

Introduction

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

The present work is a narration of the fiction of being. It is an interaction between narrations and the real world where they clash with materiality. Since the theories which trigger this book acquire signification by their application onto personal experiences, it is difficult to divide such corporeal and experimental work into specific sections. It is following this conception, that the sections that structure these pages are transitions which inform of, and are embedded into, each other. It is my way of giving shape to the (re)collection of stories and theories of the past years in this final composition.

The body is, my bodies are, the only standpoint epistemology (Harding in Alcoff, 1993) that this work will recognize. They are yet another fiction which here takes the form of a strategic account for the start of the subsequent narrations. Such location, as Thomas J. Csordas (1994) would put it, «accepts the interpretative consequences of being grounded in a particular embodied standpoint- the consequences of relatedness, partial grasp of any situation, and imperfect communication» (2). Whether we choose to label its context as late capitalism (Jameson, 1991), neo-capitalism (Derrida, 2004) or neo-liberalism (Klein, 2007; Harvey, 2005),¹ embodiment as location becomes extremely important to take into consideration when there are individuals which, in Donna Haraway's words, are «not allowed *not* to have a body» (1988: 575).

The bodies that live in this work relate to constellations which, rather than be at war with each other, grow together through vulnerable sites of being. I, therefore, often use hyphens to break the boundaries in the narra-

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

tive and to recognize the potentiality of concepts in their conjunctions. For this choice I follow Sara Ahmed when she criticizes socially settled ways of living feelings, suggesting what she calls conversion points,

[C]onversion points between good and bad feeling do matter; some bodies are presumed to be the origin of bad feeling insofar as they disturb the promise of happiness, which we can re-describe as the social pressure to maintain the signs of «getting along» (2007: 127).

Working through and from dissident, political and stigmatized affects, such as vulnerability or affects occurring through embodied experiences, can illuminate the conception of *queerness* that is applied to these stories, and, therefore, this introduction devotes a specific section to *affect*. Queer is interpreted in this book as a radical state which does not only relate to the world outside the body, but also means a way of engaging with the body's own multiplicity. To relate to the different figurations of the *self* implies a radical critique to hegemonic ways of thinking and being from privileged positions, in this case from my own European, white position. Dealing critically with this western system of knowledge can also bring up the possibility of thinking outside the psychoanalytical approaches to singular identity which constitute the base for the construction of white subjectivity (Freud, 1978; 1923)². We can, instead, choose to focus, as Haraway (1988) suggests upon the «split and contradictory self [*as*] the one who can interrogate positionings and be accountable, the one who can construct and join rational conversations and fantastic imaginings that change history. Splitting, not being», as Haraway argues (586).

Hence, my proposal is to work through the radicalization of the *self* into the many identities that conform it, its splitting into different selves. The combination of affect and the dissection of *identity* as multiple and in constant becoming, does not just speak from my own queerness, but also adds to the relational and anarchical perspectives that informs my analysis. Therefore, the imbrication of affect as a dissident way of accounting for

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

embodied experiences takes me directly to a new relational understanding of queer theory which brings to the fore its assumption of identity as multiple *becomings*. This frame is relational because the stories I share in this dissertation have only been possible through the practice of *assemblies* between bodies, subjectivities and other non-living agencies. And it is also anarchical because it keeps constant checkmating on hegemonic practices and forms of hierarchies. Indeed, as the pages which follow illustrate, hegemony is intrinsic to associative structures and needs to be counteracted by breaking with systemic exercises of power while keeping their tensions alive so as to keep our awareness of them.

I use auto-ethnography as a methodology that locates these complex and, sometimes dissonant elements, in a place from where to sustain their frictions and incongruences. Auto-ethnography stays with the trouble (Haraway, 2016) and allows embodiment to build from both experience and ethical-political agency. In this sense, it gives a structure from where to think from situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988) while granting self-commitment and acknowledgment of our own location in relation to the elements that surround our experience. It brings the body back into the center without isolating it from relationality and intersectionality as core bases for identity(ies) constructions. From queer and decolonial critical stances, self-ethnographic research has meant a path to follow in order to walk in and out of colonial historical frameworks (Chawla & Atay, 2018). As Linda Alcoff does through her canonical text, «The Problem of Speaking for Others» (1992), I here engage in a further critique of the liminal paradox implied by being part of a colonial genealogy while simultaneously working from decolonial thought. The privileges, epistemologies and affects that intrinsically haunt the former must be accounted for and focused upon in the application of the latter. In doing so, the coexistence of limitations and potentialities that knit these approaches engage into critical solidarity, acknowledging paternalistic ways of moving through these practices.

My queer, decolonial, auto-ethnographic approach attempts also a reparation to the ongoing epistemic violence that permeates our systems of thought (Spivak, 1988), holding on to the understanding that decolonial practices are actually proposed «from within colonial and racial structures» (Garbe, 2023: 2). In fact, these «new ways», are not new at all if we divert our attention to other epistemological genealogies maintaining a strong bond with the places from which they are produced. We have seen

this in the critique that black feminists have made to the distortion of *intersectionality* (Nash, 2008; 2017; Crenshaw in Guidroz & Berger, 2009) as a conceptual tool. This idea is what decolonial thinkers such as Ramón Grosfoguel (2016) refer to when he speaks about the risk of intellectual and epistemic extractivism. Along these lines, the liminality of being both in and out has become a strategy for my own conscious awareness of the risks that my research involves when confronted with non-white and non-westernized experiences.

The use of autoethnography is also imposed by my ongoing work in archaeological studies, which have allowed me to think matter in relation to phenomenology, and, thus, beyond materialistic purposes (DeLanda, 2021; Barad, 2007). Materialism puts at the center the everyday practices, the tangibilities³, of location, while connecting them to a wider context. As Chandra Mohanty recounts in her revision of *Under Western Eyes* (first published in 1984 and then revisited in 2003),

Differences are never just «differences». In knowing differences and particularities, we can better see the connections and commonalities because no border or boundary is ever complete or rigidly determining (2003: 505).

Consequently, differences will always be considered in this work as ongoing connections and in constant processes of becoming, allowing only situated close-readings to the experiences that inhabit these pages. In the vibrant materiality used in this work, I engage into fictions as tools to move towards History (capital H intended) in more perceptible and response-able ways. The understanding of my own history (small h intended) through the personal stories that I narrate here is a performative bridge to a more general reading of the political contexts that are articulated through them. History will, hence, be worked through as just another fictional narrative, as fictional as those stories which constitute my history. Correspondingly, these pages grant fiction a genealogical value in generating a different historical narrative.

All the conjunctions that conform this personal approach to self-ethnography have been especially informed by what Teresa del Valle calls *memorias encarnadas* (that can be translated as *embodied memories*) in

3 I use this word to emphasize those experiences that are particularly tangible and material, without reducing them solely to matter.

Procesos de la memoria: cronotopos genéricos (1999). In this excellent contribution, del Valle speaks about memory as something that «goes beyond what would merely be the reconstruction of the past through the data people provide» (8)⁴, suggesting that memory can be read as material that might allow us to identify symbols, as well as to take distance and re-experience the different emotions and affects attached to them. In parallel to this exploration through «embodied memories», another concept playing a salient role in my approach to these stories is that of *Antropología encarnada* (embodied/enfleshed anthropology) used by Mari Luz Esteban in her *Antropología encarnada. Antropología desde una misma* (2004). Through this notion, Esteban speaks about the necessary vindication of embodied analyses that do not depict a binary account of the world as divided between «us, anthropologists, intellectuals or feminists, on the one hand, and the rest, on the other. Between us, subjects, and the others, victims»⁵ (15). Her approach allows me to permeate the academic analysis exercise with the idea that «the personal is political,» engaging in more situated ways of doing research (Haraway, 1988).

The body, as mentioned above, is a site of vulnerability. But not only. It is also a site of resistance. And maybe these two sites, resistance and vulnerability, are, at the end of the day, the starting tandem from where to explore a feminist life (borrowing Ahmed's terminology, 2017). It is from them that I grasp my multiple fleshs, those material locations where I have become conscious of pain as well as of pleasure, of those emotions that I saw as contradictory until now. The sel(f/ves)-caring practice in this work has been actioned through the practice of self-ethnography. The importance of self-exploration, self-reflection and other introspective processes can make us realize how our subjectivities are contaminated from the outside. And when we take this into account, affects acquire radical importance for these processes of critical introspection, because they help us situate our analysis. As Carmen Gregorio Gil (2014) explains, while speaking about the importance of self-ethnographic examinations, «we are always part of

4 My translation. The original reads: «va más allá de lo que sería la mera reconstrucción del pasado por medio de los datos que aportan las personas» (del Valle, 1999: 8).

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

what we study and, in one way or another, when we define our relations with what we choose to study we are also positioning ourselves» (299)⁶.

Following Teresa del Valle's approach, I have given central importance to those memory processes she calls *hitos*⁷ (1999), which could be translated as «milestones», i.e., particular moments that mark future experience and have significant weight upon the becoming of embodied living. Here, I want to theorize *hitos* not as specific moments where life changes, but in their conjunction with the concept of *cronotopos* (chronotopes), used also by del Valle, after Mikhail Bakhtin (1981). Chronotope refers to the union between time and space, a time which is not necessarily linear and spaces that exceed the materiality of maps. I intend to focus upon the importance of non-linear timing since this work will touch on violence, gender violence specifically, and on the immersion of my bodies in the rivers, oceans and currents of its struggles. Given the complexity involved in engaging into violence as theory, it is easier to think about experiences of violence aside from fixed structures and Teresa Del Valle's *hitos* notion can be of great help for such endeavor.

Chronotopes deal not only with a time and a space, but also with the relationality of the self towards others. As a result, a fundamental concept enters the discussion: *safe(r) space*. *Safe(r) space* recognizes the impossibility of generating an ontology of safety for all, and allows an active, vibrant and generative politization of our practices and experiences, moving towards alternative, more diverse and secure chronotopes, as a momentary oasis from which to continuously rethink relationalities. The evocation of these alternative chronotopes in the experiences narrated in my stories has only been possible through the construction of safe(r) spaces, created in seminars, friendships, assemblies and inner dialogues that were critical enough to question their positionalities and relationalities within the dominant systems that ultimately regulate them. I use the concept of safer spaces because, as the topic of this work argues, I deem it impossible to escape power, so that complete safety is not an option. Safety is something

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

7 I leave it untranslated following Gloria Anzaldúa's claim for a language of its own (1987), advocating for a decolonization of language and terminology in connection to maintaining the sense that a word can only have in its original language.

locational and subjective, depending on each person's experience and, therefore, I will not use the broad and generalized form of *safe-space*. I am convinced that only through a constant reflection about how safe are those spaces considered «subversive and non-hegemonic spaces» can we enact resistances that keep us on the move towards an ongoing deconstruction of normative sites.

Insisting upon the importance of relationality, I want to acknowledge the methodology of feminist caring spaces where the assembly of bodies reflect on self-histories. As del Valle (2018) notices,

Evocation is both individual and collective. It is not memory, but, in many cases, it can unchain memory. Evocation is dynamic because it helps go further from the activation of the past and can conduct to the intensification of a memory, to a sharper focusing on its details. It can also generate a creative process [...] There resides the game that links past-present (35)⁸.

To speak about *evocations* voices the necessity of relationality for self-introspective processes. It also forces a rethinking of how the construction of narratives that have self-ethnographical analysis as their foundation methodology, can help break with the normative conceptions which rule theory and canonical understandings of epistemologies. Decolonial and postcolonial critique can also help dismantling these official constructions of theory, responding to the *epistemic violence(s)* involved in legitimized hegemonic knowledges, as the work by Gayatri Spivak (1998), Patricia Hill Collins (2000) and other postcolonial critics has evinced.

Some years ago, I had the pleasure to follow a course taught by Jack Halberstam, who contextualized the use of *low theory* in a space where a resistance to neo-liberal narratives was the *symbolic glue*⁹, which made us stick together in that specific shared chronotope (del Valle, 1999). On his revision of Stuart Hall's work (1990), Halberstam (2011) speaks about low theory attesting that it,

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

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

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

This ambivalence also speaks about the contradictions that low theory works through, which is an additional methodological understanding that impregnates this book.

Self-histories are *low* as they have been banned from conforming theories, genealogies and other determining factual narratives of authority, which we may also call collective *History* and *collective memory*. As a refusing act towards hegemonic theories and epistemologies, I want to bring up here the concept of *failure* that Halberstam develops throughout his *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011). He resorts to *failure* as a «way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and as a form of critique» (88). However, what I find particularly illuminating to the combination of theory and life which I attempt to conduct in this book is his take on the concept of failure as a «practice, [which] recognizes that alternatives are embedded already in the dominant and that power is never total or consistent» (88). *Failure* as a way of non-production, non-reproduction, non-assumption, non-function, non-consumption, non-action, but also yes-affection, yes-attraction, yes-irruption, yes-fraction, yes-friction and, mostly, yes-fiction. *Failure* as a yes-to-fiction. Yes to fiction as a low narrative of telling one's own life. Yes to the fiction of accepting our vulnerability when speaking about our own self-ethnographies. Yes to fiction as the only way I have personally been able to redirect memories into the shape of words, trauma into the form of theory and collective landmarks into public accounts. Finally, yes to fiction as a performance of the characters that give voice to my different identities, those characters that have helped me realize how much I needed to delve into an alternative understanding of identity, one which encompasses time, space and relationality.

The complexity of identity resides in the fictional dialectic conversation between «domination and subordination» (Chías, 2013: 9), which constantly oscillates from one to the other depending on the interlocutor's position. This breaking free from the dichotomous understanding of subordination and domination, or, in other words, from oppression and privilege, rather speaks up for the configuration of more subtle and intertwined

categories of control. BDSM vocabulary comes in handy at this point because of its fictional and performative potential. Vanilla can sometimes become kinky and kinky can, similarly, become vanilla¹⁰. Their exchangeability represents a model which overcomes single and fixed positionalities which could only end up reproducing *god tricks* (Haraway, 1988), i.e. absolute positions which neglect the vulnerabilities of identity construction.

Grasping vulnerability, then, has been another ingredient for my approach to the affects that I discover here. Embracing vulnerability together with stigmatized affects is to work with *failure* or, as Ahmed (2007) remarks, with,

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

In this refusal, fiction stands as an alternative for an otherwise-imagination of a feminist regeneration of the self. Fiction because I am operating within performative queer temporalities (Edelman, 1998; Esteban Muñoz, 2009; Berlant, 2011) that do not simply fake straight temporality but also, as a matter of choice, appreciate the intimate otherness of atemporal assemblies and relational timings. It is through these disruptions that this work suffers itself a break which forces fresh theory arrangements. Life stages are also entangled in this breaking of straight temporalities, in a fiction of time that allows a conjunction between past and future in the present material writing, such as Rita Monticelli (2011) points out when speaking about memory, which «as a process, also includes the future as one of its dimensions» (136).

1.2. Turning to art therapy

In this recollection of histories, my personal method and ongoing introduction to theories has been mediated through Art Therapy. One of the case studies deals with my experience as art therapist and the consequent reflections upon it. At this point, I would like to briefly introduce the field

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

and its interesting history since I find it fundamental as to understand that, as an epistemic, practical and affective discipline, Art Therapy holds on to the ideas that I have shaped in the previous paragraphs, centralizing embodiment and organizing the social in different ways, having the potentiality to include otherwise bodies.

It is not an easy task to try to delineate the history of Art Therapy and its main milestones. Maybe this is a consequence of a general understanding of art as a medium to express and expel affects since humanity was born, not to mention other non-human art expressions that are beyond our perceptions. On top of this, historicizing Art Therapy becomes an even more difficult practice since, as happens with many other disciplines that are in contact with practical experience, History as a discipline has traditionally been concerned with macro public narratives, discarding the little private stories of the individual.

Thus, even if we could speak about Art Therapy since prehistoric times, I am choosing to map Art Therapy as a discipline. As a field, Art Therapy must be tracked down to the emergence of Art History during the 19th century. One of the main transformations regarding the study of art during this period is how it is looked upon as a medium that goes beyond aesthetics. Ethics and the artistic expression of life experiences become important. The instrumentalization of art outside the regimes of aesthetic contemplation and museumification (Clifford, 1988) has a lot to do with the self-consciousness of Art Therapy. I use museumification in this context to highlight my personal critique to the capitalist and exploitative ways from which art has been regarded in the past centuries, following James Clifford's idea that art and the subjectivities behind their cultural artifacts have been objectified by the domination of a certain Art History tradition (1988).

It is not a coincidence that this process by which art starts to be understood as a more psychological artifact takes place during the era at which other disciplines studying human behavior become central in the western tradition. In relation to this connection between art and psychology, Marian López Fernández-Cao (2006) discusses that «at the beginning of the 19th Century, some psychiatrists take notice of how some users showed an uncontrollable need to paint and fill their room walls with their paintings»

(35)¹¹. The outbreak of psychoanalysis at the end of the 19th century, which used art for psychotherapies, marked the establishment of Art Therapy as a discipline in itself. The peculiar combination of historical factors taking place during the first part of the 20th century in Europe —such as the two world wars, the surrealist movement, the proliferation of psychotherapies and the generational and collective traumas—, possibilized the introduction of art in disciplines linked to subjectivity and identity. In the 1930s some ground-breaking figures such as Margaret Naumburg, Edith Kramer or Florence Cane, put into circulation the potentialities of using the combination between art and psychology in order to heal trauma, grief and distress. It is thanks to British artist Adrian Hill that the terminology was offered to the world in 1942, when the artist, after his recovery of tuberculosis that limited his mobility and kept him bedridden for a long period of time, coined the term Art Therapy (1945). As Judith Rubin (1987) explains of Hill's oeuvre, he coined his own process, creating a theory based on his own experience, since he «found his own painting to be therapeutic in his recovery from tuberculosis» (7).

Gradually, as identity was becoming central in the re-writing of European history, the discipline became something more than a healing process. It gave space also to personal exploration of subjectivity, territorializing Art Therapy beyond hospitals and therapeutic spaces and lining it along other experiential landscapes. I have myself used Art Therapy for my practices and I endorse this shift of direction. I have read about trauma from books that describe the images of my dreams, and the final reason why the methodologies of this book are fiction and autoethnography has to do with how I make sense of my own experiences as social fictions. In a way, my method is an excess, in the sense provided by Slavoj Žižek (2012) when, in his studies of cultural traumas, he affirms that «excess of represented content over its aesthetic representation has to infect the aesthetic form itself. What cannot be described should be inscribed into the artistic form as its uncanny distortion» (25).

11 My translation. Original reads: «[a] principios del s. XIX algunos psiquiatras hacen notar que algunos [usuarios] mostraban una irrefrenable necesidad de pintar y de llenar de pinturas las paredes de su habitación».

1.3. Turning to affect

Speaking about affect appears as the natural start to this work since the selves which will be discussed in the following chapters are in direct relation to emotions and affective life. Less obvious to connect at first may be the correlation of affect and knowledge production. Thinking of affect as a way of understanding knowledge production is not common, still the affective life of epistemologies is undeniable.

I am not a big fan of theorizing everything. However, I do defend the importance of radical knowledge in affecting the way we approach science and, in turn, those regimes that have direct effect on our embodiments. How epistemologies and, in general, ways of knowing the world become complicit in the biopolitical control of our embodiments is one of the main reasons why I want to «stay with the trouble»¹² of how knowledge is affected.

It is on the verge of a critique to biopolitics that this part of the introduction also keeps the problem at the center, since it speaks about power as both omnipresent but also situated (following Haraway's notion of *situation*, 1988). This is, even if departing from a Foucauldian understanding of the biopolitical control of bodies (1978), my research through affect has become a tool to speak about how affect itself is intrinsically dependent on location, on the specificity of each situation. In other words, affect has the *potentiality* to locate epistemic groundings. When speaking about *potentiality*, I am referring to the capability to affect, without any positive or negative value, since, indeed, there is also a potential for the risk of affect¹³. Situations are located since they are affected. They do not pre-exist per se, but rather they operate through their contact, their *intra-action*¹⁴ (Barad, 2007). In this case, the often-vulnerable bodies that, as we will see later on,

12 I am using Haraway's «staying with the trouble», a notion that gives name to her 2016 book and stresses the idea of an ongoing process of the ethical and political feminist project, through which issues related to identity and the body are sustained and questioned in a continuum, rather than resolved.

13 As we can see, for instance, in the use of affect by far-right politics that weaponize emotions and to disarticulate responsibility and justice markers from their electors and followers.

14 An intra-action is the notion used by Karen Barad to explain relationality from a new-materialist perspective: entities do not solely exist, but rather exist-because-of their meeting, coming into contact, into relation, into action.

have been linked to the history and use of Art Therapy represent a potentiality of producing knowledge and science otherwise. Such potentiality allows us to speak about these «otherwise» without falling into the trap of romantizing their marginal locations. To look at the self and our own embodiments as situated materials from where to think about the world (Haraway, 1988) can also prevent paternalistic, ableist, racist, gendered and many other marked ways of thinking about identity. This is the direction that the affective turn takes in this section: a drift towards the exploration of otherwise-affected epistemologies and of the use of autoethnography as a methodology in action.

When contextualizing the affective turn, Brian Massumi plays a central role in this new theoretical configuration. In *The Autonomy of Affect*, published in 1995, he distinguishes between three terms: affect, emotion and feeling. Following a constructivist frame of work, Massumi allows the reader to understand these three socially-interchangeable notions through a social experiment. The experiment consists of displaying three visual materials that tell the same story: one consisting of only images, a second one formed by a factual storytelling of what was happening in the image and the third, an emotional one, that added strategic words in specific and crucial moments of the sequence¹⁵. Being shown to 9-year-old kids, the study showed that the primacy of affect was determinant during the first screening, the one that only consisted of images. This was the only «positive» thing this viewing offered since the cognitive standards of discursive watching were dropped in favor of a more immediate and embodied reaction to the film. This failure attributed to the affected visioning exposed the way in which non-discursive processes are disregarded from how knowledge is constructed. It also allows a critical vision of cognition, which is supported by normative standards of understanding and symbolism which are extremely ableist (Hughes, 2007). Cognition, as Massumi discusses elsewhere, is studied through linguistic schemes rather than sensorial ones, shaping knowledge and rationality in their own complexity (2015: 91).

15 «A man builds a snowman on his roof garden. It starts to melt in the afternoon sun. He watches. After a time, he takes the snowman to the cool of the mountains, where it stops melting. He bids it good-bye, and leaves» (Massumi, 1995: 83). This video was produced by German television.

Returning to Massumi's experiment, its analysis proves how affect, emotion and feeling are distinguished through it. In this way, he exposes the way in which emotions are both constructed and constrained by social standards while affect has the particularity of being prior to consciousness. Disentangling this symbiotic union between the three concepts, Massumi sustains the particularity of affect, determining that «the skin is faster than the word» (1995: 86), giving space to a sensorial consideration of cognitive studies. Discursivity loses its centrality when considering the potentiality of affect, as the author expresses when writing that,

Approaches to the image in its relation to language are incomplete if they operate only on the semantic or semiotic level, how —ever that level is defined (linguistically, logically, narratologically, ideologically, or all of these in combination, as a Symbolic). What they lose, precisely, is the expression event—in favor of structure [...] Nothing is prefigured in the event. It is the collapse of structured distinction into intensity, of rules into paradox (87).

Again, the study of affect as a differential act from other emotional dispositifs, connects to the reconsideration of more immediate forms of perception and, ultimately here, art. Considering affect makes us deviate from art's canonical tradition, finding space for brutal forms of the self, transitional shapes, and performative actions. The temporality of affect informs the rhythms of these artistic expressions, affect being lost but present to the body. In this alternative temporality, the structure of affect is simultaneously present and vanished. It follows the rhythm of ephemeral forms of art, such as performative acts, that vanish immediately after they saturate the body.

As was already announced at the start of this chapter, the importance of affect is also considered through the lens of reciprocity and intra-dependence (Barad, 2007) between bodies. And, in this respect, the practice of Art Therapy is fundamental since it takes into account the autonomy of bodies from their own relationality, from their capability to become-with, as New Materialist positions would have it. Through this perspective, bodies, rather than being, become with. From this perspective, identity is not just the immutable location of being (be+in) a body but, rather, the motion of becoming (be+come) embodied with other bodies. This reconsideration of embodied affective reciprocity also takes us to a Spinozan grasping in which the monism of the body is dependent on its understanding as part of the entities and substances surrounding the body (Spinoza, 1677). Spinoza

reunites the Cartesian split between mind and body, and in this move, the process of embodiment is intra-acted (again following Barad's terminology, 2007). As Deleuze and Guattari recover from this Spinozan energy, the body recognized as a relation has the capacity to both «affect and get affected» (1987: 261). Rescuing these visions, other thinkers, such as Rosi Braidotti (2018) have reconsidered the agency of the body as inserted in the social net that surrounds it. In this sense, and following the materialist monism that Spinozan philosophy offers, the situated knowledges (in Haraway's sense, 1988) inside critical studies and feminist praxis are here determined by the relocation of the body and its immediate action beyond discourse. In this sense, bodies, having the capacity to affect and, in turn, get affected, do not preexist the contact with other bodies but rather they come to exist by such contact. And this otherness is not only bound to «the human» but includes many other entities affected by bodily matters. The problematization of the notions of humanity, embodiment, knowledge, subjectivity, and agency and of their intricate connections is the main principle of New Materialisms (Bennet, 2011; Alaimo, 2010; Barad, 2007; Van der Tuin, 2014; Shomura, 2017a, 2017b; DeLanda, 2016). These perspectives can be very productive when it comes to approaching Art Therapy since this discipline takes art as a tool for the self, without a simplification and individualization of the body, but considering it in its social assemblage instead (Puar, 2007; DeLanda, 2016).

The indeterminacy of the vindication of the autonomy of affect in works such as those by Massumi or by new materialist critics, should not fall into relativism. This is, the autonomy of affect does not mean that affect is inherent to structures but, rather, that affects become sticky to them. In this sense, affect enacts the feminist «personal as political» and the so-called «affective turn» (Clough, 2008) is clearly connected to feminist and gender studies. Indeed, the personal becoming political involves a recovering of specific affects and emotions that have been thrown out of dialectical discussions and discourse of the social because of their link, their stickiness, to «marked» bodies. As such, this use of affect stands out for its *potential* to disentangle from social constraints as it also recognizes the *potestas* in order. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) writes, «Affects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects» (19). Thus, the affective turn is more directed towards an understanding on how

affects affect. It turns to see how power is structured and hidden through affect, renouncing to a simplified defense of affect as autonomous. Patricia Clough (2008) explains this brilliantly when exposing how «[t]he turn to affect points [...] to a dynamism immanent to bodily matter and matter generally – matter's capacity for self-organization *that* [...] may be the most provocative and enduring contribution of the affective turn» (1). In her take of the reciprocity of affected embodiment, as both affecting and getting affected, Clough determines both the potential and the risk in its envisioning, since some of the direct consequences of this co-dependency of affect «[do] not only show what the body can do; they show what bodies can be made to do» (5). Once more, this reminds us of how neither the affective turn, nor feminist affect theory partake of a positivity which relies on affects. Instead, both critically use their strengths while remaining actively conscious of the risks and ambivalences they imply.

This structured sense of the «social» underlies a misunderstanding of optimism which binds subjects to a false and very limiting idea that society needs their collective exercise of optimism to be functional. As will be discussed in the chapters which follow this one, the idea of optimism and the consequent happiness expected from the subject working obediently inside social systems in the West are important tenets within feminism, and the contributions by Lauren Berlant (2011), and Sara Ahmed (2014) are salient in this respect. The affective turn stands as a strategic locus from where to generate and visualize plural affects that can be collective, inclusive and liberatory to any subjectivity.

The critique exerted by Ahmed on the over-positive view of affects found in authors such as Massumi or Braidotti, is important because of its recognition of the entanglement existing in these affective assumptions. We a refreshed approach to what happiness involves, bringing into conversation historical perspectives of affects to reach the goal of understanding affective life differently. As Ahmed (2007) writes about Braidotti's positioning,

Braidotti suggests that an affirmative feminism would make happiness a crucial political ideal. As she argues: «I consider happiness a political issue, as are well-being, self-confidence and a sense of empowerment. These are fundamentally ethical concerns.... The feminist movement has played the historical role of placing these items at the centre of the social and political agenda: happiness as a fundamental human right and hence a political question» (135).

As stated above, Ahmed does not reject any form of happiness. She simply suggests that happiness should be addressed with fresh eyes. Ahmed continues clarifying that,

I am not saying that feminist, anti-racist and queer politics do not have anything to say about happiness other than point to its unhappy effects. I think it is the very exposure of these unhappy effects that is affirmative, which gives us an alternative set of imaginings of what might count as a good or at least better life. If injustice does have unhappy effects, then the story does not end there. Unhappiness is not our end point. If anything, the experience of being outside the very ideals that are presumed to enable a good life still gets us somewhere. It is the resources we develop in sharing such experiences that might form the basis of alternative models of happiness. A concern with histories that hurt is not then a backward orientation: to move on, you must make this return. If anything, we might want to reread the melancholic subject, the one who refuses to let go of suffering, and who is even prepared to kill some forms of joy, as offering an alternative social promise (Ibid).

In this claim, Ahmed works through the binary between good and bad feelings to address and sustain those ugly and uncomfortable states of affective life that are also linked to certain genderized, racialized, otherized bodies. Ahmed responds critically to both queer negative theories such as those by Leo Bersani (1995) or Lee Edelman (2004)¹⁶ and to the above-reviewed complacent affect theories. Jose Esteban Muñoz is also a relevant scholar in that search for refreshed affective horizons. In his delicate queer-utopian thinking (2009) he addresses the way in which otherwise embodiments track divergent ways of living through affects and emotions in fashions which are much more committed to vibrant motions than to a simplification of a general feeling of optimism. Also relevant to this discussion is Margrit Shildrick (2019) who writes, «[f]or feminist and disability scholars, the task is surely to think how, in the midst of negativity, we might speak to the multiple possibilities of revitalization» (295). In that disruption from the promises of happiness, to enact the *feminist killjoy* (Ahmed, 2017) does not equal sustaining negativity but rather a compromise with a plurality of affects and emotions that can embrace subjectivity in its own complexities.

16 A more detailed account of these theories is provided in chapter 4.

Calling for attention to affect as something different from a psychological element of subjective reaction, Kristyn Gorton (2007) illustrates that,

There is a long history within feminist theory of trying to recover and recuperate images of mad, hysterical and overly emotional women. However, the point in these works is not simply to counterpoise «emotional» with «revolutionary» – these authors have learned that it is not enough to just oppose existing models with new and empowered ones. Instead, what they offer is a fundamental critique of the place of emotion in our everyday lives and the way in which affect works to inform and inspire action. More still, the attention to emotion and affect in these works offers a way of thinking about subjectivity that is not tied solely to the psyche. In other words, our actions are guided not just by what we think but also by how we feel and our bodily response to feelings. Finally, it is significant that many [...] authors [...] highlight different emotions and affects, such as anxiety, fear, and disgust, in their appraisals. In so doing, they draw attention to the specificity of emotion which prevents us from thinking about emotion as a totalizing force. Instead, we are encouraged to think about the explicit ways in which each emotion affects the individual and the social (345).

In this fragment we appreciate a re-negotiation of positivity. Through the complexity and multiplicity of affects recognized by Gorton, the romanticized idea of affect is reshaped, allowing it also a further position from the specific study of the psyche, insisting in its participation as a social encounter and relational force. This approach also offers a new insight about what subjectivity can look like when engaging in a non-anthropocentric perspective, in which the human body is considered as autonomous and detached from a complex web of intra-actions. The intra-active force offered by New Materialisms can be very fruitful when applied to the study of embodiment beyond the body itself. This perspective activates affect as another gesture and symptom from sociality, one which is deeply affected by structure. I insist on this bond of affects and emotions to the social, even if recognizing the distinction between them clarified earlier on in this chapter (Massumi, 1995).

The study of affects is also attained by Sianne Ngai, who defends that the important part of this analysis is not so much the distinction between concepts, such as affect, emotion or feelings, but their relation to identity. In her work, Ngai coins an interesting conceptualization, which also gives the title to her book, *Ugly Feelings* (2005). Negativity occupies a central place in the analysis, since, for Ngai, there is a political potential in work-

ing through the transition between negative desire (undesiring) and oppositional negativity. From this idea, that serves as an escape map, she studies the importance of disidentifying with optimistic affective and, thus, socially accepted identifications. Ngai also does a brilliant job in identifying the assemblages existing in the formulation and formation of certain affects, that complicate and entangle these in histories of racialization, ableness, class distinction or genderization. Along with this discursive line, in her defense to viewing emotions and feelings as social schemes, Ann Cvetkovich also engages into this identity relocation through affective life and theories. As Gorton explains of Cvetkovich's work, affective life is a sort of glossary of public cultures and social systems (336). In this line, Cvetkovich's work becomes an «archive of feelings», an explorative manual to navigate cultural affects and demarcated emotions. It is through Gorton's analysis that we can also enter Simone Riley's contribution on how language affects the way we locate ourselves in the world (339). In that poststructuralist perspective of language, Riley exposes how words are put together as a series of socially demarcated structures that disturb our embodiment in affective ways.

Going beyond words with words, affecting language and engaging into alternatives to binaries such as the positive-negative values which traditionally articulate how embodiment is lived is what permeates this book and the experiences and reflections which construct the selves in the following chapters.

1.4. From epistemologies to transitions: how to read this work

Before we advance any further, I would like to account briefly for the ways this work moves on through epistemologies, practices and transitions. This introductory chapter has helped as an organizing departure from traditional notions about power moving towards more complex understandings of its production and reproductions. We have, therefore, presented how power is reshaped as an everyday practice that also inhabits some supposed to be non-hegemonic spaces, such as the practices in social inclusion disciplines and non-official locations of hegemonies, such as activism. Since one of such disciplines, Art Therapy, plays a salient role in the self-experiences narrated in the following chapters, we have briefly stopped to introduce this field. More invisible places, such as affects and emotions, which are often left aside in debates about social constructions, discourses and political praxis, have also been allocated room in this intro-

duction. Through the introduction of queer methods, I have also started questioning binary epistemologies and theories.

These reflections serve as a *modus operandi* throughout the book, setting the bases for the analysis of the entanglements of the four experiences narrated in the following chapters, which take on board social expressions such as affect, queerness or resistance. The shape of these narratives has been determined by their having taken place within those specific chronotopes and they could have adopted a totally different shape at a different temporality elsewhere. My choice of conducting research from embodiment aims to respond to the frictions I perceive between my positionality and that of the theories from which this analysis emerges. Frictions are, in my opinion, sites of negotiation and possibility and, hence, the activation of a liminal positionality enables a located examination of these experiences.

This way, chapter 2 revalues the contradictions that appear in queerness, as a theory, a political identity, an experience, and a practice. Through an anti-capitalist critique to the acceleration and liquidity of kinships, I attempt to arrive at a deeper understanding of the role of queerness in my own narratives. I hence depart from the narrative of my experience inside Academia to transition to other spaces outside it where the input of theory informs these spaces. I relate it to a certain conception of *power* following Foucault and Gramsci's theories. This is complicated with other power and hegemony notions such as Latour's or Lefebvre's, slowly moving to how hegemony is interpellated by affective life, in texts like those by Ben Anderson, Sara Ahmed or Lauren Berlant. I then examine the normativity of «good affects», which ultimately appear as the promise of preferable ways of living. This takes me to explore the importance of affirmative theories when relating to stories produced under precarious circumstances or on the move. The last part of the chapter intersects nomadic theories, such as those by Rosi Braidotti and Jasbir Puar's assemblages and develops the alternative concept of *assemblies* so as to refer to the relationality of bodies in different chronotopes. Following from this, the chapter closes by looking at the subversive potentialities of queer concepts such of *queer temporalities*, *quare*, or *viscosity* in the works by José Esteban Muñoz, E. Patrick Johnson, or Alexander G. Weheliye. Their theories lead me in tackling the hegemonies that inhabit the queer. I then conclude the chapter by returning to the potentialities which open in the dialogues of failure, queer anarchism and relationality.

The third chapter departs from my experiences in lesbian coupling. Helped also by some fictional memories, I discuss the power that inhabits in non-heterosexual pairings. Recalling my experiences of violence in my past lesbian relations and resorting to Mari Luz Esteban's idea of romantic «frame of mind»/ knowledge, I enter a discussion of the heterosexual promise and the duality of the binary itself. I explore how the power of the heteronormative claims of heterosexuality resides in compulsion to romantic and sexual relationality in groupings of two. Other forms of relationality appear by taking on Brigitte Vasallo's polyamory project which engages in an expansion of desires without losing the affective solidary bonds traditionally attributed to more conventional relationalities. I line up with this conception of desire as an anarchic move against the established hierarchies between sexual, romantic, platonic, family or political associations. Throughout the chapter I come to and fro romantic ideas and I flashback to confessing the troubles of adhering to antiauthority desires and practices: the frictions between rooted livings through *potestas* and the immense scenarios of *potentia*.

This tension between *potentia* and *potestas* is used as the counterforce for chapter 4. The chapter is organized as a division between two sides, A and B, as if to highlight their intrinsic communication. It displays the discussions that intersect my own queerness in ways that I can no longer escape. In Side A, I engage in *disidentifications* as a first approximation to what my actual flesh means in my surroundings, the specific privileges that my queer identity has disguised: whiteness, legal citizenship, ability and middle class education. In Side B, I address other notions such as *resistance* and *violence*. Departing from José Esteban Muñoz's concept of *disidentifications*, I take a new materialistic input, following Karen Barad's ideas, which will allow me to explore how the disidentificatory project can bring new light through new materialist *diffractions*. This second part of the chapter deals with narratives of passive resistance and anal desires and explores the marking of some bodies as non-productive and incapable to respond.

These supremacist arrangements are also questioned in the fifth chapter that rips a gap in another monolithic narrative: that of social interventions. The chapter springs from my own experience as art therapist and then takes as its basis research conducted with a great GEMMA master companion, Ana García, where there is an exploration of how social inclusion arenas, as in the case of Art Therapy, reproduce the «good life» and

«good subject» stereotypes so as to assimilating any otherwise-subjectivity into a recognizable identity. Conscious about the race component in colonialism, I do find traces of coloniality in social intervention practices under the influence of a tradition of assimilation in certain countries, such as Spain. It is an idea of modernity that can allow their social existence, as decolonial approaches, such as Anibal Quijano's, point out. Frictions lead to what we term micro-enactions of power, that try to respond to material necessities, forcing an ongoing revisitation of the specificities of each mediation in this kind of practices.

Once I have situated myself beyond identity through the flesh, I drift towards my prosaic and prozaic conclusions. Ultimately, the frictions that happen in this book are embedded in a potential capacity which, in the shape of *potentia gaudendi* (Preciado, 2008), cannot always escape the traps of commodification. Through the leading notion of *potentia gaudendi*, I imagine conversations between the different authors I have analyzed in the preceding chapters of this book. Hence, my conclusions are transitions to situated resolutions which, rather than set definite answers, aim to open-up further questioning.