

**From an Autonomous Self to the Merger with Other:
Architecture of a Modern Gendered Subject
And Its Decomposition in BDSM plays**

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 24 500 words

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Abstract

BDSM practitioners often mention that there is a change to their selves in BDSM plays. Sometimes it is described as a shift from mundane self to a play persona or, vice versa, from hypocritical persona of normal life to a true self in BDSM. In my thesis, I explore this shift focusing on the narratives of self in BDSM. Drawing on the performativity theory and, in particular, on the concept of the space of uptake, I analyzed interviews of English-speaking BDSM practitioners I met in Budapest. I found out that these narratives of shift allow to see that subjectivity works as a spatial phenomenon, as an environment with certain architecture. Its structure is based on particular bearing elements which are disassembled in BDSM plays. Through the analysis of what is disassembled or transgressed in BDSM, I sketch down the architecture of a modern gendered subject, and explore why dismantling it in BDSM is so pleasurable for practitioners. I consider a subject as a mold for carving out individual units from the social matter, with shame and the sense of dignity as main framing elements. These elements prevent a subject from dissolution in the passionate attachment to others, and an autonomous subject is a basis of the democratic society. BDSM plays, through temporary and consensual dismantle of this structure, allow uninterrupted pleasure of the merger with the Other. My research, and, in particular, the spatial perspective on the issue contributes to the discussion on what is a subject in performativity studies. It helps to challenge the heteronormative framework of an autonomous self as an inherent natural phenomenon.

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Introduction

“Abandon yourself, all ye who enter”, wrote Fritscher describing the Catacombs, one of the most famous BDSM clubs in San Francisco (1978). There is a recurrent motive of losing oneself or, instead, finding true self in BDSM narratives. In a BDSM discourse self is something to lose or to find, or to explore as space or a territory. There is also an ongoing debates on acceptability of BDSM that often involves playing with physical and moral humiliation. The nature of BDSM interaction implies that normal conventions of dignity and equality are suspended (in consensual and limited way). One of the usual arguments that constitute anti-BDSM legal framework is that BDSM breaches human rights and is against human dignity. It is based on the assumption that no sane person would ever want and freely choose to receive pain or humiliation. True, who would choose this? However, the context, or, using the theory of performativity vocabulary, the space of uptake matters. From BDSM practitioners’ accounts, a dungeon (the place where a BDSM interaction happens) is a different from everyday normal life context. It is often positioned as a reality aside of the mundane world. The metaphors of a theater, a playground for adults, an experimental lab, etc. are often used to describe BDSM sense and atmosphere. It is a space “bracketed” (Weiss, 2011) from all other world, an “intimate theater” (Bauer, 2014) with its own rules. In other words, things that are not acceptable in normal life, and are not compatible with a human dignity and an autonomous subject are enjoyable in a BDSM dungeon. Why - is one of the questions I address in my thesis.

Fritscher’s “Abandon yourself, all ye who enter” pretty much outlines the issue I focus on in my work: how self is transformed in BDSM, why it can be pleasurable, and what it shows about the construction of self. According to practitioners, BDSM is also about transgressing borders. Such transgression gives the energy and the pleasure comparable to being high. Foucault

referred to sadomasochism as to “experimental practices on the self which tear the subject from itself” (cited in Simons, 1995, p.99). Contradistinction of self and BDSM, first, indicates that self as we understand and experience it is not a universal phenomenon but belongs to the domain of modern, normal, and mundane that does not cover all reality. Second, BDSM discourse helps to take a look at self as if from outside: what happens to self in BDSM plays - how it is torn apart, lost, found, explored, and transformed. That is, in thinking on the architecture of a modern subject, my insight was to start from the opposite - to reconstruct its silhouette and structure through the analysis of what and how is transgressed and torn apart in BDSM.

BDSM narratives give an insightful evidence that self is a construction with a particular structure that is not-universal, not stable, and can be disassembled. In my research, the bracketed space of a BDSM dungeon practitioners enter right from their mundane selves is a productive place to see that a self or a subject is a spatial phenomenon. The very positioning of BDSM as bracketed, or underground, or outside place gives a tool, an outside viewpoint to look at a subject as if from distance, from a foreign dimension. Furthermore, spatial metaphors BDSM narratives are rich with give the key to see how a modern gendered self is assembled and organized. Based on the narratives describing the transformative experience in BDSM, I consider self as a space of uptake. It is not private or interior, and it is not located in the psychological inside, as if confined within an individual’s body. Rather, I consider self as a complex psycho-social architecture an individual exists and interacts with others within. That is, subjectivity is not something inside of an individual, but works rather as an environment, the whole ecosystem, the habitat of an individual that governs perception, feelings, motives, behaviors, and functions as a stage of interaction with others.

My main theoretical framework is the theory of performativity. Kosofsky Sedgwick noted that in the field of performativity studies, there is rather the focus on temporal aspects (repetition, citationality), and suggested to take into account also the dimension of space (2003, p.9). In my thesis, I focus on the spatial aspect of performativity. As my theoretical guide I draw on different spatial models of a subject that have been developed in the performativity field. In particular, I draw on Foucauldian panopticon and repressive hypothesis with its imagery of confined in the underground sexuality; J.L.Austin's space of uptake; Kosofsky Sedgwick's audience silently witnessing performative acts; Rousseauian 'public balls' as an epitome of state-controlled theatricality that is a fundament of a subject in the modern liberal society; Tomkins' affect of shame that works as a border individuating a subject from others; Butler's theory of a subject that emerges as a result of the foreclosure of the passionate attachment to others; Grosz's psychoanalytical insights on self as a spatial phenomenon; De Lauretis' account on cinema and pop culture that structure our subjectivities through implanting certain fantasies, desires, and loci of vision, etc. I apply these analytical models to the interviews of BDSM practitioners I had a chance to meet in Budapest. Butler wrote, "psychic topographies [...] are clearly tropological" (1997, p.4). Following this, my aim is to reconstruct the topography, or the architecture of self, analyzing tropes in the narratives of my interviewees.

In the first chapter I make a short intro into BDSM and main debates around it. I also outline the theories of a subject, as mentioned, focusing on spatial models developed in the performativity theory. In the end of the chapter I describe the methodology and situation of my research. In the second chapter I sketch down the architecture of a modern gendered subject. I argue that a modern self is a space of uptake that works as a gravitational field maintained by personal borders and the gravitational center of ego. I conclude that in the modern democratic society the material for individual borders is the affect of shame, and the gravitational pull

holding the whole structure assembled inside is the sense of dignity. I also consider structures of vision within the architecture of a modern gendered self. In particular, I address the tendency of female submissiveness analyzing it as the result of the split of vision in subjectivity.

In the third chapter, I focus on what happens to the self in BDSM. I analyze its transformation and consider it as a temporary dismantle of a subject. There are certain discomforts of being a modern autonomous subject. It requires constant repetitive effort in maintaining autonomy and not dissolving in others. I claim that a subject is a gauge dividing social matter into individual selves. Attachment to others is a strong pleasure comparable to drugs, and shame is the dam that prevents a subject from flooding in passionate attachment to others. In BDSM, therefore, these dams are temporarily eliminated releasing an uninterrupted pleasure of merging with others. Power hierarchies in BDSM erase the border of shame, since the latter works only in the presence of an equal semblance. Removal of borders and subsequent merger creates the pleasure of a special deep intimacy BDSM practitioners often talk about.

Chapter 1 - Discussion on BDSM and the subject, theoretical framework, and methodology

In this chapter I will make a short review on what is BDSM, the discourses of self in BDSM, and different frameworks (pathology and liberation) in understanding the phenomenon. Furthermore, I will address main arguments - pro and anti - in feminist debates (so called feminist sex wars) and queer theory. I will also outline theoretical developments in gender and performativity studies that constitute my analytical framework - particularly, different spatial models of the subject and self. In the end of the chapter I will describe the methodological approach and the context of my research.

1.1. BDSM and a subject

To begin with, BDSM is an acronym that covers the set of practices such as bondage, discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism. It involves practices such as flogging, spanking, tying, role playing, humiliation, and a range of other activities involving unequal relationship (in BDSM community the term is ‘power exchange’) in erotic context. According to the definition in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, BDSM is a “sexual activity involving such practices as the use of physical restraints, the granting and relinquishing of control, and the infliction of pain” (Definition of BDSM, no date).

BDSM interactions (usually referred to as plays) do not necessarily imply sexual activities. In some practices, for example, in a relationship of a mistress and a ‘slave’ the latter sometimes cannot even touch or look at the mistress. Another example can be different kinds of play with pain or sensations: flogging or pouring hot wax on a body, which do not have to involve sex. Furthermore, BDSM includes different kinds of fetishes such as foot fetish, leather fetish, etc. Contrarily to the stereotypes, BDSM activities have to be consensual and safe for all

practitioners. There is a motto “safe, sane, and consensual” that is promoted as a canon in the BDSM community (Turley, Butt, 2015, p.25). There is a necessary rule of a safe word - a random neutral word that a submissive partner can use as a stop, for example, ‘pineapple’, etc. (the reason why the word has to be neutral is because expected words like ‘stop’ or ‘enough’ can be understood as a part of the game).

For many practitioners, BDSM is a lifestyle and an important part of the identity, while for others it is rather an occasional recreational activity, or the way to explore oneself and baste one’s curiosity. There are special terms to indicate roles in BDSM: for instance, ‘dominant’, ‘dom’, ‘top’ for a dominating role; ‘submissive’, ‘sub’, ‘bottom’ for a subordinate role (however, these terms are not completely synonymic); ‘switch’ for those who prefer changing roles from play to play. A female dominant can be called a Mistress, Domme, or Dominatrix, while a male dominant can be referred to as a Master, Daddy, etc. One of the most common examples of such roles can be relationship of a Mistress\Master and her\his slave or servant. A premise where a BDSM play (or a scene) takes place is called a ‘dungeon’. Usually dungeons are rooms equipped with BDSM furniture and devices for playing: for example, Saint Andrew’s cross, benches or beds for whipping, bondage facilities, sets of tools for flogging, pain infliction, etc.

There are other terms used as synonyms of BDSM. The term sadomasochism is usually more familiar and, although it refers only to certain aspects of BDSM activities, the abbreviations S&M, S/M, or just SM are quite often used instead of BDSM. The concept of sadomasochism was coined by a German psychiatrist Krafft-Ebing, in his book on sexual perversions (1886). Actually, he used separate words - ‘sadism’ and ‘masochism’ - that with time merged into one notion. The term ‘sadism’ is based on the name of Marquis de Sade (1740 - 1814) famous for his pornographic and philosophical writings depicting cruel sexual practices. ‘Masochism’

draws on the figure of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836 – 1895) known for his *Venus in Furs* - a novel where the author described his experience of being a slave of a dominant woman who would wear furs when she is in a cruel mood (1870). The acronym BDSM has appeared quite recently. According to Merriam-Webster, the term was first used in 1991 (Definition of BDSM, no date). Currently, it is the most popular term covering all kinds of non-‘vanilla’ erotic activities.

‘Vanilla’ is used by BDSM practitioners to refer to traditional sexual practices and relationships. Such culinary metaphor implies understanding of vanilla sex as boring, neutral, tasteless, in contrast to BDSM or ‘kink’ as practices that have a range of different, creative, and intensive tastes. Recently, BDSM has become quite mainstream phenomenon. Although it is still connected to the underground, popular media have started addressing the topic more and more often. Most famous instances are the movies *Secretary* (2002, dir. Steven Shainberg) and *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015, Sam Taylor-Johnson). A media star Rihanna released a song and a music video *S&M* in 2011. Later the song and the video were censored, and S&M references were excluded from the release. However, it was extremely popular and made a big resonance in media. Responding to the criticism of the video the director Melina Matsoukas commented that she consciously wanted “to get it banned ... but to make something provocative” (Matt, 2011). Such discourse represents the general tendency of using BDSM as a synonym of daring and liberation - ‘being naughty’ - in popular media.

There is a range of social networks where BDSM members can share information and find friends or partners by interests. One of the most famous and global networks is Fetlife.com with BDSM and fetish people registered from all over the world. There is also a widespread practice of BDSM meetings - ‘munches’ in the community jargon - that imply a social gathering where practitioners and those who are interested can chat and exchange knowledge.

BDSM and the self: pathology vs. liberation approaches

In the text on the *Catacombs*, a famous BDSM club in San-Francisco, the author mentioned: “Abandon yourself, all ye who enter” (Fritscher, 1978, p.3). In this appeal self is something that can be suspended before entering the space of BDSM, as if you can leave it as a coat at the entrance. Moreover, abandoning and forgetting self is a promise of pleasure. There are contradicting narratives on self in BDSM discourse: self is something to lose, to mask, to explore, or to find the true one. Either one has to forget oneself to play, or it is the naked self that can be expressed without restrictions in the dungeon. Either BDSM is a playground and an erotic theater, or it is a raw reality debunking hypocritical niceties of mundane. In other words, BDSM discourse reveals the ambiguity of the self and what is true about it. Similarly, there are contradicting discourses on what BDSM means in relation to the self: either it is a symptom of pathology and perversion, or it is subversion and liberation, or a spice and therapeutic recreation.

In general, the two main frameworks that are invoked when it comes to BDSM are pathology and sexual liberation. Regardless recent surge of media attention to BDSM as a metaphor of rebelliousness and naughtiness, the framework of perversion and deviation is the main one in use to talk about and understand BDSM practices. According to Turley and Butt, contemporary ideas on BDSM are framed with psycho-medical discourses and are rooted in the Victorian science (2015). As was mentioned above, it was an Austro–German psychiatrist and sexologist Krafft-Ebing who, in his *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), developed the wide classification of sexual pervert types that deviate from the normal healthy sexuality, which included ‘sadism’ and ‘masochism’. The idea of normal healthy sexuality, in its turn, is based on the discursive fusion of sex and reproduction (Turley, Butt, 2015). Since the concept of perversion implies that it is a deviation from the norm, from the health, it automatically invokes the imperative to

cure or punish it. Such framework, therefore, has certain social and legal consequences. For example, in some US states BDSM activities (regardless the fact that they are consensual) are recognized as the breach of the law (NCSF, 2010). In other countries the legal status of BDSM is vague.

Alternative discourse - the one of liberation - is based on the idea that our sexuality and natural instincts have been repressed by social norms. BDSM is just a way to find release of these desires. In a sense, this framework implies that BDSM is sincere sex. Non-pathologizing perspective on BDSM is based on the idea that sex is an enjoyment not strictly connected to procreation or “genitally focused sexuality” (Turley, Butt, 2015). This framework, instead of the concept of perversion that stigmatizes the whole social group of kinky people, operates with terms such as ‘expression’, ‘exploration’, ‘subversion’, etc. Queer branch of non-pathologizing discourse has been elaborated since 90s in queer theory aiming to challenge the discourse of heterosexuality as a universal norm (ibid). The framework of subversion was built on the basis of Foucauldian theory and in many ways on social constructionism. According to it, sexuality is not as an inherent drive or psychophysiological feature that is striving to find an expression, but rather a social construction which is built during interaction in certain context and power relations. I will address the queer theory approach to BDSM in more details below.

Besides, there is a wide range of initiatives dedicated to transforming the discourse on BDSM. They challenge the common view on it as on a sickness or moral issue that has to be supervised by psychologists or the government, and promote the idea that BDSM is a matter of choice and expression. Among such initiatives the most famous is the Folsom Street Fair - an annual Leather Pride in San Francisco. There is also a number of authors such as Dossie Easton, Landridge and Barker, etc. as well as activists who write on the topic from non-pathological, not-essentialist perspective. These discourse transformations had an effect: BDSM and fetish

has been just removed from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) in June 2018 (Tess, 2018).

Feminist sex wars on BDSM

There have been heated debates on BDSM among feminists since 1970s. Sadomasochism has been one of the topics, along with pornography and prostitution, which induced ideological adversary within feminist community. This adversary is also known as feminist sex wars. In short, one part of the feminist community was pro-sex. Their reasoning was based on the idea that sadomasochism is a matter of free choice, women have agency and access to consent, and can decide what to do with their body and how to have sex. It was consent and choice that, according to pro-sex feminists, made BDSM different from coerced heterosexual normative relationship. The opposite - anti-BDSM - camp argued that BDSM is the betrayal of feminist ideas. It reproduces patriarchal patterns of inequality, violence and exploitation. Even if it is a free choice of a woman, feminists have to reflect that such desires and choices are rooted in the patriarchal culture (Turley, Butt, 2015). One of the most famous proponents of the latter ideas was Andrea Dworkin who claimed that sadomasochism performed by lesbians are not a free choice but an internalized misogyny and homophobia (Dworkin, 1974). In similar way, Sheila Jeffreys criticized sadomasochistic practices for being simply the expression of internalized hatred against oneself (1996, pp.238-243). Therefore, according to anti-BDSM feminists, sadomasochism is nothing more than internalized and reproduced patriarchal and heteronormative violence, and eroticized abuse. In short, sadomasochism and feminism are antonyms and are not compatible.

Pat Califia who is a well-known pro-BDSM feminist writer gave a response to such kind of critique. He told that since all kinds of sexuality are constructed within given social discourses it is needless to say that BDSM is intertwined with heteronormative patriarchal inequalities -

as everything else is. The thing is, he argued, that BDSM, being based on these inequalities, plays with them and challenges them. BDSM does not simply replicate patriarchal power relations but rather exaggerates them, makes a parody from them, which implies completely different dynamics and subversion of the norms (Califia, 1983, p. 233). In his article *Feminism and Sadoomasochism* (ibid), he criticized anti-BDSM feminists for desexualizing lesbianism, and for becoming “a moralistic force” (ibid, p. 231). Similarly, Patrick Hopkins argued that sadoomasochism is rather “simulation” not a replication of a patriarchal hierarchies (1994).

Maneesha Decha advanced the discussion and offered to apply the postcolonial perspective to the issue (2011). She included the question of the agency to the framework. The author compared revulsion of some feminists to BDSM with the same reaction to some ““sexist third world cultural traditions”” (2011, p.131) such as “female genital cutting, foot-binding, sati, and dowry deaths” (ibid.). In the postcolonial framework, non-reflective critique of the latter implies imperialist discourse, cultural hegemony, and racism. Such critique constructs non-Western cultural practices as bad and outdated, and people practicing them as those who must be enlightened. Therefore, Decha offered to focus not on the practices per se, but on the social position of practitioners who “occupy a non-dominant cultural position” and “marginalized cultural identities” (ibid, p.131). Nevertheless, the debates on BDSM - whether it is the reinforcement of heteronormative patriarchal hierarchies or it is, contrarily, the opportunity to challenge and subvert norms - are still ongoing.

Queer theory framework

Probably, the main concept accompanying the topic of BDSM in queer studies is ‘subversion of norms’. Nikki Sullivan, in her review of the set of ideas that connect BDSM and subversion, addressed a number of authors that saw a potential of challenging the norms in BDSM practices (2003). Foucault, as well as Halperin, claimed that BDSM denaturalizes and subverts

heteronormative sexuality that revolves around genitals, implies the desire of a gendered object, and is based on the logic of reproduction (ibid, pp.154-156). Alternatively, BDSM practices “open up a sort of polymorphous perversity” (ibid, p.156) and imply rather desire not of an object but certain activities, scenarios, sensations, etc., if to follow Sedgwick’s speculations on sexuality (1990, p. 8).

Foucault who by himself was involved in BDSM practices talked about sadomasochism as an inventive activity, “it’s the real creation of new possibilities of pleasure [...] which has, as one of its main features, what I call the desexualization of pleasure [...] the idea that sexual pleasure is the root of all our possible - I think that’s something quite wrong. These practices are insisting that we can produce pleasure with very odd things, very strange parts of our bodies, in very unusual situations, and so on“(Foucault, cited in Sullivan, 2003, p.156). He developed an interesting hypothesis that BDSM developed as a replacement of medieval courtship. While the latter was sort of a play before sex, the former is a play after sex - however both of them aim to intensify the pleasure (Foucault, 1996, p. 151). Contrary to psycho-medical framework that is based on the essentialist idea that sadomasochism is the symptom of psychological aberration, Foucault and queer theory proponents state that there is nothing natural or essential in BDSM. It is just a play and a way of constructing the reality. Moreover, BDSM allows to see that gender is not the expression of the natural properties but, similarly, is a reality constructed through certain activities and in certain context (Sullivan, 2003, p. 153 - 157).

Robin Bauer, who published his PhD research on BDSM in 2014, examined dyke + queer BDSM practices through the analytical frameworks of queer and trans- studies. He put queer BDSM practices, as well as promiscuous and commercial sex, as an opposition to heteronormativity explained in terms of the “ideal of harmonic sex” (2014). The latter implies monogamous egalitarian tender sex - pure and pleasurable intimate relationship of two equal

partners. He claimed that this discourse amalgamates heteronormative moralism and liberal rhetoric, is classist, racist, and obscures connection of intimacies with social and political structures. The author suggested that queer BDSM challenges the discourse of harmonic sex and other heteronormative social norms, as well as shifts erotic pleasures from vagina-penis intercourse to different loci (2014). He wrote: “alternative intimacies celebrate difference, tension, intensity, risk, excess, ecstasy, wastefulness, perversity, campy extravagance, fluidity and insanity, as well as becoming something beyond the human” (ibid, p. 4). Bauer’s research was based on the interviews of queer, lesbian, and transgender BDSM practitioners, and aimed to deconstruct the ideal of harmonic sex as well as to explore the possibilities of alternative intimacies. The author positioned his work as “anti-heteronormative critique” (ibid, p.2) and applied a queer theory perspective on the issue.

Another present-day critical view on BDSM has been introduced by Margot Weiss. She conducted an ethnographic research of the BDSM community in San Francisco, and analyzed gender, sex, race, and class dimensions of BDSM practices in relation to capitalism, nationalism, and neoliberal economies (2011). She questioned the idea of BDSM as a subversive culture and that BDSM practices challenge norms. She showed how these practices are inscribed into neoliberal discourses of self-mastery and certain consumerist practices (buying toys, attending workshops, having access to information and self-exploration) accessible only to privileged groups. That is, according to her, contemporary BDSM practices rather reproduce than subvert existing norms and power dynamics. In wider sense, the author showed how sexuality is assembled with wider economic and social circuits (ibid).

In my thesis, I will not dwell on mentioned debates on BDSM - my aim is not a contribution to the debates on whether BDSM reproduces or subverts existing norms. As I mentioned in the introduction, my focus is on the shape and structure of a modern subject in democratic societies,

and what happens with it in BDSM: why for some people BDSM experience feels like losing self, and for others it feels like finding true self. What does this mean and what it can tell about a modern subject? Below, I will make a review of the discussion on ‘what is subject’ in queer theory and performativity studies.

Subject in queer and performativity theories

The question of the subject has been one of the most crucial issues in gender studies. Common sense understanding implies essentialist discourse on subjectivity as an inherent core with certain qualities like male/female, homo/hetero, etc. stemming from the essence, from inside. Such common sense is not so common and draws on Western tradition of thought. As Nikki Sullivan puts it, it is based on “the humanist notion of the subject as a unique, unified, rational, autonomous individual whose relations with others are secondary and whose desires and actions are transparent to him or herself” (2003, p. 41). This notion implies that a self is an internal core, a neutral source of consciousness that can be peeled off its cultural and social layers. Moreover, the idea of true self invokes the imperative of liberating it from the constraints of repressive social norms, etc.

With the development of post-structuralism and emergence of the works of the authors such as Foucault and Derrida, the perspective on subjectivity radically changed. Foucault claimed that the subject is not a naturally developed core in a human, not a neutral pre-historical source of being that pre-exists meaning and history. To Foucault, a subject does not exist before social but is produced by history and discourses. In other words, subjectivity, the self is a historical and cultural construction. In queer and performativity theories, this view has been developed: self is not only the product of dominant discourses but also the effect of constant repetitive practices, that is, is the matter of doing. Similarly, gender and other considered to be natural characteristics that define a subject are not inherent and self-evident but are maintained through

social institutions and certain reiterative practices (Sullivan. 2003, p.81). Judith Butler claimed that our bodies are not natural facts which pre-exist social superstructures, but are formed through practices determined by dominant discourses. In other words, in performativity studies, a subject is not the matter of being, but is the result of reiterative doing - repetitive citation of dominant discourses (Butler, 2006).

1.2. Theoretical framework: spatial models of a subject in performativity studies

In the theory of performativity that is my main theoretical framework, a subject is not an autonomous entity with an internal unified core but is relational and spatialized phenomenon. There is a range of accounts explaining how modern subjectivity works in spatial terms. All of these accounts outline more or less similar spatial structure based on visibility and spectacle that has developed within liberal ideologies.

1.2.1. Performativity theory: space of uptake, theatricality, and audience

J.L. Austin's concept of the 'space of uptake'

A philosopher J.L. Austin who is known as an author of the speech act theory developed the concept of performative utterances that differ from constative, or descriptive, utterances (1962). For example, there is the difference between saying 'the sky is blue' (descriptive utterance) and 'I promise you' (it is not a description of the reality but is the act of doing - the act of promising). The distinction between constative and performative utterances is to show that the language is not only descriptive -is not secondary to the reality, but is also productive - it shapes and produces the reality. In other words, it is possible "to do things with words" (ibid). There is an important concept of the 'space of uptake' that Austin introduced in connection to performative acts. Space of uptake means the context in which a performative

utterance is pronounced. It implies that for a performative act to be successful - to reach its aim - the context should be proper.

For example, for the utterances 'I promise' or 'You are fired' to work, the context, the situation and actors have to be organized in proper way. 'You are fired' told to a bystander on the street, or by a subordinate to his or her boss will not work. The effect of the utterance will be, at best, a puzzled look of people around. A performative utterance 'You are fired' will work only in the context of a work place, and when it is a boss who is making such utterance. It has to comply with convention, with what is as customary. For an utterance to be taken up there has to be a proper situation and context. Austin called such context the space of uptake. That is, performative acts work not per se but only within a certain space of uptake (ibid).

Kosofsky Sedgwick and Parker on performative acts and their audience

Kosofsky Sedgwick and Parker, developing Austin's theory of performative acts and explaining further connection of performativity and performance (1995, p.1), paid special attention to the space of the uptake of a performative act. As mentioned, for a performative act to be successful it has to comply with a convention. Convention requires a consensus, which, in turn, requires implied tacit witnesses of an act so that it can come into force, be legitimate. The authors argued that to analyze performativity it is crucial to see the whole scene of a performative act, not only the act itself. They wrote that the concept of the space of uptake with its implied presence of silent witnesses replaced the psychoanalytic concept of the gaze and is more complex: "Austin's [...] invocation of "the proper context" [...] has opened [...] onto a populous and contested scene in which the role of silent or implied witnesses [...] bears as much explanatory weight as do the particular speech acts of supposed individual speech agents" (ibid, p.7).

A performative act needs interpellation of the eyes of the witnessing audience, their recognition of the act. A literal example of this idea is a marriage ceremony, where the performative act of 'I do' has to rely on the social consensus and approval of witnesses. What is more, the very 'I' is a performative act here - the I is not a natural, universal, private I, but is a part of certain 'we' - authorized and confirmed by state heterosexual consensus (ibid, p.10). Thus, Kosofsky Sedgwick and Parker show pervasiveness of theatricality and its stage-audience structure as constitutive for subjectivity. In other words, a subject is not only a performer but is the whole scene of spectacle with tacit audience. The I is a performer and an audience simultaneously. Importantly, according to authors, in a heterosexual society there is a non-replaceable element of a stage setting and the implied sense of everything - a "proscenium arch" of marriage (ibid, p.11).

Kosofsky Sedgwick on shame-theatricality, and H. James' psychological interior

In the text on Henry James' *Art of the Novel*, Kosofsky Sedgwick built an interesting structure of the author's self as a "shame-theatricality circuit" consisting of James's relation to his younger self on one end and relation to his audience on the other (2003). According to the author, the affect of shame is fundamental for this circular structure. Based on Tomkins' affect theory, she shows that shame is narcissistic and sociable phenomenon at the same time - that is, it is oriented into two directions simultaneously: towards "painful individuation" (ibid, p.37) but towards others in seeking contact as well. Kosofsky Sedgwick talked about shame as a "space wherein a sense of self will develop", and "the place where the question of identity arises most originally and most relationally" (ibid). She introduced the concept of shame/theatricality circuit, claiming that theatricality is the part of shame. Shame emerges when narcissistic self-exposure does not meet positive confirmation from others, when the pleasure of contacting with others is interrupted.

The author analyzed James' prefaces for how the experience of shame shaped his psychological interiority as well as the relation to his audience. His subjectivity was formed as the relation of grown-up author to his inner child. This relation was charged with love and protection of more experienced self to ashamed and queer younger self (or his queer anthropomorphized stories). According to Kosofsky Sedgwick, the experience of shame and embarrassment produced certain interior spatiality of the writer: a cozy interior that constituted the setting for the re-parenting scenario that was played out between mature protective James and his younger embarrassed self. This cozy interior was exposed to the audience as a theatrical stage in writer's prefaces - as if he shared the pleasure of watching such a heart-warming spectacle with his readers.

Kosofsky Sedgwick wrote: "the flush of shame becomes an affecting and eroticized form of mutual display. The writing subject's seductive bond with the unmerged but unrepudiated "inner" child seems, indeed, to be the condition of that subject's having an interiority at all, a spatialized subjectivity that can be characterized by absorption" (ibid, p.44). This ashamed and queer inner child was shaped as a performance of self-exposure, "exhibitionistic flirtation with adults" (ibid, p.42), the performance of "sanctioned intergenerational flirtation" (ibid, p.43). Kosofsky Sedgwick cited a fragment from the text where James invoked the atmosphere of domesticity and coziness referring to the image of a nursery, which created a certain setting for the interior spectacle. With that, this absorption that created subjective interiority, this spectacle of intimate relation of a fatherly figure to an inner child, is performed as a self-exposure to the audience, is directed outwards, as if it seeks for an understanding and positive feedback from the audience. Such exposure of internal space and the drama occurring there constituted the theatrical part of James' performativity.

Described semi-directed spatial structure of self that consisted, on the one hand, of a cozy interior and, on the other, of a theater was produced by the affect of shame. This space was not a pure space but was inhabited with figures (James-mature writer, young ashamed James, and the audience) who were in certain relation and position to each other. If to imagine this structure literally, the curtains of private self that are supposed to cover the internal world of the writer were simultaneously a theatrical curtain exposing the scene to an audience. In my research I draw on Kosofsky Sedgwick's spatial imagination and am exploring the architecture of self through the narratives of BDSM practitioners.

Rousseauian 'public ball' as a prototype of a modern subject

David Marshall showed that Rousseau's concern on "how spectacles govern our lives" (1988, p.135) anticipated modern regime of governmentality. Rousseau condemned the theater for corrupting Genevan society. For him, theatrical relations were to blame for inequality in society, since exhibiting oneself in front of others as well as comparison to others induce competitiveness and vanity, which make a social man (in distinction to a savage) to annihilate self, to become an actor who lives "outside of himself [...] in the opinion of others" (ibid, p.138). Theatricality structure social relations as well as a subject (a 'social man'). "In large cities, according to Rousseau, this concern for the eyes of the world turns people into actors" (ibid, p.140). Rousseau criticized theatricality for making people into actors with vain "relative self", for annihilating of self and making it non-autonomous, dependent on public opinion, seeking for the recognition of the audience, which was immoral for him.

With that, Rousseau accepted that theatrical relations are what constitute society. That is, they are inescapable. He developed an idea that if spectacle is an unavoidable condition of sociality, theatricality shall be taken under the control of government to regulate society in accordance with morality and common good. He offered that it could be possible to develop a theater that

would be moral, where theatricality and vanity would be used by the state to govern the society. He developed an image of the "balls for young marriageable persons" (Rousseau, cited in Marshall, 1988, p.160) where unmarried youth would make a proper spectacle of themselves, engaging in a modest and innocent dance observed by the public and by their watching and controlling parents. The key of this ball was in the constant observation – “relentlessly open eyes of the public” (ibid, p.160) - and censoring each other. The aim of this ball, to Rousseau, should be to find a couple to marry. Such public ball would bear the function of “state-controlled theatricality”, policing and “mutual surveillance” (ibid, p.163). It would be "the empire of opinion": the power of public opinion to control people's manners and morals and consequently their actions” (ibid). According to Marshall, Rousseauian public ball is an epitome of the modern governmentality based on control and surveillance: “consequently, if people are governed by public opinion, then the best way to govern them is to control public opinion. According to Rousseau, rather than opposing amour-propre and people's subservience before the eyes of the world, government should seize the apparatus of public opinion” (ibid, p. 163).

1.2.2. Spatial character of psychic: inhabited fantasy

Grosz on fundamental spatiality of a subject

In the text on psychic topographies, Elizabeth Grosz addressed psychoanalysis to unfold the idea of psychic reality not as a biologically predetermined function but as a mental construction built according to the map of corporeal experience (1994). Such perspective does not go along with the views on psychic as something volatile - a contemporary synonym for the soul - and, therefore, pure from gender and other biological and social markers. Grosz referred to Freud who claimed that formation of a coherent identity as well as the feeling of I as something

unified is not given but is the sum of aggregated corporeal experiences (ibid, p.31). "The ego is a consequence of a perceptual surface" (ibid, p.32). Importantly, it is not just a projection of a body surface, but a projection of emotionally charged sensations and objects surrounding a child. "The ego, then, is something like an internal screen onto which the illuminated and projected images of the body's outer surface are directed" (ibid, p.37).

Moreover, subjectivity develops through the ability to differentiate own body from the environment and locate oneself in the space. Grosz introduced an important insight drawing on Caillois observation of the phenomenon of mimicry in insects. According to this observation, in most cases mimicry does not have any value in terms of natural selection - it does not hide creatures from predators (since the latter draw more on smell than vision) and it does not make sense in dark environments. That is, mimicry is sort of a luxury that does not have any special sense for survival. Therefore, Caillois made a conclusion that mimicry is not a survival function but is about "representation of and captivation by space" (ibid, p. 46). In similar way, subjectivity is an isomorphic to the environment construct, absorbed and individuated imitation of socio-symbolic environment.

De Lauretis on public and private fantasies

De Lauretis, exploring popular culture and cinema, developed a theory that the structure of spectatorship in cinema teaches us different modes of subjectivity. In particular, popular cinema teaches us that a subject and a spectator is a man, and a representation and an object of spectatorship is a woman. The author claimed that cinema produces gendered forms of subjectivity through structuring our fantasies and desire. She explored how "visual pleasures" "seduce women into femininity" (1984, p. 10). Popular culture is commonly understood as a fictional escape from the burdens of mundane reality. However, it invokes intense feelings and identification with drama and characters, and through this produces "structures of cognition"

(1999, p.304), shapes desires and subjectivities. Referring to Freud, De Lauretis explained that “fantasy is the psychic mechanism that structures subjectivity by reworking or translating social representations into subjective representations and self-representations” (ibid, p. 307).

I draw on De Lauretis’ insight on the role of fiction and entertainment in producing public fantasies that become private and structure psychic reality and motives. De Lauretis developments on constitutive effect of pop culture big narratives help to understand the connection and intersection of social and public with individual and psychic through representation and fantasies. It is important for my research since my interviewees referred to their experience of BDSM as the experience of fiction. Fiction, alternative reality, fantasy appeared to be important aspects in BDSM experience.

1.2.3. Fantasy of surveillance: Foucauldian spatial model of a subject

Panopticon

In *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault explained modern subjectivity through the architecture of panopticon – the model of a prison designed by 18th century philosopher Jeremy Bentham. It was presented as a new type of prison that is based on permanent inescapable visibility. It has a circular structure and contains cells with windows on both external and internal walls - that is, cells are completely transparent and a prisoner inside is always visible. In the center of the inner courtyard of a panopticon there is a tower with a guard inside. A guard is not visible for prisoners, so that they do not know when he watches them and when no - therefore they think he watches them always. This structure creates a sense of total permanent surveillance that, according to Bentham, is able to prevent misbehavior without direct force and brutal methods. Moreover, to Bentham, this model would be effective, hygienic, and economically rational in comparison to dark crowded jails. For Foucault, panopticon embodied

a modern regime of power that does not mean hierarchical negative power with a king or a sovereign on top, but implies power that disciplines people through ubiquitous tacit surveillance. Moreover, the source of power and surveillance, a guard in the tower, is absorbed and internalized as a part of subjectivity. That is, a subject is not only a prisoner who is observed and controlled by an external guard, but is a prisoner and a guard simultaneously.

Repressive hypothesis and its spatial model

Foucauldian repressive hypothesis is a crucial concept for understanding contemporary discourses on sexuality. According to them, sexuality is repressed and censored by hypocritical social norms rooted in prudish Victorian era. In other words, connection of sexuality and power is negative: sexuality is a drive, an instinct that has been suppressed, limited, silenced by bourgeois morals. Such discourse produces the imperative to liberate ourselves, reveal the truth on sex, break taboos, and claim back our right to express our desires freely. Inappropriate sex was expelled into the social underground - illicit sexualities with their “infernal mischief” (Foucault, 1988, p.4) were displaced into “the brothel and the mental hospital” (ibid). “Only in those places would untrammelled sex have a right to (safely insularized) forms of reality [...]. Everything else, modern puritanism imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence” (ibid, p.4-5).

“By creating the imaginary element that is “sex,” [...] a sort of mirage in which we think we see ourselves reflected - the dark shimmer of sex” (Foucault, 1988, p.156-157). This image on what is sex for us today outlined by Foucault - “the dark shimmer” of a mirage we see the reflection of self - creates a certain structure of subjectivity in spatial sense. The repressive hypothesis produced certain imagery - in De Lauretis’ terms, a public fantasy - inhabited and crystallized into the structure of a modern subject. This structure implies two levels, one above another, in psychic as well as spatial senses: the self is a social erection, a superstructure with

its morals and conscience, and sexuality is the underground with its dark in-depth energies and promises of liberation.

1.2.4. Shame as the border and surface of a modern autonomous subject

Tomkins and Kosofsky Sedgwick on shame

According to Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003), and before to Tomkins (1962), the feeling of shame is constitutive in the formation of a personality. Shame functions as a bearing wall in the structure of self. Tomkins wrote that shame is one of the basic affects, and affects are evolutionarily evolved alerting devices that make us discern one aspects of reality and dismiss other to act adequately in response to the situation. Affects structure our attention, make certain aspects of reality salient and create the architecture of reality within which we have the drama and the motives to perform in certain way (Nathanson, 2008). Tomkins compared shame and humiliation as the levels of intensity of the same affect, and called it simply the affect of shame-humiliation. This affect feels as the stingiest one since it gets right to the most vulnerable zone of an individual - sense of dignity. It inhibits communication with others and invokes the desire to hide face and lower eyes. Most visibly it appears in a child who, being ashamed for something, covers her/his face with palms.

Shame is an antonym of “looking and smiling as silence stands to speech and as disgust, nausea, and vomiting stand to hunger and eating” (Tomkins, cited in Kosofsky Sedgwick, Frank, 1995, p.134). Kosofsky Sedgwick and Tomkins emphasized that the activator of shame is not a repressive social prohibition as usually understood in the common sense discourses on the emergence of shame. As was observed, shame first appears when a child is looking in somebody’s face and suddenly understands it is not their mother’s but of an unfamiliar stranger. This sudden unrecognition interrupts (but not completely) facial communication and enjoyable

circuit of loving mutual looking. Shame appears as a stumble, barrier of self-exposure and communication, and works as a reflective force - it turns focus back on self. It creates a feeling of self as separated, individuated from others. Shame is a reduction, interruption of “intimacy and communion” (ibid, p.139), barrier to “excitement and enjoyment” (ibid, p.149). Tomkins referred to “shame and pride” as “central motives” (ibid, p.136) in a human being. Importantly and most interestingly, Tomkins claimed that shame-humiliation is a constitutive affect in democratic liberal societies, while contempt-disgust is the fundamental affect in hierarchical totalitarian societies (ibid, p.139). To put it simple, with the internalization of democratic values shame became a central motive governing individuals in democratic societies.

Butler on passionate attachment to others and individuating foreclosure

In *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997), Judith Butler explored the relation of subjectivity and subjection and claimed that subjectivity or the self is constituted within and as a hierarchical power relation. Therefore, internalized relation implies inner spatiality, a subject has certain spatiality. Butler wrote: “[...] psychic topographies that are clearly tropological” (ibid, p.4). The author speculated on what is a subject drawing on Foucauldian idea that power is not external and negative to a subject but produces a subject. That is, a subject is produced in and as subordination. Butler considered psychic aspect of subjectivity formation and psychic topographies of the subject. She argued that a subject emerges in the strong affective attachment to those he/she completely depends on (considering fundamental vulnerability of a child to her/his caregivers). With that, paradoxically, a subject is formed by putting a barrier to this attachment, by turning against itself, against this attachment. To protect own autonomy, to exist at all a subject has to dam the desire of merging with significant others in passionate affection. Drawing on Tomkins, Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Rousseau, I suggest that this barrier, this foreclosure is shame. As mentioned above, Tomkins explained shame as

an affect that emerges from communicative failure, when one wants to establish a positive contact but this request is disrupted (cited in Kosofsky Sedgwick, Frank, 1995). For Kosofsky Sedgwick, shame is a self-constitutive affect and is inseparable from theatricality that can be understood as extroversion, a drive to connect with others (2003). In other words, the spatial image of shame is a barrier, a dam, a foreclosure.

According to Butler, there is “[...] a primary vulnerability to the Other in order to be” (1997, p.21). Autonomy of a subject emerges as the effect of shame for being dependent on others or being subordinated. It works as a foreclosure, a barrier to the desire of dissolving in others. There is a parallel with Rousseauian account on theatricality as annihilation of self and living in the eyes of others - conditions of sociality he was ashamed about. That is, in liberal societies shame functions as a barrier, the immunity preventing dissolution in others. At the same time, to be, to exist, to be socially intelligible, the very I has to be proved by tacit consensus of the silent audience (Kosofsky Sedgwick, Parker, 1995). That is the very existence of a subject is fundamentally dependent on the recognition of others, and at the same time to exist as a subject it has to be autonomous. Butler explained this in following way: a subject is an effect as well as an agent of power – it is formed in attachment to power and simultaneous foreclosure to this attachment. This foreclosure shifts external power into the agency of a subject. A subject recoils power it is constituted and subjected by as own agency. Therefore, interiority of a subject, its psychic space experienced as private, internal, individual, separated from external social environment is the effect of the foreclosure to passionate attachment to others (Butler, 1997).

1.3. Methodology and situation of my research

My methods include interviews and participant observation. From October 2016 to April 2017 I conducted interviews with Budapest based BDSM practitioners who speak English. I got the chance to meet most of my interviewees at the BDSM conference held in Budapest in November 2016 and also on local events, parties, and munches. A few of my respondents I met through common acquaintances. In terms of a social profile, most of my interviewees can be related to the global mobile community, since many of them studied and travelled abroad or came to Hungary from other countries. I conducted semi-structured interviews and asked my respondents to describe their plays, feelings, fantasies, associations, and things they find important in BDSM. My aim was to listen to how my interviewees describe their experiences and feelings, what metaphors and imagery they involve, so that to reconstruct the spatial structure of their narratives and understand the construction of described subjective experiences. Furthermore, in my research I involved observations from meetings (munches) and parties, and insights from private conversation. Regarding consent, I informed my respondents about the publication in the Internet and free access to my thesis, and asked for their oral consent. To protect the privacy of my respondents, in my thesis I am using not real names or nicknames but random pseudonyms.

Conclusion of the chapter

In this chapter, I gave a definition of BDSM, described basic discourses - of pathology and liberation - on it, addressed main lines of discussion in feminist community (sex wars between pro-BDSM and anti-BDSM feminists as well as postcolonial feminist approach) and queer theory (Foucault, Weiss, Bauer). I also outlined academic discussion on what is a subject in queer and performativity theories, emphasizing Foucault's framework of a subject as a product of dominant discourses and Butler's concept of identity as a matter of doing rather than a matter

of being. Since my focus is on the architecture of a modern subject, I then made a broader review of spatial models of a subject developed in different theoretical works within the performativity branch of gender studies.

This review included models based on the image of theater and audience, in particular, J.L. Austin's concept of the space of uptake, Kosofsky Sedgwick's images of the audience of silent witnesses and shame-theatricality circuit, and Rousseauian fantasy of 'public balls' as a model of modern governmentality. Furthermore, I addressed more psychoanalytic accounts: in particular, Grosz who described that ego is fundamentally spatial phenomenon that is developed through individuation from the environment and locating self as the source of vision in space, and De Lauretis who explained how the public fantasies of pop culture form individual subjectivities. Then I discussed Foucauldian models of the panopticon and the repressive hypothesis, focusing on their spatial aspects. Finally, I outlined performativity theory perspective on the affect of shame that works as a barrier, a foreclosure of communication with and attachment to others. I am using the spatial aspects of these models - theater, audience, barrier of shame, structure of vision, etc. - as a framework to analyze the narratives of my interviewees. Drawing on spatial templates developed in performativity studies, in the next chapters I am reconstructing the structure and shape of a modern self and am analyzing how it is transformed in BDSM.

Chapter 2 - Self as a space of uptake: the architecture of a modern gendered subject

Summing up the theoretical review in the first chapter, a subject is a construction that has certain historicity. This construction is not relativist: it is not a randomly made up cloud castle, and it is not a matter of an individual choice. A subject, self, as we live it today, has its archeology and genealogy, layers of social evolution and historical tradition. In the works written on the topic, the focus has been put mostly on the context and logic of the formation of the subject. In this chapter, I will focus not on the historical but on the spatial, architectural aspect of this construction based on spatial frameworks summarized in the theoretical review. My focus is following: if a subject is a social construct, what shape and structure does it have? How is it composed and assembled, what are the pillars, and what is that which holds it together? How does it function? That is, I will discuss a subject and self from spatial perspective. Spatial metaphors describing what happens to self constitute significant part of BDSM discourse: BDSM narratives operate with the concepts of transgression, transgressing borders, loss of self, exploring self (as if self is a territory) or reaching depths of self, expanding self, etc. In BDSM, self is not so self-evident and coherent, it transforms into another structure, foreign for a subject. BDSM narratives give hints, evidences that can help to reconstruct the architecture of self. In other words, in this chapter, my goal is to sketch down the composition of a subject from the foreign to self perspective of a BDSM dungeon.

2.1. Bracketed space of BDSM and its relation to self

BDSM and fiction

There is a recurrent motive of alternative space in the discourse on BDSM. A dungeon is a space with own rules, where basic social norms can be suspended. There is a range of metaphors used to refer to BDSM: theater, playground, experimental lab, underground, etc.

Foucault, in his interviews described BDSM practices as a “creative enterprise” (Foucault, cited in Sullivan, 2003, p.156) and “laboratories of sexual experimentation” (Foucault, 1996, p.151). Robin Bauer referred to BDSM as an “intimate theater” with “its own specific kind of reality and social space” (2014, p.13). Similarly to Bauer, Margot Weiss, analyzing her respondents’ narratives on BDSM as a different from the normal life world, used the term “bracketed space” (2011) - in a sense that the space of BDSM play is experienced as a separate, safe, bracketed from the quotidian world space. Moreover, according to her interviewees, BDSM exchange is sometimes experienced as more real than life, as “a deep, almost innate, part of themselves” (ibid, p. 152). Similar feelings were described by some of my respondents. For example, Hanna, a queer who prefers a dominant role in BDSM, told that during plays she sometimes feels as being in hyper reality:

“[...] usually these scenes for me are very very intimate, and so, actually, even though I am in power, my body is incredibly sensitive. It feels almost as if my nerves are exposed. It is very... It feels like hyperreal. It feels like my body is very conscious of everything what’s going on around me, and my body is very conscious about everything what is going on with my partner [...]”

Pat Califia wrote that “the S/M subculture is a theater in which sexual dramas can be acted out and appreciated” (cited in Scott and Jackson, 1996, p.232). Ted Polhemus, explaining why BDSM is not the replication of inequalities in the bedroom claimed that “[S/M] is best understood as a sort of a game - an enclosed microcosm with its own rules and territory [...]” (cited in Sullivan, 2003, p.159). Susan Stryker explored the space of a dungeon as “a generative space” of “the materialization of creatively grasped virtualities” (2008, p.38).

My respondents often compared BDSM with the experience of fiction: reading books, watching movies, fantasizing, etc. There is a strong and obvious connection between BDSM and fiction,

virtual spaces. Hanna, talking about BDSM scenes she participated in, described them as a space in her head:

“I think that’s like hmm... It’s almost as it’s in my head... or like even though it’s happening but it’s happening... even though it’s happening in the real physical realm it’s the context that this is only happening [...] like outside of the reality, because this is not something... It’s like acting... It’s like when you... It’s like a movie. Or people acting just because they are wearing clothes from 80s doesn’t mean that they are in 80s. They are acting. So it’s outside the reality and the context of what the real world is now. So it’s kind of the same thing for when I am doing a scene. Because what I’m doing in a scene is not something I would do, and it’s not part of... It’s not something I would do outside of the scene in the real world... it’s only something that is limited and contained within the space of the scene. And so it almost feels as if it’s an own space outside of reality, and sometimes it feels like a lot what’s going on is really going on in my head. Not in the sense that I am imagining it but in the sense that... ehm... In the sense that it is not part of like the real world [...] and this is like especially when it comes about really intense scene. Like that’s not how I feel about everything but like especially when I am doing something with a lot of pain.”

Another interviewee Tim, a dominant, compared BDSM with a weird horror dystopian world where power and mind control have no limits, which is “very much of a fantasy world. Which is fun to explore and the other person can make it real”. I suggest that such a tangle of sexuality, fiction, dark side, liberation, and exploration that could be traced in all these narratives on BDSM are part of the repressive hypothesis imagery. A BDSM dungeon (a space or a scene where a BDSM play takes place) is a literal representation of the repressive hypothesis imagery and spatial structure that I will outline below.

Dungeons of sexuality and the repressive hypothesis

According to Foucault, who coined the term, the repressive hypothesis is a modern idea about natural forces (or sexual drives) in us that are repressed and censored by hypocritical social

order (1988). According to this discourse, connection of sexuality and power is negative – sexuality is a drive arising from the depth that was suppressed, limited, silenced by Victorian morals. It is said that inappropriate sex was expelled into the social underground - illicit sexualities with their “infernal mischief” (ibid, p.4) were displaced into “the brothel and the mental hospital” (ibid). “Only in those places would untrammelled sex have a right to (safely insularized) forms of reality [...]. Everything else, modern puritanism imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence” (ibid, p.4-5).

However, as Foucault showed (ibid), the discourses on sexuality have only proliferated since 18th century. The repressive hypothesis connected the ideas of truth, self, and liberation to sex, which has produced certain social and political effects. It invoked the imperative to liberate ourselves, reveal the truth, break taboos, and claim back the right to express our desires freely. Moreover, I suggest that the imagery of BDSM with its dungeons, dark atmosphere, and underground vibes is one of the products of the repressive hypothesis as well. The discourse of repression divided social and psychic reality onto two levels - two spaces of uptake in reverse relation to each other: the space of a subject, and - pre- or under it - the space of sexuality where, according to the repressive discourse, sexuality is confined by morals and norms. The imagery of the latter could not be captured better than it was made by a BDSM dungeon concept. Within the repressive hypothesis, sexuality is the other side of the coin, negative, reversed mirror-world in relation to social superstructure of the subject. The tension between these two fantasies - between the imposed superstructure of a conscious self and the truth confined in the dungeon of sexuality - produces the energy experienced as transgression in a BDSM scene.

Interestingly, in the narratives of BDSM practitioners, sexuality functions rather as a spatial phenomenon – not a psychological property, or drive, or a subject’s object-directed desire, -

but a virtual space, a fantasy to explore and inhabit with different scenarios. That is, in BDSM, direct kinship of sexuality and fantasy is especially obvious, they become the same - an alternative space to explore. The repressive hypothesis imbued the fantasy of sexuality with the fleur of darkness, underground, and of everything that is not the subject under the daylight reality. Laplanche and Pontalis connected the development of imagination and fantasy to secrecy (1968). They wrote that fantasy develops as a response to enigma, when an individual faces something she/he cannot explain. I assume that the proliferation of the discourses on sexuality deployed also because of such tension of the secrecy, whisper, and coded languages around sex. To put it in another terms, sexuality was produced as a visible secrecy, significant silence, meaningfully closed doors, coded whisper as a way of talking about 'it' – all this became a fruitful tension stimulating imagination to reveal the secret and decode the whisper.

To sum up, the repressive hypothesis has a certain spatial structure consisting of two imaginary spaces or fantasies. Within this model, sexuality is a fantasy constructed as an underground space in negative relation to a fantasy of a subject constructed as a social superstructure. Such imagery produces the imperative to liberate sexuality from the imprisonment of bourgeois norms. From this, I argue that BDSM is based on another strategy – instead of liberating sexuality and coming out, it is coming down to this virtual underground and inhabits it. Underground energy of BDSM, atmosphere of a forbidden fruit, connection of dungeons design to horror genre and to hidden dark side emanates from fruitful fantasmatic space of illicit sexualities, generated by the repressive hypothesis. That is, BDSM inhabited that virtual space, that dark chthonic catacombs where, according to the repressive hypothesis, hypocritical Victorian moralists banished sexuality to.

Shift between the spaces: fantasy and reality

In BDSM discourse, there is a cleft between realistic mundane life and a BDSM dungeon. Although the actual space - room or any other type of place - where BDSM play happens definitely differs from other premises with its atmosphere, decoration, etc., the main shift between the spaces - from mundane reality to a BDSM intimate theater happens in the minds of practitioners, according to some of my interviewees. Applying performativity perspective, I suggest that the shift happens not only in the minds, but of the whole performative environment, or the space of uptake. There is a switch in the mode of being, temporary suspension from the modern autonomous performance of self. All metaphors and narratives of transgression, playground, theater, etc. capture change in experiencing the reality, and refer to the feeling of entering another space. These images are not just metaphors but represent the performative shift between spaces of uptake: between the space of a subject within which an individual has to learn to contain her/himself socially and psychically, and the space of a dungeon where individual borders are defined not by humanist discourse but by consent and rules of the play. It shows to what extent an individual, a subject, or self as an autonomous social unit is not a natural self-obvious phenomenon but a construction that has to be maintained by constant repetition of a certain performance.

Furthermore, these narratives imply distinction between truth and fiction, truth and play, authenticity and theatricality, reality and fantasy, self and persona, core and mask. In performativity theory, self-identity is not given, natural, universal, or true but is a fiction, a mask that through repetition entrenches as a true authentic core. That is, the distinction between a persona and a self is that in the latter case the traces of fantasy and fiction are lost under the layers of repetition. The effect of authenticity and naturalness is also due to compliance with dominant discourses. If a dungeon or a BDSM play feels as a fictional space, a fantasy space,

mundane norm feels like reality because a fictional fantasy under it became reality through constant repetition. In other words, a space of subject is a fantasy that became reality through channeled multiple reiterations.

What is the most important, such performance with time, through constant repetition crystallizes into more or less stable construction we exist in and experience as self or subjectivity. Constant channeled repetition creates traces and buildups in the environment, become environment by itself. Lauren Berlant in her text on obesity conceptualized this fact as “spaces of ordinariness” (2007), showing how regular reiteration of circuits of ordinary life at some point solidify into the environmental phenomenon having rather properties of space than activity. I suggest that it works on the scale of individual as well. Through continuous reiteration, self from a performance becomes a space. This space works as a setting, a space of uptake, context for every next reiteration of performance. As a space of uptake (defined by Austin as a context of performative acts), it has a set of conventions crystallized into structure and composition. In the next sections I will sketch down the silhouette of a modern gendered subject, and the structures of its space, spectatorship, and drama.

2.2. Self as a space of uptake: the architecture of a subject

As I mentioned above, self is a space of uptake formed by continuous reiteration of certain performance. In other words, a subject is both a setting and a performance. There is a certain geometry and bearing elements that compose the structure of this space. There is also certain drama and characters that inhabit it. Self, or subjectivity has a spatial composition with the center of gravity and figures in certain relation to each other. Through constant repetition and reiteration, the drama, action, scenario is crystallized, repetitions stratify on each other and become a pattern, a structure, a setting, environment, a psychic landscape of certain structure

within which an individual acts and feels. This is an individual, psychic space of uptake. If J.L. Austin was talking about space of uptake in a sense of social conventions (1962), the perspective on space of uptake in terms of psychic reality shaped by fantasies (with their structures of vision and desire) allows to see that the context is not only social but psychic as well. Moreover, constant repetition and reiteration of performance itself becomes a context with time. It is crystallized and accrued into a context, a space of uptake that is an environment of every next performative act. And this space of uptake can be changed, similarly, with time, by channeled repetition of other performative acts.

I do not consider self as a concept or an image, or a core located somewhere inside of consciousness. Even post-structuralist accounts, claiming that self is constructed through discourses and that subjects become agents of these discourses through internalization, imply implantation of a discourse inside of a human being. Foucauldian image of power (1980) that similarly to blood capillaries spreads through the society still is based on interiorization, since such visual implies that discourses pierce individuals and govern them from inside. That is, self is imagined as something inside of a body and a mind. However, what can be seen from BDSM case, self is not an interior phenomenon, but is the whole context, the whole ecology, a space to inhabit and a field to interact with others on. Sullivan wrote that “the self is constructed in and through its relations with others, and with systems of power/knowledge” (2003, p.41). That is the self is a construction isomorphic to the experience of living in the world.

Gravitational field of a subject

Kosofsky Sedgwick, describing functioning of the shame affect, wrote that it appears as a sudden stumble in the circuit of “mirroring expressions between the child’s face and the caregiver’s recognized face (a circuit that, if it can be called a form of primary narcissism, suggests that narcissism from the very first throws itself sociably, dangerously into the

gravitational field of the other)” (2003, p.36). “Gravitational field” - that is the image, perhaps, that most fully describes the nature of the subject’s space of uptake. Foucauldian panopticon, theater, and an audience refer to certain aspects of this field. There are gravitational centers, dominants in this performative field, the accents that organize all other objects in this space. In liberal society, such organizing center is a sense of dignity. It is a heart, the center of gravity, an organizing element that holds the structure of self together. In the post-soviet architectural discourse there is a notion of a compositional dominant - an element of an architectural assembly that, being a visual dominant, organizes the whole space and lines of vision around itself. An individual in a modern democratic society, with its values of equality, has to be own compositional dominant. A modern subject is a structure with individual center of gravity that keeps a gravitational field, or the space of uptake, assembled within one body.

Power and space are isomorphic. Power is recognized and conceptualized in spatial terms: hierarchies, positions, size. Studies in the field of cognitive science provide with the proofs that the experience of power involves “mental stimulation of space” (Schubert, 2005) and that power is mentally represented as vertical relation and as size (Schubert, 2009). What is explicit in BDSM scenes, space render power on multiple levels of reality, structure the material-discursive continuity of a scene: from the organization of BDSM space to the figures of speech used by practitioners. Spatial tropes enable the concept of power (the figures of domination\submission, top\bottom) and, at the same time, power hierarchies structure literal, material space (vertical arrangement of bodies, etc.). If to map down the spatial relations in BDSM play, a dominant performs freedom in movement, tends to expand in space through devices, and to tower over a submissive. Whereas, a submissive is put, first, into the low area: is bent, put on knees, to the dirty zones – e.g., under the soles of a dominant, under the water

closet, etc., and, second, is put into vulnerable position – suspended, chained, immobilized, fixed in discomfort and exposing position, etc.

Such physical structuring of space through dramatizing high/low dichotomies and size is co-assembled with the dramatizing of power hierarchies on symbolical level. There is an isomorphic connection of spatial positioning and distribution of power. As an example of that power and space positionality structure each other let me share an episode I witnessed at the Budapest BDSM conference in November 2016. During one of the performances a dominant woman was tickling her submissive with a sharp device. The submissive was chained to the pole on the stage, and at some point, to reach the sensitive part of his legs, the mistress got down on her knees. Instantly, a sadist woman who were sitting next to me commented this ironically, “This is something new, a mistress on the knees”.

A modern subject is a structure that transforms social into psychic by dividing social into individual units. This structure - with an ego and personal borders - has to be strong enough not to dissolve in the passionate merger with others. Its stability is achieved by two main elements: personal borders that, similar to dam keeping water from flood, keep the space within one body, and a sense of dignity that, similar to magnet, is a gravitational force that keeps together and organizes the environment around itself. In a liberal society, shame is a building material for individual borders or the surface of self. And a sense of dignity is a gravitational center. That is, the autonomy of a subject is not given and requires constant performative effort. This fact is visible in BDSM hierarchical relationship: a submissive and a dominant partners do not have distinct individual borders and have one organizing center for both. They sort of share a territory and agree on sovereignty of only a dominant partner. The gravitational field of a submissive is concentrated around the center performed by a dominant. It is a system with two parts but one coordinating center. Whereas in a democratic society every grown up

individual must have an individual center and must feel what is her or his rights (in other words, territory).

Autonomy of a subject: shame as borders and dignity as a gravitational core

As I claimed above, autonomy of self is not given but is a constant repetitive exercise. According to Kosofsky Sedgwick, shame is an “individuating” affect (2003, p.36). “In the developmental process, shame is now often considered the affect that most defines the space wherein a sense of self will develop” (ibid, p.37). Shame outlines the borders of a subject, the interface of interaction between self and others. According to Butler, the psychic interiority of a subject is produced as a foreclosure of the desire for attachment to other people (1997). That is, a subject is the effect of clash between the desire of merger with the Other and simultaneous shame for this desire. This tension between the flow of desire and counter-flow of shame generates an interface between inside and outside. The shame constitutive for a subject is not a shame in general, but is a very particular shame for the dependency on others and others’ opinion. Shame involves a desire for connection with others, it indicates dependency on others: it consists of a desire for connection and a barrier to this connection at the same time. According to Butler, desire for dissolution in others is a condition of the emergence of a subject, and a barrier to this desire is a condition for a subject to keep existence. Subject is a barrier to the desire and attachment to others (1997).

The shame expressed by Rousseau when he talked about theatricality was the shame for annihilation of self through dissolution in the opinion of others (Marshall, 1988). Marshall addressed Rousseauian idea of controlled theatricality (and its epitome ‘public balls’) as a model of the modern governmentality. For Rousseau, theatricality was a condition of the emergence of a social man, and Marshall showed that the philosopher’s idea on controlled theatricality is, actually, the model of the modern liberal governmentality. However, Marshall

did not consider another crucial element of a modern subject that was articulated in Rousseau's critique: the shame for theatricality. That is, his critique reveals more than the fact that a modern subject is constituted as and within theatrical relationship. Rousseauian narrative - in particular, the emotion he puts into the text - shows that another bearing element of a modern subjectivity is the shame for such theatricality and dependence on public opinion. Shame is the barrier that forecloses a subject from dissolution. Shame and theatricality are constituents of the autonomous modern democratic self. Hanna, mostly a dominant in BDSM interactions, described the situation when she dropped off a dom-space (certain state of mind during a play, for submissives the analogue is a sub-space) because suddenly became ashamed of what she was doing. Shame was experienced as dropping off the space and returning to self:

"Yeah, sub-space and dom-space". Head-space is just, you know, like the mental status. If you are a dom, it's a dom-space, and if you are a sub, it's a sub-space. So, I enjoyed being in the dom head-space, which in intense scenes can almost feel like a different persona. I like that persona, that persona is powerful and is in control, and I like watching them, I'm talking about myself. [...] I have not felt shame in the... maybe there was one or two instances but usually that means I'm dom dropping... I don't know if you know this. So there is sub drop. There is dom drop. So usually it means that something probably went wrong or I did something that I did not want to do. Or I was in like... Like there was something off in that scene that caused me to feel this way because it means I wasn't in the head space or I dropped from the headspace, from the dom-space which what would... ehm... and basically I was coming back to reality while I was doing something that I wouldn't do in reality... you know... and it feels like gap in consciousness - in my consciousness when I'm like "what the hell...". Like "what am I doing, where's my morality?" It's kind of like my morality is judging me for what I am doing because I dropped out from the dom-space and now I am doing this in the real, and like real world, which for me is not something that I would do. I would never bit a person just for fun in real world... Or like outside the scene. And so in that sense I have felt shame or... embarrassment or guilt. But that's only happened couple of times because the person I was... the person I'm like... I'm usually hyper aware about my

boundaries and of how far I can go because... because I'm the person in control. It means that I have more responsibility.”

There is a connection between shame and dignity. Tomkins wrote that affect of shame-humiliation makes an individual to feel “naked, defeated, alienated, lacking in dignity or worth” (cited in Kosofsky Sedgwick, Frank, 1995, p.133). This copula of shame and dignity forms the structure of a subject. They correlate as borders and a center. Shame functions as a stumble, initial threshold separating an individual from everybody else that afterwards grows and crystallizes into formed personal borders. Dignity is a core, the center of gravity holding the whole structure of a modern subject together. The essential nature of dignity for a human being is articulated by Tomkins: “[...] there is no claim which man makes upon himself and upon others which matters more to him than his essential dignity. Man above all other animals insists on walking erect. In lowering his eyes and bowing his head, he is vulnerable in a quite unique way. Though not so immediately strident as terror, the nature of the experience of shame guarantees a perceptual sensitivity to any violation of the dignity of man” (ibid, p.136).

Shame as a constitutive affect in democratic society

According to Tomkins, shame is a fundamental structural affect in democratic societies (cited in Kosofsky Sedgwick, Frank, 1995, p. 139). Contrary to authoritarian societies where the affect of disgust is framing the relationship of a subject and the Other. Pride is a core holding a subject together, and shame is a border material individuating but at the same time connecting to the Other, keeping identification with the Other. In shame you recognize the Other as your semblance. Shame affect implies identifying with the Other, recognizing a human in the Other. It is telling how this aspect works in BDSM. A male dominant practitioner I met on one of the munches shared his advice on how to eliminate shame and feel more confident in a dominant position. He said that the best way to understand approach to a submissive partner is to get a

dog. You love and care about your dog, but it is important to show the dog its place and who is an owner. Another dominant, my interviewee Stephen, mentioned importance of keeping the mindset of a predator. In his opinion, to be a confident dominant you have to approach others as your prey, your food. He told that the question of confidence becomes irrelevant when you have a predator's mindset. When you look at potential submissives as at sheep, it becomes of no matter whether you are confident or no, how you look, etc. A predator does not worry about this in front of its dinner, cannot feel shame or fear in relation to a sheep. That is, dehumanizing, making a submissive partner not same to you erases shame.

2.3. Self and structures of vision

Self as a source of perspective

Subjectivity involves perception of oneself as occupying certain point in space, in relation to others, and implies certain perspective, optics opening from this point. Grosz referred to the case of psychasthenia (psychological condition when a person cannot locate oneself in space or cannot distinguish oneself from others or environment) to explain that the sense of occupying a certain point in space that coincides with own body is a precondition of subjectivity (1994). This sense of being in place - "connection between consciousness and a particular point in space" (Caillois, cited in Grosz, 1994, p.47) - is conditional for experiencing self, personality, as an entity different from surrounding. "This anchoring of subjectivity in its body is the condition of coherent identity, and, moreover, the condition under which the subject has a perspective on the world, and becomes a source for vision, a point from which vision emanates" (Grosz, 1994, p. 47). Psychasthenia is an extreme example of incoherence of perception and the source of vision or perspective - in this case own perspective is "replaced by the gaze of another, for whom the subject is merely a point in space and not the focal point organizing space" (ibid).

Feminine subject's split of vision

"The ego, then, is something like an internal screen onto which the illuminated and projected images of the body's outer surface are directed" (Grosz, p.37). To extend this logic, ego is the screen where social experience and meanings are projected onto as well. De Lauretis in her text on isomorphic relation of private individual fantasies and public ones, developed the thought that pop cultural grand narratives and, in particular, cinema contaminate us with certain fantasies as structures of desire and spectatorship, which constitutes our subjectivities (1999). In a range of feminists' works, current social and cultural norms are criticized for denying women subjectivity and objectifying them. To generalize, it has been claimed that "men are the subjects, women the objects" (Cameron, Frazer, 1996, p. 211). From this perspective, in the space of a subject - whether it is male or female - the gaze is structured in a way that a subject of looking is a men, while an object is a women. That is, I assume, a woman inhabiting and developing her subject space, her inhabited fantasy, watches it and sees herself from a male perspective.

According to the above-mentioned logic, in our culture, the source of vision is constructed as a male one. There is sort of the split in the self-perception when the existence of a female character depends on a male subject looking, as if it gives the source of light, a light projector for a female character to become visible. This split or a dual structure is, in some way, similar to the experience of reading a novel by a girl who finds herself identifying with the experiences and existential dramas of a main male hero, while at the same time identifying herself with his perspective on female characters. That is why, I suggest, many women are dependent on men's attention - the image of oneself exists as an object of looking by a figure of a men in own self-cinema. That is one of the reasons I suggest women tend to a submissive behavior even in the

current reality of Western society, with its more or less equal access to opportunities in gender sense.

Some researchers claim that masochistic tendencies are a general phenomenon among women (Bartky, 1990). It is a very interesting tendency in contemporary liberal societies, where gender equality, even if it has not become a real fact, has become a legal right. There is a certain motive that attracts women into submissive performance. Tomkins argued that all our motives can be described by the formula: to minimize negative affects, and to maximize positive affects (1962). I understand such submissive tendencies as a recurrent impulse of finding own existence or the sense of existence in the Other, in his eyes, since in our culture a male loving gaze is a powerful source of positive reinforcement (just to take any example of women's pulp fiction). In exchange to male attention which is a substantial good (although not always reflected) in the economy of a normative female subject, women are ready to hand over control and power to a man as a gift. Women are seduced by own sweet feminine image, and are in some sense addicted to the pleasure of being admired by a figure of a man in own private fantasy (the cinema of self). That is, in this private fantasy space, or rather self-movie - there is a flow of vision and desire from a looking male figure to a female figure. Femininity in such fantasies is a treasure, a value to desire. In pop narratives sort of *Fifty Shades of Grey* and women pulp fiction, female submissiveness is not about oppression or humiliation, but, contrarily, is a permission to a men to take the power over the treasures of femininity. I suggest this sweet fantasy is what makes women being seduced into submissive performance. Gender is not about oppression, but about seduction.

In other words, a female subject that finds her existence in a male gaze experiences the split between the source of vision and the source of sensations. In this case the space of a female subject emanates from a male figure looking to a female figure exhibiting and feeling. Gender,

therefore, is the type of a space represented, the movie on the screen of the ego. It is the relation between the center of perception (emotions, sensations, experiences) and the source of vision. I would claim that among men most probably center of experience coincides with the source of vision more often, while among women more often these two points are split and create an internal structure of a female feeling and a male figure looking. Perhaps, it is also connected to the traditional associations of femininity with a mask. Womanliness is sometimes related to something not in-depth, just a pretty surface - as if it exists in 2D, like a flat projection on the screen. This trope can represent the structure of vision in a subject, where femininity is a projection in the eyes of a male figure. It creates a women-specific existential conflict of connecting emotions and lived experiences which feel three-dimensional, deep, and overwhelming with a flat figure, a carton projection. It can explain the cases of women anxiety finding its outburst in such disorders as body-image, etc. If your existence depends on the Other's gaze, there is an imperative to keep these eyes on you all the time. In other words, if, according to Grosz (1994), the unity and integrity of self is achieved through the amalgamation of the source of vision and the sense of body location into unified perspective or the origin of coordinates, in a female subject this unity is achieved through a mediator - an image of a male Other who is the source of vision.

Grosz, referring to Freud, wrote that ego is an internalized map of "the degrees of the intensity of sensations in the child's body" (ibid, p.33). Following this logic, female subjectivity is based on one of the intensive experiences of the gaze of the (male) Other. One of the most intensive, I assume, because the appraisal of a girl's beauty is a main tool of positive reinforcement in socialization of girls. Truly, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Therefore, if beauty is a core of the construct of femininity, and the 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder', for a female subject to exist there should be the eyes - internalized and found in others - that hold her image. In

other words, to exist, a female subject has to be mirrored in male eyes (at least internalized). It explains why women are more inclined to be submissives in BDSM partnerships.

2.4. Dramas and motives of a gendered self: female submissiveness tendency

De Lauretis quoted Freud's claim that "His Majesty the Ego [is] the hero alike of every day-dream and every story" (cited in De Lauretis, 1999, p. 304). That is, a fantasy with its drama, tensions, disposition and relationship of characters structure subjectivity, is the setting, the stage where drama is happening. The drama through constant reiterations, being acted out again and again, entrenches a performative circuit that becomes a setting itself - a crystallized pattern of self, a structure, a stage of every next reiteration of the performance. De Lauretis, talking about public and private fantasies produced by popular cinema, claimed that the drama, the scenario of movie creates an environment where a spectator finds a place for their self (1999, p.307). She called this space a "field of vision and meaning" (ibid, p. 307), and I would add feelings as well. Gender is a form of subjectivity, genre of a "popular epic" (ibid, p.305) with its audience, drama, and characters. Gender is also a character chosen in this drama. Although all characters and the audience are present in subjectivity, the self-identification happens only with one of the characters, which determines the perspective and therefore motives, strategies, and actions.

Conventionally fantasies are understood as ephemeral effects of desire that, in its turn, is constructed as an effect of a sexual orientation. Psychoanalysts Laplanche and Pontalis provided with an insight that a fantasy is actually a cradle and a structural principle of an individual's sexuality (1968). Stryker mentioned their important insight with regards to "a concept of fantasy as inhabited structure (and of structure as inhabited fantasy)" (2008, p.39). According to Laplanche and Pontalis (1968), the fantasy of seduction is a primal mold of the

historicity of a subject's sexuality, similarly as a primal scene is a starting point of the historicity of a subject. They explained the fantasy of seduction as the following drama: ““A father seduces a daughter” might perhaps be the summarized version of the seduction fantasy” (ibid, p.14). Importantly, the feature of an original fantasy is that it is a structure with “multiple entries” (ibid). That is, a subject can be a ‘daughter’ as well as a ‘father’ or even ‘seduction’ (ibid). I do not take this psychoanalytical framework as a theory to draw on (since psychoanalysis is not my theoretical framework), but I draw on a significant authors’ insight to outline how the virtual space of illicit sexuality that BDSM inhabits is structured and attuned. That is, I draw on the fantasy of seduction as a scene with certain gender and power drama that frame and inform (is a setting for) different scenarios. “Fantasy [...] is not the object of desire, but its setting” (ibid, p. 14). “[...] sexuality is detached from any natural object, and is handed over to fantasy, and, by this very fact, starts existing as sexuality” (ibid, p. 17).

Furthermore, Laplanche and Pontalis, tracing the roots of sexuality in fantasy, referred to Breuer who called an individual's inner world a “private theater” (1968, p.1). I agree that the concept of a theater precisely describes the structure of the space of subjectivity. However, ‘private’ is not the best word to refer to it, since this psychic theater is the environment in which an individual perceives, acts, and communicates with others. That is, the space of subjectivity is not as private as it is rather a meeting place of private and public, individual and social. Joan Riviere developed a psychoanalytical framework on gender, particularly womanliness, as a mask, a device for a woman to avoid anxiety (1986). She analyzed the case of her patient, a very successful woman who found herself being not able to resist the impulse of flirting with men at work, which compromised her professional image. Riviere suggested that womanliness was a mask put to cover masculinity and avoid punishment from a ‘castrated father’. Femininity was sort of a device to feel safe. She considered womanliness rather as “a device for avoiding

anxiety than as a primary mode of sexual enjoyment” (ibid, p.38). In this perspective, it is visible that gender is not only a performance, a copy of copy, a mask cited and reiterated, but gender is the whole drama, the whole fantasy that generates motives for certain performance.

That is, gender performance is not an automatic citation, mechanical reiteration, but is inspired and maintained by affects and motives produced by dramas in our subjective theaters. Gender is not only a mask but also the whole drama, the whole movie where a mask has its role and function. A gendered self is simultaneously the performance and the theater - the mask, the drama, and the setting. Let's take as an example the phenomenon of female inclination to submissiveness, as stated to be a common fact according to some researchers (Bartky, 1990). Since BDSM is a chosen activity, I cannot claim that a submissive role is imposed to women by societal rules. In BDSM realm it is about enjoyment, therefore, choosing to be a sub a woman looks for a pleasure. Following Lauretis' insight that women are seduced to femininity by magic of cinema (and other grand narratives of popular culture), there is a particular drama played out in the theater of subjectivity to seduce women into a submissive role. At one of the BDSM meetings, a submissive woman told that for her submissiveness is similar to religious motives of serving to something bigger than you. Another submissive man claimed he is hunting down dominant women who would be able to tame his bestiality. Such motives have a logic, a context. Nobody would sincerely enjoy being a second role. To allow somebody to take over you and enjoy it, to receive positive feelings from a bottom position there should be a certain condition. In this case submissiveness should be a veil covering values one has, a sign indicating treasures. In other words, submissiveness is a pleasurable experience when it signifies the value and desirability of a sub in the eyes of others.

There is a very popular movie *Fifty Shades of Grey* where a millionaire-sadist seduces an ordinary woman into BDSM relationship and being his submissive. The drama would not be

enjoyable for a female audience (the main target of this production) if we read the motives of Mr Grey as the desire to assert oneself or just fulfill his fantasies. The drama feels good when Mr Grey's motives are presented as the attraction to heroine's femininity, the desire to conquer her and possess her valuable body. That is, for Mr Grey the body of the heroine is of a very high value, and her submissiveness is a gift to him, and we know that he knows it. In such drama submission is not a bottom, from behind position, and it is not constructed as a position of a sheep (as mentioned above, in the reflections of a dominant man on a predator's mindset), but is a precious gift. Sweet drama played out in a normative female subjectivity leads women to hand over their 'gifts' again and again. I assume that in popular context, and as a driving drama seducing women into submissiveness, is a drama where their femininity and bodies are precious values in the eyes of men. As I suggested before, tendencies of female submissiveness are due to the fact that male gaze is a strong source of positive reinforcement, and in the gravitational field of a female subjectivity it has a big weight that organizes the whole environment of a woman's self.

Laplanche and Pontalis mentioned that an individual can take up any role or different roles simultaneously in structural fantasies (1968). To remind, in the structural fantasy 'a father seduces a daughter' a person can identify with a father, a daughter, and even seduction. That is, I suggested before, a male gaze, or a male figure is a front character in a woman's fantasy, through his eyes a woman enters her structural fantasy and admires herself, is seduced by own image. In her fantasy, her submission is a gift of trust, a gift of the right to possess her body which is precious in the fantasy, which gives a sense of value. It is the act of self-admiration through the eyes of a male other. Therefore, mentioned tendency of female submissiveness would be reduced if women could get off the hook of the sweet pleasures of watching self-movies with their feminine bodies as a main prize, and break the circle of self-admiration

through an internalized desiring male gaze. It requires rebuilding of the whole space of self, restructuring the fantasy that constitutes the space of self, moving the existential center from a male figure to own character, becoming a subject of vision, reverting the line of sight from the own feminine body as an object of looking to the outside, to the world, becoming a subject of vision, the sense and the source of self.

Conclusion of the chapter

In this chapter my aim was to reconstruct the space that constitutes self, to sketch down the architecture of a modern gendered subject, and to single out main elements that bear this structure. First, I analyzed BDSM narratives that articulate BDSM as an alternative world similar to fiction or virtual spaces. I argued that such perception is based on the repressive hypothesis imagery that produced two-level architecture of a subject: a superstructure of a conscientious self, and repressed, confined into underground sexuality waiting to be liberated. These are two spaces of uptake: an individual space of a mundane self and a shared space of sexuality. I suggested that BDSM, instead of liberating sexuality from the underground, is based on an alternative strategy - to come down and inhabit this underground. I also addressed a recurrent motive of the shift between a real self and a persona in BDSM. I came to a conclusion that realness is the effect of channeled multiple reiteration - the fictional or fantasy nature of self is lost under the layers of repetitive performance. Moreover, through constant repetition a performance is crystallized into a structure - that is, becomes the environment itself, and functions as the space of uptake for every next reiterative circle of performance.

Therefore, I drew on the assumption that self or a subject functions as a spatial phenomenon. To describe the nature of this space I used Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of a gravitational field. I argued that in the liberal society with its values of equality a subject is a frame to divide social matter into individual units. A subject is a mould that cuts social into individual psychic. The architecture of a modern autonomous subject is buttressed by two main elements: personal borders and an individual core. Shame is the material for borders, and the sense of dignity is a core that holds all the structure together. Shame is a dam that prevents dissolution of self in the passionate attachment to others, and dignity is a gravitational center that organizes a social matter around individual ego. Subjectivity is sometimes referred to as a private theater, which

is similar to the assumption that a fantasy is a private matter, existing inside of us, in our psychological interior. I argued that the theater of subjectivity is not so private, since it is a setting within which we meet and interact with others.

I concluded that to be a modern subject, it requires a constant repetitive effort to keep autonomy and not to dissolve in passionate merger with others. Not self-evident nature of autonomous self is visible in BDSM relationship with its enhanced intimacies and transgression, where there are no defined individual subjects but rather a merged gravitational field with an organizing center in a dominant partner. I then considered the structure of vision generated by the architecture of a modern gendered subject. Drawing on Grosz's idea that self develops as a separate point located in space and as a source of vision, I analyzed the structure of vision of a normative feminine subject. In particular, I focused on the question of submissive tendencies among women. Based on De Lauretis' insights on how popular cinema seduces women into femininity, I argued that a female subject experiences the split between a source of vision and a source of feeling: the former emanates from a figure of a male Other, that is a female existence is equal to seeing oneself through the eyes of a male Other. This can be due to the fact that in popular grand narratives and mythology women find their identification with the objects of desire of a main hero that is usually male.

I suggested that the tendency of women's submissiveness can be also due to the fact that a male desiring gaze is used as a strong positive reinforcement in socialization of girls, which can in some sense make women addicted to this source. Moreover, on the case of BDSM and the fact that submissiveness can be a chosen pleasure, I suggested that the tendency of women's submissiveness is based on the fantasy that femininity is a treasure which women perceive as a prize in exchange for a male's desire. In such fantasies women are seduced by own image of a sweet prize. Therefore I assumed that gender is more about seduction than oppression. I

suggested that the tendency of female submissiveness could be transformed perhaps not so much by public actions as by individual work on restructuring the ecology of self, moving the source of vision and sense from an internalized male subject to the own gravitational center.

Chapter 3 - BDSM and a subject: transgression, intimacy, and the merger with Other

In this chapter I am analyzing the reasons BDSM activities give pleasure to the practitioners. I claim that BDSM scene is a space of uptake different from mundane self. That is, it is not a subject moving between normal reality and a dungeon as if entering different spaces, but a subject is transformed into something else in a BDSM scene, and is assembled back into self when the scene ends. I draw on the narratives of my interviewees to understand why transgression and intimacy are so important concepts in BDSM and what they actually mean and do to a subject. Why transgressing borders is enjoyable, and why power hierarchy is necessary for reaching the kind of special enhanced intimacy BDSM practitioners are looking for. What makes things like physical and psychological humiliation, giving up control or, contrarily, dominating somebody so attractive and pleasurable. What is the unifying feature of these activities that make them pleasurable, and what does this pleasure tell about the nature of self.

3.1. Shift between spaces of uptake: self and a BDSM scene

As described in previous chapter, there is a recurrent motive of shift between realities in BDSM narratives. Researchers and practitioners use the metaphors of theater, bracketed space, experimental lab, playground, etc. to describe what happens within a BDSM scene. There is a strong connection between fiction, virtual spaces and BDSM. I suggest that this discourse functions as a safety rope that returns you back to a normal life safe and sane, without irreversible consequences. Knowing that it is just a play, or it is outside of a real world, allows a person to do things that are unacceptable in contemporary democratic society, and can be dangerous for the sense of integrity in normal circumstances. BDSM dungeon is a different space of uptake similar to a playground in a sense of make-believe. However, this is not the

only aspect that makes BDSM resemblant to fiction. I will return to this question in the end of the chapter.

There is also a common topic of shifting between being a persona and a real self in BDSM narratives. My respondent Hanna mentioned that she feels like a different persona she enjoys watching when she is in a dom-space (certain state of mind during BDSM plays). Kathie, a queer switch, also mentioned that dominating means for her performing:

“I mean being a top is really... I have to perform a lot of confidence [...] that’s performative... Performing the confidence, the seriousness, doing everything with precision [...] It does feel a bit like a persona. A performance of persona. Actually I’m kind of an exhibitionist. I like when people are watching. There is something in being a top that is exhibitionist. But it’s a different attraction to this. It’s not that it can come so naturally and easy.”

Another interviewee Tim, a dominant, connected BDSM to horror movies and superheroes comics. He told that he appreciates BDSM as a space open for incarnating different scenarios: for example, he can bring post-apocalyptic scenario where people are soulless dull robots in writing but not in the physical world. And BDSM, behind the closed door of a bedroom, allows to play around this fantasy:

“I can write a dystopian fiction, some kind of a robot movie with robots who kill people androids. But it doesn't really exist, cause we live in kind of society where all get along. And BDSM allows you to explore what it feels like in a different world, different dimension, different set of roles. “

Stephen, another dominant for whom BDSM is not just a recreational activity but a significant part of his identity, claimed the intrinsic similarity of BDSM and fiction. He recollected his childhood memories:

“I fantasized like crazy about anything I came across about anal sex, vampire movies and so on and so on. And this was just the kind of a fantasy material that

anybody draws on in early adolescence. But it did get really strong response out of me. And I think that it's part of the reason also for getting involved in the early age into things like horror and weird fiction, because that often touches on same sort of ideas and feelings."

My conclusion is that the commonality of BDSM and fiction, or BDSM and play or theater is not only due to the fact that both belong to the realm of make-believe. The commonality of playing BDSM and reading, watching, acting out fictional stories is also due to that all these activities imply transformation of self. Rousseau, who speculated about the nature of a modern European subject, and who predicted the modern regime of governmentality that is based on controlled spectacle, was criticizing theaters and actors for exactly the same: they are dangerous because of "self-forgetting and self-alienation" (Marshall, p. 145).

3.2. Narratives of transgression

Energy of transgression

One of the practitioners I met at the BDSM conference 2016 in Budapest told that the most important in BDSM is the "transgressive energy" it generates. Robin Bauer in his research put special attention on boundaries, boundaries transgression and intimacies as the main issues in BDSM (2014). Sense of self implies sense of being separate from all other world and having personal boundaries. In BDSM, transgressing these boundaries - social and personal - is what makes a BDSM experience exciting for some practitioners. My interviewee Tim told that for him BDSM is exciting because in normal life he cannot be in control as totally as in a BDSM play:

"...cause it's very rare in daily life in 21st century. Just being a human being comes with a lot of diminished power. I don't have power. I see on TV, like, superheroes who can do telekinesis. Or hypnotists who can do mind control, who can manipulate, have control over people places and things. Time travel stuff is not

available to real humans [...] When you can push your control further than it is in regular life is exciting, is fun to play with. It's just more stimulating, invigorating. I want to see how to do this, especially with other people, cause I would love to be in control of everybody [...] In a weird dystopian perfect world where I was, like, I could be able to tell everybody what to do. And sex is a part, heart of it. Just to go to girls on the street and say 'hey just come upstairs to my room' would be great. I'm sure Brad Pitt could do this, but I'm not Brad Pitt. Or to say to a person in the store 'just give me cigarettes'. Or 'give me the coffee for free'. Or go to the bank and say 'put a million dollars on my account'."

Stephen, a dominant, answering why BDSM is motivating for him, told:

"To go beyond normal boundaries of what is possible and rational. That's very much de Sadian idea [...] Basically de Sadian imagination is an eternal war against reality and limiting, against hostility of nature, because nature confines and limits and restricts to the extent that your desires can't find fulfilment [...] What de Sad is all about is this eternal rage against reality, one giant spoiled child's tantrum. Being basically constantly angry with reality and nature for limiting the expression of his desires."

Stephen continued that BDSM allows to transcend normal boundaries between people. To pass normal layers of autonomy, modesty or self-control, and to reach the degree which is not normally available. Two of my interviewees also mentioned that BDSM setting gives opportunity to access emotions and feelings which are not possible in normal context, referring to the dark nature of humans, dark instincts. Tim described an apocalyptic fantasy world he is thinking about, where he can release true feelings:

"If I say whatever I want I would be an outcast. There is a point where you can't get angry and let out. But there is some kind of anger, desire of degrading people, saying things into their face. Everyone is disgusting and gross I guess. Programmed walking pieces of meat, highly advanced monkeys. The idea of free will is not a real thing, we are computer programs [...] BDSM allows me to play in that world all in all. Where you can live and thrive and escape and survive. Universe is cold and unfriendly. Today you have to be nice and smile to get what you want. Whereas in

the bedroom behind closed doors you can turn into post-apocalyptic scenario where you can... just play dark instincts, get them out. In arts you can do it too but it's not, like, it's more physical activity [...] To explore cold world where everyone is just a computer. It's fun to treat another person like a dull robot because that's really what we are, in our core. You can leave in kind of soulless world, and that's fun to play around with. In the rest of the world it's beneficial to yourself and to others to believe in a soul and goodness of people and altruism and helping others, whereas you know there is an argument we made against that, and that's kind of bullshit facade of society. Being nice to your neighbor is just to play as we are a community, whatever... People true feelings are much more sinister and dark Just like self-centered. I don't know if you are not a robot. I can't really tell [...] schizophrenic mind-frame. An alternative is the very real scenario that you are not a human being I guess. That's a possibility is fun to explore, it's fun to treat somebody like a not human."

"It's really coming to these reptilian urges. Really, the basis of all. Instincts are really just to fuck. Like Dionysian drugs and sex and loud music. Sex is just a great way to turn off the brain and use your body. Just turn off your brain [...] I can turn off my frontal lobe and focus on my reptilian brain which is barely conscious, just on physical carnal primal. Sometimes it reaches there, sometimes it doesn't. The aim of the fantasy is just to stop thinking and float. Your body is just a body, and you turn off your brain. Which can be not my friend sometimes."

Stephen referred to horror and myths on vampires and werewolves as those that articulate these dark instincts. As well as BDSM, horror allows to reach other levels of a human being:

"Something like werewolves obviously is dealing with something like bestial primal aggression, and so on and so on. And myth has often been a frame for these kinds of feelings. Also horror often deals with transgression, just as myth does, in which operates for very primal psychological, religious, et cetera, reasons. And therefore it often has a vocabulary that actually allows you to deal with this stuff, or at least it gives you a frame to express these things [...] Obviously there are many many other types of horror and so on, but in my opinion horror is often about transgression. It's often about going beyond the boundaries of the normal self."

The question is what is transgressed and why it is enjoyable. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, personal borders are built on the basis of the affect of shame. Shame is the primal material and mold that shapes individual borders of a modern subject. Eliminating or opening up individual borders gives the feeling of transgression.

Rituals of transgression, BDSM hot buttons, and the autonomy of a subject

Weiss provided with the interview accounts that described the choice of scenarios for plays as the process of finding the trigger or “hot buttons” (e.g., Nazi play, Master\slave play, etc.), and through this showed the connection of affective with political (2011). Replaying these scenarios open up individual borders. Agamben wrote that sadomasochism is the practice of manufacturing of naked life from a partner (1998, p.134). To explicate this point, it is important to approach the genealogy of the formation of a citizen, the self, and, in general, what it means to be a human. For this, I draw on Agamben’s concepts of bare life, sovereign and homo sacer, developed by the author for analyzing the origins of the modern regimes of power (ibid). Bare life means “zoe (mere biological life), as opposed to bios (‘full’ human existence)” (Weheliye, 2008, p.67). Extracting bare life is the technology of establishing power of a sovereign (authorized figure, e.g., a master or a state) and the production of homo sacers. The latter imply those who are stripped off particular individualized life and human dignity, being constituted as living bodies outside of human ethics, rights, and citizenship. For Agamben, the dichotomy of bare life/human life, which, in certain sense, can be understood as the dichotomy of flesh (corpus)/body, is an integral component of modern politics (1998).

However, I suggest that Agamben draws on the unreflected concept of an individual as an autonomous unit by default, with naked life existing inside of an individual. Contrarily to Agamben, I suggest that BDSM and transgressive rituals of cracking individual borders and social norms is not about extracting bare physiological life from an individual - that’s not how

the phenomenon works. Rather, BDSM does not extract, but puts away the dams preventing a subject to spread about and dissolve in social, and to merge with others in “passionate attachment” (Butler, 1997). In other words, the primal is not a ‘bare life’ but is a strong attachment to others, to social. Therefore a subject - as an autonomous structure with personal borders (shame) and a core (ego and dignity) - is not a social superimposition over biological naked life. Rather, a subject or self is a gauge that partitions social and organizes it into autonomous individual units.

That is, in BDSM, social takes over individual. In other words, BDSM does not, in Agamben’s terms, strip life from its particularity to flesh or to bare naked life, but rather it unleashes social, unleashes passionate attachment to others. Elimination of shame in BDSM works as removing a dam holding desire of the merger with others, which gives the feeling of release, the energy of transgression. This can be part of the reason of the debates over BDSM on legal level. Humanist freedom of choice and the imperative of liberating sexuality clashes with the principle of autonomy, inviolability, and integrity of democratic bodies. Strangely, BDSM is based on the liberal logic of freedom and privacy, but at the same time contradicts to the performance of humanity and citizenship in liberal societies. Halperin in the work on the origins of democratic body (1990) wrote that the institution of democracy in ancient Athens produced new kind of a citizen’s body – “free, autonomous, and inviolable body undifferentiated by distinctions of wealth, class, or status” (1990, p.98). That is to say, in democratic Athens sanctity and inviolability of body were established as the new defining border between citizens and others, instead of differentiation by wealth or class.

“Freedom from servility, exemption from torture, and corporeal inviolability” (ibid, p.96) and to be “equally the lords over their own bodies” (ibid, p.99) became a ground for collectivity of honorable male citizens as opposed to dishonorable non-citizens (women, slaves, prostitutes,

and foreigners). Halperin's genealogical analysis shedded light on why BDSM is stigmatized, letting to see the roots of modern performance of democratic body and citizenship and its principal sanctity and inviolability. Importantly, BDSM practices - for example, bondage or mummification which involve immobilization, sense deprivation, etc. – imply being vulnerable and dependent on a partner, which conflicts with the performance of self and a human as an autonomous, independent, and self-controlling subject. I connect the stigma on BDSM with the contradiction to the liberal performance of self. The practices of power-pain-pleasure exchange confuse the principle of inviolability, sanctity, autonomy and self-mastery of a democratic subject and, in general, of a human in the Western paradigm. Violating social norms, treating the other as a non-human being is one of the hot buttons in BDSM. When I asked my interviewee Tim what is so exciting for him in dominance he answered:

“Just like to control, see what it means to treat somebody else not as a person, like a robot. Like a piece of meat. For me, to do whatever I want. It feels powerful, exciting.”

3.3. Merger with the Other and dissolution of a subject: BDSM intimacy

Shame as a subject's safety latch, and elimination of shame in BDSM

Shame works as an interruption of “intimacy and communion” (Kosofsky Sedgwick, Frank, 1995, p.139). Rousseau's critique of theatricality (Marshall, 1988) was imbued with the shame for being ashamed of depending on others. Nikki Sullivan gave an example of how submissive desires are usually explained: “Indeed, as Polhemus notes, the submissive's desire, what drives him or her, is often explained in one of three ways. Either as a desire for a break - however brief - from the responsibilities of life, as a craving for attention, or as a need to ‘expunge deep-rooted guilt or self-loathing’ (Polhemus, cited in Sullivan, 2003, p.158). In all cases a narrative is about the attachment to the Other: break from the responsibilities as break from the constant

reiteration of an autonomous self-sustainable subject, and unleashing the desire of the Other's attention. We feel shame for it, since it is considered as an immature, infantile desire to be approved by the Other. It is important to understand the structure of shame and guilt to see how the subject functions as an autonomous unit, and how being a subject means constant repetition and performance of will. How it requires being centered inside own borders maintained by the affect of shame - shame of dissolving in others and losing own will, becoming infantilized or subordinated.

As described in previous chapters, shame is a constitutive affect in the formation of a subject. As Butler argued, the subject is a construction founded on the feeling of shame that disrupts the desire of attachment to the Other (1997). Personal borders are sort of an interface that appears when the desire of others stumbles upon the threshold of shame, and the flow is then reverted back, inside, creating the feeling of interiority, and separateness. The subject is a frame that prevents an individual to dissolve in others. Shame is a safety latch keeping a subject partly introverted, assembled. A subject is constituted as a spectacle, relation of an actor and an audience, an observed and an observer, in passionate relation to others, and is simultaneously ashamed of this. Shame is a covering surface of this spatiality, a personal border, which is, at the same time, is in permanent tension, and has to be reestablished constantly, reiteratively. Shame is a barrier that outlines the autonomy of a subject. Moreover, the constitutive for a modern subject shame is double-structured: it consists of the basic shame described by Tomkins as sudden interruption of communication with the Other, and a meta-shame: shame for being ashamed, for being dependent on the opinion of others.

Such meta-shame for being ashamed implies that an adult autonomous subject has to mask his/her shame, since it reveals the dependency on others. With my interviewee Oscar, shame was one of the main topics we talked about. He shared that in the childhood he had a very

strong feeling of shame that his sexual fantasies is something wrong. In his childhood he had strong feelings of fear and loneliness that he will never meet anybody else he would be able to share these desires with. He recalled the situation that happened to him when he was 16 years old. In the shop he saw a magazine with a picture of a blindfolded girl with a gag ball in her mouth. He did not have any idea what that ball was. He told:

“That image transferred the feeling of vulnerability of the girl, and I’ve known that I’ve been dreaming about this vulnerability [...]”

For Oscar BDSM is about deeper connection with a partner he cannot find in vanilla sex:

“For me to feel connected, to feel absolutely connected I need bring in also that part which is connected to shame. So what I like about BDSM is enjoying being humiliated [...] feeling humiliated or ashamed is something which I don’t want to show to the outside world, which I don’t want to show to the people I meet on the street. And the person is very special who I can share this with. And the person who can see me in such a scene, also vice versa, who I can see in this state of mind, does see much more from me, does see much more from the whole picture, nothing is hidden from myself.”

BDSM annihilates this meta-shame of being dependent on others, of being ashamed in front of others like a child. There is a very interesting and important moment in Oscar’s interview. He mentioned that when he is in a submissive position he feels shame, and he explained that shame in BDSM and shame in mundane life differ:

“[...] this is quite different version of the shame. This is not separating me, this is connecting me. This shame is something we can share [...] so there is a heavy part of that but there is a liberating part of that - that I can show you the heavy part of that, and we are together in the scene, and I have shown you what is inside me, and this makes me feel the connection. So yes, when I’m a submissive and I’m having the orgasm I do feel the shame after that, but this is different shame and this is not tearing apart but connecting. The shame itself is not good. But it’s good if I don’t need to feel that alone and I don’t need to hide. And I don’t need to feel ashamed of

feeling shame. Probably, that sounds funny but in not BDSM situation I feel ashamed of feeling shame. In the BDSM situation I only feel shame [...] It's accepted to be vulnerable and I don't need to hide, I don't need to go, but I can experience this vulnerability and I can show it, and I can share it, and I can get care from the other when being vulnerable. That's it."

Shame produces foreclosure of a subject, a border, a surface of self. In BDSM, theatricality as the desire for the eyes of others, narcissistic exhibitionism, approval of the audience and craving for its sympathy – this “passionate attachment” as the first constituent of a subject (according to Butler) is not interrupted with a barrier of the shame (the second constituent of a modern subject). BDSM dungeon hosts the fantasy of sexuality as something pre, in-depth, as passion, as seduction that precedes shame (*seducere* from Latin means ‘draw aside’ which echoes Rousseauian concerns with regard to theatricality as transporting self outside oneself, which is immoral for him). “The posture of the adult subject consists precisely in the denial and reenactment of this dependency” (Butler, 1997, p.9) – perhaps, BDSM is reenactment of such dependency on the Other without denial.

Nikki Sullivan in her observation on arguments around BDSM explored the idea “that S/M roles are not an expression of one’s inner self, but rather, are fluid, non-essential, freely chosen, subject positions that destabilize the humanist model of the subject [...]” (2003, p.161, my emphasis). From the dynamics that happen in BDSM plays, I would say that it is not subject positions but rather modes of subject that change. In the mundane life of the modern democratic society with humanist values, we perform autonomous subjects as individual units accumulated within own, individual psychological and bodily borders, with individual dignity that holds this structure. The development and maintenance of this structure requires constant repetition of certain performance and willpower. Failures of such performance are negatively reinforced from inside and outside: failing to protect own borders - with the discomfort of shame or pain

of humiliation, and, in opposite cases, when making bid for someone else's 'territory' - with the repulsion from others. In other words, a modern subject is accumulated within one body, and bodily borders are isomorphic to psychological and social borders, with the human dignity as a center that does not allow the subject to disperse, spread out, stuck somewhere outside of an own will, or dissolve in somebody else's will.

Nikki Sullivan gave an example of the narrative where submission in BDSM was presented as the strategy of reversal of the humiliation trauma received in the past - as if reproducing humiliating situation on own terms returns control and agency, and moreover, dissociates negative connotations from such not respected in Western culture qualities as "weakness, vulnerability, emasculation, penetrability, inferiority, and so on" (2003, p. 163). However, she continued, it "is interesting [...] that the emphasis here is on autonomy, agency, intentionality, and self-definition, all of which are characteristics of the humanist subject" (ibid.). That is, the desire and practice for decomposing of own subject are in any case framed by a humanist logic, that is, is truly bracketed with safe for the dignity discourse.

Intimacy: the Other as a drug

BDSM narratives show that the Other is a drug, that we are fundamentally addicted to others. Butler claimed that subject is inherently vulnerable to power (1997). Shame and dignity are these safety latches that prevent the devastating for the existence of a subject effect of such vulnerability and the passionate attachment to the Other. As mentioned previously, my respondent Hanna described her BDSM experience as more real, hyperreal in comparison to everyday life. Similarly, Margot Weiss referred to her interviewees who felt that BDSM was deeper and more sincere level of reality (2011). Sometimes, BDSM experience is described as similar of getting high. Based on the narratives of my interviewees and, in general, on the accounts of BDSM practitioners, power imbalance, an extreme hierarchy is the premise of this

special, more intense intimacy that practitioners look for and find in BDSM. Polhemus wrote: “[T]ake away the premise of inequality and you are left with the equivalent of a car without a motor... with ‘vanilla sex’ [...]” (cited in Sullivan, 2003, p.159). That is, power hierarchy results in the merger of individual gravitational fields into a shared BDSM playground. My respondent Oscar mentioned that in a dominant position he feels more viable, almost like a God:

“I feel that she adores me. It’s somehow narcissistic thing. I feel viable, I feel myself strong through the confirmation of the other.”

"Some kind of unity and identity over and above the mere momentary impingements of stimuli (whether internal or external) is one of the guiding themes in Freud’s theorization of the ego. Freud locates the ego at the center of nucleus of the perceptual-conscious system" (Grosz, 1994, p.30). In BDSM plays, passive and dependent submissive position (since the will center is handed to a dominant partner) allows to return to the state of being an ego-less swirl of sensations and feelings, accompanied with a temporarily disintegration of the identity. Oscar told:

“As a submissive I enjoy being told what to do and how to do and when to do, so, having barriers and having limits and rules like a small child [...] actually, it’s quite similar to the situation of a very young child.”

Another respondent Kathie described her submissive experience in terms of flow, release, intimacy:

“First thing that comes to mind is it is relaxing being a sub... I don’t have to think, to worry what is happening next because it’s not up to me. Of course, there is a conversation before and we discuss. But when in the play - then I can really, like, go [...] And then there is also a lot of real wise that comes through pain for me. A lot resonated both on physical and on deeper emotional level. Really release, very intimate. It creates such an intimate connection with a person. Combination of eye

contact, breath, and pain, and consent... I feel really connected. It is so interesting how connected you can feel. It's really great. The connection is what is great."

Precariousness of a subject as an autonomous and unified phenomenon becomes visible in BDSM. Being an individual self requires constant willpower and repetition of certain performance. Grosz wrote, "It cannot be simply taken for granted as an accomplished fact, for it must be continually renewed, not through the subject's conscious efforts but through its ability to conceive of itself as a subject and to separate itself from its objects and others to be able to undertake willful action" (1994, p. 44).

"David Halperin [suggests] that the pleasure produced by practices such as fisting, anonymous sex, bondage, and so on, functions - however briefly - to 'shatter identity, and dissolve the subject' (1995:95). This is because such practices work against the logic of heteronormative sex - a practice that ultimately serves to reproduce selves (in the humanist sense)" in a sense that such activities do not imply a logical result in reproduction or at least an orgasm (Sullivan, 2003, p.156). I would not agree that shattering identity happens because of absence of the reproductive logic. A subject is dissolved and shattered in literal sense, through psychical merger with a partner. Love addictions, symbiotic relations with significant others, experiences of merger with the crowd are forms of passionate attachment in terms of Butler, or addiction to the Other. It was telling that Oscar when describing one of his scenes was talking about the experience of his girlfriend, and then, when he suddenly noticed that, he told:

"It's funny to realize that I'm talking about her feelings, her experience. I guess that's why as a dominant I often do identify myself with the other."

According to the interviews, BDSM transgressive interactions help to eliminate shame and to achieve special intimacy, more intense and close. However, Tim described another picture -

where BDSM with its dark atmosphere depicts another, not so loving and caring, soulless, inherently selfish nature of human beings:

“I was brought up to believe that sex is supposed to be so loving and with a partner which has to be a really beautiful thing. Which it is, can be, but it also can be vicious and cold and can be just as exciting. Being able to live in both worlds is exciting, to explore both worlds. World that is caring and loving, and world that is not. Where you don’t believe in altruism, that people are truly capable of caring for somebody else. You believe that everything is inherently selfish. Even caring for people is inherently selfish. Or you believe in both.”

This narrative outlines not the intimacy but the distance dividing people in the cold universe. However, I suppose that such narrative debunking the loving and caring world is the reversal of the desire and passionate attachment to others.

My interviewee Stephen, who addressed de Sadian ideas as a rage of a big spoiled child against limiting worlds, provided with the intuition that being an autonomous subject implies frustrating unavoidable separation from the world and others. It means a painful and cold insight that the world is not your powerful mother that will caress any pain and fulfill any urge. Developing as a subject also means understanding of own limits and will. I suggest that BDSM allows to reach psychological levels when this frustrating knowledge was not there yet. In general, in some sense, regress to childhood stage can be powerful effect some practitioners are looking for. From the interview with Stephen:

“this classic prototype of an adult baby [...] basically someone who wants to be treated as a kid whether it’s a businessmen being a little baby for his mistress, et cetera., you know that going to retreat to the child-like state where you are fully accessible, fully dependent. Obviously for some people it’s a very powerful thing. And that is a one instance of transcending at least the normal adult social boundaries and getting back to some more fundamental and primal feelings [...] for whatever reason the childhood connection is very important for them.”

3.4. Structure of a BDSM scene: power imbalance as the condition of intimacy

BDSM intimacy: power hierarchy and imbalance

In the dominant-submissive interaction, it is not that two autonomous subjects interact with each other, but rather it is a symbiotic unit with one control center. Subjectivities are reassembled into a different structure. Power hierarchies can release intensive experience of affection and attachment. There are many accounts describing BDSM interaction as the experience of intense intimacy. My interviewee Oscar told:

“What I enjoy about BDSM is a connection, is a deeper connection than I could have without BDSM [...] So BDSM for me is about... is an encounter, meeting each other, showing ourselves and also showing our vulnerability... Also showing what I feel ashamed about, also show which is hard to show... I don't know if normal sexuality for normal people does also fulfill this need or not.”

John Cohen, analyzing “political ontology” of body in Western societies, elaborated the idea that our subjectivity has been developed through a trope of territory and a sovereign (2004). In his text on autoimmune diseases, he wrote that we think our biology through the “two thousand year old juridical metaphor” (ibid, p.8) as a relationship of a sovereign and his property or territory. That is, a human is conceptualized as the relation of self and biological body, where self has a body, possesses it. Cohen considered this as a naturalized “social relations of property ownership” (ibid, p.8). According to that idea, that subjectivity is kind of a metaphor of territory and its sovereign, in BDSM play, a dominant partner is a sovereign of merged territories, while a submissive partner abandons own territory into the hands of an outside landlord - a dominant. From here we can see that the one who sees and feels does not equal to the one who controls and performs will. Democracy as a mode of living today implies subjectivization, that is being a subject of political power, a master, a sovereign over own territory - own life and body. “The technologies of the self by which processes of subjectivization bring the individual to bind

himself to his own identity and consciousness” (Agamben, 1998, p.5). In BDSM, an individual is bind not to her/himself but to the Other.

Power imbalance is a condition for the merger with the Other, and therefore reaching enhanced levels of intimacy. Interestingly, it seems it is not possible to fuse with an equal partner. For a submissive to feel unity with his/her dom the figure of the latter has to be huge, like a God, and for a dom to feel confident in possessing a sub the latter has to be denigrated. For example, dominant practitioners sometimes identify themselves as primal predators. Stephen, a male dominant, in the mentioned conversation on the confidence in BDSM relationship, shared the opinion that such questions become irrelevant when you have a certain mindset - to be a dominant means certain mindset, a mindset of a predator. When you look at potential submissives as at the sheep, it becomes of no matter whether you are confident or no, how you look, etc., a predator does not worry about this in front of its dinner. Such metaphors invoke mindsets that involve subjective positionality and affective patterns, and show that shame is a condition of equality and identification, that are the pillars of democratic society.

Dominants describe their experience as controlling borders, being responsible for the whole situation, as if controlling the whole territory of a play space. From the interview with Hanna, a queer dominant:

“I think power exchange, at least, as I’ve tried it so far, is [...] when someone gives you control. Over, like, over either their physical body or also their mental state [...] So, when you do whatever you want to someone’s body. Of course, this is all within already pre-negotiated consensual context. But when someone gives you the control to decide how you are going to fuck them, for example. Or how you want them to sit [...] What you want them to do at this moment. [...] So this is more like of the mental control. So, yeah, I think that’s kind of what... I think control. It’s about control, like, who is in control of the scene, who is in control of the situation, who decides what happens next. I think that’s what the power is.”

Whereas, submissives are usually focused on the figure of a dominant, which has quite mesmerizing effect. The figure of a dominant in the submissive's subjective architecture is very big, significant to the extent that eclipses the rest of the reality. In terms of size perception in power relations, one female submissive I met at the BDSM conference in Budapest, described spiritual charge of BDSM. For her, submission is about serving to someone that is bigger than you, it is motivating for her to be a part of something bigger. Furthermore, the motive of fatherly or motherly figures is very common in BDSM discourse. My respondent, Salome, a domina, told that she likes to be a motherly figure for her subs, and in general in life:

"I call myself mother-like sadistic. I like to be like their mother. I just tell them what to do. I'm sadistic but I'm kind. Always protective. I'm like the nicest person in the world."

When I asked her how she feels as a mistress she told:

"Confident and happy, proud. Because they are watching you like a goddess."

The point is that In BDSM you are not autonomous, the others and how they look at you define you.

Autonomy of a subject and feminist sex wars over BDSM

I suggest that feminist sex wars are based on the clash of the different aspects of the modern subject discourse. A modern subject, as well as notions of democracy and equality, are historical and social constructs, the products of the humanist discourse. The subject, democracy, equality and free choice require individuals with very well defined borders and autonomy. Pro-BDSM feminists draw on the aspect of free choice claiming that in BDSM women can choose what to do with their sexuality and escape the trap of compulsory heteronormative relationship. That is, women can finally do what they want and express and explore their bodies and desires as free individuals. Anti-BDSM feminists draw on another

aspect of humanist discourse: dignity. From this perspective, BDSM is a backlash for feminists, since traditionally women have been dissolved in their families and merged with their men. Therefore, after years of struggle when finally women managed to become free autonomous subjects, equal to men at least in legal sense, to choose BDSM with its self-dissolution and inequalities, even in the format of play, is the betrayal of feminist goals and of the long history of feminist fight. From this perspective, the core of feminist sex wars is the clash of different aspects of a modern subject: free choice and dignity, which do not coincide. That is, the humanist logic is the ground for both lines of arguments: in pro-BDSM, it is the concept of free choice that is more salient, while in anti-BDSM dignity is the one.

Conclusion of the chapter

In this chapter I analyzed the transformation of self in BDSM interactions. First, I again addressed the semblance of fiction and BDSM, and concluded that it is based on similar experience of self-transformation and self- forgetting. Then I referred to the recurrent narrative of transgression in BDSM discourse. There is an idea that BDSM allows to break normal boundaries between people and reach very deep levels and very close connection and intimacy with others. I suggested, therefore, that the main pleasure of BDSM is in the merger with others. The modern liberal society with its principles of equality requires individual autonomous subjects, and being a modern subject is a constant repetitive performance that implies certain willpower and is based on shame and the sense of dignity.

I argued that a subject is a gauge that cuts social matter into autonomous individual units with private psychic. That is, social as the dependency on and the desire of others is prior to an individual subject stage, and BDSM allows to flood this desire without stumbles of shame. The energy of transgression that practitioners are talking about is an effect of eliminating borders

that interrupt the desire of the passionate attachment to others. Power hierarchy performed in BDSM erases shame (since shame is a sign of an equal semblance you identify with), and, based on the theory that shame works as a barrier to communication with the Other, allows uninterrupted flood of social. In other words, in BDSM, an individual subject is temporarily decomposed, disassembled, and merged with the Other into a different symbiotic structure, which gives a strong relief and pleasure for practitioners.

Conclusion

The aim of my research was to sketch down the architecture of a modern gendered subject. Foucault wrote that BDSM is about “experimental practices on the self which tear the subject from itself” (cited in Simons, 1995, p.99). I drew on the reverse logic tracing back what was torn out and reconstructing the structure disassembled in BDSM. Drawing on the spatial models of a subject developed in the performativity theory, I consider a subject as a spatial phenomenon, as a particular space of uptake. Analyzing the interviews of BDSM practitioners, I conclude that a subject functions as a structure maintaining social gravitational field within an individual body. The main bearing elements of this structure are individual borders built from the shame affect and a gravitational center of dignity that holds the whole structure together.

Furthermore, I argued that self is not only a performance, but is a setting of the performance at the same time. Through constant channeled reiteration, repetitive circles of performance crystallize into the structure and become the space of uptake themselves. That is, crystallized layers of performance become the environment, the setting for every next performance reiteration. The architecture of self functions also as the architecture of vision: it determines what is a spectacle and where a spectator is located. Focusing on the phenomenon of female submissiveness (as, e.g., claimed by Bartky (1990), I suggested that a female subject is split between a figure of a male Other that functions as a source of vision, and a female figure that functions as an object of spectatorship. Women are seduced by the spectacle of femininity as a sweet desirable prize for a hero, and the pleasure of submissiveness is based on this spectacle.

I also addressed common motives in the BDSM discourse about commonality of the latter with fiction, fantasy, virtual worlds, and sometimes horror mythology. I assumed that this is partly due to the imagery produced by the repressive hypothesis. Within this discourse, there are two levels of self: a superstructure of conscientious and transparent subject, and the underground dungeon of confined sexuality that has to be liberated. I suggested that BDSM, instead of liberation and coming out strategy, comes down to that imaginary dungeons and inhabits them.

Analyzing BDSM interviews, I came to a conclusion that the main pleasure of BDSM is in the experience of an uninterrupted merger with others. Since an autonomous modern subject is the result of a foreclosure of a passionate attachment to others (Butler, 1997), BDSM is a place for a temporary elimination of foreclosure, which dissolves, disassembles individual into shared social. My observation is that the transgressive energy and the pleasure of enhanced intimacy BDSM practitioners are often talking about is based on the fact that the Other is one of the strongest drugs for human beings.

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