Frigid transgressions: Unveiling the queer potentialities of asexuality

By

Hilal Kasikci

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Supervisor: Hyaesin Yoon

Second reader: Hadley Renkin

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Abstract

This thesis scrutinizes the possibility of asexuality to emerge as a novel locus in queer epistemologies and becomings, as well as a locus of rupture in the system of compulsory sexuality that is embedded in capitalist circuits. In order to construe both the material and cultural mechanisms underlying the process of construction of sexual imperative that has rendered asexuality unintelligible and unthinkable, and in an attempt to unearth the transgressive potentialities asexuality carries, I situate my research into the uneasy intersection between Marxian critique and feminist/queer theories.

I begin with providing an account of the relationship between capitalism and sexuality to unveil the materialist facet governing the constitution of the regime of sexual normativity. The contemporary mode of production, in my conceptualization, governs the performative process of sexual subjectivation through which sexuality has been normalized and rendered compulsory. Asexuality, therefore, emerged both as a product of and a challenge to the normative sexual discourses embedded in capitalism. In this vein, I then proceed to discuss the deconstructive potentialities residing in asexuality, suggesting that asexuality could be read as a queer locus of disidentification with the dominant interpellations of pervasive discourses of sexual normativity, on the way to achieve delinking of sexuality from subjectivity. Problematizing the existing esentialist conceptualizations of asexuality as an identitiy category based on lack of sexuality, I offer new readings of asexuality as a disidentificatory locus, framing it as a non-identiterian and non-belonging site that exists solely in and through its potentiality beyond the paradigm of liberal-humanist discourses.

The disidentificatory potential that asexuality carries could be realized in its promise to be a rallying ground for achieving new non-monogamous configurations of intimate affinities and non-institutionalized ways of being together that challenge the normative regime of sexuality that privilege monogamous intimacies and (hetero)sexual relationalities. In this vein, I contend that by being excluded from ontology, asexuality has emerged as a site not fully saturated by (hetero)normative formulations of intimacy and affinity. Hence, I maintain that it is this exclusion that contradictorily paved the path for deconstructive possibility of asexuality to resignify intimacy and desire, which have been monopolized by sexual vocabulary.

In this picture, asexuality could lead to rethinking sexual normativity and destabilizing the centrality of sexuality in discourses. This project of queering of asexuality, as a consequence,

aims to expand and destabilize the current meanings and conceptualizations of queer that have so far been focused on non-normative sexualities and sexuality in general. Finally, asexuality as a queer locus, embodies a potential to achieve a relaxation of the (sexual) norm and expansion of the matrix of intelligibility regarding (a)sexual performances and subjectivities.

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Contents

1. Introduction

The year 2001 constituted a milestone in the process of gaining recognition and visibility for the asexual community: it marked the birth of AVEN – the Asexual Visibility and Education Network that was formed as the informational resource for asexual or questioning people, as well as scholars interested in research on asexualities. Since its emergence, AVEN has served as a reference point for all major academic research on asexuality that aimed to contribute to the depathologization of asexuality and creation of public acceptance for the asexual community. Consequently, all scholarly research since has taken as its starting point AVEN's definition of asexuality which reads as follows: "An asexual person is a person who does not experience sexual attraction, [and] unlike celibacy, which is a choice, asexuality is a sexual orientation." (*AVEN*, 2016).

So far, academic scholarship on asexuality has, in most cases, uncritically adopted AVEN's essentialist definition that constructs asexuality as another sexual orientation based on a lifelong lack of sexuality. Yet, there were at least two critical feminist approaches to essentialist definitions of asexuality. C. J. DeLuzio Chasin (2013) criticized the essentialist definitions of asexuality on the basis of their establishing of a dichotomy between people, one the one hand, the people who experience a lifelong lack of sexual attraction and therefore those who 'belong' to the asexual community and, on the other hand, those whose experience of lack of sexuality is not lifelong, which in extension renders them a legitimate subject of psychiatric interventions for the hypoactive sexual desire disorder. Furthermore, DeLuzio Chasin (2013) argued that definitions of asexuality as a life-long lack do not correspond to the lived experience of asexuals who constitute a diverse category, a spectrum of asexualities. Ela Przybylo (2011) took the critique of essentialist asexual identity one step further to demonstrate how essentialist discourses of asexuality as a lack (of sexuality) put sexuality in a hegemonic position, consequently reinforcing the discourses of sexual normativity that have rendered asexualities unintelligible in the first place. Yet, despite their critique of sexual normativity and the essentialist definitions of asexuality, neither DeLuzio Chasin nor Przybylo interrogated the roots of the sexual imperative, nor did they question the possibilities of asexuality to be a locus of queer transgression.

Starting from critique of essentialism as it was provided by Przybylo and DeLuzio Chasin, I suggest that research on asexuality should go one step further from merely criticizing the essentialist discourses and the discourses of sexual normativity, towards understanding the roots of the sexual imperative and consequently looking into the possibility of asexuality to be as a locus of transgression. In this thesis I attempt to fill in this apparent gap in the current scholarship in asexuality, first – by arguing that asexuality has been rendered unintelligible by the sexual imperative produced within capitalist circuits; then, by claiming that through its potential to destabilize the normative ideals of relationships, intimacy and desire, asexuality could emerge as a site where disidentifications with sexual normativity could be performed, and therefore could be reconceptualized as a disidentificatory locus of queer utopia. Asexuality, which emerges both as an effect/product of and a challenge to the normative sexual discourses, is not an intensely saturated site beyond the existing pathologized conceptualizations, henceforth it could become a burgeoning locus to challenge/question the sexual normativity.

The main research questions that will be leading me in my research of transgressive potentialities asexuality carries are the following: How was sexual imperative engendered by mechanisms of capitalism and how did it, by extension, position asexuality as the unintelligible Other? Furthermore, starting from its position of unintelligibility, I ask – could asexuality, and in what ways, turn this unintelligibility into a strategy to emerge as a queer locus of disidentification with sexual normativity? And if so, what reconceptualizations of relationships, intimacy and desire would this new locus of disidentification bring about?

In this regard, the broad aim of this thesis is twofold. First of all, its purpose could be defined as a reconceptualization of asexuality as a queer locus of disidentification with the regimes of sexual normativity embedded in capitalism, where practices of destabilization of sexual normativity and sexual identity categories could be performed, which would consequently lead to a debilitation and de-valorization of pervasive discourses of sexuality. At the same time, by redefining asexuality as a locus of disidentification with sexual imperative, my purpose is to expand and critically engage with existing queer conceptualizations of the transgressive potentials embedded in non-normative practices of sexuality, which oftentimes mobilize a tendency to reify sexual liberation rhetoric. Consequently, queering of asexuality also carries along the queering of *queer*, the destabilization and broadening of the term 'queer' and queer theory to shift from its embeddedness in the discourses of sexuality to include the unstable locus of asexual disidentification with sexual normativity.

In order to respond to my main research questions, I will engage in a close reading of a wide range of theories that inform my novel readings of asexuality as a queer locus of rupture. Therefore, my methodology could be described as a theoretical endeavor to put various theories into a dialogue in order to produce a new theoretical ground for reconceptualizing the notions and implications of asexuality and sexual normativity. In order to delineate the relationship between capitalism and sexuality, and further elaborate on queer potentialities the asexual locus carries for the disruption of sexual normativity, I will put into a dialogue Marxian critique with queer theories, with an overarching Foucauldian approach to construction of sexuality and power. To be more specific, I understand the possibility for transgression, in Foucauldian framework, as being constituted in and by the same site power is operating in. At the same time, my understanding of transgression and normativity rests on a Butlerian queer framework that conceptualizes the subject who transgresses as an effect of the process of subjectivation in which the subject is enabled through constitutive constraints that impel the subject to cite the norm, while not foreclosing, but producing the possibility of transgression. Finally, Marxist critique informs my historical materialist scrutinizing of the relationship between the normative mechanisms and the production relations.

In this way, while offering a queer insight into the normalizing regimes mobilized through the sexual regime of knowledge, that could shed light on blind spots of Marxian thought that failed to interrogate the relationship between sexuality and materiality, I am also expanding the queer critique to integrate material analysis which is attentive to the role of capitalist operations in construction of those normalizing regimes.

At this point, it is crucial to note that my discussion of asexuality does not address the issues immediately related to the lived experience of asexual identified individuals, which is why my methodology does not rely either on ethnographic research or on discourse analysis of representations of asexuality and asexuals in the popular culture. Although I find the struggles the asexual identified individuals are facing every day a highly important and relevant subject that academic research should engage with, this kind of discussion is beyond the scope of my research. Unlike the current receptions of asexuality that are still operating on the identitarian paradigm, I am using asexuality as a conceptual tool and an epistemological intervention to address and reassess the notion of sexual normativity, as well as rethink and expand queer meanings and enactments beyond those of the sexual liberation rhetoric that are available in the current queer scholarship. Instead of looking into the actuality of asexuality – or in other words, into the current practices of asexuality along the lines of the current scholarships, I discuss what transgressive meanings asexuality *could* enact, or put differently, what queer potentials it promises, once the ongoing essentialist conceptualizations and identity-seeking strategies that asexual activists and scholars pursue are left behind. Since current practices of asexuality and modes of being together, and by extension current scholarly debates, still largely cater to the reification of the discourses of sexual normativity, I discuss asexuality's transgressive potential as lying within the realm of *queer utopia*, rather than as one being engendered by practices of asexuality within the realm of *here and now*.

Conducting a research on asexuality from this perspective is not only relevant because it fills in a gap in the current scholarship that has – as a consequence of its focus on non-normative sexualities and sexuality in general, largely ignored asexuality which has been seen as a locus of lack (of sexuality). More importantly, reconceptualizing asexuality as a queer locus is an important critical contribution to the feminist scholarship that has so far, in an attempt to seek recognitions for asexual identified people, framed asexuality in normalized terms and hence inadvertently reinforced the discourses of sexual normativity. At the same time, the discussion of sexuality as a capitalist construct which breaches the dichotomy between the realms of the so-called cultural and material is a significant contribution to Marxian-queer scholarship. Finally, it is a critical contribution to the queer theory that, being focused on non-normative sexualities and sexuality in general, failed to recognize transgressive potentialities of asexuality.

Naturally, at the same time, investigating asexuality as a possible site of transgression of regimes of sexual normativity embedded in capitalism has its own limitations. One of them, as I have indicated, is the fact that due to the scope and the focus of the thesis I will not engage in discussion of asexual movement or the lived experience of asexual identified people. Another limitation is to be found in my discussion of capitalism as the mechanism that fostered compulsory sexuality. In this sense, it is important to state that capitalism was not the only mechanism that produced sexual normativity. However, the scarcity of studies on the relationship between capitalism and construction of sexuality outside the hermeneutics of repression inspired me to situate my research on long-established tension between historical materialism and feminist/queer theories in order to explore the neglected aspect of the *material* in construction of sexual imperative, thence reach a more comprehensive understanding of the system of compulsory sexuality.

I will now offer the outline of the thesis. After the introduction, in the second chapter I present an overview of literature written on asexuality, starting from pathologizing scientific discourses of late 19th and 20th century towards depathologizing yet essentialist discourses that feminist scholarship has produced since the beginnings of 21st century. Following my exposition of literature written on asexuality, I proceed to discuss the main theories I ground my novel readings of asexuality in: starting from Butler's subjectivation and Foucault's power-knowledge networks, I continue to discuss Marxist-queer theories that have reconciled the realms of the cultural and material; finally, I discuss José Esteban Muñoz's theories of disidentification (Muñoz, 1999) and queer utopia (Muñoz, 2009). Therefore, in the third chapter I expose the theoretical framework that informs my critique of sexual normativity and the essentialist discourses on asexuality as well as my reconceptualization of asexuality as a locus of queer utopia. By drawing on and further elaborating the Marxist-queer critique of the relationship between capitalism and sexuality (Floyd, 2009), in the fourth chapter I engage in discussion of the intersections between capitalism and the sexual imperative and the ways capitalism produced sexual normativity as such. After revealing the mechanisms that have rendered sexuality an imperative, in the fifth chapter I engage in the critique of discourses that reinforced sexual imperative and consequently framed asexuality in essentialist terms, as a fourth sexual identity based on lack (of sexuality), such as those proposed by Breanne Fahs (2010) and Megan Milks (2014). In the same chapter, drawing on Muñoz's (1999) theory of disidentification and Giorgio Agamben's concept of whatever (1993), I propose a new reading of asexuality as a queer locus of disidentification with significatory power of sexuality. Finally, in the sixth chapter, I expand the theoretical discussion of asexuality as a locus of disidentification, arguing that asexuality has the potential to energize a queer utopia (Muñoz, 2009) where novel forms of relating to one another could be established. These novel forms, I argue, could work to reconceptualize and dismantle the notions of monogamy and sexual desire, and hence the sexual imperative itself.

To sum up, in this thesis I offer a novel theoretical ground for reconceptualization of notion of asexuality that would break away from previous accounts that have framed it solely in the essentialist terms, as a fourth sexual orientation based on a lack of sexuality, and that have therefore perpetuated the discourse of sexual normativity. I propose that asexuality, together with the notion of sexual normativity need to be reconceptualized through the lenses of queer-Marxian critique. First, I argue that asexuality was rendered unintelligible by the sexual imperative discourses that have themselves been produced by and within the capitalist mechanism. Perusing Foucauldian and Butlerian approach, I then indicate that the possibility of asexuality to be a locus of transgression stems from its exclusion from ontology. As a locus where new forms of relationalities, intimacies and desires in their multiplicities could be performed, asexuality, I claim, has the potential to be the site of disidentification with the discourses of compulsory sexuality. In other words, asexuality has the potential be a locus of queer transgressions, and as such it belongs to what Muñoz (2009) calls a queer utopia.

To reiterate, looking into asexuality from this perspective is a timely and relevant research for reasons more than one. To begin with, it critically engages with and contributes to the feminist accounts on asexuality that have so far have only served to reinforce the sexusociety. Furthermore, by reconciling the realms of the cultural and material in its analysis of the construction of the sexual imperative, it proves to be an important contribution to the marxist-queer critique as well. Finally, reconceptualizing asexuality as a queer locus is a significant step towards critically engaging with queer theory, since it proposes a reconceptualization and further destabilization of the notion of ´queer'. In this reconceptualization, 'queer' as a locus of theory and praxis should expand and at the same become blurrier to encompass, besides its numerous loci of non-normative sexualities, a critique of the system of compulsory sexuality and consequently disidentifications with sexual normativity as well.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter I present an overview of scholarship that has been written on asexuality. In the first subchapter "Scientific discourses on asexuality: from pathologization to depathologization" I offer an overview of scientific, namely medical, psychological and sexologist scholarship produced on asexuality from the late 19th to early 21th century, tracking its course from pathologizing accounts to depathologizing arguments. In the second subchapter "Asexuality in feminist literature: normalization discourses and emerging demand for recognition" I discuss feminist scholarship on asexuality that has been, in the spirit of depathologization, mostly engaged with developing normalized conceptualizations of asexuality.

2.1. Scientific discourses on asexuality: from pathologization to depathologization

Prior to the discursive formation of an asexual identity in the 2000s when asexuality started to be perceived as a legitimate identity category or practice, it only appeared as an object of inquiry in the disciplines of sexology and psychology/psychiatry under the category of sexual or mental disorders. Mostly grounded in medical discourses, asexuality was tackled as an abnormality to be diagnosed and treated. In her text "Mismeasures of asexual desire", Jacinthe Flore (2014) unpacks the history of scientific pathologization of asexuality that started with Richard von Kraft-Ebbing and the birth of sexual science in the 19th century and was furthered by researchers in psychoanalysis, sexology and psychiatry in the 20th century. What is common to all of the scientific discourses on pathologization of asexuality is that they flourished on essentialist ideas of biological determinism. The beginnings of pathologization of asexuality could be traced down to Richard von Kraft-Ebbing, a professionally trained psychiatrist, who was one of the first to discuss sexuality from a psychiatric perspective in his book *Psychopatia sexualis* (1886). First works in sexology, such as Kraft-Ebbing's *Psychopatia sexualis*, were deemed revolutionary at the time, since their discussions of sexuality were a part of the liberatory project incited by the hermeneutics of repression. However, while attempting to depathologize sexuality itself, to 'liberate' it from the 'repression' of the Victorian prudish morale, these accounts at the same time further pathologized other non-normative forms of sexuality. So for instance, Kraft-Ebbing frames everything other than heterosexuality as a perversion, including any type of sexual activity with aims other than procreation. In a similar fashion, he conceptualizes asexuality as an anomaly, claiming that those who lack sexual instinct must be suffering from cerebral disorders as well (1929, p. 61). Following in the footsteps of Kraft-Ebbing, other prominent figures in the field of sexology in 20th century further supported the project of pathologization of asexual desire, which at the same time, served to prop up and reinforce the discourses of sexual normativity.

After Kraft-Ebbing, a significant boost for the pathologization of asexuality emerged from Freud's early 20th century psychoanalytical research that overemphasized the importance of sexuality in the formation of individual. According to Freudian theories, people are from the earliest age sexual beings and the repression of sexuality was, in one way or another, the main cause of all neurosis and psychosis. The road towards pathologization of everything non-sexual continued with 20th century research on clinical sexology and psychiatry. Flore (2014) examines how 1960s research on clinical sexology conducted by William Masters and Virginia Johnson posited that there is “natural receptivity situated in genitalia”, and that therefore everyone should be responsive to sexual stimuli. According to this logic, if responsiveness to sexual stimuli was lacking, it was solely due to the individuals’ fear of performance. Furthermore, starting from the 1970s the psychiatric discourses on sexuality perpetuated the sexologist claims based on the biologically determinist idea that genitalia is the “key to sexual desire” (Flore, 2014, p. 59). These psychiatric discourses created the category of sexual dysfunctions, such as for example the hypoactive sexual desire disorder (Flore, 2014, p. 60).

First depathologizing scientific work on asexuality appeared only in the early 2000s, coinciding with the emergence of the asexual movement on online venues, the first and most well-known one being AVEN, Asexual Visibility and Education Network, founded in 2001. One of the first and most important scholars who furthered the project of depathologization of asexuality was sociologist Anthony Bogaert. Bogaert (2004, 2006, 2008, 2012, 2015) who conducted a number of studies on asexuality and asexuals, claims that asexuality – which he defines as a distinct sexual orientation based on a stable and lifelong lack of sexual attraction, is not a disorder, but rather a normal sexual variation that appears throughout animal kingdom. Therefore, albeit his bias-free and nonpathologizing approach to asexuality, his research engages with essentialist conceptualizations of asexuality that he understands as a condition one is born with.

Other scholars who, like Bogaert, furthered the project of depathologization of asexuality within medical and psychological discourses are Lori Brotto and Morag Yule (2010, 2013, 2015), Nicole Prause and Cynthia Graham (2007), Jacinthe Flore (2013) and Andrew Hinderliter (2009, 2013). Brotto and Yule tackle asexuality as non-pathology, challenging the common clinical view that asexuality should be defined as a sexual dysfunction, due to which it is oftentimes classified under hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD). According to Brotto and Yule, asexuals unlike individuals diagnosed with HSDD, are less likely to have previously experienced any sort of sexual desire or fantasies or they have experience a significantly lower desire. Moreover, their study showed that depression and sex-related distress, which are common symptoms in HSDD diagnosed individuals, are rarely experienced by asexuals. Consequently, they conclude, asexuality is not a disorder and therefore should not be conflated with HSDD.

Prause and Graham's "Asexuality: Classification and characterization" (2007) is considered the first scientific study which was based on the data collected specifically and solely to investigate asexuality, in which 1,146 self-identified asexual participants were surveyed. Although previously Bogaert (2004) conducted a similar scientific study suggesting that one percent of the population is composed of asexuals, scholars like CJ DeLuzio Chasin (2011) questioned the accuracy of his findings due to the fact that his study perused data which was not collected for the purposes of exploring asexuality and which was obtained prior to the emergence of asexuality as an identity category. Prause and Graham's study, unlike Bogaert's, does not take absoluteness and lifelong presence of asexuality as a prerequisite, but takes the aspects of fluidity and flexibility into consideration and aims to give voice to self-identified asexual individuals. Much like Bogaert, Prause and Graham claim that asexuality is not a disorder, since – as their interviews with asexual identified individuals show – it does not comprise the component of personal distress, which is otherwise required for psychiatric diagnoses, including hypoactive sexual desire disorder. More recently, along the lines of depathologizing scientific considerations of asexuality as proposed by Bogaert (2012), Brotto and Yule (2010, 2013) and Prause and Graham (2007), Jacinthe Flore (2013) and also Andrew Hinderliter (2013), an asexual identified scholar, explored the relationships and differences between asexuality and HSDD, while critically engaging with the medical discourses surrounding asexuality and undermining classification of asexuality as a dysfunction and a disorder.

Nevertheless, while attempting to undo the general assumptions of asexuality as a disorder by employing an asexuality-positive approach, most of the works in the scientific trajectory of asexuality do not usually engage with the theoretical and cultural contextualization and meanings of asexuality. In other words, they do not look into the normalizing regimes and mechanisms that led to unintelligibility of asexuality, nor do they look into how and in what ways this subordinate unintelligible position of asexuality catered to the normalization and reification of the heterosexual matrix and the sexual regime of truth. A more nuanced conceptualization of asexuality can be found in scholarship embedded in feminist framework, which I am discussing in the following section.

2.2. Asexuality in feminist literature: normalization discourses and emerging demand for recognition

A great deal of the research on asexuality from a feminist perspective focuses on the issue of sexual diversity and engages in depathologization of asexuality by conceptualizing asexuality as a distinct sexual orientation and/or identity category (Cerankowski, & Milks, 2010; Kim, 2011; Przybylo, 2011; Gressgard, 2013). Therefore, ironically, the feminist literature that dismissed the discourses of pathologization ended up reproducing the discourses of normalization, framing asexuality as a sexual orientation or identity in order to gain recognition for asexuals. In chapter 5 I will look into how identity-seeking strategies as ways of gaining recognition, that permeated sexologist as well as feminists accounts, actually reinforce the normalizing (hetero)sexual discourses. At this point, it suffices to offer a couple of examples of these strategies. For instance, Randi Gressgard in "Asexuality: from pathology to identity and beyond" (2013) construes the constitutive elements of the shift from pathology to recognition of an asexual identity. She claims that the formation of "an asexual identity takes place through a process of objectification and subjectification/subjection at the interface between expert disciplines and activism" (Gressgard, 2013, p. 179). In addition, she points towards the fact that emergence of asexual identity could help us reimagine the concept of sexual citizenship and a new personhood beyond the boundaries of liberal humanism. In a similar vein, in their attempts to gain recognition for asexuality and asexuals, many scholars have called asexuality a "fourth sexual orientation" (Durãe, Martins, Borralho, 2016; Bogaert, 2015; Cerankowski, & Milks, 2010; Cranney, 2016). These discourses of "fourth sexual orientation" frame sexuality as a spectrum that spans from the hypersexual to non-sexual people. Hence, according to them, the lack of sexual also falls under the overarching umbrella of sexual identity category, or sexual orientation.[1] A feminist scholar who also falls into the pit of the normalizing discourses of identity politics is Erica Chu (2014). On the one hand, Chu makes a contribution to the queer reading of asexuality through a substantial critique of LGBTQ movements for their insistence on "compulsory eroticism", which is in line with my critique of the way queer theory promoted

[1] Sexuality works as an overarching umbrella within which every kind of practice and identity has to be read *in relation* to sexuality. Therefore, even definitions of asexuality as an absence submit to the hegemonic discourses of sexuality. Consequently, defining asexuality as a lack contributes to the omnipresence of sexuality and incites further self-definitions through sexuality that grant asexuality the position of another sexual orientation.

compulsory sexuality. Nevertheless, despite her critique of compulsory eroticism, Erica Chu still argues that asexuality needs to be rendered a legitimate identity category – a “radical identity” which lacks the erotic component of sexuality. Consequently, by conceptualizing asexuality as a “radical identity” lacking the erotic component, Chu (2014) positions it in negative terms, as an opposition to sexuality.

The discourses that framed asexuality as a complete lack of sexuality, such as the one offered by Erica Chu, have permeated feminist literature. These texts ended up limiting the nonnormative potentialities of asexuality by framing it merely in negative terms as a lack of sexuality. For example, arguing against the sex-positive approaches and discourses of “sexual liberation” that permeated feminist and queer literature, Megan Milks (2014) insists that asexuality could be seen as a radical discourse of sex-negativity which stands in opposition to a discourse of sex-positivity. Similarly, Karli June Cerankowski (2014) claims that asexuality and sexuality operate in different languages. According to her, the language system of asexuality “requires a negative definition – one that lacks sexual attraction to others” (p. 300).

At the same time, recent feminist scholarship has also produced works that have criticized the essentialist projects that framed asexuality as an identity based on a lifelong lack of sexuality. This branch of feminist scholarship argued that asexual locus is a locus of diversity, and that therefore the lack should not be only understood in terms of being a lifelong one. Consequently, it significantly contributed to the broadening of the scope of asexual locus to include the lived experiences of individuals who are lacking sexuality temporarily, indeed expanding the locus of asexuality to include what I will call a “diversity of lacks”[2]. However, at the same time, this scholarship did not challenge the definitions of asexuality that have framed it in opposition to sexuality as a lack, and therefore did not question the identity-seeking strategies that risk reifying the discourses of sexual normativity.

Feminist critique of the essentialist renderings of asexuality solely as a lifelong lack of sexuality is offered by C.J. DeLuzio Chasin who identifies the limits and lacks of the existing research. In her articles “Theoretical Issues in the Study of Asexuality” (2011) and “Reconsidering Asexuality and Its Radical Potential” (2013) DeLuzio Chasin criticizes the

[2] I would like to emphasize that when I refer to asexuality as a ‘lack’, or ‘lack in degrees’ for that matter, I am not invoking Lacanian psychoanalisis. I am using the word in its literal sense as a synonym for ‘absence’, and in the particular case of this research, asexuality as a ‘lack’ always signifies a lack of sexuality.

unfortunate essentialist and monolithic conceptualizations of asexuality as a lifelong lack, instead bringing asexual diversity and fluidity to the fore. She stresses that one cannot talk about one asexual or asexuality, but rather that there is a great variety in degree and their perception of asexuality among asexual identified people.

Along the lines of feminist critique, important pieces of ethnographic research on asexuality have also pinpointed towards the necessity of redefining the essentialist accounts of asexuality. The ethnographic research conducted by sociologists Kristin Scherrer (2008) and Mark Carrigan (2011) demonstrated that the conceptualizations of asexuality as a unitary identity and a lifelong lack of sexuality, do not correspond to the lived experience of asexuals and their struggles to claim an asexual identity and build a community. In "Coming to an Asexual Identity: Negotiating Identity, Negotiating Desire" (2008), Scherrer offers her findings based on interviews she conducted with asexual identified people. They demonstrate the complexities of claiming an asexual identity, pointing towards asexual individuals' struggle to be intelligible and the challenges they encounter in pursuing romantic/aromantic relationships. Scherrer's interviews reveal that asexual identified individuals oftentimes identify also as bi, straight, lesbian, gay, queer, romantic or aromantic, which gestures towards the diversity in asexual community. Relying on the same qualitative data she has collected, she furthers her work on asexuality with another article, "What Asexuality Contributes to the Same-Sex Marriage Discussion" (2010). In this article she questions the dominant position of sexuality in relationships and the monopoly of sexual vocabulary in defining relationships, calling attention to asexuals' attempts to challenge the coital imperative and build non-normative forms of relationships. Much like Scherrer, Mark Carrigan aims to reach a better understanding of asexuals in their own terms and make their lived experience of asexuality visible. Drawing on interviews and online questionnaires conducted with asexual individuals, Carrigan (2011) concludes that the unitary definition of asexuality does not correspond to the lived experience of asexuals. According to Carrigan, there is a great diversity within community with regards to sexual practices that the current scholarship has greatly failed to tackle.

In this regard, DeLuzio Chasin's (2011, 2013), Scherrer's (2008, 2010) and Carrigan's (2011) discussions on asexual fluidity as a site of diversity that disrupts the previous essentialist definitions is in line with my understanding of an asexuality as an open-ended site that should not accommodate fundamentalist claims regarding sexuality and identity and by extension, my claim that there should not be an 'asexual norm' that the asexual subject is expected to cite.

Nevertheless, despite criticizing the essentialist assumptions about asexuality as necessary a lifelong lack, these studies have not questioned the definitions of asexuality as a lack and the normalizing strategies of identitarian politics itself. However, recently, a sole voice of Ela Przybylo has uttered what none of the studies I have here discussed proposed: the critique of normalization strategies of identity seeking, and hence of asexuality as a reinforcement of sexuality, or what she calls a "sexusociety". In her article, "Crisis and Safety: The Asexual in Sexusociety", Przybylo (2011) asserts that although positioning asexuality as a distinct sexual orientation defined by absence/lack lends legitimacy to asexuality and contributes to the visibility of asexual identified people, it at the same time risks reifying sexuality as an overarching universal category and an essential property of the individual. Przybylo's dicussion, in that sense, constitutes a basis for and a significant contribution to my critique of the regime of sexual normativity, as well as my critique of the pitfalls of defining asexuality in opposition to sexuality.

The scholarship on asexuality has come a long path from the scientific discourses of pathologization of asexuality to the nonpathologizing yet essentialist discourses that framed asexuality as an identity based on the essentialist idea of complete lack of sexuality, and finally to the feminist conceptualizations of asexuality that have questioned the monolithical understanding of asexuality as a life-long lack, arguing for a asexuality as a locus of diversity. However, even the discussions that criticized essentialist understandings of asexuality as a lifelong lack did not critically engage either with the dichotomous rendering of asexuality as a lack vis-à-vis sexuality in the first place, or with the normalization ideals underlining the identity seeking strategies as a way towards recognition. On the contrary, they have forwarded it, claiming that the asexual identity should not be monolithic, but rather that it should include a diverse spectrum of lacks. Therefore, by and large, the current scholarship on asexuality pursues the well-known liberal humanist identity politics discourses that have informed the LGBT politics, which are focused on visibility and recognition. Ironically, the discourses that made claims for asexuality as a separate sexual orientation category only perpetuated the idea that sexual truth resides within the ontology of subjectivity, in accordance with which asexuality should be defined as a particular kind of "perverse" truth about one's sexuality that seeks legitimization and recognition, which could be achieved through identity-seeking strategies. Hence, by submitting to essentialist discourses of sexual orientation, the scholarship on asexuality, with the exception of Ela Przybylo, has failed to question and challenge the system of compulsory sexuality which has rendered asexualities unintelligible in the first place.

The scientific as well as feminist scholarship that attempted to depathologize asexuality by offering essentialist accounts of it informs my critique of such monolithic definitions that, together with normalizing identity-seeking strategies ended up buttressing the sexual normativity discourses. At the same time, reconceptualizations of asexuality as a site of diversity and fluidity are in line with my conjuring of asexuality as a locus that should not be confined to a lack, but that rather should emerge as a site of indeterminacy and open-endedness. Finally, I draw on and further develop Przybylo's (2011) unprecedented critique of the ways asexuality consolidates the sexusociety by elaborating on the possible modes of transgression that the asexual locus could bring about.

3. Setting the terms: Compulsory Sexuality and its fallouts

In this chapter I offer the theoretical framework which will inform my novel readings of asexuality. In the first subchapter "Reading sexual imperative through Butler and Foucault" I begin by discussing Foucault's genealogical understanding of history of sexuality, as well as Butler's theory of performativity, that is to say the theories which I rely on to conceptualize how sexuality as an imperative renders asexuality unintelligible. In the second subchapter "Not 'merely cultural': Reconciling marxist and queer theories" I proceed to discuss Kevin Floyd's (2009) queer Marxian reading of the interrelatedness between capitalism and sexuality. Floyd´s approach inform my further discussion in chapter 4 of how sexuality was produced as an imperative within and through capitalist circuits. Finally, in the subchapter "Queer theory and asexuality: a dialogue" I discuss main queer theoretical texts on which I ground my reconceptualization of asexuality as a locus of transgression of sexuality, and by extension capitalism. First I discuss Michael Warner's (1993) conceptualization of "queer" and the ways the notion could be expanded and put into dialogue with asexual non-normativities.

Then I discuss Muñoz's (2009) theory of disidentification and queer futurity that informs my reading of asexuality as a queer utopia.

3.1. Reading sexual imperative through Foucault and Butler

With the rise of contemporary asexual movement in 2000s the bourgeoning discussions regarding marginalization of nonsexualities revolved around the fact that sexuality operates as a system of social control compelling people to engage in sexual behavior and build identities around sexual categories and therefore that it stigmatizes nonsexualities as well as those who fail to engage in "respectable" sexual activities. This idea is subsumed under various concepts such as compulsory sexuality (Chasin, 2013; Emens, 2014; Gupta, 2015), sexual assumption (Carrigan, 2011), sexusociety (Przybylo, 2011) and sexualnormativity (Chasin, 2011; Hinderliter, 2009, 2013), all referring to the discourses that dictate sexuality as a norm, a compulsory mode of being in this world, according to which a vast array of subjectivities (straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual) are produced, while at the same time others – those who do not adhere to the sexual norm – are being cast out as misfits in the schema of sexusociety. System of compulsory sexuality produces the assumption that all individuals are sexual, and the experience of sexual desire and practice is an essential part of healthy being.

In this thesis I make use of the concept of compulsory sexuality to construe how asexuality has been rendered unintelligible and disposed into the domain of unthinkable except for outside the discourses of pathology by investigating the genealogy of sexual imperative and its discontents through a close reading of Foucault's *History of Sexuality Vol I* (1978).

The history of sexuality has been most comprehensively traced in Foucault's book under the same name, in which he demonstrated that sexuality is a historical construct which emerged in the 18th century. The repressive hypothesis Foucault argues against in the *History of Sexuality* suggests that since the Victorian era there has been a pervasive prudish attempt to repress sexuality at all costs, which consequently created the impression that sex promises liberation. Foucault argues that the discourses on sexuality began to be the very apparatus through which the networks of powers were organized and in compliance with which society was regulated, through "a steady proliferation of discourses concerned with sex—specific discourses, different from one another both by their form and by their object: a discursive ferment that gathered momentum from the eighteenth century onward" (1978, p. 18). As Foucault puts it, "the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world" (1978, p. 11) caused sexuality to coalesce as one's inner truth, identity and subject position. Therefore, in its pervasive and prolific flow through discourses, by rendering sexuality a fundamental part of the self, the discourses on sexuality has become the very ground to regulate sexual practices as well as to discipline the bodies in compliance with the current power structures. In this intertwined relationship between power and sexuality, sexuality was no more something one does, but something one is. The norms and regulations instrumentalized through the discourses on sexuality constructed the human initially as a sexual being, rendering sexuality as an inevitable part of the healthy self and the very condition of becoming a subject.

Moreover, in order to construe how asexualities are rendered (un)intelligible by the norms that have led sexuality to be deployed as a compulsory practice and identity category, I will position my conceptualization of asexuality into the framework of performativity by perusing Judith Butler's understanding of subject(ivation). Butler understands subject, drawing on Althusser's concept of interpellation[3] and Foucault's concept of *assujettissement,* as performatively constructed through simultaneous processes of production and constraint which come into play within and through multiple competing discourses (1990, 1997, 2004). In this vein, the subject is an effect of the process of subjectivation, compelled to consistently reiterate the norm in order to be allotted cultural intelligibility, in other words to appear as having a coherent self and identity. As Butler (1997) elucidates, "subjection is, literally, the making of a subject, the principle of regulation according to which a subject is formulated or produced. Such subjection is a kind of power that not only unilaterally acts on a given individual as a form of domination, but also activates or forms the subject. Hence, subjection is neither simply the domination of a subject nor its production, but designates a certain kind of restriction in production" (p. 84). Grounded in Foucault's understanding of power, normative ideals that a subject is expected to approximate should not be understood solely as prohibitive technologies, since they hold the very generative force that enable the subject as well. According to Butler,

[3] In *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)*, 1971, Louis Althusser defines interpellation as a process of subjectivation in which individuals are hailed into assuming a certain subject position, and thus produced as subjects by ideology.

“[t]he paradox of subjectivation (assujetissement) is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power” (1993, p. 15). In other words, the autonomous subject is preconceived, conditioned, and sustained through constitutive repetitions and defined by the disciplinary mechanisms, which provide it with a ground to become intelligible as a subject, that is, to achieve cultural intelligibility. Following Foucault and Wittig in contending that the concepts of sex, gender and sexuality are in fact the paramount regulatory regimes, constitutive of the normative practice which “produces and regulates the intelligibility” (1993, p. 52), Butler claims that identity only happens through stabilization of those concepts. Therefore, those who do not cite consistently and coherently become unintelligible.

In further elaboration, Butler claims that those that are rendered unintelligible also consolidate the reiterative power of what pushes them outside the domain of intelligibility. This outside, which is by no means an absolute one, refers to the territory of unintelligible bodies and failed subjectivities, which is something that Butler addresses as the constitutive outside: “A constitutive or relative outside is, of course, composed of a set of exclusions that are nevertheless internal to that system as its own nonthematizable necessity. It emerges within the system as incoherence, disruption, a threat to its own systematicity” (Butler, 1993, p. 39). In other words, the constitutive outside is a discursive exteriority inhabited by the bodies that are non-normative and abjective[4]. Constitutive outside becomes the site where that which is, by exclusionary practices, condemned ‘not to matter’, is by the same token rendered constitutive for apparatuses of production of the intelligible bodies and subjectivities that ‘do matter’. Butler’s concept of

[4] In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Julia Kristeva describes the notion of abjection as:

> A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A “something” that I do not recognise as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are safeguards. The primers of my culture. (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2).

constitutive outside proves to be a useful tool in my attempt to scrutinize the relationship between asexuality, that which does not yet matter, and sexuality, that 'matters'. Relying on Butlerian framework, I will discuss that asexuality could be conceptualized as the constitutive outside of normative sexuality, which leads to marginalization of non-normative absences of sexualities. In line with what Butler says about constitutive outside as "that which can only be thought – when it can – in relation to that discourse, at and as its most tenuous borders" (1993, p. 8), I will argue that asexuality could be intelligible only in so far as it appears as an unthreatening pathological lack in the dominant discourses.

According to Butler, the system that regulates what falls in or outside of the domain of intelligibility is heteronormativity – the phallocentric, heterosexist misogyny and homophobia, in what Foucault (1980, p. 107) calls the "society of normalization", which privileges certain repetitions, therefore allowing them to appear as legitimate subjects while deeming others deviant. Butler's concept of heterosexual matrix, which is "that grid of intelligibility through which bodies, gender, and desires are naturalized" (Butler, 1990, p. 151) underlines my conceptualization of sexual normativity, whose naturalized position rendered asexuality as a locus of the abject, while enabling the very potential an asexual locus embodies for destruction of its systematicity. Moreover, in an attempt to investigate the potentialities asexuality embodies as a conceptual tool to deconstruct the structures that have produced sexual normativity, I will pursue a genealogical scrutinization of the mechanisms that have implemented the sexual imperative and the matrix of intelligibility structured by the norms and regulations that are underlined by the very imperative. In this regard, I discuss the production of sexuality at the intersection with capitalism, offering a queer Marxist critique. Therefore, in the following section, I discuss the theories that underline my conceptualization of sexuality as a product of capitalist mechanisms.

3.2. Not 'merely cultural': Reconciling Marxist and queer theories

In this section I offer an overview of main theories that I draw on to construe the complex and miscellaneous relationship between capitalism and sexuality. Claiming that sexuality is not a "merely cultural" production, but rather closely entangled with the other historical and socio-economic developments, I will analyze the role of capitalism in rendering sexuality an imperative and producing (sexual) subjectivities with regard to gendered objects of desire.

Judith Butler, in her essay “Merely Cultural” (1997a), defines the so-called split between the Marxist thought and queer theories as “a constitutive rupture” (1997a:269), criticizing the presumption that positions material and cultural into incommensurable spheres of inquiry. Looking into this constitutive rupture with a new lens, I will demonstrate that the domain of political economy, which capitalism supposedly inhabits, and that of the cultural are co-constitutive of each other. By doing so, relying on the theories of Kevin Floyd (2009) and John D’Emilio (1993), I will unveil the oftentimes neglected materialist facet in the production of compulsory sexuality, and underline how material inscribes and at the same time is inscribed by ‘cultural’.

Kevin Floyd, in *The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism* (2009), brings queer theory in a dialogue with Marxist theory by navigating through the ideas of Judith Butler, Frederic Jameson, Michel Foucault and energizing Georg Lukács’ concept of reification. Reconciling two seemingly divergent epistemologies, Floyd complicates both queer and Marxian histories by unearthing the material bases behind heteronormativity and the production of normative masculinities and femininities, as well as by broadening the scope of Marxian thought in order to understand sexuality at the intersecting circuits of production, consumption and accumulation. Floyd offers a historical account of performativity, juxtaposing *Gender Trouble* with the history of capitalism to demonstrate that skilling/deskilling of labor in capitalism shapes the ways gendered body and its desires are formulated. Furthermore, he lays out the parallels between the regulation of capital and the regulation of sexuality as well as the parallel between the proliferation of scientific knowledge production surrounding sexuality and Taylorism. Finally, he points towards the effects of material on conditioning the psyche and forming subjectivities in particular ways that are in line with the heteronormative totality. I rely on Floyd’s historization of reification of desire under capitalism in my scrutinization of commodification of sexual knowledges and sexual subjectivities.

On a similar note, in “Capitalism and Gay Identity”, John D’Emilio (1993) contests the transhistorical conceptualization of homosexual identity, or as he calls it – “the myth of the eternal homosexual” – by providing a historical account of how gay identity has come about. He points out,

> I want to argue that gay men and lesbians have not always existed. Instead, they are a product of history and have come into existence in a specific historical era. Their emergence is associated with the relations of capitalism; it has been the historical development of capitalism – more specifically, its free labor system – that has allowed large numbers of men and women in the late twentieth century to call themselves gay, to see themselves as part of a community of similar men and women, and to organize politically on the basis of that identity. (p.102)

D'Emilio is indicating the contradictory nature of the relationship between capitalism and family that has rendered the emergence of LGBT identities possible. On the one hand, as D'Emilio argues, material structuring of capitalism weakens the dependency on the family unit, hence allowing individuals to live outside the family, where they could form lesbian and gay identities. On the other hand, capitalism has had to rely on the family unit for the reproduction of next generation of workers and the unpaid labor, owing to which not only the reproduction of next generation but also the reproduction of homophobia and heterosexism has been guaranteed. D'Emilio's analysis informs my scrutinization of the relationship between sexuality and division of labor, as well as my discussion of how the capitalist spheres of production and reproduction function as performative sites that compel the subject reiterate the sexual norm.

3.3. Queer theory and asexuality: a dialogue

Upon my attempt to track the roots of sexual imperative that has emerged at the intersection of biopolitical instutitions and capitalist circuits of production and consumption, I will move on to investigate what the deconstruction of sexual imperative through the lens of asexuality could do for queer theories, and how a queer conceptualization of asexuality could facilitate the unveiling of the transgressive implications and potentialities asexuality carries for feminist theory and praxis. Therefore, in this section, I offer an overview of main theories that inform my reading of asexuality as a queer locus.

The political incentive of this project is brought about by political implications of Butler's theory of performativity, which does not solely explain the logic of exclusionary matrix in the formation of subjectivities, but being grounded in Foucauldian philosophy, it also focuses on the generative force of discourses. As Butler elucidates “the disciplinary apparatus produces subjects, but as a consequence of that production, it brings into discourse the conditions for subverting that apparatus itself. In other words, the law turns against itself and spawns versions of itself which oppose and proliferate its animating purposes (1997, p.100)”. Conceptualizing asexuality as a locus of resistance, I aim to rework the questions, Butler previously raised about lesbianism, “can the exclusion from ontology itself become a rallying point for resistance?” (1993a, p. 127), in order to see how the overwhelming unintelligibility of asexualities could perform as the very tool to rupture the sexunormative structures which has led to this unintelligibility at first place. In other words, according to Butler (Butler & Athanasiu, 2013), the performative as "an exercise of articulation that brings an open-ended reality into existence" (p. 130) embodies the very potential for the subversion of the reiterated norm. Thus, taking into consideration this iterability and material discursive citationality, both of which involve the repetition of the norm, it is safe to say that the possibility of resistance emerges exactly from those very repetitions, given that new spaces for embodied subjectivities can be created by subversive iterations. As Butler has put it: “By the virtue of reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labor of that norm” (2011, p. xix). As I will further elaborate in my chapter, this could mean that asexuality, with its potential to energize a reiteration which unveils discursive-material inconsistencies, as well as the very constructedness and instability of norms of compulsory sexuality, can potentially subvert the discourse from within, by indicating its insufficiencies, and thus opening up a possibility for new productions, which are by no means unlimited, but which at the same time can generate capacities for some new forms of agency and new conceptions of subjectivity. Therefore, an asexual locus could in turn encompass all those excluded by the normative measures, and therefore those who could find ways of arriving into the realm of intelligibility through possible fissures they could create in discourses of normativity.

Michael Warner (1993) defines queer as "resistance to regimes of the normal" (p. xxvi) underlined by excess and non-normative sexual practices and pleasures. The notion of queerness, as conceptualized by Warner, goes beyond countering the deeply embedded bias of heterosexism. It identifies the very pervasiveness of modernity as an all-embracing heterosexual ideology that positions heterosexual reproduction as a primordial condition of society’s ability to reproduce itself. The processes of exclusion and discrimination of dissident sexualities, as diagnosed by the theoretical work of identity theory and its political applications, are just a tip of the iceberg of a much more ubiquitous feature of modern societies – the processes of normalization. From this perspective, identity politics is deeply ingrained in the heterosexual culture as the very notion of identity is heavily ethnicizied and based on the premise that the heterosexual family is the foundation on which the fundamental political framework is built upon – the nation-state. Every other aspect of human experience and practice is thus understood to be an exception to the heterosexual metarule.

This is the entry point of queer theory, as understood by Warner, in the sense that it breaks with the demands for inclusion, representation and other forms of add-on political strategies and tries to subvert the very foundation of heterosexual society which is its power to position itself as an universal standpoint from which everything else can be understood and addressed. These *regimes of the normal* are operative in all social practices and institutions, social theory notwithstanding. Understanding the production of knowledge as a heteronormative practice is thus the main requirement for a theory to be queer. In this way, the demand for generalization that is otherwise denied to marginalized sexual subjects is the starting point for queer theorizing.

In this thesis I expand Warner's conceptualization of queer encapsulate not only the excess, but also the non-normative absence of sexuality that could too perform "resistance to regimes of the normal", considering that system of (hetero)sexual normativity is what regulates 'the regime of the normal' in myriad ways.

One of the most significant theories I will be using in my reconceptualization of asexuality is José Estaban Muñoz's (1990) queer strategy called disidentification, which he devises in order to disrupt this 'regime of normal' and open up a deconstructed space within the normative regimes of power. To disidentify with a certain identity position, according to Muñoz, is not equal to misidentifying or counteridentifying which would amount to the simple rejection of an identity. Rather, disidentification constitutes a process of destabilization in which supposedly stable racial, sexual or gender identities are being deconstructed through an intersectional embodiment. Disidentification as theoretical tool and queer practice assembles "a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture" (p, 31). As I will further elaborate in chapter 5, what underlies my conceptualization of a queerly asexual locus is politics of disidentification that embodies the potential to potential to turn *disempowered* and *unthinkable* positionality of asexuality into a rallying locus of resistance.

Finally, even though asexualities of *here and now* might not carry ostensible queer significations, a novel configuration of, even speculation about, what asexuality could mean in enmeshment with queer theories could broaden the queer horizon while leading to a possible expansion of the matrix of intelligibility regarding asexual virtualities and performances. Jose Estaban Munoz (2009) states that the domain of queerness is not of here and now, but of *there and then.* According to Munoz, queerness is the potentiality that could be realized in the future; it is something we are longing for, it is the ideal, the utopia. Queerness is, therefore, the domain of the future, while present is a "prisonhouse"; as he says "… we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds." Queerness then rests on the rejection of the present and, at the same time, the "insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (2009, p.1). Inspired by Munoz's understanding of queer futurity, I position asexuality as a locus of potentiality – "a certain mode of nonbeing that is eminent, a thing that is present but not actually existing in the present tense" (Muñoz, 2008, p. 8).

* * *

In this chapter I have given an overview of theories which inform my reading of asexuality. First, I have given account of Foucault´s theory of the emergence of discourse of sexuality, as well as Butler´s performativity theory by discussing her concepts of subjectivation, the constitutive outside and the heterosexual matrix, all of which inform my analysis of intelligibility of asexualities that takes place within the sexunormative society. Furthermore, I have provided an overview of Marxist queer theories that focus on the relationship between capitalism and emergence of (hetero)sexual normativity. As I have indicated, these theories are crucial for my discussion of capitalism as one of the main sites for production of normative sexuality, and hence for my bridging of the conventional material/ cultural binary. Moreover, I have discussed the queer theories I will be using in my reconceptualization of asexuality as a queer locus. I began by offering Warner's (1993) definition of queer which, as I have said, I draw on and further expand in my reconceptualization of asexuality. I then proceeded to discuss Muñoz's (2009) notion of disidentification which I draw on in positioning asexuality as a queer locus of transgression. Finally, I have exposed Muñoz's (2009) theory of queer futurity through which, as I have stated, read asexuality as a locus of queer potentiality. By putting into dialogue Foucauldian approach with queer theory and Marxist queer theories I hope to offer, in the chapters that follow, a substantial critique of sexual imperative as a product both of material and the *cultural*, and consequently a reconceptualization of asexuality as a locus of transgression that is imbued with the potentiality of the then and there of utopia.

4. From accumulation to sedimentation[5]: Sexuality as an accumulation technology in capitalism

> Modern laments that sex is used to sell are not about some accidental and transitory association of late capitalism. They are rooted in an almost three-hundred-year-old history of desire, corporeal and commercial. (Thomas Lacquer, 1992, pp. 214-15)
>
> Since we all live within the world of capital circulation and accumulation, this has to be part of any argument about the nature of the contemporary body. (Harvey, 2000, p. 102)

[5] According to Butler, materiality is constituted through sedimentation of certain stylized repetitions that are governed by regulatory norms and principles. Butler (1993, p. 15) explains *materialization* as the process of sedimentation, that is brought about through stylized repetitions of certain acts and coherent citing of norm. A sedimentation comes with the congealment of the past which has produced that sedimentation as a material effect. Therefore, sedimentation always implies historicity, and historicity always embodies sedimentation. Butler states that history is "a condition in which a 'practice' could not exist apart from the *sedimentation* of conventions by which it is produced and becomes legible" (1993, p.282, emphasis mine). Starting from this conceptualization, I define the historical process of investment in/of the bodies by accumulation strategies of capitalism, as a process of sedimentation, through which sexuality, both as a naturalized bodily property and a discourse of normalization, materializes, in other words gets sedimented.

Feminist and queer studies have cultivated a groundbreaking locus of knowledge for the explorations of the formation of heteronormativity, compulsory sexuality and sexual identity, which challenges the biopolitical regime of knowledge that has produced the essentialist and normative apprehensions on sexuality. Within this trajectory, very few have attempted to locate their scrutinization of sexuality at the uneasy intersection between historical materialism and feminisms (Hennessy, 2000; Floyd, 2009; Evans, 1993; D'Emilio, 1993). There has always been a prima-facie essential breach between feminist and Marxist theories on the basis of a kind of reductionism; as one has been blamed by virtue of focusing solely on discursive facet of the issue, and the other looking for all the answers in the light of class question. Marxist/socialist feminist tradition contributed a great deal to establishing a bridge between these two, by unearthing the intertwined relationship between capitalism and gender, albeit not particularly engaging in the denaturalization of sexuality. Hence, it failed to open up a theoretical space for more immediate considerations of the relationship between sexual normativity and capitalism, as well as to lay out the material facet in the formation of (normative) sexual identity categories. The foundational Marxist scholarship on the relationship between capitalism and sexuality, sketched out mainly by Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich, revolved around the idea of antinomic dialectic between capital and sexuality which attributed to capitalism solely a repressive function in its relation to sexuality, thereby fostering the rhetoric of sexual liberation. As a consequence, Marxian engagements with sexuality mostly failed to indicate the productive role of capital in proliferation of discourses of sexuality and sexual identity categories, perpetuating the veiling of the materialist facet that underlies the construction of sexuality. I feel obliged to clarify that these failures might stem from the long lasting epistemological separation of the so called cultural and material paradigm, which has developed into an almost incommensurable relationship that is hard to reconcile with the existing theoretical tools traditional Marxism and feminism could offer. What could be considered as reconciliation attempts, made by Althusser (1971), Lukács (1972), Gramsci (1971), were criticized on the basis that their approach prioritizes the class analysis over what is deemed cultural, by ascribing material the sole power to determine the cultural/social.

Nancy Fraser attempts to reconcile 'politics of recognition' with 'politics of redistribution', as she categorizes, however she does not challenge the idea that two different forms of injustices – misrecognition and maldistribution – root back to essentially different locus of social/economic structures. Thus, she ends up deepening the prima facie fissure and tension between these two. When she is talking about despised sexualities as a matter of misrecognition, she puts forward: “Sexuality in this conception is a mode of social differentiation whose roots do not lie in the political economy because homosexuals are distributed throughout the entire class structure of capitalist society, occupy no distinctive position in the division of labor, and do not constitute an exploited class. Rather, their mode of collectivity is that of a despised sexuality, rooted in the cultural-valuational structure of society” (Fraser, 2003, p. 18). Fraser fails to recognize the interlocking relationship between political-economic realm that capitalism inhabits and that of “cultural-valuational”, which are co-constitutive of each other.

Judith Butler, in her answer to Fraser’s conceptualization, refers to the split between these two disciplines, historical materialism and feminist/queer one, as “constitutive rupture” (1997, p. 269), and states that “this is not simply a question of certain people suffering a lack of cultural recognition by others but, rather, a specific mode of sexual production and exchange that works to maintain the stability of gender, the heterosexuality of desire, and the naturalization of the family” (1997, p. 272). Bringing the co-constitutive relationship between capitalism and sexuality to the fore, Butler furthers her analysis claiming that “the regulation of sexuality was systematically tied to the *mode of production* proper to the functioning of political economy” (Butler, 1997, p. 272, emphasis in the original). Nevertheless, while finding the analytical separation Fraser is positing problematic, Butler does not further her discussion to unpack the ways mode of production and regulation of sexuality depend on each other.

Arguing that the formation of compulsory sexuality, and in extension heteronormativity, was produced by capitalist mechanisms, I will construe the complex and miscellaneous relationship between capitalism and sexuality with respect to the process through which sexuality has been rendered an imperative and an essential part of an individual, in order to trace the mechanisms underlying the unintelligibility of asexuality. In this endeavor to unveil the materialist facet underlying the process of sex being turned into sexuality, an economic and political behavior, my mapping of the interdependence between sexual normativity and capitalism is twofold. In the first two subchapters, by bringing into dialogue a Marxian framework with Butler, I reconceptualize capitalist operations as performative in order to construe the subjectivation process and sexuality under capitalism. In the third subchapter, I will discuss the ways in which sexuality is instrumentalized for rationalization and organization of productive consumption, and expansion of market niches, as well as the ways in which sexual identities are produced at the moment of consumption within capitalist circulation. Lastly, I look into how capitalist circuits have depended on the mobilization of a sexual regime for the organization of paid and unpaid work, which was vital to reproduction and functioning of its operations.

4.1. Labor as performative, performativity as labor: Towards a reconceptualization of performative practices as reproductive labor

> -Having recognized the diversity of production, I recognize the diversity of subjects produced therein: I emphasize that production produces not only workers but Americans, loyal and proud General Motors employees, women, and gays and lesbians. (Joseph, 2002, p. 33)

The misguided split between cultural and the material that has permeated the scholarship on political economy/historical materialism and cultural studies (feminist and queer theories) has led to the mystification of the relationship between the social (re)production of labor that constitutes the laborer, and the performative citational practices, that constitute the subject. By extension, this resulted in a common practice of theorization of subjectivity (and hence, sexuality) as separately from the processes of capitalist circuits, which by extension has led to the ahistorical conceptualization of subjectivity and heteronormativity.[6]

In order to demonstrate that sexual imperative is assembled through capitalist circuits and vital to functioning of capitalism, I will first delineate the relationship between production and signification (the performative citational process), indicating that sign production and material production are simultaneous and co-constitutive operations. I argue that the regulatory norms and principles governing the cultural survival of subject, which depends on achieving cultural

[6] See Floyd's critique of Butler (2009, pp.79-120)

intelligibility and which necessarily involves the citing of the sexual norm as informed by regulatory ideals, and those norms that govern material survival, which depends on achieving the production of the means of subsistence under capitalism, co-inscribe each other, and are both operative in the subjectivation processes. Within the process of subjectivation, which is a performative process, the subject is interpellated into a subject position through citing the sexual norm, which is mobilized by the heterosexual matrix, which itself, in my conceptualization, is informed by the system of compulsory sexuality. Therefore, in order to understand how sexual norm was informed by capitalist mechanisms, it is necessary to demystify the relationship between the performative process of subjectivation and capitalism. The material (re)production of labor power that capitalism necessitates, I claim, is never separate from the cultural survival, the discursive production of the subject. Subject survives in both terms: as Butler (1993) says, it is through cultural intelligibility that the subject (the body) *materializes.* Therefore, for a comprehensive scrutinization and critique of the regulatory norms that compel the subject to submit to pervasive discourses of sexuality, and take up sexual identities, I will delve into an analysis of the relation of capitalist operations to (sexual) subjectivities.

Challenging the traditional material versus *merely cultural* dichotomy, Miranda Joseph (2002) argues that production is performative, whereas at the same time, performance is productive. Explaining the "performativity of production and the productivity of performance (p. 30), she claims that one's position in production is productive of her identity, and that therefore identities and social formations should not be understood as having "independent preexisting life but are fully immanent in (produced by and productive of) this productive activity" (p. 40). Here I must underline that production is not understood as referring solely to formal waged labor, but it comprises reproduction, consumption and all other value producing activities.

Joseph (2002) points out that according to Marx, the relationship between materiality and discourse is that of inseparability. She reminds that according to Marx "materiality equates with human practice, and thus materiality is inseparable from discourse" (Joseph, 2002, p. 35). In that sense, as Joseph argues, "materiality is always already discursive" and "discourse is always already material" (p. 36). Furthermore, implicating co-constitutiveness of materiality and discursivity, Marx elucidates that production process does not only entail reproduction of the subject's material existence, but also cultural existence:

> Production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form . . . of expressing their life. As individuals express their life so they are. (Marx, 1978, p. 150)

Marx's idea of production as the process for the simultaneous production of the subjects, could be read in a Butlerian framework as a performative process, given that performative practices the subject engages in, simultaneously, produce the subject. Parallel to this Marx delineates that the individuals materialize as the product of their productive activities (1978, pp.158-160). Given the broader understanding of production that I am perusing here – as productive consumption, reproduction and all other value generating activities[7] – if to read Butler through a Marxian lens, it becomes clear how the performative practices a subject performs could also be understood as reproductive labor. Reproductive labor, in the Marxist-feminist framework, would encompass activities such as cleaning, eating, cooking, as well as affective labor, namely any activity for reproduction of the labor power, which includes both reproduction of the physical existence of the individual, and the future bearers of the labor power. In that sense, for labor power to exist and continue, the subjects need not only produce commodities, but also (re)produce themselves in certain ways as prescribed by capitalist mode of production. Similarly, Harvey claims that "the laborer does not only lie in the path of variable capital as producer and exchanger. He/she also lies in that circulation proves as consumer and reproducer of the self (both individually and socially)" (2000, p. 110). Furthering his claim, I argue that the discursive means and modes of reproducing oneself are regulated by a certain matrix of intelligibility mediated by capitalist processes. If we look at the framework of theory of performativity, for the subject to come into existence, she has to engage in the certain discursive practices through performative citing of the norm, which in turn reproduces the subject (see Butler, 1997, 1993). Butler claims that bodies materialize within a performative process of reiteration of set of norms, meaning the matter of the bodies is constituted as the effect of certain power relations; hence "matter of bodies will be indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization and the signification of those material effects (1993, p. 3). In this regard, this citational process through which matter comes to matter is embedded in and produced by capitalist circuits. Therefore, I argue that this materialization is an effect/product of both the process of production (in the aforementioned

[7] See Joseph, 2002; Aruzza, 2015.

broader sense) and the labor of sign production. It is in this sense that production is performative and performance is productive. Therefore, the material and discursive reproduction of the self cannot be perceived as separate and autonomous procedures.

On a similar note, understanding production as performative, Joseph redefines labor to include "sign production" (2002, p. 42). With this in mind, it could be claimed that subjectivation is achieved through labor of sign production that the subject performs. The subject is compelled to perform a citational labor in order to reproduce herself. Consequently, reproductive labor encompasses all the activities for the reproduction of an intelligible subject, as well as the reproduction of the means of subsistence for the survival of the subject. Through her elaboration of Marx, Joseph (2002, p. 36) demonstrates that the means of subsistence for the reproduction of persons are not biological imperatives, but historically and socially determined under capitalism. In this regard, materialization of the body and the survival of this matter depend on consumption and reproduction of the means of subsistence (both in the 'cultural' and material sense), whereas perpetuation of capitalist circuits depends on production, preservation and expansion of these needs. Similarly, Butler states that the shaping, signification and circulation of the body are actually "[s]et of actions mobilized by the law, the citational accumulation and dissimulation of the law that produces material effects [and] the lived necessity of those effects (1993, p.12), and this 'law' is inscribed and mobilized by "specific social regulatory ideals" (p. 12). Concordantly, if we read Butler's theorization through Marx's historical materialist framework, what Butler (1993, p.4) calls "specific social regulatory ideals" that inform the "law" might indeed be enabled by capitalism, while also continuing to be altered, shaped, modified and incited in accordance with the changing dynamics and needs of capitalist circulation.

To sum up, the performative process of subject being constituted through citing the sexual norm ('sign production' in above conceptualization), which was previously understood to be associated exclusively with the realm of cultural, in this reconceptualization is seen to be mediated by capitalism. In what follows, I will discuss how extraction (and production) of labor power is also a performative process, that in turn could give insight into how commodity logic underlines the production and regulation of sexuality.

4.2. Capitalist mode of investment of/in the body: extracting labor power, extracting sexuality

"[C]apitalism is precisely about the production of a new kind of laboring body" (Harvey, 2000, p. 104).

Drawing upon Marx's remark that the workers are transformed "into appendages of capital in both the work and the place and the consumption sphere (or, as Foucault would prefer it, bodies are made over into *docile bodies* by the rise of a powerful disciplinary apparatus from the eighteen century onwards)" (Harvey, 2000, p. 101), David Harvey in his conceptualization of "body as an accumulation strategy" suggests that bodies in capitalism cannot be "a measure, sign, or a receiver of anything outside of the circulation of capital or of the various mechanisms that discipline them" (2000, p. 101). Moreover, Harvey (2000) suggests that the process of the circulation of variable capital, which is "the sale/purchase and use of labor power as a commodity" (p. 103), which is dependent on the process of extracting labor power from the body of the laborer as a commodity, becomes the site where bodies and subjectivities of "those through whom [the variable capital] circulates" (p. 103) are constituted. Furthering Harvey's claim, I argue that this process of the circulation of variable capital, as a performative process, does not solely involve the mere extraction of the labor power from the body of the worker, but that it also includes the very production of this labor power as an intrinsic capacity of the body whose exploitation is a prerequisite for capitalist circulations.

Prior to capitalism, the body was not objectified as materialized form of the means of accumulation/production, but it had an immediate relationship with the labor it was engaged in. Namely, the body did not materialize as the consolidated resource of an inherent labor power to be turned into a commodity, but its capacity for labor was realized at the moment of laboring, meaning it was a laboring body only insofar as it was performing labor (see Federici, 2004; Joseph, 2002, pp. 30-68). Italian autonomist feminist Silvia Federici touches upon the issue of body in capitalism, by stating that "the body had to die so that labor-power could live" (2004, p. 141). Perhaps, what she has in mind is the fact that the pre-capitalist mode of bodily existence was drastically altered by capitalism, to the extent that body could live only insofar as it could materialize as the bearer of labor power. In this sense, labor power is not intrinsic to the worker's body, but it is produced within and through the capitalist circuits, and for its recognition and materialization the laborer (the body) has to sell labor power, which then becomes a commodity. In other words, the worker could realize/perform her labor power only in the moment of turning it into a commodity, which is then consumed by the laborer. And this operation has to be repeated throughout her life, since the worker is compelled to survive. Survival of both individual and collective labor body means that the laborer needs to perpetuate the circulation of variable capital (by selling her labor power as a commodity), in return for a wage, which then allows her to reproduce her labor power (by consuming the capitalist-produced commodities) in order to continue living. Harvey, following Marx, claims that this circular process leads to alienation of laborers since “their creative capacities are appropriated as the commodity labor power by capitalists” (2000, p. 102). However, in my conceptualization, what takes place in this process is not only alienation, but also identification, in the sense that by virtue of being compelled to sell labor power, the worker identifies with her labor power as an inherent and constant capacity, which in return produces her as the laborer. The commodity logic of capitalism underlines the laborer’s relation to the labor power and its use value, and to her body, which now with capitalism is produced as the primary source of labor power. And through this process of commodification of labor power, the laborer is interpellated into subjectivity imbued with labor power, as a result of which the labor power appears to be innate, organic and primordial.

In what follows, I will further develop my claim that in these capitalist strata, where body becomes an accumulation strategy, regime of sexuality cannot be understood as an autonomous system that falls outside the nexus of capitalist subject production. Harvey (2000) explains that “[p]roductive consumption of the commodity labor power in the labor process under the control of the capitalist requires, *inter alia*, the mobilization of ‘animal spirits’, sexual drives, affective feelings, and creative powers of labor to a given purpose defined by capital” (p. 103). This given purpose rises sometimes for expansion of market niches and boosting of consumption, and sometimes for rendering the individual as the productive subject, namely for sustaining of the circuits of production, consumption and circulation. Concordantly, in the next section I posit that the process of extraction of labor power from the body of laborer, which is constitutive of labor power at the same time, could be read in parallel with the process of sex being turned in sexuality, as a result of which – as Foucault (1978) delineates – sexuality was no more what someone does, but what someone is.

4.2.2. "Capital as accumulated labor"[8], Sexuality as accumulated/ sedimented sign labor

In this section I argue that the capitalist commodity logic mediates the process of naturalization of sexuality, or in other words, of sex being turned into sexuality. The notion of commodity fetishism, as proposed by Marx, refers to the process of the reification of social relations into commodities that are rendered as having an immanent value independently of historical and social relations that produce it. Consequently, reification of social relations into commodities obscures the labor processes involved in the production of these commodities. Floyd explains reification as follows:

> Reframed in terms of a relation between knowledges and bodies, reification refers to a subject object dynamic specific to capitalist social relations by which social labor epistemologically objectifies bodily properties and capacities, and by which those objectifications in turn discipline, regulate, instrumentalize those bodies themselves, normalizing them as deskilled laborers or as sexual subjects, for example. (2009, p. 40)

As in the logic of commodity fetishism, which obscures the labor processes involved in the production of these commodities, reification of social relations into commodities is operative in the subjectivation process as well. As I will further elaborate below, matrix of intelligibility functions though the premise of this logic of commodity.

Namely, the subject who performs the "repetitive citational skilled labor" (Floyd, 2009, p. 95), which is also reproductive labor, in order to achieve intelligibility (which is a cultural value), does not recognize the historical and social relations enabling the chain of citationality that grant a certain citation legitimacy, meaning value. Hence, this obscuring of individual and collective labor underlying the process of discursive and epistemological labor that mediates the matrix of intelligibility ascribes the appearance of ontology to cultural values, one of them being sexual identity. Very much like the alienation process where the worker cannot recognize her own labor in the products that she has invested her labor in, the subject does not recognize the reproductive labor (in the form of performative labor of citing the regulatory norms mediated by capitalist circuits) in the product, the product being the intelligible self, hence takes it for granted

[8]Marx, K., 1972, p. 125.

that the cultural values attached to the self are organic. In this sense, naturalization of sexuality occurs through obscuring of the epistemological labor in the knowledge production, which then governs the individual and collective consumptive and reproductive labor through which the subject is interpellated into a sexual identity category. On a similar note, Floyd expands Foucault's argument on sex being turned into sexuality:

> What Foucault characterizes as an emerging discursive regime representing sexuality in terms of subjectivities rather than actions—for example, in terms of homosexual "species" instead of sodomitical practices—I argue can be understood as mediated by capital in terms of a growing epistemological dissociation of sexual desire from the gendered body, a reification of sexual desire as such. (2009, p.40)

Reification, both in the case of reifying a 'bodily capacity' into labor power and in the case of reifying sex act into a subjectivity, does not only denote a moment of externalization, but also naturalization. With transition into capitalist mode of production, laborer is no more the direct producer of the means of production (both production of her own labor power, in extension of her body, and production of commodities for subsistence), but she has to consume her own labor power, whose extraction is organized through social and collective labor relations. Within and through this process during which she is the consumer of labor power, she is defined as the laborer. This commodity logic of capitalism underlining the laborer's relation to the labor power and her body, I further argue, becomes a normative apparatus that at the same time governs the process of sexual subjectification. Subject is not only rid of the means of production outside the commodification operation, but also rid of means of production of sexual significations. The subject is now compelled to reiteratively consume (read: cite) sexual knowledge mobilized by pervasive discourses of sexuality, through which she is simultaneously defined as the sexual being. Much like with the case of commodification of labor-power, where subject is not only alienated from her own labor power, but indeed identifies with it, the sexualized subject is not alienated from a supposed primordial sexual energy, but indeed identifies with sexuality through this sexual knowledge production. Neither of these processes work in a unilateral fashion; on the contrary through disciplinary mechanisms, subject is produced as this productive consumer from within. Through this capitalist tendency of reification and commodification, both sexuality and labor power become naturalized and by extension they are proclaimed to already existing prior to capitalism. As Floyd (2009) sets out “[t]he epistemological objectification of the worker’s technical skill and the epistemological objectification of sexual desire are both, in this sense, aspects of a more general, ongoing, reifying capitalist dynamic…” (p. 45).

Furthermore, through this process of reification and commodification, bodies are assigned with certain use values in circulation, while at the same time, though this dissimulation effect created by the logic of commodity fetishism, those values appear to be intrinsic to the bearer. Let us remember that commodity fetishism occurs within and through this circulation process, as a consequence of which products/commodities are perceived to have inherent values in themselves as though they emerged on their own, regardless of the labor embedded in it. This dissimulation of the labor, I contend, prevails also in the case of sexual subjectivities. Much like products, bodies (subjects) appear to have inherent sexual values, considering that commodity fetishism is operative in the production of sexual knowledges as well. Namely, by virtue of dissimulation of epistemological labor embedded in sexual knowledge production, subject perceives the sexual value as inherent and natural.

In *Grundrisse* Marx (1973) states that:

> The precondition of commodity circulation is that they be produced as *exchange values,* not as *immediate use values,* but as mediated through exchange value. Appropriation through and by means of divestiture [*Entäusserung*] and alienation [*Veräusserung*] is the fundamental condition. Circulation as the realization of exchange values implies: (1) that my product is a product only in so far as it is for others; hence suspended singularity, generality; (2) that it is a product for me only in so far as it has been alienated, become for others; (3) that it is for the other only in so far as he himself alienates his product; which already implies (4) that production is not an end in itself for me, but a means. (p. 126)

In this regard, the body as a commodity is not directly circulated based on assumed use value of it, but has to be mediated through certain chain of exchange values. For instance, body cannot be circulated through its assumed use value, as in capacity for sexual activity, but has to be brought into the realm of exchange values in accordance with the chain of signification regulated through epistemological labor. This exchange value corresponds to sexual identity categories, which becomes a universal signifier in the circulation process of bodies. In this vein, Rosemary Hennessy (2000) states that "reified sexual identities—straight, gay, queer—are tied to capitalism's class system in that they are ways of seeing cultural study, commodity logic, sexual subjects and knowing oneself and others that shore up the logic of commodity exchange on which capital is based. This is a logic that abstracts social phenomena, including human relationships, from the historical conditions that make them possible" (pp. 105-6). Therefore, use value of the sexualized bodies becomes determined or reconstructed through the discourses of sexual regime of truth that capitalism mobilizes for the purposes of bringing body into the realm of exchange even outside of the formal waged production process. In this picture, parallel to what Marx (1973) says about production which "is not an end in itself for me [the individual], but a means" (p. 126) repeating sexuality (which is reproductive labor of citing the sexual norm) is not an end in itself, but a means for 'cultural' survival, whereby to be integrated into the matrix of intelligibility.

I have argued above that the alleged sexual subject is the effect of the performative process of commodification of sexuality, which comprises subsumption of sex acts by productive discourses of sexual knowledge that rendered body essentially sexual. In extension, sexuality as the intrinsic property of the subject could be realized and achieved only in the sexual object choice paradigm, which at the same time grants the subject with a sexual identity. In parallel, with the shift under capitalism, where labor could only be practiced insofar as it is apprehended to be effect of labor power, an inherent capacity to be sold in the form of commodity in the production sphere, sexual activities as well could only be practiced as manifestation of an 'innate sexual identity'. In the following chapter, I will move on to discuss in what ways and for what purposes capitalism, in its different phases, instrumentalized sexuality in order to maintain its circulation, to compartmentalize production and reproduction, therefore to achieve the separation of public and private.

4.3. Different deployments of sexuality with different capitalist incentives

Touching upon the relationship between disciplinary apparatuses and capitalism, Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish* (1995), elucidates that the shift in mode of production with capitalism had an interdependent relationship with the shift in power in the West, from traditional, violent forms to the disciplinary one, which would bring about "subtle, calculated technology of subjection" (p. 220) that capitalism instrumentalized for the accumulation of persons:

> [T]he two processes – the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital – cannot be separated; it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them; conversely, the techniques that made the cumulative multiplicity of men useful accelerated the accumulation of capital. At a less general level, the technological mutations of the apparatus of production, the division of labor and the elaboration of the disciplinary techniques sustained an ensemble of very close relations… Each makes the other possible and necessary; each provides a model for the other. The disciplinary pyramid constituted the small cell of power within which the separation, coordination and supervision of tasks was imposed and made efficient; and analytical partitioning of time, gestures and bodily forces constituted an operational schema that could easily be transferred from the groups to be subjected to the mechanisms of production... [T]he technical analysis of the process of production, its "mechanical" breaking-down, were projected onto the labor force whose task it was to implement it: the constitution of those disciplinary machines in which the individual forces that they bring together are composed into a whole and therefore increased is the effect of this projection. Let us say that discipline is the unitary technique by which the body is reduced as a 'political' force at the least cost and maximized as a useful force. The growth of a capitalist economy gave rise to the specific modality of disciplinary power, whose general formulas, techniques of submitting forces and bodies, in short, "political anatomy," could be operated in the most diverse political regimes, apparatuses or institutions. (pp. 220-21)

Foucault's remark on the relationship between disciplinary power and capitalism could be furthered by including the aspect of sexuality into the scrutinization of "accumulation of men" and accumulation of capital, since the discourses of sexuality have been the primary technology both for internalization of those aforementioned disciplinary mechanisms on individual and social level and for organization and division of labor, as well as for the creating of a certain ontologies in the form of productive and desiring subject under capitalism. During transition to capitalism, the drastic shift was the production of the "free" worker by capitalism, who no more needed to serve 'sovereign power'. As suggested by Foucault (1982), "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free" (p. 221), while at the same time, in order for capitalism to function and expand, this 'freedom' had to be managed, there had to be 'docile bodies', prone to be disciplined in compliance with capitalist ends. Therefore, capitalism had to give birth to new subjectivities, through which a self-sustaining system of control and discipline could be established.

Before Foucault's conceptualization of sexuality as an instrument of productive power mechanisms, sexuality was – in orthodox Marxist texts – understood as a primordial property, which with transition to capitalism has begun to be repressed, because under capitalism the subject became alienated from her own body and sexuality. For instance, Marxist thinkers Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse delineated the commodification of sexuality solely through the concept of alienation, claiming that capitalism repressed libidinal capacities of the subject. Arguing against Marcuse's conceptualization of power and repression in relation to the body and sexuality in capitalism, Foucault states:

> I would also distinguish myself from para-Marxist like Marcuse who give the notion of repression an exaggerated role—because power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression… If, on the contrary, power is strong this is because, as we are beginning to realize, it produces effects at the level of desire—and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it. (1980, p. 59)

For Foucault, then, repression is only one manifestation of the deployment of sexuality, which produces intensification of desire and sexual relationality, the mechanism Foucault situates historically into the same period of transition to capitalism. Foucault connects the nineteenth century period of deployment of sexuality to "the need to form a 'labor force' (hence to avoid any useless 'expenditure,' any wasted energy, so that all forces were reduced to labor capacity alone) and to ensure its reproduction (conjugality, the regulated fabrication of children)" (1978, p. 43). But despite historically framing sexuality as one of the overarching disciplinary apparatuses, and on another note admitting to the interdependence between the rise of capitalism and disciplinary power, Foucault did not delve much on the relationship between proliferation of sexualities and capitalism. Operating in Marxist-queer framework, Kevin Floyd (2009) criticizes Foucault for not comprehensively recognizing the capitalist dynamics in the nexus of power-knowledge sexuality:

> But Foucault, for his part, is so concerned to emphasize the objective normalization of bodies by knowledge that he obscures the production – by agents, by historically situated laboring subjects – of this same knowledge. While Foucault's analysis certainly demystifies the objective operation of these knowledge regimes, it also reinforces the mystification of their status as social labor's highly mediated products. (p. 189)

In his attempt to historicize sexuality's relation to capitalist development, Floyd (2009) suggests that normalization of sexuality is carried out by epistemological labor of knowledge production by certain historical agents and institutions, always catering to the needs of capital accumulation. If we are then to read Foucault through a Marxian framework, we could argue that – since repression itself, as a manifestation of the deployment of sexuality, produces intensification of desire and sexual relationality – what capitalism incites is not alienation but identification with sexuality, even though techniques and mechanism of coalescing subjectivity with sexuality differs in different capitalist epochs.

Bringing Foucault into dialogue with Lukács, Butler and Marx in his study of reification of desire in capitalism, Floyd (2009) suggests that Taylorism (which refers to the late 19th and early 20th century period in the United States) is the period when the laborer is rendered the productive subject, and her body is engineered to emerge as a strategy of accumulation, particularly through sexual knowledge production developed mainly by the discourses of psychoanalysis from eighteenth to early twentieth century. With Fordism (the period which refers to post-WW2 boom) consumptory mechanisms incite the proliferation of desires and sexual identities, since the crisis raised as a consequence of overproduction/overaccumulation in Taylorism needed to be solved by stimulating overconsumption by expanding and opening new market niches through proliferated sexual identities. Along the same lines, Foucault (1980) also differentiates between two epochs in capitalism that instrumentalized two distinct ways of the deployment of sexuality without using the terms Taylorism and Fordism, but sticking to the same historical differentiation. Foucault (1980) raises the question: “What mode of investment of the body is necessary and adequate for the functioning of a capitalist society like ours?” (p. 58). According to him, the answer is the following:

> From the eighteenth to the early twentieth century I think it was believed that the investment of the body by power had to be heavy, ponderous, meticulous and constant. Hence those formidable disciplinary regimes in the schools, hospitals, barracks, factories, cities, lodgings, families. And then, starting in the 1960s, it began to be realized that such a cumbersome form of power was no longer as indispensable as had been thought and that industrial societies could content themselves with a much looser form of power over the body. Then it was discovered that control of sexuality could be attenuated and given new forms. (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 58)

According to Foucault, capitalism “finds a new mode of investment which presents itself no longer in the form of control by repression but that of control by stimulation” (1980, p. 57). This conceptualization is in line with Floyd’s (2009, p.47) argument that with the inception of Fordism, due to the “potential accumulation crisis” which could result in “idle, uninvested capital… and idle, univested labor, this ‘free’ capital needed to be reinvested. Hence, the expansion of the market niches and consequently, a stimulation of consumption (that would in turn further stimulate production) were required for the capitalist system to sustain itself.

Following a chronological logic, I will first look into pre-Fordist phase of capitalism, in which the mode of investment of the body, the particular ways for the deployment of sexuality, capitalism required was through more “heavy, ponderous, meticulous and constant” disciplinary mechanisms.

4.3.1 Organization of the spheres of production reproduction through sexuality

With the inception of capitalism, since production was transferred from household to the market, family was no more the center of production, and the idea of self-sustaining family units was demolished. On the other hand, the family unit, though with altered characteristics, had to be preserved so that it would stand as the source of unwaged labor in order to provide capitalism with surplus and reproduction of labor power. Without implementing the sexual knowledge regime, I would argue, capitalism would not have been able to have control over and prevent the process of individualization and desired population growth from counteracting against each other. Along the line with land expropriation and wage economy, capitalism started to sow the seeds of individualism and broke the collectivist social structure, in which family used to be an economically self-sustaining social unit. However, it also had to keep this boosted individualization process under control, granting that one of the primary principles for capitalism to sustain itself is the nuclear family unit, which will be the complementary sphere of production. As I have mentioned above, in the capitalist system, the relation of domestic sphere, where reproductive labor is performed, to production process is mystified, so that the activities taking place in the sphere of reproduction would remain unpaid, therefore provide capitalism with constant surplus value. Moreover, as I have explained previously, capitalism, for its maintainability and survival, requires (re)production of labor power, which includes biological reproduction of next generation of laborers and other activities that involve both providing of the material (preparing food, clean clothing, rearing children etc.) and the affective labor (such as affection and love for the laborers, so that they would not become exhausted by the alienating nature of the wage labor).

For organization of capitalist relations of production and social reproduction, capitalism relies on the sexual division of labor, in which reproductive labor has been naturalized as responsibilities of women, so that the activities they perform for providing capitalism with the labor power it necessitates do not appear as work, and therefore do not qualify to be waged labor. Foucault (1978) claims that "deployment of alliance" (p. 106) preceding the deployment of sexuality has started to lose significance with the rise of capitalism, since its organization based on kinship ties has become less and less relevant for the emerging economic and political developments that "no longer rely on it as an adequate instrument or sufficient support" (p. 106). With respect to this, Floyd elucidates that:

> This emerging regime of sexual knowledge is then gradually "deployed" from "the fringes of familial institutions,"… from outside the "family cell," and proceeds to saturate that cell with highly coded sexual meaning that seems at first

> to threaten but ultimately reinforces familial relations of alliance by radically changing the nature of those relations. (2000, p. 56).

Sexual regime, then, consolidated the family structure, both maintaining the reproduction of family unit, and perpetuated and reproduced inside this family structure. In this sense, sexual saturation granted family with new significations in its new nuclear and monogamous structure, in accordance with capitalist mode of production. Foucault (1978) connects the deployment of sexuality in nineteenth century to "the need to form a 'labor force' (hence to avoid any useless 'expenditure,' any wasted energy, so that all forces were reduced to labor capacity alone) and to ensure its reproduction (conjugality, the regulated fabrication of children)" (p. 114). Drawing attention the role of witch-hunts within this process of forming a 'labor force', Sivia Federici (2004) elucidates, that "[t]he witch trials provide an instructive list of the forms of sexuality that were banned as 'non-productive': homosexuality, sex between young and old, sex between people of different classes, anal coitus, coitus from behind (reputedly leading to sterile relations), nudity and dances" (p. 184). According to her witch trials functioned as a disciplinary apparatus for the purposes of constructing the 'right' kind of sexuality, in order to maximize utility and docility on the surface of the subject's body.

By virtue of rendering sexuality an inevitable need and imminent part of a healthy individual through the discourses of sexual knowledge, and then by condemning and pathologizing exercise of sexuality outside marriage, capitalism positioned the family as the ultimate ambit to meet this need. John D'Emilio, in *Capitalism and Gay identity* (1993), touches upon this very point, "On the one hand, capitalism continually weakens the material foundation of family life, making it possible for individuals to live outside the family… On the other, it needs to push men and women into families, at least long enough to reproduce the next generation of workers", and he adds, "[t]he elevation of the family to ideological prominence guarantees that capitalist society will reproduce not just children, but heterosexism and homophobia" (p. 474). According to D'Emilio, without sexualisation of modern societies, capitalism would not be able to implement privatization of reproductive labor and organization of wage labor.

Even though capitalism has managed to create the utterly productive subject through pathologizing the non-productive practices of sexuality, capitalist circulation could not be sustained only by virtue of normalizing labor processes and situating productivity of the laboring subject in the sphere of reproduction/production. In addition, capitalism needed to intensify and normalize the consumption process as well. The Taylorist regime of focusing on maximizing the production, meaning accumulation through production, led to the crisis of overproduction/overaccumulation, since capitalism failed to synchronize the consumption with production. Therefore, capitalism needed a new regime, where accumulation through production, which was maintained by turning the body into a machine, could be complemented with accumulation through consumption. It was not enough for capitalism to normalize the subject as productive, it also needed to normalize it as the consuming one. Therefore, sexuality has to be instrumentalized for the purposes of excitement and incitement for the implementation of consumerist desires and expansion of market niches. As Foucault (1980, p.58) suggests, now the subject needed to be controlled not by repression but by *stimulation.*

4.3.2 Will to Know, Will to Consume: Objectification of sexuality for disciplinary and consumptory purposes

> -If modern societies have dedicated themselves to speaking of sex *ad infinutum* while exploiting it as a secret, surely this exploitation has been in commodified and commercial forms. (Evans, 1993, p.25)
>
> "And what if sex itself is no longer in sex?" (Baudrillard, 2007 [1977], p. 16).

The crisis of accumulation that had stemmed from the unbalance between production and consumption that capitalism underwent could be solved by a boosted consumerism regulated by a consumption norm. The individual who was previously constituted as the productive subject, now, besides being productive, has to be imbued with a consumerist desire. Surplus-value generating activities previously organized mainly around two spheres – reproduction and production – now needed to be expanded into a consumption-based mode of accumulation, by multiplying and intensifying the consumptory mechanisms.

In order for this circular mechanism of consumption and production to survive, three steps needed to be taken according to Marx: "Firstly quantitative expansion of existing consumption; secondly: creation of new needs by propagating existing ones in a wide circle; thirdly: production of new needs and discovery and creation of new use-values" (Marx, 1973, p. 408 quoted in Floyd, 2009, p. 47). To this end, practices of consumption needed to be moved beyond the paradigm of consuming for reproduction of subsistence – for reproducing the self and the bearers of labor power –, by intensifying individualization, and through this individualization, by multiplying the individual needs. It is in that vein that sexuality is released from solely procreative ends to non-procreative, but value-generating ones. However, the process of subject's incitement into further individualization by virtue of further sexualization had to be controlled and regulated by capitalism in a way that it would be the locus of production of the consumerist desire. Therefore, capitalism needed to further normalize the subject, while multiplying the sites for its normalization, with intensive intervention into both private and public relations of the subject. It is in that moment, as Floyd (2009) suggests that "a disciplinary social consumption has been constitutive of the reificationof heterosexual and homosexual forms of subjectivity" (p. 35). With respect to capitalism's further invasion of the every aspect of life, Floyd (2009) states that " [t]he managing of consumption within an emerging intensive regime of accumulation, the attempt to ensure that effective demand keeps pace with increases in productivity, is … a compensatory intervention mediating—normalizing, regulating, commodifying – personal life" (p. 53). The idea of personal life is constituted through separation between production and leisure. This distinction between production and leisure had previously been organized in a symmetrical relation to public and private. However, with this new incentive in capitalism to deploy consumption-based mode of accumulation, leisure was enhanced both quantitatively and qualitatively, through deskilling of previously skilled labor with the Taylorist shift to maximize relative surplus-value rather than absolute surplus value, which carries more limitations[9]. And this expanded leisure has become the site for generating surplus value through consumptive labor of the subject. Thereby, consumptive labor was socially organized and

[9] Relative surplus-value is the value extracted through maximization and intensificaiton of production by the improvements made in the labor process, including deskilling of labor, as opposed to absolute surplus value which is extracted through lengthening the working day where labor process is embedded in, thus could only achieve so much because of spatial, temporal and physical restrictions.

extended to public, which has been mediated by relations of exchange. Similarly, Joseph (2002) contends that “[t]he labor of the consumer contributes the greater share of surplus value, an unlimited share since it is based on signification and not on human labor capacity within the twenty-four-hour day” (p. 41). Then, as Floyd (2009) suggests “subjectivity itself is increasingly interpellated… within the space-time of leisure, at the moment of consumption rather than production” (p. 54).

Furthermore, spatio-temporal constraints employed within the sphere of production (such as formal labor time and the factory) become the means that lead to proliferation of consumption, due to the fact it gives an illusionary promise of liberation within the sphere of consumption by urging subjects to express their (sexual) desires through commodity exchange. This illusion of liberation is underlined by the existence of the various lifestyles that are embedded in and productive of numerous market niches. As mentioned above, the main incentive in the deployment of sexuality prior to Fordism, was to implement a separation between private and public, hence to privatize the reproductive labor, which is why the focus was on procreation. And this previous deployment of sexuality that was located into locus of ostensible constraints is now instrumentalized to constitute not only productive but also desiring subject, by compelling the subject to compensate for those constraints with proliferation and intensive investment in desire within the sphere of consumption. This realm of consumption, unlike the one of production, controls and shapes the subject not by ostensible constraints, but by stimulation, particularly by stimulation of sexual significations. On a similar note, Harvey (2000) points out that:

> The organization, mobilization, and channeling of human desires, the active political engagement with tactics of persuasion, surveillance, and coercion, become part of consumptuary apparatus of capitalism, in turn producing all manner of pressures on the body as a site of and a performative agent for ‘rational consumption’ of further accumulation. (p. 111)

Furthering Harvey’s claim, I contend that the subject could express and provisionally satisfy the desire only though consumption of commodities and signs. This provisionality in return ensures reproduction of this desire embedded in its body, and therefore its future consumption as well. And it is through this very process the subject is saturated with desire. This circular process could be, in a Butlerian fashion, considered as a performative repetition, without which the subject cannot preserve its provisionally intelligible position.

Foucault maintains that "[i]n the space of a few centuries, a certain inclination has led us to direct the question of what we are, to sex . . . to bring us almost entirely – our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history – under the sway of a logic of concupiscence and desire" (1978, p. 78). This *certain inclination,* I would claim, has been generated in the capitalist circuits, for the purposes of maintenance and proliferation of market niches. This sphere of consumption expands and mobilizes the sexual regime of knowledge, which, I claim, becomes the motor of the consumption norm. The consumption norm is based on the premise of exploiting the hermeneutic of sexuality as the hidden truth that has been repressed, thus only in demystification of this truth a 'true self' could be realized. Then, sexuality functions as an omnipresent incitement for the consumerist desire. Similarly, Evans puts forward that "the material construction of sexualities has been most spectacularly manifest not only through consumerism's colonization of specialized sexual leisure and lifestyles but also through its deployment of covert coded sexual messages to further the commercialization of all commodity forms" (1993, p.41). It is timely to ask here, what is it that bolsters subject's 'willing' participation in the consumptive labor?

Evans stresses that "[t]he material construction of sexualities within consumerism lies at the very heart of the modern era's instrumental self-interest for whilst consumption and sexual identity and expression are pursued in public, both their objectives remain resolutely fetishized as 'personal' and 'private'" (1993, p.45). Moreover, he also elaborates that "[o]nly sexuality can serve as the link between private desire and its public expression in and through the market" (1993, p.25). Then, subject cites the consumption norm, meaning perform consumptive labor, in order to be able to know and make sense of itself as a sexual being, and express this sexuality in an intelligible form through the market relations. In capitalism it is only through consumption of sexual knowledge, lifestyles, and signs that this 'hidden truth' of sexuality could be deciphered as in the form of sexual identities. In that sense, sexual subjectivation materializes in the moment of consumption within a repetitious temporality. Evans suggest that "[t]he pursuit of the sexual self is the pursuit of the commodified self; individual, private, innermost accomplished through the acquisition and conspicuous manifestation of style" (1993, 45). This manifestation of style in the form of a sexual identity category is achieved through coherent and stylized practices of consumptive labor, with respect to which one has been attributed an illusionary sense of agency that is proclaimed to be external to workings of capitalism. As opposed to this logic, Harvey puts forward "by locking workers into certain conceptions of lifestyle, consumer habits, and desire, capitalist can more easily secure compliance within the labor process while capturing distinctive and proliferating market niches for their sales" (2000, p.112). This process, then, becomes an emerging site for sexual subjectivation under capitalism.

* * *

Beginning with a broader claim about sexual imperative being produced in an intertwined and immediate relation to capitalism, in this chapter I have pursued an endeavor to pinpoint the interlocking moments where sexuality and capitalist mode of production could not be understood as autonomous mechanisms that have been structured independently from each other. With this in mind, I have attempted to present a meaningful dialogue between materialist literature and Butler and Foucault in order to reveal that the construction of sexual normativity has never been separable from material processes and transformations. By bringing together insights and arguments that are formative of the theory of performativity and those that are formative of Marxian theories, I have demonstrated how the contemporary mode of production governs the performative process of sexual subjectivitation, through which sexuality has been normalized and rendered compulsory, which in return allowed capitalism to turn the body into an accumulation strategy. I have attempted to demonstrate that sexual performativity, hence sexual subjectivation, is compelled and regulated through the imperatives and norms of labor which necessitate disciplining of the subjects into productivity and coherency, as well as through the imperatives of consumption which necessitate inciting of the subject into productive desires. This intensive deployment of sexuality by capitalism in every aspect of life is what rendered asexualities unintelligible and unspeakable. Starting from this point of exteriority, I argue that it is this locus of unintelligibility, within which asexuals failed to be positively interpellated into desiring subject positions oversaturated by sexual significations, is what at the same time imbues asexuality with transgressive potentialities to debilitate the significatory power of sexuality. Therefore, in the following chapter, I demarcate the ways in which the deconstructive potential of asexuality could be realized by grounding my conceptualization in a locus of queer edifice, a tool best suited for exploring the transgressive impetus that a non-normative site could carry.

5. The impossible possibility or whateverizing sexuality: Reconceptualizing asexuality on the way towards queer futurity

-"The coming being is whatever being." (Agamben, 2001)

-"What history always misunderstands, fails to recognize, alternative, or radical negativity."(Felman, 1983, p. 105)

-"Disidentification can be a world-making project in which the limits of the here and now are traversed and transgressed." (Muñoz, 1999, p. 169)

In this chapter, I offer my critique of current scholarly understandings of asexuality and offer my reconceptualization of the notion of asexuality that – I argue – could potentially be the queer locus of disidentification with sexuality. In the first subchapter, I criticize current conceptualizations of asexuality that have framed it in dichotomous terms vis-à-vis sexuality as a sexual identity based on lack. This conceptualization, I argue, falls into the pit of reifying the discourse of sexual normativity and hence fails to read the queer potentialities the asexual locus could carry. In the second subchapter I offer new readings of asexuality as a queer locus of disidentification with sexuality, framing it as a non-identiterian and non-belonging 'whatever' that exists solely in and through its potentiality of queer utopia where new practices beyond the paradigm of belonging and identifying could be performed.

5.1. Problematics of defining asexuality as a (sexual) identity category based on lack

Currently, the dominant scholarship on asexuality in feminist theory, as I have previously demarcated, positions asexuality as a separate sexual identity category, as the "fourth sexual orientation", which is located at the very end of the 'sexual spectrum' – as the identity completely lacking sexuality (Durãe, Martins, Borralho, 2016; Van Houdenhove, Gijs, T'Sjoen, & Enzlin, 2015; Robbins et al., 2016; Russell, 2016; Vanwesenbeeck, 2016). In this vein, feminist literature has conceptualized asexuality as a "radical discourse of sex-negativity"

(Milks, 2014), a “radical identity” (Fahs, 2010) which lacks the “erotic component of sexuality” (Chu, 2014). And although significant pieces of literature criticized definitions of asexuality as a lifelong lack, arguing instead for an asexual diversity that would welcome different degrees of asexualities (Przybylo, 2011, Gressgard, 2013, DeLuzio Chasin, 2011, Scherrer, 2008), they nevertheless reinforced both the idea of asexuality as a lack (according to them, a lack in degrees[10]) as well as identity-seeking strategies as a way to reconceptualize the notion of sexual citizenship and hence gain recognition for asexual community.

Remembering what Butler says regarding unintelligibility, that one "exists" not only by virtue of being recognized, but, in a prior sense, by being recognizable” (Butler, 1997, p. 5) – the idea which I have previously discussed in Chapter 3 – it is not so difficult to understand why asexual identified people are choosing this kind of a way to claim intelligibility, given that asexualities and those who practice asexuality have always been denied of recognition or misconstrued and pathologized, which made them an object of medical and psychiatric intervention.

Namely, the way general public perceives asexuality has been saturated with negativity; along the lines of discourses of pathologization and medicalization, asexuality has also been seen as the sedimentation of the repressive hypothesis, a perpetuation of the so-called Victorian prudish values. I have elaborated more on Foucault’s critique of repressive hypothesis in chapter 6, so here it suffices to briefly retrace the main argument in order to understand the negative meanings asexuality has been charged with. Namely, the repressive hypothesis suggests that since the Victorian era there has been a pervasive prudish attempt to repress sexuality at all costs. Hence, asexuality – in some discourses of pathologization – is understood as a product of societal repression of sexuality. Foucault (1978) criticized repressive hypothesis, stating that “[t]he irony of this deployment [of sexuality] is in having us believe that our “liberation” is in the balance” (Foucault, 1978, p. 159). The promise of liberation that lies in the balance of sexuality suggests that the normative, ‘healthy’ sexuality should be neither too excessive nor completely

[10] I use the term ‘lack in degrees’ to refer to those discussions of asexuality that framed it as a fluid identity according to which the degree and temporality of lack of sexual attraction could differ from one person to another. Ironically, despite its contribution to de-essentializing accounts of asexuality, this stream of scholarship nevertheless still stuck to definitions of asexuality as a lack in opposition to the normative measures of ‘healthy’ sexuality, the problematics of which has been previously discussed in chapter 2.

lacking. Therefore, a healthy Self only exists if it performs sexuality within the boundaries of what is constructed as the required sexual balance, while everything outside of the required balance is considered pathology. Hence, in the sexual regime of truth we live in, what is called 'lack', failing to adopt to this 'balance' has been positioned as excluded from the discourses of liberation, therefore seen as the reminiscent of the 'prudish' Victorian values and consequently, pathologized.

Merely understood as an expression of 'repressed sexuality', asexuality has been denied a legitimate subject position. Asexuality, then, becomes relegated to the position of the constitutive outside. In accordance with this, the few media representations that do exist portray asexual people as aloof, lifeless, nerdy, and robotic (Przybylo, 2011, p. 452). To fight all these negative charges ascribed to asexuality, asexual identified people, scholars and activists have mostly attempted do away with negativity, claiming asexuality as unthreatening difference in order to gain recognition and approval.

However, sexual orientation claims surrounding the discussions about asexuality position asexuality in an epistemological cul-de-sac, in which an identity based on non-experience of sexuality (as most studies define it) seeks recognition as a distinct sexual orientation. As Ela Przybylo (2011) has pointed out, despite the fact that these claims successfully help asexual community gain recognition, "it functions to stabilize sexuality because it incites new discourse of sexuality, coercing us into a defence of sexuality; we become sexuality's defendants against the potential threat of asexuality" (p. 452).

Following in the footsteps of Przybylo (2011), who claims that "[a]sexuality functions to reaffirm the space of sexuality, to re-establish its margins. It reminds us of the parameters of 'normal' sexuality and sex acts…" (p. 452), I argue that asexuality as a 'lack of sexual attraction and behavior' that falls into the spectrum of sexual identity categories, contradictorily, reifies the omnipresence of sexuality and the sexual monopolizations of identity and discourses, in spite of the fact that it has the potential to be a theoretical and practical tool for deconstruction of compulsory sexuality. Foucault maintains that "[t]he implantation of perversions is an instrument-effect: it is through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure [branch] out and [multiply], measured the body, and penetrated modes of conduct" (1978, p.48, emphasis mine). In this regard, conceptualization of asexuality as a lack, instead of reversing its relation to sexuality as an “instrument-effect”- hence cultivating its potential to dissemble normative power of sexuality-, contributes to sedimentation of sexual colonization. Therefore in its current state, as Przybylo (2011) puts forward, “asexuality functions to reaffirm the space of sexuality, to re-establish its margins” (p. 452).

Namely, positioning of asexuality as an identity based on its lack of sexuality – creates a dichotomous relationship between asexuality and sexuality. In this binarized scheme, the existence of asexuality depends on the omnipresence of what it opposes. In that sense, asexuality as what lacks sexuality, and hence what is dependent on sexuality would only exist only insofar as sexuality preserves its central position. Hence, asexuality, which is supposed to signify a difference from sexuality, is rendered through this dichotomy as a mere absence of sexuality. Defining asexuality as lack, an absence, instead of a difference is to submit to dominant position of sexuality which calls the asexual identified subject into being through this lack in a subordinated position to the sexual. This resonates with Eve Sedgwick’s analysis of the dichotomous relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality, as she puts:

> First, term B is not symmetrical with but subordinate to
> term A; but second, the ontologically valorized
> term A actually depends for its meaning on the simultaneous subsumption
> and exclusion of term B; hence, third, the question of priority
> between the supposed central and the supposed marginal category of each dyad
> is irresolvably unstable, an instability caused by the fact that term B is constituted
> as at once internal and external to term A. (1990, p. 10)

Sedgwick’s delineation of the relationship between hetero and homo loci, could be deployed to the understanding of the relationship between asexuality and sexuality. In this regard, sexuality as the omnivalent power-knowledge network monopolizes the matrix of intelligibility within which subjects are granted with ontology. Hence, sexuality has a hierarchical relationship with asexuality, for which the only possibility of being included in the spectrum of ontological positions resides in its subordination to sexuality. At the same time, in order for sexuality, as the “supposed central”, to carry this “ontologically valorized” position, “subsumption and exclusion” of asexuality becomes a prerequisite. In that sense, asexuality as the marginalized absence caters to stabilization of the centrality of sexuality, while carrying and implicating the very potential for its instability. Sedgwick's account of the dyadic relationship of hetero/home resonates with Butler's delineation of "original vs. copy", referring to the relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Delving into the discursive tension between heterosexuality and homosexuality manifested through inferior positioning of homosexuality as the derivative example and a failed citation of the former, Butler explains how the paradigm of copy/original is indeed tautological and the nature of their relationship is co-dependent. The notion of original vs. copy is mobilized through a propositional logic, in the sense that the essential and superior position of heterosexuality is dependent on the presence and at the same time exclusion of homosexuality, the copy. That is the reason why heterosexuality always carries the implication of homosexuality (the copy) as an inevitable principal of its status as the original. In this vein, the truth value of heterosexuality could only emerge in the presence of homosexuality, namely, the conceptual power of the original originates from the assumption that it could be copied. What I advocate for in this regard, is to challenge conceptualization of asexuality as a signifying absence that performs as a stabilizer-effect. Instead, asexuality should be reconceptualized to complicate and convolute the chain of signification that the sexual meanings are embedded into, which then would bring the instability of this "supposed central" to the fore.

On another note, essentializing this so called lack for the purposes of legitimization equals to adding the letter A to the LGBT cluster embedded in the discourses of identity politics. The essentialist discourses that define asexuality as a complete lack do not achieve the depathologization of asexuality and therefore, could be read in parallel with the homonormative discourses of identity politics. Instead of depathologizing asexuality, discourses of essentialism further marginalize those who practice asexuality without fitting into the picture of a complete "lack", much in line with what homonormative discourses have done to the queer community which did not align with normative discourses of 'balanced' gay (see for instance Warner, 1999). In this sense, the essentialist discourses create a division between a 'genuine' 'happy' and 'healthy' asexual who has never experienced sexual attraction, and who is content with that and, on the other hand, the 'unhealthy' asexual that has experienced sexual attraction/desire before, yet who currently experiences a low sexual attraction or none. Consequently, adopting essentialist discourses legitimazes the medical/psychiatric intervention in the case of the asexual who fails to perform a 'coherent' identity (see also DeLuzio Chasin, 2011). In this essentialist picture, asexuality as a sexual orientation category would be the regulatory ideal to live up to. However, as I have argued, even if negotiating an identity manifests itself as a primary option and an exodus from unintelligibility; it is indeed just opening up another ground for regulatory regime of sexuality compelling individuals to fit into sexual identity categories to prevail onto.

To sum up, instead of challenging the discursive regime of sexuality, the conceptualizations of asexuality as an identity based on a lack reinforce the sexual regime. So far, steps have been mostly taken for the inclusion of asexuality into sexual discourses as means to underscore the exclusion of asexuality from discourses and the invisibility of asexual identified people. By defining asexuality as a distinct sexual orientation, these discourses counterintuitively catered for the sexualization of asexuality and further sexualization of desire and intimacy. Therefore, albeit strategically valuable, this common approach to asexuality as a sexual identity has served to undermine the transgressive potentials that I believe this newly emerging locus of asexuality embodies: the potential to facilitate the rethinking of the normative position of sexuality, sexual identity categories and the subjectivities built around it or in other words, the very potential of asexuality to be a locus for decentralization and denaturalization of sexuality. Consequently, current attempts to locate asexuality into already existing sexual orientation frame neither achieve producing alternative subjectivities and discourses that are not monopolized by sexual vocabulary nor do they achieve the denaturalization of sexuality. As Przybylo elucidates, “[a]s long as asexuality remains faithful to reactive, binary-bound repetitions, it may only serve as a surface resistance to sexusociety, while at the same time aiding in sexusociety’s production” (2011, p. 456).

In this vein, in the following section, I will explore subversive potentials of asexuality through a queer lens in order to transfigure sexual meanings and attenuate the significatory power that sexual normativity discourses maintain. In doing so, I will also bring to the fore the theoretical instruments a reconceptualized locus of asexuality could offer for expanding and mobilizing queer meanings and enactments. In this regard, this queering of asexuality calls for unstabilization of the queer locus itself, to be, as Butler (1993, p. 223) says, “Critically queer”, since it is its unstability is what characterizes queer as queer.

5.2. Depotentiating sexual significations: Towards queer configurations of asexuality

In this project, as mentioned above, I will not be looking into empirical asexualities; rather my primary incentive is to unearth the performative potentials a queerly asexual space could actuate for undoing the normative sexuality, paving the path for non-normative performances and new forms of subjectivities outside the power-knowledge-sexuality regime. The incentive underlining my effort is not only queering asexuality or pointing at the possibilities of queer becomings in the locus of asexuality, but rather reworking the understanding of queer from an asexual lens and configuring new spaces and tools for queer resistance beyond non-normative sexual experience. Hence one of my aims is to deconstruct the rhetoric of sexual liberation, which will hopefully open up a new semantic field where novel perspectives and epistemologies for better understanding/deconstruction of heteronormativity could be exercised, that are beyond the logics of inclusion and exclusion mobilized through liberal-humanist discourses.

Before I delve into the investigation of asexuality, I would like to underline the ways in which I will approach, rework and resignify the notion of asexuality. First of all, my understanding of asexuality is not a continuation of previous accounts and definitions of asexuality as lack and absence, which gains signification only in its symmetrically oppositional relation to sexuality. I believe these definitions have failed to formulate a more nuanced stance against sexual normativity that would engage with the deconstruction of its underlying mechanisms through which sexual imperative comes about. One of the reasons behind my attempt to rework asexuality in a queer framework is that I aim to offer a possibility of a fuzzier imagining of an asexuality, which would open up a new horizon where the necessary political tools and strategies for the remaking of sexual, asexual and queer subjectivities could be rethought. This blurry ground I choose to locate asexuality on does not necessarily coalesce only with not performing sexuality; rather, I see it as a material-discursive tool that could be designed for denaturalization of sexuality. The project of denaturalization of sexuality would consequently debilitate sexuality’s normalizing power in governing over sex and gender binaries which, in tandem with centralized sexuality, construct all other forms of dualisms and concomitantly, constitute bodies and identities. On these grounds, I approach the notion of asexuality as a conceptual tool: an undefined site, a locus of resistance and queer practice. Aiming towards denaturalization and decentralization of sexuality, I see asexuality not only as a locus of absolute abstinence, absence or mere lack of sexuality, but more importantly, as a site where practices of negating sexuality as an identity marker, negation of sexual normativity, and debilitating pervasive valorization of sexuality could be performed.

Postulating that negativity that imbues asexuality endows it with the unrealized potentialities for transgression, I argue that asexuality needs to be read along with the discussions regarding radical negativity and queer negativity of both the antirelationist and anti-anti-utopian queer theories. I will distance my conceptualization of negativity from pure and absolute negativity of Lee Edelman (2004), which, in spite of his anti-utopian stance, ends up appearing unaccountably utopian. Akin to Paolo Virno's "nondialectic[al] understanding of the negative: as ambivalence, oscillation, and that which is perturbing" (quoted in Noys, 2010, p. 66), I contend that asexuality as potentiality cultivates not a negativity whose directionality is in symmetrical opposition with and mutually constitutive of sexuality, but an undefined process of dissatisfaction with what both sexuality and asexuality signify, which would complicate the binary polarizations reproduced by the system of compulsory sexuality. Drawing upon Shoshana Felman's theory of radical negativity, which "belongs neither to negation, nor to opposition, nor to correction ('normalization'), nor to contradiction (of positive and negative, normal and abnormal, 'serious' and 'unserious,' 'clarity' and 'obscurity')—it belongs precisely to scandal: to the scandal of their nonopposition" (quoted in Munoz, 2009, p. 13), I claim that the negativity that asexuality embodies does not have to materialize in an oppositional or exclusionary relation to practices of sexual acts. Asexuality, as I will further elaborate below, could emerge as the open-ended site where negativity could be instrumentalized for the purposes of disidentificatory becomings and deconstructive engagements. In this vein, I will attempt to conceptualize asexuality without yielding to assimilationist politics by drawing on Jose Esteban Munoz's (1999) theory of disidentification, reading it along with Giorgio Agamben's (1993) concept of whatever (qualunque), and offering a queer reading of negativity.

Relying on Muñoz's politics of disidentification, I argue that asexuality could emerge as a disidentificatory locus – the site for disidentifying with dominant interpellations of the discourses of compulsory sexuality, and with the significatory power of sexuality. Disidentification, according to Muñoz (1999), refers to a political strategy posited against homogenizing and assimilating identity positions underlined by regulatory ideals of normative power structures force upon the subjects. This political strategy is not simply informed by counter-identification or misidentification with normative imperatives; it does not rest on a superficially reactive position that is informed by sheer contrast or juxtaposition vis-à-vis dominant interpellations of normative discourses. Disidentification strives for destabilization through resignification and obfuscation of inscribed meanings and significations normative loci mobilize. As Muñoz (1999) states:

> "Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and re-circuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus disidentification is a step farther than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by dominant culture. (Muñoz, 1999, p. 31)

Concordantly, instead of limiting asexuality's potentiality to counteridentify with sexuality, I argue that it has the potentiality to materialize as the ground for performative disidentifications to 'recycle and rethink the encoded' sexual meanings and significations. Disidentifying with "excess of significance" (Rubin, 1984, p.151) surrounding the discourses of sexuality will simultaneously mean disidentifying with the health imperative that dictates the 'balanced' (hetero)sexual activity as its prerequisite, with normalcy, reproductive futurism, identity politics, sexual identity categories, (hetero)normative sociality, and with the hierarchization and categorization of relationships and intimacy in compliance with normative sexual order.

As I have previously implicated, to disidentify with sexual imperative does not have to be achieved through 'not doing it', but it can also involve a disidentification with the normative privileging of act over non-act. In that sense, as much as placing the 'not doing' of sex outside of categories of sexual identification is a legitimate strategy of disidentification, another equally powerful means of achieving disidentification with an asexual locus would be assuming an indifferent approach towards "doing it" and hence rejecting any sort of sexual identity categorization based on performing sex. Indifference towards sexuality within the sexunormative society should not be understood as an easy task, given that subject is constantly impelled to appropriate and cite pervasive sexual significations. Therefore, what brings about the transgressive disidentificatory potential is not only the often vocalized queer agenda of rejecting the logics of sexual orientation, but it is also the indifference towards the performances of sexual acts, the disidentification with the prescriptive importance attributed to sexuality, that could imbue asexuality with novel queer meanings, and that gestates the possibilities for new queer loci, becomings and practices. In other words, disidentification will undermine “the solemnity with which one speaks of sex nowadays” (Foucault, 1978, p. 6). Conflating the meanings of doing and not doing sex – or rather debilitating the excess of significations that the discourses of sexuality compel subjects to reiterate – facilitates disidentification with and deconstruction of the promoted liberal-humanist subject who is constructed on the premises of coherence, unitarity and wholeness. Given that it is the consistent and coherent repetition of norms and principles that bring the liberal-humanist subject into the matrix of intelligibility, by not citing faithfully and consistently one will disrupt the systematicity of this matrix (Butler, 1993). In order to be intelligible, the subject needs to coherently cite sexuality, which is secured by certain membership in a normative sexual category. The successful identification with a sexual orientation category foreshadows a future repetition of the sex act, or in other words, produces a temporality that justifies the sexual assumption and creates the appearance of a coherent and consistent subject, enforcing loyalty to this illusionary coherent self. Then these continuous performative citations, through which the identification is achieved, are constituted through and constitutive of what Butler (1993) calls sedimentation, through which, simultaneously, sexuality is granted an appearance of ontology: sexuality becomes one with the subject. However, in the gray disidentificatory site that asexuality could bring about, this subtle premise of coherency on which the liberal-humanist subject is formulated and owing to which it exists in the matrix of intelligibility is being deconstructed, the coherency is being broken, which at the same time complicates the sexual assumption, thus the taken-for-granted status of ontology. Therefore, asexuality in this disidentified form, promotes the potential to delink subjectivity from sexuality.

Akin to this theorization of sexuality, within the so-called asexual spectrum the Gray-A’s (the individuals who occasionally experience sexual attraction but do not engage in sexual practices, or those who generally do not engage in sex, although sex is not completely off the table) disidentify with the imperative of identifying with sexual categories, claiming that sexuality does not define them or it is not an important marker for them. Since they practice asexuality more than they practice sexuality, they claim that they feel frustrated about being subsumed under a sign that generates false assumptions about their lived reality, thus they maintain that sexual identity categories do not correspond to their apprehension of themselves ("Let's not do it", 2015). This could be considered as an empirical manifestation of deconstructing the hierarchy of act over non-act, and in extension depotentiating "ontologically valorized" (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 10) character of sexuality.

My conceptualization of asexuality as non(anti)-identitarian and non-belonging resonates at the same time with Agamben's (1993) concept of "whatever" as it exists solely in and through its potentiality beyond the paradigm of belonging and identifying. Agemben (1993) coins the concept of 'whatever' in The Coming Community in his discussion of creating a community which is not constituted through exclusionary and discriminatory means and that no more rests on organizing around common properties. What underlines this new community, he claims, should be "whateverness" that falls outside of the homogenizing nexus of identities and properties, and that which cannot be deployed to achieve belonging. 'Whatever-being', is a "such-and-such being… reclaimed from its having this or that property, which identifies it as belonging to this or that set" (1993, p. 1-2), and it is situated into a zone of indistinguishability. He further explains that "[whatever being] is neither apathy nor promiscuity nor resignation" (1993, p. 10), and argues for "the relative absence of determinate contents" (1993, p. 85) in the construction of whateverness and communities. According to Agamben, whatever being as devoid of any essence is constituted "by the indifference of the common and the proper" (Agamben, 1993, p. 18) and rejects the identitarian paradigm for its existence. This whatever, Agamben (1993) says, "is the event of an outside… [that] what is most difficult to think: the absolutely non-thing experience of a pure exteriority" (p. 66). Agamben's concept of whatever informs my reading of asexuality, as it also refers to that which has been rendered unthinkable and an exteriority to legitimate subject, and as I argue for an attitude of indifference, or in other words 'whateverness', in the practice or non-practice of sexuality.

Furthermore, Agamben's whatever is not bound up with any naturalized or definitively politicized identity, rather it comes about through the process of denaturalization and desacralization of the self. According to Salzani's reading of Agamben, "[t]his operation takes the name, in more recent texts, of "profanation": It implies the neutralization of what is profaned, which loses its aura of sacrality and is restored to use. And the creation of a new use is possible only by deactivating an old use, by rendering it inoperative…" (Salzani, 2012, p. 227). In parallel with this profanation process Agamben is describing, a possible asexual locus I am proposing could be built on the political premise of neutralization of sexual meanings and identities – that which has been previously "profaned". Therefore, sex could be "restored to use" without being oversaturated with regulatory signification.

Therefore, in line with what I have discussed in Chapter 4, by relying on a strategy of profanation asexuality could be at the same time the locus of disidentification with the capitalist valorization of sexuality, with respect to which market is oversaturated with sexual codes and significations, and commodified lifestyles underlined by sexual identity categories, all of which that has rendered sexuality as the main incentive for consumption. It is within the capitalist circuits that sexuality is attributed with historically and socially constructed use-values, through which sexual acts and expressions are granted the function to ascribe subject with certain cultural values and meanings, that subject relies on for achieving cultural intelligibility. In this regard, disidentificatiory locus of asexuality must accommodate use(s) of sexuality beyond value, thus disable the mobilization of sexuality as an omnipresent incentive for formation of consumerist desire.

In this vein, Agamben elucidates that "[p]rofanation … neutralizes what it profanes" (2007, p.77). Namely, Agamben (2007) claims that the capitalist system is secured by transforming desire into an apparatus of consumption and constant valorization, sacrelization of phenomena. Therefore, he argues for profanation of established values, maintaining that: "It is, however, possible that the unprofanable, on which the capitalist religion is founded, is not truly such, and that today there are still effective forms of profanation. For this reason, we must recall that profanation does not simply restore something like a natural use that existed before being separated into the religious, economic, or juridical sphere. (2007, 85). In this sense, when I advocate for profanation of sexuality, and finding value beyond use, I do not refer to any primordial/natural use that existed before capitalism, but nonsensical uses by rendering existing sexual signification inoperative. In other words, I call for a profanation of pervasive significations attributed to sex acts.

Consequently, this profanation would lead to the debilitation of the power-knowledge network sexuality is situated into, thus achieving the delinking of self and sexual acts (or lack thereof). As Gayle Rubin suggests, "[s]exual acts are burdened with an excess of significance" (1984, p. 151), and sexual imperative is mobilized and reinforced through coercive reiterations charged with this excess of significance. Therefore, asexuality could function as a tool for "profanation" of sexuality, not only through non-normative absence but also through disidentificatory sexual engagements, which do not necessarily fit into the non-normative excess strategy of queer.

Foucault elaborates on the pervasiveness of discourses of sexuality:

> The notion of 'sex' made it possible to group people together in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified. (1978, pp. 154-55)

To disrupt the universalizing logic and omnivalence of normative discourses of sexuality, asexuality, much like whatever being that exist only in itself as "such it is" in its singularity, should exist in and emerge from its singularity without affirming an identity. Agamben (1993) states that "Whatever singularity has no I identity, it is not determinate with respect to a concept, but neither is it simply indeterminate; rather it is determined only through its relation to an idea, that is, to the totality of its possibilities" (p. 67). Concordantly, a possible asexual locus should not be defined as a signifying absence with respect to sexuality, which would reify the omnivalent position of normative sexuality. Rather, it should emerge as a locus not only for those who do not practice sex, but also for those who aim to whateverize sexual practices, rejecting the normative logic which endows sex practices with identity making function. In this regard, whatever is characterized by disidentfication with belonging, the homogenizing logic of commonality and the universalizing logic of identity categories. In other words, instead of performing/ signifying a universal signified, sexual practices – in a disidentificatory locus – could exist in their singularities. Asexuality as the space of whatever does not accommodate to any single identity, but cultivates a locus of non-belonging for multiple becomings in their singularity.

Asexuality from the anti-descriptivist perspective that I am engaging in, should also disidentify from its previous definitions and conceptualizations, which proved to be mostly essentialist since the struggle for visibility, which has located the asexuality on the margins of intelligibility, will not suffice in devitalizing the regulatory power sexuality is imbued with. Butler also touches upon the strength of disidentification as a political strategy:

> [t]he mobilization of the categories of sex within political discourse will be haunted in some ways by the very instabilities that the categories effectively produce and foreclose. Although the political discourses that mobilize identity categories tend to cultivate identifications in the service of a political goal, it may be that the persistence of disidentification is equally crucial to the rearticulation of democratic contestation. Indeed, it may be precisely through practices which underscore disidentification with those regulatory norms by which sexual difference is materialized that both feminist and queer politics are mobilized. Such collective disidentifications can facilitate a reconceptualization of which bodies matter, and which bodies are yet to emerge as critical matters of concern. (Butler, 1993, p. 4)

Therefore, I argue that the political promise of asexuality does not lie in its absolute negation of or opposition to sexuality, as current scholarship on asexuality posits, but in its indifference towards the significatory power of sexuality which privileges (hetero)sexual engagements over any other activity. Asexual locus, in my conceptualization, is not underlined by the membership it offers to those who organize around a common/generic identity property which would accommodate sense of belonging they seek for as they fail to be interpellated by the existing categories. It is not to say that asexual locus will not or cannot serve to those that are interpellated into subjectivity as "abiding falsehoods"[11] But it could provide them with theoretical and practical tools to disrupt the matrix of intelligibility and the way the matrix is structured and challenge the regulatory norms embedded in the matrix. In this new conceptualization of asexuality that I am proposing, asexual locus would be underlined by the disavowal of the logic of inclusion/exclusion. Hence, what mobilizes the queer potential the asexuality could offer is the political promise of deconstructing the structures that compel subjects or abjects to take up sexual identities in coherence with the norms and regulatory

[11] "Abiding falsehood" is a term that Butler uses to refer to lesbian (un)intelligibility. See Butler, 1993a, p. 312.

significations of the domain of compulsory sexuality, which renders them unintelligible in case of perverse and divergent articulations and practices of subjectivity.

Finally, I would like to underline that my engagement with asexuality is inspired by Muñoz's (2009) concept of utopian performativity or performatively utopian, and hence it focuses on the potentiality that is present, but not yet actualized here and now. Muñoz conceives utopia as "a casting of a picture of potentiality and possibility. This casting or imagining is also an act of negation. What is negated is the present in lieu of another time or place. Thus, utopia has a positive valence, that of a projection forward, and a negative function, which is the work of critique" (2009, p. 125). Therefore, in this reading, the place of the potentialities asexuality carries is the one of future, but it would not – as Edelman (2004) would claim – perpetuate any promise of a unified community. Criticizing utopian politics on the basis of being complicit with reproductive futurism, Edelman claims that the utopian engagement with future "perpetuates the hope of a fully unified community, a fully realized social order, that's imagined as always available in the fullness of the future to come" (2004, p. 473). Even though I do agree with Edelman on his critique of reproductive futurity, I do not think that a critically utopian reading of queer, in the way Muñoz does it, corresponds to utopia that Edelman criticizes, since Muñoz 's critical utopianism does not rest on the premise of reproductive futurism, which perpetuates a hope of unity with the present. On the contrary, Muñoz's queer futurity advocates for the dismantling of the structures of present that a non-queer future rests on, as well as for the deconstruction of present significations of future.

Therefore, the significant potentiality that I believe could be embedded in this undetermined asexual locus is the possibility for a future which disidentifies with present. It is in the queer configurations of future where the unconventional, non-instituionalized and de-sexualized modes of intimacy, desire and relationality lie.

6. Asexuality as a locus of rupture: disidentifying with normative societal (sexual) imperatives

> "Some people like to have a lot of sex, others little or none[…] Some people spend a lot of time thinking about sex, others little." (Sedgwick, 1990:25)

Starting from the scrutinization of the mechanisms that produced sexual normativity through which matrix of heteronormativity is constructed, in this chapter I delineate how asexuality, in line with its potential to be the locus for disidentification, could lead to the rethinking of sexual normativity and the monolithic understanding of desire and intimacy and consequently be a locus of rupture in and resistance to biopolitical institutions and the heterosexual matrix. In order to demonstrate how asexuality could achieve its potential of becoming a queer locus of disidentification, I draw attention to the affirmative possibilities of asexuality to emerge as a rallying ground for achieving new configurations of intimate affinities that challenge the sexual regime privileging heterosexual relationality and biological bond in the formation of family and kinship, as well as new forms of non-monogamous and nonsexual romantic/aromantic forms of relationships beyond the neoliberal parameters. First, I delineate how asexuality has been excluded from discourses by the totalizing sexual regime, which designates sexuality as the ultimate determining force in the construction of subjectivity as well as relationships, and which prescribes ways of bonding and being together for a 'healthy' sexual citizen, by extension marginalizing that which fails to be loyal to its prescribed formulations. Starting from this point, I will rework the question Judith Butler asks – originally referring to lesbians–, "Can the exclusion from ontology itself become a rallying point for resistance?" (1993:127) in order to reveal the transgressive potentialities of asexuality. As I further show, by being excluded from ontology, asexuality has at the same time emerged as a site not fully saturated by (hetero)normative formulations of intimacy and affinity. Hence, I argue that it is this exclusion that contradictorily paved the path for affirmative possibility of asexuality to resignify intimacy and desire, which have been monopolized by sexual vocabulary, and to construct uninstitutionalized ways of being together, analogous to what Foucault gestures at in the

“Friendship as a Way of Life”. In this way, I argue, asexuality could serve to re-imagine the political subject produced by queer and anarchist incentives – the subject who repudiates sexuality as a significant marker of his/her identity, contrary to what is imposed by the biopolitical institutions and capitalism.

In this picture, asexuality could lead to rethinking sexual normativity and destabilizing the centrality of sexuality in discourses as well as challenging the biopolitical institutions constructed around it. Asexuality as a queer locus, therefore, could achieve a relaxation of the (sexual) norm and expansion of the matrix of intelligibility regarding (a)sexual performances and subjectivities.

6.1 Mononormativity

> “The state is a social relationship; a certain way of people relating to one another. It can be destroyed by creating new social relationships; i.e., by people relating to one another differently.” (Landauer, 2010)

> “Sex then became the 'code' of pleasure. Whereas in societies with a heritage of erotic art the intensification of pleasure tends to desexualize the body, in the West this systematisation of pleasure according to the 'laws' of sex gave rise to the whole apparatus of sexuality. And it is this that makes us believe that we are 'liberating' ourselves when we 'decode' all pleasure in terms of a sex shorn at last of disguise, whereas one should aim instead at a desexualisation, at a general economy of pleasure not based on sexual norms.” (Foucault,1980, p. 191)

While the norms and regulations instrumentalized through the discourse on sexuality constructed the human initially as a sexual being, rendering sexuality as an inevitable part of the healthy self and the very condition of becoming a subject, the presence (or lack thereof) of sexuality has become the determining factor in defining and forming relationships, affinities and intimacies (see also Rothblum and Brehony, 1993). Depending on whether a relationship includes sexual component or not, certain meanings regarding the level and nature of intimacy and affects are ascribed to the relationship, and those meanings lead to a 'commonsensical' categorizations and hierarchization of relationship forms that are available in discourses. For instance, romantic affiliations, which take sexual component for granted, are mostly prioritized over friendships of all sorts. Therefore, kinship and family networks are built in accordance with the prescribed order of prioritization of relationships, privileging heterosexual relationality over the alternative kinds. While sexual normativity as an overarching disciplinary mechanism constitutes sexual identity as an inherent part of self, and therefore an imminent element of intimate and romantic relationships that should be built around one's sexual object choice, it produces monogamy as a privileged and ubiquitous site for the exchange of amorous affects and the experience of intimacy.

In the circuits of capitalism and biopolitical institutions, dyadic relationality is rendered the only ethical and healthy form of experiencing and practicing intimacy, in particular those relationships which are loyal to the heteronormative schema. Through consistent repetitions of monogamous coupledom prescribed by the very mechanisms and institutions which produced sexual normativity, monogamy is enacted as a compulsory domain of intimate relationality which consequentially renders alternative forms of intimate relationality unavailable outside of the pathologized discourses. Compulsory monogamy, therefore, becomes a system of social control governing and disciplining bodies, especially women's bodies in conformity with the imperatives of heterosexual matrix (Emens, 2003; Willey, 2015). Gayle Rubin suggests that Western societies hold a "hierarchical system of sexual value" (1984, p. 279), according to which a heterosexual monogamous couple, preferably married, is placed as the privileged, most ethical and healthiest formation. Rubin adds that "[m]ost homosexuality is still on the bad side of the line. But if it is coupled and monogamous, the society is beginning to recognize that it includes the full range of human interaction" (1984, p. 152). Compulsory monogamy, therefore, produces and monopolizes the meanings and vocabulary circulating within discourses on intimacy, desire, affection and love, and forces those who pursue them to engage in relational practices that conform to its principles. I would like to stress that this pursuit is not simply a matter of choice, but indeed an imperative to fall into the realm of intelligibility which is structured by the power and knowledge networks regulated through sexuality. That is also the reason why many heterosexual women, and also some men, engage in consensual unwanted sexual activities as the coital imperative is one of the impositions of monogamous couples (Gupta, 2008; DeLuzio Chasin, 2010, 2013).

Marianne Pieper and Robin Bauer coined the term mononormativity to refer to relations of power which construct monogamy as the natural and vital aspect of the morally worthy subject. Bauer's extended definition of mono-normative matrix is worth quoting in length, which is:

> a complex power relation, which (re)produces hierarchically arranged patterns of intimate relationships and devalues, marginalizes, excludes and 'others' those patterns of intimacy which do not correspond to the normative apparatus of the monogamous model. Mono-normativity is based on the taken for granted allegation that monogamy and couple-shaped arranged relationships are the principle of social relations per se, an essential foundation of human existence and the elementary, almost natural pattern of living together. From this perspective, every relationship which does not represent this pattern, is being ascribed the status of the other, of deviation, of pathology, in need of explanation or is being ignored, hidden, avoided and marginalized. Mono-normativity is historically linked with heteronormativity in complex ways. (quoted in Finn, 2010, p. 145)

As Mark Finn (2010) argues, monogamous order or mononormativity is structured in accordance with the sociohistoric binary way of thinking which locates experiences of pleasure and intimacy and relationalities into a network of separate and oppositional containments. Monogamous order, Finn claims, promises stability, coherence and security as it is based on a binary arrangement of organized inside vs. disordered outside which comes with the thread of chaos and instability. Reading Finn through a framework of performativity theory, it becomes clear that through the obsessive repetitions and reiterations of monogamy in this binary framework, mononormativity is granted a hegemonic position and thus becomes the only real and respectable way of relating intimately. Monogamy, as one of the primary domains where regulatory operations of sexual normativity take place and where its measures are reified, monopolizes the language and significations regarding intimacy and bonding in its privileged private realm of dyadic relationality. Therefore, in a Butlerian sense, monogamy stands for the ‘phantasmic ideal’ (Butler, 1990) to be reiterated by the intelligible subjects of heteronormative matrix. In this vein, monogamy becomes what Butler (1990) would call a “regulatory fiction” that gains the value of authenticity and reality through the constant repetition of certain acts in accordance with the norms of the phantasmic ideal, which simultaneously positions its outside as devoid of what it allegedly promises. Namely, the sedimentation of previous instances of repetition and thus the reproduction of monogamous relationality rendered monogamy a naturalized and privileged form of sociality as such, which in extension produces the effect of wholeness, depth, romantic love, passionate sex, comfort, etc. Moreover, these are rendered the prerequisites of intimate relationality, operating in a manner of inscribing extra-dyadic intimacies with the opposite attributes, such as lack, superficiality and chaos. By doing so, mononormativity also ascribes the values of emotional stability, self-worth and maturity to the subjects who comply with the mononormative realm, and the opposites to those who deviate from it. Mononormative matrix, therefore, produces the normative measures of what is real, authentic, healthy and respectable. In that sense, to deviate from the boundaries of mononormativity is to risk stability, happiness, moral and emotional satisfaction.

Furthermore, mononormative domain and its logic of exclusivity and privacy reify the capitalist order, since they are in mutually constitutive relationship with dichotomous structuring of capitalist private/public, reproductive/productive sites which reinforce the sexual division of labor. Compulsory monogamy is mobilized through the required consumption pattern and the neoliberal ideas of ownership and possession as well (see also McPheeters, 1999), the most privileged institution of the system of monogamy being marriage.

In the fourth chapter I have discussed how with the inception of capitalism and the concomitant transferal of production from household to the market through wage labor and land expropriation, family was no more the center of production, and the idea of self-sustaining family units was demolished. On the other hand, the family unit, though with altered characteristics, had to be preserved so that it would stand as the source of unwaged labor in order to provide capitalism with surplus and reproduction of labor power.

In order to manufacture a new form of family, monogamous and nuclear one unlike during pre-capitalist mode of production, through which the reproductive realm will be maintained as the source of unwaged labor, capitalism required the invasive discourse of sexuality. By rendering sexuality an inevitable need and imminent part of a healthy individual and by condemning the exercise of sexuality outside marriage, capitalism positioned the family as the ultimate site to meet this need. D'Emilio, in Capitalism and Gay identity (1993), touches upon this very point: "On the one hand, capitalism continually weakens the material foundation of family life, making it possible for individuals to live outside the family…On the other, it needs to push men and women into families, at least long enough to reproduce the next generation of workers" (p. 474). Mononormative discourses, therefore, catered for capitalism to manage to establish a desired balance between the boosted individualization process and the family unit. Furthermore, the monogamous order facilitated what Sholz (2009) calls the "affective divide", making the family unit responsible for the affective labor needed by capitalism as part the process of reproducing and sustaining labor power, which reinforced the gender division of labor by assigning the women with the role of providing the affects. Considering that the domain of monogamy is a power-knowledge locus that is informed by capitalist and heterosexist norms, non-monogamies relationships have become a bourgeoning object of inquiry both in feminist, queer and anarchist academic engagements, as well as in activist circles. In the next section, I discuss the current discourses on non-monogamies, pointing towards their perpetuation of the sexual imperative, and consequently their failure to address the naturalized notions of sexualized desire and intimacy

6.2. Polyamory: a transgressive locus or a safeguard of sexusoceity?

Non-monogamous forms of relationships, and in particular polyamory, have received growing attention especially in the last decade (Barker, 2006; Klesse, 2006, 2014; Ringer, 2001; Visser & McDonald, 2007, Heckert, 2010). Even though the current scholarship on non-monogamies contributed to depathologisation of non-monogamous sexual practices to some extent, it failed to implicate the transgressive potentialities of non-monogamies to deconstruct mononormative and heteronormative discourses on relationships. On the contrary, it reified sexual normativity and moralistic discourses around it (see also Finn&Malson, 2008). Finn in collaboration with Malson (2008) claims that non-monogamous relationships and languages embedded in liberal-humanists discourses reproduce the hegemonic coupledom standards and hetero-romantic narratives, since they are mostly grounded on the normative ideal of exclusive romantic containment, even in the absence of sexual fidelity as a regulatory notion. When a couple engages in extra-dyadic relational practices, it supposedly serves to reinforce the stability and the emotional bond in the relationship, "precisely because a couple's bond is so deep, so secure and so central to their lives that they can afford to open it up and let others in" (O'Neill & O'Neill, 1972, quoted in Finn&Malson, 2008, p. ??). As I have previously elaborated, the reasons behind this common picture Finn and Malson are describing are grounded in the discourses of sexual normativity which construct sexuality as a basic human need and unstoppable energy.

In addition, as suggested by Christian Klasse (2006), with the growing discussions on polyamory and increasing number of people identifying as polyamorous, polyamory has become more and more assimilated into heterosexist moralist discourses. As a consequence, the discourses on polyamory have started to adopt an exclusionary and otherizing language. In an attempt to distance themselves from the narratives of infidelity and chaos, many people who name their practices as 'responsible' or 'ethical' non-monogamy, place a great deal of emphasis on the emotional/romantic and ethical aspects of their polyamorous engagements, by extension otherizing and stigmatizing the 'promiscuous' ones. Also, most of the popular polyamory narratives are devoid of political underlyings; on the contrary, they are saturated with individualist incentives, emphasizing choice and personal sexual preference (Song, 2012). Polyamorous discourses (Klesse, 2006, 2014; Visser, & McDonald, 2007) oftentimes mobilize and promote the impetus on 'knowing oneself' and 'discovering one's true sexuality' rooted in psychiatric discourses of biopolitical institutions, which constructed the sexusociety we live in. These discourses ostensibly implicate alliance with what Foucault calls the 'sexual regime of truth': "We demand that sex speak the truth [...] and we demand that it tell us our truth, or rather, the deeply buried truth of that truth about ourselves which we think we possess in our immediate consciousness" (1978, p. 69). As Foucault suggests, the discourses of sexuality created the belief that the truth which escapes oneself could be reached through sexuality. This is not only a hunt for truth, but the very process through which truth is produced and implemented, the truth being what measures one's value as a human being, positing her/him in a direct relationship vis-à-vis power. In this vein, polyamory, instead of becoming a deconstructive practice, has become another locus where one could be compelled to cite the norms of the sexual regime of truth.

On the other hand, scholars such as Song (2012) and Heckert (2010) explored the transgressive potential of polyamory, tackling it as an anarchist practice for resistance. However, despite of their critique of the hegemonic position of monogamy, neither Song nor Heckert pose a challenge to the sexual imperative. On the contrary, they consolidate its omnipresence by framing resistance and liberation within a sexualized locus, much alike their predecessors who promoted free love tradition of 1960s, which as Densmore (1971, p. 58) showed, proved to be problematic. In his article "Independence from Sexual Revolution", Densmore criticizes the prevailing equation of sexuality with freedom, stating that "people seem to believe that sexual freedom . . . is freedom . . . this sexual freedom . . . includes no freedom to decline sex," (quoted in Przybylo & Copper, 2014, p. 307)

The discourses surrounding the notion of sexual liberation are an extension of what Foucault calls "the repressive hypothesis." The repressive hypothesis Foucault argues against in the History of Sexuality suggests that since the Victorian era there has been a pervasive prudish attempt to repress sexuality at all costs, which consequently created the impression that sex promises liberation, whereas in fact it began to be the very apparatus through which the networks of powers were organized and in compliance with which society was regulated, through "a steady proliferation of discourses concerned with sex—specific discourses, different from one another both by their form and by their object: a discursive ferment that gathered momentum from the eighteenth century onward" (Foucault, 1978, p. 18) With this in mind, even though sexual liberation rhetoric on a superficial level celebrates multiplicity and diversity, it is produced by and serves to reinforce sexual normativity by virtue of conforming to illusionary formula of emancipation based on sexual commonality, which does not challenge power structures that constructed the disciplinary mechanisms and the regulatory domain. And, as Foucault puts it, "the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world" (1978, p. 11) caused sexuality to coalesce as one's inner truth, identity and subject position. Therefore, in its pervasive and prolific flow through discourses, the discourse on sexuality has become the very ground to regulate sexual practices as well as to discipline the bodies in compliance with the current power structures. In return, asexuality, which emerges both as an effect/product of and a challenge to the normative sexual discourses has become negatively correlated with the notion of liberation. The discourses organized around repressive hypothesis, and the illusionary promise of liberation through sex impossiblized the emergence of an intelligible space for asexuality beyond the pathologized conceptualizations by the virtue of positioning asexual practices as manifestation of success of supposed repressive processes or the residue of Victorian prudishness. However, as I demonstrate in the next section, the very exclusion it has been subjected to could enable asexuality to emerge as a locus for alternative configuration of queer relationalities and affinities and reposition non-monogamies within a transgressive framework.

6.3. Asexual Promiscuities: Alternative modes of Intimacy and Desire in a Sexually Decolonized Space

Given that both monogamy and non-monogamies are mostly established around the idea of sexual intimacy, imagining intimacies in a desexualized or a nonsexual space has become unthinkable, hence intimate and romantic relationality are rendered unavailable for asexuals (see also Scherrer, 2010). Since sexual behavior has been seen as an intrinsic component of romantic and intimate relationality, many asexual identified people claim that they feel pressured to engage in sexual activities with their non-asexual partners, regarding which DeLuzio Chasin (2013) conducted a study on women who have consensual unwanted sex. Those who want to practice intimacy in a non-sexual space face the threat of their relationship being delegitimized both by general public and their partners. Therefore they are compelled to engage in sexual activities even when they would rather not.

However, it would be wrong to assume that sexual imperative works only on asexual identified people. On the contrary, it compels everyone to repeat the sexual norm, while pathologizing those who diverge from the citational boundaries and fail to conform to the sexual imperative. For instance, the discourses of hegemonic masculinities, cutting across temporal and spatial borders, require the fulfillment of the sexual norm according to which strong sexual desire and sexual activity reinforces the masculine ideal. However, the sexual norm continues to be enacted even in the case of those who allegedly fail to meet the hegemonic masculinity standards, when the directionality of supposed sexual desire differs. As sexuality is that which interpellates people into intelligible subjecthoods, the unstoppable sexual flow becomes intrinsic to gay identity, or in other words, it effectively functions to reinforce/produce the gay identity as such. Another example is the existence of the pejorative term “lesbian death bed” that denotes the common understanding that lesbian relationships, especially long-term ones, lack sex and by extension passion and intimacy. As a consequence, the notion of “lesbian death bed” reinforces lesbophobia and delegitimizes lesbian relationships, which is why some lesbian identified women also engage in consensual unwanted sexual practices to authenticate their relationships (Rothblum, 1993).

However, the emergence of asexual movement in the last decade catalyzed a process of reconsidering relationships, intimacy and non-monogamies, that had largely been informed by a taken-for-granted sexual assumption. I believe that it is timely and relevant to look into the transgressive potential for delinking sexuality from intimacy that an asexual space embodies, which would hopefully serve for forming non-institutionalized ways of being together. Asexuality as a conceptual space and also a practice could mobilize non-normative repetitions of relating, by demonstrating that resistance is possible here and now, and that it could be achieved by destabilizing the normative repetitions enacted not only on asexuals but everyone else in sexusociety. Ela Pryzbylo, who also advocates for destabilizing the normalized ways of becoming and being together, believes that resistant energies of asexuality "lie in alternative plural enactments" (2011, p. 457).

Foucault, in "Friendship as a way of life" (1989) touches upon the political significance of engaging in non-institutionalized ways of being together, gesturing towards the possibility of a desexualized space to achieve resistance instead of organizing around sexual identity categories. Although his conceptualization encompasses only male homosexuality, what he strives towards is exactly what I think a possible asexual space could offer. By going beyond the traditional ways of coming into a homosexual identity predisposed by the repressive hypothesis through digging out the hidden truth of (homo)sexuality in oneself, Foucault posits, one should seek ways to make use of that sexuality to achieve a way of life established upon a sort of queer relationality, a "multiplicity of relationships" (1989, p. 35). Foucault puts forward that homosexuality is more than a manifestation of certain desires, but something desirable by the virtue of suggesting a new form of life built on non-instutionalized ways of sociality. In a similar vein, my claim is that asexuality, which emerged as an identity category in the beginning of 2000s, could be the ground that offers the possibility for more than seeking recognition and depathologization. I argue that it can also be a locus of disidentification, a prolific space of resistance that could dismantle the very institutions causing its exclusion from the ontology and generate a nonsexualized space for alternative kinds of relationalities and subjectivities to be constructed.

Foucault conceptualizes this new way of life under the notion of friendship, which he sees as a not yet a fully colonized locus, through which homosexuals – without falling into the discourse of sexual liberation movements of sixties – can be reorganized into new alliances outside the regulations. In this new way of life, friendship could become a novel ground not for shared identities, but for shared becomings and shared will to know and invent subversive potentialities of constructing new ethics and kinships. Asexuality, as a not fully saturated site, is imbued with the potential to achieve this 'friendship as a way of life'. Asexuality might be denied of a nonpatholigized space in discourses and subjected to erasure, but nevertheless there are not yet prescribed ways of being the 'right kind of asexual' or of what an asexual relationship should look like. Therefore, it can be an effective tool that could turn this state of being neglected into a queer agenda for the purposes of deconstructing the power-knowledge network designed through deployment of sexuality which regulates a certain "economy of pleasure" (Foucault, 1978, p. 191) producing (and also constraining) the relationality formulas as we know it. Many asexual identified scholars and activists, such as Ela Przybylo and DeLuzio Chasin call conventional significations of being-in-common into question, seeking for polymorphic and multiple configurations of being together and relating to one another. It is these new ways of being together that can further the politics of disidentification: by creating new epistemologies not saturated by the violent discourse of inclusion/exclusion, they can achieve more than just reaching for the humanist-liberal discourses of visibility and diversity. Namely, although the overly emphasized sexual component is what marks the territories and boundaries for monogamous or non-monogamous relationships by being the determinant of what monogamy is and what it is not, this marker does not have to exist in the case of asexuality. Therefore, asexuality could lead to non-monogamous relationships in which the line between sexual and non-sexual, and 'just friendship' and whatever assumed to be beyond are blurred. Asexuality as a locus of disidentification could foster sexual decolonization of discourses, and consequently lead to contesting normative configurations of being together for the purposes of establishing new affinities, reinventing the relationship languages and challenging the solemnity around sex and the positioning of romantic relationships above others.

* * *

In this chapter, I have pinpointed to the potential asexuality as a locus of disidentification with sexuality has to reinvent the normalized modes of being together and reimagine the traditional understandings of desire and intimacy. I began by discussing how capitalism employed sexual imperative to naturalize monogamy as the privileged form of sociality, which went hand in hand with sexualized ideas of desire and intimacy that were supposed to sustain the monogamous unit. And although certain discourses of polyamory have attempted to dismantle the notion of monogamy, they nevertheless ended up reinforcing the sexual imperative where one cites the norms of the sexual regime of truth. Therefore, I argued that asexuality carries the potential to be the queer locus of disidentification with sexual imperative that does not only prescribe sexual innateness to human beings, but also (and as a consequence) monogamous coupledom and sexualization of desire and intimacy. Asexuality, therefore, could act as a locus of queer disidentification with the sexual imperative through its potential to form new kinds of alliances analogous to what Foucault proposed in "Friendship as a way of life", through which a reinvention of desire and intimacy will come about.

7. Conclusion

The questions I set out at the beginning of this thesis concerned the queer possibilities the locus of asexuality might carry. In that sense, my aim was to discover whether and in what ways asexuality could act as a locus of resistance to sexual normativity. In order to provide an answer to this question, I first needed to delineate what asexuality is transgressive of – or in other words, to discuss the mechanisms that rendered sexuality an imperative in the first place – and consequently, look into the ways asexuality could act as a queer locus of rupture and disidentification with the sexual imperative and its "excess of significance" system of compulsory sexuality brings about.

In that sense, my discussion of asexuality as a queer locus did not have as its aim the investigation of the lived experiences of 'real asexuals'. Rather, by putting different theories into dialogue, I approached asexuality as a conceptual tool that could – by the virtue of its disidentificatory potential – help us rethink sexual normativity, and reconceptualize the notion of queer and hence produce a substantial critique of sexunormative society.

In this thesis I offered a queer reading of asexuality, arguing that it has the potential to dismantle the sexual imperative and the normative sexual identity categories fostered by capitalist circuits, and hence constitute a queer locus of transgression of normative regimes engendered by regulatory mechanisms. First, by drawing on Marxian-queer critique, I contended that that sexual imperative was engendered by and vital to capitalist mechanisms that made use of it as a source of unwaged labor. This sexual imperative acted as a regulatory mechanism that positioned sexuality as the inherent part of every human being, consequently rendering asexuality unintelligible, and positioning it into an uninhabitable territory. Consequently, I argued that by realizing the deconstructive potentialities engendered ironically by its "exclusion from the ontology", asexuality could transform its position from one of the constutitve but unintelligible Other to the one that would embody queer transgressions. Starting from this position, I proposed that we need to leave aside the recognition-seeking essentialist discourses that framed asexuality as a fourth sexual orientation based on a "lack" and move towards reconceptualizing asexuality as a queer locus of disidentification with the sexual normativity. Asexuality as a rallying locus for disidentificatiory engagements could debilitate the omnivalent significatory power pervasive discourses of sexuality hold embedded in and mediated by capitalism, thus lead to delinking of subjectivity from sexuality and It is through its destabilization and resignification of intimacy, desire and monogamy, which have been monopolized by sexual regime of truth, I argued, asexuality could achieve non-normative configurations of intimate affinities and construct uninstitutionalized ways of being together that challenge the sexual regime privileging (hetero)normative relationality and sociality.

This research proves to be a contribution to various strands of scholarship. First of all, reconceptualization asexuality as a locus of disidentification is a significant contribution to the current feminist scholarship that has framed asexuality by and large in the essentialist terms of yet another sexual identity, only this time based on a 'lack' of sexuality', which only served to reinforce the discourses of sexual regime of truth. Also, by investigating the relationship between the system of compulsory sexuality and capitalism, it contributes to reconciliation of queer theory with historical materialism, calling for Marxian considerations of queer theories and queer intervention into Marxian thought. Moreover, it is also a valuable contribution to queer theories, which has so far seen the potential for transgression within non-normative excess of sexuality. By exploring the possibility of asexuality to become a new locus in queer epistemologies and becomings, it also calls for rethinking and expansion of queer meanings and enactments that are available in the current queer scholarship beyond the sexual liberation rhetoric. Looking into asexuality with a queer lens not only aims at expanding the scope of queer theory to include other non-normative sexualities, but it critically engages with queer theories striving towards rendering queer an open-ended locus of instability, indetermination, uncertainty and fluidity, which does not rest on the premise of foreclosures and exclusions.

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