components that exist simultaneously with each other" (1997, p.84). It "resists the interpellating call of ideology that fixes a subject within the state power apparatus" (p.83), which is similar to transfeminism, i.e. what the Spanish Post-Porn-Queer-Community works on (see section 4.4). Disidentification is "a mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor simply opposed it", usually emerging through /linked to precarious conditions (Muñoz, 1999, p.141). Together with the heterosexual social order, which was for Warner central to defining queer theory, this seems the most

challenging approach to it. In my eyes the concept and practice of disidentification, exemplary shown in the terrorist drag, is a juncture between queer theory, queer politics and queer practice, a possibility of a besides rather than continuous exponential beyond, better, more right.

The cultural politics of disidentification are also closely connected to the issue of passing, of being intelligible in one's subjectivity. Here, compared to Bersani, the use of parody is successful, as it (intends to) disrupts the "to be or to have", "the Freudian distinctions between desire and identification" (p.89). Passing as the "original", as "real" is not of interest, but to make the gesture of passing visible. Torres, who calls her project Pornterrorism holds many parallels with the terrorist drag Davis performs. While both her and Llopis work along the lines of race, gender and sexuality, it is the co-presence of identity differentials, and the simultaneous existence of contradicting desires, that make their characters so queer and oblique. The non-normal, that what is not straight, and clearly identifiable, or only identifiable as a threat to the norm, that upholds space and lets bodies extend into it, gets exposed in Post-Pornography, as we will see more in-depth later on.

Queer phenomenology develops through the use of phenomenological insights, and its basic assumptions and premises about existence is to make sense of the experience and impact of 'being out of place' and the disorientation that goes along with it, especially in terms of sexuality and ethnic/racial (non-) belonging. In the frame of this thesis I focus on sexuality, recognizing that the work of Jose Esteban Muñoz (1999) and Ahmed (2006, 2010) shows sexuality and ethnical/racial belonging are interlinked, which means that a more thorough consideration of the latter can result equally insightful for disidentification and disorientation. After, having outlined the range, meaning, and orientation of "queer"/queer theory I turn now to Phenomenology, to complete the ground for Queer Phenomenology and the concrete mechanisms of disorientation it develops. Disidentification and disorientation are similar in practice, experience, and effect. What distinguishes them is mainly their inclination towards performance theory as opposed to phenomenology. As this study is based on narrative interviews, only



complemented by the performance of the artists the queer phenomenological toolkit proves to be more useful to look at how sexuality comes to matter in Post-Pornography.

## 1.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology emerges as a critique of *naturalism*, a philosophical viewpoint that assumes that natural laws rule the universe, thus that nothing exists beyond this natural universe. In response phenomenology focuses on “the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of any full understanding of the nature of knowledge” (Moran, 2008, p.21). To get to this understanding phenomenology describes phenomena, as they are experienced, meaning as they appear to consciousness. Hence its method “is a matter of describing, not of explaining or analyzing” (Smith, 2007, p.ix).

Moran emphasizes in his *Introduction to Phenomenology* that in a description it should always be acknowledged that experience “presents itself as the experience of engaging directly with the world” (p.6). This experience, based on an intuition is limited that “as what it is presented as being” and only so “within the limits in which it is presented there” (Husserl as quoted in Moran, p.10). Phenomenology’s intention is to apprehend phenomena in their ‘givenness’, and ‘facticity’. This means the world, of which the phenomenon is part of, is understood as being ‘already there’ before the reflection begins (p.vii). It is there, given as a fact. In order for the phenomenon to emerge in its essence, the assumptions about the world should be left aside. This essence that manifests itself in the process of perception is mediated through the body.

The body takes a central place in phenomenology, as it is the place of the intersection between the humans and the world, between objectivity and consciousness. Smith (2007) calls phenomenology the study of essence, extracting it though not without putting it back into existence (p.xvii).

In the Preface to Merlau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*, whose central interest is to study existence, Smith concludes that “all periods of history appear as manifestations of a single existence” and

“[b]ecause we are in the world, we are condemned to meaning, and we cannot do or say anything without its acquiring a name in history” (p.xxii). In other words, there is a background on which phenomena come into existence and a horizon that orients us in our understanding and interpretation of them (p.13), though Ahmed questions the necessity of a single existence and the need to string experiences, to a straight line, to give them one linear orientation in order for them to be intelligible, to matter and to be meaningful.

### 1.3 Queer Phenomenology

It is crucial that “matter” does not become an object that we presume is absent or present: what matters is shaped by the directions taken that allow things to appear in a certain way.

(Ahmed, 2006, p.165)

Sara Ahmed’s (2006) main hypothesis is that orientations are organized rather than casual. They shape what becomes socially as well as bodily given and cause that matter starts to matter (p.158). Phenomenology’s basic concept is to turn toward phenomena in an already existing world and to describe those phenomena as it appears to consciousness, which means how the individual who looks at it, like the phenomenologist, perceives it. This is Ahmed’s starting point, arguing that the gesture of turning toward indicates already a direction, which puts orientation at the core of phenomenology.

The exciting part of queer phenomenology is to turn towards orientation itself in order to see how matters appear rather than the appearance of the matter. Ahmed describes phenomenology as a switch between dimensions; a continuous zooming in and out, between perceiving the object against the horizon it contrasts itself and the object itself. This switch between dimensions allows apprehending a phenomenon in its existence, for which the assumptions of the world should be left aside. Interestingly, in the dimension switches from the whole to the particular, the particular itself becomes again a whole new dimension.

Husserl's concept of the "synthetic consciousness" merges the multiple dimensions that we perceive. It always "connects the new experience with the recollection" (as quoted in Ahmed, 2006, p.36). His example is horizontal/"one"-dimensional, as it merges the front and the back of the table, which he observed, to the idea of the table, rather than a continuous zooming in, which could be seen as vertical opening up of dimensions. Though, as synthetic consciousness connects experience with its recollection, there should not be any difference in applying the concept to vertical dimensions.

Ahmed, who focuses on the latter idea, adds that besides the different sides of a phenomenon there is also the background, that "what must have already taken place for the table [or any other object under scrutiny] to arrive" (2006, p.37). In the case of Husserl, part of the background is already the possibility for example to sit in a room and look at a table without having to bother about quotidian things, a privilege he notes though without exploring it further. The background is an essential part of the emergence of the phenomenon, while the zooming in makes the surrounding disappear, until the contour of the table dissolve and only the paper on the table is seen. At this point the room, the moment in time, or the privilege disappears, while being constituent and prerequisite of the phenomenon.

Ahmed (2006) identifies the moments of zooming in and the in-between, the moment of switch between dimensions, as moments of disorientation. These moments seem to lack orientation, as they "point" towards becoming oriented" again, trying to add something that seems to be missing for it to fit back in line, to orient it again (Ahmed, p.159). The queer angle of phenomenology is caused "by bringing objects to life in their "loss" of place, in their failure of gathering to keep things in their place" (p.165), when this loss challenges categories and concepts that were meaning and order giving to a common understanding. This makes queer phenomenology a tool to look at what matters with disorientation, or to look with disorientation as matter. It means to recognize and allow for things not to make sense, as either or, as perfectly fitting together wholes, but as parts, besides each other, that still matter and constitute matter, in their horizontal, vertical, queer or opaque connection.

### 1.3.1 Causing Disorientation

Ahmed assumes disorientation to be a fact, that “we will, and we do” experience in our life. It refers to specific moments rather than to a state of continuous disorientation. These quite ordinary moments are moments of bodily experiences or bodily feelings. The author identifies five different modes of apprehending, turning to or perceiving the world, in which disorientation can be/ is experienced.

#### 1.3.1.1 *Zooming in*

The first moment Ahmed (2006) identifies is zooming in. As mentioned above, a moment as simple as concentrating on an object in front of the observer can cause a moment of disorientation. Looking at a paper on a table, like Husserl in his study room, makes the room vanishes as the table becomes central to the perception until it turns itself into the background on which the paper is apprehended. Husserl calls such an apprehension a ‘singling out’, as the background in experience, which every perceived object has, is put aside (p.25). “The paper becomes worldly, which might even mean you lose sight of the table” (Ahmed, 2006, p.156). In other words, the paper can absorb its surrounding and manifest itself as a world in itself, it becomes the ground/ frame of our experience. This can cause disorientation, as what orients us in existence, in the world, are exactly background and horizon, which disappear or simply change with the phenomenon, becoming worldly, taking up the shape of the world, which changes suddenly from a familiar world to an unfamiliar one, where the horizon and possible points of orientation are not yet (fully) detected/ established.

#### 1.3.1.2 *Slipping away/ Loss*

Disorientation is also an act of facing. Even though classical phenomenology turns towards the object in order to grasp the essence of its existence, e.g. facing the writing table, it is “a facing that also allows the object to slip, or to become oblique”(Ahmed, 2006, p.171), as it is impossible to fully grasp the

table by adding all missing angles, as the ways/perspectives/angles to face the object are endless. This means that the phenomenological gaze in general could be taken as a queer gaze, in a literal sense of queer as oblique, as not straight, as it remains open to the picture that is continuously (re-) formed. Therefore, Ahmed argues that rather than trying to capture the phenomenon in its wholeness it is of interest to look at “how we are oriented towards queer moments when objects slip” (Ahmed, 2006, p.171). This fragmentary/ momentary character also indicates that it is impossible to establish a queer orientation as a possible/concrete line that can be followed.

An object can slip away due to the countless angles that can constitute a phenomenon. However, a similar disorientation can occur when the ground no longer supports a certain action (Ahmed, 2006, p.170). Notwithstanding, a losing ground also supports actions. Characteristic of these actions are that they either lead to shifting the ground or to clearing a new ground, both allowing for different paths, than the assumable stable ground initially provided. In terms of bodily feeling, disorientation can be cause either when the ground turns or when we turn, or both. Anyhow, in such a moment *one* perspective is lost, “but the “loss” itself is not empty or waiting, it is an object, thick with presence” (Ahmed, 2006, p.158), enabling new activities.

It is important to notice that moments do not follow one another as “a sequence of spatial givens” that unfolds as moments of time (Ahmed, 2006,p.158). Rather, Ahmed argues, the loss of an object’s history for example is rather a refusal “to make them history by losing sight”(Ahmed, 2006,p.164). Hence, disorientation causes presence through loss rather than disappearance.

### *1.3.1.3 Proximity*

It is not only because something slips that it is queer, it can also be “that the proximity of what does not follow makes things slip” (p.166). Hence, proximity necessarily involved contact with things. Though it is exactly proximity that does not hold things in place and thereby creates a feeling of distance (Ahmed, 2006, p.166). Whitney Shiloh (2011) calls this, with regard to Merlau-Ponty’s concept of pure

depth, “overwhelming proximity” and affective orientation. “Pure depth” can be found in the experience of being surrounded with total darkness of night, a “depth without foreground or background, without surfaces and without any distance separating it from me” (p.3). Ahmed uses Imanuel Kant’s example of walking blindfolded (meaning in the “dark” or without seeing) into an unfamiliar room. What matters according to Kant is to know where left and right are, so that one can, being oriented in thought, leave the room again. Martin Heidegger critiques Kant’s idea; it is not the knowledge about the sides but “about the familiarity with the world”, which is necessary to orient oneself (Ahmed, 2006, p.7). Ahmed takes up Heidegger’s conclusion that space “becomes a question of “turning”” (p.6), of “aligning body and space” (p.7) through the differentiation between the familiar and strange, rather than the directions. Though, Ahmed admits, “what we feel does not necessarily allow us to know which way we are facing” (p.7). This uncertainty between feeling and orientation is what Merlau-Ponty referees to with an overwhelming proximity. By taking away background, the history on which matter comes to matter and the foreground, what we are orientated towards, the “things over there”, collapse into each other, because of an overwhelming proximity; the absence of orientation, disorientation.

The subject-object distance, which characterizes depth perception, disappears. Nevertheless, Merlau-Ponty insists on depth even in a moment/situation of pitch-blackness. This depth he calls ‘pure’ depth, which causes “a *felt* sense of depth, of orientation”. Yet, Shiloh notes that depth is differentiation. Merleau-Ponty sees on the one hand the night “itself in contact with me”, which shows that there is a differentiation and on the other hand he claims that there is no “distance separating” of one from the other (Merleau-Ponty as quoted in Shiloh 2011). Shiloh phrases it as “a meeting of surfaces ... like an electrification, a charge: the night and my body permeate and animate each other”(p.18). This “overwhelming proximity” can be an experience of vertigo, of disorientation, dispossession, even distance from or loss of the experience of the personal” (p.18). Dollimore analyzes the disorienting or disturbing effects of proximity in a similar way, when he looks at sexual dissidence, where “the other as

proximate proves more disturbing than the other as absolute difference" (p.15). Merleau-Ponty adds that besides in darkness the same "dimension of affective intimacy between body and world experience "can be found "in the spatiality of dreams, respiration, myths, imaginations, sexual desire, homesickness, proprioception, and intuitive homing navigation " (Shiloh 2011, p.4).

#### *1.3.1.4 Touch*

The first two moments of disorientation part from the stable and straight, where zooming in, a shifting ground, or the turning of oneself, is causal. However, there are also moments when disorientation itself becomes what is given. Ahmed suggests that this disorientation starts with the becoming strange of familiar objects. In the relation of objects to bodies, between experience and consciousness - objects are understood as the extension of bodies, or bodies as the incorporation of objects. "Things become queer precisely given how bodies are touched by objects, or by "something" that happens, where what is "over there" is also "in here" or even what I am "in"" (Ahmed, 2006, p.163). According to Ahmed, it is also already touch itself that disorientates the body, that makes it lose its' way.

#### *1.3.1.5 Becoming Object*

With regard to Merleau-Ponty and Stratton (the scientist who did a famous self experiment about vision without inversion, using special glasses that made him see "upside-down", which made him totally helpless in his familiar environment), Ahmed shows that disorientation involves "becoming an object". It is not the physical characteristics and mechanisms of spine, muscular- and/or nervous system, but the being caught up in a world that keeps the body upright. "If this involvement is seriously weakened, the body collapses and becomes once more an object" (as quoted in Ahmed, p.159). Besides the voluntarily calling into question of the world, structure, straight line, as Stratton did, disorientation is already/ also unevenly distributed as "some bodies more than others have their involvement in the world called into crisis" (p.159). In an ahmedian terminology these are the bodies, which do not follow the "straight line",

the line that seems to extend into space, by providing a space and a place. However, a body that has no place, a body “out of place”, does not pass unnoticed, but also has a ground for action. In both ways, the potential effect of disorientation, the becoming object and disorientating for others is given.

### 1.3.2 Sexual Disorientation

In her book on queer phenomenology, Ahmed uses ‘queer’ in two ways. One is the disturbance of a certain order things have, while the other use refers to the order of sexual orientation, a sexual order, which is, according to queer theory, mainly a compulsory heterosexual one. However, those orders “queer” more than just sex, the same way other kinds of queer effects can in turn end up “queering” sex. For an exploration of the “uncanny effects” sexual disorientation can have, Ahmed references Michael Moon. Moon (1998) analyzes visual and written texts that built on desire as mimesis, in contrast to the representations of “realist texts and ordinary pornography” that try to de-emphasize the idea of mimesis, by emphasizing a natural and original realness. The concept of desire, as mimesis, was originally elaborated by the comparative literature scholar Borch-Jacobsen who argues, “desire is not oriented by pleasure” but rather “(dis) oriented by mimesis” (Borch-Jacobsen 1989 as quoted in Moon, p.15). Therefore, Moon sees sexuality not so much oriented by its object or object choice, including gender, age, body type, social class, to mention just a few, but rather an imitation, “disoriented by mimesis” (p.15). From this it follows that sexuality is based on mimesis, thus causing disorientation, and not organized linear, oriented towards objects.

Sedgwick uses the simple gesture/ sensation of touch, to illustrate how, “the sense of touch makes nonsense out of any dualistic understanding of agency and passivity; [because] to touch is always already to reach out, to fondle, to heft, to tap, or to enfold, and always also to understand other people or natural forces as having effectually done so before oneself, if only in making of the textures object” (2003, p.14). Touch, as a central element of sexuality, is thus already a mode of mimesis, a mode of



disorientation. With the examples Moon refers to, he shows how for example sadomasochistic practices are hard to recognize immediately as desires. Though once such a structure is recognized it seems that even “our deepest and strongest desires are not our own, that our dreams and fantasies are only copies, audio- and videotapes, of the desires of others and our utterances of them lip-synching of these circulating, endlessly reproduced and reproducible desires”(Moon, 1998, p.21).

Hence there is no original beginning or starting point, no clearly definable background, neither a clear or unique foreground, but pure repetition and change merge seamlessly into each other. The concept of mimesis resembles theories of performativity, as outlined by Judith Butler (1988, 1993, 2004) for example, who assumes that gender, but also identity categories like lesbian or heterosexual only exist performatively through compulsive and compulsory repetition of an ideal. Though performance happens in a context, hence on a background, therefore oriented, while it always comprises an element of disorientation.

Freud links fetish to mimesis. The fetish is “at least as much a practice as it is an object that locates itself undecidedly between mimetic desire and the indefinitely wide range of objects on which that desire may fasten” (2001, p.29). Here we come back to what Ahmed has stressed, not to look or define an object of disorientation but to turn towards the practice/ action disorientation supports.

Tamsin Wilton (2004) studied the self-fashioning of her interviewees, who were “both lesbian-identified and not” (p.64), and postulates a position of transit; ‘being in transit’ as a location for disorientation, which she understands more as an attempt to see desire outside of the heteronormative (Wilton, 2004, p.178). Her example stays in the realm of sexual orientation, rather than a more general disorientation. Nevertheless, it challenges the chronology of copy and original, that is indicative in a heteronormative society, where heterosexual reproductive sex is the original, that is continuously copied, or imitated, of whom everything else is a mimesis. In similar terms Butler (1993) takes lesbianism as an imitation and gender insubordination, and more general of her definition of performativity, which is “not

a singular “act”, for it is always a reiteration of a norm of set of norms, ... it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition” (1993, p. 12)

Following Ahmed’s argumentation, sexual disorientation is not to be thought as subversive, because this would just reproduce an orientationalist discourse of sexuality, to which many analyses of the repressive hypothesis have lead by upholding “the pseudo dichotomy between repression and liberation, hegemonic and subversive”(Sedgwick, 2003, p.12). In a way it is not even transgressivev as borders rather permeate and animate each other rather than crossing a boundary and leaving the old behind. Sexual disorientation rather transits amongst many points, merging them into one, like synthetic consciousness, that makes us understand the table as consisting of its being, legs, inside and top.

### 1.3.3 Orientation / Queer Commitment

There is something about the loss of an object- “before” it has “gone,” where the object can include simply what is “before us”- that disorients and creates a new slant.  
(Ahmed, 2006, p.166)

Queer phenomenology turns orientation into a queer commitment. Queer in queer phenomenology does not offer an orientation but moments of disorientation, which possibly create new slants to be inhabited/lived. In terms of concrete practices or politics, it is difficult to include disorientation, as it is impossible to institutionalize it. It can merely result in a commitment towards “an opening up of what counts as a life worth living” (Ahmed, 2006, p.178). As the focus of my research lies on how sexuality comes to matter in Post-Pornography, this commitment would be towards moments of disorientation and disorienting practices that open up a new slant of worth to be appreciated as part of the matter of sexuality.

Here, disorientation becomes possible as a state, or as an extended moment and not only as a shifting of grounds, because “what retreats does not return, and something does not approach to take its

place" (p.166); a life understood as worth living, slips away and is not replaced by a new definition to be followed by others, rather it is a recognition of dissonant diversity. The same counts for sexuality, it is opened up to different theoretical approaches and practices, that makes it slip away, or make one lose sight of an initial understanding of it, which is not replaced by a new all embracing definition but one that presents a recognizable dissonant diversity.

Finally, disorientation entails/ leads to a queer commitment rather than re-orientation. This means queer commitment is not to be understood as finding a queer line, that can be followed, and where queer privileges can be accumulated, but again it asks about our orientation towards queer moments, towards moments of disorientation (p.179). Though, what counts as a queer moment, a moment that disorients or unsettles the individual perception depends again on the specific background of experience. In this sense the most conservative can be queer, and a queer the most conservative (Puar, 2005, 2007). Still it is the orientation towards disorientation, through which disorientation comes to matter.

The following chapter deals with different concepts that challenge ideas about sexuality, either by zooming in on a certain aspect, such as time, intimacy or the body, losing sight of other aspects, or by having an estranging effect on what is considered sexual and non-sexual. Examples show how these concepts are reflected in or respond to Post-Pornography, and how sexuality comes to matter through the different angles theoretical concepts and post-pornographic practices provide.

## Chapter II

### □ Sex/Sexuality

The same reason that prevents us from 'reducing' existence to the body or to sexuality, prevents us also from 'reducing' sexuality to existence: the fact is that existence is not a set of facts (like 'physic facts') capable of being reduced to others or to which they can reduce themselves, but the ambiguous setting their inter-communication, the point at which their boundaries run into each other, or again their woven fabric.

(Merleau-Ponty, 2007, p.193)

What is sexual about a video clip showing a close up of rotten fruits that are penetrated by a finger<sup>3</sup> or manuals on the phenomena of spontaneous abortion or writing and publishing a book with intimate details and a striking openness about feelings of the writer? The study of sexuality is certainly a creative and prosperous field that continuously produces new concepts on sexual phenomena and their pathologies. It expands in many directions, reaching from medicine to philosophy, to art and law. The video as well as the writings can be judged according to their artistic value, or according to their political persuasiveness concerning the legislation on pregnancy, abortion or transexuality, while they also bear a philosophical potential, for example as counter-sexual practices and the negotiation of intimacy. No account by itself is ever exhaustive or satisfying, but many contribute to moments of disorientation, through the disorienting potential inherent in sex/sexuality and form a background on which Post-Pornography, as a practice and theory can be understood.

Therefore, this chapter presents different aspects and concepts that seem most telling, in my eyes for making sense of how sexuality matters and comes to matter in Post-Pornography. The structure follows thematic and conceptual blocks starting with a brief history of sex research. The second block

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<sup>3</sup> The video "porno-vegetal", shows in an extreme close up, how rotten fruits are penetrated by a finger, to the sound of moaning. I find the video sexually arousing, until the camera zooms out and the fruit can be recognized as fruit. Lucia Engaña Roja, the video artist, tries to eroticize the domestic space and blur the boundary between sexual/non-sexual, playing on the mechanism of proximity and confusion. Hence, her example is interesting for various sections of the following chapter.

combines historical and queer theoretical accounts. In a third step I interconnect queer theory, psychoanalysis and phenomenology. Similar to a phenomenological conjunction, where different sides of a phenomena are joined together, the aim is to map out the theoretical orientations and directions that nurture a post-pornographic understanding of sexuality, joining together the different building blocks, of time, technology, intimacy, desire, love, the body, erogenous zones and sublimation, to a background and horizon of Post-Pornography. This compilation is meant to gather possible theoretical points and moments that disorient sexuality as a stable or fixed concept, while the link to Post-Pornography fuses them with experience and practice. The chapter is also the starting point for reading and facilitating a better understanding of the work and interviews with Llopis and Torres, aiming at the question how sexuality comes to matter in Post-Pornography.

## 2.1 Modern Study of Sexuality

The history of sexuality is well documented- investigating where sex can be found in historical and scientific accounts, reaching from prehistory, through the Middle Ages until modern history (see e.g. Tannahill 1989, Taylor 1997, Schiebinger 1991). Already the illustrations and graphs in the just cited books are telling; bodies, breasts, penises, ancient sex toys, cave paintings, resembling exactly a contemporary idea of sex and sexuality. Though, from Antiquity to the Enlightenment, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Greek ideas, on “[h]uman sexual behaviour, reproduction, education ethics, and treatment of sexual malfunctions”, as well as the art of seduction and lovemaking, (Ovid, Plato, Aristotle, Galen, Plato, Hippocrates) dominated Western ‘protosexology’ (O’Brian 2009). Sexology and the modern study of sexuality, as an academic field, were established in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the following paragraphs I consider the development of sex research from the modern study of sexuality to the contribution of queer theory to conceptualization/understanding of sexuality.

Representatives of the early modern studies of sexuality are, to mention just a few of the most

popular ones, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Ellis Havelock and Magnus Hirschfeld, and somewhat later Sigmund Freud. In this period, reaching from 1890-1940, physicians conducted sex research. Bullough explains, that physicians were assumed to be “experts of the body functions” (1998, p.127, O’Brian 2009) therefore they were also considered to be the ones qualified/ who had the authority to talk about sexual activities, including some of the moral issues. Thus, a medical perspective dominated the study of sexuality.

With the publication of the Kinsey Report, entitled with *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, in 1948, a crucial change occurred. Alfred J. Kinsey, a biologist/zoologist, was interested in describing and classifying sexual expression. He established a heterosexual-homosexual rating scale, with which he added a taxonomic approach to the field. As he did not believe in the self-classification of people’s sexuality, he measured sex in terms of outcome, like orgasm. His work had a big impact on sex research and general attitudes toward sex, shifting the idea of homosexuality from an illness to a behavior. This also helped “encompassing a variety of disciplines and approaches” (Bullough p.127) into the hitherto exclusively medical/scientific study of sexuality.

Besides the physicians, psychologists and sometimes anthropologists had contributed to studies of sexuality, though usually the sexual part of the studies was secondary (Bullough, 1998, p.128, Weston 1998, Vance 1991). Most of the researchers, like Ellis, Hirschfeld, and Kinsey, based their work on compiled sexual histories (interviews, history, personal experience). A general concern of the studies was their representativeness, as it was believed that the possibility of objective knowledge existed. The hygiene approach to sex, with a strong emphasis on sex moral, also hindered the investigation. Just looking at the table of contents of the Kinsey Report, an emphasis lies on intercourse, orgasm, male homosexuality, and masturbation.

The statistics given through out this volume on the incidence of homosexual activity, and the statistics to be given in the present section of this chapter, are based on those persons who have had physical contacts with other males, and who were brought to orgasm as a result of such contacts. By any strict definition such contacts are homosexual, irrespective of the extent of the psychic stimulation involved, of the techniques employed, or of the relative importance of the homosexual and the heterosexual in the history of such an individual.

(Kinsey, 1998, p.623)

Margarete Mead, a famous anthropologist who also contributed greatly to the field, criticizes the Kinsey report for not talking "about emotion of sex, its meaning to people ... ". In her opinion "[w]e need to think more about sex as a part of inter-personal relations." (Mead as quoted in Ramsey, 1950).

Since the 70s, pro sex or sex positive feminism and a growing gay movement countered the hitherto moral debate defending their position that there is no deviant sexuality. These stands of thought and their respective activism also lead to a strong response to the AIDS/HIV crisis that hit in the beginning of the 1980s. AIDS turned sexuality into a social as well as a (inter-)national health issue. The more it established/showed the importance of AIDS activism for alternative approaches to research, in which the scientist, considered as an expert deals with a reality that is alien to him/her, the more often it misses the needs/the goal to deal effectively with the epidemic (Crimp, 1988). The stigmatization of and moral assumption about homosexuality and the subsequent discrimination and mistreatment or social fears about it were central issues to this body of emerging research that turned into what is now called queer theory. Besides homosexuality, queer studies encompass bisexuality and transexuality/transgenderism (see O'Brian, 2009) and other non normative practices. Together with feminism it is what most influence/d contemporary sex research.

Between sexologist accounts of sexuality from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Foucault's historicization of sexuality in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>, the schools of thought can roughly be characterized/

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<sup>4</sup> Based on deconstruction of the *repressive hypothesis*, the idea that sexuality is a repressed given, in need of liberation, Foucault argues in his book *The History of Sexuality Vol.1* that sexuality is and has always been constructed. What counts as sexual depends on the historically specific context.

divided in two strains. One axiom is sexual *essentialism*, “the idea that sex is a natural force that exists prior to social life and shapes institutions...eternally unchanging, asocial, and transhistorical” (Rubin, 1993, p.9). The academic study of sex, through the disciplines of medicine, psychology and psychiatry, where sex is seen as a property of individuals, usually reproduces this essentialism.

The second axiom, informed the history of sexuality (Foucault, 1978/1988), that lead to an emerging scholarship of lesbian and gay studies, which looked at the origins and conditions of homosexuality (Jeffrey Weeks 1991, David Halperin 1993, Henry Abelove 1992). This body of research/literature, leads to understand sex as “constituted in the course of historically specific social practices” (Rubin, 1993,p.10). This is considered a *constructivist* perspective. Rubin notes in her early text *Thinking Sex* that body, brain, genitalia, but also the capacity for language, belong to human sexuality, though none of them determines its content or experience, neither its institutional forms. From her anthropological perspective she states that, “we never encounter the body unmediated by the meanings that cultures give to it” (p.11).

## 2.2 Perspectives of/on Sexuality

### 2.2.1 Technology and Time

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault gets to the conclusion that in our era sex has become “the revelation of truth... and the promise of a certain felicity” (1988, p.7), which steams from a Christian imperative of confession (p.21). The general idea is that a *good* Christian is supposed to confess contravening desire but rather than just confessing it one is supposed to transform desire into discourse. Further, he ascribes it to a “political economy of population”, which turned sex into an issue of “special knowledges” (p.26), as for example the AIDS crisis and the medicalization of women’s bodies (fertility, pregnancy, contraception). What interests Foucault is how this “truth” is established and constituted;



which is “the way in which sex is “put into discourse”. Concretely, this includes to ask/look at “who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which promote people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said” (p.11). He argues that the discourse about sex resembles “a will to knowledge” and “a technology of power”, that works through what the repressive hypothesis groups together under censorship, denial, and the claim of sex as repressed (p.12).

Preciado (2002) argues that what Foucault outlines in the history of sexuality is actuality a history of biopolitics<sup>5</sup>, which lets us understand sexuality as a positive and productive technology that changes the idea of a natural form of sexuality to a technological sexuality. Rather than the four devices Foucault points out as examples (the hysterical mother/woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple and the homosexual), Preciado plays with the idea of a dildo (p.78). According to her the dildo appears to be just another instrument among other organic or inorganic machines (like hands, wips, penises, harnesses, condoms, tongues, etc.) and not simply a copy of just one of those (p.64). The Dildotectonica (from dildo=plastic sex/sex made of plastic and téktôn=constructor, generator), she develops the understanding of the dildo as a technology and positions itself as a science that studies the use, formation and application (simply using it or while “fucking”) of the dildo while it also tries to localize the deformations it can cause on a sex gender system. In this context the body serves as a surface and terrain of displacement and incorporation of the dildo (p.41).

While Preciado agrees with Foucault who calls sexuality a regime of “power-knowledge-pleasure”(p.11), a regime that polices and affects the body, her philosophical approach to sexuality, even though it is very illustrative with examples, images and descriptions of possible counter-sexual practices, remains philosophical and hypertheoretical, which renders the embodied everyday instances of sexual disorientation invisible. Nevertheless it has without a doubt an impact and utility being provoking and

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<sup>5</sup> Preciado understands biopolitics or biologic as she also calls it, as the effect of politics on “human nature”, that political power is applied to and impacts body, space and discourse.

inspirational, regarding bodily practices.

Another queer theorist I consider important in relation to time and history is Carla Freccero. She sees the importance of Foucault's work as functioning as "a certain unsettling in relation to heteronormativity" (2007, p.485), which has its origin in the wide spreading field of sexuality. However, Freccero attempts to dislodge queer from sexuality and use it "as a critique of (temporal) normativity" (p.489), which she develops conceptually in the notion of queer temporality. Queer temporality is applicable beyond queer sexuality, as its potential lies in unrevealing the notion of respectability and the normal (p.4). The question that follows is, what does this mean for the history of the study of sexuality and the history of sexuality.

Freccero divides the studies of sexuality into anachronistic, and anti-anachronistic (2007, p.486). She compares anachronistic to ethnocentrism, with the difference being that it is not place but time through which, "culturally different models of gender and/or same-sex desire" were assimilated in order to prove that same-sex sexuality and alternative (nonbinaristic) gendering were universal phenomena. The anti-anachronistic move is what gave rise to the sexuality studies of lesbian, gay or queer orientation, with the intention "to intervene politically in the present by using the past" (p.488). Many studies classify as social constructivist, as well as in the anti-anachronistic<sup>6</sup>. Though, Freccero argues, most of the sexuality studies scholars are distracted by the Foucauldian debate "acts versus identities", using historical acts for calling for modern identity politics. However, Freccero emphasizes that he actually argued "that historical time was multiple and that multiple temporalities could be seen to coexist synchronically in any given historical formation" (Freccero, p.486).

Her concept of *queer temporality* does not deal with a troubling periodization of empirical history but rather sees history as "lived through fantasy in form of ideology" (2007, p.488). This means that there

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<sup>6</sup> *The History of Sexuality* by Foucault, Halperin's (1993) work on the history of homosexuality, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism* by Valerie Traub 2002, Jeffrey Week (1991) essays on history, sexuality and identity and Henry Abelove's "Specualtions on the History of 'Sexual Intercourse'" (1992).

is an “affective force of the past in the present”, though this relation to historicity is a *phantasmatic relation* (2007, p.184). What I want to signalize with introducing a queer temporal critique of sexuality is its opposition to the use of chronological time, where one event naturally follows another, to make sense of sexuality, the “passing centrality” as Freccero calls it. In her study of bisexuality, a leading scholar in sexuality studies, Clare Hemmings (2002), shows illustratively, how continuity, the fact that gender and object choice must be consistent over time, is crucial to sexual identity politics. The narratives of “one’s true sexual identity” turn to an anticipated future, which in turn “can only be validate by a past that is retrospectively given meaning according to the present” (p.25). Rather than claiming the structural impossibility of the bisexual subject, as Hemmings concludes, Freccero advocates for turning to “questions of subjectivity and desire” and an analysis that brings together different objects of study instead of solidifying them (p.491).

The queer temporal critique shows how much the study of sexuality depends on the notion of time, and how time and continuity is the tool to verify and authenticate sexuality, or -in Foucaultien terms- to establish a “sexual truth”. This claim for authenticity is also an important aspect in pornography and the reflections on the possibilities of having sex Llopis explores in her latest work. She challenges the difference/devisions between watching porn, masturbating and “real sex”, through incorporating live chat programs, like Chatroulette into her performance.

The use of Internet, having onlive (online and live/real time) sex, could probably also be seen as replacing the dildo and merge into a wider Diloteconica of different and discontinuous models of technologies in and of sexuality. According to Preciado this not an alarming step, but rather a step that indicates a strategic change of incorporation of technology into sex. While Torres performance demonstrate the strategic and political use of practices aiming at what modern sexology has grouped together as the ultimate technologies related to the production of “sexual pleasure”, with the orgasm as the “ultimate and irreducible unite/entity of individual pleasure” (Preciado, 2002, p.79).

In this sense the work that the artists describe in their books does not represent a sexual CV, a history of their sexual career, but different technologies and their use in order to produce sexuality, which becomes visible when chronological time is put aside. And though, the same example can also be easily countered by arguing that what occurs is a normalization of certain practices, behaviors or bodies. To conclude, I believe, time and technology help to see that Post-Pornographic works first and foremost cause a moment of disturbance/ disorientation rather than a new standard. Though, such moments can be found in throughout history.

Merleau-Ponty rightly points out that sexuality cannot be reduced to existence, understood as a set of physical facts, to which I would add technologies. Neither can existence be reduced to sexuality. I agree with the continuation of the initial quote, that emerges as meaningful is the intercommunication and ambiguity between sexuality and existence, where their boundaries “run into each other”. The connection between bodily existence and sexuality also rises as a central issue throughout the conducted interviews and is also clearly recognizable in their broader work.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, I turn to a closer reading of “The body in its sexual being” by Merleau-Ponty, which talks in a fruitful way to Tim Dean’s concept of impersonality of desire, a “gay critique of psychoanalysis” (p.3), and to the idea of sexuality being a negotiation between public, private and intimate as it is developed in Lauren Berlant’s and Michael Warner’s common text “Sex in Public”.

### 2.2.2 Psychoanalysis and Foucault

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sexuality became central to an understanding of what and who we are. With its foundational thinker, Sigmund Freud, it remains until today an important tool to think, analyze and critique theories of sex/sexuality, yet not without being challenged.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This issue is further analyzed in chapter three.

<sup>8</sup> See Dean, 2000, p.1 and Foucault, 1988, p.130.

Despite that Freud's theories of sexuality, make a strong reference to the essentialist accounts of sexuality;<sup>9</sup> he himself leaves a possibility for a constructivist account of inversion, an early name of homosexuality. Freud distinguishes three types of inverts: the absolute invert whose "sexual objects are exclusively of their own sex", amphigenic inverts in whose case the "sexual objects may equally well be of their own or of the opposite sex", and the contingent inverts characterized by the fact that "under certain external conditions...they are capable of taking as their sexual object someone of their own sex and of deriving satisfaction from sexual intercourse with him" (2001, p.137). The latter shows that in the case of homosexuality sexual object choice is not necessarily a natural phenomena/given for Freud but that it is rather caused/constructed.<sup>10</sup>

Dean criticizes that most scholarship in feminist, gay and queer studies follow Foucaultian theory, whereby psychoanalysis is either assimilated into an "essentially Foucaultian epistemology", which would mean seeing its normalizing impact on bodies and sexualities, or rejected as an ahistorical and universalizing view (2000, p.3). In contrast he tries to unite psychoanalysis and social constructionism in order to get to a position where the terms to discuss sexuality do not divide into essentialism versus constructivism. In his opinion this distinction represents false alternatives, which mislead us in theory and practice (p.4). He calls for "a fundamental reconceptualization of sexuality and its place in our lives" (p.5), thinking about sexuality and desire in less psychological terms, though without becoming too technological by turning to bodies and pleasures like Foucault suggests. His method is to read Lacanian psychoanalysis, which is for him a "radical antinormative critique of sexuality" (p.19), in order to "understand sexuality outside the terms of the ego, the individual, or the self" (p.3).

Berlant and Warner (1998) criticize Foucault for overlooking the possible transformation of sex and private relations that could be enabled through a critical culture. According to the authors, Foucault

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<sup>9</sup> His main reference being the *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, the journal in which most of the early sexologist published.

<sup>10</sup> It must be said that also other sexologist of this time de-pathologised homosexuality. Hirschfeld e.g. concluded in his later life, that homosexuality is not an illness, he still remains known for his earlier work.

shows how “modern epistemologies of sexual personhood” lead to isolation. Sexuality is used in a binary sense, separating sexualities into normal or perverse, which helps to administer people/bodies. At the same time this defines sexuality as a property of subjectivity. I agree with Berlant and Warner that the potential for transformation lays not solely with the individual but in “publicly or counterpublicly accessible culture” (p.559). In order to understand sexuality outside the terms of the ego, or as a public and counterpublic culture, I use the following three sections to locate (counter-) sexuality.

### 2.2.3 Intimacy and impersonal objects as location

Sexuality is often thought of as “as a form of intimacy and subjectivity” (Berlant and Warner, 1998, p.566), which is assigned to the “body/local/personal” (Halberstam, 2005, p.5). In a nutshell the authors critique a limited understanding of sexuality as intimate or located inside the subject. Dean’s suggestion is that, rather than assuming that sexuality includes another person, we should focus on desire that comes into being not as the consequence of subjective identity but through an impersonal object (p.17). Through this suggestion he opposes multiculturalism and identity politics that he criticizes for their “diversification and proliferation of sexual norms” which then “simply enlarges the scope of normalization” leaving desire up to the imaginary of the individual (p.18) merely perpetuating a normative understanding of sexuality.

To talk about non-normative sexuality, as what post-pornographic sexuality is understood to be, I consider Dean’s approach useful. He believes the symbolic order, which “denotes the transindividual aspect of subjectivity” (p.18), can help not to fall into essentialist or constructivist trap but to built on them can help not to fall into a normative. However, this is easier said than done, as body-centered identities with sexual subjectivity located “within and between embodiment, place and practice” make it difficult to open up a debate on sexuality (Halberstam, p.5).

It seems that the tension between the body-centered, subjective identity and counter public

culture and impersonality of desire cannot be resolved easily. However, this I see not at all negative, but even desirable, for it might be a productive friction to be kept in mind, a point/moment where the object of study might emerge more clearly.

#### 2.2.4 Social practice

Berlant and Warner offer a concept of “queer zones”, refereeing to the location of sexuality and desire based on the premise that there is nothing more public than privacy. Some relations between sex and public might be more obvious, as it is in case of pornographic cinema, sex magazines, or lap dancing, while the sexual connotation of other publics is not be very explicit, not directly organize around sex/the sex act. And it is exactly those publics, “the queer zones”, that contain the potential of turnings. (1998, p.547). However, Berlant and Warner’s notion of queer culture is based on a quite narrow understanding of queer as opposite to the heterosexual culture, in the absence of which the possibilities of alternative/queer identities, in terms of intelligibility, publics, culture, and sex are necessarily proliferated. Nevertheless, their analysis bears some useful insight for revealing the notion of privacy that is connected to sexuality. Moreover, they define queer social practices as formed through sex and theory. Such a practice is used with the attempt “to unsettle the grabbed but powerful norms”, without being explicitly sexual, as long as they are oriented towards destabilizing heteronormativity (p.548).

If we take sex and theory as the defining elements of a queer social practice, it resembles Llopis understanding of Post-Pornography, defined as *teoría y carne*, theory and flesh <sup>11</sup>. One of the themes she works on is for example pregnancy that she depicts as a sexual stage and its potential for pleasure, rather than a medicalized stage with a reproductive finality. And although I fully agree that the reproductive purpose/ potential of the pregnant body should not be ignored, the understanding of pregnancy where

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<sup>11</sup> Her reference to the sexual body is not in opposition to heterosexual reproduction, but as a practice that is not all the time against something, even in its most displeasing, indecent, nasty, shocking or offensive character, but through a non-normative appearance and behavior/practices.

the pregnant body is taken as a sexual object or pregnancy as the instrument of pleasure, like a dildo, comes close to a counter-sexual practice that is in opposition to productivity.

I also consider Torres' work a social practice where intimacy is approached in a carnal sense through performance. In one of her live interventions she gathered a group of allies to masturbate in the courtyard of a Spanish university, during the break of a conference they all attended. Once climaxing, people got dressed again and left. It was a challenging moment for the guards, who did not know how to react to this obvious pleasure that was disturbing them at the same time. As the police is not allowed to enter the university in Spain, this was a space in which private, intimacy and public could be negotiated more easily and direct, without being "policed" right away.

What I want to point out through those examples is how theory and sex inform each other and turn into a practice and survival strategy, where a queer zone allows for certain practices and where a certain practice also creates a queer space, that make queer life possible.

### 2.2.5 Location of desire/ the unconscious

For Dean's account of impersonal desire and non-normative sexuality the unconscious is of a crucial importance. It is the "censored chapter" of the individual's history, which "has already been written down elsewhere " (Lacan as quoted in Dean, 2000, p.7). In Dean's words this means it is written down in public discourse and in "the symbolic domain of language and culture, which is necessarily transindividual yet also historical" (Dean, p.7).

The just mentioned example of pregnancy falls into such an "elsewhere", being part of public discourse as well as of a symbolic domain. Also Berlant and Warner (1998) focus on the elsewhere in order to theorize sex where intimacy/ intimate life is "the endlessly cited elsewhere of political public discourse"(p.553), a sphere where everybody seems to be equal, despite unequal political or economical conditions. Intimacy is caused by the differentiation of spaces into "personal life" and work, politics and



public sphere. This division into public and private spheres posits intimacy as an institution of personal life (p.553), which then becomes the place of social reproduction, self-development and accumulation and transfer of capital. Another effect this construction of intimacy as an elsewhere has is that sex, as a merely personal matter, seems irrelevant (p.553) to a wider public, while intimacy is mediated by the public/private discourse, being at the core of the public. If intimacy is a/the place of construction of subjective history, while at the same time being connected to a wider context, intimacy becomes the elsewhere that the unconscious is aligned to, and upon which impersonal desire and non-normative sexuality is built upon.

I find the idea of a personal diary another probably less explicit sexual but fundamentally intimate enterprise, being the place where the most personal and intimate thoughts, feelings and happenings of a person's life are written down/captured. When such an account is published, or written with the knowledge that it will be published, one could argue that it is less intimate, or even not intimate anymore, as the boundary between public/private is not respected. Nonetheless, the books Llopis and Torres published about their individual life, read as diaries. In her book, Llopis (2010) writes during a period of 5 months diary entries. She reflects on the various points about the boundary between a writing to be published and her "real diary", how she stops to distinguish, or to think about what of her personal life or of the people she writes about could be found "too" intimate. Torres' book (2011) has a thematic structure, hence less the form of a diary, resembling a life history, or experiential account of her body, desires and experiences. Nevertheless, it provokes in me the same uneasiness and excitement as Llopis book does for It shows many traces of a diary, of feelings, and dreams, personal facts, that alternate between exposing oneself in utter vulnerability and empowering openness. As a life history, it is even more the construction/presentation of a subjective history, and the negotiation of the intimate. The concept of the books challenge the concept of intimacy by exposing it in a crude way, displacing it from where it could be encountered before, though without demolishing it.

Besides book authors, the two artists are also active blog authors. Writing a blog, or blogging, is a very interesting type of authorship as it takes place in cyberspace. Cyberspace is an interesting location, where also online pornography takes place, showing that there is eroticism and sex outside of a purely private sphere and couple arrangements.

Berlant and Warner talk about “border intimacies”, which hint in a more general sense at the “spillage of eroticism into everyday social life”, which often cause a transgressive impression, or even aversion (p.560). With this example I want to symbolize, that Llopis’ and Torres’ books, and their respective blogging, public performances or public interventions can be grouped under counterintimacies, but are not its only examples. An even more central element to queer culture building “is the critical practical knowledge that allows such relations to count as intimate, to be not empty release of transgression but a common language of self-cultivation, shared knowledge, and the exchange of inwardness” (1998, Berlant & Warner, p.561).

Torres mentions in the interview “the group of monsters” she gathered around her. I think this group or place, defined by her being intelligible, constructs critical practical knowledge on which queer culture building rests. For the sake of more clarity/intelligibility, she introduced poetry into her performance. Llopis’ project of writing manuals, works towards a similar goal, as they also comprise the aspect of knowledge sharing that facilitates a common language of self-cultivation.

Yet the shift between the spheres of public and private makes it difficult to “entextualize” the examples in culture and to recognize them as more than just as a “lifestyle” (1998, Berlant & Warner, p.561). There are hardly any institutionalized matrixes for counterintimacies, they are rather “forms of affective, erotic, and personal living that are public in the sense of accessible, available to memory, and sustained through collective activity” (p.562). However, to be read widely as culture, or even as an artistic or art, is usually less of a concern in Post-Pornography, yet as a spatial issue it is crucial to meet their basic needs because museums, galleries and (theatre) stages and cinemas are the places where they find an

audience that helps them earn a living. Although the artists might not be necessarily interested in their contribution to the arts, it is “passing as real art” that helps them survive. At the same time, it is impossible to institutionalize Post-Pornography and the subsequent disorientation as pillars of queer culture building, as they are effect of non-straight, linear or stable fluctuation. However, art is also a space of negotiation, allowing disorientation, and therefore interesting for a post-pornographic project, insofar as working with the crossing of theoretical and practical boundaries.<sup>12</sup>

Rather than negotiating queer sexuality in the realm of art or through the public/private divide, it is also at stake in dealing with the unconscious. If we are to approach sexuality through the unconscious, as Dean proposes, it emerges in a temporal pulsation, which “may only be registered as it disappears, in the moment it’s closing up” (Dean, p.9), resembling the definition of disorientation from the first chapter.

This section outlined the potential of locating desire in the “elsewhere”, which is caused by the problematization of intimacy, negotiated through the division of spheres in public and private, as understood by Berlant and Warner or in the unconscious in Dean’s understanding. Both approaches are characterized by becoming apparent in “slipping away”, through crossing the boundary that produced them. Hence they become manifest while they seem to be losing their shape. These queer understandings of sexuality are not determined by intimacy or the unconscious, but they appear in the dissolution of the demarcations/matrix/boundaries of sexuality and desire.

While this part showed how practice together with space/place, can influence sex and location of desire, the following part turns more concretely to the experience of body and sexuality.

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<sup>12</sup> The potential of art is analyzed in more depth in section 2.2.12 Sublimation.

### 2.2.6 Experience

Sexuality ... ought not, any more than the body in general, to be regarded as a fortuitous content of our experience. Existence has no fortuitous attributes no content which does not contribute towards giving it its form; it does not give admittance to any pure fact because it is the process by which facts are drawn up.

(Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p.196)

The central interest of Merleau-Ponty's investigation is existence. There are phenomena, like space, objects, and experiences, that grab our attention and which we perceive. Yet the question this poses for Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, for the apprehension of these phenomena, is: what is the relation between the perceiving embodied subject and its surrounding, the world it lives in. Sexuality is, according to him, a primary function through which phenomena are brought into existence for us, through which we perceive the world that is out there. However, the general difficulty lies in the transformation/impact the activity of the subject has on the "intercourse between the epistemological subject and the object" (2005, p.178). Hence, Merleau-Ponty has as his primary object not to define what is sexuality, or its meaning, but to ask about the sexual being of the body in the world, how this experience is perceived and shape giving to existence. "There is interfusion between sexuality and existence, which means that existence permeates sexuality and *vice versa*" (Merleau-Ponty, 2007, p. 196). This involvement of sexuality with existence makes it impossible to separate "the proportion of sexual to other motivations" or "to label a decision or act 'sexual' or 'non-sexual'" (Merleau-Ponty, 2007, p.196). This consideration leads Merleau-Ponty to understand "sexual life" as the simple proof for the existence of sex, which is not simply an "epiphenomenon" of existence (p.184). Similarly, I take Post-Pornography as multiple de facto situations that show an involvement of sex/sexuality.

Merleau-Ponty uses the metaphor of "sexuality as an atmosphere" that is at all times present, which "becomes defused in images which derive from it only certain typical relationships" (Merleau-Ponty, 2007, p.195). This atmosphere is forms part of the human being (Merleau-Ponty, 2007, p.182), where the body's function is to ensure "metamorphosis", form ideas into things; like sleep into real sleep,

a thought of sex into sex (p.190) which makes body and mind/ sign and significance abstract moments (p.192). As merely any sensory data gets integrated in already existing configurations words like 'see' or 'hear', but also 'sex' have no meaning by themselves, it is the body in its givenness that absorbs the existence of hearing, sight or sexuality (Merleau-Ponty, 2007, p.185).

In short, sexuality is a form giving experience of and to existence, which is apprehended through the body, such as all perception is in phenomenological framing. Sexuality depends on a de facto situation, which is already something other than itself, which always changes once it is noticed, once it passed. Even though the focuses of Dean, Berlant and Warner, and Merleau-Ponty differ widely, all authors agree, that sex exists and involves individual/subjective experience with phenomena that produce and shape the particular existence. They assume mobility of desire between purely bodily and consciousness, from ideas into things, from being located inside the self to the transindividual unconscious, and between public/private/intimate. In all accounts sexuality is omnipresent, being able to be read into any aspect or phenomena. On the one hand sexuality can be found everywhere, which, on the other hand, leads to a non-locality of sexuality. What I want to signalize with these divisions and distinctions is their inter-connection and importance in giving shape to a queer-phenomenological understanding of sexuality, as I argue that the different moments of disorientation are caused by the permeation of 'sexual' and 'non-sexual'. In the following sections I address the issue of permeation between sexual/non-sexual and the mobility of desire in more concrete terms.

### 2.2.7 Erotic Perception and Orgasm

Merleau-Ponty postulates that there is no pre-eminently attractiveness to a body. Close physical contact would only cause a 'vague feeling' as the knowledge of 'an indeterminate something' "is never enough to 'spark off' sexual behavior and create a situation which requires a definite mode of resolution" (Merleau-Ponty, 2007, p.181). With this Merleau-Ponty opposes a basic assumption about pornography

where the closeness of the body to another fragmented body, genitalia, sex toys, or fetish object in the porn movie is assumed to have the incentive to 'spark off' sexual behavior in the consumer (Gatto, 2008, Stüttgen, 2008).

According to Merlau-Ponty's claim perception can lose spatially as well as temporally its erotic structure. Besides that, he assumes that the individual has the power to project a sexual world or putting oneself into an erotic situation, which does not manifest a sexual label. This opens up the field of erotic perception to non-conventional/normative sexuality. Moreover, Merlau-Ponty also suggests the possibility when stumbling upon a sexual situation of "maintaining it or following it through to complete satisfaction" (2007, p.181). The satisfaction seems to correlate with "orgasm", considering his examples. According to a famous porn actress from the "Golden age of Porn" in the 70s, Georgina Spelvin, "an orgasm is that point in time that can not be measured, a mystical instinct that doesn't really exist in this dimension" (Dye, 2009). This shows that Merlau-Ponty's account of sexuality has a clear orientation towards satisfaction.

Even though it might be far fetched I think it mirrors what Merlaeu-Ponty writes about embodiment and temporality, which is when one becomes absorbed into one's body and the present "takes on an air of eternity" (2007, p.192). Nonetheless, in his account of the body in its sexual being he also grants the possibility to provide satisfaction to "a cycle of movements and states" of non-sexual nature, which nevertheless 'patterns' "intention or initiative of a sexual kind" (p.181).

The embodiment of sexuality through the experience of orgasm is central and meaning giving to Llopis, who quotes Spelvin on the question of the importance of orgasm for her work. Torres underlines the practical and satisfactory character of orgasm, for a sense of life as well as for her political project of creating networks of lovers, through giving and receiving orgasm.

Merlau-Ponty uses desire interchangeably with erotic experience that "comprehends blindly by linking body to body" (2007, p.181). This means for him that something is sexually significant not when

we consider it in a possible relationship to pleasurable states or the sexual organs, but when it exists for the body, when the stimuli applied coincides or adapts to sexual conduct (p.181). Even though, Merleau-Ponty considers desire and erotic experience as something that “takes place in the world” (2007, p.181), being the aiming of one body at another body, it is not so far from Dean’s call for the importance of the unconscious, considering his specification of desire, as nothing that is understood solely through conscious pondering, it is not “a *cogitation* which aims at a *cogitatum*” (Merleau-Ponty, 2007). In both cases it is the proximity of objects or bodies that enables action, desire and erotic perception.

### 2.2.8 Functional/Non-functional and Erogenous Zones

In the Freudian logic sexuality emerges in “the reflective turning away from functional activity-feeding and suchlike- that involve other people, and the turning around upon itself of the drive, in the direction of fantasy” (Dean, 2000, p.252). For Freud, an erogenous zone comes into being “as soon as sexuality is separated from organic functions, that is, in the reflexive moment of autoerotism”(Freud 1953-74 cited in Dean, 2000, p.252) and this is where the detachment of sexuality from genitalia emerges as a theme. It is one’s body that can lead to an erotic perception by discovering it in terms of erogenous zones, hence not necessarily linked to another body.

An good example of autoerotism are Henry James’ prefaces to the *New York edition* of his work, where he maintains a metaphorical yet quite explicate sexual/erotic relation to the character he used to be when writing the edition he is now prefacing, the text itself and him, the writer of the prefaces (Sedgwick 2003). James’ autoerotism also supports Dean’s claim about the usefulness of psychoanalysis for queer theory, which, by separating gender and sexuality, leads to a “mobility of desire” that “makes sexuality all the more difficult to localize” (Dean, 2000, p.254). He even argues that this mobility makes queer theory fail as a disciplinary project, because its core concerns turning around sexuality are not locatable. Phenomenology parts form and always comes back to the body, nonetheless seeing the content of

sexuality as fortuitous, provides for a mobility of desire. Thus, taking the different schools of thought together in a phenomenological phrasing, it can be said that desire does not reside in a particular point but in a net, constituted through the interconnection with existence.

### 2.2.9 Defamiliarization of Sexuality

The mobility of desire, starting with delinking it from genitality leads to an opening up of possibilities and a defamiliarization of sexuality when sexuality and desire take an unfamiliar shape by having moved away from an “ethos of penetration and domination” (Halperin 1993) or (re-)productivity (Abelove, 1992). Whether this is a psychoanalytical approach or a queer one, it is in any case very phenomenological as it leaves aside assumptions about the object, being in this case sexuality. It ‘brackets’ sexuality off from the worldly assumptions it is connected to in a capitalist, Christian and western cultural setting, with genitals and their respective use for penetration, domination and reproduction (of bodies and structures). This move is a general phenomenological method to apprehend the phenomena that is to be described.

Counter-sexual practices such as Post-Pornography, seems to be inspired by a mobility of desire, whose representations lead to a defamiliarization of sexuality for the one who encounters them. Examples of such an encounter can be live performances, or the *mustrea marana*, so far the only Post-Porn-film-festival, happening annually in Madrid and Barcelona.

### 2.2.10 Affective Life

Similarly to Dean, Merleau-Ponty does not follow a distinction between pleasure and desire interlinking them instead. Accordingly, one's affective life is the “area of our experience which has clearly significance and reality only for us” (2007, p.178), is “desire or love” that cause that “a thing or a being”



comes into existence for us, begins to be. "Desire or love" is also central to understand how things can exist in general (Merleau-Ponty, 2007, p.178). For Merleau-Ponty, affectivity is a mosaic of affective states, which consist of pleasures or pains, "mutually incomprehensible, and explicable only in terms of the bodily system" (p.178). Pleasures and pains a person experiences cannot necessarily be linked to natural pleasures and pains, because reflexes and the association of ideas can be displaced them in a dramatic way (Merleau-Ponty, 2007). He doubts for example that sexual incapacity is linked to the disappearance of visual or tactile representation that brings pleasures and pains into being. Though, as he argues, "there are no sexual reflexes and no pure state of pleasure" (p.180) and only when "the very structure of perception or erotic experience ... has undergone change", external stimuli residing in the original world, that which gives meaning and sexual value to the objective body, lose their effectiveness/interest (p.180).

Once more Dean argues with Lacan, that "in fantasy the subject relates not to another subject, but to an "object" generated by the symbolic order's impact on one's own body" (Lacan 1953 cited in Dean p.263). Hence, what Merleau-Ponty calls external stimuli of pleasure/desire residing in the world, which give sexual value to the body, is what Lacan calls the symbolic order. This stimulus is caused for Freud by turning away from people, in a reflective way, for Lacan by relating in fantasy to an object, and for Merleau-Ponty sexual stimuli reside in a general manner in the original/factual world. This brings back the location of sexual desire, pleasure and fantasy, as laying in the symbolic order, the unconscious, "beyond" genitalia - as Dean calls it- or "besides", as Sedgwick would say.

What is said so far is that sexuality is neither related to mental depth, the resonance of interiority or chthonic power, to the terms in which the unconscious is often understood, nor exclusively to the genital organs. The unconscious to which desire and non-normative sexuality is linked is rather, as Dean (2000) argues, "neither psychological nor strictly cultural, but something else entirely" (p.9), tentatively, a woven fabric of different facts among which count body and sexuality but one which is always a de facto

situations. This would also mean that any performance is not just an artistic play but also a real situation, not just staged sex but “real” sex - desire might have moved to a non-sexual part that becomes sexualized, where the boundaries between the sexual and non-sexual blur, and the map of erotic zones is changing.

### 2.2.11 Love and sexual aim

As mentioned above love and/or desire are central functions to understand how things come into being/existence for us. Love is also what distinguishes Lacan, who assumes that there is no gender where there is love, from Freud's theories on sexuality that state that the object is gendered, even in its most fragmented version (Dean, 2000, p.219). Dean, in contrast, emphasizes the political character of love/loving, especially in his more recent work. He is particularly interested in the potential of activities and concepts concerning the openness towards the stranger, anonymity and risk, to see love as instances of contact and not an instance of networking, linked to productivity and normalizing attitudes (2009, 2000). Queer politics, he says, should involve “not only the negative effort to resist norms, but also the positive work of intense, almost superhuman loving” (Dean, 2000, p.268), which consists of moments of contact with the strange or the stranger.

Freud sees this new sexual aim as pathology, because of being so far removed from the “normal”, pinup examples of licking excrement and intercourse with dead bodies. According to Freud, any such aim “goes to astonishing lengths in successfully overriding the resistances of shame, disgust, horror or pain” (Freud, 1953-74 cited in Dean, 2000).

All these affects seem to be constitutional for Post-Pornography (Salanova, 2012). Torres puts love/loving as the central motive of her performance which is, as she says in the interview, often inspired by horror movies, or painful experiences, playing with disgust and arousal, through the use of pig intestines, horrifying/horrible images and sexual pleasure. Her work and thoughts in general, as presented

in her book, are dedicated to and inspired by her polycystic ovary, which has a transsexual effect on her body. Since transsexuality is still listed as pathological disorder by the American Psychiatric Association, this shows how these sexual aims, or this labor of love is linked to political issues, influencing a persons' daily life, both in legal and health arenas as the stop-transpathologization movement stated in their 2012 campaign. Also Llopis bases her work on "the total bareness of emotions", which link to the affects Freud mentions.

Dean (2000) reads Freud's passage about "new sexual aims" as a triumph of love that consists in "fucking corpses and eating shit". Though this triumph "entails a kind of "mental work" which works towards overriding "shame, disgust, horror, or pain-", it is a struggle "against the affect-laden social norms regulating sexuality" (p.268). The mental work Dean addresses might be what Merlau-Ponty has called *cogitation*, hence incompatible with his understanding of erotic perception and desire. Yet it would be wrong to say that there is an unbridgeable convergence of opinions for Merlau-Ponty (2007) acknowledges that "the very structure of perception or erotic experience" can "undergone change" which in his example, leads to the loss of desire (p.180). However, he does not contemplate the opposite possibility, of even stronger or different desire, a desire Post-Pornography works with and how Dean likewise proposes it. Generally though, it seems to be affect, love and desire that orient the sexual aims and that bring sexuality into existence, that make it perceivable as a phenomena, that make it worldly for us. The interview analysis in the following chapter comes back to the issue of how sexuality comes to matter through emotions and affect in the work of Llopis and Torres.

### 2.2.12 Sublimation

The clear words Freud found to exemplify new sexual aims are similar to how non-normative sexuality is described in queer live sex performance or fetish porn. Performance as well as pornography can be argued to be artistic expressions, understanding pornography as a cinematographic genre for

example (Williams, 1989), or in terms of modern art, where experience/sensation, performance and sexuality are often brought together (Jones, 1997). Especially post-pornographic acts are perceived at the margin between avant-garde art and trash, between socially and cultural acceptable or not. This is where the concept of sublimation, which is also introduced by Freud, becomes interesting for contemplating sexuality. Freud writes:

The progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilization keeps sexual curiosity awake. This curiosity seeks to complete the sexual object by revealing its hidden parts. It can, however be diverted ("sublimated") in the direction of art, if its interest can be shifted away from the genitals on to the shape of the body as a whole.

(Freud, 1953-74 cited in Dean, 2000, p.275)

Sublimation is used in its double meaning as diverging and refining the content, through a shift toward art. Interestingly, Freud's description of sublimation sounds like a phenomenological observation, where the different parts of the same phenomena are connected. Husserl uses the example of the table and the different sides and views we can have on it, that we conjure, despite their differences to one and the same table, which would be in the case of sexuality Freud describes the connection of the different parts of the sexual object, that can shift away from the genitals towards the body as a whole, which also incorporates the non-normal sexual aims he previously talked about.

Dean sees the difficulty with sublimation as a question of boundaries - it occurs where the boundary between the sexual and the nonsexual tip into each other expanding "the reach of the sexual", described through the mobility of desire in queer theory and psychoanalysis. However, Dean (2000) points to the problem sublimation brings with its "ineluctably turn to aesthetic" (p.275), which is just another regime that polices sexuality and pornography as does intimacy. Though he concludes that aesthetics is not just policing but also a constituent part of for example gay identity.

Dean proposes another way to imagine sublimation - he is convinced that it would be much easier to stop having sex, than to stop thinking about sex "in certain habitual ways" and hence to recognize that one often derives greater pleasure from imagination "than from actually doing it" (p.273).

Thus, the idea of sublimation is that it entails “no detour via the unconscious” and produces “exactly the same satisfaction as explicitly sexual activity” (p.276). Lacan’s provocative conclusion on Freud’s concept of sublimation shows a similar idea:

Freud tells us repeatedly that sublimation is also satisfaction of the drive, whereas it is *zeitgehemmt*, inhibited as to its aim- it does not attain it. Sublimation is nonetheless satisfaction of the drive, without repression.

In other words- for a moment, I am not fucking, I am talking to you. Well! I can have exactly the same satisfaction as if I were fucking. That’s what it means. Indeed, it raises the question of whether in fact I am not fucking at this moment.

(Four, 1977, cited in Dean 2000)

Dean (2000) adds that the love for literature can be exactly the same others have for/by doing sex (p.277). He suggests that such a high estimation, which one can also have for gardening or philosophy (Preciado 2002), should be understood “as a subset of a more general aesthetic commitment to beauty, rather than as a specifically sexual preference” (p.277). I agree with Dean (2000) that aesthetic passion and sexual passion are not comparable in terms of superior and inferior, but both “can include an ecstatic self-loss-or syncope- similar to that which may be experienced in the raunchiest sex” (p.278), they can be orgasmic (in the sense of causing a mystic moment in time that cannot be measured according to Llopis or that what makes one believe that life is beautiful, as Torres describes orgasm). Regarding the judgment of inferior/superior, Sedwick (2003) introduced beside as a location, in contrast to a beneath of beyond, an origin or telos, a better or worth. Beside marks a difference, while escaping a dualistic system of thought/judgment. In this way it lends itself to organize the different passions outlined above and offers a place of Post-Pornography, not as a post, a better or beyond of pornography but as an attempt of a non dualist understanding of normal pathological, good or bad, taboo or liberation.

Indeed, it seems as if Post-Pornography plays with a certain astonishment, which according to Muñoz (2009) “helps one surpass the limitations of an alienating presentation and allows one to see a different time and place” (p.5), which alludes to an “utopian function of art” (p.7) by promising a futurity, “something that is not quite here”. A certain utopia also seems to guide Llopis and Torres in their work,

for even though, their projects are focused on the world, as they perceive it, and the struggles to survive in it, their work expresses a tremendous positive attitude.

The study of sexuality came from sex research in relation to abnormality, where it was understood in medicalized terms of disease and procreation. The orientation was heteronormative, essentialist, located in the individual represented by the body. A social constructivist side, also asking for the meaning of the body and sexuality emerged, seeing sexuality from a behaviorist point of view and through historicizing sexuality. It is where the aspect of temporality started to rise - following anthropology and the queer critique of temporality, the emphasis gets shifted to desire and subjectivity rather than studying sexuality in an explanatory mode. Queer theory leads to amplifying the realm of sexuality towards fields and practices classified as non-sexual, showing the centrality of sexuality to discourse, theory and practice that are mutually shape giving to it. The mobility of desire, possibility of sublimation and the non-locality of sexuality make it impossible to nail sexuality down to a single or solid form. Its shape appears, sexuality comes to matter through slipping away, not being repressed but opaque, difficult to see due to its multiple possibilities and simultaneous compound forms. Sexuality exists, and it does have a presence, though it can only be described in its ever-changing existence in de fact situations always already being part of a wider net of interconnections.

While each concept adds an angle to sexuality, they contest and at times contradict each other. Yet it is the existence of sexuality, in its confusions and frictions, as mediated through bodies, of the artists as well as through my perception and angle of looking at it, which I tried to expose in clarity through out this chapter, to elucidate what was sexual about writing or about unusual practices, using rotten fruits or the Internet and how the different conceptual orientations towards sexuality and the respective examples make sexuality come to matter.

So far queer phenomenology has provided a frame to approach sexuality as a phenomenon that appears to slip away and at the same time manifest itself through an orientation through the traces it

leave, even if they are just a confusion that does not get resolved or reoriented towards a goal, a straight or clear line. In the following chapter, this net of conceptual (dis-) orientations is used/ applied to the interviews with Llopis and Torres, in order to tackle how sexuality comes to matter, how it becomes meaningful and manifest for the artists.

## Case Study□ Post-Pornography

Since my first encounter with Post-Pornography I have assumed that what matters in and what gets manifested through it is Sexuality. Therefore, I was not surprised by the sexual or carnal obscenity it exhibits in its most diverse forms of expressions, but by how Post-Porn artists, particularly Llopis and Torres, use sexual triggers and obscenity in order to express what matters to them, which again makes sexuality take a certain form or come to matter and matter. The surprise this chapter holds is exactly the explicate way how Llopis and Torres modulate matter and sexuality in the interviews<sup>13</sup>, contrary to the impression the encounter with their work might leave on the spectator.

Out of the quite diverse Post-Porn scene, I chose Llopis and Torres because of their high degree of popularity due to having published a book. Llopis' book, *Eso era el Postporno* (2010), is an attempt to define what Post-Pornography supposedly is, paired with documenting her physical and emotional struggle for reaching an orgasm through masturbation. Torres, in her book *Pornterrismo* (2011), which is also her name on stage, reflects in an elaborate and vivid way on her post-pornographic life and work. Both artists combine art and activism, making use of various canals, writing, blogging, doing performances, videos and workshops, which, together with their books, make them referential, in terms of audience, visibility and accessibility.

The previous chapter showed how concepts of sexuality are shifting between moral, medical,

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<sup>13</sup> The interviews were conducted in April 2012, according to a narrative methodology. The sound files of the interviews can be accessed upon request (rebekka.leitlein@gmail.com).

psychological or spatial issues, depending sometimes on the action and at other times on identity either considered as natural, bodily or constructed, or as an embodied experience opposed to theorization. If all these aspects are considered, it gets evident that sexuality, as a phenomenon, does not allow for a clear/straight and exhaustive line of explanation. It is rather disorienting, like an effect of sex itself.<sup>14</sup> Thus, I intend to read/analyze the interviews using the queer phenomenological tools developed in the first chapter, which allow to approach the phenomenon of sexuality, turning to moments of disorientation, characterized by touch, proximity and becoming object. The analysis also links with concrete performances, direct interventions and writings of the two artists.

Methodologically I take a (queer-) phenomenological approach rather than taking queer theory to understand the ways in which mass culture, language or literature, shape sexuality (Warner, 1993 Dotty, 1993), or to read it into art piece and literature or even analyzing the work of “queers”/queer people. I look at what arises as thematic fields in the interviews, how they interconnect and contradict each other and how meaning is constructed through them for the artist, which indeed is also mediated by me as the audience as reader and listener of particular works and of the interviews. For this reason, queer theory is important as it strongly influenced my understanding and interest in the topic and guided me conducting the interviews on these grounds yet, I try to be clear about and indicate my voice in the interview process and their analysis.

In contrast to the various bits and pieces of Post-Pornography that have already been presented, this chapter follows a more systematic approach. First, I situate the movement historically, as well as in a wider debate on pornography and art, before entering in an analysis of the material at hand.

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<sup>14</sup> See sexual disorientation



### 3.1 Name

The name, Post-Pornography, has its actual origin in the intent of the erotic photographer Wink van Kempen to classify a product that would be pornographic but not with the sole intention to a prostheses for masturbation but also humorous, critical and political (Llopis, 2010, p.22). In 1992 Annie Sprinkle used the term in her *Post-Post Porn Modernist Show*. This performance was a milestone in the field of art and sex work and the beginning of a post-pornographic movement. Still today it is an inspiration for many people who work with Post-Pornography. As 'whore-turned-pornographer-turned performance artist' as Linda Williams (1993) summarizes Sprinkle's curriculum vita, Sprinkle took a sex positive position and proudly demonstrated in her show the achievements of her career. It was a "critical, performative approach to sex and image production" (Stüttgen, 2007, p.277).

### 3.2 Pornpolitics

Historically Sprinkle's *Post-Post-Porn Modernist* performance falls into a *Post-Pornographic Era*, which according to Kendrick (1996) starts after the US publication of *The Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography*, in 1970. Besides considering pornography as loveless, it also considered pornography as degrading for the human being, reducing him "to the level of animal". However, it was not possible to find enough evidence to claim that pornography is dangerous to its viewer or that the porn industry is solely organized crime. The Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, a British government report that dealt with similar issues concluded the debate between art and pornography by describing pornography as "worthless trash". The US Senate rejected the report and so did Nixon, president at that time, with his analogy of pornography and anarchy. A line must be drawn "against pornography to protect freedom of expression" (as cited in Kendrick, 1996, p.219), as it is a threat to moral principle and the social order. Based on this, Kendrick sees the *Post-Pornographic Era*, as simply marked by an earlier period. He emphasizes that the beginning of this period when the reports were conducted must be

understood in context and political climate of the time.

The late 70's and early 80's is also the time when the sex-wars reached a peak, symbolized with Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon who considered pornography as violence because it fuses "the erotization of dominance and submission with the social construction of male and female", in which female sexuality is seen "as lust of self-annihilation" (as cited in Bersani, 1987, p.213). On the other side there was a discourse that "argues for a radically revised imagination of the body's capacity for pleasure" (Bersani, 1987, p.215), to which for example, Pat Califia and Gayle Rubin, who promoted lesbian and SM sex, contributed. The condition of possibility for this discourse, as Bersani (1987) rightly claims, is a certain refusal of sex as it is understood to be known as "in its essence, less disturbing, less socially abrasive, less violent, more respectful of "personhood" that it has been in a male-dominated, phallogocentric culture" (p.221). In the sex war debate, the mentioned examples are often polarized and wrongly solidified in their stands (Duggan, 2006). Furthermore, this *Post-Pornographic Era* is marked by a latent fear that "sex will become self-conscious and recognize its own political nature" (Kendrick, 1996, p.220) where pornography is assumed to be the detectable origin.

The work of Llopis and Torres builds especially on the political nature and potential of pornography. It is also part of a discourse where sex is considered as a powerful political tool and of a revision of the imagination of the body's capacity for pleasure. The artists hit the nerve of contemporary discourses on sexuality and on pornography dealing with issues such as transsexuality, bodies and pleasures considered non-normative, and by opposing the recent medicalization of sexuality. On this account, Post-Pornography emerges from the shift of pornography as a patriarchal male invented instrument, with the female body and its private parts at its base, to a political tool of pleasure, with very different symbols at its core (Kendrick, 1996, p. 229, Duggan, 2006), as a continuation or on-going revision of sexual pleasure images.

Interestingly, most definitions of porn in the 70s and 80s took the stage film as an ahistorical

prototype of porn, which is based on sex scenes without much dialogue or storyline, and which relied on the equation of pornography with “worthless trash” (Kendrick, 1996, p.229). Although Williams also has little respect for stage films, she argues for pornography as a film genre (Williams, 1989). For Kipnis, (1993) pornography turns into a media text that carries a multiplicity of meaning like any other. McNail considers the 90s the moment when pornography emerges as a cultural category as it also became a “cultural motif in all manner of media representation” (McNail, 1996, p.vii). Nevertheless, moral, ethical and political taboos remain. There are different arguments to explain the proliferation of pornography and of the pornographic in the 90s. Some built on “the post-1960s politics of sexual liberation” while others assign it to capitalism and the liberation of sexuality from the exclusively reproductive sphere that allowed for the commodification of sexuality (McNail, p.92). Trash, meaningful or subversive, what this debate shows is that there are different perspectives and positions from which pornography can be read and produced.

A constant fear though that accompanies this debate until today is, as Kendrick (1996) neatly outlines in his examination of the development of pornography from a secret room in a museum in Naples in 1758 until the 90s, is that pornography is a jockeying for power, which is at the same time connected to the “fear that representations direct our lives in ways we cannot govern or even understand” (p.236).

### 3.3 History of (Post-) Pornography

Besides the political context in which Post-Pornography emerges, it is also embedded in a history of pornography. The secret museum in Naples, where pornographs (whore paintings and deviant images) were kept away from the general public and only made accessible for men who could pay for the entrance, is the beginning of pornography in Kendrick’s eyes. Later it became a hygienic discourse on regulating prostitution and women’s sexuality until the ‘techno eye’ changed the boundaries of the visible

and obscene, though still complicit in the production of what Foucault calls “sexual truth” (Preciado, 2008). Preciado (2008) makes a strong spatial argument and advocates for including pornography into a critical (art) historiography, as it is the place where the limits of the socially visible and with it pleasures and sexual subjectivities are constructed, normalized, condemned and/or pathologized (p.42). Today, there is still a historiographical gap/emptiness, which keeps Post-Pornography, video art and ‘pornofeminist’ performances outside of the visible. This missing grid for visibility to understand/turn to this cultural production is also hampered by the idea of pornography as tool for uncritical masturbation/worthless trash, with the idea that the critical is killing the pornographic success/aim. Preciado calls for a political ecology of culture, where urban garbage, like pornography and with it sexual objects and practices are re-evaluated/re-defined and their modes of productions reconsidered (Preciado, 2008, p.43).

### 3.4 Theoretical orientation and strategies

In a theoretical genealogy Preciado (2007) embeds the concept of Post-Pornography in *post-porn*, *punk*, *transcultural feminism*. She reminds us of the importance of the works of Michel Foucault, Monique Wittig and Adrienne Rich, in order to identify heterosexuality as a political regime and a dispositive of control; of Judith Butler and Judith Halberstam who emphasize cultural processes which lead to a stylization of the body through normalizing practices, constructing a 'natural' difference between the genders; of Donna Haraway and Anne Fausto-Sterling who question the mere existence of biological sex, and of the great number of scholars that pointed out the relatedness and intersection of gender with other categories such as, race, class, migration and human trafficking. Preciado argues that these thoughts are part of a feminist epistemology that follows a victimization discourse, until those identified as victims start to speak. In the case of Post-Pornography this is until sex-workers, porn actresses, and people living a non-normative sexuality or with a non-normative body entered the 'sex wars'. The feminist movement in which Post-Pornography emerges is therefore, structured around prostitution and pornography

(Preciado, 2007, p.2). Tim Stüttgen, film scholar, Post-Porn theorist and performer calls it a “(post) lesbian context” (Stüttgen, 2007, p.278), which María Llopis (2010) and Diana J. Torres (2011) call ‘*transfeminismo*’ (in English: transfeminism). Transfeminism is defined by the application of transgender discourses onto feminist discourses and their transversal, or intersectional, approach to oppression considering race, sexuality, social and economical factors. Its attempt is to transcend binaries and definitions and spaces marked in opposition to each other and creates itself by taking form and residing in different spaces (Torres, 2011, pp.196). As a strategy it shows dissident sexualities, mainly through technology, audiovisual support/aid and social networks, which explicitly chooses the pornographic imaginary to call the attention of the spectator, to tackle directly issues of sexual repression (Salanova, 2012, p.9), which I understand more as calling attention to sexual possibilities instead of repression.

Besides audiovisuals, performances and writings through which *Post-porn, punk, transcultural and transfeminism* expresses itself, it is also characterized by its playfulness and reflexivity as well as certain practices, parties and marginal spaces, most notably occupied spaces (Preciado, 2007, Llopis, 2010). “The aim of these feminist projects is not to liberate women or legal equality but to uncover the political devices that produce difference of class, race, gender and sexuality towards the invention of an artistic and political platform of a common future” (Preciado, 2007, p.3). Hence, Post-Pornography uses different strategies of critique and intervention of representation. It is “another way of producing pleasure through the gaze, but also a new definition of public and private spaces and a new mode of inhabiting the city” (Preciado, p.47). In more concrete terms it is the “becoming a subject” (*devenir sujeto*) of those bodies and subjectivities that were presented as the abject of pornographic representation, such as women, sexual minorities, non-white bodies, transsexuals, intersexual and transgender, deformed and different abled bodies. Obviously these bodies are not marginal but central to the dominant pornographic representation, though always presented through a heterosexual masculine gaze. Hence, Post-Pornography is the inversion of a pornographic apparatus, claiming other representations and other

pleasures (Preciado, 2010 as quoted in Salanova p.35).

Stüttgen is more detailed about pleasure, its production and visibility. Central to him is also the element of rupture. According to him “one could grasp post-pornographic image categories in relation to classical pornographic images that confront the heterosexually identified narrative patterns of the sexual act with other sex events and plunge them into a state of crisis” (Stüttgen, 2007, p.282). He compares this state of crisis to what happened to uninterrupted narration of Hollywood cinema, with the emergence of the New Wave Cinema of post-war Europe marked by “the sudden entry of exterior social conditions”. A post-pornographic regime of sexual representation is performatively excessive. In spite of this excessiveness, it is marked by the notion of camp, “a vulnerable gesture situated between implicit, critical, denaturalizing performance and glamorous affirmation” (Stüttgen, 2007, p.277), which nonetheless can have an effect on reality. For Stüttgen (2007) Post-Pornography is a strategy to create a gender ambivalent representation in order to “complicate normative representation patterns in a critical way” (p.279). Queer performance opens up for new forms of sexual subjectivity, not to uncover the construction of heterosexual gender position, but to analyze and investigate alternative forms of sexual subjectivity. Post-Pornographic images are “affective singularities of lustful, image politics that smuggle themselves into the interface of theory and practice” (Stüttgen, 2007, p.279).

In search of a definition, Llopis’ whole book deals with mapping out the ground on which the movement moves and from where it nurtures itself. What becomes obvious is that besides the very theoretical definitions of Stüttgen and Preciado, there is no unified strategy or position of Post-Pornography (Llopis 2010, Stüttgen 2007). Central to all the theorists and artists is sexuality as the central theme anchored in practice. Like Linda Williams’ (1989) take on hard-core pornography it could be said that Post-Pornography is one form, actually multiple forms joint together under one term, of “knowledge-pleasure” of sexuality.

Besides, Salanova (2012) argues that Post-Pornography is an artistic movement. She depicts

parallels/connections to performance art of the 60s, that was appreciated by many artists, in particular women, for its political potential, and conceptual art, as well as the use of the (female) body and obscenity as a politically subversive element, or the use of masochism of *Viennese Actionism*. According to her, art tends to convert presentations of realism/reality, as which most post-pornographic productions with their very subjective and experiential character could be counted, into metaphors or a meta-language to escape the discomfort of this realism/ reality. Thus, the boundaries between reality and fiction, life and actuation are moldable, and the mere act of presentation can be interpreted as a reflection of an artist. I agree with Salanova that the difficulty with Post-Pornography eventually lies in its visual impact, which does not allow for a gradual (metaphorical) approximation and which can also lead to rejection, misrecognizing it as trash, while it is art in her eyes (Salanova 2012, p.19), or simply causing a feeling of nausea and disorientation rather than beauty and pleasure. Due to her generous definition of art as a metaphorical process, Post-Pornography can be defined as art, though it does not seem the primary interest of most of the artists, to produce a metaphor or a bourgeois commodity. Nevertheless, the artists do not deny that they depend upon art, space wise as well as in terms of financial survival.

Llopis and Torres are both based in Barcelona. Most Post-Porn performances pass the city, even Sprinkle hold her Post-Porn wedding there in summer 2011. Salanova (2012, p.35) calls it a “neuralgic” point of Post-Pornography in Spain. Certainly, it is a city with a lot of public art and a vibrant artistic and political scene from which the movement lives. Though Berlin and Rome are also interesting locations of post-pornographic cultures and politics, which might indicate a certain subcultural status that is only possible to spring in the diversity of big cities, a fact that is not further explored in the frame of this paper for lack of space.

After having established the background of Post-Pornography, it is the moment to turn to the concrete expressions and to the works of Torres and Llopis. In continuation I outline Torres concept of *Pornterrorism* and one of her exemplary performances I attended in 2011. Subsequently, I turn to one of

the works Llopis finds most characteristic of her work and to one of her more recent performances, which is most thought provoking in my eyes, for thinking about how sexuality comes to matter. The examples and contents are chosen based on the conducted interviews made in April 24, 2012 in Barcelona with Diana J. Torres (1:14:24) and in April 21, 2012 in Valencia with Maria Llopis (57:47).

### 3.5 The Matter of Sexuality: Interview analysis

#### 3.5.1 Diana J. Torres and Pornterrorism

Diana J. Torres, born 1981 in Madrid, Spanish philologist and performance artist, developed in 2006 the concept of Pornterrorism (in Spanish *pornoterrorismo*), under which her work has been presented since then. As the word combination shows, her project is about pornography, thus explicit sex, and terrorism. The latter she chose because of the onomatopoeia trrrr, the phonetic representation of tremble, which represents the intention to shake (up). What she wants to shake up are conventional representations of sexuality and pleasure and to uncover non normative/ “monster” bodies and pleasures with the intention to “oblige” the audience to become emotionally implicated, either by positioning themselves politically, and/or through an interaction of a sexual kind, being aroused or revolted (Salanova, 2012, p.51). In 2011, she published her first book entitled *Pornoterrorismo* that contains a detailed life history and account of her work and thoughts. To give more body to the concept, the following paragraph describes a performance of Torres. It is based on a performance I attended in a club (Ventura) in Madrid in February 2011.

##### 3.5.1.1 Performance

The stage was a free space in the middle of the club. She lied naked on a chaise longue while another naked male-bodied person filmed her body with an infrared light, which got projected on the wall behind them. As a spectator it was impossible to see at which parts of her body he pointed. Due to



the extreme close up only moving skin was visible, as well as the rhythm of her breath. She started to masturbate, her breath got faster, and admit I lost the attention and stopped looking at the camera to only focus on her. A short while after, she ejaculated. She asked for a condom, put it over the microphone and introduced it into her vagina, but instead of playing with the microphone she started to play with her body, using her lower abdomen as a drum. She invited someone from the audience to join her and together they started to play a folk song, which the rest of the audience joined, by clapping the beat with them. The atmosphere changed from erotic/sexual to joyful/happy. After a while *Pornoterrorismo* got up and took out the microphone, thanked the audience and saying that it was enough now and left the stage.

To create a Pornterroristic attack, she usually also projects gore images and videos, like slaughter, war scenes, mutilation, torture, horror movies, pornography and anything alike, while she reads poetry while being beaten/ drummed on, which is painful, as she clarified it in the interview. Yet she additionally enhances the pain through BDSM<sup>15</sup> practices like putting needles in her face or nipples, which cause bleeding, again enhanced through the use of animal blood. The practices she uses reach from vaginal fisting, female ejaculation, BDSM practices to other sexual practices she likes and considers worth gaining visibility and practicing, as they can be sources of pleasure. Additionally she uses her poetry to communicate, to add words, “to express all that the body cannot express in a few minutes” (Torres, 2012). Part of her activism also consists in workshops about the practices she uses, particularly fisting and female ejaculation.

As already mentioned Torres’ book gives a very detailed account of her work as a pornterrorist. In the interview she confirms that it was a lot of work to write the book and that it is very representative of her thoughts and of her work. Nevertheless, she is most fond of a performance she recently developed for a theater in Barcelona, where she is fully wrapped in plaster cast, on which each spectator is asked to write the worst insult s/he was ever called. By this it turns into a “trauma-dress” and is a metaphor for all

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<sup>15</sup> Bondage&Discipline Domination&Submission Sadism&Masochism

the pain Torres felt with, in and due to her body, of which she gets rid of by destroying the dress. After having done more or less similar performances during the last six years, where she made use of the different pornterrorist elements in a variety of combinations, this new performance resumes the pain and anger, which she considers her founding inspiration. It is also a proof of the possibility to deal with all this inner brokenness, which can be fit together without the social straight jacket of insults (Torres, 2012).

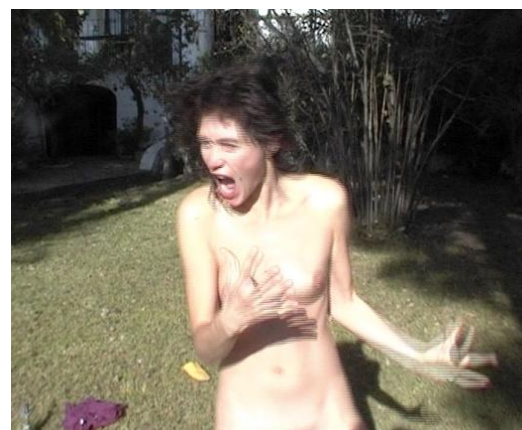


Images retrieved from: <http://www.graell.com/>.

### 3.5.2 Maria Llopis and Post-Pornography

#### 3.5.2.1 *La Bestia*

Maria Llopis, graduated from the academy of arts in Valencia and is a freelance performer, artist, writer and blogger. She still finds one of her early works developed in a post-pornographic realm most representative for her work. *La Bestia* (in English: The Beast), is a short movie, Salanova classifies as video art (2012, p.18), which Llopis produced in 2005 in collaboration with Águeda Bañón. The plot is a woman, represented by Llopis herself, who walks in a shiny dressing gown in a garden. All of a sudden, she rips off her clothes, until being completely naked and starts to grunt, losing saliva in an uncontrolled manner, attacking the camera, accompanied by extraordinary beastly facial gestures. Continuing with the previous she climbs a tree, and the beast that she had seemingly woken up falls asleep. When she wakes up after a short moment, she seems to be again the “lady” that walked in the garden before, obviously disturbed by her nakedness and her location on the tree. She climbs down, collects her scattered clothes, puts them on and walks back to the house in the background. In the video Llopis deals with the contrast between natural and fake, civilized and beastly, the disciplined and the spontaneous, the pretty and ugly, with the intention to reflect on the equally constructed character of stereotypes about disciplined and subversive attitudes. Even though this was one of her first works under a post-pornographic umbrella, seven years later it is still the most telling for her as she told me during the interview.



### 3.5.2.2 *Chatroulette*

Another work the artist feels strongly about is practical manuals she is writing on different issues like spontaneous abortion, alternative maternities or how to live in a matriarchal society. The manuals look very different from her previous work. Indeed her book, written in a diary style, without omitting even the smallest, most intimate details about her life and emotions at that time and her struggle to reach an orgasm by herself, which she also makes topic in a group performance<sup>16</sup> and on her blog ([girlswholikeporno.com](http://girlswholikeporno.com)), seem more obviously post-pornographic, than the manuals. She actually does not mind if her work is considered Post-Pornographic as it is a label that was put on her work from outside. Hence, it is not in her hands to classify her work as such though she agrees to call it Post-Pornography even for her recent work on maternity, “I actually still work on sexuality, and maternity for me is also sexuality and in this sense it is Post-Porn for me as it is part of a reflection on sexualities” (Llopis, 2012, 40:00).

Another recent project of Llopis are performances and videos that involve online platforms like Chatroulette, on which people can meet to have sex. Her first experience with online sex she documents on her blog:

Proudly, I look at my open cunt on the screen of my mac. I’m holding the machine between my legs, firmly, so the webcam films my genitals. On Chatroulette you can chat with strangers with a camera. You keep clicking on “next” until you come across somebody who seduces you and who you feel like lingering with. Your encounters are random, your only option is to click on next, and you rarely get the same partner twice. Mostly you find erect penises, and yes, there are few girls. A pity because it’s great fun. And practical too. You get home late, tired, alone, and you have a world of flesh at your disposal.”

(Llopis, 14.11.2010)

This experience is also inspiration for a short porn movie called “Chatroulette” (Barcelona, 2011□), which is based on this experience. Furthermore she used Chatroulette as a central element in her performance at the latest edition of the Berlin Pornfilm Festival (2011).

<sup>16</sup> The group performance belongs to the work of Sue Lea Chang.

This performance took place in an old cinema in Berlin. A laptop camera was wiggled up towards the audience so that it could be seen on the screen in front of the room. The audience was partly dressed and partly naked, according to one's own desire. First an introductory video by Ariel Efraim Ashbel about Chatroulette, was played, before Llopis entered Chatroulette. The Australian writer with the pseudonym Ms Naughty (2011), who was present at the performance, writes about her experience: "we were presenting a cinema audience and nude women to whoever was lucky enough to click "next". Suddenly, we were all feeling rather thrilled and giggly. It was an excellent jape and we all started waving and yelling at anyone who appeared on screen" (2012, November 11). On her blog Llopis writes that she just had gotten her menstruation the morning of the performance. She wonders about what her body tries to communicate her but realizes that she is in Berlin to work, to perform. She writes about her breakfast and her impressions of the city, before she gets to the descriptive perception of the performance. On the screen there is the image the webcam produces and on another there is the camera of the Chatroulette partner. She positions herself in the third row of the cinema, as it is the spot best illuminated. She is naked. The first encounter is with a girl, who enjoys engaging with the audience. The girl asks for people to kiss and touch until she asks Llopis to have sex. Llopis agrees, gets in front and asks for a volunteer. A guy volunteers and gives her cunnilingus. She describes it as an elegant and delicate cunnilingus. At this point it became hard to attend to all the demands the girl expresses. Llopis has a 'sweet' orgasm. The girls disconnects and the performance continues with Manroulette, similar to Chatroulette but for gay men. There is an interaction with various people from the website. In Llopis eyes not as successful as with the first girl, but fun. The performance ends with a debate on the different ways to have online sex.



All images, La Bestia and Chatroulette, retrieved from: <http://girlswholikeporno.com/>.

Having established a theoretical and “visual” idea, the background is firm to look at the mechanisms the artists use in their work in order to make sexuality come to matter in Post-Pornography and to understand how post-pornographic sexuality comes to matter and have meaning. The four following parts, hard-core rhetoric, shifting visibility, art, after/impact, derive from a visual analysis directed at the disorienting effect of Post-Pornography through transgressing/ shifting boundaries. They are useful as a structure as they group the topics that came during the interviews into thematic fields.

#### 3.5.3.1 Hard-core rhetoric

Fabián Giménez Gatto (2008) offers an interesting formal analysis between “mainstream” pornography and Post-Pornography. He argues that it is the obscene that lays at the core of pornography, not as a moral judgment but as intensified visibility, the visibility of sex, which turns the explicit into a

synonym of truth and “real”. Stephen Ziplo’s *Makers Guide to Pornography* (1977), is referential for the definition of “mainstream” porn, including Gatto’s. It is marked by its hard core rhetoric, comprised of “cum shots”, capturing the ejaculation, “medical shots”, the genitals filmed as for medical purposes/ looking at the genitals with a clinical gaze and “meat shots”, which stands for a fragmented and phallic view of the body, the body without a face, objectified, reduced to penetration (anal, vaginal, oral). The intention of these techniques is to show the “real” by eliminating any kind of (visual) distance. This resembles in my eyes what Amelia Jones (1997) calls “a desire for immediacy”, a “modernist dream” which has also influenced performance art (p.17) and the search for the real as a kind of “sexual truth”.

I understand this desire for immediacy and the real, as an orientation towards proximity, which I consider comparable to visibility, privacy as well as intimacy, as earlier discussed. Moreover, they are all constituent of sexuality and at the same time defined by it, remembering Berlant and Warner (1998). Llopis produces porn videos that follow such a hard-core rhetoric, based on visibility, in her case visible intimacy, while Torres applies it more in the sense as defined for mainstream pornography. However, both use “sex in close ups” as Llopis calls it. An interesting comment as a close up is exactly a “zooming in” and in a performance, without audiovisual technology, the background and surrounding of the performance have a similar effect as zooming in, which brings us back precisely to what Ahmed carved out as constituent for moments of disorientation.

In terms of privacy/intimacy and visibility/exposure defined through sexuality, both artists show no reserve or modesty when dealing with a real or fictional/imaginary audience. Llopis for instance, after talking about the influence of her schizophrenic mother, and how she talked to her about conceiving her, which Llopis elsewhere calls rape (as her biological father was a catholic priest who “fucked” her mother under violent conditions), and a four years of abusive relationship with an older guy, she goes smoothly over to saying:

With 20 I started to feel better, I was already in Valencia [where she studied]- and Cuba. I spent one month in Cuba. Already the arrival in Cuba - one night I was in a place where I was forced into having sexual relations, while I did not want to have sex. This is rape, it's the story "Rape in Havana" you can find on my blog. It is rape, but not a traumatic rape with a knife in a place I don't know where, hurting you, it was without damage/hurt, but in Cuba my first sexual relations - I got off for the first time with a woman, fisting, trios, a lot of sexual openness, Cuba changed me a lot. After that I dedicated myself more to the occupy movement, occupying houses in Germany, with the extreme left, everything very political.

(Llopis, 2012, 7:40)

This quote shows various interesting connections. On the one hand, rape is mentioned as a sexual experience, a special one indeed, that spearheads a list of other sexual experiences/practices, like lesbian sex, fisting, and threesomes. Just the sentence itself has a hard-core rhetoric. Remarkable also is the story she wrote about the rape, as she is very explicit about what happened and how she reached an orgasm in this situation. This openness about her experience, publishing it as well as sharing it during the interview, eradicates a distance one is supposed to keep, probably not during an interview on Post-Pornography though. However, the interview as well as the blog is knowingly directed to a wider anonymous audience. Besides crossing this boundary of public and private/intimate, her explanation about the pleasure one can feel during a rape, or how rape phantasies are common tropes in masturbation, but censored, impossible to voice, even forbidden to have<sup>17</sup>, shows what a disorienting effect rape seems to have, and how there is another boundary kept in place that one is not deemed to cross.

Another aspect the quote shows is how sexual practice also goes seamlessly in line with her dedication for political leftist views and the idea behind occupying spaces. She does not seem to make a difference between the two, the sexual belongs to the political and the political belongs to the sexual, both moments she identifies as crucial, and meaningful to her self-development, work and understanding of Post-Pornography. The link between politics and sexuality resembles what queer theory builds on in its

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<sup>17</sup> This is well documented in the documentary: *Too much Pussy* 2010.



theory building.<sup>18</sup> Llopis broaches the concept of intimacy through emotional nudity and extreme openness, but also in a very tangible way through all her work that includes an online element, like Chatroulette. Yet prior to a deeper reflection on this issue, I want to consider Torres hard-core rhetoric,

People say that I am tender even if I am ejaculating, putting needles or bleeding, they say you do it in a tender way and that way is important for me because it is a way to destruct the border between the audience and me. I don't like that border, it is the reason why I hate theatre for example.

(Torres, 2012, 40:12)

Here we have the ejaculation, the ultimate proof of “real” sex and pleasure, the classical cum-shot or money shot of porn movies, gets translated into a live performance. The technical tool of zooming in on the genitals in this moment might not be there, though it is even more real and more proximate as the spectator is even present in the exact moment of the ejaculation, a proximity that is difficult to imitate in a movie. Nonetheless, also Torres enumerates the sexual practices she does in a rather casual way, not giving too much importance to them as such. They retrieve their meaning in relation to tenderness, being expressions of tenderness. It is curious for me that she uses tenderness to describe her performances, most people I have talked to considering them as something between shocking and disgusting. Admittedly, it is similar to any other invisible or marginal practices, like BDSM, which is difficult to recognize for people who are not familiar with the rules and practices, or even for anyone who is not part of the particular situation.<sup>19</sup>

According to Gatto, the tropes of post-pornographic rhetoric are “the appearance of the scene...the marginal, the edge of the invisible of the representation of porn, the backstage, the set, the crew” (Gatto. 2008, p.101). A performance necessarily has such rhetoric as the crew and the set are visible to the spectator. Besides including live sex, emotions or the life history that fosters certain desires over others, the edge of the invisible of the representation of porn is bent, if not crossed. The changing

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<sup>18</sup> See section Queer Theory.

<sup>19</sup> Recommendable and in-depth references on SM and BDSM practices are Gayle Rubin or Margot Weiss.

visibility brings Gatto to ponder about whether Post-Pornography becomes the new eroticism, as it is opening up new lines of visibility through deconstructing the mainstream pornographic tools. Also Preciado's political-philosophical analysis of Post-Pornography emphasizes the trading of symbols and artifacts as a post-pornographic tool. She argue that it helps to dismantle political devices that produce difference, or which can also have normalizing intentions and effects but the intention is never to establish new lines of visibility, or to attempt to become a "new" eroticism. Certainly, there is no escape from tools that can be considered in one or another way conventional, or at least references to pornography, when dealing with sexuality in an explicit way. This is especially the case in Post-Pornography, which is positioned as an answer to bad pornography, following Sprinkle's quote about "the answer to bad porn is not no porn, but make better porn", which is also closely linked to the DIY style.<sup>20</sup> Though, I agree with Preciado that eroticism is at most an unintended byproduct some spectators perceive.

Gatto developed his concept of Post-Pornography into Para-pornography which refers to everything around the erotic scenery, e.g. when the camera is off, as he himself notices that an erotic scene/ eroticism is based on distance, though obscenity implies a dilation of visibility which annuls any distance. The erotic on the other hand works through illusion. Contrarily to eroticism, the obscene is obsessed with the real (see reference p.57 in Salanova, 2012). Thus, it can be said that the obscene is a disorienting proximity; a pornographic device the artist makes use of. Interestingly, the rhythm of the interviews showed that Llopis and Torres do not feel bound to inventing each time a more shocking representation of their sexuality, trying to be even more obscene. Each time I tried to introduce or clarify whether what they said is parallel to a theoretical term like counter-sexuality, intimacy or shame, the conversation became dragging. Both call themselves exhibitionists therefore they love an obscene hard-core rhetoric, showing bodies, genitals and pleasures. Nevertheless, it is not some concepts that drive

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<sup>20</sup> Do-It-Yourself

them but bodily experiences, desires and pleasures.

Llopis' latest project, writing manuals, is as all her other works, inspired "by a series of things" she had experienced/ lived through with her body, about which she wanted to talk (Llopis, 2012, 52:42). Torres also attributes her inspiration to her body, and the polycystic ovary she has, that changes her hormonal balance every month. For Torres this is a privileged and a punishment, because it also made her suffer a lot when she was a teenager. Nevertheless, she calls it "the best thing" she has. "My body makes these strange things, totally disturbing, so I have to learn to deal with a society which doesn't like it." (Torres, 2012, 54:34). The social rejection Torres suffered, the base for the rage, which alongside with love, are her driving forces, and center of her latest performance I just described.

Their recent projects show a clear shift and contrast from the former work of each artist. Each one is still based on a bodily experience and remains obscene in its intimacy, connected to the sexual/sexed body with its genitalia and hormones, though less recognizable as pornographic with its conventional hard-core rhetoric based on proofs of immediate pleasure.

### 3.5.3.2 Shifting visibility

Already in her book Llopis wonders about the limitation of pornography and if there is a possibility to represent emotions in pornography, or if there could be such a thing as "emoporn", where emotions and pornography would come together (Llopis, 2010, p.79). She believes firmly in "emotional nudity as a strong armament" (Llopis 2012, 15:40). Just like pornography serve them emotions also become empowering tools. Another direction, besides emotions, in which visibility can shift, is through technology, such as the Internet,

With the pornographic you masturbate, that's it with pornography, but with Chatroulette you are really fucking with someone. There is no physical contact, but you are with a real person, in real time, you are with this person. I find it a curious way to be with someone...

(Llopis, 2012, 20:30)

In this quote we see how the virtual becomes real, how visibility as seen with the eye becomes tangible, how online sex becomes equal to “real” sex. Laura U. Marks (2002) postulates in her work on haptic vision that “the eyes themselves function like organs of touch” (p.2). She argues there cannot be made a clear cut between haptic and optical visibility, it is rather a matter of degree. Haptic visibility causes an embodied perception of the video as the other body and “to the screen as another skin” for example (p.4). It is the viewer’s response to the images. Phenomenology of cinematic experience demonstrates the interactive character between the viewer and the film, and I think performance and cyberspace can be added to this. According to Marks there is an oscillation between two bodies that “creates an erotic relationship” the “shifting between distance and closeness” (p.13).

If pornography is understood in terms of extreme visibility/obscenity it is hardly haptic according to Marks. “A haptic pornography would invite a very different ways of engaging with the image”; either it would need to back away from the full representation or get so close until it disappears (Marks, 2002, p.16-17). This is exactly how Gatto defined Post-Pornography, and how it seemed applicable to the works of Torres and Llopis. This would mean that Post-Pornography indeed invites for a haptic experience. Nishant Shah describes this through the ‘hypervisualisation’, where cyberspaces are created as cultural artifacts, which is then “unraveling and revealing that which was hitherto unavailable to our notion of our sense of the self and the spaces we inhabit” (Shah, 2007, p.37). Hence Post-Pornography is less a struggle for finding new tropes of the un-shown but about the construction of (a critical) sexual subjectivity through sense.

The performance with Chatroulette, also deals with collective sex. There is a double audience, positioning ourselves as an audience in terms of pornography, ...situate ourselves as an active audience, or as exposed and at the mercy of the other [connected to Chatroulette] ...

(Llopis, 2012, 22:30)

Collective sex deals more with an audience that exposes itself to the demand/wish of what they are asked for on the Internet, rather than having sex... you give up some of your will, when the usual intimacy of Chatroulette, you’re alone on the Internet at home

for some sex, is left behind/given up, and the aspect of sharing this experience with/in a group ... that the people also have a sexual experience, when sex starts to happen among the people ... [does this mean that there is a collective intimacy constructed?] yes exactly, it can be called collective intimacy.

(Llopis, 2012, 23:30)

Here a critical and collective sexual subjectivity is constructed, which could also be called a collective intimacy as Llopis confirms. As the quote shows collective sex, as she calls it, is more about the audience itself, rather than the implication of the Internet, or another Internet user. At the same time this collective intimacy is dependent on the distant and at the same time close other, at whose mercy the audience leaves itself and in relation to whom this collective intimacy is constructed.

Marks (2002) argues "haptic images encourage a bodily relation to the screen itself" before the narrative takes over. "Desire in such a space operates differently than in optical visibility, since it is not limited to the operation of identification"(p.17). The shift from an individual intimacy/sex to a group intimacy/collective sex, is an exploration of the decoupling between desire and identification, which has been theoretically discussed in Dean's work on impersonality of desire, as presented in the previous chapter. The impersonality of desire is also at the core of queer political goals that are directed towards dissolving fixed gender representations, multiple identifications, rather than categorizing or desidentification (Stüttgen, 2007; Muñoz 1997). At the same time, it also underlines the carnal aspect and centrality of the physical body and its reactions to stimulation, which theoretical realms often ignore.

Haptic cinema is an object to interact, "rather than an illusion into which we enter" (Marks 2002,p.18). Therefore, it calls on different ways of knowing, such as embodied intelligence and ways of interacting with one another. Marks concludes that "[w]hat is erotic about haptic visibility, then, may be described as respect of otherness, and concomitant loss of self in the presence of the other" (p.20). The concomitant loss of self in the presence of the other or the others might be a poetic way for what Llopis intended to say with giving up one's will and being as the audience at the mercy of the other. If this were so, collective sex, as being of haptic visual nature, would imply eroticism, which was earlier defined as

working through distance and illusion, opposed to disorientation. In this case, though, distance is not the opposite of proximity, but the loss, the appearance of otherness through the loss of self, the becoming object, each of which is as disorienting as proximity or touch (direct and physical or purely visual).

### 3.5.3.3 Art

Besides proximity and distance, there is also the oppositional orientation between pornography and performance art, which is troubled by the work of Torres and Llopis. Linda Williams (1993) argues in her analysis of Annie Sprinkle's pornography and performance art that there is no gain in establishing a clear cut or dividing line between one and the other. Rather, Sprinkle's "myriad sexual performances tend to blur the boundaries between the two" (p.117), which challenges the hierarchical binary of art and pornography as well as artist and whore (Williams 1989,1993, Preciado 2008, Paasonen 2010).

The opposition between pornography and performance art is also at stake in Llopis online performance on Chatroulette. Here, producer-consumer and artist-spectator become indifferent. Susanna Paasonen (2010) explores the phenomenon of netporn, which is characterized by user-generated content. She criticizes the existing dualistic framework to conceptualize pornography, as for example amateur/professional, alternative/mainstream and independent/commercial. Her argument is that pornography needs to be rethought, this time not as a film genre as Williams did but as a popular media genre since "its boundaries have become stretched- and perhaps even redrawn- with the introduction of digital media tools" (p.1298).

Here a difference is made between porn on the net, which is a display of the same old pornographic images the media provided in forms of videos, pictures and netporn (Paasonen 2010, Shah 2007). According to Nishant Shah (2007) netporn is a category of pornography (p.34). What distinguishes netporn is the fact that it is being structured within cyberspaces. Compared to the technology of Internet, cyberspace is the creation of a space through the abstraction of graphic representation of data into the human system. She uses William Gibson's idea of 'consensual hallucination' to emphasize the deliberate

act of creation of the space and of the self, which are "necessarily inter-active and agential" (p.31). Shah stresses the fact of not losing sight of the double importance of cyberspace as a structuring element as well as for the meanings it produces.

Following Shah's definition of netporn as 'disembodied' pornography, as 'constituted within interaction' it also escapes the commodity logic, which often characterizes pornography as a genre (Paasonen, 2010, p.1302; Shah, 2007, p.35). Furthermore, as Paasonen shows, the two spheres cannot be kept separate as alternative pornographies, as netporn "fed back to the imageries of commercial pornography (porn on the net) which they apparently subvert" (p.1301). She concludes that "rather than exploitative consumers, users are seen to hook into this economy of desire as the audience desired by the performers and producers" (p.1308). In Paasonen's eyes pornographic expressions are acts that create value, even if they are created in a mutual interaction like netporn. Hence, she considers it as a labor of love. With amateur porn having gained a big share of mainstream pornography, it is the free labor aspect that further complicates an understanding of mainstream commercial porn, with regard to increasing use of sites like Chatroulette for sex. Here the labor of love gets a double meaning, just like art and pornography are tools for Llopis and Torres in order to do the real "work", reflecting on, doing sexuality, emotion and loving.<sup>21</sup>

Torres takes horror and gore movies as an inspiration for her performances of whom she only considers the latest ones with the plaster cast/trauma-dress "more arty", even though also her previous work shows, as Salanova (2012) points out, many parallels to performance art. For Torres:

Art is a tool and must be understood ... I started to put the poetry inside the performance to express with words all the things that the body cannot express in a few minutes in front of people you don't know. ... Fucking or having sex with another person you can express a lot of things - people can be so clear when you are having sex with them, but not in a performance. But they come to your performance to see something related to art.

(Torres, 2012, 19:20)

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<sup>21</sup> See section Love and Sexual aim.

This quote shows that art has only a functional meaning for Torres, which is communication, or clarity and not monetary value. Though, she does not consider solely the visual, the body on stage, as sufficient in terms of clarity, wherefore she adds poetry, which in turn is also considered as art. Though besides all her efforts to transmit a clear message she admits that “there are people that can receive that love and there are people who get blocked, that cannot feel that part of me, my tenderness” (Torres, 2012, 40:04). Love/tenderness (in Spanish *cariño*) becomes the structuring element or the medium through which she wants to communicate. It also important for the meaning it produces. In a quote mentioned earlier on, Torres talks about the boundary between audience and performer, and the sexual excitement, desire and love the audience gives to her, being an exhibitionist. Also here love or desire seem to be the all structuring element and meaning, just as Merleau-Ponty had considered love or desire as central functions to understand how things come into being/existence for us. Nevertheless, despite the poetry or the *cariño* she puts, her work shifts between horror and tenderness, but touching through either one.

Torres’ work becomes a laborer of love, in its various senses of sex and emotion. The term, as used by Paasonen when hinting at the labor aspect of amateur pornography, relates sexuality with performance art and money is undeniably also one of Torres big issues. In her book she writes that her true dedication and ability lies in sex. However, the labor of love is often nonreciprocal, in the sense of creating/allowing livable conditions. While art lives form the artists, most artists cannot live form art, and even less if this art is sexuality (Torres, 2012). The only discourse in which it is allowed to talk about money and the labor of love is prostitution and conventional pornography, the latter valued as worthless trash rather than art as already outlines at various points. However, Torres’ post-pornographic labor as a prostitute for lesbian and non-normative sexualities, called *perrashorizontales*/ horizontal bitches remains until now unsuccessful due to missing clients as “lesbians do not fuck [for money], they only make love”, thus not recognizing prostitution in its possibility as a labor of love in its double meaning.



### 3.5.3.4 After/Impact

While the former was indicative for moments of disorientation caused by Post-Pornography, this part deals with disorientation as an extended moment, which is marked by the fact where that “what retreats does not return, and something does not approach to take its place” (Ahmed, 2007, p.166). This time however the emphasis lies not on perspectives of sexuality that caused the slipping away, or loss of an initial understanding, as in the previous chapter, but the disorienting moment after watching a post-pornographic performance or video.

The same way silence belongs to a sound to clink, the moment after the presentation forms part of the artifact. Constance Penley (2006) analyzes the power and pornographic/sexual quality of stage films and bawdy songs. She stresses the importance of ribald humor. According to her, humor can also be part of a parody, that keeps the challenge of ‘norm’ and ‘original’ vivid, “that are at issue in a postmodern world of sexual identities and representation” (Williams, 1993, p.128). This is also vital to Llopis’ and Torres’ the interest. Penley (2006) argues that humor does not kill the pornographic side but makes the stage films “often much wilder sexually than porn films”(p.7). Any cultural and film production, may it be theater or pornography cannot exist without its audience. For stage films the audience is particularly important as they count on “the back talk and verbal display” they spark, which forms “an integral part of the film experience” (Penley, 2006,p.8).

In his cartography of post-porn politics Stüttgen (2007) called it rupture; the moment, which forces the viewer/consumer/audience to talk back, to reconstruct (sexual-) desire under one’s own parameters. Indeed, contents and types of reaction of stage films and post-porn performances/ videos may differ from each other, not least due to the historical moment and situation in which they are produced. Nevertheless, this backtalk, rupture, confusion, anger and excitement sparked by the piece, belongs in both cases to the performance as well as to the film experience.

Penley (2006) takes side for stage films, in opposition to Williams, arguing that the lack of

narrative and “‘primitive’ display of genitals and sexual activities” are not as misogynistic, if their ‘popular joke structures’ are considered over the weak film narrative (p.9). The narrative closure might not even be desirable, as it is the celebration of sex itself “without channeling it into the only socially acceptable form of sexual expression” (p.10). In this respect this openness leaves space for rupture, for the expected to retreat without coming back or being replaced by another point of orientation. It creates a new slant Ahmed calls for with a queer commitment.

More particular of Post-Pornography is the moment after the performance/video/live intervention, when the act has dissolved into the invisible, when the optic visibility has dissolved. This moment could also be seen as a haptic moment, of embodiment of the contact with the act, having experienced the act through the body. The emptiness after the performance, the (after) end moment, could also symbolize a non-closure. The rupture, shock, confusion or pleasure caused by the “raw sex”, i.e. the artists’ presentation of a reflection on sexuality, could as well be seen similar to the non-closure of stage films, as a post-pornographic strength. It is not a weakness caused through the missing of familiar elements of a classical pornographic movie or a conventional artwork, but an opening up to possibilities. The artists’ orientation towards possibility can also be seen in the following quotes:

Lately I feel really good about writing practical guides, practical guides to survive in this terrible world (Llopis laughs) and instead of being against this and against that, I will encounter something and at least write a guide to see what we could do, because something we will do for sure.

(Llopis, 2012, 38:25)

Orgasm is the most powerful energy we have in our body, and we don’t need anybody to have it. It empowers me a lot, because it makes me think that life may be something beautiful, something to fight for. It is important because of that. It makes me feel happy, and if I can share it with another person or a group it is like a way of connection really strong...you experience orgasm in your body, and then you can also make really nice networks of lovers.

(Torres, 2012, 1:10:00)

Torres and Llopis do not express any concrete ideas. It is rather the opening up of possibilities, the generation and sharing of knowledge that on the one hand serves as a disorienting device on various

levels, as well as to inhabit new slants, either through guides or through the creation of networks. The latter serves in Torres' eyes mainly for sharing knowledge and support. Llopis also considers the potential of Post-Pornography to help living a life less dull minded.

In any case sexuality remains the central issue from which, through which, and about which they talk. However, unlike commercial and mainstream pornography, different sexual practices, desires and experiences are used or become tools for expressing anger and love. As crucial factors emerge the proximity of the artists in their emotional and affective closeness. It is precisely this, which seems to be confusing as well as disorienting. The combination of emotion and pornography, Llopis had posed as a question in her book, seems to turn into a double obscenity the respective work of Torres and Llopis seem to prove, which is at the same time meaning giving. According to Merlau-Ponty's phenomenological understanding this is not least, because it is a mediation of their existence inextricably linked with their sexuality, and vice versa the mediation of their sexuality entangled with their existence. If we take this proximity of the artists' existence as obscenity, in the sense of extreme visibility, it is still or even more so pornographic in terms of a hard-core rhetoric and disorienting in queer phenomenological terms.

It can be said that sexuality comes to matter through emotions and affects, which are mediated through pornographic expressions. Both artists identify key moments that influence their work, from which their reflections spring. Generally they are linked to their body and bodily existences. Either it is the polycystic ovary and the difficulty of the hormonal effects on her body for Torres, or the schizophrenic mother, and the theme of rape, climaxing during rape, being raped, and having raped, in the case of Llopis.<sup>22</sup> The search for possibilities and aspects of sexuality blend into a wider interest for knowledge pleasure production, such as through maternity or pregnancy or workshops and talks about female ejaculation, related to the Skene gland.

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<sup>22</sup> The work in which she deals with raping someone and the possibility of raping are *El Belga* and *Raping Tim*, both accessible on her blog.

A non-normative body, gender ambiguity in times of transphobia, as well as being a (double-) rape “victim”, are often sources of stigma and shame. Interestingly, both artists emphasized that they are not ashamed of anything. The examples they make in relation to shame are when waiting alone, talking to little kids or talking in front of an audience, however not in terms of their sexuality and body. Though it could be argued that they have simply reworked stigma into a certain pride, presenting with pride the individual bodily and personal differences, fighting for a place for the non-normative. Sedgwick (2003) considers that the forms taken by shame “are available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, reconfiguration, *transfiguration*, affective and symbolic loading and deformation” but she also points out that they are “perhaps all too potent for the work of purgation and deontological closure” (p.63). Even though their work might be of this character, at no point it is purgation, in the sense of purifying. In Llopis’ examination of rape, where she herself appears as a rapist, shows that she is not arguing for innocence but simply for a space to talk about it. In this sense, the duality of “getting rid of individual our group shame, or undoing it” (Sedgwick, 2003, p.62), does not apply. Nevertheless, Sedgwick’s argument that “one *is something* in experiencing shame” is interesting for looking at Post-Pornography. What Sedgwick means is that shame is “the place where the *question* of identity arises most originally”, but it is also a place of relationally, deriving from and aiming toward sociability, if shame is understood as “an inability to effectively arouse the other person’s positive reaction to one’s communications” (Sedgwick, 2003, p.37). In seeing something that is eventually not normal, like a homeless man that would walk into the lecture room, Sedgwick’s example, or the pain or pleasure someone else is experiencing in a situation that is horrifying for oneself, show how “shame is both peculiarly contagious and peculiar individuating” (p.36). It is sociable as it touches us to see it, we can feel it and we can feel or connect to the feeling of the other, as we also know it. On the other hand one feels utterly alone when being ashamed, with the head down, hoping that nobody is watching.

Even though Torres and Llopis cannot relate to Sedgwick’s concept of shame, their work, where

their personality is a record of the highly individual history of the particular person, which for other people with a similar history is indeed shameful, could be seen as expressions where "the fleeting emotion of shame has instituted far more durable, structural changes in one's relational and interpretative strategies toward both self and others" (Sedgwick, 2003, p.62). Although the artists do not talk about shame they recognize the emotions they have, rage and love, as relational and interpretative strategies towards both self and others.

As long as certain bodies and sexualities are stigmatized, shame, anger and love will remain a powerful axis around which meaning will spin. Sedgwick suggests considering shame and its transformations as habitual. Hence Sedgwick counts affect as central to the existence of sexuality, which is nothing to overcome, but just something to be considered, as being powerful in its effect, both on the individual as on others.

## Conclusion

The theoretical approach to sexuality proved to be disorienting, through its singling out of certain aspects that questions previous assumptions and certainties, losing sight of carnal aspects, or of critiqued for being too embodied or medicalised, depending on the perspective from where the critique is uttered. However, each of the concepts presented adds to a different/new pattern to grasp sexuality. In their direct connection to Post-Pornography and particularly the artists' work, which exemplify the mobility of desire, the negotiation and power of intimacy, public/ private and obscenity, through technology, visibility and countersexual practices, and the use of emotion, the disorientation of sexuality as a practice gets apparent.

Though, even if disorientation is often felt as nauseousness Ahmed considered the potential of disorientation in its power to shift horizon and background, which creates a new slant, a different pattern, a possibility to extend into space in a queer way, alternative to following a straight line. In the text from which the opening quote was taken the author calls for openness towards the future and the opening up for new possibilities or new slants to be lived as Ahmed would say. Grosz (2010) develops a concept, which she calls bare life, where she conceives freedom as "the condition of, or capacity for, action in life", contrary to a negative concept of freedom *from*, "as the elimination of constraints" (p.140). She draws on Henri Bergson, who argues that general moments of action, cannot be separated into cause(s) and effect(s), but are characterized by being physical states which are "(a) ... always qualitative, ...(b) function not through distinction, opposition, categories, or identities but through "fusion and interpenetration," ...and (c) ... emerge or can be understood only in duration rather than through the conventional model of spatialization" (Bergson, as cited in Grosz, p.145). This description resembles Merleau-Ponty's concept of pure depth, and affective orientation, which can exactly cause disorientation and the shift of horizon towards the unknown, or indeterminacy, a condition for life in his eyes and the

condition of freedom according to Bergson, but in any case a condition to act. Grosz builds on this definition of action for her argument that “[f]reedom is not a transcendent quality inherent in subjects but is immanent in the relations that the living has with the material world, ... to a large extent structured by the ability to harness and utilize matter for one’s own purpose and interest”, which locates the capacity to act outside of the subject. “Freedom is thus not primarily a capacity of mind but of body: it is linked to the body’s capacity for movement, and thus its multiple possibilities of action. ” (Grosz, 2010, p.152).

This turns the question of being straight or queer into a question of being. The question of orientation and the possibility to extend into space, of a horizon and background that support certain actions over others as Ahmed phrases it. To locate the possibility of action in the relation with the material world also allows for an impersonal desire outside of the ego. Grosz (2010) considers that it is “the enactment of a freedom that can refuse to constrain sexuality and sexual partners to any given function, purpose, or activity and that makes sexuality an open invention even as it carries the burden of biological, cultural, and individual construction” (p.153). The artists’ work underlines this *plaidoyer* for the potency, impact, importance, power, and the future in doing sex, offering diverse examples of how sexuality comes to matter and takes shape through disorientation and disorients at the same time, caused by the challenging or crossing of a boundary, be it art/pornography, intimacy/obscenity, anger/love, disgust/arousal, public/personal, conceptual/carnal, cyberspace/live performance.

It can be said that Torres’ performances entail like Sprinkle’s work “an ever-widening range of sexual acts, or “perversions,” which broaden the understanding of sexual performance and the range of sexual objects conventionally not regarded as acceptable objects of desire” (Williams 1993, p.122). In this sense it is not of interest if it is urine or ejaculate, real or a performance because “there is never an either/or but always a this/end” (Williams 1993, p.130), it is art and pornography, haptic and visual, indefinable and clear, real and imitated, intimate and exposed. Torres’ performances show the intertwining between her body and the material world through rage, love and tenderness, which makes

them turn into a freedom that gets immanent in the relations between the living and the material world, as Grosz defined it.

The condition for action in life for Llopis are emotions, and affective orientation that is caused by the intersection between her body with her surrounding, the world she lives in. Through the use of Chatroulette, assumptions about space, time and touch are fused and the resulting concept of collective sexuality/intimacy, point to a certain indeterminacy that signifies the exercise of freedom in relation to the material world and objects at hand.

Both artists explicitly uses the tool of obscenity and pleasure, to create a slant that enables them to have a life worth living, as exhibitionists, people considered to live non-normative sexualities. Therefore, Post-Pornography is not an invention of something new but an exploration of what is already there in the relation between their bodily and emotional existence, their sexuality and the world. The prefix "post-", is therefore not a question of what will become pornography once its tools are disclosed and what will be the truth of sex. On the contrary, Post-Pornography offers a vision of sexuality, where the post-pornographic artifact is the artistic creation of the performer's sexuality, which in itself is the starting point, inspiration, invite for action and opening up of possibilities that draws the spectator into the spectator's own (artistic) creation of sexual subjectivity. The outlined concepts and mechanisms are just some of the theoretical tools that explain the transgressive and transformative potential Post-Pornography carries to blur the boundaries and to cause moments of sexual disorientation as well as being supportive of enjoying this disorientation with pleasure. Disorientation and Post-Pornography provide a perspective and framework that help to approach sexuality and open up an exploratory field for activities and knowledge-pleasure-production. It is the embodiment of transgressive sexuality, in the sense of boarder crossing, that are presented in an obscene way, that can seem far removed from academic discourse, which however proves to matter according to Grosz's call for opening up activities to new interests, perspectives, and frameworks hitherto not adequately explored or invented, which



however can provide the possibility/ inspiration/ ground/ horizon to act differently, to “enable women [and all other queers] to partake in the creation of a future unlike the present” (Grosz, 2010, p.154).

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