



Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

ADVERTIMENT. L'accés als continguts d'aquesta tesi queda condicionat a l'acceptació de les condicions d'ús establertes per la següent llicència Creative Commons:  http://cat.creativecommons.org/?page_id=184

ADVERTENCIA. El acceso a los contenidos de esta tesis queda condicionado a la aceptación de las condiciones de uso establecidas por la siguiente licencia Creative Commons:  <http://es.creativecommons.org/blog/licencias/>

WARNING. The access to the contents of this doctoral thesis it is limited to the acceptance of the use conditions set by the following Creative Commons license:  <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/?lang=en>

Tesis doctoral

Departament de Filosofia

Vulnerability, desire and violence

Andrés Armengol Sans

Directors
Hourya Bentouhami
Carlos Besses Raebel

Agraïments

Malgrat que aquesta tesi hagi estat escrita en anglès, experiència que ha estat el d'una vertadera des-possessió que m'ha permès de transitar en una altra *llengua* que no fou la que imprimí en mi les seves primeres empremtes, seria incapaç d'escriure quelcom tan singular com uns agraïments en una llengua que no formés part de *lalangue* que em fou donada per l'Altre.

Una tesi, com qualsevulla altra mena d'obra, mai no és un treball individual, sinó que en ella el desig de l'Altre té un paper cabdal. En aquest sentit, sense tots els lligams que em sustenten, no hagués estat capaç d'arribar fins aquí.

Sense el desig de les dues persones que decidiren donar-me un lloc en l'entramat simbòlic, marcat per un amor que mai no ha minvat, jo no seria qui sóc. Gràcies als meus pares per haver-me fet sentir acompanyat en tots i cadascun dels moments de la meva ek-sistència. Ambdós sempre m'han recolzat en les meves decisions i compromisos. La gratitud i amor cap a ells és *in-finit(a)*.

Les meves dues germanes, Marta i Helena, el tresor més preuat que tinc en aquesta vida, amb les quals he après què significa articular un lligam basat en l'amistat, l'amor i una complicitat continuus.

Als meus avis materns, qui m'introduïren en la que, per a mi, és una xarxa simbòlica imprescindible, el menorquí, estant cada una de les meves paraules travessada per records indelebles. Tot i que l'avi ja no hi sigui, està present en totes i cadascuna de les paraules d'aquesta tesi, sobretot cap al final.

Gràcies al grup de recerca "Cos i textualitat", especialment a na Meri Torras, el qual m'acolli sense reserves des del primer moment en què vaig mostrar la meva predisposició a sol·licitar la beca predoctoral FI-DGR de la Generalitat de Catalunya. Treballar des de la diferència és l'única possibilitat de crear espais d'escolta.

Alhora, gràcies al departament de Filosofia de la UAB pel seu suport, el qual m'ha permès de disposar d'un càlid ambient de treball, tant a nivell de docència com de recerca. Un agraïment que va dirigit també a na Mercè Rius, n'Oriol Farrés i en Jesús Hernández, els quals han deixat en mi una empremta que m'acompanyarà tota la vida.

A tu, Begonya, directora de tesi, companya de vida i amiga imprescindible. D'ençà et vaig conèixer al tercer curs de la carrera, la teva presència i veu han esdevingut dos elements fonamentals en la meva quotidianitat. Passin els anys que passin, tots aquests anys viscuts junts i els que quedin per venir m'acompanyaran com una segona pell. Gràcies per creure en mi i recolzar-me en les meves perspectives. Així mateix, vull agrair el paper que ha tingut la meva co-directora de tesi, n'Hourya Bentouhami, qui em va brindar l'oportunitat d'endinsar-me en nous horitzons teòrics. La seva presència em va permetre de fer dues estades al si del grup de recerca ERRAPHIS, un espai de discussió fonamental.

De fet, les dues estades de recerca a l'Université de Toulouse 2-Jean Jaurès m'han permès de fer amistats amb na Cécile, n'Ewa, na Claire, na Lise i na Bruna. Endemés, en Christophe, qui tingué l'amabilitat d'acollir-me a casa seva durant la meva primera estada, ha esdevingut un bon, gran amic.

Als meus companys de feina i grans amics: na Maria, na Marina, na Laura, n'Andrea, n'Antonio, n'Alger, en Roger, n'Andreu, n'Alba i na Clara. Gràcies per compartir amb mi estones i caps de setmana que han oscil·lat entre la calma i la rauxa, entre el debat i la festa. Entre tots ells hi té un paper molt especial na Ceci, la meva estimada Ceci. No només és una gran amiga, sinó que em permeté de descobrir la psicoanàlisi, experiència i discurs que ha suposat un *acte*, un abans i un després en el meu dia a dia.

Tot i que els llaços amorosos amb ells ja no hi siguin, als meus dos Oriols. Amb ells, de manera separada i amb distàncies temporals, vaig descobrir què significa que, gràcies a l'amor, desig i gaudi es dirigeixin vers a aquell altre tan Altre, descobrint que, efectivament, estimar és entregar a l'Altre la pròpia falta. Heu estat els dos grans amors que he viscut en aquests 27 anys.

A en Pau, n'Andrés, na Lucía, na Vicky, na Flor, na Galia i na Laura. Nous companys i amics de neurosis obsessives, histèries i fòbies diverses. Haver-vos conegut en la formació clínica del Fòrum Psicoanalític de Barcelona ha estat el més dolç regal que em van brindar les acaballes del 2016.

Sense tots i cadascun d'ells, no seria qui sóc. Gràcies i moltes més gràcies per haver-me acompanyat en l'aventura que m'ha permès de transitar un discurs per entrar

en un altre, fascinant i laberíntic, aquell que es guia per l'ètica de l'escolta de la paraula de l'altre.

Bellaterra, 23 de febrer de 2017

1. INTRODUCTION

La vulnérabilité a été mobilisée par certains discours comme un *locus* philosophique pour élaborer une nouvelle ontologie du sujet. En effet, notre réalité socio-politique ne soutient plus la fiction d'un sujet omnipotent. Depuis 2008, la précarité a émergé dans une cruelle vague qui a détruit et appauvrit les vies humaines, défaisant le fantasme d'une autonomie individualiste. Par conséquent, la première partie de cette thèse sera consacrée à une analyse ontologique de la notion de vulnérabilité dans les œuvres de deux philosophes féministes qui ont depuis longtemps développé ce concept : Judith Butler et Adriana Cavarero. Mon objectif est de clarifier dans quelle mesure une telle notion implique une réélaboration de l'éthique et la politique, et quelles sont les limites et les potentialités de leur cadre théorique.

Par conséquent, une première question doit figurer au sujet de cet élément : qu'est-ce que signifie être vulnérable, et à quelle perspective ontologique s'articule la vulnérabilité? La réponse, que je vais développer tout au long de cette thèse, prend appui sur une double approche. L'une est strictement liée à la mise à jour de la tradition métaphysique et la pensée contemporaine de la post-métaphysique et l'autre doit être considérée en termes matérialistes.

Toutefois, les deux approches partagent un même référent, qui a été revu, depuis la *Phénoménologie de la perception* de Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), comme l'instance principale de l'existence : le corps. La conséquence immédiate qui peut être déduite d'une telle déclaration est la suivante : nous sommes vulnérables parce que nous avons un corps. Néanmoins, ce qui est en jeu dans une telle définition de la vulnérabilité, c'est quel statut est donné au corps, étant donné que son statut conditionne le développement ultérieur de l'argument concernant la vulnérabilité en tant qu'une condition ontologique. Ainsi, le corps doit être repensé comme une topologie cruciale et comme une entité essentielle pour toute subjectivité. Ce virage ontologique contribua ainsi à corriger un oubli historique. Un tel oubli désigne la position reléguée historiquement donnée au corps qui avait été réduit à une simple réalité organique.

Encore un doute se pose en ce qui concerne une telle méthode, qui implique le démontage d'un dualisme composé par Descartes et son héritage : *res cogitans* versus

res extensa. Tout en relevant ce défi, mon principal objectif est le réexamen du corps comme une *condition sine qua non*.

1.1. **La vulnérabilité comme le trait de l'existence: Repenser l'existence selon l'ontologie relationnelle**

Selon ce que j'ai introduit, il est nécessaire de repenser le corps afin de clarifier son rapport primordial à la vulnérabilité. Le défi est donc d'analyser quelles sont les implications à repenser le corps en ces termes.

Tout d'abord, une question cruciale doit être clarifiée concernant la pensée depuis le bouleversement ontologique introduit par Heidegger. Une telle question interroge la logique intrinsèque de la pensée. Selon Heidegger, la pensée a besoin de déconstruire une très vieille tradition : la métaphysique. Dans la philosophie occidentale, le discours hégémonique a fonctionné selon la logique binaire, principalement depuis la philosophie moderne, et a donné lieu à l'axiome suivant : penser et savoir s'identifient entre eux. Cela signifiait qu'il y avait deux réalités implicites selon un schéma dans lequel il y avait une prééminence ontologique de l'un des concepts, ce qui articulait un lien oppositionnel. La première notion a été établie suivant un schéma formel et abstrait, ayant une pertinence sur ce dernier. Son nom a changé au fil du temps, bien que sa principale caractéristique soit restée plus ou moins permanente : *substance*, *sujet* ou *conscience*, parmi les principaux. En outre, la réalité constituée et représentée par ce concept avait une particularité : il a été présumé pour être déconnecté du monde. Par conséquent, le sujet n'était pas contingent ou matériel, mais universel et incorporel.

Ce qui concerne le deuxième élément impliqué dans cette logique binaire, il était un objet susceptible d'être épistémologiquement appréhendé par le sujet, qui lui conférait en retour son intelligibilité. En effet, son existence dépendait littéralement de l'opération épistémique subjective, ce qui signifiait que, sans un sujet de réflexion et abstrait, il n'y avait aucun objet. En ce qui concerne cette subordination de l'objet pour le sujet, un autre élément doit être ajouté. Selon le cartésianisme, le sujet était le substrat, le noyau de toute énonciation possible et de tout ce qui existait dans le monde. Dans une telle opération, le temps n'avait pas un rôle pertinent dans la mesure où le sujet de représentation élaborée au cours de la modernité était externe à toute autre

opération que l'élaboration de la pensée. Ainsi, le sujet devient l'entité souveraine qui a concédé une existence possible à tout qui l'entourait. Par conséquent, une telle notion du sujet était attachée à sa compacité ontologique, qui a permis un processus de domestication de la sphère des objets qui n'entraîne pas une modification du statut du sujet. Le sujet était alors censé d'être en mesure d'obtenir une connaissance progressive et absolue en raison d'une accumulation dynamique. En fait, une telle dynamique progressive permettait l'identité du sujet à lui-même au niveau d'une conscience suprême.

Dans ce contexte, dérivé du cartésianisme, dans lequel le sujet était institué comme *res cogitans*, le statut ontologique du corps a été mis radicalement hors de propos. Suite à cette remarque, le corps pourrait être réduit à un objet purement mécanique appelé *res extensa*, les attributs exclusifs dont ont été l'espace, la taille et la figure. Ces attributs pouvaient être clairement représentés par la dynamique de la pensée, qui appartenait aux caractéristiques de la conscience infinies et immortelle :

Par le corps, j'entends tout ce qui peut être terminé par quelque figure ; qui peut être compris en quelque lieu, et remplir un espace en telle sorte que tout autre corps en soit exclu ; qui peut être senti, ou par l'attouchement, ou par la vue, ou par l'oïe, ou par le goût, ou par l'odorat ; qui peut être mû en plusieurs façons, non par lui-même, mais par quelque chose d'étranger duquel il soit touché et dont il reçoive l'impression. Car d'avoir en soi la puissance de se mouvoir, de sentir et de penser, je ne croyais aucunement que l'on dût attribuer ces avantages à la nature corporelle ; au contraire, je m'étonnais plutôt de voir que de semblables facultés se rencontraient en certains corps (Descartes, 1970 [1641]: 40).

Dans le même temps, une autre caractéristique a émergé de la conception cartésienne du corps : c'est un élément passif, tandis que la *res cogitans* était active. Le genre de lien entre ces deux éléments était donc une logique binaire qui reproduisait la structure dualiste supposée de l'être humain comme tel. Ainsi, le corps n'appartenait pas, à proprement parler, à la sphère de la pensée, mais c'était simplement une représentation imaginaire du sujet : "Je suis une chose qui pense, c'est-à-dire qui doute, qui affirme, qui nie, qui connaît peu de choses, qui en ignore beaucoup, qui aime, qui hait, qui veut, qui ne veut pas, qui imagine aussi, et qui sent" (Descartes, *op. cit.*: 50).

Si cette analyse est prise en compte selon une approche post-métaphysique, cette dynamique n'est pas, à proprement parler, un résultat provenant de la pensée, une critique faite par Heidegger au sujet de la métaphysique. La raison d'un tel diagnostic, à la suite de Heidegger, réside dans la réduction de la zone de l'objet à une pure entité

épistémique dont le statut ontologique équivaut à une représentation formelle. Au contraire, Heidegger soutenait que la pensée se caractérise par un mécanisme différent. Suite à ses propos, tandis que la connaissance suppose ce qui doit être appréhendé comme une entité objective prête à être connue par le sujet et ses outils formels, la pensée irait autrement. Ce changement implique une dislocation du dualisme, parce que dans la pensée l'objet n'est pas transparent pour l'objet, pas plus qu'il n'y a une opposition claire et précise entre le sujet et l'objet. En d'autres termes, l'objet ne se confond pas avec une pleine présence qui attend d'être saisie par certains principes universels de la conscience.

Selon l'analyse de Heidegger, la pensée ne fonctionne pas au moyen d'une opposition de deux éléments ontologiquement différents, mais elle mobilise une catégorie cruciale pour le discours de la post-métaphysique : la relation. Le déplacement ontologique attribué à cette notion disloque le sujet d'une prérogative logique, mettant en cause le solipsisme découlant du processus épistémologique du cartésianisme. Un tel virage modifie la nature de ce qui dans la métaphysique moderne était censé faire l'objet d'une représentation scientifique, récupérant une notion qui sera fondamentale tout au long de ma thèse : la négativité. En conséquence, l'objet est supprimé d'une positivité pure grâce à l'introduction d'un reste qui interdit tout accès à une représentation complète.

Par conséquent, ce virage ontologique implique une déconstruction de la notion traditionnelle qui réduisait le sujet au domaine de l'épistémologie. Grâce à une telle dislocation, la catégorie d'identité est sérieusement remise en cause par la tradition post-métaphysique. En effet, en raison de la prééminence donnée à la notion de relation, la pensée implique déjà une modification du sujet, ce qui met en crise les appareils dualistes. La pensée révèle que la connaissance n'est pas l'indicateur principal, mais qu'elle découle plutôt de cette opération plus fondamentale. En ce sens, l'héritage provenant du geste heideggérien vise à élaborer un nouvel effort pour réfléchir sur l'être à travers une notion de pensée qui, selon ce que je soutiens dans cette introduction et dans la première partie de ma thèse, doit être réfléchi conjointement à la pertinence conférée au langage.

En fait, dans la métaphysique, le langage n'implique aucun trouble parce qu'il était considéré comme le mode d'expression des pensées et des idées, ce qui implique un autre dualisme, à savoir, la conscience et le langage, la première étant l'élément

prééminent. Toutefois, en raison de la spécificité de la pensée soulignée par la post-métaphysique, ce lien dualiste doit être réexaminé. En effet, selon l'importance de la relation, le sujet n'est pas le principal point de référence, mais son existence ne peut être considérée en dehors du registre ontologique ouvert par la catégorie de la relation. Dans un contexte où le dualisme est remis en question en vertu de l'indétermination impliquée par l'ontologie relationnelle, le langage n'est plus conçu comme un outil pour le sujet de la connaissance.

En outre, si l'approche de la post-métaphysique est correctement considérée, il y a un autre élément en jeu dans cette critique : le monde. Dans l'examen du langage comme un élément fondamental pour le sujet, qui subvertit le discours de la modernité, le domaine de la subjectivité n'est pas une entité solipsiste, mais son existence est conceptualisée selon un paradigme différent : l'ek-sistence, c'est-à-dire, l'être-hors-de-soi. Un tel tournant implique que le monde n'est pas un scénario éventuel, mais c'est le contexte où le sujet ek-iste, ce qui signifie aussi une matérialisation de la subjectivité. Par conséquent, grâce à une telle mobilisation discursive, un autre concept crucial doit être sérieusement envisagé : l'altérité. Cette dimension matérielle du sujet, c'est-à-dire, son emplacement dans un monde où l'identité substantielle est mise de côté, renvoie à une autre question : le sujet est exposé. En d'autres termes, le sujet n'est pas une réalité autonome, mais il est ontologiquement ouvert à ce qui défie son existence même.

Le corps, dans la rhétorique de la post-métaphysique, est institué comme le point de fracture d'existence, une remarque faite par le philosophe français Jean-Luc Nancy. Le statut ontologique du corps se détache, donc, d'une réalité purement épistémique réduite à une représentation élaborée par un sujet formel, devenant un obstacle pour une définition synthétisante du sujet. Néanmoins, il y avait déjà un métaphysicien qui avait auparavant contesté le dualisme cartésien : Baruch Spinoza, qui diffère de la tradition rationaliste par le biais de l'assertion suivante : « Personne ne sait ce qu'un corps est capable de », phrase réélaborée par Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari dans leur *corps sans organes*.

En outre, l'ek-sistence, l'exposition et le monde se réfèrent à un autre élément, qui traverse le discours sur la vulnérabilité tel qu'il est élaboré par Butler et Cavarero : le désir. Je vais formuler clairement comment cette notion opère dans cette thèse en se référant à un cadre critique spécifique afin de réviser la notion contemporaine de vulnérabilité : la psychanalyse telle qu'elle est livrée par Sigmund Freud et Jacques

Lacan. Le point qui est pertinent ici est que, selon la psychanalyse, le désir et le langage – pensée comme un cadre symbolique – ne doivent pas être séparément analysés, puisque le désir est structuré sur un plan linguistique. C’est parce que le sujet est assujéti par le langage que le sujet désire, ce qui implique qu’il n’y a pas de sujet sans l’Autre. L’altérité conditionne l’ek-sistence du sujet en lui donnant un nom.

Le monde, par conséquent, est récupéré par un élément théorique qui dépasse les paradigmes heideggérien et cartésien selon une notion d’ek-sistence où le corps devient son point de départ, écartant le sujet de toute coïncidence formelle avec lui-même: “Les corps toujours sur le départ, dans l’imminence d’un mouvement, d’une chute, d’un écart, d’une dislocation. (Ce que c’est qu’un *départ*, même le plus simple : cet instant où il était. Cet instant où il fait place à la seule béance de l’espacement qu’il *est* lui-même” (Nancy, 2000 [1992]: 31).

Ainsi, l’altérité ne se réfère pas seulement à un domaine extérieur, mais elle s’enracine dans l’existence même du sujet, ce que signale le concept psychanalytique d’inconscient. La conséquence dérivée de cette nouveauté ontologique est le passage de l’identité à un devenir compris comme un être-hors-de-soi, ce qui, à son tour, implique une exposition corporelle par rapport à une autre. La vulnérabilité s’affirme, selon ce point de vue philosophique, comme une condition ontologique qui part d’une dépendance primaire, ce qui ne peut pas être pensé en dehors de la dimension affective que ce lien implique.

1.1.1. L’articulation de la vulnérabilité à partir du corps : Exister c’est être exposé

Compte tenu de la priorité ontologique de la vulnérabilité, l’interrogation cruciale en ce qui concerne l’existence cesse de mettre l’accent sur le privilège du « je », et il permet une pertinence du « tu ». Ce n’est plus une existence centrée sur soi, mais sur l’autre auquel le sujet est attaché : “Cuando la vulnerabilidad es considerada condición ontológica universal, la pregunta por el ser experimenta un giro irreversible, en virtud del cual ya no cabe la fórmula “¿qué soy?” sino “¿quién eres?” (Saez, 2014: 9).

En outre, il y a un glissement de l’ontologie vers l’éthique par le biais de la notion d’exposition et la conception d’ek-sistence qu’elle implique. Le sujet, donc, n’est ni

fond ni un noyau, mais un point indéterminé, c'est-à-dire une instance négative pour laquelle aucune définition positive ne peut être fournie. Sa constitution en ce qui concerne l'altérité, étant une fracture à la base, acquiert une existence mondaine enracinée. Néanmoins, la notion d'exposition mobilisée par le discours sur la vulnérabilité, par rapport à mon approche, est très problématique dans la mesure où elle introduit une passivité du sujet dans sa dimension incarnée, dépendant de l'Autre. Comme j'argumenterai dans ma thèse, principalement dans la première partie, la notion d'exposition mobilisée par la vulnérabilité est articulée selon un monisme discursif qui sera analysé par le recours à la psychanalyse lacanienne. En effet, selon le circuit pulsionnel, la psychanalyse fournit un nouveau registre qui défie un conflit présumé entre activité et passivité, une fracture au milieu de ce débat par référence à la libido et la jouissance. En ce qui concerne cette discussion, lorsque Begonya Saez fait valoir que "somos vulnerables porque somos expuestos, porque somos un cuerpo" (Saez, *op. cit.*: 12), ce que je voudrais discuter dans ma recherche c'est pourquoi la notion de vulnérabilité réduit le corps à l'être, montrant quelles conséquences a ce geste depuis le paradigme de la psychanalyse, la contrepartie de cette thèse afin de rendre visible une réduction ontologique du sujet et le corps impliqué par le discours philosophique sur la vulnérabilité.

Cependant, la psychanalyse et le discours sur la vulnérabilité coïncident avec une certaine approche du corps : celui-ci n'est pas analysé comme une pure réalité organique, mais est le résultat de l'effet du langage sur l'organisme vivant. En d'autres termes, la notion de corps impliquée par sa réflexion n'est pas l'objet scientifique analysée par la biologie, mais un corps qui est habité par un sujet : "El cuerpo no es el organismo vivo, sino que resulta de la acción del lenguaje en el organismo vivo" (Saez and González, 2013: 103). Une telle interaction entre le corps et le langage implique également que le sujet est le résultat d'un assujettissement au langage comme structure qui précède son émergence concrète. Autrement dit, il n'y a aucun sujet en dehors du langage. Malgré cette similitude, il y a une divergence importante qu'il faut souligner dans ce domaine. Pour ce qui est de leur rapport à la vulnérabilité, le sujet et le corps sont analysés en vertu d'un développement discursif qui prend comme référence les rapports entre les formes de la connaissance et le pouvoir comme appareil de mise en forme du sujet. En d'autres termes, c'est une dynamique discursive entièrement régie par une ontologie nominaliste qui vise à mettre en évidence la généalogie et l'historicité

des modifications subjectives au niveau social. En ce sens, en ce qui concerne le corps, il devient un produit discursif, sans précisions. Au contraire, la psychanalyse ne prend pas le sujet et son corps comme une entité moniste, mais il vise plutôt à tenir compte qu'il y a une différence structurelle entre le sujet et le corps étant donné que le sujet *n'est pas son corps*, mais il *a un corps*. En outre, c'est un corps qui, dans une perspective lacanienne, se décline différemment du fait de l'appareil topologique que Lacan a élaboré afin d'argumenter avec précision concernant le lien entre le sujet, le corps et le langage. Par conséquent, dans une perspective psychanalytique, il n'y a pas une telle chose comme le corps, mais son statut est différencié dans ce que Lacan a nommé les trois registres qui sont la structure de l'appareil psychique : l'Imaginaire (le stade du miroir comme une totalité illusoire), le Symbolique (le corps tel qu'il est réglementé par des dispositifs culturels dans la sphère des liens sociaux) et le Réel (le reste du corps qui dépasse le discours comme son excès, qui se réfère au réel de la jouissance et de la différence sexuelle). En d'autres termes, par rapport à ce que je soutiens dans ma thèse, il n'y a pas une ontologie du corps de la psychanalyse, mais le corps constitue une parcelle irréductible de la négativité pour le sujet dans la mesure où une fusion avec sa réalité corporelle est impossible. C'est donc un domaine de la négativité qui ne peut être surmontée. Comme je vais le préciser dans ma recherche, le discours philosophique met seulement l'accent sur le Symbolique et l'Imaginaire. Par conséquent, il efface le sexe et les pulsions, c'est-à-dire, le réel qui résiste à une représentation compacte du langage de la langue et l'image, faisant une union entre être et avoir, qui sont logiquement distincts dans le discours psychanalytique.

1.1.1.1. Désir, exposition et reconnaissance

Pour ce qui est de la vulnérabilité, le rôle attribué à l'exposition comme une condition ontologique ne peut être considéré en dehors du désir et de l'altérité. Le désir, compris comme le noyau dialectique de la subjectivité, est considéré ici, en termes hégéliens, comme un moyen de reconnaissance. On discutera de l'articulation théorique du désir comme noyau dialectique de la subjectivité dans les œuvres d'Emmanuel Levinas, Hannah Arendt, Adriana Cavarero et Judith Butler, dont le travail conceptuel sera plus tard analysé dans cette introduction.

Ces quatre auteurs partent d'une notion de l'ek-sistence, notion selon laquelle le sujet n'est pas opposé au monde et à l'altérité, mais est plutôt ancré dans le monde par le biais de la notion de relation. Cette notion suppose la défaite de la logique binaire cartésienne. Ainsi, l'altérité devient le concept crucial sur lequel tourne leur approche ontologique vers le sujet selon une éthique. En outre, un tel tournant éthique apporte également la conception binaire entre sujet/objet à sa fin. De cette façon, la négativité devient structurellement pertinente, ce qui signifie que le sujet n'est pas simplement confronté à l'altérité dans un sens ontologique et éthique, mais qu'il devient un autre pour lui-même dans sa liaison avec l'Autre et sa dépendance primaire vers lui.

Philosophiquement parlant, les racines d'une telle dépendance sur l'Autre se réfèrent à la dialectique hégélienne du maître et de l'esclave, dans la *Phénoménologie de l'Esprit* (1807). En effet, ce que je soutiendrai dans la première partie de ma thèse fait évidemment le lien entre désir et reconnaissance, ce qui implique que le sujet ne peut exister sans un autre sujet qui reconnaît son existence. Cette structure articule déjà une notion préliminaire de relation qui est radicalisée par la négativité. En ce qui concerne la dialectique hégélienne du désir, la reformulation lacanienne du désir selon l'insertion de la Loi du signifiant à travers l'Autre implique que le désir fonctionne comme une demande, détail qui s'avère être un outil critique utile pour signaler les limites inhérentes à une telle perspective, ce qui va encore m'aider à souligner les problèmes qui traversent la notion de vulnérabilité.

En outre, la reformulation lacanienne du désir devient une bonne occasion pour revisiter le *conatus* spinoziste, dans la mesure où Spinoza fut le premier philosophe à considérer ce qui est inscrit dans la logique du désir, défini comme la persévérance à exister. Un tel réexamen sur l'articulation spinoziste du désir se fondera sur le statut conféré par Lacan à l'objet-cause du désir et à la logique dialectique qui déplace le sujet vers lui, contestant le caractère immanent que Spinoza avait conféré au désir. Par conséquent, le désir va être repensé selon un cadre qui ne le réduit pas à la survie du sujet, ce qui est souligné avec la notion freudienne de la pulsion de mort, comme je le spécifie dans la première partie de mon travail. Les notions de castration et de désir comme étant l'expression d'un manque-à-être en raison de la perte inaugurale qu'inflige de langage sur le corps lors de sa procédure de dénaturalisation sont centrales dans mon analyse. C'est pourquoi, en ce qui concerne cette question, l'inconscient est compris comme étant la somme des effets dérivés de l'incidence du symbolique sur une entité

vivante qui devient habitée par une incertitude nucléaire, le domaine d'un *savoir inconnu*. Pour la psychanalyse, par conséquent, le sujet de l'inconscient, un sujet défini par la poursuite d'un objet irrémédiablement perdu, nommée par Lacan l'objet petit a, est une entité scindée, radicalement différent de sa projection imaginaire. Comme Butler déclare dans *Subjects of Desire. Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France* (1987): "Desire is always after something other than the self, but it is also always involved in a project of self-constitution" (Butler, 1999 [1987]: 88).

La définition du sujet fourni par la psychanalyse offre une autre différence vers l'approche philosophique sur la vulnérabilité, parce que le sujet de ce discours est identifié principalement sur les « I », c'est à dire, la projection imaginaire d'un soi faite de multiples et diffuses identifications. Cette divergence est radicale entre philosophie et psychanalyse, car elle implique deux sujets différents, et comporte deux approches différentes vers le sujet et son lien social.

En effet, alors que la notion de vulnérabilité parle en termes ontologiques de l'union entre le sujet et la sphère sociale façonnée par de multiples rapports de pouvoir et de savoir, la psychanalyse insiste sur un concept sans lequel le sujet de l'inconscient n'existerait pas : le symptôme. Deux notions différentes du sujet, donc, vont traverser cette thèse dans la mesure où le symptôme, d'obédience psychanalytique, ne vise pas toute anomalie comme devant être corrigée, mais il signale la dissidence structurelle qui caractérise le sujet par rapport à n'importe quel impératif culturel, ce qui écarte toute analyse d'un sujet réduit aux normes, ou tout autre perspective d'adaptation au réel.

Malgré cette différence notable, le discours sur la vulnérabilité et sur la psychanalyse pointent vers la perte d'identité que la négativité du désir implique car le désir, déjà chez Hegel, comme le souligne Butler, poursuit toujours autre chose que l'identité du sujet à lui-même :

Thus the problem of desire is the problem of the paradoxical nature of self-consciousness, how to remain oneself in the midst of alterity. If one resolves the aims of desire into the aims of a singular identity to discover and reflect itself, one disperses with the realm of alterity and thereby loses the self as well. And if one claim that is in the nature of determinate objects to solicit desire, one neglects the project of identity informing desire. Hence, any effort to determine the true aim of desire is necessarily deceptive. Desire, then, can be said always to operate under the necessity of partial desire [...]. (Butler, *op. cit.*: 89)

Le désir, par conséquent, a un circuit trompeur concernant un objet aboutissant à sa réalisation étant donné la négativité qui caractérise l'objet-cause du désir poursuivi par le sujet. Cette expression d'un manque-à-être est abordée pour les études littéraires selon une clé interprétative : la structure narrative de l'être, qui traverse les discours théoriques de Hannah Arendt, Adriana Cavarero et Judith Butler. Ainsi, je m'efforcerai d'exposer et d'analyser critiqueusement quelles sont les potentialités et les limites d'une telle stratégie, laquelle traduit le désir dans une narration qui lie le sujet à l'Autre.

Dans le même temps, ce récit du désir se relie à la reconnaissance, et, de cette façon, le désir implique la relation et l'altérité. Une fois que la reconnaissance se pose comme le but ultime poursuivi par le sujet comme désireux, un autre problème surgit concernant le sujet de la vulnérabilité. Comme je vais développer dans le troisième chapitre de ma thèse, réduire le désir à la reconnaissance implique une relation forcée avec l'altérité qui finit par l'apprivoiser et la reconduire aux notions d'identité et de la similitude. Ce sera ma principale critique en ce qui concerne la notion de vulnérabilité telle qu'elle est présentée dans tous les travaux de Judith Butler.

Dans ce contexte, le lien entre désir et reconnaissance se réfère exclusivement aux conditions d'intelligibilité culturelle – ce que la psychanalyse désigne comme les identifications qui partent de l'Imaginaire et sont ensuite ordonnées par le Symbolique comme la Loi du signifiant –. Ma critique se fonde sur le présupposé moniste selon lequel, constitué par des discours, le sujet est totalement pris au piège par les filets du pouvoir et du savoir. En ce sens, l'ontogenèse lacanienne du sujet selon les trois registres topologiques – l'Imaginaire, le Symbolique, et le Réel – est un outil fondamental et essentiel pour élargir le sujet au-delà des impératifs culturels. Ce qui fonctionne dans ce cadre est la négativité, inoculée par le langage et par la fracture interne que le Réel est pour la chaîne signifiante. Ces deux éléments, la négativité et le Réel, sont radicalement absents dans une analyse nominaliste du sujet, où il équivaut aux mandats des normes culturelles, situation qui conduit à une impasse : le sujet n'a aucune autre pertinence que ce que les dispositifs discursifs diffus et disséminés lui permettent d'avoir.

Néanmoins, le sujet, selon ce que la notion de vulnérabilité et la psychanalyse signalent, n'est pas affirmé comme le fondement du discours, au contraire, il en est le produit. C'est ce que Judith Butler soutient dans *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) : "Representation set out in advance the criterion by which

subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject” (Butler, 1990: 1). À ce stade, l’analyse se réfère aux identifications qui façonnent les sujets dans leur dimension sociale. Il vise à rendre visible quelle est la liaison en ce qui concerne la reconnaissance et la violence, laquelle est au cœur du processus de socialisation.

1.2. Configurations subjectives dans les discours et les rapports de pouvoir

En ce qui concerne le déplacement du sujet comme un effet discursif, la généalogie de Foucault sur la Modernité est une méthode très riche, notamment son concept d’assujettissement, ce qui implique que le sujet est produit et soumis par des filets diffuses des connaissances et du pouvoir. L’analyse foucauldienne sur l’historicité qui traverse l’émergence du sujet par rapport aux régimes de vérité et de ses questions dynamiques d’exclusion permettent de défaire l’héritage humaniste et son mythe sur un sujet autonome et autosuffisant. Le processus d’assujettissement dépend, suivant Foucault, de l’incarnation de régimes de normalisation, qui, à leur tour, créent des zones d’abjection, catégorie cruciale pour Butler et sa réflexion sur la vulnérabilité.

En outre, la révision foucauldienne de la Modernité en ce qui concerne la coexistence des relations de pouvoir et la connaissance comme base pour l’émergence du sujet ne fait pas appel à la tradition libérale fondée sur le rôle répressif attribué au pouvoir. Une telle définition du pouvoir laisse de côté le rôle productif des interconnexions entre savoir et pouvoir en ce qui concerne le sujet, ce qui se réfère au concept de *discours* dans le corpus foucauldien:

Je suppose que dans toute société la production du discours est à la fois contrôlée, sélectionnée et redistribuée par un certain nombre de procédures qui ont pour rôle d’en conjurer les pouvoirs et les dangers, d’en maîtriser l’événement aléatoire, d’en esquiver la lourde, la redoutable matérialité (Foucault, 1971 : 10-11).

Suivant l’héritage foucauldien, la relation entre pouvoir et savoir crée ses propres zones de répudiation et de légitimation, ce qui signifie que n’importe quel scénario discursif est toujours allié à la division entre ceux qui sont censés être en charge du pouvoir et ceux qui sont censés être domptés par lui. Une relation qui, en fait, n’est pas fondée, selon Foucault, sur une nécessité métaphysique, mais c’est plutôt un produit de la contingence de luttes au sein de la sphère sociale :

Comment pourrait-on raisonnablement comparer la contrainte de la vérité avec des partages comme ceux-là, des partages qui sont arbitraires au départ ou qui du moins s'organisent autour de contingences historiques ; qui sont non seulement modifiables mais en perpétuel déplacement ; qui sont supportés par tout un système d'institutions qui les imposent et les reconduisent ; qui ne s'exercent pas enfin sans contrainte, ni une part au moins de violence (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 15-16).

Cet assujettissement discursif sur le sujet est un schéma très utile afin d'introduire le lien entre violence et vulnérabilité, lequel est analysé dans ma thèse en ce qui concerne trois situations empiriques : la transsexualité et sa régulation psychiatrique ; la normalisation chirurgicale des bébés intersexués et l'administration des migrants dits illégaux dans le contexte des politiques migratoires actuelles. Ces trois scénarios doivent être considérés en relation avec les distributions sociales, le rôle réglementaire attribué aux connaissances scientifiques et le fait que, dans notre présent, le corps vivant est au centre de la politique, ce qui signifie qu'il y a un énorme intérêt institutionnel à la domestication de la vie, y compris dans son expression minimale.

Dans tous ces cas, savoir et pouvoir se soutiennent mutuellement, laissant de côté toute opposition présumée entre eux, ce qui signifie que la transsexualité, l'intersexualité et les migrations illégales sont trois zones d'exclusion produites et régulées par les dispositifs discursifs qui les délimitent et les définissent. La notion de vulnérabilité ne peut être correctement analysée par conséquent sans prêter attention à la manière dont le discours, à travers des pratiques et des institutions, précise les conditions d'intelligibilité culturelle différemment élaborées et maintenues.

Toutefois, dans l'approche foucauldienne, le sujet est réduit à un effet discursif, ce qui explique pourquoi Foucault articule la résistance comme moyen de la ré-articulation d'un cadre sociopolitique donné. Ainsi, la résistance traverse des relations de pouvoir en vertu d'une logique d'immanence qui conçoit un scénario agoniste selon lequel s'il y a pouvoir, il y a résistance. Je vais prendre sérieusement en compte une telle perspective foucauldienne concernant les trois situations susmentionnées, bien que je veuille faire attention aux limitations de cette perspective.

En effet, si le sujet est considéré comme un résultat purement dérivé du discours, deux questions doivent être mises en évidence. L'une se réfère à la textualité attribuée au sujet et son corps, privés de toute singularité ; le corps devient ici façonné par des mécanismes externes, parmi lesquels, selon Foucault, il y a l'appareil de la sexualité. À

son tour, le statut du corps se réfère à une surface textuelle où les signifiants sont inscrits en vertu des normes et règlements.

Cela implique un constructivisme social où le corps et le sujet deviennent des éléments neutres. La deuxième question, qui est branchée sur le monisme discursif dérivé de cette torsion, implique que, dans une perspective foucauldienne, le sujet peut être entièrement inscrit dans une logique d'inclusion et d'exclusion, régi par les cadres historiques d'intelligibilité. Ainsi, Foucault élabore un réductionnisme discursif où la résistance est réduite à ouvrir de nouvelles zones de la subjectivité, lesquelles seront plus tard absorbées par les rapports de pouvoir.

Contrairement à cette approche historiciste et constructiviste du sujet et de son corps, la psychanalyse, par le biais de l'inconscient et du symptôme, propose une analyse différente sur cette question. À savoir, le sujet n'est pas réduit à son identification. Une telle remarque ne repose pas sur une réclamation métaphysique proche du cartésianisme, mais sur l'inconscient et la négativité et la fracture interne qu'ils supposent. À travers cette fracture, la région du « moi » est structurellement différenciée du sujet scindé de l'inconscient.

En outre, des auteurs comme Joan Copjec exprime une autre question importante concernant la conception du sujet en termes psychanalytiques partant des trois registres lacaniens (l'Imaginaire, le Symbolique et le Réel) : si le sujet est réduit au Symbolique en termes de la Loi du signifiant et l'Imaginaire, compris comme le registre spéculaire du moi, le sujet serait un texte pur qui puisse être déchiffré. Néanmoins, l'articulation du Réel comme la fracture interne du sens et du langage réarticule deux autres, comme je l'expliquerai plus tard dans cette même introduction.

Ensuite, dans une approche lacanienne, le discours n'est pas simplement un réseau fait de relations de pouvoir et de savoir, mais c'est la région du lien social, qui existe grâce à la dimension du Symbolique, définie par son contingence et ses usages historiques. J'analyserai dans la troisième partie de ma thèse, lorsqu'elle traite de la notion de violence, comment pour Lacan le discours n'est pas simplement une question de pouvoir et de savoir, mais qu'elle régleme également la dimension corporelle au moyen de la production d'une dimension libidinale, qui est liée à la jouissance, et l'excès qu'elle incarne à l'égard de tout mandat culturel.

En conséquence, alors que l'affiliation foucauldienne de la vulnérabilité du sujet se traduit par une somme des attributs ordonnée selon la dimension réglementaire du pouvoir et des discours, la psychanalyse signale la limite interne de la dynamique du pouvoir, qui se réfère à la singularité du sujet, qui n'est ni imaginaire que symbolique, mais elle est placée sur le Réel. Un tel geste permet aussi une approche différente de la notion de biopolitique que Foucault définit comme la dimension productive et régulatrice du pouvoir qui caractérise la montée et l'hégémonie du capitalisme. Dans une perspective biopolitique, le sexe et la différence sexuelle fonctionnerait tout simplement comme un nouveau dispositif d'assujettissement, dont les racines sont placées dans des mutations historiques des formes de connaissances et les stratégies de puissance qu'elles autorisent.

Sur cette question, il y a une divergence radicale entre la tradition foucauldienne et la psychanalyse, qui doit être examinée ainsi que le registre du Réel dans l'approche lacanienne. En effet, si le nominalisme historiciste estime que tout le domaine subjectif est pur discours, pour la psychanalyse le statut sexué du sujet est un blocage interne pour la production de sens. Comme j'argumenterai quant au traitement de Lacan de la différence sexuelle, cette notion installe une limite interne pour une tendance constructiviste qui prétend réduire le sexe et la différence sexuelle à leur traduction contingente en termes socio-symbolique. Au contraire, la psychanalyse signale le vide qu'ils introduisent au cœur de la signification dans la mesure où l'effet du langage infligé sur le corps vivant exile le sujet d'un recours à une loi naturelle. En d'autres termes, il n'y a aucun signifiant approprié pour nommer le statut sexué du sujet, comme le souligne Joan Copjec dans *Read My Desire. Lacan against the Historicists* (1994):

To say that the subject is sexed is to say that it is no longer possible to have any knowledge of *him* or *her*. *Sex serves no other function than to limit the reason, to remove the subject from the realm of possible experience or pure understanding*. This is the meaning, when all is said and done, of Lacan's notorious assertion that "there is no sexual relation": sex, in opposing itself to sense, is also, by definition, opposed to relation, to communication (Copjec, 1994: 207).

Par conséquent, le registre du Réel est à considérer lorsqu'on traite le sujet parce qu'il ne se réfère pas à une substance préalablement linguistique qui fonctionne comme arrière-plan pour n'importe quelle réalité symbolique. C'est la région de ce qui est impossible à capturer à travers les mécanismes de la signification, sa limite interne. Une limite qui ne repose pas sur une opposition métaphysique, mais il plutôt appelle à ce que le sens ne peut saisir, ce qui signifie que le sujet n'est pas un pur effet discursif, mais

une anomalie dont l'être n'est pas totalement inscrit dans n'importe quel signifiant. Ainsi, comme le remarque Copjec, prêter attention au réel du sexe et de la différence sexuelle ne consiste pas à imposer un critère d'exclusion basé sur une approche normative du sujet, mais il met en évidence ce qui fonctionne comme un surplus qui va bien au-delà de toute tentative discursive. En ce sens, faisant attention au Réel comme l'élément topologique qui défie le langage loin de piéger le sujet à la logique des inclusions et les exclusions, il montre la défaillance interne d'une telle logique.

En outre, le royaume du Réel dépasse la relationnalité ontologique orchestrée par la post-métaphysique en recourant à l'indétermination qu'il développe. En fait, le réel de la différence sexuelle ne repose pas sur une opposition ou une complémentarité, mais il fait appel à une asymétrie structurelle qui interdit toute solution adaptative. En d'autres termes, le Réel n'appartient-il pas à l'être, mais il le morcelle, présentant un vide qui ne peut être capturé par aucun signifiant. Ainsi, dans la troisième partie de ma thèse, je clarifierai que ces auteurs qui réduisent le sexe au rang d'une norme d'exclusion qui oriente vers un choix d'objet spécifique, ne se préoccupent que de manifestations partielles du sexe. Traduire le sexe et la différence sexuelle dans une norme est, en ce sens, ce qui permet à l'orchestration forcée d'une relation obligatoire entre deux sujets, le premier se définissant par rapport au second. Telle est la critique élaborée par Joan Copjec en ce qui concerne la tradition foucauldienne qui donne au sexe le statut d'une norme qui conférerait une priorité à l'hétérosexualité monogamique sur n'importe quel autre choix d'objet sexuel à travers un dispositif d'exclusion :

That is, it is only when we define the two terms as having a reciprocal relation, the meaning of the one depending on the meaning of the other and vice versa, that we incline them – more strongly, compel them – toward union, albeit one that is sustained through violent antagonisms. For, the complementary relation is, in Lacan's terms, an imaginary one; it entails both absolute union and absolute aggression (Copjec, *op.cit.*: 202-203).

D'après ce que j'ai soutenu jusqu'à présent et ce que Copjec décrit dans cette citation, le signifiant de vulnérabilité mobilise uniquement un registre discursif, basé sur les inclusions et les exclusions, se référant aux domaines de répudiation qui créent un groupe en fonction d'une logique normative et identitaire. Dans un sens lacanien, cette procédure nominaliste et historiciste s'intéresse seulement à la création de logique d'un groupe et son comportement extérieur, ceux-ci ayant été expulsés, et qui confirment l'existence d'un ensemble. C'est ce que Lacan nomme, dans *Encore* (1975b), le positionnement logique masculin de la différence sexuelle :

El lado masculino introduce un tipo de lógica que puede remitir a una lógica colectiva de *segregación* en la medida en que su universal se considere, no sólo como limitado por la excepción, sino abriendo el campo de imaginarización de un “otro” – la alteridad, el extranjero – concebido como radicalmente opuesto en sus atributos (la mujer, el judío, etc.) (Cevasco, 2010: 133).

Cependant, la psychanalyse souligne un supplément qui défie toute prétention à valider une totalité en vertu d’une confrontation binaire. Un tel supplément fonctionne comme une limite qui traverse toute tentative visant à élaborer un ensemble logique, qui se réfère à la logique féminine, ou à la jouissance pas-toute : “Lacan propose concebir la *posición femenina* como posición límite [...]. Una posición que se sitúa en el borde mismo del universo simbólico. Eso es lo que va a proponer con la formalización de la sexuación” (Cevasco, *op. cit.*: 22).

1.3. Pouvoir et violence

Néanmoins, la tradition foucauldienne permet une plus grande analyse du lien complexe entre la violence et le pouvoir, qui met au centre du débat que tout discours donné crée ses propres zones d’amortissement. En d’autres termes, il n’y a aucun discours sans stratégies coercitives. Par conséquent, la généalogie du sujet entreprise par Foucault vise au dévoilement des dispositifs sociaux, institutionnels, épistémiques et politiques qui créent des régimes d’intelligibilité discursive selon laquelle le sujet est élaboré au moyen d’une méthode disciplinaire et normative.

En outre, dans son *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (1976), Foucault a donné une articulation précise du pouvoir comme diffus et articulé selon une relationnalité multiple. Cette articulation du pouvoir dépasse la conception du pouvoir comme répressif ou punitif, montrant sa dimension productive d’un sujet qui est représenté par la dynamique du politique. Une telle remarque a également été soulignée par Nietzsche dans son *Sur la généalogie de la moralité* (1887), où Nietzsche a plaidé pour un processus de défaite de la conscience moderne, introduite par Nietzsche comme un effet de la punition.

Ensuite, sans annuler une notion disciplinaire du pouvoir plus concernée sur un sujet incarné comme l’individu, dans son premier livre sur la généalogie de l’appareil de la sexualité, Foucault introduit un nouveau paradigme sur le pouvoir et le savoir dans le premier volume sur sa trilogie de la sexualité. Ce paradigme n’est pas réduit à une

stratégie souveraine basée sur faire mourir ceux qui défient la figure du souverain et de laisser vivre le reste de la population. Elle consiste plutôt à une stratégie régulatrice sur la vie nommé biopolitique. Telle torsion, que Foucault considère comme une transformation cruciale de la modernité depuis le XVIII^e siècle, met le corps au centre de l'espace politique. Le corps est transformé en bio-machine dont on trouvera un avantage économique, ce qui signifie que la montée du capitalisme et de la biopolitique sont deux phénomènes liés. Ce paradigme foucauldien présente un nouveau cadre pour analyser la réalité actuelle de notre époque et la notion de vulnérabilité émerge comme conséquence d'une telle modification discursive.

La notion foucauldienne du pouvoir conçoit une configuration politique comme une lutte, contestant un contrat social où les individus remettent leur « pouvoir ». C'est, ainsi, une modification discursive au-delà du libéralisme, où le droit juridique et l'État sont les réalités primaires. Le pouvoir est, donc, un filet de diffusion qui n'est pas unifié par une origine juridique. Par conséquent, le pouvoir n'est pas une possession subjective au détriment des autres. Les relations de pouvoir créent, puis, sujets, ce qui signifie qu'aucun sujet n'est étranger à elles, et ils configurent cadres d'intelligibilité dans lequel n'importe quel sujet peut apparaître.

Malgré cela, l'approche de Foucault n'implique pas une relation unidirectionnelle entre le pouvoir et les sujets, mais elle est multiple et diversifiée. En effet, si le pouvoir est un ensemble de luttes, qui sont, dans une certaine mesure, arbitraires et imprévisibles, le processus d'assujettissement ou de soumission n'est jamais complet. Il a besoin d'une répétition obligatoire par le biais de normes et pratiques pour parvenir à une stabilité supplémentaire qui, en dépit de cela, ne sera jamais tout à fait réussie, étant traversée par des formes de résistance : "Là où y il a pouvoir, il y a résistance et que pourtant, ou plutôt par là même, celle-ci n'est jamais en position d'extériorité par rapport au pouvoir" (Foucault, 1976.: 125-126).

Par conséquent, une telle notion de pouvoir, dans sa dimension biopolitique, implique que les trois scénarios empiriques que j'ai choisi pour illustrer le lien entre la vulnérabilité et la violence doit être présenté avec précision. Le conflit politique actuel n'est pas fondé sur la notion traditionnelle de la souveraineté, mais il fait appel à la dimension réglementaire de la biopolitique. Dans ce cadre, la violence est exercée afin de protéger la vie comme un investissement qui doit être stimulée par un processus d'exclusion. Le résultat d'une telle dynamique est un déplacement de la stratégie de

souveraineté, qui reposait sur la sanction de la mort. Par conséquent, le geste politique présent point à laisser mourir ceux déclarés comme inutiles ou défectueux en vertu des sujets stimulés comme productifs et bien adaptés au contexte social actuel.

Néanmoins, ce qui est absent dans l'analyse foucauldienne du pouvoir est sa dimension psychique, c'est-à-dire, le processus d'internalisation des impératifs culturels qui pourraient conduire à une autodestruction du sujet. En d'autres termes, les formes freudienne et nietzschéenne du surmoi et de la mauvaise conscience. En effet, la dimension psychique de la violence ne fait pas simplement référence aux forces externes qui annihilent le sujet, mais elle signale aussi le mécanisme réflexif à travers lequel le sujet exécute des dispositifs violents contre lui-même et d'autres. Cette dimension de la violence peut être considérée par le biais de la psychanalyse, la généalogie nietzschéenne de la conscience par l'intermédiaire de la punition et le concept de performativité de Butler, laquelle sera une bonne occasion de rendre visible les limites de la notion foucauldienne de la discipline, malgré ses éléments éclaircissants.

En ce qui concerne le lien entre la vulnérabilité et la violence, il est important de remarquer que les régulations biopolitiques sur le corps ont tendance à effacer la dimension du sujet telle qu'elle articulée par la psychanalyse. En d'autres termes, par le recours à des normes et à leur revers pathologique, l'exercice biopolitique sur le sujet et son corps parvient à créer la fiction d'une réalité homéostatique, mise en place par une variété de connaissances dont l'objet est un code statistique prêt à être amélioré. Il s'agit de la thèse que je vais développer concernant le traitement psychiatrique de la transsexualité, la chirurgie normalisatrice sur des bébés intersexués et les Centres de Détention d'Étrangers. La fiction biopolitique opère par le biais du commandement vers une production réglementée par le recours à un appareil disciplinaire dont le fond est le discours scientifique et la vérité du sujet qu'il fournit prétendument.

Les luttes plurielles et diverses contre l'hégémonie de la biopolitique sont également conditionnées par un tel cadre, ce qui pose un doute quant à leurs potentialités. En ce sens, il est important de remarquer que la notion de sujet qu'elles mobilisent est également encadrée par un tel paradigme discursif. Dans la mesure où mon objectif est de contextualiser l'appareil biopolitique d'une réalité locale afin de rendre visible ces mécanismes pour souligner la dimension matérielle de la vulnérabilité, je limiterai mon analyse à la réalité sociale de Barcelone. Selon mon point de vue, une telle approche contextualisée est ce qui permet d'analyser la création d'une réalité sociopolitique et les

stratégies spécifiques développés par certains groupes pour tenter de renverser un régime donné d'assujettissement.

1.4. **Les antécédents théoriques de la notion de vulnérabilité : Corps vulnérables, débats pluriels**

La notion de vulnérabilité a sa propre histoire. Il a généré son propre débat et a retenu des différentes voix. Par conséquent, le discours sur la vulnérabilité élaboré par Judith Butler et Adriana Cavarero a une histoire, qui est liée à certains des débats contemporains qui avaient permis les processus de démantèlement de la métaphysique. Les figures philosophiques qui créent un précédent pour cette réflexion actuelle sont, principalement, Emmanuel Levinas et Hannah Arendt, bien qu'ils n'aient pas une position théorique identique. Ainsi, alors que Levinas prétend que l'incarnation physique de l'Autre, principalement par le biais de son visage, est un témoignage de la condition vulnérable de l'ek-sistence, la notion arendtienne de la politique a souligné une sphère faite des apparitions publiques qui exigent une cohabitation concertée.

1.4.1. **Hannah Arendt : L'action concertée et la narration comme deux éléments mutuellement impliqués**

Mon intérêt pour le travail d'Arendt réside dans sa conception de la politique et l'action comme deux régions qui appartiennent au domaine de l'humain. Sa notion de la politique se réfère, comme dans Aristote, à l'imbrication entre l'action et la parole. Cette approche parcourt son ouvrage *The Human Condition* (1958).

Selon Arendt, l'action politique est, néanmoins, dissociée de n'importe quelle dimension liée au travail. Ce qu'elle nomme la *vita activa* est liée à la praxis collective qui contribue à bâtir une communauté. Une telle réalité communautaire est ce qui conforme le pouvoir, compris comme agissant de façon concertée. En fait, Arendt réduit le travail et à la survie, et cette stratégie implique un geste dépolitisant de cette réalité :

Labour is the activity that corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism and eventual decay are bound to the vital

necessities produced and fed into the life process by labour. The human condition of labour is life itself. (Arendt, 1958: 7).

Toutefois, il est important de souligner que l'exclusion du travail de la dimension de la politique est, en soi, un geste politique.

Pourtant, ce que je voudrais exposer sur la notion d'Arendt concernant la politique, afin de rendre visible les origines de la relationnalité ontologique qui soutient la notion de vulnérabilité, est ce qu'Arendt nomme le droit de parler. Selon Arendt le discours n'est pas étranger à l'action, mais c'est ce qui donne une spécificité supplémentaire à l'action, lui procurant un statut politique parce que le discours produit un sens partagé. Par conséquent, on pourrait prétendre qu'un tel lien entre le discours et l'action confère à la politique un niveau performatif, qui rappelle des actes performatifs d'Austin dans *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) : la création de ce qui est énoncé par le biais du discours.

Le caractère performatif du politique confère une dimension particulière et très problématique au corps. En fait, l'approche d'Arendt envers la vie corporelle est principalement phénoménologique, soulignant que l'organisme pourrait être un obstacle au sujet de l'apparition publique. C'est pourquoi, discutant de la relation occasionnelle entre le corps et la douleur, Arendt dit : "Indeed, the most intense feeling we know of, intense to the point of blotting out all other experiences, namely, the experience of great bodily pain, is at the same time the most privative and least communicable of all" (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 50-51).

Bien qu'Arendt affirme la naissance comme point de départ de la politique, le corps acquiert un intérêt secondaire dans son discours étant donné la prééminence donnée à l'action linguistique. En fait, le corps, selon sa perspective, est assez souvent associé à une réalité biologique et organique, ce qui expliquerait la déconsidération du travail comme élément étranger à la politique. Ainsi, Arendt met tout l'accent dans le « moi » lié au langage comme élément constituant de la région du *bíos*, le concept grec pour définir une vie faite d'attributs, qui s'opposait à *zoé*, comprise comme la vie dans un processus biologique, ce qui est également présent dans le travail d'Agamben *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995). Ce « moi » fait de langage, dont la constitution est la liaison à l'acte de parole, est ce qui caractérise la condition humaine comme une ontologie qui oscille entre égalité et différence :

Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 176).

Le discours énonce une nouvelle dimension qui concerne le « self » : la condition de l'émergence de l'individu, dans la mesure où la langue est transmise par l'autre qui nous parle, est le « tu » et non pas le « je ». Cette caractéristique souligne une interdépendance fondamentale. Cette interdépendance originale appartient à la sphère de la politique, comprise par Arendt comme une somme d'agents qui, bien qu'ils partagent un cadre symbolique, introduisent leurs différences respectives dans une réalité communautaire. Par conséquent, l'inauguration de la situation politique n'est pas donnée par un être autonome et autosuffisant, mais par un individu qui est contraint d'interroger l'autre. Ainsi, la question principale est : « Qui êtes-vous ? » Cette torsion traverse la réflexion élaborée par Adriana Cavarero dans *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* (2000), où Cavarero relie la notion de vulnérabilité à la possibilité de perdre sa vie entre les mains de l'autre, question liée à notre exposition corporelle.

La dimension de la parole et l'action est au cœur de l'ambivalence que Arendt remarque concernant deux éléments : le « qui » et le « quoi ». Selon Arendt, le « qui » n'est ni une réalité évidente, ni un attribut, mais une limite, une marge qui, même s'il n'est pas pré-discursif, ne peut pas être absolument révélée à travers le langage. Chaque existence singulière devient telle grâce à la rencontre avec l'altérité et de la parole. En outre, elle suggère que le « qui », en raison du fait qu'il n'est pas une réalité évidente, se révèle grâce à un processus sans fin qui se déroule dans la narration comme la façon dans laquelle le désir peut s'exprimer à d'autres. Par le « quoi », Arendt désigne tous les attributs que possède un sujet, qui peuvent être reconnus par les autres. Selon Arendt, ensuite, le lien entre le « quoi » et le « qui » implique que “the disclosure of “who” in contradiction to “what” somebody is – his qualities, gifts, talents and shortcoming, which he may display or hide – is implicit in everything somebody says and does” (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 179).

La constitution relationnelle du « moi » provenant de ces deux notions signifie que toute personne est fabriquée de cohabitation incessante avec les autres et, en même

temps, le « quoi », la dimension la plus singulière de chaque être humain, résiste à toute traduction dans le « quoi », c'est-à-dire, la somme des attributs :

The moment we want to say *who* somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying *what* he is; we got entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or a “character” in the old meaning of the word, with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us. (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 181).

L'existence devient une réalité fragmentaire qui n'atteint jamais une dimension synthétique, ce qui implique l'impossibilité d'une résolution finale. L'existence, est donc, toujours une ek-sistence énigmatique. La cohabitation est une exposition constante où tout individu ajoute une dimension nouvelle et différente : “The disclosure of the “who” through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always falls into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 184).

Arendt souligne que le « moi », dans la mesure où il est un être politique, est fait d'une multiplicité de récits différents, dont aucun n'acquiert jamais une fin. Telle est la dimension narrative du « moi » faite avec et par les autres : “The stories, the results of action and speech, reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author or producer. Somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author” (Arendt, *idem*).

1.4.2. Emmanuel Levinas : La primauté de l'éthique, et la dimension primordiale de l'Autre

Le deuxième référent important pour la notion de vulnérabilité, telle qu'elle est précisée par Judith Butler et Adriana Cavarero, est Emmanuel Levinas. Si Arendt n'a pas attribué une pertinence spécifique au corps, mettant comme éléments principaux la narration et la parole, Levinas souligne le rôle crucial du corps dans le domaine de l'éthique comme l'incarnation de la vulnérabilité de l'existence. En effet, la principale caractéristique de la pensée levinésienne est la primauté qu'il confère à l'éthique sur l'ontologie. Cette importance donnée à l'éthique est un effort pour déconstruire la notion traditionnelle d'un sujet autonome et rationnel et, en même temps, son discours ne se réfère pas à un individu comme Arendt, mais à un sujet décentré au moyen de la priorité de l'Autre.

En ce qui concerne ce point, Levinas ne considère pas comme un référent le scénario épistémologique hérité de la Modernité, selon lequel le sujet et l'objet sont opposés au moyen d'une structure perceptive qui attribue une passivité à l'objet en raison du rôle actif conféré à la conscience solipsiste. Afin de renverser ce lien strictement épistémique, Levinas développe une relationnalité entre le sujet et l'Autre faisant appel à un rapport asymétrique entre eux : "Jamais ma relation à l'égard du prochain n'est la réciproque de celle qui va de lui à moi car jamais je suis quitte envers l'autre. La relation est irréversible" (Levinas, 1978 [1947]: 12-13).

Selon son approche, l'éthique implique une rupture de l'être, lequel, suivant Levinas, est basé sur la catégorie métaphysique d'identité, ce qui implique le refus de l'altérité :

L'être se refuse à toute spécification et ne spécifie rien. Il n'est ni une qualité qu'un objet supporte, ni le support de qualités, ni l'acte d'un sujet, et cependant, dans la formule « ceci est », l'être devient attribut, puisque nous sommes immédiatement obligés de déclarer que cet attribut n'ajoute rien au sujet. (Levinas, *op. cit.*: 17)

Cette irruption dans le domaine de l'éthique sera donnée par l'existence de l'Autre, qui, à son tour, ajoute une dimension qui manquait absolument dans la tradition métaphysique : le corps comme une exposition relationnelle qui implique une interdépendance subjective. Ce hiatus au sujet de l'ontologie est exprimé par Levinas en recourant à la paire conceptuelle de l'*existant* et de l'*existence*. L'*existant* se réfère à une réalité ontologique, laissant de côté ce qui dépasse la dimension de l'être et de la phénoménologie, tandis que l'*existence* est interprétée par Levinas comme un point de rupture qui doit être poursuivie afin que l'Autre apparaisse. L'existence, est donc toujours une ek-sistence, un devenir qui oblige le sujet à agir, qui pousse le domaine de la subjectivité à l'extérieur de soi-même. Il implique, par conséquent, une confrontation à la contingence et au domaine de ce qui ne peut pas être prévu.

Toutefois, Arendt et Lévinas, malgré leurs différences, se réfèrent toujours à un « moi » (Arendt) et un sujet (Levinas) associés à une conscience fragmentée. Les deux points de vue laissent de côté la « découverte » de l'inconscient, ce qui a des conséquences fortes concernant la relation entre le sujet et son corps, ayant aussi un impact dans l'analyse du lien social. Par rapport à Arendt, le sujet est assimilé à un « moi » fait par les rencontres avec d'autres comme une narration fragmentée, tandis que Levinas réduit le sujet à la dimension phénoménologique de la conscience. Ces

deux approches conditionnent le développement sur la vulnérabilité élaboré par Butler et Cavarero.

Fait intéressant, toutefois, Levinas conçoit l'éthique comme une rencontre asymétrique entre deux individus qui va bien au-delà de la notion de reconnaissance. En effet, en ce qui concerne Levinas, l'Autre, dans son altérité radicale, défie toute sorte de reconnaissance, ce qui conteste l'idée hégélienne selon laquelle le désir est désir de reconnaissance. La différence devient, alors, la catégorie principale de la rencontre éthique, un scénario pour lequel il n'y a aucune norme appropriée qui épuise la relation avec l'Autre : "La relation avec autrui ne saurait être pensée comme un enchaînement à un autre moi ; ni comme la compréhension d'autrui qui en fait disparaître l'altérité, ni comme la communion avec lui autour de quelque troisième terme" (Levinas, *op. cit.* : 144).

Cette spécificité de la dimension éthique souligne que même la notion arendtienne de communauté n'est pas suffisante pour les concepts d'altérité et de différence mobilisés par Levinas. L'éthique, dans un sens levinassien, implique l'interruption de toute réalité commune présumée, installant un hiatus qui remet en question toute relation entre le sujet et l'Autre. La singularité que Levinas attribue à l'éthique est aussi liée à une notion bien connue de son discours : le visage de l'Autre et le paradoxe qu'il entraîne. Le visage de l'Autre incarne une vulnérabilité qui pourrait inciter le sujet à commettre une action violente contre l'Autre, bien que, dans le même temps, le visage de l'Autre, dans son exposition corporelle, édicte un commandement normatif pour la préservation de la vie : « Il faut ne pas tuer ». En conséquence, la disposition que le sujet doit entreprendre vers l'Autre est issue d'une *responsabilité pour l'existence de l'Autre*, comprise comme un droit inconditionnel. Cette obligation sera la source de la politique en matière de droit :

La politique doit pouvoir en effet toujours être contrôlée et critiquée à partir de l'éthique. Cette seconde forme de socialité rendrait justice à ce secret qu'est pour chacun sa vie, secret qu'on ne tient pas à un clôture qui isolerait quelque domaine rigoureusement privé d'une intériorité fermée, mais secret qui tient à la responsabilité pour autrui, qui, dans son avènement éthique est incessible, à laquelle on ne se dérobe pas et qui, ainsi, est principe d'individuation absolue. (Levinas, 1982: 86).

Pour Levinas, la vulnérabilité apparaît, donc, comme une notion qui mobilise l'éthique comme un registre fondamental qui représente une approche vers le sujet sans le réduire

entièrement à l'ontologie, mais il souligne la nécessité de repenser la différence comme une notion primordiale, comme c'est le cas dans les travaux de Judith Butler.

1.4.3. **Adriana Cavarero : La singularité et l'inclination subjective**

Après l'examen introductif de Hannah Arendt et Emmanuel Levinas, qui sont les principaux référents concernant la notion de vulnérabilité dans les analyses d'Adriana Cavarero et de Judith Butler, j'expose les principaux arguments qu'elles donnent dans leur débat sur cette notion. Adriana Cavarero part de la remarque arendtienne sur la naissance comme une catégorie fondamentale pour repenser la politique. Explicitement, elle tente d'élaborer un point de vue ontologique de la vulnérabilité au départ de deux coordonnées arendtiennes que j'ai déjà mentionnées : le « qui » et le « quoi ». Cavarero les utilise pour élaborer une notion de singularité dont la racine théorique est l'inclination subjective qui déstabilise l'autosuffisance que la Modernité avait attribuée au sujet.

Malgré son inspiration arendtienne, Cavarero met en évidence l'importance du corps en tant que singulier et exposé. En ce qui concerne cette première notion, qui se rapporte au « qui » arendtien, elle l'articule comme un élément que l'on trouve dans les marges du langage, résistant à une représentation compacte, ce qui met une limite à la chaîne des signifiants. La dimension de la singularité est, à son tour, attachée à la parole et l'action. Concernant son discours, Cavarero réduit le discours et la parole à la narration. Selon son point de vue, la narration est l'occasion de remettre en question toute structure binaire. Ainsi, la narration est le moment où sujet et objet sont mélangés et mutables parce que, comme Arendt dit, il n'y a aucun auteur concret de l'histoire racontée, et même l'histoire édictée par la figure de l'Autre n'est pas un objet épistémique, mais un processus interminable. Une ek-sistence narrative est, par conséquent, toujours être à venir. Il s'agit du premier défi posé par Cavarero : penser la singularité par le biais de la notion de différence, ce qui permet une ontologie qui ne valide pas la prédominance d'un sujet fondateur, mais un glissement vers la relation et son indétermination. Par cette indétermination, Cavarero essaie de suggérer que l'émergence du sujet ne peut pas provenir de l'axiome cartésien *Cogito, ergo sum*, mais d'une relation de dépossession : le soi dépend de l'autre pour exister, et il y a une

primauté de l'altérité dans toute constitution subjective. La métaphore qu'elle utilise pour suggérer cette dépendance est le lien entre la mère et l'enfant. L'enfant a une dépendance physique et psychique vers un personnage qu'il introduit dans un monde où l'identité est cassée, le désir étant ce qui fait le lien entre la mère et l'enfant, ce qui suppose en même temps que la mère ne peut pas être complètement connue par l'enfant. Qui la mère est, l'enfant ne peut le savoir, ce qui oblige à une configuration où les liaisons corporelles sont fondamentales.

Par conséquent, la naissance et l'enfance deviennent un scénario grâce auquel la politique pourrait être repensée en termes de cohabitation, soulignant une exposition sans laquelle le sujet ne peut pas exister. Cette exposition n'est pas seulement un récit, mais, surtout, elle est corporelle. Une telle relation confère à l'Autre un rôle primordial puisque le soi doit être narré pour être, ce qui vient de la dimension de l'histoire. Par le biais de la narration, la singularité est obtenue comme un « qui » où le soi apparaît :

What makes a narration a political act is not simply that this narration invokes the struggle of a collective subjectivity, but rather that it makes clear the fragility of the unique. The uniqueness and the unity of the self, which is disclosed through that self's actions and words, and which is then narrated as a unique and unified life-story, does not display any of the general characteristics of traditional subjectivity: interiority, psychology, agency, self-presence, mastery and forth. Rather, the "narratable existent" is a unique *existent*, "who" someone is. Also this "narratable self" is constitutively in relation with others (2000 [1997]: X).

Toutefois, comme c'était le cas dans la définition d'Arendt de soi comme une création résultante de la parole et action, la dimension corporelle soulignée par Cavarero est réduite à ce qui, dans un sens lacanien, se réfère à la dimension imaginaire du corps. C'est une surface textuelle sur lequel les signifiants donnés par l'Autre forment un soi fragmentaire et discontinu, dont les limites sont mutables et multiples. En ce qui concerne cette question, Cavarero fournit une ontogenèse du soi dont le lien vers l'altérité où l'Autre devient un « tu », produisant un scénario binaire où deux entités se trouvent mutuellement. L'altérité n'implique donc pas une fracture interne pour la subjectivité. En fait, ce qui est absent dans la tradition arendtienne, dans laquelle s'inscrit la pensée de Cavarero, c'est le sujet, pris au piège dans le soi, ne permettant pas une réflexion plus profonde sur l'altérité.

Concernant le lien avec l'Autre, Cavarero efface toute sorte d'agressivité. Et, ainsi, cette relation repose sur une réalité romantique où le soi et le tu sont vus du point de vue

idyllique, étant régis par l'intimité et la dévotion envers l'autre. Le signe de cette relation est l'altruisme : "Prior to being a generous life-style in the service of others, altruism is indeed the foundational principle of a self that knows itself to be constituted by another" (Cavarero, *op. cit.*: 84).

En fait, la relation entre mère et fils introduite par Cavarero élude le discours et la sociabilité dans la mesure où le pouvoir et la domination ne la déterminent pas en quelque sorte. La relation entre eux est réduite à une rencontre « magique » avec l'Autre de manière mythique :

The relational character of the ethic that responds to this [bond to the Other] is not therefore the fruit of a choice; or, rather, the object of a possible appraisal or the result of a grandiose strategy. It is rather the necessary aspect of an identity which, from beginning to end, is intertwined with other lives – with reciprocal exposures and innumerable gazes – and needs the other's tale (Cavarero, *op. cit.*: 88).

Ce qui est radicalement absent dans la notion de vulnérabilité articulée par Adriana Cavarero est ce sur quoi, par contre, Judith Butler insiste: sa dimension matérielle, enracinée dans la relationnalité sociale à travers laquelle le sujet émerge et ek-iste.

1.4.4. **Judith Butler : La vulnérabilité comme lutte pour la reconnaissance**

Judith Butler estime la vulnérabilité à partir de cet horizon : l'exposition implique la situation toujours possible d'être blessé.e. Ainsi, la cohabitation suppose, selon son approche, être face à un Autre, dont le sujet dépend selon un monde social traversé par des relations discursives. Dès le début, la préoccupation de Butler a été comment un sujet peut devenir tels et, dans une perspective foucauldienne, elle analyse quelles normes et relations de pouvoir contrôlent et administrent le processus d'assujettissement. Déjà dans *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), le but de Butler était d'élucider qui compte comme sujet, et quelles sont les conditions d'intelligibilité culturelle qui conditionnent cette opération. C'est pourquoi la stratégie Butler défend toujours et fait usage, par le biais de l'héritage de Foucault, de la généalogie. Elle met l'accent sur les pratiques, les discours et les institutions qui régissent la viabilité et la qualité de la vie du sujet. Suite à cette perspective, l'un de ses objectifs est la

déconstruction des systèmes juridiques, régis par le droit et l'État, et le sujet d'exclusion qu'ils configurent :

The question of “the subject” is crucial for politics, and for feminist politics in particular, because juridical subjects are invariably produced through certain exclusionary practices that do not “show” once the juridical structure of politics has been established (Butler, 1990: 2).

Ainsi, Butler s'efforce de défaire la structure binaire qui régit les configurations sociales et politiques hégémoniques qui conditionnent l'existence corporelle dans le monde contemporain. Pour atteindre cet objectif, Butler plaide pour le caractère performatif de la représentation non seulement dans des cas juridiques, mais aussi dans les relations discursives qui régulent des corps, la sexualité et les identifications, y compris les identifications sexuées. Par performatif, elle entend que le référent d'un schéma représentatif de réglementation n'est ni précédent, ni aliène au référent, mais qu'il est constitué par des pratiques d'exclusion qui fixent à l'avance les cadres ontologiques et épistémiques d'intelligibilité. Selon cette perspective, la réflexion de Butler sur la vulnérabilité est liée aux discours, aux institutions et aux pratiques culturelles, le langage étant un fait crucial. Sa plus grande préoccupation est les processus de production des sujets et des corps exclus, ce qui crée un spectre d'abjection, où les mêmes pratiques d'exclusion sont effectuées. Butler écrit : “Perhaps the subject, as well as the invocation of a temporal “before”, is constituted by the law as the fictive foundation of its own claim to legitimacy” (Butler, *op. cit.*: 2-3).

Par conséquent, la réflexion de Butler sur la vulnérabilité partage avec Nietzsche et Foucault les efforts visant à nier la primauté d'un sujet universel et abstrait comme une entité fondatrice. Remettant en cause la primauté d'un sujet défini en vertu d'un libre-arbitre absolu, Butler souligne une passivité primaire présente dans l'émergence du sujet au cœur de la matrice des relations de pouvoir. Le sujet serait créé par eux selon un effet rétroactif : les relations de pouvoir disparaissent après la création du sujet et, à travers une opération illusoire, elles constituent le sujet comme sa cause même. Suivant une approche foucauldienne, Butler interroge la notion d'une fiction « extérieure » aux relations de pouvoir comme une création politique par excellence. Cela signifie que toute lutte politique ne peut avoir lieu qu'au sein d'une résistance qui, selon Foucault a proclamée, ne peut se produire que traversant ces mêmes relations de pouvoir. Cette interrogation implique que “the juridical structures of language and politics constitute

the contemporary field of power; hence, there is no position outside this field, but only a genealogy of its own legitimating practices” (Butler, *op. cit.*: 5).

Par conséquent, le sujet ne peut devenir tel qu’au sein de relations discursives qui sont conditionnées par des dynamiques historiques contingentes. Par ailleurs, le sujet apparaît comme une configuration répétitive qui crée la fiction d’un « noyau de l’identité » et une « vérité intérieure » qui s’exprime dans l’apparence physique. En vertu de cette configuration, Butler remplace la notion de sexe par celle de genre pour rendre visible un processus de « faire », visant à remettre en question les pratiques binaires d’exclusion qui récusent et peuvent même détruire certains corps :

The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects (Butler, *op. cit.*: 145).

Selon ce schéma conceptuel, le spectre de l’abjection créée par des dynamiques politiques régulatrices et productives est un « extérieur » nécessaire afin de contrôler les sujets au moyen de dispositifs violents imposées par la répétition, comme Butler dit dans *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (1993):

The abject designates here precisely those “unliveable” and “inhabitable” zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the “unliveable” is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject (Butler, 1993: 3).

Cependant, ce que Butler appelle « abjection » serait liée au Symbolique lacanien comme une logique réglementaire et hétérosexiste comme élément structurant toute identité sexuée possible. Afin de soutenir une telle affirmation, Butler efface le sexe du corps, en le plaçant dans un appareil culturel qui impose une contrainte ritualisée au moyen de l’incorporation de normes. La psychanalyse lacanienne fonctionnerait, donc, comme un appareil disciplinaire et régulateur pour maintenir une hégémonie hétérosexiste qui exposerait les identifications non hétérosexuelles aux blessures et répudiations.

Je tiens à souligner qu’une telle revendication est issue d’un oubli du Réel, que Lacan a explicitement liée à la différence sexuelle et le sexe dans son enseignement plus tardif et, plus précisément, dans son séminaire *Encore* (1975b). En même temps, Butler situe le fonctionnement psychique de la forclusion, qui appartient à la dimension

clinique de la psychose, à l'origine de toute identification subjective, ce qui est une erreur théorique et clinique :

Indeed, the construction of gender operates through *exclusionary* means, such that the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of foreclosures, radical erasures, that are, strictly speaking, refused the possibility of cultural articulation (Butler, *op.cit.*: 8).

Par conséquent, dans le discours de Butler, le sexe et le genre sont totalement inscrits dans ce que Lacan a nommé la logique phallique, c'est à dire, la production d'un ensemble au moyen d'un signifiant maître et son extérieur. En conséquence, le sexe devient un processus d'exclusion dans la mesure où Butler oublie ce que Lacan a nommé la logique pas-toute phallique, radicalement absente dans sa discussion avec la psychanalyse. Le paradoxe est l'enjeu de l'articulation de la notion de vulnérabilité, liée principalement au corps genré, selon les dispositifs d'exclusion, ce qui limite clairement la portée de cette notion, car elle est constamment liée aux inclusions et des exclusions. Il y a donc une impossibilité logique pour signaler ce qui échappe un tel fonctionnement dans la mesure où elle est exclue par l'articulation discursive de la vulnérabilité.

Ce qui est obvié par Butler est le fait qu'elle institue un lien imaginaire qui interdirait des identifications non hétérosexuelles, poussant vers une lutte pour la reconnaissance et contre l'abjection qui répète sans cesse le mécanisme d'exclusion, bien qu'elle essaie de l'annuler. Une telle remarque a été déjà examinée dans l'analyse susmentionnée fournie par Joan Copjec concernant les limites de la notion de genre et la dimension du Réel. Néanmoins, cette critique n'a jamais été examinée par Butler, ce qui explique pourquoi elle persiste à reproduire les impasses de la logique phallique. C'est grâce à ce commentaire critique que son erreur d'interprétation des notions de l'Imaginaire et du Symbolique doit être analysée, dont je vais développer dans le premier chapitre de cette thèse.

Malgré la limite conceptuelle signalée, laquelle détermine les notions de vulnérabilité et d'abjection, l'analyse de Butler sur le langage et le discours devient une bonne occasion de réviser les mutations discursives du sujet dans le domaine social, en particulier depuis son *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative* (1997b). Dans cet ouvrage, Butler affirme que "if we are formed in language, then that formative power precedes and conditions any decision we might make about it, insulting us from the start, as it were, by its prior power" (Butler, 1997b: 2). Toute analyse sociale et politique sur le

sujet concernant les affaires courantes doit prendre en compte le rôle structural du langage et de sa réalité discursive afin de rendre visible l'exclusion et la violence.

La priorité ontologique concernant le pouvoir performatif du langage éclaire la question sur laquelle Butler est plus récemment préoccupé : être vulnérable implique qu'on peut être blessé par d'autres ou par un Autre qui précède et conditionne les formations subjectives. Tandis que Cavarero efface cette dimension, Butler est explicite : le sujet vit au sein d'une structure normative qui conditionne sa viabilité et sa survie. Cela implique que "language sustains the body not by bringing it into being or feeling it in a literal way; rather, it is by being interpellated within the terms of language that a certain social existence of the body first becomes possible" (Butler, *op. cit.*: 5).

Une telle remarque doit être correctement considérée afin de prendre en compte les derniers développements sur la notion de vulnérabilité élaborée par Butler, dont je parlerai dans les première et troisième parties de cette thèse afin de signaler avec soin ses potentialités et ses impasses, principalement depuis son *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005).

1.4.5. La différence sexuelle et la jouissance pas-toute phallique : Au-delà des identifications et la relevance de l'amour

Dans cette dernière section de l'introduction, il faut souligner de façon serrée la dimension critique que la psychanalyse, principalement dans sa version lacanienne, rend possible, dans la mesure où la notion de vulnérabilité, en prenant en compte la proposition de Cavarero et celle Butler ont à offrir, est concerné. En effet, comme je l'ai signalé tout au long de cette introduction, le discours de la post-métaphysique à l'arrière-plan de la notion de vulnérabilité offre une définition ontologique de la subjectivité en termes relationnels. Il n'y a aucun doute que la relationnalité permet de défaire la logique binaire héritée de métaphysique moderne, même si elle a ses limites aussi. Surtout en qui concerne le nominalisme, étant donné qu'il soutient la notion même de vulnérabilité, principalement par le biais de la notion foucauldienne de discours, et la réappropriation de Butler d'une telle conceptualisation.

Le nominalisme est la principale limitation à prendre en compte ici. Et je soulignerai que le Onominalisme est là où les propositions de Foucault et de Butler s'arrêtent. L'approche nominaliste entraîne une neutralisation du sujet, qui devient ainsi une somme de multiples identifications fragmentaires réglées par un discours entendu comme une alliance entre le savoir et le pouvoir. En conséquence, la dimension libidinale et sexuelle, qui est au cœur de l'approche psychanalytique vers le sujet étant donné que Freud a mis en évidence la pertinence de l'inconscient, est traduite en règles culturelles. En conséquence, le corps est conçu comme privé de pulsions et de la singularité réelle que la différence sexuelle implique.

Les théories féministes qui ont incorporé la généalogie foucauldienne ont également contribué à une substitution du sexe en vertu du terme genre, lequel devient une association pluriel des signifiants et des pratiques culturelles régulées par les normes et les institutions. En outre, la notion de vulnérabilité, principalement selon la perspective de Butler, identifie la notion de sexe et différence sexuelle à un dispositif régulateur basé sur un mécanisme d'exclusion qui fonctionne selon le même registre que Lacan a affirmé concernant à la position masculine ou phallique. Une telle position sexuée consiste en l'établissement d'un ensemble selon des inclusions et des exclusions, créant ainsi un ensemble la cohérence duquel dépend d'expulser au moins un de ses membres. Par conséquent, si la logique phallique était le seul registre de la dimension sexuée du sujet, sa traduction dans le domaine du social serait réduit à la déconstruction et l'élargissement des normes, ce qui implique que la reconnaissance et ses impasses deviendrait la lutte principale.

La subversion que la psychanalyse permet concernant ce monisme discursif et ses limites repose sur deux éléments : l'inconscient et la logique féminine ou pas-toute phallique.

En ce qui concerne l'inconscient, la psychanalyse n'affirme pas que le sujet est un pur produit dérivé du discours et de ses rapports de pouvoir, mais le sujet de l'inconscient, contrairement à ce que Foucault et Butler assertent, est l'échec de l'Autre symbolique, c'est-à-dire, une déviation de toute fixation présumée. Par conséquent, le sujet de l'inconscient n'est pas réduit aux identifications imaginaires et symboliques, mais c'est le vide qu'aucun signifiant jamais ne remplit pleinement. Il est un point

d'interruption, ce que j'analyserai plus précisément dans la dernière partie de ma thèse par rapport à l'éthique de la psychanalyse à travers la figure d'Antigone.

Concernant la logique féminine ou pas-toute phallique, deux questions doivent être soulignées. Comme je l'ai déjà mentionné dans les sections précédentes de cette introduction, si Lacan réélabore la différence sexuelle grâce au Réel, il s'agit de dire que le sexe n'est pas un prédicat attribué au sujet, mais le blocage de la chaîne signifiante. Il y a un vide pour lequel aucun processus de prédication ne fonctionne correctement. Si Lacan articule enfin la différence sexuelle comme ce qu'il est impossible d'être capturé par le biais de l'Imaginaire et du Symbolique, il a finalement fait appel, grâce à la théorie et la pratique clinique, à une appartenance à un réalisme non pas fondé sur une réalité épistémique des concepts, mais signalant l'effondrement interne de tout mécanisme ontologique. En d'autres termes, le réalisme que Lacan attribue au sexe et à la différence sexuelle signifie que ce ne sont pas deux domaines littéralement capturés par le discours, mais ils sont la dimension qui dépasse la dynamique du langage, ce qui ne réduit en aucun cas la différence sexuelle à une réalité purement anatomique. La façon dont Lacan conclut sa manière d'aborder la différence sexuelle et le sexe, étant donné qu'ils ne s'appliquent pas aux normes, est logique. Telle est la subversion de la psychanalyse lacanienne : le sexe et la différence sexuelle ne sont pas susceptibles d'être appréhendés par parce qu'ils ne sont pas deux réalités épistémiques, mais la béance qui déplace radicalement la production du sens.

Le statut particulier de la logique pas-toute phallique réside dans le fait que sa position est une limite pour l'inconscient dans la mesure où l'inconscient, compris comme étant un savoir ignoré par le sujet, ne connaît qu'un signifiant : le phallus, le signifiant du manque-à-être imposé par le langage. Pour l'inconscient, donc, la logique pas-toute phallique est "una cuestión límite, en el sentido de que resiste a ser atrapada, encauzada en un saber" (Cevasco, 2010: 20).). En d'autres termes, pour l'inconscient, le sexe est simplement phallique, c'est à dire, réglémenté par la castration imposée par le Symbolique, ce qui implique que le pas-tout est plus ancré dans le Réel, impossible à représenter avec succès.

Enfin, la logique pas-toute phallique pose un défi structurel à tout discours qui vise à produire un signifiant qui pourrait fonctionner comme un universel dans le Symbolique. Dans la mesure où elle défie la possibilité de faire un groupe avec elle, je soutiendrai dans cette introduction que c'est l'impasse concernant la vulnérabilité. La vulnérabilité

ne peut que se référer à cela comme ce qui reste à titre exclu parce que ce n'est qu'un discours absolument situé dans l'Imaginaire et le Symbolique, expulsant de son analyse le Réel et, plus précisément, le *réel* de la logique féminine.

Ce que la vulnérabilité analyse, donc, est l'articulation actuelle dans le domaine social régi par une administration biopolitique des sujets dans une alliance étroite avec des nouvelles formes de la dynamique capitaliste, ce qui crée une prolifération d'identifications et leurs exclusions suivantes :

En este tipo de *interpretación* de lo masculino sólo puede concebirse al otro como radicalmente amenazante, porque encarna la figura de una alteridad fantasmática: ese otro que nos habrá robado lo que la estructura nos impone como "falta", como "falta", como goce siempre descompletado por la castración, por más objetos "plus-de-gozar" que nos pongamos entre los dientes o bajo los ojos (Cevasco, *op. cit.*: 134-135.).

Ma stratégie de dépasser une telle dynamique d'exclusion se fondera sur une analyse approfondie de la structure particulière du pas-tout, qui fonctionne comme un supplément pour les limitations imposées par le phallus et ses règlements, visant à signaler l'impossibilité structurelle de réduire le sujet à un ensemble compact. Un tel défi sera accompagné par la notion d'amour tel qu'il est développé par Lacan, mais j'insisterai sur le fait que le défi consiste à déplacer l'amour envers une modalité qui n'ignore pas le Réel qui interdit toute harmonie possible entre les sujets et leurs différents positionnements sexués, ce qui a clairement des conséquences sociales et politiques. En d'autres termes, au lieu de placer exclusivement la subjectivité comme partie du discours et de ses normes, j'essaierai de décrire sa spécificité structurelle, à savoir, sa singularité, sans réduire la réflexion autour du sujet à la dimension d'un ensemble compact. Un tel cheminement permet de faire place à une notion de ce qui est assimilé à une série d'éléments infinis qui défient toute totalité.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	45
1.1. Vulnerability as the Mark of Existence: Rethinking Ek-sistence in the Light of Relational Ontology	46
1.1.1. Articulating Vulnerability by means of the Body: To Exist is to Be Exposed	51
1.1.1.1. Desire, Exposure and Recognition	54
1.2. Subjective Configurations in Discourse and Power Relations	59
1.3. Power and Violence	65
1.4. Roots of a Contemporary Debate: Vulnerable Bodies, Crossed Dialogues	68
1.4.1. Hannah Arendt: Acting in Concert and Narration as Two Co-Extensive Realities	68
1.4.2. Emmanuel Levinas: The Ethical Turn, and the Primary Dimension of the Other	71
1.4.3. Adriana Cavarero: Singularity and Inclination	74
1.4.4. Judith Butler: Vulnerability as the Struggle for Recognition	77
1.4.5. Sexual Difference and the Not-All Phallic <i>Jouissance</i> : Beyond Identifications and the Role of Love	81
PART ONE: BODILY EXISTENCE, DESIRE, AND VIOLENCE	85
2. THE ONTOLOGICAL APPROACH TOWARDS THE BODY: FROM METAPHYSICS TO RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY	85
2.1. The Metaphysical Oblivion of the Body: <i>Res Cogitans</i> vs. <i>Res Extensa</i>	86

2.1.1.	A Desiring and Non-Dualistic Substance: Spinoza's Critique	90
2.1.2.	Reconsidering Space as a Fundamental Category: Spacing Bodies in Jean-Luc Nancy's Ontology	99
2.1.2.1.	Beyond Being: Some Glimpses of the Real-Impossible to Represent	104
2.2.	Desire and Language	111
2.2.1.	G.W.F. Hegel's Lordship and Bondage Dialectic: Desire as Recognition	112
2.2.1.1.	Jacques Lacan's Reformulation: Desire as the Incarnation of Otherness	122
2.2.1.1.1.	The Unconscious, Desire, and the Three Registers	123
2.2.1.1.2.	Desire and Sexual Difference: The Real and the Two Sides of Sexuation	131
2.3.	Adriana Cavarero's Account on Vulnerability: Difference and Exposure	140
2.3.1.	The Reduction of the Subject to the Imaginary: Textuality and the Self	142
2.4.	Judith Butler's First Account on Vulnerability: Gender Norms, Recognition, and Bodily Subjection	147
2.4.1.	The Oblivion of the Subject of the Unconscious: Desire and the Self	148
2.4.2.	The Symbolic and the Law: Butler's Foucauldian Translation of Psychoanalysis	150
2.4.3.	Recognition and Bodily Subjection	157
2.4.3.1.	A Sterilised Body: The Voidance of the Drives from the Body	161

2.5.	Demand and Alterity: Hannah Arendt's <i>Who are you?</i> , or How to Live in Concert	165
2.5.1.	Acting in Concert: Demand and Alterity	169
2.5.2.	Stories as the Background for History: The Hero	172
2.6.	Alterity and Precariousness: Emmanuel Levinas' Vulnerable Other	175
2.6.1.	Ek-sistence, the Body, and Action	177
2.6.1.1.	The Body and Desire: The Other of Ethics	179
3.	DANGEROUS LIAISONS: DESIRE AND VIOLENCE	187
3.1.	Violence and Recognition: Segregation and Sameness	187
3.2.	Bad Consciousness and Inner Censorship: Psychic Violence	192
3.2.1.	Friedrich Nietzsche's Account on Punishment: Guilt and Debt	193
3.2.1.1.	Bad Consciousness and Gender Identity Core	197
3.2.2.	Sigmund Freud's Super-Ego: Contemporary Discontents	199
3.2.3.	Michel Foucault's Discipline: Psyche as a Prison	206
3.2.3.1.	Foucault and Psychoanalysis: The Limits of Discourse	212
3.2.3.2.	Exceeding Discipline through Recourse to Ethics: Pleasures and the Self	219
3.2.4.	Judith Butler's Performativity: Power and Language	222

3.2.5.	Beyond Knowledge and Power: Sociality and <i>Jouissance</i> in Jacques Lacan's Four Discourses	239
3.2.5.1.	The Discourse of the Master: Desire and Domination	243
3.2.5.2.	The Discourse of the University: Knowledge and Domination	245
3.2.5.3.	There Is Not Any Social Totality: The Impossible to Write and Negativity	247
3.2.5.3.1.	Vulnerability as an Attempt to Articulate a Reverse of Capitalism	248
PART TWO: VULNERABILITY, VIOLENCE AND PRECARIOUSNESS		250
4.	BIO-POLITICS, PATHOLOGIZATION, AND PRECARIOUSNESS	250
4.1.	Vulnerability and Precariousness in a Bio-Political Horizon	252
4.1.1.	Illnesses and Disorders as Two Devices to the Regulate the Subject	255
4.2.	The Symptom and the Bio-Political Subject: Precariousness as a New Malaise	261
4.2.1.	Precariousness as a New Malaise: The Material Axis of Vulnerability	266
4.2.1.1.	Population as the New Bio-Political Subject	269
4.2.2.	Judith Butler's Precariousness: Loss and Mourning as an Attempt to Reconstruct the Social Bond	275
4.2.3.	Isabell Lorey's Analysis of Precariousness as a Governmental Device: Neo-Liberalism and Individuation	287
4.3.	Vulnerability, Bio-Politics and Violence: Three Scenarios	295

4.3.1. The Discourse of the University Allied with Bio-Politics: “Gender Identity”	298
4.3.1.1. The Psychiatric Discourse: DSM III, IV, and V	299
4.3.1.2. Struggling against Psychiatrization: Queer Theory and Gender Performativity	306
4.3.1.3. Lacanian Approaches on Transsexuality: Between Psychosis and Hysteria	317
4.3.1.3.1. Transsexuality and Psychosis: A First Approach	323
4.3.1.3.2. Transsexuality and Hysteria: A Second Approach	332
4.3.1.3.3. There Is No Final Diagnose on Transsexuality: The Symptomatic Singularity	343
4.3.1.4. Resisting Abjection: <i>Espai Trànsit</i>	344
4.3.2. “Doing Justice” to “Abnormal” Bodies: Compulsory Surgery and the Normalisation of Intersexual Bodies	349
4.3.2.1. The Historicity of Sexual Difference	350
4.3.2.1.1. Bioethics and the Informed Consent on Intersexual Babies	359
4.3.2.2. Denouncing Violence over Bodies: <i>Espai Obert TransIntersex</i>	368
4.3.3. Capitalism and Racism	372
4.3.3.1. Immigration Detention Centres: Discipline and Regulation onto the Rest Expelled by the Circuit of Capital	388
4.3.3.1.1. From Citizens to Entrepreneurs of Ourselves: Dealing with Giorgio Agamben’s <i>Homo Sacer</i>	397
4.3.3.1.2. Struggling against Current Migratory Policies: <i>Tanquem els CIE</i>	403
5. FEMININE <i>JOUISSANCE</i> AND WHAT EXCEEDS DISCOURSE: LOVE AND DESIRE	408

5.1. Jacques Lacan's "Between Two Deaths": The <i>Real</i> Dimension of the Act	409
5.1.1. A Different Dimension for Ethics: The Real	409
5.1.2. Antigone and the Ethical <i>Act</i> : The Real beyond the Law	415
5.1.2.1. From the <i>Passage à l'acte</i> to the (Imperfect) Act	420
5.1.3. The Structural Limit of Vulnerability: Judith Butler's Erasure of the Symptomatic Dimension of the Subject, or the Failure of Nominalism	428
5.2. A Chiasm <i>within</i> the Subject: Love as the Junction of Desire and <i>Jouissance</i>	438
5.2.1. Sexed Positions in relation to Love	438
5.2.2. Love as the Encounter between Desire and <i>Jouissance</i>	441
5.2.2.1. Love and Impossibility: The Power of Negativity	445
6. CONCLUSIONS	448
7. BIBLIOGRAPHY	451

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, vulnerability has been mobilised by certain discourses as a new philosophical *locus* to elaborate a new ontology of the subject. Indeed, our socio-political reality does not any longer sustain the fiction of an omnipotent subject. Since 2008, precariousness has emerged in a cruel wave that has destroyed and impoverished many human lives, undoing the fantasy of an abstract and individualistic autonomy. Therefore, the first part of this dissertation will be mainly yet critically devoted to an ontological analysis of the notion of vulnerability by means of the works of two feminist philosophers who have long developed this concept: Judith Butler and Adriana Cavarero. In this sense, what I will aim to clarify is to which extent such a notion involves a rethinking of the ethical and the political, and which are the limits and potentialities of their theoretical framework.

Consequently, a first issue must be outlined regarding this element: what does it mean to be a vulnerable being, and from which ontological perspective might vulnerability be articulated? The answer, as I will develop all along this dissertation, encourages at least a double approach. The first one is strictly related to the contemporary tradition of post-metaphysics and its novelties in relation to the metaphysical tradition, and the second one must be considered in materialistic terms.

However, both approaches take as a referent the same entity, which has been vindicated all along since Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945) as the main topological instance for existence: the body. The immediate consequence that might be inferred from such a statement is the following one: we are vulnerable because we have a body. Nonetheless, what is at stake in such a definition of vulnerability is which status is given to the body, since this very status conditions the later development of the argument concerning vulnerability as an ontological condition. The body, thus, needs to be reconceptualised as a crucial topology, and as an essential entity for any subjectivity. From such an ontological turn, something begins to change in what has been a nearly eternal oblivion. Such an oblivion refers to the relegated

position historically given to the body, which had been reduced to a simple organic reality with which one had to deal.

Yet a legitimate doubt arises in relation to such a method, which implies dismantling a dualism made up by Descartes and his legacy: *res cogitans* versus *res extensa*. Engaging with such doubt, my main goal is and remains in the reconsideration of the body as a *condition sine qua non*.

1.1. Vulnerability as the Mark of Existence: Rethinking Existence in the Light of Relational Ontology

According to what I have introduced, it seems necessary to rethink the body in order to clarify the primordial role given to it by means of the notion of vulnerability. The challenge, thus, is to analyse which are the implications of rethinking the body in these terms.

Firstly, a crucial question should be clarified regarding *thinking* since Martin Heidegger's ontological twist. Such a question interrogates the intrinsic logic of thought. According to the inauguration allowed by Heidegger, thinking¹ requires to deconstruct a very old tradition: metaphysics. In Western philosophy, the hegemonic discourse has functioned as a binary one, mainly since Modern philosophy and given its maxim: to think is to know or, more accurately, to apprehend. It meant that there were two implied realities according to a scheme in which there was an ontological pre-eminence of one of the concepts, articulating an oppositional horizon. The first notion was established by means of a formal and abstract schema, having a relevance over the latter. Its name has changed through time, though its main characteristic has remained more or less permanent: substance, the subject, or consciousness, among the principal ones. In addition to this, the reality constituted and represented by this concept had a peculiarity: it was presumed to be disconnected from the world. Therefore, it was not said to be a contingent or material reality, but a universal and *incorporeal* one.

Regarding the second element involved in this binary logic, it was said to be an object susceptible of being epistemologically apprehended by the subject, which gave to

¹ The use of the notion "thinking" that I mention does not reduce thinking to a product, but it refers to the process that governs such a dynamic.

it a further intelligibility. Indeed, its very existence *literally* depended on the epistemic subjective operation, which meant that *without* a thinking and abstract subject, there was no object. In relation to this subordination of the object to the subject, a further element should be added. Following Descartes, the subject was the *substratum*, the core of any possible enunciation about what existed in a mundane context. In such operation, time did not have any relevant role inasmuch as the subject of representation elaborated during Modernity was external to any other operation than the elaboration of thoughts. As a result, the subject became the sovereign entity that conceded any possible existence to what surrounded it. Hence, such a notion of the subject was attached to its ontological compacity, which allowed a process of domestication of the objects' sphere that did not entail any modification of the status of the subject. The subject, then, was supposed to be able to obtain a progressive and absolute knowledge by virtue of an accumulative dynamic. As a matter of fact, such a progressive dynamic was said to guarantee an identity of the subject with itself at the level of a supreme consciousness, which meant that the regulatory ideal of Modern metaphysics was sameness.

In the context derived from Cartesianism, in which the subject was entitled as *res cogitans*, the ontological status of the body, as post-metaphysics would claim and still does, was radically irrelevant. Following this *dictum*, the body could be reduced to a purely mechanical object named *res extensa*, the exclusive attributes of which were space, size, and figure. Those attributes could be clearly represented by the dynamic of thought, which belonged to the infinite and immortal characteristics of consciousness:

Par le corps, j'entends tout ce qui peut être terminé par quelque figure ; qui peut être compris en quelque lieu, et remplir un espace en telle sorte que tout autre corps en soit exclu ; qui peut être senti, ou par l'attouchement, ou par la vue, ou par l'oïe, ou par le goût, ou par l'odorat ; qui peut être mû en plusieurs façons, non par lui-même, mais par quelque chose d'étranger duquel il soit touché et dont il reçoive l'impression. Car d'avoir en soi la puissance de se mouvoir, de sentir et de penser, je ne croyais aucunement que l'on dût attribuer ces avantages à la nature corporelle ; au contraire, je m'étonnais plutôt de voir que de semblables facultés se rencontraient en certains corps (Descartes, 1970 [1641]: 40).

At the same time, another characteristic emerged from the Cartesian conception of the body: it was a passive element², whereas the *res cogitans* was an *active* one. The

² The passivity attributed to the body has its deepest roots in Aristotle's hylemorphism. *Hylé* is a mere material passive element waiting for an activity that must come from the outside, mainly an active *male* element. *Morphé* is a moving and active – male too - force that conforms matter to an appearance and

sort of link between these two elements, thus, was a binary logic that reproduced the dualistic structure that sustained the human being as such. As a result, the body did not belong, properly speaking, to the realm of thought, but it was merely an imaginary representation made by the subject: “Je suis une chose qui pense, c’est-à-dire qui doute, qui affirme, qui nie, qui connaît peu de choses, qui en ignore beaucoup, qui aime, qui hait, qui veut, qui ne veut pas, qui imagine aussi, et qui sent” (Descartes, *op. cit.*: 50).

If this analysis is taken into account from a post-metaphysical approach, such a binary dynamic is not, strictly speaking, a result derived from the operation of thought, a criticism made by Heidegger regarding metaphysics. The reason for such a diagnosis, following Heidegger, resides in the reduction of the region of the object to a pure epistemic entity the ontological status of which is equalized to a formal representation³. On the contrary, Heidegger sustained that thought was defined by a different mechanism. Following his remarks, while knowledge presupposes what has to be apprehended as an objective entity ready to be known by the subject and its formal tools, in thought it would go otherwise. This change implied a dislocation of the dualism, because in the process of thinking the object is neither transparent for the subject nor there is a clear and precise opposition between the subject and the object. In other words, the object is not the same as a *full* presence waiting to be caught by some universal principles settled down in and brought about by consciousness.

According to Heidegger’s analysis, thus, thinking does not operate by means of a contraposition of two ontologically different elements, but it mobilises a crucial category for the post-metaphysical discourse: *relationship*. The ontological displacement attributed to this notion dislocates the subject from a logical prerogative, putting into question the solipsism derived from the epistemological process of Cartesianism. Such a turn modifies the nature of what in Modern metaphysics was said to be the object of scientific representation, recovering a notion that will be a fundamental one all along my dissertation: negativity. As a result, the object is removed

some properties that are external to it (or, in Aristotelian terms, *her*). See Aristotle (1936): *Aristotle’s Physics*. Oxford, Clarendon Press. Translation by W.D. Ross

³ See Heidegger, Martin (1951-1952): *What is Called Thinking?* New York, Harper & Row (1963). Translation by J. Glenn Gray. In this work, Heidegger elaborates a new framework for rethinking the philosophical discourse according to a logic that is not reducible to a scientific criterion, but it rather refers to a dislocation of the regulatory status conferred to science since Modernity, aiming to argue for a paradigm in which ontology precedes any epistemic production. In other words, thought is firstly related to being than to the ontic register of the objects, which are supposed to be the material for knowledge.

from a pure positivity by means of the introduction of a rest that bans any access to a complete representation.

Therefore, such an ontological twist involves a deconstruction of the traditional notion that joined together the subject to epistemology. By means of such a dislocation, the category of sameness is seriously questioned by the post-metaphysical tradition. Indeed, due to the pre-eminence given to the notion of relationship, thinking already implies a modification of the status of the subject, which brings into crisis the dualistic apparatus. Thinking reveals that knowledge is not the primary register, but that it rather derives from this more fundamental operation. In this sense, the legacy derived from such a Heideggerian gesture aims at elaborating a new effort to reflect on being through a notion of thought that, as I will argue in this introduction and the first part of my dissertation, must be considered next to the relevance conferred to language.

In fact, in metaphysics, language did not imply any trouble because it was said to be a sheer means for expressing thoughts and ideas, which, again, implied another dualism, namely, consciousness and language, being the former the pre-eminent element. However, owing to the specificity of thought that post-metaphysics outlines, such a dualistic link must be re-considered. Indeed, according to the importance of relationship, the subject is not said to be the primary datum, but its existence cannot be considered apart from the ontological register opened by the category of relationship. In a context where dualism is questioned by virtue of the indeterminacy implied by an ontological relationality, language is no longer conceived as a tool in the hands of a subject of knowledge.

Furthermore, if the post-metaphysical approach is properly considered, there is a further element at stake in this critique: the world. By means of the consideration of language as a basic element for the subject, which subverts the Modern discourse, the domain of subjectivity is not equalized to a solipsistic entity, but its existence is conceptualised from a different paradigm: ek-sistence, this is to say, being-outside-of-oneself. Such a turn entails that the world is not a contingent scenario, but it is the context where the subject ek-sists, meaning also a materialization of subjectivity. Hence, thanks to such a discursive mobilisation, another crucial concept must be seriously considered: alterity. This *material* dimension of the subject, this is to say, its *location* into a world where the substantial identity is put aside, also points to a further

issue: the subject is exposed. In other words, the subject is not a self-sufficient reality, but it is *ontologically* opened to what challenges its mere existence.

As far as exposure is concerned, it is bound to what Cartesianism named *res extensa*, this is to say, the body. The body, by means of the post-metaphysical rhetoric, is instituted as the point of fracture of existence, a remark that the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy has often and poignantly asserted⁴. Its ontological status, thus, is detached from a purely epistemic reality that reduced it to a representation made by a formal subject, becoming an obstacle for a synthetic definition of the subject. Nonetheless, there was already a metaphysician who had previously challenged Cartesian dualism: Baruch Spinoza, who differed from the rationalist tradition through the following assertion: “No one knows what a body is capable of”, a *dictum* that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari by the way held in his *corps sans organes*⁵.

Moreover, ek-sistence, exposure and the world refer to a further element, which traverses the discourses on vulnerability as they are elaborated by Butler and Cavarero: desire. I shall make clear how this notion operates in this dissertation by referring to a specific critical framework in order to revise the contemporary notion of vulnerability: psychoanalysis such as it is delivered by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. The point which is relevant here is that, according to psychoanalysis, desire and language – as a symbolic framework – are and must not be separately analysed, since desire is linguistically structured. It is because the subject is linguistically structured that the subject desires, and it is therefore that there is no subject without an Other. Alterity, then, conditions the ek-sistence of the subject, and it gives a name to the subject⁶. The wordly scenario, therefore, is recovered from an axis that exceeds both the Heideggerian and Cartesian paradigms according to a notion of ek-sistence where the body⁷ becomes its

⁴ See Nancy, Jean-Luc (1992): *Corpus*. Paris, Galilée, pages 31-33, where, following the deconstruction of metaphysics begun by Heidegger, Nancy mobilises the body as the element that introduces uncertainty within the operation of thought, dislocating being from identity and sameness.

⁵ See Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix (1980): « *Comment se faire un corps sans organes?* », in *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2. Mille Plateaux*. Paris, Éditions de Minuit, pages 185-204.

⁶ In my research, “Other” will have two main uses. The first one refers to negativity crossing the subject and not allowing any synthesis that would give birth to a compact subjectivity. The second one is twofold. On the one hand, in Lacanian terms, it refers to the symbolic apparatus that enables the subjective structure in relation to language and signification. On the other hand, in Levinasian terms, it refers to the prerogative given to alterity, not ontologically, but ethically.

⁷ Jean-Luc Nancy’s bodily ontology departs from this analysis also, which vertebrates his further reflection on the subject and the notion of a constitutive difference. See Nancy, Jean-Luc (1992): *Corpus*. Paris: Galilée, mainly for the use of the term exposure in his work, which he elaborates from an etymological use of the concept skin in French, *peau*, creating the neologism *expeausition*, pages 31-34.

point of departure, deviating the subject from any formal coincidence with itself: “Les corps toujours sur le départ, dans l’imminence d’un mouvement, d’une chute, d’un écart, d’une dislocation. (Ce que c’est qu’un *départ*, même le plus simple : cet instant où il était. Cet instant où il fait place à la seule béance de l’espace qu’il *est* lui-même” (Nancy, 2000 [1992]: 31).

Alterity, thus, does not only refer to an exterior realm, but it roots into the very existence of the subject, a remark that is also signalled by the psychoanalytic concept of the *un-conscious*. The consequence derived from this ontological novelty is the transition from identity to a becoming understood as a being-outside, which, in its turn, implies a bodily exposure in relation to an Other. Vulnerability, as far as the philosophical perspective is concerned, is hence affirmed as an ontological condition according to a primary dependency, which cannot be thought apart from the affective dimension that such a bond involves.

1.1.1. Articulating Vulnerability by means of the Body: To Exist Is to Be Exposed.

Given the ontological priority of vulnerability, the crucial interrogation in relation to existence ceases to focus on the privilege of the “I”, and it allows a relevance of the “you”. It is not any longer an existence focused on the self, but on the Other to whom the subject is attached: “Cuando la vulnerabilidad es considerada condición ontológica universal, la pregunta por el ser experimenta un giro irreversible, en virtud del cual ya no cabe la fórmula “¿qué soy?” sino “¿quién eres?” (Saez, 2014: 9).

In addition to this, there is a transfer from ontology to an ethics by means of the notion of exposure, and the conception of ek-sistence that it entails. The subject, thus, is neither a background nor a core, but an indeterminate point, this is to say, a negative instance for which no positive definition can be provided. Its constitution is in relation to otherness, being a fracture at its core, acquiring a worldly rooted existence. Nonetheless, the notion of exposure mobilised by the discourse on vulnerability, as far as my approach is concerned, is quite problematic inasmuch as it introduces a passivity regarding the subject in its embodied dimension, depending on the Other. As I will argue in my dissertation, mainly in the first part, the notion of exposure mobilised by

vulnerability is articulated from a discursive monism that will be critically analysed through recourse to Lacanian psychoanalysis. Indeed, thanks to the circuit of the drives, psychoanalysis provides a new register that defies a presumed conflict between activity and passivity, opening a fracture in the middle of this debate through recourse to the libido and *jouissance*⁸. In relation to this discussion, when Begonya Saez claims that “somos vulnerables porque somos expuestos, porque somos un cuerpo” (Saez, *op. cit.*: 12), what I would like to discuss in my research is why the concept of vulnerability *reduces* the body to being, signalling which consequences does it have from the paradigm of psychoanalysis, the counterpart of this dissertation in order to render visible an ontological reduction of the subject and the body entailed by the philosophical discourse on vulnerability.

However, both psychoanalysis and the discourse on vulnerability coincide with a certain approach towards the body: it is not understood as a pure organic reality, but it is the result from the effect of language onto the living organism. In other words, the notion of the body involved by its reflection is not the scientific object analysed by

⁸ Two issues should be clarified. Regarding the notion of *jouissance*, it is a Lacanian concept that refers to the body in its *real* dimension, which in psychoanalysis means the rest that exceeds the domain of being – ontology in a philosophical lexicon – and discourse. Besides, it aims to refer to what goes beyond the Freudian concept of pleasure principle, which was the fundamental concept for Freud to give an account of the psychic apparatus before the publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). In this work, Freud introduced a third question that opened a new line for the clinical practice of psychoanalysis in order to more properly refer to the symptomatic repetition of what did not cause any subjective pleasure, but it rather pointed to a self-destructive dimension. This is what Freud named the death drive. Concerning Lacan, the notion of *jouissance* departs from this enlarged perspective elaborated by Freud, which specifically outlines the sexed and libidinal dimension of the body, which defies cultural imperatives.

As far as the discussion between activity and passivity regarding the subject is concerned, authors like Judith Butler, who will be crucial in my research in order to discuss the concept of vulnerability, offers a good theoretical example of such a trend. Hence, Butler’s notion of vulnerability mobilises an exposure towards otherness, which refers to a social context that precedes and enables the subject, and the social intercourses with other subjects. Due to the fact that these realities precede the emergence of each subject, the subject is, therefore, exposed to which exceeds its concrete existence. This is why the concept of vulnerability situates the subject in an originary passivity that aims to presumably dismantle the metaphysical polarity between activity and passivity, which had ontological and political consequences.

For a further approach on the first remark referred to psychoanalysis, see Freud, Sigmund (1895): *A Project for Scientific Psychology*, in the volume I of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, “Pre-Psychoanalytic Publications and Unpublished Drafts (1886-1899)”; (1900): *The Interpretation of Dreams* (II), the volume V of the Standard Edition “The Interpretation of Dreams (II) and On Dreams (1900-1901)”, and (1920g): *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in the volume XVIII of the Standard Edition “Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works (1920-1922)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Insitute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey. Concerning Lacan, see Lacan, Jacques (1966): « Au-delà du *Principe de réalité* » and « Du *Trieb* de Freud et du désir du psychanalyste » in *Écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 73-92, and pages 851-854.

biology, but a body that is inhabited by a subject⁹: “El cuerpo no es el organismo vivo, sino que resulta de la acción del lenguaje en el organismo vivo” (Saez and González, 2013: 103). Such an interaction between the body and language also involves that the subject is a result from a *subjection* to language as a structure that precedes its concrete emergence¹⁰, this is to say, there is no subject outside language.

Despite this similarity, there is an important divergence that needs to be stressed on this domain. As far as the notion of vulnerability is concerned, both the subject and the body are analysed by virtue of a discursive development that takes as its reference the entanglements between forms of knowledge and power as the shaping apparatus for the subject. In other words, it is a discursive dynamic wholly governed by a nominalist ontology that aims to highlight the genealogy and historicity of subjective modifications at a social level. In this sense, regarding the body, it becomes a discursive product, with no further clarifications.

On the contrary, psychoanalysis does not take the subject and its body as a monist entity, but it rather aims to reflect that there is a structural difference between the subject and the body since the subject *is not* its body, but *it has* a body. Furthermore, it is a body that, from a Lacanian perspective, is differently declined by virtue of the topological apparatus that Lacan elaborated in order to accurately argue for the nexus between the subject, the body, and language. Hence, from a psychoanalytical axis, there is not such thing as *the* body, but it is plurally declined depending on its differential status in what Lacan named the three registers, which are the structure of the psychic apparatus: the Imaginary (the looking-glass phase as an illusory totality), the Symbolic

⁹ Such a difference between the body and the subject does not aim to re-invoke a Cartesian dualism between a material reality and a thinking entity. On the contrary, while for psychoanalysis the subject is the subject of signifier, this is to say, the result of the process of subjection implied by the Symbolic as a signifying chain, the body is the region of *jouissance*, which inoculates a negativity at the core of the reflection body-soul because there is no fusion between subject and body. Indeed, in his seminar *Encore* (1975b), Lacan began to reformulate the body in terms of the Other of *jouissance*, onto which symptoms become incarnated. For further remarks on this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil, and Soler, Colette (2009): *Lacan, l'inconscient réinventé*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

¹⁰ Language, as a structure made of a battery of signifiers whose functioning depends on its usage, is referred by Lacan – at least during the period of 1950's and 1960's – as a Big Other that enables the appearance of the subject through a void, this is to say, creating a hole for which no definition can be elaborated. In other words, the failure of a compact system is what designates the place of the subject. For a further approach on this issue see Lacan, Jacques (1978): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II: Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse 1954-1955*. Paris, Le Seuil, and (2007): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVIII: D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant 1970-1971*. Paris, Le Seuil.

(the body as it is regulated by cultural devices in the sphere of social bonds), and the Real (the rest of the body that exceeds discourse as its surplus, which refers to the real of *jouissance* and sexual difference)¹¹. In other words, as I will argue in my dissertation, there is not any ontology of the body for psychoanalysis, but it constitutes an irreducible parcel of negativity for the subject inasmuch as a fusion with its bodily reality is impossible. It is, then, a domain of negativity that cannot be surmounted. As I will clarify in my research, the philosophical discourse has only put its emphasis on both the Symbolic and the Imaginary instead. Therefore, it erases sex and the drives, this is to say, the Real that resists a compact representation by means of language and the image, fusing being and having, which are logically distinct in the psychoanalytic discourse.

1.1.1.1. Desire, Exposure and Recognition

As far as vulnerability is concerned, the role given to exposure as an ontological condition cannot be considered apart from desire and alterity. Desire, understood as the dialectical core of subjectivity, shall be considered here, in pure Hegelian terms, as a means for recognition. The theoretical articulation of desire as the dialectical core of subjectivity will be discussed within the works of Emmanuel Levinas, Hannah Arendt, Adriana Cavarero and Judith Butler, whose conceptual work I will later bring into dialogue in this introduction.

These four authors depart from a notion of ek-sistence according to which the subject is not opposed to the world and alterity, but it is rather anchored in a worldly scenario by means of the notion of relationship. Such notion brings the Cartesian binary notion of the subject to an end. Thus, alterity becomes the crucial concept that vertebrates their

¹¹ See Cevasco, Rithée (2013): « Perspectivas psicoanalíticas sobre el cuerpo: el cuerpo sexuado » (pages 73-101) and Carbonell, Neus (2013): « No hay discurso sin cuerpo. No hay discurso sin goce » (pages 189-205) in Saez, Begonya and González, Ana Cecilia (ed., 2013): *Analizando el cuerpo. La vigencia política del psicoanálisis*. Barcelona: Ediciones P&S. Both authors explore the Lacanian remarks on the bond between language and the body in the triple dimension that Lacan offered, referring to the looking-glass phase where the organism is illusionary recovered by a unifying totality.

As far as the drives are concerned, which refer to the impact of language onto the living organism, they are placed at the bodily borders such as the eye-lids, the lips, the ears, the anus, and the urethra.

Besides, it is also important to outline the peculiar status that Lacan conferred to sex as a subtraction from the signifying chain in the domain of the Real, a question that Rithée Cevasco incessantly outlines. For a further approach on this issue developed by Lacan in the late period of his teaching, see Lacan, Jacques (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*, Paris, Le Seuil; (1973): « L'étourdit », in *Scilicet*, n. 4, pages 5-52, and also Copjec, Joan (1994): *Read My Desire. Lacan against the Historicists*. Cambridge, MIT Press.

ontological approach towards the subject by means of an ethical turn. In addition, such ethical turn brings also apart the binary conception of relation, the subject/object scheme, to an end. And, in this way, negativity becomes structurally relevant, meaning that the subject is not simply confronted to otherness in an ontological and even ethical sense, but that it becomes another for itself in its bond with the Other and its primary dependency towards it.

Philosophically speaking, the roots of such a dependency on the Other are to be found in the Hegelian dialectic of lordship and bondage, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). Indeed, as I will argue in the first part of my dissertation, the link between desire and recognition, which involves that the subject cannot exist without another subject that *recognises* its existence, already articulates a preliminary notion of relationship that is said to be radicalised by the notion of negativity. In relation to the Hegelian dialectics of desire, the Lacanian reformulation of desire by means of the insertion into the Law of the signifier through the Other, whereby desire operates as a demand, proves to be a useful critical tool to signal the limitations inherent to such a perspective, which will further help me to stress the problems that traverse the very notion of vulnerability¹².

Besides, the Lacanian reformulation of desire shall become a good occasion for revisiting the Spinozist *conatus* inasmuch as Spinoza was the first philosopher to consider the subject inscribed into the logic of desire articulated as persisting on one's living¹³. Such a critical reconsideration on the Spinozist articulation on desire will be based on the status given by Lacan to the object-cause of desire, and the dialectic logic that moves the subject towards it, disputing the immanent nature that Spinoza conferred to it. Therefore, desire will be rethought from a framework which does not reduce it to the survival of the subject, as it is the case with the Freudian notion of the death drive, as I will specify in the first part of my investigation¹⁴. The notions of castration and

¹² See Lacan, Jacques (2013): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI : Le désir et son interprétation*, Paris, Éditions de la Martinière-Le Champ Freudien. Lacan, in the section untitled « Construction du graphe » (pages 11-35) develops the irreversible change that the subject undergoes by being introduced into the signifying chain as the linguistic structure in which desire takes place.

¹³ See Spinoza, Baruch (1661-1675): *Ethics*. Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company. Translation by Samuel Shirley (2002). In the third part of the work, Spinoza deals with desire as the essence of the subject, enumerating the emotions and affects derived from desire too.

¹⁴ For a fruitful approach on this central psychoanalytic question, see Cevalco, Rithée (2010): *La discordancia de los sexos. Perspectivas psicoanalíticas para un debate actual*. Barcelona: Ediciones P&S. As Cevalco signals in her work, the notion of *jouissance* offered by Lacan is a reformulation of

desire as the expression of a lack-of-being due to the inaugural loss that language inflicts over the body by its process of denaturalization will be central in my analysis. This is why, in relation to this question, the unconscious is understood as the sum of effects derived from the impact of the Symbolic over a living entity that becomes inhabited by a nuclear uncertainty, the domain of an *unknown knowledge*¹⁵. For psychoanalysis, thus, the subject of the unconscious, a subject defined by the pursuit of an irretrievably lost object, named by Lacan the *objet petit a*, is a scinded entity, radically different from any account of the self and its imaginary projection. As Butler declares in *Subjects of Desire. Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France* (1987): “Desire is always after something other than the self, but it is also always involved in a project of self-constitution” (Butler, 1999 [1987]: 88).

The definition of the subject provided by psychoanalysis offers another difference regarding the philosophical approach towards vulnerability, because the subject that such a discourse has in mind is primarily identified to the “I”, this is to say, the imaginary projection of a self made of multiple and diffuse identifications. This divergence is a radical one between philosophy and psychoanalysis because it implies two different subjects, and it entails two different approaches towards the subject, and its social linking. Indeed, while the notion of vulnerability refers in ontological terms to the union between the subject and the social by means of a net of multiple relations of power and knowledge, psychoanalysis stresses a concept without which the subject of the unconscious would not exist: the symptom. Two different notions of the subject, therefore, will traverse this dissertation inasmuch as the symptom, from a psychoanalytic focus, does not point to any anomaly that should be corrected, but it signals the structural dissidence that characterizes the subject regarding any cultural imperative, which deviates from any presumably account of a subject reduced to norms, and also from an adaptative goal.

In spite of this relevant difference, the discourse on vulnerability and psychoanalysis both point to the undoing of identity that the negativity of desire

two Freudian axioms: the pleasure principle and the death drive. This reformulation enables Lacan to undo any sort of dualistic logics by means of a reconsideration of the body as a *substance jouissante*, where substance does not signify in metaphysical terms.

¹⁵ All this schema is developed in Lacan, Jacques (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI : Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris : Le Seuil, mainly in the section « Tyché et Automaton », pages 53-62.

involves because desire, already in Hegel, as Butler stresses, always pursues something *other*:¹⁶

Thus the problem of desire is the problem of the paradoxical nature of self-consciousness, how to remain oneself in the midst of alterity. If one resolves the aims of desire into the aims of a singular identity to discover and reflect itself, one disperses with the realm of alterity and thereby loses the self as well. And if one claim that is in the nature of determinate objects to solicit desire, one neglects the project of identity informing desire. Hence, any effort to determine the true aim of desire is necessarily deceptive. Desire, then, can be said always to operate under the necessity of partial desire [...]. (Butler, *op. cit.*: 89)

Desire, therefore, has a deceptive circuit concerning a presumably fixed goal, which is alien to the negativity that characterizes the object-cause of desire pursued by the subject. This expression of a lack-of-being is approached from a central axis for Literary Studies: the narrative structure of being, which traverses the theoretical discourses of Hannah Arendt, Adriana Cavarero, and Judith Butler¹⁷. Hence, I will endeavour to expose and critically analyse which are the potentialities and limits of such a strategy, which translates desire into a narration that binds the subject to the Other.

¹⁶ As Ana Cecilia González puts it, desire is the expression of a “lack-of-being”, a negativity that invades the subject in a constitutive sense. See González, Ana Cecilia (2013, unpublished dissertation): *Lacan y el pensamiento contemporáneo. Usos y estatutos del cuerpo*. She explains this negativity in terms of an impossible identification between the subject and its body, which means that the subject *has* a body, though it *is not* a body: “De esta falta de ser se deduce que no hay identificación posible entre el ser faltante del sujeto y el cuerpo, y por lo tanto el cuerpo queda del lado del “tener”. Por otro lado, de este “tener” el cuerpo se deriva el sentimiento de extrañeza de estar localizados en un cuerpo” (González, 2013: 41).

¹⁷ As I will develop in the second section of the dissertation, there is a quite problematic formulation concerning Butler’s approach towards the subject. Following Lacanian psychoanalysis, I will argue that she remains trapped in an imaginary dimension, this is to say, showing a compact entity that is not a subject, affected by negativity, but an ego. For a further approach on this issue, and the reformulations that Butler has elaborated on her later discussions on recognition and subjectivity, see Butler, Judith (2004b): *Undoing Gender*. New York, Routledge, mainly the chapter « Longing for Recognition » (pages 131-151), where she reformulates her previous discussion on this topic, and she deals with Hegelian negativity in terms of the impossibility of a symmetrical recognition. See also Butler, Judith (2004a): *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York, Verso, where she tries to rethink politics in terms of living in concert taking as a point of departure an alterity rooted in the body as the exposure of vulnerability, mainly in the chapter « Violence, Mourning, Politics », pages 19-49.

Furthermore, a criticism of the notion of the subject deployed by Butler can be found in Sáez, Javier (2004): *Teoría queer y psicoanálisis*. Madrid, Síntesis and Zupancic, Alenka (2008): *Why Psychoanalysis: Three Interventions*. Aarhus, Aarhus University Press. Both authors assert that Butler misreads the constitution of the subject in Lacanian psychoanalysis, which means that her accusation against Lacan of imposing a regulatory norm in order to produce a coherent subject through the notion of *foreclosure* confuses the foreclosure proper to the psychosis with the repression at stake in neurosis. In other words, Butler would wrongly assert that *foreclosure* is the psychic and linguistic operation by which any subject becomes such, which would involve that any subject is potentially psychotic if it does not follow the regulatory norms. The notion of *foreclosure* concerning the psychotic subject is extremely well developed and discussed in Lacan, Jacques (1981): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre III: Les psychoses 1955-1956*. Paris, Le Seuil, where Lacan re-elaborates the Freudian approach on the structural configuration of psychosis based on the memoirs of president Schreber.

At the same time, this narrative account of desire links it to recognition, and, in this way, desire implies both relation and alterity. Once recognition is posed as the ultimate goal pursued by the subject as desiring, a further problem emerges regarding vulnerability. As I will develop in the third chapter of my dissertation, reducing desire to recognition entails a forcible relationship with alterity that ends up taming it to the notion of identity and sameness. This will be my major criticism in relation to the concept of vulnerability as it is presented throughout Judith Butler's work

In this context, the bond between desire and recognition is exclusively dependant on the conditions of cultural intelligibility – which in psychoanalysis refers to the identifications that depart from the Imaginary and are further ordered by the Symbolic as the Law of the signifier –. My criticism relies on the monistic presupposition that, constituted by discourse, the subject is wholly trapped by the nets of power and knowledge. In this sense, the Lacanian ontogenesis of the subject referred to the three topological registers – the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real – is a fundamental critical tool to expand the subject beyond cultural imperatives. What operates in this framework is negativity, the negativity inoculated by language, and the internal fracture that the Real is for the signifying chain. These two elements, negativity and the Real, are radically absent in a nominalist analysis of the subject, where it is equalized to the cultural mandates of norms, and it leads to an impasse: the subject has no other relevance than what diffuse and disseminated discursive devices allow it to have.

Nonetheless, the subject, according to what both the notion of vulnerability and psychoanalysis assert, is not affirmed as the primary element for discourse, but, on the very contrary, it is its product. This is what Judith Butler sustains when, in *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), she outlined that “representation set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed, with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject” (Butler, 1990: 1). At this point, the analysis refers to which are the identifications that shape the subjects in their social dimension. It aims at rendering visible which is the bond regarding recognition and violence, which is at the core of the process of socialization.

1.2. Subjective Configurations in Discourse and Power Relations

In relation to the displacement of the subject as a discursive effect, Foucault's genealogy on Modernity is a very rich methodology, namely his concept of *assujettissement* (subjection), which entails that the subject is produced and *subjected* by diffuse nets of knowledge and power. Regarding this issue, the Foucauldian analysis of the historicity that traverses the emergence of the subject in relation to regimes of truth and its exclusionary dynamic questions the Humanist legacy, and its myth towards a self-sufficient and autonomous subject. To become a subject, following Foucault, depends on an embodiment of regimes of normalization, which, at its turn, create zones of abjection, a crucial category for Butler and her reflection on vulnerability.¹⁸

In addition to this, the Foucauldian revision of Modernity in terms of the coexistence of relations of power and knowledge as the basis for the emergence of the subject does not appeal to the liberal tradition based on the repressive role attributed to power. Such a definition of power leaves aside the productive role of the interconnections between knowledge and power in relation to the subject, which Foucault named *discourse*:

Je suppose que dans toute société la production du discours est à la fois contrôlée, sélectionnée et redistribuée par un certain nombre de procédures qui ont pour rôle d'en conjurer les pouvoirs et les dangers, d'en maîtriser l'événement aléatoire, d'en esquiver la lourde, la redoutable matérialité (Foucault, 1971: 10-11).

Following the Foucauldian legacy, the relationship between power and knowledge creates its own zones of repudiation and legitimacy, which means that any discursive scenario is always allied with the tensional bond between those who are said to be in charge of power, and those who are said to be tamed by it. A relationship that, as a matter of fact, is not based, as Foucault outlines, by any metaphysical necessity, but it is rather a product of the contingency of struggles within the social sphere:

Comment pourrait-on raisonnablement comparer la contrainte de la vérité avec des partages comme ceux-là, des partages qui sont arbitraires au départ ou qui du moins s'organisent autour de contingences historiques ; qui sont non seulement modifiables mais en perpétuel déplacement ; qui sont supportés par tout un système d'institutions

¹⁸ My goal concerning abjection, as I will argue in the section devoted to the psychiatrization and normalization of transsexuality and intersexuality, is not to reduce abjection to a category that only has an effect for some bodies. Hence, my point is to outline that "abjection" operates as a logical process in any attempt to consolidate a hegemonic constitution of the subject according to three criteria: self-sufficiency, coherence and non-contradiction. Abjection, then, is the very limit needed for any political constitution that refers to identity as a fixation based on the "I" as an immutable surface.

qui les imposent et les reconduisent ; qui ne s'exercent pas enfin sans contrainte, ni une part au moins de violence (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 15-16).

This discursive shaping over the subject is a very useful schema in order to introduce the link between violence and vulnerability, which will be analysed in my dissertation in relation to three empirical situations: transsexuality and its psychiatric regulation; normalization and surgery on intersexual babies, and the administration of illegal bodies in the context of current migratory policies. These three scenarios must be considered in relation to social distributions, the regulatory role attributed to scientific knowledge, and the fact that in our present the living body is at the centre of politics, which means that there is a huge interest regarding the domestication of life even to its minimal expression. In all these cases, knowledge and power sustain each other, leaving aside any presumed opposition between them, which means that transsexuality, intersexuality and illegal migration are three zones of exclusion produced and regulated by the discursive devices that delimit and define them. As far as vulnerability is concerned, then, it cannot be properly analysed without paying attention to how discourse, through practices and institutions, elaborates conditions for cultural intelligibility that are differently elaborated and maintained.

However, from the Foucauldian approach, the subject is reduced to a discursive effect, which explains why Foucault articulates resistance by means of the re-articulation of a given socio-political framework. Thus, resistance traverses power relations by virtue of a logic of immanence, which designs an agonistic scenario according to which, if there is power, there is resistance. I will seriously take into account such a Foucauldian perspective regarding the three aforementioned situations, though I would like to pay attention to the limitations that such a perspective has.

Indeed, if the subject is taken as a pure result derived from discourse, two issues must be highlighted. The first one refers to the textuality attributed to the subject and its body, deprived of any singularity; the body becomes here shaped by external mechanisms, amongst which, according to Foucault, there would be the device of sexuality. At its turn, the status of the body that the Foucauldian subject is given refers to a textual surface where signifiers are inscribed by virtue of norms and regulations¹⁹.

¹⁹ This Foucauldian notion of the body as a discursive surface where an epistemological and political history leaves its footprints was developed by Foucault himself in Foucault, Michel (1971): « Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire », in Bachelard, Suzanne; Canguilhem, Georges; Dagogner, François; Foucault, Michel; Gueroult, Martial; Henry, Michel; Laplanche, Jean; Pariente, Jean-Claude, and Serres, Michel

It entails a social constructivism where the body and the subject become neutral elements. The second issue, which is connected to the discursive monism derived from this twist, entails that, from a Foucauldian perspective, the subject can be fully inscribed into a logics of inclusion and exclusion governed by historical frames of intelligibility. As a result, Foucault orchestrates a discursive monism where resistance is reduced to open new zones of subjectivity that will be later absorbed by power relations.

Contrary to such a historicist and constructivist account of the subject and its body, psychoanalysis, by means of the unconscious and the symptom, offers a different analysis on this matter. Namely, that the subject is not reduced to its identifications. Such a remark is not based on any metaphysical claim close to Cartesianism, but on the *unconscious* and the negativity and internal fracture it supposes. By means of such a fracture, the region of the “I” is structurally differentiated from the scinded subject of the unconscious. Furthermore, authors like Joan Copjec²⁰ outline another important question concerning the conception of the subject in psychoanalytic terms by pointing to the three Lacanian registers (the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real): if the subject was reduced to the Symbolic in terms of the Law of the signifier, and the Imaginary, understood as the specular register of the self, the subject would be a pure text that could be deciphered. Nonetheless, the articulation of the Real as the internal fracture of sense and language re-articulates two notions, as I will later explain in this very introduction.

Besides, from a Lacanian approach, discourse is not simply a net made of power relations and knowledge, but it is the region of the social bond, which exists thanks to the dimension of the Symbolic, defined by its *contingent and historical* usages²¹. As I will analyse in the third section of my dissertation when dealing with the notion of

(1971): *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, pages 145-172. This Foucauldian notion of the body is also present in at least the two first works by Judith Butler, in which she offers a conception of the body as cultural sign elaborated according to different cultural frames of intelligibility. See Butler, Judith (1987): *Subjects of Desire. Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France*. New York, Columbia University Press (1999), and (1990): *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge.

²⁰ See Copjec, Joan (1994): *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*. Cambridge: MIT Press, namely chapter 8 « Sex and the Euthanasia of the Reason » (pages 201 – 236), where she elaborates this critical argument against the deconstructionist strategy made by Judith Butler.

²¹ These two questions concerning Lacanian psychoanalysis refer to Lacan’s reformulations on discourse as a social bond according to the roles played by the subject, the master signifier, the Other and *jouissance*, whose positions are different in each of the four different discourses that Lacan developed (the master, the university, the hysterical and the analyst) in Lacan, Jacques (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: L’envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil.

violence, for Lacan, discourse is not simply a matter of power of knowledge, but it also regulates the body dimension by means of the production of a libidinal dimension, which is tied to *jouissance* and the excess it incarnates in relation to any cultural mandate²².

Consequently, while the Foucauldian affiliation of vulnerability translates the subject into a sum of attributes ordered by the regulatory dimension of power and discourse, psychoanalysis signals the internal limit for the dynamic of power, which refers to the singularity of the subject, which is neither imaginary nor symbolic, but it is placed on the Real. Such a divergent gesture also allows a different approach towards the notion of bio-politics, which Foucault defined as the regulatory and productive form of power that characterizes the rise and hegemony of capitalism²³. From a bio-political perspective, sex and sexual difference would simply work as a new device for subjection, whose roots are placed in historical mutations of forms of knowledge and the power strategies they allowed.

On this issue, there is a radical divergence between the Foucauldian tradition and psychoanalysis, which needs to be considered all along with the register of the Real in the Lacanian approach. Indeed, if the genealogical nominalism considers that *all* the subjective domain is sheer discourse, for psychoanalysis the sexed status of the subject is an internal deadlock for the production of sense. As I will argue regarding Lacan's treatment of sexual difference, this notion installs an internal limit for a constructivist trend that pretends to reduce sex and sexual difference to their contingent translation into socio-symbolic terms. On the contrary, psychoanalysis points at the void that they introduce at the core of signification inasmuch as the operation of language inflicted onto the living body exiles the subject from any recourse to a natural law. In other words, there is no final and suitable signifier to name the sexed status of the subject, as Joan Copjec highlights in *Read My Desire. Lacan against the Historicists* (1994):

²² Nonetheless, in his reconsideration of alterity and discourse in the last period of his work, Foucault tried to rethink the role that the Other could have for the subject, a question that in his reflections was extremely connected to his analysis of the ethics of Antiquity. On this matter, see Foucault, Michel (1984): *Histoire de la sexualité 3: Le souci de soi*. Paris, Gallimard, and Foucault, Michel (2001): *L'herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France 1981-1982*. Paris, Gallimard.

²³ For an approach based on this reconsideration, see Copjec, Joan (1994): *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*. Cambridge: MIT Press, and Butler, Judith; Laclau, Ernesto and Žižek, Slavoj (2000): *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London/New York, Verso, where both Laclau and Žižek argue against Butler's reading of the Lacanian Real as a hypostasis of the Symbolic order that pushes subjects to heterosexist sexual positions and a heterosexual kinship as the basic Law in any social configuration.

To say that the subject is sexed is to say that it is no longer possible to have any knowledge of *him* or *her*. *Sex serves no other function than to limit the reason, to remove the subject from the realm of possible experience or pure understanding*. This is the meaning, when all is said and done, of Lacan's notorious assertion that "there is no sexual relation": sex, in opposing itself to sense, is also, by definition, opposed to relation, to communication (Copjec, 1994: 207).

Therefore, the register of the Real is worth considering when dealing with the subject because it does not refer to a pre-linguistic substance that would work as the background for any symbolic reality. It is the region of what is impossible to capture through the mechanisms of signification, its internal limit. A limit which is not based on any metaphysical opposition, but it rather appeals to what sense cannot grasp, which means that the subject is not a pure discursive effect, yet an anomaly whose being is not fully inscribed into any signifier. Thus, as Copjec signals, paying attention to the real of sex and sexual difference does not mean to impose an exclusionary criterion based on a normative approach towards the subject, but it makes evident what operates as a surplus that goes far beyond any discursive attempt. In this sense, paying attention to the Real as the topological element that defies language far from trapping the subject to the logic of inclusions and exclusions, yet it shows the internal failure of such logic.

Besides, the realm of the Real exceeds the ontological relationality orchestrated by post-metaphysics through recourse to the indeterminacy that it elaborates. As a matter of fact, the real of sexual difference is not based on either oppositions or complementarity, but it appeals to a structural asymmetry that bans any suitable solution. In other words, the Real does not belong to being, but it pierces it, introducing a hole that no signifier can exhaust. Hence, in the third part of my dissertation, I will clarify that those authors that reduce sex to the status of an exclusionary norm that gives a prerogative to a specific object choice take as the whole problem the partial manifestations made evident by sex. In this sense, translating sex and sexual difference into a norm is what allows the forcible orchestration of a compulsory relationship between two subjects, defining the former by means of the latter²⁴. Such is the criticism

²⁴ The Lacanian approach on sexual difference obeys to the reformulations that Lacan offered of his own theoretical and clinical apparatus by placing as a crucial topology the register of the Real and the relevance of *jouissance*. Following this reformulation, what Lacan elaborated was a logical schema on sexual difference, whereas in a previous period of his work, where the pre-eminence was conferred to the Symbolic, he had offered a grammatical account on sexual difference. For a further approach on this question see Lacan, Jacques (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*, Paris, Le Seuil, above all the section « Une lettre d'amour », pages 73-82, and (2013) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI : Le désir et son interprétation 1958-1959*. Paris, Éditions de La Martinière-Le Champ Freudien, mainly « Le rire des dieux immortels », pages 253-278.

elaborated by Joan Copjec in relation to the Foucauldian tradition that gives to sex the status of a regulatory norm that would give a priority of monogamous heterosexuality over any other sexual object choice through an exclusionary device²⁵:

That is, it is only when we define the two terms as having a reciprocal relation, the meaning of the one depending on the meaning of the other and vice versa, that we incline them – more strongly, compel them – toward union, albeit one that is sustained through violent antagonisms. For, the complementary relation is, in Lacan's terms, an imaginary one; it entails both absolute union and absolute aggression (Copjec, *op.cit.*: 202-203).

According to what I have argued up to now and what Copjec outlines in this quotation, the signifier of vulnerability only mobilises a discursive register based on inclusions and exclusions, referring to domains of repudiation that any group in terms of a normative and identitarian logic creates. In a Lacanian sense, this nominalist and historicist procedure only pays attention to the logical creation of a group and its constitutive exterior²⁶, those having been expelled, who confirm the existence of a set. This is what Lacan named, in *Encore* (1975b), the masculine logical positioning of sexual difference:

El lado masculino introduce un tipo de lógica que puede remitir a una lógica colectiva de *segregación* en la medida en que su universal se considere, no sólo como limitado por la excepción, sino abriendo el campo de imaginarización de un “otro” – la alteridad, el extranjero – concebido como radicalmente opuesto en sus atributos (la mujer, el judío, etc.) (Cevasco, 2010: 133).

However, psychoanalysis underlines a *supplement* that challenges any pretention to validate a totality by virtue of a binary confrontation. Such a supplement works as a limit that traverses any attempt to elaborate a logical set, which refers to the feminine logic, or the not-all phallic *jouissance*: “Lacan propone concebir la *posición femenina* como

²⁵ This criticism is offered in Butler, Judith (1993): *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. New York, Routledge, in the chapter « The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary », pages 51-92. In addition to this, in this section she also accuses Lacanian psychoanalysis of reproducing a homophobic discourse. In her reading of Lacan, abjection would be symbolically represented by gay and lesbian subjects. Butler's argument is based on the first articulation of sexual difference made by Lacan, which was based on the difference between *having* the phallus (masculine) or *being* the phallus (feminine). Butler's reading pretends to assert that in such a notion of sexual difference there is a complementarity between the sexes, which further prohibits homosexuality as a repudiated sexual orientation.

²⁶ Such a definition of the phallic logic, which provides with a designation instead of a definition of the masculine side, was elaborated by Lacan through recourse to Gödel's notion of the logico-mathematical set: to make a set, at least one of its members must be compulsory expelled. It is the very operation of rejection which confirms the creation of a set, regardless of the factual existence of its members.

posición límite (...). Una posición que se sitúa en el borde mismo del universo simbólico. Eso es lo que va a proponer con la formalización de la sexuación” (Cevasco, *op. cit.*: 22).

1.3. Power and Violence

Nevertheless, the Foucauldian tradition enables a larger analysis of the intricate link between violence and power, which puts at the centre of the debate that any given discourse creates its own zones of depreciation. In other words, there is no discourse alien to coercive strategies. Therefore, the genealogy of the subject undertaken by Foucault aims at unveiling which are the social, institutional, epistemic and political devices that create regimes of discursive intelligibility according to which the subject is elaborated by means of a disciplinary and normative method.

Moreover, in his *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (1976), Foucault gave an accurate articulation of a notion of power as a diffuse and multiple relationality not merely bound to and enacted by repression and/or punishment, but it also produces a subject that is only presumably represented by the very dynamic of the sphere of the political. Such a remark had also been stressed by Nietzsche in his *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), where Nietzsche argued for an undoing process of the Modern consciousness, which he introduced as an effect of punishment.

Furthermore, all along with a disciplinary notion of power more concerned on an embodied subject as an individual, in his first volume on the genealogy of the device of sexuality, Foucault introduced a new paradigm on power and knowledge in the first volume on his trilogy of sexuality. Such a paradigm is not reduced to a sovereign strategy based on making die those who defy the figure of the sovereign and letting live the rest of the people. It rather consists in a regulatory strategy over life named bio-politics²⁷. Such a twist, which Foucault considers as a crucial transformation of Modernity since the XVIII century, places the body at the centre of the political space. It is transformed into a bio-machine from which an economical benefit can be obtained, which means that the rise of capitalism and bio-politics are two related phenomena.

²⁷ The notion of “bio-politics” that I am using comes from a Foucaultian perspective that he develops in the last chapter of the first volume of the history of sexuality, « Droit de mort et pouvoir sur la vie ». See Foucault, Michel (1976): *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir*. Paris, Gallimard, pages 175-211.

This Foucauldian paradigm presents a new framework to analyse the current reality of our times, and the very notion of vulnerability as a result from such a discursive modification.

Moreover, the Foucauldian notion of power designs a political configuration as a struggle, disputing a primary social contract where individuals hand over their “power”. It is, thus, a discursive modification beyond liberalism, where the juridical law and the State are the primary realities. Power, therefore, is always a disseminated net that is not unified by a juridical origin. Hence, power is not a subjective possession to the detriment of others. Relations of power create, then, subjects, which means that no subject is alien to them, and they configure frames of intelligibility within which any subject may appear.

Notwithstanding this, Foucault’s approach does not entail a unidirectional relation between power and the subjects, but it is multiple and diverse. In fact, if power is a set of struggles, which are, to a certain extent, arbitrary and unpredictable, the process of *assujettissement* or subjection is never complete. It needs a compulsory reiteration through practices and norms in order to achieve a further stability that, in spite of that, will never be wholly successful, being traversed by forms of resistance: “Là où y il a pouvoir, il y a résistance et que pourtant, ou plutôt par là même, celle-ci n’est jamais en position d’extériorité par rapport au pouvoir” (Foucault, 1976.: 125-126).

Therefore, such a notion of power, in its regulatory bio-political dimension, implies that the three empirical scenarios that I have chosen in order to illustrate the nexus between vulnerability and violence needs to be accurately introduced. The current political dispute is not based on the traditional notion of sovereignty, but it appeals to the regulatory dimension of bio-politics. In this framework, violence is exercised in order to protect life as an investment that needs to be stimulated through an exclusionary process. The result of such a dynamic is a displacement from the sovereign strategy, which was based on sanctioning death. Hence, the present political gesture points to let die those declared as useless or defective by virtue of the subjects stimulated as productive and well adapted to the current social context.

Nonetheless, what is absent in the Foucauldian analysis of power is its psychic dimension, this is to say, the process of internalization of cultural imperatives that might lead to a self-destruction of the subject. In other words, the Freudian and Nietzschean

forms of super-ego and bad consciousness. Indeed, the psychic dimension of violence does not simply refer to the external forces that annihilate the subject, but it also signals the reflexive mechanism through which the subject executes violent devices against itself and other. This dimension of violence can be considered by means of psychoanalysis, the Nietzschean genealogy of consciousness through punishment and Butler's concept of performativity, which will be a good occasion to make visible the limitations of the Foucauldian notion of discipline, despite its illuminatory elements.

In relation to this link between vulnerability and violence, it is important to outline that the bio-political regulations onto the body tend to erase the dimension of the subject as psychoanalysis articulates it. In other words, through recourse to norms and its pathological reverse, the bio-political exercise onto the subject and its body manages to create the fiction of a homeostatic reality set up by a variety of knowledges for which the subject is a statistic code ready to be ameliorated. This is the thesis that I will develop regarding the psychiatric treatment of transsexuality, the normalizing surgery on intersexual babies and Immigration Detention Centres. The bio-political fiction, then, operates by means of the commandment towards a production regulated through recourse to a disciplinary and regulatory apparatus the background of which is the scientific discourse and the *truth* for the subject it supposedly provides.

Therefore, the plural and diverse struggles against the hegemony of bio-politics are also conditioned by such a framework, which arises a doubt regarding their potentialities. In this sense, it is important to remark that the notion of the subject they mobilise is also framed by such a discursive paradigm. In this sense, inasmuch as my purpose is to contextualise the bio-political apparatus to a local reality in order to render visible these mechanisms through recourse to the material dimension of vulnerability, I will limit my analysis to the social reality of Barcelona. According to my point of view, such a contextualised approach is what enables to analyse the creation of a socio-political reality and to expose which are the specific strategies developed by certain groups in order to try to subvert a given regime of subjection.

1.4. Roots of a Contemporary Debate: Vulnerable Bodies, Crossed Dialogues.

The notion of vulnerability has its own history. It has generated its own debate, and has engaged different voices. Consequently, the discourse on vulnerability elaborated by Judith Butler and Adriana Cavarero has a history, which is linked to some of the contemporary debates that gave birth to the dismantling process of metaphysics. The philosophical figures who set a precedent for this current reflection are, principally, Emmanuel Levinas and Hannah Arendt, despite they did not elaborate an identical theoretical position. Thus, while Levinas claimed that the bodily incarnation of the Other, mainly through its face, was a testimony of the vulnerable condition of existence, the Arendtian notion of politics pointed to a sphere made of public appearances that demanded a concerted cohabitation.

1.4.1. Hannah Arendt: Acting in Concert and Narration as Two Co-Extensive Realities.

My interest in Hannah Arendt's work relies on her conception of the political and action as two regions that belong to the domain of the human. Her notion of the political refers, as in Aristotle, to the imbrication between action and speech. This approach traverses her work *The Human Condition* (1958).

According to Arendt, the political action is, nonetheless, disattached from any dimension related to work and labour. What she names *vita activa* is related to the collective praxis that contributes to building a community. Such a communitarian reality is what conforms power, understood as acting in concert²⁸. In fact, Arendt reduces work and labour to survivability, and this strategy entails a depoliticizing gesture of such a reality:

Labour is the activity that corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism and eventual decay are bound to the vital

²⁸ Hence, for Arendt, violence and power are two different realities, which is clearly at odds with my approach. Arendt understands violence as an authoritarian action against the community, which would interrupt the deliberative account on democracy derived from Arendt's work. Such a perspective will not be analysed in my dissertation because my analysis on power and discourse has a Foucauldian and a Lacanian affiliation.

necessities produced and fed into the life process by labour. The human condition of labour is life itself. (Arendt, 1958: 7).

However, I want to underline that excluding labour and work from the dimension of politics is, in itself, a political gesture.²⁹

Yet, what I would like to outline concerning Arendt's notion of the political, in order to render visible the origins of the ontological relationality that sustains the concept of vulnerability, what Arendt named the right to speak. Speech, then, is not alien to action, but it is what renders a further specificity to action, providing it with a political status because speech produces a shared sense. Hence, it could be claimed that such a nexus between speech and action confers to the political a performative level, which reminds of Austin's performative acts in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962): the creation of what is enunciated by means of speech.

The performative character of the political confers a peculiar and quite problematic dimension to the body. In fact, Arendt's approach towards bodily life is mainly phenomenological, stressing that the body might be an obstacle regarding public appearance. Hence, discussing the occasional relationship between the body and pain, Arendt said: "Indeed, the most intense feeling we know of, intense to the point of blotting out all other experiences, namely, the experience of great bodily pain, is at the same time the most privative and least communicable of all" (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 50-51).

Despite Arendt asserts birth as the starting point of the political, the body is given a secondary part since the first part is given to linguistic action. In fact, the body, according to her proposal, is quite often associated to a biological and organic reality, which would explain Arendt's misconsideration of labour and work as two elements of the political and politics. Thus, Arendt focuses on a narrative self that conforms the region of the *bios*, the Greek concept that designed a life made of attributes, which was opposed to *zoé*, understood as life as a biological process, which is also present in Agamben's work *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995). Such a narrative self, the constitution of which is bond to the speech act, is what characterizes the human condition as a tensional ontology between equality and difference:

²⁹ In this sense, those thinkers who vindicate themselves as heirs of Arendt's thought also maintain such a division, which can be found in philosophers like Giorgio Agamben and his notion of bare life, which I will discuss regarding the Immigration Detention Centres in order to undo such a binary logic.

Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 176).

Speech outlines a new dimension as far as the self is concerned: the condition for the emergence of the self, inasmuch as language is transmitted by the other that speaks to us, is the “you” and not the “I”. This feature stresses a fundamental interdependency. Such an original interdependency is what belongs to the political understood by Arendt as a sum of agents who, despite sharing a symbolic framework, introduce their respective differences into such a communitarian reality. Therefore, the inauguration of the political is not given by an autonomous and self-sufficient being, but by a self who is compelled to interrogate the other. The primary question, thus, is: “Who are you?” This twist traverses the whole reflection elaborated by Adriana Cavarero in *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* (2000), where she links the notion of vulnerability to the possibility of missing one’s life in the hands of the other. And this is so given our bodily exposure.

The dimension of speech and action is at the core of the ambivalence that Arendt outlines regarding two elements: the *who* and the *what*. According to Arendt, the *who* is neither a self-evident reality nor an attribute, but a limit, a margin that, even if it is not pre-discursive, cannot be absolutely revealed through language. What is expressed here is that the *who*, each singular existence, becomes such thanks to the encounter with otherness and speech as a disruptive ek-sistence. Besides, she suggests that this *who*, owing to the fact that it is not a self-evident reality, discloses itself through a never-ending process that takes place in narration as the way in which desire can be expressed to others. By the *what*, Arendt refers to all the attributes that a subject possesses, which can be recognized by the others. According to Arendt, then, the link between the *who* and the *what* implies that “the disclosure of “who” in contradiction to “what” somebody is – his qualities, gifts, talents and shortcoming, which he may display or hide – is implicit in everything somebody says and does” (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 179).

The relational constitution of the self derived from these two notions means that any individual is an incessant becoming made in cohabitation with others and, at the same time, the *who*, the most singular dimension of each human being, resists any translation into the *what*, this is to say, the sum of attributes:

The moment we want to say *who* somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying *what* he is; we got entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or a “character” in the old meaning of the word, with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us. (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 181).

Existence appears to be a fragmentary reality that never achieves a synthetical dimension, which involves the impossibility of a final resolution. Existence, hence, is always an enigmatic ek-sistence and so is the other. Cohabitation, thus, is a constant exposure where any self adds a new and different dimension: “The disclosure of the “who” through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always falls into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 184).

Arendt stresses that the self, inasmuch as it is a political being, is made of a multiplicity of different narrations, none of which acquires ever an ending. Such is the narrative dimension of the self as an agent made with and by the others: “The stories, the results of action and speech, reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author or producer. Somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author” (Arendt, *idem*).

1.4.2. Emmanuel Levinas: The Ethical Turn, and the Primary Dimension of the Other.

The second important referent for the notion of vulnerability as it is elaborated by Judith Butler and Adriana Cavarero is Emmanuel Levinas. If Arendt left behind the body by virtue of narration and speech, Levinas stresses the crucial role of the body in the domain of ethics as the incarnation of the vulnerable status of existence. Indeed, the main characteristic of Levinasian thought is the primacy he confers to ethics over ontology. Such a relevance of ethics is an effort to deconstruct the traditional notion of an autonomous and rational subject as the background for ethics and, at the same time, his discourse does not refer to a self as Arendt does, but to a decentred subject by means of the priority of the Other.

In relation to this point, Levinas does not take as a referent the epistemological scenario that comes from the legacy of Modernity, according to which the subject and the object are opposed by means of a perceptive structure that attributes a passivity to the object by virtue of the active role conferred to the solipsistic consciousness. In order

to subvert such an exclusive epistemic bond, Levinas elaborates a relationality between the subject and the Other³⁰ appealing to an asymmetric positioning between them: “Jamais ma relation à l’égard du prochain n’est la réciproque de celle qui va de lui à moi car jamais je suis quitte envers l’autre. La relation est irréversible” (Levinas, 1978 [1947]: 12-13).

According to his approach, then, ethics involves a fracture into being, which, as far as Levinas is concerned, is based on the metaphysical category of sameness and the exclusion of the realm of alterity:

L’être se refuse à toute spécification et ne spécifie rien. Il n’est ni une qualité qu’un objet supporte, ni le support de qualités, ni l’acte d’un sujet, et cependant, dans la formule « ceci est », l’être devient attribut, puisque nous sommes immédiatement obligés de déclarer que cet attribut n’ajoute rien au sujet. (Levinas, *op. cit.*: 17)

Such irruption into the domain of ethics will be given by the existence of the Other, which, in its turn, adds a dimension that was absolutely absent in the metaphysical tradition: the body as a relational exposure that entails a subjective interdependency to what escapes any possible domestication to identity. This hiatus regarding ontology is expressed by Levinas through recourse to the conceptual pair of the *existant* and the *existence*. The *existant* merely refers to an ontological reality, leaving aside what exceeds the framework dominated by being and its phenomenology, while *existence* is understood by Levinas as a breaking point that needs to be pursued, in order for the Other to appear. *Existence*, thus, is always an ek-sistence, a becoming that forces the subject to act, which pushes the domain of subjectivity outside of itself. It entails, thus, a confrontation with contingency and the domain of what cannot be foreseen.

However, both Arendt and Levinas, despite their differences, still refer to a self (Arendt) and a subject (Levinas) related to a fragmented consciousness. Both

³⁰ However, there is a controversial approach towards the Other in the Levinasian conceptual framework. First of all, one of the usual images he uses to refer to otherness is the unnameable Jewish deity, Yahweh, whose specificity is the lack of a name, which involves an enigmatic nature. Not only Jewishness is present in this problematic configuration of the Other, but also an explicit exclusion of Arabians and Palestinians from the realm of the Other since they are taken to be a threaten for the Judeo-Christian legacy, and they are therefore deprived of any cultural intelligibility, and, thereby, recognisability. This thesis, extremely close to the Zionist posture, can be found in Levinas, Emmanuel (1973): *Difficile liberté*. Paris, Albin Michel. In relation to his Zionism, Judith Butler offers a strong criticism of his positioning in Butler, Judith (2005): *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Chicago: Fordham Press, part three, untitled « Responsibility » and in (2012): *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. New York: Columbia University Press. Since my concern with Levinas is referred to his relevance as a referent for the notion of vulnerability, I will not discuss this controversy.

perspectives foreclose the Freudian “discovery” of the unconscious, which has strong consequences regarding the relationship with the subject and its body, and it also has an impact onto the sphere of the social. Very differently, Arendt assimilates the subject to a plural self made by the encounters with others as a fragmented narration, while Levinas reduces the subject to the phenomenological dimension of consciousness, both conditioning the further development on vulnerability elaborated by Butler and Cavarero.

Interestingly, however, Levinas conceives the ethical as an asymmetrical encounter between two individuals that goes far beyond the notion of recognition. Indeed, as far as Levinas is concerned, the Other, in its radical alterity, defies any sort of recognition, which disputes the Hegelian sentence that affirms that desire is the desire for recognition. Difference, then, is the regulatory category of the ethical encounter, a scenario for which there is no suitable norm that exhausts the relationship with the Other: “La relation avec autrui ne saurait être pensée comme un enchaînement à un autre moi ; ni comme la compréhension d’autrui qui en fait disparaître l’altérité, ni comme la communion avec lui autour de quelque troisième terme” (Levinas, *op. cit.* : 144).

Such an ethical claim means that even the Arendtian notion of community is not enough for the concepts of alterity and difference mobilised by Levinas. Ethics, in the Levinasian sense, involves the interruption of any presumed common reality, installing a hiatus that questions any relationship between the subject and the Other. The singularity that Levinas attributes to ethics is also related to a quite well-known notion of his discourse: the face of the Other, and the paradox it entails. On the one hand, the face of the Other incarnates a vulnerability that might induce the subject to commit a violent action against this very Other, while, at the same time, the face of the Other, in its bodily exposure, enacts a normative commandment towards the preservation of life: “You ought not to kill”³¹. As a result, the disposition that the subject must undertake regarding the Other is based on a *responsibility for the Other’s existence* understood as an unconditional duty. Such a duty will be the source of politics in terms of law:

³¹ An ethics based on an incessant demand coming from an enigmatic Other, whose primacy is strongly normative, is criticized in Zupancinc, Alenka (2008): *Why Psychoanalysis. Three interventions*. Uppsala, Aarhus University Press, more specifically in her « Intervention Two: Freedom and Cause », where she argues that those ethical approaches based on a never-ending demand requiring a responsibility for the existence of the Other imply a strong violence and coercion executed by the Freudian Super-Ego.

La politique doit pouvoir en effet toujours être contrôlée et critiquée à partir de l'éthique. Cette seconde forme de socialité rendrait justice à ce secret qu'est pour chacun sa vie, secret qu'on ne tient pas à un clôture qui isolerait quelque domaine rigoureusement privé d'une intériorité fermée, mais secret qui tient à la responsabilité pour autrui, qui, dans son avènement éthique est incessible, à laquelle on ne se dérobe pas et qui, ainsi, est principe d'individuation absolue. (Levinas, 1982: 86).

For Levinas, then, vulnerability emerges as a notion that mobilises ethics as a fundamental register that stands for an approach towards the subject not wholly reduced to ontology, but it outlines the need to reconsider difference as a primordial notion, as it is the case in Judith Butler's work.

1.4.3. Adriana Cavarero: Singularity and Inclination

After the introductory consideration of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas, which are the main referents concerning the concept of vulnerability in Adriana Cavarero's and Judith Butler's account, I will expose the main arguments they both give in their debate on this notion. As far as Adriana Cavarero is concerned, she departs from the Arendtian remark on birth as a fundamental category to rethink politics. She explicitly attempts to elaborate an ontological perspective about vulnerability departing from the two Arendtian coordinates that I have mentioned: the *who* and the *what*. Cavarero uses them to elaborate a notion of singularity the theoretical root of which is the subjective inclination to destabilise the self-sufficiency that Modernity attributed to the subject³².

Despite her Arendtian influence, Cavarero highlights the relevance of the body by means of singularity and exposure. Regarding this first notion, which she relates to the Arendtian *who*, she maintains the argument of a configuration that inhabits the margins of language, resisting a compact representation, which puts a limit to the chain of signifiers. The dimension of singularity is, at its turn, attached to speech and action. As far as speech is concerned, she only refers to storytelling, particularly to narration as such. According to her view, the storytelling that narration involves is an occasion to question any binary structure, where subject and object are not two divided and opposed

³² Regarding Adriana Cavarero's theoretical production, I will not analyse her incursion into the analysis of violence because she is mostly focused on the links between war and terrorism against civilians, which, as a matter of fact, belongs to a different perspective, and it would require a different approach. As far as her notion of violence is concerned, see Cavarero, Adriana (2007): *Horrorism. Naming Contemporary Violence*. New York, Columbia University Press (2009). Translation by William McCuaig.

elements. Narration is the moment in which they are both mixed and mutable due to the fact that, as Arendt said, there is no proper author, and the story enacted through the figure of the Other is not an epistemic object, but a process, a never-ending *work in progress*. A narrative ek-sistence is, thus, always *be-coming*. This is the first challenge posed by Cavarero: thinking singularity through the notion of difference, turning towards an ontology not based on the predominance of a founding subject, but on relation, on indeterminacy instead. By this indeterminacy, Cavarero tries to suggest that the emergence of the subject does not come from a primary evidence based on the Cartesian axiom *Cogito, ergo sum*, but from a relation of dispossession: the self depends on the Other in order to exist, and there is a primacy of otherness in any subjective constitution. The metaphor she uses to suggest this dependency is the bond between the mother and the child³³. The child has a bodily and psychic dependency towards a figure that introduces it into a world where sameness is broken, being desire the tie between them, and the fact that the mother cannot be completely known³⁴. *Who* the mother is the child cannot know, which forces it to an ek-tatic configuration where bodily liaisons are fundamental.

Therefore, birth and infancy become a scenario from which politics might be rethought in terms of cohabitation, being exposure the way in which any subject can exist. This exposure is not just a narrative one, but, above all, bodily. Such a relationship confers to the Other a primary role since the self needs to be narrated in

³³ However, the kind of bond between the mother and the child that Cavarero outlines represses a dimension that psychoanalysis, at least since Freud and Lacan, has outlined: the mother's body becomes the first libidinal object for the child, while the child, for the mother, assumes a phallic value, being an object of desire. This relationship, nonetheless, is not based on any harmonic reality, but it is quite complex since the mother, instituted by the child as the Other causing a desire, oscillates between concession and privation. Hence, the desire of the child is the rest between demand, and what it obtains from the mother; the oscillation makes the demand unsatisfied. In addition, Lacan also analyses the problematic dimension of the image of the mother as an omnipotent figure, this is to say, the fantasy of a phallic figure that might appear without a lack, which in some situations might have some catastrophic consequences. In relation to this, the desire of the mother can work as an element that sucks in the child, which in the clinical dimension of psychoanalysis is often verified. For a further approach on this dimension, see Lacan, Jacques (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: L'envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil; Soler, Colette (2003): *Ce que Lacan disait des femmes. Étude de psychanalyse*. Paris, Éditions du Champ Lacanien, and Gherovici, Patricia (2010): *Please Select Your Gender. From the Invention of Hysteria to the Democratization of Transgenderism*. New York, Routledge.

³⁴ See Cavarero, Adriana (2014): « Inclinaciones desequilibradas » in Saez, Begonya (ed., 2014): *Cuerpo, memoria y representación. Adriana Cavarero y Judith Butler en diálogo*. Barcelona, Icaria, pages 17-38, where she exposes the relevance she confers to birth and the relation mother-child in order to think vulnerability as an ontological condition.

order to be, which comes from the dimension of the story. Through storytelling, hence, the singularity is obtained as a *who* where the being of the self is disclosed:

What makes a narration a political act is not simply that this narration invokes the struggle of a collective subjectivity, but rather that it makes clear the fragility of the unique. The uniqueness and the unity of the self, which is disclosed through that self's actions and words, and which is then narrated as a unique and unified life-story, does not display any of the general characteristics of traditional subjectivity: interiority, psychology, agency, self-presence, mastery and forth. Rather, the "narratable existent" is a unique *existent*, "who" someone is. Also this "narratable self" is constitutively in relation with others (2000 [1997]: X).

However, as it could be verified in Hannah Arendt's definition of the self as a creation resultant from speech and action, the bodily dimension stressed by Cavarero is primary linked to what, in a Lacanian sense, echoes the imaginary dimension of the body. It is a textual surface onto which the signifiers given by the Other shape a fragmentary and discontinuous self, whose boundaries are mutable and multiple. In relation to this question, Cavarero, as far as I am concerned, provides an ontogenesis of the self whose bond towards alterity is more concerned on the role conferred to the Other as a *you*, producing a binary scenario where two entities find each other. Alterity, thus, does not entail nor arouse for subjectivity any *internal fracture*. In fact, what is absent in the Arendtian tradition, in which Cavarero's work is inscribed, is the subject, trapped into the self, which does not allow a deeper reflection regarding otherness beyond such a bond with the Other.

Regarding the bond with the Other, Cavarero erases any sort of aggressiveness³⁵. And, thus, relation equates a romantic reality where the self and the *you* are seen from an idyllic perspective, being governed by intimacy and devotion towards the Other. The sign of this relation is altruism: "Prior to being a generous life-style in the service of others, altruism is indeed the foundational principle of a self that knows itself to be constituted by another" (Cavarero, *op. cit.*: 84).

Cavarero's account of the relationship between mother and son elides discourse and sociability inasmuch as power and domination do not determine it in any way. The

³⁵ Concerning the bond between aggressiveness and narcissism, which are evacuated from Cavarero's approach, I will analyse their interconnection regarding the looking-glass phase in Lacan, which refers to the topology of the Imaginary and its binary relationship with otherness. Such a binary relationship comes from the Lacanian appropriation of the Hegelian dialectic, which aims to argue for the intricate link between love and hate.

relation between them is reduced to a “magical” encounter with the Other, and it is given an account of in mythical terms:

The relational character of the ethic that responds to this [bond to the Other] is not therefore the fruit of a choice; or, rather, the object of a possible appraisal or the result of a grandiose strategy. It is rather the necessary aspect of an identity which, from beginning to end, is intertwined with other lives – with reciprocal exposures and innumerable gazes – and needs the other’s tale (Cavarero, *op. cit.*: 88).

What is radically absent in Adriana Cavarero’s notion of vulnerability is what Judith Butler aims at recalling: its material dimension, rooted in the social relationality by which the subject emerges and ek-sists.

1.4.4. Judith Butler: Vulnerability as the Struggle for Recognition

Judith Butler considers vulnerability from this horizon: being exposed involves the always-possible situation of being hurt. Cohabitation implies, according to her approach, being thrown to an Other on which the subject depends according to a social world traversed by discursive relations and regulations. From the very beginning, Butler’s concern has been how a subject can become such and, from a Foucauldian perspective, she analyses which regulations, norms and sets of power relations control and administrate subjection (*assujettissement*). Already in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Butler’s aim was to elucidate *who* counts as a subject, and under which frames of intelligibility subjection takes place. This is why the strategy Butler always defends and makes use of is, through Foucault’s legacy, a genealogical one. She focuses on the practices, discourses and institutions that govern the subject’s viability and liveability. Following this perspective, one of her goals is the deconstruction of the juridical systems, governed by the law and the State, and the exclusionary subject they configure:

The question of “the subject” is crucial for politics, and for feminist politics in particular, because juridical subjects are invariably produced through certain exclusionary practices that do not “show” once the juridical structure of politics has been established (Butler, 1990: 2).

Thus, Butler makes an effort to undo the binary structure that governs the hegemonic social and political configurations that condition the bodily existence in the

contemporary world. In order to achieve this goal, Butler argues for the performative³⁶ nature of representation not only in juridical instances, but also in the discursive relations that regulate bodies, sexualities and identifications, including gendered ones. By performative she means that the referent of a representative regulatory schema is neither previous nor an external referent, but that it is constituted through exclusionary practices that establish in advance the ontological and epistemic frames of intelligibility. According to this perspective, then, Butler's reflection on vulnerability is tied to discourse, institutions and practices, being language a crucial fact. Her biggest concern is the processes of production of excluded subjects and bodies, by means of which a large spectre of abjection is created, where the very same exclusionary practices are performed. Butler writes: "Perhaps the subject, as well as the invocation of a temporal "before", is constituted by the law as the fictive foundation of its own claim to legitimacy" (Butler, *op. cit.*: 2-3).

Therefore, Butler's reflection on vulnerability shares with Nietzsche and Foucault the effort to deny the primacy of a universal and abstract subject as a founding entity. Questioning the primacy of a so-called subject defined by virtue of an absolute free will, Butler stresses a primary passivity present in the emergence of the subject at the core of the matrix of power relations. The subject, then, would be created by them retroactively: power relations vanish after the creation of the subject and, through an illusionary operation, they present the subject as their very cause. Following a Foucauldian approach, Butler questions a fictional "outside" of power relations as a political creation *par excellence*. It means that any political struggle can only take place within a resistance that, as Foucault proclaimed, can only happen traversing these very power relations. Such questioning involves that "the juridical structures of language and politics constitute the contemporary field of power; hence, there is no position outside this field, but only a genealogy of its own legitimating practices" (Butler, *op. cit.*: 5).

Hence, the subject can only become such within discursive relations that are conditioned by historical and contingent power relations. Moreover, the subject emerges

³⁶ Despite the fact that I will deeply analyse Butler's performativity, it is important to outline her Derridean and Austinian influences. For an accurately approach concerning the term "performativity" and its link to language, see Derrida, Jacques (1988): « Signature, Event, Context » in *Limited Inc.* Evanston, Northwestern Press, pages 1-23. Translation by Gerald Graff, and Austin, John L. (1962): *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

as a repetitive configuration that creates the fiction of an “identity core” and an “inner truth” that expresses itself in physical appearances. By virtue of this configuration, Butler substitutes the notion of sex by gender to render visible a process of “doing” to question the exclusionary and binary practices that do repudiate and can even destroy some bodies:

The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects (Butler, *op. cit.*: 145).

According to this conceptual schema, the spectre of abjection that regulatory and productive political dynamics create is a necessary “outside” in order to control subjects by means of violent devices imposed through repetition, as Butler says in *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (1993):

The abject designates here precisely those “unliveable” and “inhabitable” zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the “unliveable” is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject (Butler, 1993: 3).

However, what Butler names “abjection” would be tied to a notion of the Lacanian Symbolic as a regulatory and heterosexist logic that is said to structure any possible gendered identification. In order to sustain such an assertion, Butler erases sex of the body, placing it into a cultural apparatus that imposes a ritualised coercion by means of the embodiment of norms. Lacanian psychoanalysis, then, would function as a disciplinary and regulatory apparatus to maintain a heterosexist hegemony that would expose non-heterosexual identifications to injury and repudiation.

I would like to underline that such a claim is based on an oblivion of the Real, which Lacan explicitly linked to sexual difference and sex in his later teaching and, specifically, in his seminar *Encore* (1975b). Concomitantly, Butler situates the psychic operation of foreclosure, which belongs to the clinical dimension of psychosis³⁷, to the origin of any subjective identification, which is a theoretical and clinical mistake:

³⁷ In the seminar devoted to a critical revision of the Freudian Schreber’s case, Lacan offered a new insight, both theoretical and clinical, to psychosis. Lacan’s approach to psychotic symptoms is not based on the Foucauldian division of normalcy/pathology, but it signals a psychic structure based on the rejection of the operation of castration imposed by language. Castration means that the entrance into the Symbolic inflicts onto the subject a loss of a primordial *jouissance*, which in the case of neurosis is

Indeed, the construction of gender operates through *exclusionary* means, such that the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of foreclosures, radical erasures, that are, strictly speaking, refused the possibility of cultural articulation (Butler, *op.cit.*: 8).

Therefore, in Butler's discourse, sex and gender are fully inscribed into what Lacan named the phallic logic, this is to say, the production of a set by means of a master signifier, and its constitutive outside. Consequently, gender becomes an exclusionary process inasmuch as Butler leaves behind any further consideration related to what Lacan named the not-all phallic logic, which is radically absent in her discussion with psychoanalysis. The paradox at stake, thus, is the articulation of the notion of vulnerability, primarily linked to the gendered body, according to exclusionary devices, which clearly limits the scope of such a notion since it is constantly bound to inclusions and exclusions. There is, hence, a logical impossibility to signal what escapes such a functioning inasmuch as *it is foreclosed by the very discursive articulation of vulnerability*.

What Butler obviates is the fact that she institutes an imaginary bond that would prohibit non-heterosexual identifications, which pushes towards a struggle for recognition against abjection that incessantly repeats the exclusionary mechanism she pretends to undo. Such a remark has been already considered in the aforementioned analysis provided by Joan Copjec concerning the limits of the notion of gender and the dimension of the Real. Nonetheless, this criticism has never been carefully considered by Butler, which explains why she keeps reproducing the impasses of the phallic logic. It is by virtue of this critical remark that her misreading of the notions of the Imaginary and the Symbolic need to be analysed, which I will develop in the first chapter of this dissertation.

Despite the signalled conceptual limitation determining the notions of vulnerability and abjection, Butler's analysis on language and discourse becomes a

articulated by means of a repression of the signified of the phallus, transformed into a signifier deprived of a precise meaning. Opposite to repression, foreclosure entails that the psychotic structure rejects the dimension of the Symbolic, which is foreclosed by means of a non-mediated union between the registers of the Imaginary and the Real. This is the psychic mechanism that explains the functioning of deliria, which attempt to elaborate a certain stability in front of a non-castrated *jouissance* and its disturbing effects. Therefore, it has nothing to do with a sexed position or the choice of the *partenaire*, as Butler's thesis suggests. For a further approach on this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (1932): *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*. Paris, Le Seuil, and (1981): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre III : Les psychoses 1955-1956*. Paris, Le Seuil.

good occasion for revising the discursive mutations of the subject into the social sphere, especially since her *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative* (1997b). In this work, Butler claims that “if we are formed in language, then that formative power precedes and conditions any decision we might make about it, insulting us from the start, as it were, by its prior power” (Butler, 1997b: 2). Hence, any social and political analysis on the subject regarding current affairs must take into account the structural role of language and its discursive reality in order to render visible forms of exclusion and of violence.

In addition to this, the ontological priority concerning the performative power of language illuminates the question about which Butler is most recently concerned: being vulnerable implies that one can be hurt by others or by an Other that precedes and conditions subjective formations. Whereas Cavarero obviates this dimension, Butler is poignant: the subject lives within a normative structure that conditions its liveability and survival. It involves that “language sustains the body not by bringing it into being or feeling it in a literal way; rather, it is by being interpellated within the terms of language that a certain social existence of the body first becomes possible” (Butler, *op. cit.*: 5).

Such a remark must be properly considered in order to take into account the last developments on the notion of vulnerability elaborated by Butler, which I will discuss in the first and third parts of this dissertation in order to carefully signal its potentialities and impasses, mainly since her *Giving and Account of Oneself* (2005).

1.4.5. Sexual Difference and the Not-All Phallic *Jouissance*: Beyond Identifications and the Role of Love

In this last section of the introduction I shall stress the critical dimension that psychoanalysis, mainly in its Lacanian version, makes possible, as far as the notion of vulnerability, taking into account the proposal Cavarero and Butler have to offer, is concerned. Indeed, as I have made clear all along this introduction, the post-metaphysical discourse at the background of the notion of vulnerability is primary concerned with an ontological definition of subjectivity in relational terms. There is no doubt that relationality allows for undoing the binary logic inherited from Modern

metaphysics, though it has its limits too. Especially if the nominalism that vertebrates vulnerability is considered, mainly through the Foucauldian notion of discourse, and Butler's re-appropriation of such a twist.

Nominalism is the main limit to be considered here. And I shall stress that nominalism is where Foucault's and Butler's proposals strand. Since the nominalist approach to ontology entails a neutralisation of the subject, that thereby becomes a sum of multiple and fragmentary identifications regulated by a discourse understood as an alliance between knowledge and power. As a result, the libidinal and sexual dimensions, which are at the core of the psychoanalytical approach towards the subject since Freud highlighted the relevance of the unconscious, are translated into cultural regulations. As a consequence, the body is conceived as deprived of the drives and the *real* singularity that sexual difference entails, above all in Lacan's innovative consideration of this realm.

Besides, the feminist theories that have vindicated and subscribed to the relevance of the Foucauldian genealogy had also contributed to a substitution of sex by virtue of gender, which becomes a plural association of signifiers and cultural practices regulated by norms and institutions³⁸. In addition to this, the very notion of vulnerability, mainly regarding Butler's perspective, identifies the notion of sex and sexual difference to a regulatory device based on an exclusionary mechanism, which operates according to the same register that Lacan asserted concerning the masculine or phallic position. Such a sexed position consists of the institution of a whole by means of inclusions and exclusions, creating a set the consistency of which depends on excluding at least one of its members. Therefore, if the phallic logic were the single register for the sexed dimension of the subject, its translation into the domain of the social would be reduced to the undoing and enlarging of norms, which entails that recognition and its impasses would become the main struggle.

³⁸ Just to quote some of them, see, for instance: Rubin, Gayle (1975): « The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex » in Reiter, Rayna (ed., 1975): *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York, Monthly Review Press; Lauretis, Teresa de (1987): *Technologies of Gender. Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press; hooks, bell (1981): *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*. Wisconsin, South End Press; Wittig, Monique (1980): « The Straight Mind » in *Feminist Issues* 1.1: 103-111, and Preciado, Paul B. (2000): *Manifiesto contrasexual*. Barcelona, Anagrama.

The subversion that psychoanalysis allows concerning this discursive monism and its limits is based on two elements: the unconscious and the feminine or not-all phallic logic.

Concerning the unconscious, psychoanalysis does not assert that the subject is a pure product derived from discourse and its power relations, but the subject of the unconscious, contrarily to what Foucault and Butler assert, is the failure of the symbolic Other, this is to say, the deviation from any presumed fixation. Hence, the subject of the unconscious is not reduced to the imaginary and symbolic identifications, but it is the void that no signifier ever fills fully in. It is, thus, a point of interruption, which I will specifically analyse in the last part of my dissertation, concerning the ethics of psychoanalysis through the figure of Antigone.

Regarding the feminine not-all logic, two issues must be outlined. As I have already mentioned in the previous sections of this introduction, if Lacan re-articulates sexual difference by means of the Real it involves that sex is not a predicate attributed to the subject, but it becomes the deadlock for the signifying chain. It is a void for which no process of predication properly works. If Lacan finally articulated sexual difference as what is impossible to be captured through the Imaginary and the Symbolic, it eventually appeals, thanks to theory and clinical practice, to an affiliation to a realism not based on an epistemic reality of concepts, but it signals the internal collapse of any ontological mechanism. In other words, the realism that Lacan attributes to sex and sexual difference means that these are not two areas literally shaped by discourse, but they are the dimension that exceeds the dynamic of language, which by no means reduces sexual difference to a purely anatomical reality. The way in which Lacan finds his way to deal with sexual difference and sex, given that they do not apply to norms, is logics. Such is the subversion of Lacanian psychoanalysis: sex and sexual difference are not susceptible of being apprehended by being because they are not two epistemic realities, but a whole that pierces language and its production of meaning.

In addition to this, the peculiar status of the not-all phallic logic resides in the fact that its position is a limit for the unconscious inasmuch as the unconscious, understood as an ignored knowledge by the subject, only knows a signifier: the phallus, the signifier of the lack-of-being imposed by language. Therefore, for the unconscious the not-all phallic logic is “una cuestión límite, en el sentido de que resiste a ser atrapada, encauzada en un saber” (Cevasco, 2010: 20). In other words, for the unconscious, sex is

merely phallic, this is to say, regulated by the castration imposed by the Symbolic, which entails that the *not-all* is more anchored into the Real, which is impossible to successfully represent.

Finally, then, the not-all phallic logic poses a structural challenge to any discourse that aims at producing a signifier that might work as a universal into the Symbolic. Inasmuch as it defies the possibility to making a set with it, I would claim in this introduction that it is the deadlock for vulnerability. Vulnerability refers to it, instead, as an excluded exception because it is a discourse absolutely located in the Imaginary and the Symbolic, rejecting from its analysis the Real and, more specifically, the *real* of the feminine logic.

What vulnerability analyses, thus, is the current articulation into the social sphere governed by a bio-political administration of the subjects in a narrow alliance with new forms of the capitalist dynamic, which creates a proliferation of identifications and their subsequent exclusions:

En este tipo de *interpretación* de lo masculino sólo puede concebirse al otro como radicalmente amenazante, porque encarna la figura de una alteridad fantasmática: ese otro que nos habrá robado lo que la estructura nos impone como “falta”, como “falta”, como goce siempre descompletado por la castración, por más objetos “plus-de-gozar” que nos pongamos entre los dientes o bajo los ojos (Cevasco, *op. cit.*: 134-135.).

My strategy to exceed such an exclusionary dynamic will be based on a further analysis of the peculiar structure of the not-all, which works as a *supplement* for the limitations imposed by the phallus and its regulations, aiming to signal the structural impossibility to reduce the subject to a compact set. Such a challenge will be accompanied by the notion of love as it is developed by Lacan, though I will emphasize that the challenge is to displace love towards a modality that *does not ignore* the Real that bans any possible harmony between subjects and their different sexed positioning, which clearly has social and political consequences. In other words, instead of exclusively placing subjectivity by the side of discourse and its norms, I shall try time to outline its structural specificity, namely, its singularity, leaving behind the notion of the subject as a compact set, with the limitations I have signalled, and embracing a notion of the subject understood as a series of infinite subjects who defy any totality.

PART ONE: BODILY EXISTENCE, DESIRE AND VIOLENCE

2. THE ONTOLOGICAL APPROACH TOWARDS THE BODY: FROM METAPHYSICS TO RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY

The first part of my research will be oriented by an analysis of relational ontology, which is at the core of the notion of vulnerability, and the vindication of the body it involves. Hence, I will primarily offer an approach towards the Cartesian dimension of the body inasmuch as the Modern legacy is questioned by the discourse on vulnerability. Such a deconstruction will be based on the criticisms directed against the dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* elaborated by Baruch Spinoza, and the deconstructionist approach articulated by Jean-Luc Nancy.

Afterwards, I will revise the notion of desire introduced by Baruch Spinoza, which must be understood as a *conatus* that pushes the subject towards the maintenance and expansion of its existence, while I will also introduce the Hegelian dialectical scene of lordship and bondage. Such a section is fundamental in order to give a proper account of the relevance conferred to recognition by authors like Judith Butler. Linked to desire, I will refer to the turn the question of desire is given by Lacan by means of his reconsideration of Freudian drives and sexual difference. This will allow me to articulate a theoretical counterpoint for the notion of vulnerability.

In addition to this, this part will analyse the different scopes on vulnerability offered by Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas, and the novelties introduced thereto by Adriana Cavarero and Judith Butler. Butler's approach will be the occasion to analyse the nexus between vulnerability and violence, signalling the limits of the notion of recognition, especially outlining the psychic dimension of violence. To achieve this goal, I will refer to psychoanalysis, Friedrich Nietzsche, Judith Butler, and Michel Foucault.

Therefore, this first part will be mostly devoted to philosophical discourse, which is the region where vulnerability has been conceived as an ontological condition. Nonetheless, in this part I will also clarify which are the limitations for an ontological

approach towards the body and the subject, also by means of developing the psychoanalytic dimension of the symptom and the body in its *real-sexed* reality.

2.1. The Metaphysical Oblivion of the Body: *Res Cogitans* vs. *Res Extensa*.

According to what I have already mentioned in the introduction and at the beginning of this chapter, it is important to situate the notion of vulnerability within the broader paradigm of post-metaphysics, the project of which consists of allowing for a new philosophical register that critically assumes the legacy derived from metaphysics. In relation to this, the Cartesian dimension of the body has had an enormous impact on many epistemic levels, which is why I have chosen it as a referent for the metaphysical discourse.

In relation to this, the *logos* of metaphysics has a dual structure made of oppositions. It is, thus, a binary logic based on a dichotomic relation of complementarity between the concepts therein implied. Such *logos* refers to a notion of language where subject and object are constituted as opposed. Modernity, as René Descartes witnesses, is likewise structured in binary terms, according to which there is a funding binary principle, namely the one given by the distinction between a formal and abstract principle, the attribute of which is thought, and a material element, the body, shaped as a an extended entity, the role of which is to support the subject. Due to the disembodied nature conferred to the subject, which becomes the core for any process of signification and enunciation, the realm of thought is transformed into a reified reality that transcends any external to limit, locked into itself. This solipsism enables the articulation of a notion of sameness and coherence of the subject with itself.

Such a dualistic register is what allows the development of a scientific knowledge, the methodology of which pretends to create and find the tools to dominate and to tame objects to clear and distinct concepts. Therefore, the economy of thought that emerges from this framework is what the Frankfurt School called an *instrumental reason*³⁹. Besides, the subject as an instrumental and mental datum involves another

³⁹ Such is the thesis analysed and developed by Adorno and Horkheimer, which clearly links the emergence of Modern science to a reality based on transforming objects to available and suitable entities for the formal and abstract subject of thought, the background of sense. For a further approach on this

consequence: it becomes a reified substance, radically isolated from the world, and from any social bond. The schema, then, will be the following one: the subject comes first and, it abstractly and conceptually institutes the world as the contingent region where it will develop its conquering activities. The world is just some sort of brute facts that need to be modelled according to the intentions of the maker. A maker the autonomy of which consists of an omnipotent voluntary capacity expressed in free will.

By means of the methodical doubt, Descartes sketches out a theoretical apparatus where knowledge becomes the supreme guideline. This methodical doubt is based on a subject the main attribute of which is thought, this is to say, also doubt. Anything that surrounds the subject might be false, but what always remains as a true proposition is that it thinks. In other words: *Cogito, ergo sum*. From this perspective, which must be clarified is what follows: how can anyone know in a clear and distinct manner? How to avoid mistakes and falsehoods? Even if objects are said to be susceptible of being apprehended and dominated, a quite difficult path has to be pursued. The subject, in Cartesian terms, would be a perfect one *if it* were simply an incorporeal entity, this is to say, an abstract being that would not need any *material* support in order to exist. Alas, it does need it. The next step, then, is to clarify which is the nature of this troubling body, a body said to be an inconvenience since Plato.

The epistemic and ontological strategy developed by Descartes is mostly based on reducing the body to the representation that consciousness makes of it, this is to say, the *mental image of the bodily reality made by the res cogitans*. Hence, the attribution of a secondary status to the body by means of asserting its confusing characteristics as far as the epistemic dimension is concerned signals that the relationship between consciousness and body is not simple or easy to elaborate. In this sense, the cohabitation of both substances can only be solved, according to the Cartesian method, by virtue of transforming the body into an object that the *res cogitans* might identify as a concept, which is not guaranteed in advanced.

The Cartesian enterprise is devoted to find a reality for the *res extensa* through recourse to univocity. Such a remark is a fundamental one because it shows the main metaphysical conflict regarding the body: its status does not immediately belong to

issue, see Adorno, Theodor W., and Horkheimer, Marx (1944, reedited in 1947): *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford, Stanford University Press (2002). Translation by Edmund Jephcott.

being, but just the representation of it can be equated to such a register. The solution proposed by Cartesianism is, therefore, the assimilation of the body to a projection of an *extended surface*, attributing to the body a formal and abstract reality that, eventually, erases any existence of the body in its own material terms. Such is the role conferred to geometry in Descartes's method in order to produce a totality of the body, expelling from such a unity any equivocity and negativity. As a result, concerning the region of being in epistemic and dualistic notions, consciousness can exist without any recourse to embodiment:

Puis, examinant avec attention ce que j'étais, et voyant que je pouvais feindre que je n'avais aucun corps, et qu'il n'y avait aucun monde, ni aucun lieu où je fusse. [...] je connus de là que j'étais une substance dont toute l'essence ou la nature n'est que de penser et qui, pour être, n'a besoin d'aucun lieu, ni dépend d'aucune chose matérielle (Descartes, 1637 [1965] : 90-91.).

The methodical doubt, thus, proceeds according to a skeptical procedure the result of which is the isolation of consciousness, radically disattached from the world and, thereby, from the body, expelled from its constitution. It is by means of such an isolation that pretends to reduce the *res cogitans* to an exclusively logical principle that a coherent core is attributed to the thinking being. Such operation enables to sustain introspection and transparency as two qualities for thought.

Nonetheless, the articulation of such a transparency and coherence, by means of an identity of being and thought regarding the *res cogitans*, requires the reduction of representations and thought to a clear and evident register, which means that language is truthful, this is to say, it works as a conceptual tool the referent of which is a *factual* object susceptible of being apprehended by the *res cogitans*. Such a linguistic instrumentality institutes a binary structure that works as a criterion for differentiating truth from falsehood, becoming the core of any process of enunciation the *res cogitans* as entity the being of which is thought.

Cartesian binarism is problematic because it presupposes a union between two substances, which, as a matter of fact, entails a logical and formal contradiction regarding the very definition of substance since Aristotle's metaphysics. Indeed, the metaphysical tradition has always affirmed that a substance is independent from anything else, this is to say, its existence is self-sufficient. The trouble, thus, is not the claim that "je trouve ici que la pensée est un attribut qui m'appartient: elle seule ne

peut être que détachée de moi” (Descartes, 1970 [1641]: 41), but the further liaison between thought and body as two substances which are presumed to make one.

What remains unjustified is what maintains together these two substances, which, besides, seems to diminish the presumed perfection of *res cogitans* inasmuch as it is said to depend on a finite, physical and imperfect reality such as the *res extensa*. Despite the absence of a final resolution at this level, Descartes points to imagination, outlining the privileged role of the *image* for consciousness, in order to clarify the nexus between these two different entities:

De plus, la faculté d’imaginer qui est en moi, et de laquelle je vois par expérience que je me sers lorsque je m’applique à la considération des choses matérielles, est capable de me persuader de leur existence: car quand je considère attentivement ce que c’est que l’imagination, je trouve qu’elle n’est autre chose qu’une certaine application de la faculté qui connaît au corps qui lui est intimement présent, et partant qui existe (Descartes, *op. cit.* : 109-110).

The consequence of his argument, thus, is to assert that the existence of the body is radically linked to the representative image that consciousness makes of it. Hence, the existence of the body, aside imagination, is deprived of any relevance, which, as Spinoza would remark, means that thought and being do not know *anything* of the body, but they are purely related to the domain of the *representation of the bodily dimension*:

Je conçois, dis-je, aisément que l’imagination se peut faire de cette sorte, s’il est vrai qu’il y ait des corps; et parce je ne puis rencontrer aucune autre voie pour expliquer comment elle se fait, je conjecture de là probablement qu’il y en a: mais ce n’est que probablement, et quoique j’examine soigneusement toutes choses, je ne trouve pas néanmoins que, de cette idée distincte de la nature corporelle, que j’ai en mon imagination, je puisse tirer aucun argument qui conclue avec nécessité l’existence de quelque corps (Descartes, *op. cit.* : 112).

Descartes aims at proving the *actual existence* of what imagination represents, which is directed towards the assertion that the object – in this case, the body – really exists. This further means that the linguistic dimension of thought is able to designate an external referent for the image elaborated by the *res cogitans*. Such is the role attributed to God, an absolute Other capable of granting the truth of thought that belongs to consciousness. By granting truth, God grants also the factual existence of the body as a referent for the imagination. A God wherein, as I will later discuss in relation to the relevance of the signifier for psychoanalysis, grounds all reliability conferred to language.

The objective dimension of the body as an external referent the truth of which is granted by God as the supreme epistemic and ontological principle is never questioned

by Descartes. Instead, Descartes literally identifies the *image of the body* to the *body in itself*. Such an identification, which is disputed by the contemporary tradition, notwithstanding with that, still applies. Indeed, most current ontologies on the body and the discourse on vulnerability derived therefrom reduce the status of the body to an image⁴⁰ and to a purely linguistic reality, leaving aside one of the crucial concepts for psychoanalysis and for my research: the Real that exceeds sense and language:

Premièremet donc j'ai senti que j'avais une tête, des mains, des pieds, et tous les autres membres dont est composé ce corps que je considérais comme une partie de moi-même, ou peut-être aussi comme le tout. De plus, j'ai senti que ce corps était placé entre beaucoup d'autres, desquels il était capable de recevoir diverses commodités et incommodités, et je remarquais ces commodités par un certain sentiment de plaisir ou de volupté, et ces incommodités par un sentiment de douleur (Descartes, *op. cit.* : 113).

Yet, before revisiting such identifications from a Lacanian perspective, I shall render visible the first fracture of Cartesianism brought about by another metaphysician, Baruch Spinoza, who re-elaborated the relationship between consciousness and the body by means of a monist principle, introducing at its turn the dimension of desire through recourse to what he identified as and named *conatus*.

2.1.1. A Desiring and Non-Dualistic Substance: Spinoza's Critique.

As I have exposed in the previous sub-section, the body became a geometrical surface that acted as a support for the incorporeal *res cogitans*. However, I have already outlined the problems that come from this dualistic logic. The next step is to analyse which are the implications involved in this theoretical structure that departs from the notion of substance.

In relation to the troubling articulation of two substances in terms of the subject, Baruch Spinoza offers some suggestive and interesting remarks, breaking the dualism that vertebrates the Cartesian metaphysics and, to some extent, the binary register of metaphysics. Nonetheless, I would like to make clear that I will not elaborate an

⁴⁰ See Lacan, Jacques (1966): « Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du *Je* » in *Écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 93-100 ; (1978) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II : Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse 1954-1955*. Paris, Le Seuil, and (1975a) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre I : les écrits techniques de Freud. 1953-1954*. Paris, Le Seuil, where Lacan developed his looking-glass phase (*stade du miroir*).

approach towards the whole production of the Spinozist system, which I have neither done in relation to Descartes. Thus, my aim is to strategically analyse those concepts at the core of the post-metaphysical logic that enable to elaborate the current concept of vulnerability and its implications. In this sense, I will only refer to Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677), leaving aside its substantial monism regarding God.

After this methodological clarification, the first step to disarticulate the binary structure of Cartesianism is to analyse what Spinoza introduces as a substance, disputing the Cartesian definition of it through recourse to the previous metaphysical tradition. Hence, the Spinozist clarification involves that, by means of the very definition of substance, there can only be *one substance*, but not two of them when the substance is said to be self-caused: "By that which is self-caused I mean that whose essence involves existence; or that whose nature can be conceived only as existing" (Spinoza, 2002 [1677]: 217).

As a result, inasmuch as the substance is just one and it is self-caused, the non-contradiction principle mobilised by Spinoza disputes any attempt to institute a dual structure because it would ruin the very definition of substance. Moreover, Spinoza establishes a tie between being self-caused and the fact that what is self-caused has a necessary existence, which means that its essence involves its existence. In other words, there is something that is not possible or contingent, but necessary. A necessity that, regarding Spinoza's treatment of the substance, belongs to the infinite, leaving aside finitude as a suitable adjective for the substance:

A thing is said to be finite in its own kind [*in suo genere finita*] when it can be limited by another thing of the same nature. For example, a body is said to be finite because we can always conceive of another body greater than it. So, too, thought is limited by another thought. But body is not limited by thought, nor thought by body (Spinoza, *idem*.)

The inherent coherence and non-contradiction derived from such a methodology involve that, if a necessary being is self-caused, and its existence is involved in its essence, it has to be infinite. Indeed, if what is finite is limited by another entity of the same nature and, even more, there can be another similar thing bigger and greater than it, then a self-caused entity must be infinite. If it were finite, there would be another entity greater than it, and it would be *causa sui* too. In this sense, then, what exists by itself is unique and cannot be compared to anything else.

Moreover, there is another remark to be made concerning this dispute on finitude and infinitude: the appearance of the body and thought, which are said to be finite because they are limited by other entities of their same nature, and because there can always be greater and bigger bodies and thoughts than those firstly considered. Furthermore, Spinoza outlines an additional criterion in relation to the body and thought: they belong to two different registers. Such a distinction implies that a body is always conditioned and determined by other bodies, and a thought is always conditioned and determined by other thoughts. This logical independence between body and thought questions the Cartesian dualism. Thus, the Spinozist criticism will reach nearly every domain of the Cartesian system, and it will radically reformulate it.

In addition to this, the re-articulation of the substance, which further involves a re-elaboration concerning the body and consciousness, introduces another paradigm: attributes and affections. Spinoza asserts that “by attribute I mean that which the intellect perceived of substance as constituting its essence” (Spinoza, *idem*). According to this definition, affects will be tied to the different modes that belong to the attributes of substance. Affects, therefore, are the expressions of substance, tied to modes: “by mode I mean the affections of substance, that is, that which is in something else and is conceived through something else” (Spinoza, *idem*). It is the realm of affects which will be the key to introduce the dimension of desire, understood by Spinoza as the *conatus*.

However, what must be strongly highlighted is the difference that Spinoza establishes between the body and consciousness, which has further consequences inasmuch as the body exceeds the paradigm of representations and ideas that thoughts make of it. In order to argue for this difference between these two attributes of the substance, Spinoza affirms that “things which have nothing in common with each other cannot be understood through each other; that is, the conception of the one does not involve the conception of the other” (Spinoza, *op. cit.*: 218).

Claiming that to understand a notion through another notion demands a similitude reinforces the previous statement by Spinoza: the body and the mind are not complementary, and the former does not depend on the latter. It also means that any sort of relation that can take place between these two notions is not based on oppositions. According to this division, thought is the attribute of the mind, and extension is the attribute of the body. In order to bind this thesis, what Spinoza clarifies, quarrelling against a dualist perspective, is the fact that if there were two different substances -

which would involve that they would have different attributes and modes -, they would have nothing in common. If they would have nothing in common, their cohabitation would become a huge contradiction. This is why his methodological and logical solution is an ontological monism, yet with two different modes.

Owing to the fact that a substance is a self-caused reality the essence of which involves its existence, and it is an infinite entity with infinite attributes and modes, it can only be unique. If there were two substances, the former would have created the latter, and this contradicts the very definition of it. Besides, substance cannot be divisible. If it were, owing to the fact that it is an infinite entity with infinite attributes, there would be two possibilities: either it would have infinite parts that would condition each other, which is absurd according to the definition of infinitude, or there would be many substances, which is also absurd. Substance, thus, is unique, and its indivisibility derives from its definition. Nonetheless, this indivisibility not only affects the substance, but also its attributes and modes. As to the modes, it means that the mind and the body cannot be reduced into smaller pieces either. This statement has some consequences concerning the bodily status because, as Spinoza remarks, it is quite difficult to represent a body not susceptible of being divided, which, at its turn, involves that a body is a totality for Spinoza. A fully significant and complete totality. An entity, that would not be *partes extra partes*, as Descartes asserted, but, on the very contrary, a whole.

However, how does Spinoza argue for this indivisibility of the body? The first question that he raises is related to the specificity of matter, a notion that has become extremely important in several contemporary debates. Spinoza stresses that matter is not made of several parts, but that it expresses itself in different modes, which have a modal partition, but not a substantial one. Matter, as an attribute of the substance in its extended mode, cannot be divisible, which would involve that it would be finite. Hence, Spinoza's solution is to substitute a substantial partition for a modal one. A similar strategy is pursued by him on the body's mortality and finite existence. A body can be perishable as a body, but not as a mode in which the substance can express itself.

Therefore, there is a double status of the body: the first refers to the bodily reality, and the second concerns its bond towards substance. This infinity has another consequence: the lack of temporality. Substance and all its modes (including the body and the mind) are eternal, which suggests an eidetic order not governed by time as an

operative and transcendental element. At the same time, this eidetic order implicitly establishes a hiatus between substance and all that derives from it, which is quite problematic because it reinstalls a dualistic register. This implicit dualism, previously criticised by Spinoza referring to the Cartesian proposal, involves that the substance is the cause of the essence of beings, but it does not mean that any essence implies its existence.

The further emphasis on the body stressed by Spinoza introduces the domain of volition, which operates next to affects. At this level, Spinoza refers to three modes: will, love and desire, which aim to undo the process of individuation orchestrated by the Cartesian dualism. Whereas Descartes placed the domain of extension in relation to definable, shaped and individual entities, Spinoza proposes an affective relationality inasmuch as the finitude of the body requires an in-finite series of other bodies. Relationality is, therefore, the key notion to understand the functionality of affects. As a result, the body is not situated as a passive element whose existence depends on consciousness, but there is a logical independence at the core of the development of desire and affects.

In relation to this difference between body and consciousness inasmuch as they are two different modes of substance, Spinoza affirms that whatever idea produced by consciousness refers to a bodily being: “That which constitutes the actual being of the human mind is basically nothing else but the idea of an individual actually existing thing” (Spinoza, *op. cit.*: 250). Such a remark might seem similar to the Cartesian system, though Spinoza elaborates an additional twist to re-think the relationship between the body and consciousness when he claims that there is an *affective* transitivity between these two modes. In this sense, taking into account that no idea, no representation, could be elaborated without the body as its background, any mutation of a body has its correlation at the level of representation: “the object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body – i.e., a definite mode of extension actually existing, nothing else” (Spinoza, *op. cit.*: 251). Consciousness, then, has an embodied-affective dimension.

In spite of this re-articulation of the body through recourse to affects and the transitivity as a mode of relationship between the body and consciousness, Spinoza is yet placed into a domain that confers a primacy to the organicist reality in detriment of other registers related to the body. As a matter of fact, his definition of bodies

specificities is based on the physical discourse, this is to say, the logical development of the scientific discourse, which has quite consequences on the approach towards the articulation of the bodily reality. Such a treatment of the body entails that Spinoza defines it by means of two differences: being at rest or being moved by another body according to an infinite causal procedure.

In addition to this, Spinoza remarks that there are two kinds of bodies: simple and composed. Those which are composed are made of other bodies, which reinforces his thesis according to which all that comes from the substance, considered as a substantial mode, cannot be divided into smaller portions, and its division is only referred to its concrete nature (i.e.: a body is divisible as a body, but not as a substantial mode). This also implies that the form of bodies *as* bodies is not substantial – a body is not *the* substance, but a *mode* of it –, yet the union of all the other bodies that composes them.

The logical difference between the body and consciousness has a further implication. Indeed, if a body can only be limited by other finite bodies, it entails that the relationship between consciousness and the body is not focused on an epistemological level, but on a relational one. Therefore, Spinoza declares that “the human mind has no knowledge of the body, nor does it know it to exist, except through ideas of the affections by which the body is affected” (Spinoza, *op. cit.*: 258).

Regarding this statement, Spinoza refers to an issue that, as far as my approach towards the body is concerned, is fundamental. Indeed, the transitivity between the body and consciousness finds a hiatus, which refers to the proper status of the former, and the impact it has for the latter. If consciousness does not have any sort of knowledge of the body as a mode of the substance it involves that the representations based on bodily realities do not capture the whole reality of the body. In this sense, the bond between these two substantial modes is not univocal, but it is governed by a surplus, which concerns the body and its enigmatic status regarding consciousness. The representations and the images made of the body, then, do not absorb them into a totality, but they are *partial* inscriptions of the body into an eidetic reality. Hence, concerning the bodily life, there is not any final and definitive truth, but a negative rest persists, which is at the core of the further philosophical and psychoanalytic turn on the subject and the body.

Moreover, what puts a question for consciousness is not limited to the realm of representation, but to the presumed represented object, which cannot be fully absorbed by the conscious dynamic. A body, therefore, works as an interrogation, which will be also used by Jean-Luc Nancy in his ontological discourse on the body as the fracturing point for ek-sistence. Besides, apart from Nancy's bodily ontology, the opacity conferred to the body as a body would also be taken up by Freud, when he claimed that "Psyche is extended: (it) know(s) nothing about it"⁴¹. Consequently, my aim is to stress that in Spinoza there is an attempt to point to what exceeds the representations made by of consciousness, which signals an unconscious dimension *avant la lettre*. Such a challenge for the metaphysical logic is reinforced by this further statement, according to which, "*the mind does not know itself except insofar as it perceives ideas of affections of the body*" (Spinoza, *op. cit.*: 260.).

Such a gesture regarding the relationship between consciousness and the body entails a further displacement in relation to Cartesianism. The *je* named by Descartes as the primary datum becomes an embodied reality, which enables to establish a comparison with the Freudian and Lacanian notions of the *ego*. For psychoanalysis, the *ego* is an extended representation of the body in its *imaginary dimension*⁴², which is also suggested by Spinoza in this quotation: "The human mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing except through the ideas of affections of its own body" (Spinoza, *op. cit.*: 261).

In addition to this, it is important to outline the distinction made by Spinoza, at the level of affects, between will and desire. This difference is at the core of my approach towards desire as the modality that primary defines the subject of the unconscious discovered by psychoanalysis. Hence, while the will has as its function to assent or to dissent, desire is the perseverance in one's living, which would be also evoked by Lacan at the level of the ethics of psychoanalysis, based on not giving up the subject's desire. At its turn, through the realm of desire Spinoza introduces an indeterminate zone between passivity and activity delineated by: emotions:

⁴¹ See Nancy, Jean-Luc (1992): *Corpus*. Paris, Galilée (2000), section « Psyche ist ausgedehnt », pages 22-25. The Freudian quotation that Nancy reproduces is "Psyche ist ausgedehnt: weiss nichts davon", page 22.

⁴² See Lacan, Jacques (1975a): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre I: les écrits techniques de Freud 1953-1954*. Paris, Le Seuil, mainly the section untitled « Idéal du moi et moi-idéal », pages 205-226.

By emotion [*affectus*] I understand the affections of the body by which the body's power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the ideas of these affections. Thus, if we can be the adequate cause of one of these affections, then by emotion I understand activity (...) (Spinoza, *op. cit.*: 278.).

This reflection on emotions, which can be passive or active depending on the presence or lack of mastery of the subject, reinforces the crucial importance that Spinoza confers to the body. Despite his previous organicist perspective on the body, the emotion introduces a reformulation of the body in a broader perspective. Such a reflection on emotions and affects is the clue to understand the role that desire will have in later discursive formulations, amongst which the Hegelian dialectic of lordship and bondage is fundamental.

Spinoza does not link desire to recognition, but to an expression of the *conatus* as the principle that pushes towards the perseverance on one's living, which could be assimilated to the pleasure principle that Freud explored⁴³ due to the fact that to persevere in one's living requires a homeostatic principle, as the pleasure principle is said to be. Concerning the *conatus*, Spinoza affirms that "the *conatus* with which each thing endeavours to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself" (Spinoza, *op. cit.*: 283).

However, as far as Spinoza is concerned, he explicitly ties the dimension of desire to consciousness, as he asserts in the following quotation: "Desire is *appetite accompanied by the consciousness thereof*" (Spinoza, *op. cit.*: 284). Hence, the relationship between consciousness and desire is regulated by the ideal of a mastery of the self. What remains unsolved in the Spinozist system is the status of desire, and if it can be satisfied by a concrete object.

⁴³ See Freud, Sigmund (1915c): « Instincts and Their Vicissitudes » in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIV "On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement, Papers on Meta-psychology and Other Works (1914-1916)". London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey. Also Freud, Sigmund (1920g): *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XVIII "Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works (1920-1922)". London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey. In Freudian terms, the pleasure principle is what pushes the subject to persevere on its existence, according to the criterion of obtaining pleasure and diminishing pain. Nonetheless, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920g), Freud revisited the hegemonic role of pleasure principle, adding a remark concerning the status of repetition and the compulsive movement towards the cessation of life. This is how Freud introduced the death drive, a concept that Lacan would later reformulate in his eleventh seminar, analysing the notion of repetition as one of the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis. For a further approach on the Lacanian reformulation of repetition, see Lacan, Jacques (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil.

Spinoza asserts that the pleasure principle structures desire, another element that confirms my previous suggestion on the similitude between the conatus and the Freudian pleasure principle. According to his view, this bond between pleasure and desire has some moral consequences: what is desired is what is said to be good, and what is hated is what is bad, which provides some sort of an emotional background for ethics. Furthermore, the fact that the desire expressed by the conatus is the essence of humankind means that “desire is the very essence, or nature, of each individual insofar as that is conceived as determined by some given state of its constitution to do something” (Spinoza, *op. cit.*: 308).

In addition to this, if desire is attached to the affects that belong to the body, a further hint regarding the constitution of desire could be suggested inasmuch as consciousness ignores the body in itself. Desire, therefore, emerges from an *unconscious* register, though Spinoza does not specifically refer to such a dimension. Thus, if desire is enabled by what exceeds consciousness, which becomes deprived of a further fixation, the nature of the presumed object that would satisfy desire remains ignored by the dynamic of consciousness, being unclear and uncertain. Besides, if each body is limited by another body, desire is not, strictly speaking, an affect produced by an isolated subject, but it is caused by another body. In this sense, then, another parallelism between Spinoza and psychoanalysis can be articulated: desire is not the expression of a sovereign autonomy, but of the impact of the Other onto the subject, this is to say, desire is the desire of the Other.

Therefore, despite Spinoza’s reference to the paradigm of virtue and self-mastery, to obey the dictates of reason implies that a virtuous life is what enables the access to what is good in terms of being desired, which also means to never give up one’s desire, as Lacan once claimed⁴⁴. Moreover, if the body is a mode of the substance, the *natura naturans*, and man, a non-dualistic mixture of body and mind, is an expression of it, whose essence is desire, it also involves that desire expresses the natural laws that govern the world.

⁴⁴ See Lacan, Jacques (1986): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII : L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil, namely the section « Les paradoxes de l'éthique ou As-tu agis en conformité avec ton désir ? », pages 359-376. The extreme consequences of conforming to one’s desire depicted by Lacan are brought to a poignant expression in, for instance, Pier Paolo Pasolini’s production, in films such as *Medea* (1969), and *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (1975). The radical commitment of the subject with desire is expressed in Pasolini’s works parallelly to a denounce of the fascist reduction of desire to a purely ideological purpose.

Consequently, despite Spinoza's inscription into a discourse based on the notion of substance, which conditions his sometimes ambivalent articulation regarding consciousness and the body, some further elements in relation to the relationality that characterizes the concept of vulnerability begin to be clarified. The dismantling of Cartesian dualism through an ontological monism, and the introduction of desire as the affect produced in relation to the Other opens a new paradigm later stressed by psychoanalysis, which, as a matter of fact, leads to a first approach towards the unconscious, and the fracture of the philosophical notion of being.

2.1.2. Reconsidering Space as a Fundamental Category: Spacing Bodies in Jean-Luc Nancy's Ontology.

The Spinozist remaking of the subject is a crucial tool for undoing the metaphysical legacy inasmuch as it signals a point of indeterminacy concerning the dynamics of representation and the body, which in the post-metaphysical discourse is radicalised. Such is the case of Jean-Luc Nancy's ontology, whose point of departure is the body as the fracture of *logos*, an ek-tatic reality that decentres any notion based on identity, mobilising difference as the crucial category.

I shall focus on Jean-Luc Nancy's work *Corpus* (1992), where he endeavours to elaborate an ontology whose referent is the body, not according to an organicist vision, but as a fracture that recuperates the notion of extension as the production of a spacing relationship. In other words, the body is what installs at the core of the subject a negativity understood as a point of indeterminacy.

In his ontological project, Nancy endeavours to undo, through recourse to a deconstructionist procedure, the metaphysical strategy to reduce the body to a full presence. Thus, he gives an account of the quotational operation that tries to reduce the body to a fixed object that can be insistently repeated in order to increase the operation of conferring an immutable and oppositional sense to the body.

Nancy attempts to unveil the further dimension that belongs to repetition: the lack of an original referent that sustains what is presumably reproduced by virtue of the regulatory ideal of sameness. In other words, there is no pre-discursive referent that might assure a stable status for the reiterative process. This feature introduces a

temporal dimension that does not presuppose that each instant will be equal to the others. To argue for this gap between each repetition, Nancy refers to the Derridean concept of *iterability* [*iterabilité*], which signals the structural anomaly of the reiterated element inasmuch as repetition institutes the very object it pretends to reproduce through different citations. Thus, the fixity that metaphysics tries to confer to the body as a mere organism located somewhere as fully representable is not a *primum datum*, but the result of a quotational and ritualised operation.

In this sense, Nancy mobilises the body as the entity that operates as a frontier for sense and, hence, for discourse, fracturing any attempt to produce a representative closure. Such a fracturing element attributed to the ontological status of the body is what Nancy enunciates in order to recover the notion of extension from a paradigm not simply based on the Cartesian dichotomy. Extension, thus, is articulated by means of a spacing dynamic. Space, therefore, is not simply reduced to its geometrical representation, but it concerns the tensional link between presence and absence, inoculating at the core of such a link an impossibility to produce a totality of sense.

As a result, as far as Nancy's ontology of the body is concerned, the fracturing status of the body is what ruins any attempt to tie the subject to the domain of sameness, claiming for a situated⁴⁵ perspective that defies any attempt to inscribe the subject into a solipsistic autonomy. By virtue of spacing, thus, the bond between the subject and the body is not understood as two opposed epistemic entities, but they are inscribed into a relationship deprived of a synthetic resolution: "Corps est la certitude sidérée, mise en éclats. Rien de plus propre, rien de plus étranger à notre vieux monde" (Nancy, 2000 [1992] : 9).

The fact that the body, as a fracture, becomes the explosion of any certitude as an aprioristic axiom has another consequence too: there is no certainty concerning the subject. *Who* the subject *is* is not a question with a self-evident answer, but a never-ending interrogation that pushes any sort of substantial identity into crisis. In addition to

⁴⁵ Regarding the situated status of the subject, and, therefore, of discourses and knowledge, which dismantles the abstract and universal perspective based on an incorporeal subject, see, among others: Spivak Chakravorty, Gayatri (1987): *In Other Words: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York, Routledge; Haraway, Donna (1991): *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York, Routledge; Braidotti, Rossi (1994): *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. Cambridge, Columbia University Press, and Barad, Karen (2007): *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, Duke University Press.

this, the deconstruction of certainty involves another aspect: alterity as a structural path. It is the very beginning of the rethinking of the subject not in terms of sameness, this is to say, governed by the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction, but according to difference.

Nonetheless, regarding the notion of difference, it is important to take into account that difference could be simply understood as the confrontation of the subject with what is other to itself. Such a definition of difference is, strictly speaking, a binary logic. Hence, the aim is to elaborate a notion of difference placed into the subject itself, this is to say, an internal rupture that inoculates into the very being of the subject a strangeness, a non-coincidence. This declination of difference is, indeed, the path opened by the Freudian discovery of the unconscious, this radical negativity that exceeds any attempt to capture the subject by means of any regulatory ideal.

Following this dislocation of the subject from a foundational perspective through the body, ek-sistence, by means of the recovery of the world through the concepts of spacing and extension, implies being outside oneself from the start, this is to say, a dispossession from any mythical interiority. The void that such a twist evokes is at odds with the metaphysical attempt to write a relationship between representation and what is represented, or, to write it in Lacanian terms, a non-complementarity between the signifier and the signified: “L’angoisse, le désir de voir, de toucher et manger le corps de Dieu, d’être ce corps et de n’être que ça font le principe de la (dé)raison de l’Occident” (Nancy, *idem*).

Therefore, one of the goals of the metaphysical *logos* was to eliminate any kind of in-determination by virtue of a fixation, a full presence that tried to give an account of a totality that the subject would be meant to be. This aim could only be achieved by the suppression of the body. Despite this effort, the recovery of the body in the domain of thought involves the impossibility to close the question that Hannah Arendt formulated: *Who are you?* which is also bound to repetition: any subject becomes such through some ritualised repetitions that create the illusion of a “natural” existence based on an agent as its cause. However, it is a mere illusion owing to the fact that, if repetition can occur, it must be able to take place without postulating a founding “I”.

Otherwise, once the “I” was absent, repetition would collapse⁴⁶, which also means that there is a pre-existing repetitive mechanism that enables the subject, being a structure that always points to an absence, the always-possible absence of the subject that becomes subjected, and its mortal condition.

In addition to this, this ontology of the body takes into account the language as a structure for signification, this is to say, the creation and institution of meaningful practices and situations by means of the use of signifiers. Notwithstanding with that, in Nancy’s ontology the body is not purely and simply reduced to a linguistic entity, which can be found in some constructivists discourses, but there is a relationality between body and language, a tensional link. The body, therefore, is not either a pre-discursive reality or just a linguistic creation, but it is placed *between* these two poles. As a result, the link between language and body is expressed through the metaphorical recourse to writing, which suggests a bordering of the bodily surface by the signifier, inscribing onto the body its relational constitution between matter and language:

Cela n’arrive peut-être pas exactement *dans* l’écriture, si celle-ci a un « dedans ». Mais en bordure, en limite, en pointe, en extrémité d’écriture, *il n’arrive que ça*. Or l’écriture a son lieu sur la limite. In n’arrive donc rien d’autre à l’écriture, s’il lui arriver quelque chose, que de *toucher*. Plus précisément : de toucher le corps (ou plutôt, tel et tel corps singulier) *avec l’incorporel* du « sens ». Et par conséquent, de *rendre l’incorporel touchant*, ou de faire du *sens* une touche (Nancy, *op. cit.*: 13).

The body, therefore, in its fracturing status, is the limit for the production of sense, this is to say, the material limitation for language. In other words, the body points to a hole at the core of the process of signification which no predicate or attribute can successfully absorb. Besides, the metaphor of touch, of rendering sense “touchable”, implies that sense and the body are not independent one from the other, though the latter is not reducible to the former. The bodily reality operates as its fracture, the impossibility for a monolithic and abstract logos, which was also present in Spinoza’s remarks when he asserted that no thought could happen without a body as its place and mark. Even more: the body, in its bond with language, inaugurates an *additional dimension*: affectivity, as Spinoza had stressed. As a result, the dimension of sense is detached from a presumed abstract and neutral domain, which creates a bond between

⁴⁶ See Derrida, Jacques (1988): *Limited Inc.* Evanston, Northwestern University Press. Translation by Gerald Braff. Mainly the section untitled « Signature, Event, Context », pages 1-23, where Derrida elaborates a link between repetition, language and writing that involves that the assertion according to which language is performative means that the always-possible absence of the subject is a structural issue.

desire and discourse inasmuch as desire cannot be analysed without taking into account that affects are derived from the bonds with the Other⁴⁷.

Therefore, having a body rooted in space as a spacing entity, which entails a paradoxical tie between presence and absence in the body due to the fact that there is no proper place of departure, means that to ek-sist is to exit the point, as Antonia Birnbaum remarked in an epilogue to the English translation of *Corpus*⁴⁸. In other words, exposition, being placed outside of oneself, is the way in which ek-sistence takes place:

Les corps ne sont pas du « plein », de l'espace rempli, (l'espace est partout rempli) : ils sont l'espace *ouvert*, c'est-à-dire en un sens l'espace proprement *spacieux* plutôt que spatial, ou ce qu'on peut encore nommer le *lieu*. Les corps sont des lieux d'existence, et il n'y a pas d'existence sans lieu, sans *là*, sans un « ici », « voici », pour le *ceci*. (Nancy, *op. cit.*: 16).

The ontological perspective inaugurated by Nancy, then, opens a theoretical and ethical reflection towards one of the most fundamental elements of the notion of vulnerability: a dis-possession from any individualistic account that situates the subject in a relationship of dependency, this is to say, there is no subject apart from its alienation towards the Other⁴⁹.

Furthermore, there is another question that needs to be highlighted from this previous quotation of Jean-Luc Nancy's *Corpus*: if the body is a place for existence, a place in terms of openness and not as a container that has to be filled in, existence is not only located and embodied, but it is also *singular*. Each body, then, is a unique ek-sistence that builds itself in a relational way in a world that it inhabits as a spacing entity traversed by language. It also means that any place is occupied by a *who* whose life is not a mere datum, but traversed by a *singular* story in relation to others.

⁴⁷ I will deeply analyse this question concerning the remarks stressed by Jacques Lacan and his claim that the unconscious is the domain of the Other, being desire the operation that places the subject always beyond itself, desiring from a dimension of strangeness. See Lacan, Jacques (1966): « Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir dans l'inconscient freudien » in *Écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 793-828, and (2013) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI : Le désir et son interprétation 1958-1959*. Éditions de la Martinière- Le Champ Freudien.

⁴⁸ See Birnbaum, Antonia (2008): « To exist is to exist the point » in Nancy, Jean-Luc (1992): *Corpus*. New York, Fordham Press (2008). Translation by Richard A. Rand, pages 145-149.

⁴⁹ The concept of alienation, whose origin could be traced since the Hegelian dialectic of recognition inasmuch as self-consciousness demands to be recognised in order to obtain an existential status, was articulated by Marx as a condition derived from material and ideological forms of exploitation. Nonetheless, what I am suggesting in my research is an alienation inflicted on the subject since its very constitution due to the effect of the signifier onto the living the body, which coerces it to be outside itself in order to be. As I will argue in the section devoted to Lacan's reformulation of desire, the subject cannot be without this bond with the Other, in its imaginary and symbolic dimension. For a further approach towards this notion, see Lacan, Jacques (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil.

Following this reflection, the bond that takes place between the subject and the Other, which is always mediated by language in terms of a desiring demand, can never be taken for granted, nor even its consequences. The demand as a way to reconsider ek-sistence as a singular relation between subjects is a crucial part in the reconsideration of ek-sistence as located and emerging from the body, though it signals a condition for the subject's existence: its finitude. In this sense, subjective relations are also exposed to the loss of the Other who occupied the place of a desired or loved object. Thus, its disappearance constitutes, at its turn, a wound for the subject, which Freud analysed in relation to mourning, a remark also stressed by Judith Butler in her *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004a)⁵⁰. Simultaneously, the relationality that ontologically enables the subject is also traversed by what will be analysed in the third chapter of this research: aggression and violence, which, as a matter of fact, can also be self-inflicted, as Freud signalled concerning the dimension of the super-ego, and the reflexive voice of the drives.

Moreover, inasmuch as the ontological relationality outlined by Nancy regarding the body and its spacing constitution is an incessant process, each bodily encounter involves a renewal of the enigmatic nature of alterity, which does not merely appeal to the Other, but also to the subject. In other words, the decentering implied by such indeterminacy does not take for granted any fixed identity, which installs an odd reality at the core of subjectivity. The notion of relation, then, is what installs the subject into an ek-tatic disposition, transforming the paradigm of being by means of the Derridean concept of differing from the Cartesian level of the ego.

2.1.2.1. Beyond Being: Some Glimpses of the Real-Impossible to Represent

However, in his work *L'intrus* (2000), the ontology of the body that Nancy had previously elaborated finds an impasse that, as far as I am concerned, exceeds the ontological dimension of being. Indeed, the strangeness that he outlines concerning the

⁵⁰ Butler, Judith (2004a): *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York, Verso, where Butler began to discuss a bond between vulnerability and dispossession. In this sense, she offered a reflection on mourning as a loss that confirms our relational existence and bodily exposure. See, mainly, the chapter « Violence, Mourning, Politics », pages 19-49.

negativity that impregnates the experience of inhabiting the body signals a hole at the core of being that goes far beyond a relational account of the subject: it is a void that pierces sense and language. In other words, it is a first glimpse of the Real-impossible to represent. Hence, what I will argue in this section is a reconsideration of the Real by Nancy. In this sense, my aim is to assert that Nancy reinstalls the body into the domain of being, which entails a translation of the Real into language by means of the indeterminacy he confers to relationality. Indeed, as I will carefully outline in forthcoming sections, what Nancy disregards is the impossibility to sustain even the notion of relationship due to the radical negativity that imposes the domain of the Real, which largely exceeds the production of sense, incarnating its internal excessive limit. In this sense, the *real* of the body is a decentrement from the being articulated by post-metaphysics due to the strangeness of *having* a body:

Où est-ce qu'on peut établir ici l'adéquation et la justice? Qui est-ce que peut les mesurer, qui les prononcent ? Tout va m'arriver de quelque autre part et dehors de cette histoire, ainsi comme mon cœur, mon corps me furent arrivés de quelque autre part, ils sont une autre part « en » moi-même (Nancy, 2000 : 20).

According to this quotation, I would suggest that Nancy does not properly consider a crucial psychoanalytic notion: the body, as a living body, is the realm of *jouissance* due to the surplus derived from the effect of the signifier onto the body. Thus, when Nancy asserts that “l'intrus est en moi et fait de moi un étranger pour moi-même” (Nancy, *op. cit.*: 32), what is at stake here is the logical relevance conferred to this strangeness, this is to say, if strangeness is related to the production of sense or if it becomes an occasion to signal its collapse. Such a collapse must be considered all along what becomes a gap for the Symbolic: the drives and sex. Indeed, as I will develop in this last section, the body obtained from the relational ontology is a body fully inscribed into the signifier, which involves an erasure of its sexed dimension, which entails a hiatus between ontology and psychoanalysis.

In addition, this quotation from *58 indices sur le corps. Extension de l'âme* (2004), reinforces my hypothesis concerning the limit of an ontological approach towards the body:

Mais, dans ce sens, la chose étendue n'est pas simplement extérieur ni étrangère à la chose pensante. Elle est son lieu d'exercice ou, encore plus, elle est son exercice même. Pour se mettre en relation avec soi-même dans toutes ses opérations, la chose pensante doit se séparer de la simple ponctuation. Elle doit s'étendre. En s'étendant, elle se dévie de soi-même – elle ne se partage vraiment, elle ne se coupe pas, sinon que elle se dévie. Elle doit retourner de cette déviation, elle doit retourner à « soi-même ». Mais ce tour

demande d'un dehors. Elle se pourra constituer en un « dedans » et une *égoïté* seulement là. Le « dedans », dès le début, est formé par la déviation-dehors, il est proprement *ouvert dès le dehors* (Nancy, 2004 : 10).

In spite of Nancy's attempt to mobilise the body as the limit for discourse and the production of sense, what remains problematic in his approach is a presumed *unified body*. Indeed, such a *representation* of the body is a linguistic effect, a remark that Lacan signalled in relation to the three registers: the specular and unified image; the body inscribed into the Law of the signifier in its production of signification, and what Nancy completely erases: the fragmented and sexed *real* dimension of the body. This third register, which exceeds the domain of sense, is the realm of *jouissance*, this is to say, the enjoyment obtained from the impact of language onto the living organism, which gives birth to the drives, and which also deprives the sexed reality of the body of an instinctual object. As I will justify all along this dissertation, it is the very notion of *jouissance* that entails an insurmountable difference between ontology and psychoanalysis.

In order to further justify my criticism, I think it is important to pay attention to the ontogenesis of the body elaborated by Lacan in relation to the looking-glass phase. Such a notion entails that there is no subject born *with* a body, but what the subject identifies and recognises as its *own* body is an image made by means of the effect of the signifier. Indeed, the dimension of *being* that Nancy mobilises in his discourse simply gives an account of the *relationship* between the subject and the body, while, as far as I am concerned, psychoanalysis offers more tools to go beyond a relational discourse, signalling its failure, as I will argue in forthcoming sections.

Jacques Lacan, thanks to the clinical dimension of psychoanalysis, dismantles what ontology introduces as a *primum datum*: a relationship between the body and the subject as two simply discursive elements. Hence, in his analysis on the birth of the body as a total form, this is to say, a unitary entity, Lacan outlines that to have a body is not a self-evident feature, but it must be recognised as such, which means that Otherness performs a crucial role in such a process. In this sense, Lacan stresses that a body is not reduced to the living organism, yet it is the result of the bond between the organism and language by means of an *imaginary mechanism*. The image, regarding the register of the Imaginary, will work as a formal package that provides with some consistency the libidinal bodily flesh. In addition to this, such a unified image is the

founder of the *Moi*, this is to say, the self that is made of partial and plural identifications, which ignores the unknown dimension of the unconscious.

Such a primary definition of the role of the image refers, then, to the inscription of the child into language, which happens thanks to the Other that desires and speaks to it. Before such a moment, the infant, this is to say, the subject deprived of language and speech, has a polymorphous corporeal reality lacked of a specular reverse that confers to it an image, this is to say, a form. Thanks to the imaginary creation of the bodily surface, the subject is able to construct a world, being its body a spacing entity, as Nancy declares. The acquisition of the *imaginary body* is exemplified by Jacques Lacan through a visual experiment: the scenario of this experiment introduces a table with a pitcher that contains some flowers, which is placed between an oval mirror and a vertical one. In addition to these elements, there is an eye observing this scene, which works as a metaphor of the subject. This eye observes this space from a corner, which means that its sight of the table and the pitcher with the flowers is conditioned by its position.

The important detail highlighted by Lacan is the *virtual* vision obtained from these objects, which means that it is not a *real* vision, but it is shaped by the disposition of these objects and the reflection of them. As a result, the perception of the table and the pitcher with the flowers, due to the oval mirror and the lighting effects, would be the following one: due to an *optical illusion*, the eye perceives the pitcher under the table, while the flowers are seen on the table. All these elements implied in the scene work as metaphors for different objects. The table as a surface represents the body, while the pitcher and the flowers symbolize the infantile drives and desire. Thus, the child, when it observes its image in front of a mirror, obtains a specular and imaginary reflect of a total bodily unity that is not a direct translation of its immature little body:

C'est sur quoi j'insiste dans ma théorie du stade du miroir – la seule vue de la forme totale du corps humain donne au sujet une maîtrise imaginaire de son corps, prématurée par rapport à la maîtrise réelle. Cette formation est détachée du processus même de la maturation et ne se confond pas avec lui. Le sujet anticipe sur l'achèvement de la maîtrise psychologique et cette anticipation donnera son style à tout exercice ultérieur de la maîtrise motrice effective (Lacan, 1975a : 128).

This imaginary and specular creation of the body as an extended surface is not a pure optical experiment, but one of the very effects of inhabiting language as a signifying structure that, moreover, traverses the body, as this scenario shows. This

schema, as a matter of fact, already signals two dimensions that Nancy does not take into account in his ontology of the body: the drives and desire. Indeed, due to the effect of language onto the body, the drives are derived from the cutting operation of the signifier, which delimits certain limiting zones such as the lips, the anus, the eyelids, the urethra, the ears and the vagina. The body and the drives, then, are placed *between* biology and culture.

As far as desire is concerned, in the constitution of the “I” as an image of the body, it already deploys a primordial role because the recognition of the image of one’s body is bond to the Other, which means that desire is not an “inner” quality, but a manifestation of the unconscious as the discourse of the Other⁵¹. The remark concerning the imaginary body as the topology on which Nancy’s ontology is mostly concerned is also a criticism regarding the Cartesian subject, and the Spinozist conception of the body. In fact, if the “I” [*Moi*] is not the subject, as Freud had already noticed⁵², the Cartesian *cogito* becomes an idealised version of the *Moi* that takes the illusionary self-sufficiency that the image of the body provides as an eternal truth due to the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy, as Nietzsche had also outlined⁵³. Concerning Spinoza, a similar criticism is also suitable inasmuch as he departs from the imaginary register of the body as a founding reality, which, indeed, would not take place outside language and the impact of the Symbolic:

Dans le rapport de l’imaginaire et du réel, et dans la constitution du monde telle qu’en résulte, tout dépend de la situation du sujet. Et la situation du sujet (...) est essentiellement caractérisée par sa place dans le monde symbolique, autrement dit dans le monde de la parole (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 130).

Furthermore, Lacanian psychoanalysis implies an effort to enlarge the discourse on the subject and the triple dimension of its body beyond the paradigm of the metaphysics of substance. The subject and its body, therefore, are not inscribed into a

⁵¹ See Lacan, Jacques (1975a): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre I : les écrits techniques de Freud 1953-1954*. Paris, Le Seuil, and Lacan, Jacques (1973) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI : les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* 1964. Paris, Le Seuil, where Lacan developed this notion of the unconscious and its bond to the domain of the Symbolic, a question that I will develop in the next subsection.

⁵² See Freud, Sigmund (1923): *The Ego and the Id* in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIX “The Ego and the Id and Other Works (1923-1925)”. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1954). Translation by James Strachey. Freud explicitly defined the “I” [*Moi*] as an extended projection based on the body, which confers some consistency to the subject.

⁵³ See Nietzsche, Friedrich (1873): *On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense*. New York, Aristeus Books (2012). Translation by Paul F. Glenn, where Nietzsche states that the trope *par excellence* according to which language works is metaphor, substituting things without an “objective” referent.

formalist register of an essence that gives an account of their truth, but their nexus is based on the linguistic *subjection* regulated by the Symbolic⁵⁴. Indeed, what Lacan signals regarding the imaginary dimension of the body and the self is the fantasy that sustains the illusionary autonomy derived from this image, which does not refer to an ontological attribute of the subject. As Lacan outlines, the very constitution of the body as a specular image can only occur in relation to *what does not belong to the "I"*, this is to say, it imposes an initial alienation towards alterity: "Le moi se constitue par rapport à l'autre. Il en est corrélatif. Le niveau auquel l'autre est vécu situe exactement le niveau auquel, littéralement, le moi existe pour le sujet" (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 83).

Following this issue, the point of convergence between Nancy's ontology of the body and Lacan's analysis of the imaginary body refers to the status that such a specular creation acquires in relation to the world, becoming the very condition for space. The extended world, thus, "ce n'est rien d'autre que les images du corps humain, et l'hominisation du monde, sa perception en fonction d'images liées à la structuration du corps" (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 223). In this imaginary construction of the world, the liaison with the other to whom the subject is attached oscillates between fascination and aggression, which links this issue to the Hegelian statement of desire as the desire *for recognition*. Thus, the Imaginary is what institutes a dual register between the self and what is alien to itself, which is further dislocated by the negativity of the signifier introduced by the Symbolic⁵⁵:

Le sujet repère et reconnaît originellement le désir par l'intermédiaire, non seulement de sa propre image, mais du corps du son semblable. C'est à ce moment-là exactement que s'isole chez l'être humain la conscience en tant que conscience de soi. C'est pour autant que c'est dans le corps de l'autre qu'il reconnaît son désir que l'échange se fait. C'est pour autant que son désir est passé de l'autre côté qu'il s'assimile le corps de l'autre et qu'il se reconnaît comme corps (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 233).

⁵⁴ Nonetheless, I will also point to Lacan's reformulation of the body as a *substance jouissante*, as he asserted in the late period of his teaching, fully concerned by the third register, the Real. For a further approach, see Lacan, Jacques (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil, namely the section untitled « De la jouissance », pages 9 – 18.

⁵⁵ However, gender and sexuality theorists like Judith Butler fill in the Symbolic with the content of a heterosexual matrix, misleading the Lacanian notion of the term, and missing a crucial question: the chain of significations that the Symbolic is said to be is based on the absence of an external referent. See Butler, Judith (1990): *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge; (1993): *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York, Routledge; (2004b): *Undoing Gender*. New York, Routledge, and Lacan, Jacques (1978): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II : le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse 1954-1955*. Paris, Le Seuil, namely the section untitled « La lettre volée », pages 261-280.

As far as the sexed status is concerned, which is not assimilated to imaginary ideals or symbolic articulations of sexual difference, a further difference needs to be outlined. The relationship established by Nancy between body and writing is what enables him to assimilate sex and sexual difference to a differing process, this is to say, a fragmented reconsideration of *sense*. In other words, sex is finally introduced into text, with no rest outside such a discursive strategy. Despite this reduction of sex to the Imaginary and the Symbolic, Jacques Lacan and Jean-Luc Nancy agree on a reformulation of sex and sexual difference that does not have as an exclusive reference the genital organs or some chromosomes whose translation is a binary expression. Thus, the status of the sexed dimension of the body is not simply pre-discursive, though for psychoanalysis there is an *extra* element that suspends the signifying chain, this is to say, the real of *jouissance*. By erasing the Real, Nancy attempts to articulate a similar status between the Derridean *différance*, this is to say, the differing process of the signifier due to writing, and sex, understood as multiple and fragmented predicate:

Se différencier en tant que sexe ou en tant que sexué est, précisément, ce qui constitue le sexe ou la sexuation, c'est au même temps ce qui fait possible le rapport sexuel et c'est, en fin, ce qui ne donne lieu à son propre *entéléchie* : personne n'est pas homme ou femme sans reste, aussi que personne n'est non plus homo- or hétérosexuel sans reste (...) (Nancy, 2001: 32)⁵⁶.

According to this reformulation of sex by means of deconstruction, sex does not appeal to any sort of pre-discursive truth placed in an anatomical instance, but it is a differing process bond to the status of the body as a resting fracture. Therefore, it becomes a disseminated notion not susceptible of being synthesised in a univocal category, as a universal classification, but it appeals to a *rest*. In order to deny a substantial approach towards sex and sexual difference, Nancy argues for a reconsideration of sex as the domain tied to ek-sistence and the body that incessantly differs from itself, radically decentring the subject and having a multiple and fragmentary sense. In other words, it would be a rest that would dispute any identity category as an immutable fact, installing at the core of subjectivity a strangeness that could be similarly related to the Freudian notion of *Unheimlich*, feeling odd at home⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ This notion of sex in terms of an ontological *différance* was first formulated by Jacques Derrida in relation to the presumed absence of sex in the Heideggerian *Dasein*. See, Derrida, Jacques (1983): « *Geschlecht*. Différence sexuelle, différence ontologique » in *Cahiers de l'Herne n° 45 : Heidegger*. Paris, Galilée, pages 436-447.

⁵⁷ See Freud, Sigmund (1919): « The Odd One In », in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, volume XVII “An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works” (1953-

On the contrary, Lacan signals that sex cannot be deconstructed because it is not a predicate, but it incarnates a void, which entails that it is an impasse for sense, its self-contradiction, placed in the dimension of the Real, which resists being deciphered, as Joan Copjec outlines in *Read My Desire. Lacan against the Historicists* (1994): “While sex is, for psychoanalysis, never simply a natural fact, it is also never reducible to any discursive construction, to sense, finally” (Copjec, 1994: 204).

Despite this divergence between psychoanalysis and Nancy’s ontology of the body, such a theoretical turn regarding a further consideration of the body is an extremely useful tool in order to understand the relationality that traverses the concept of vulnerability. Hence, the spacing structure of the body that Nancy signals has a parallelism with the dependence that both Cavarero and Butler stress, elaborating a new cultural frame where the body opens a new register that radically breaks with the metaphysical tradition.

2.2. Desire and language

I shall proceed to introduce the notion of desire in the following pages, already mentioned in the aforementioned section devoted to Spinoza’s *conatus* and the realm of affects. The analysis will be based on two authors: Hegel and Lacan. Both authors articulate desire by means of a crucial notion: negativity.

As far as Hegel is concerned, my critical reading of his *dictum* of desire as the desire for recognition will be guided by the interest of this dissertation regarding the limits and potentialities of enunciating vulnerability as an ontological condition. In this sense, such a critical analysis will not refer to classical works such as Kojève’s *Introduction a la lecture de Hegel* (1947) or Hyppolite’s *Génèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l’esprit de Hegel* (1946). Instead, my theoretical apparatus will be based on Judith Butler’s *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France* (1999 [1987]); Jacques Lacan’s reformulations of the Hegelian proposal on desire in works such as *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre I: Les écrits techniques de Freud 1953-1954* (1975a), *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II: Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique psychanalytique 1954-1955* (1978), and *Le*

1974). Translation by James Strachey, which refers to the internal fracture of recognition due to the unconscious and, secondly, to anxiety.

séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI: Le désir et son interprétation 1958-1959 (2013); Jean-Luc Nancy's *Hegel: L'inquiétude du négatif* (1997), and Judith Butler's and Catherines Malabou's co-authored work « *You Be My Body For Me: Body, Shape and Plasticity in Hegel's Phenomenology of the Spirit* » (2011). All of them, implicitly or explicitly, explore the bond between consciousness and the body, the limit that the body is said to be to achieve self-mastery, and the links between desire and alterity.

The next step in relation to desire is based on the reformulation entailed by Lacan in relation to the nexus between desire and the unconscious, which refers to language as a crucial element to resignify the notion of negativity. In addition to this, thanks to Lacan, I will outline the limits and problems inherent to recognition, unsmaking the violence that such a concept implies concerning alterity and the subject.

2.2.1. G.W.F. Hegel's Lordship and Bondage Dialectic: Desire of Recognition.

Dealing with the Hegelian notion of desire is an intricate and complex operation inasmuch as it is based on a dialectic articulation of consciousness as a historical and mutable entity the truth of which is not static, but progressive. In relation to this issue, the Hegelian discourse takes into account the impasses to which consciousness is confronted. Consciousness is translated by Hegel into a progressive mechanism that needs to begin again and find new ways for its historical expression. Such a dialectic constitution of the Hegelian subject has its echo in the primary scission Hegel remarks in relation to consciousness, mobilising to different elements: consciousness as the "I" – translated by Lacan as the imaginary self or *moi* –, and substance, which entails that the Hegelian realm of subjectivity is structured by virtue of an internal difference and negativity.

In this sense, Hegel is alien to the Cartesian *ego* as an isolated entity, yet consciousness ek-sists in a worldly scenario that confronts it to what is alien to itself, which is as at the core of mediation inasmuch as the subject has no immediate access to itself or to the external reality. This displacement from the egotistic paradigm of Cartesianism and the internal fracture outlined by Hegel gave birth to an incipient notion of the *un-conscious* inasmuch as consciousness is deprived of any reality that

does not require any mediation, this is to say, the aid of what differs from itself. Indeed, the Hegelian subject never obtains a final satisfaction because the nexus between consciousness and desire is a constant path towards otherness, a remark also stressed by Jean-Paul Sartre when he declared that *l'être-pour-soi* or the subject was a totality-non-totalised⁵⁸. Such a particular structure between desire and consciousness is well defined by Butler: “Hegel claims that “self-consciousness in general is Desire” (paragraph 167b), by which he means that desire signifies the *reflexivity* of consciousness, the necessity that it becomes other to itself in order to know itself (Butler, 1999 [1987]: 7)”.

The definition of “desire” in Hegel’s work is not univocal, but it changes at the same time that consciousness experiences its own modifications. Such experiences include the irreducible tension between universality and singularity, sacrificed by virtue of the universality in a synthetic dialectic, whereby desire also mutates. One of the preliminary definitions of desire is appetite, this is to say, possessing what might be foreigner to consciousness, which operates indifferently to language⁵⁹. In this first modality of desire, consciousness is presumed to be solipsistic, despite the bond between alterity and the subject inasmuch as it desires what exceeds from itself, which means that negativity is already operating. Hence, this feature already diminishes the presumed loneliness that Hegel confers to this initial stage. As a result, from the very beginning, the Hegelian subject exists by virtue of an ecstatic disposition, being confronted to negativity thanks to incessantly transcending its facticity, which is constantly rebuilt. Therefore, consciousness is never the same as it was before, as Hegel asserted concerning the “I” as “the referent and the very act of reference. It is this very “I” that opposes to another one and, at the same time, it transcends this other, which is for him just himself” (Hegel, 1977 [1807]: 186). According to this quotation, what Hegel endeavours to clarify is the fact that the portion of consciousness that refers to the self [*Moi*] plays a double role in the acquisition of a progressive self-mastery for consciousness in its relation towards alterity. The self, in such a movement, splits itself

⁵⁸ See Sartre, Jean-Paul (1943): *L'être et le néant. Essai d'une ontologie phénoménologique*. Paris, Gallimard, where the *être-pour-soi* is said to be a negative entity that oscillates between transcendence and facticity, which places it in an unsurmountable frontier.

⁵⁹ This Hegelian statement on the existence of a pre-linguistic desire in terms of appetite would be clearly disputed by Lacan thanks to its schema on desire, in which he explored the linguistic mediation proper to desire, and the notion of the *objet petit a*. See Lacan, Jacques (2013): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI : Le désir et son interprétation 1958-1959* Paris, Éditions La Martinière – Le Champ Freudien, and Lacan, Jacques (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI : Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil.

in two different terms that refer to enunciation (what Lacan would later reformulate as the unconscious *Je*), and the content of the enunciation, the *moi* or “I”. In its opposing dynamic to otherness, consciousness would try to absorb alterity in an effort to establish a non-contradictory principle. Nonetheless, consciousness fails, as the dialectic of lordship and bondage suggests. As Butler affirms: “The Hegelian subject is not a self-identical subject who travels smugly from one ontological place to another; it is *its* travels, and *is* every place in which it finds itself” (Butler, *op. cit.*: 81).

Therefore, there is a structural tension between the aim to achieve self-mastery and the dynamic status of consciousness that would incessantly pursue an impossible autonomy, uncatchable owing to its ontological constitution as a dynamic negativity that always transcends itself. Besides, consciousness begins its path as a subject that faces the obstacles it finds in its way, which also involves several modifications in its disposition, and in its bond towards otherness. Inhabiting a world that must be conquered, consciousness begins its desiring constitution in its aim to transform the environment from otherness to sameness:

As external, consciousness is “other” to itself, which means that it is which is generally understood as “other” to itself, namely, the world; hence, the inverse of this statement of identity is also true: consciousness of the world is always simply consciousness of itself in its alterity (Butler, *op. cit.*: 31).

Following this statement, the travel that consciousness undertakes is structurally rooted into the world. It implies, therefore, a process of embodiment, which recalls of Nancy’s ontology of the body and the Spinozist monism. Hence, the body is involved from the beginning in this tremendous path, a remark that in the Hegelian text is explicitly present concerning the role conferred to the slave and the revolutionary terror as the anxious moment that makes the body tremble.

Hegel remarks that desire in terms of appetite also refers to another moment of consciousness as *self*-consciousness, where desire is bond to the Spinozist *conatus* in terms of persevering in one’s living. Yet, desire in terms of appetite does not have a concrete object as its goal, which means that its object is not representable in concrete terms, which involves a further negativity concerning desire. Desire, thereby, dislocates consciousness from the Cartesian realm, questioning its transparency and self-mastery. The desiring path inaugurates a region not governed by the Aristotelian non-contradiction principle, which also has consequences concerning causality and its

domain⁶⁰. As far as self-consciousness and desire are concerned, what incessantly appears is a negativity that fractures the subject in terms of difference, which implies a splitting at the core of subjectivity that diminishes any voluntarism.

In relation to such an internal splitting of the subject, each time self-consciousness aims to detach from its body in order to obtain a greater self-mastery, it becomes a failure, as it is made clear in the dialectics of lordship and bondage⁶¹. Moreover, Hegel adds that self-consciousness can only be satisfied by *another* self-consciousness, which introduces a dependency that was presumably absent in earlier stages of consciousness. In other words, self-consciousness becomes *structurally alienated* in front of the Other, which is stressed by Hegel: “Self-consciousness is an object for consciousness, an object that establishes in itself his being-other-than-itself, or it rather establishes the difference as a void difference, and, at the same time, it is in this domain a self-sufficient object” (Hegel, *op. cit.*: 193).

According to this quotation, self-consciousness is instituted through a reflexive gesture, producing a split at the core of consciousness, which creates a surplus that pierces the subject. Such a split is not bound to an epistemic operation, but to the transcending logic of desire in its pursuit of alterity, becoming the subject other for itself. In this sense, even reflexivity is displaced from the paradigm of consciousness, which responds to what escapes the domain of any binary apprehension. The desiring dimension, therefore, limits any enterprise focused on autonomy inasmuch as it separates the subject from any certainty, being negativity a lack of any resolution⁶². As a result, this embodied and desiring subject is bound to exist by means of a social bond which goes far beyond any egotistic prerogative, being the Other the instance and figure

⁶⁰ The subversion of the principle of causality would be radically questioned by Lacan concerning his analysis of *Das Ding* and the region of *jouissance*, a preliminary proposal on this domain that he exposed in the beginning of the second period of his teaching, influenced by the category of the Symbolic in terms of the Law. See Lacan, Jacques (1986): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII: L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil, mainly the sections untitled « *Das Ding* » (pages 55-70), and « *Das Ding II* » (pages 71-86).

⁶¹ Following this hypothesis, it is extremely useful to pay attention to Butler's reading of Lordship and Bondage in Butler, Judith (1997a): *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, namely the chapter untitled “Stubborn Attachment, Bodily Subjection. Rereading Hegel on the Unhappy Unconsciousness”, pages 31-62.

⁶² This is why Lacan always claimed that desire comes from the Other, which alienates and radically decentres the subject, introducing the subject from the beginning into an ecstatic dis-position. See Lacan, Jacques (1978) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II: le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique psychanalytique 1954-1955*. Paris, Le Seuil, and Lacan, Jacques (2013) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI : Le désir et son interprétation 1958-1959*. Paris, Éditions La Martinière-Le Champ Freudien.

that places the subject into a symbolic-linguistic position. Such a negative procedure is summarised by Butler by means of this mechanism: “As an effort to negate, consuming desire seeks to annihilate the independence of some living object (it cannot negate life in the general sense, so restricts itself to some determinate manifestation of the enemy)” (Butler, *op. cit.*: 37).

Furthermore, the destructiveness of desire as appetite produces a subjective division according to which the “I” does not coincide with the desiring instance, which becomes opaque and impossible to represent by conscious mechanisms. Such is, in Lacanian concepts, the effect of language and its production of the subject of the unconscious, which does not coincide with the partial identifications of the self⁶³.

The remark made by Hegel according to which self-consciousness can only be satisfied by another self-consciousness introduces a scenario where the encounter that takes place is not between two *res cogitans*, but between two *embodied* subjects. Such a twist, then, puts a limit to the synthetical logic that Hegel attributes to the paths of consciousness by means of successive moments of mediation, pushing the subject outside any psychological interiority previous to ek-sistence. This scenario, which is governed by a presumed intersubjectivity, coerces the subject towards recognition, depending on the other in order to be. The result of this encounter, therefore, is not any autonomous subject, being the body an obstacle for the acquisition of free-will. In Hegelian terms, “self-consciousness is *in itself* and *by itself* as long as and by the fact that it is in itself and by itself to another, this is to say, it can only exist as recognised by another” (Hegel, *op. cit.*: 194).

As the passage on lordship and bondage shows, recognition does not prove to be a symmetrical relationship, but *a-symmetrical*, in which the subjective positions of master and slave might not be equated. Concerning the slave, in order to preserve its life in front of the master, his role is to nourish and work for the former, who must renounce

⁶³ Hence, Lacan remarked that the self [*Moi*] was not the enouncing principle presumably tied to consciousness, but an extended projection emerged from the looking-glass phase and made of multiple identifications with the Other. The enouncing principle, then, would be removed to the *Je*, the shifter, in a re-articulation of Roman Jakobson’s linguistics, as Lacan showed in his schema of the dynamic of desire. See Lacan, Jacques (1978): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II : Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique psychanalytique 1954-1955*. Paris, Le Seuil, mainly « Une définition matérialiste du phénomène de conscience », pages 61-78, and (2013) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI : Le désir et son interprétation 1958-1959*. Paris, Éditions La Martinière-Le Champ Freudien, mainly « Construction du graphe », pages 11-36.

to a parcel of satisfaction in order to incarnate such a symbolic position, In other words, the master gives up its body, which means that the slave is transformed into an embodied prosthesis of his. This is why the master's access to the world is mediated by the slave's labour:

In the section "Lordship and Bondage", Hegel's emergent subject confronts another self-consciousness, and immediately concludes that it, the initial subject, has lost itself. Desire remains defeated until it can find a way of revealing that other subject as essential to its own identity; this way is forged through the struggle for recognition (Butler, *op. cit.*: 46)⁶⁴.

Accordingly, the Hegelian subject is fully concerned by *inter*-subjectivity as its being-in-the-world. Nonetheless, the encounter with another self-consciousness is considered in a first instance as a scandal owing to the fact that it reveals that the other in front of whom it finds itself is not a passive entity in terms of a mere object, but *another* consciousness. This scandal will have as a response a violence against the body of the other through a death struggle, though in this struggle something will become clear: in order to ek-sist, recognition as a first expression of desire demands an Other, which places self-consciousness in an incessant paradox. It implies also a doubling movement in desire, which proves to be placed in an infinite process:

For the self-consciousness there is another self-consciousness. It has come from *outside*. It has a double meaning: at first instance, self-consciousness has lost itself, owing to the fact that it finds itself as an another essence, and secondly it has surpassed the *other* because it does not see the other as an essence, but it sees *itself* in the *other* (Hegel, *op. cit.*: 194-195).

Therefore, recognition is a deceiving process inasmuch as the master is recognised by the slave, though the slave is not recognised by the master. Besides, this asymmetry is also a failure for the master because there is no other master that provides it with some recognition, but just a slave, which means that the expected recognition does not coincide with what results from the encounter⁶⁵. It is this deception which

⁶⁴ As I will later argue from a Lacanian perspective, Butler already misses a crucial point here: there are not only two consciousness involved in the struggle for recognition, but a third element that displaces this struggle to a symbolic instance governed by the law. It refers to language as a signifying structure that involves that the lord and the slave are, from the beginning, in a social world governed by rules. See Lacan, Jacques (1975a): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre I: Les écrits techniques de Freud*, Paris, Le Seuil, mainly « Leçon XXIII – 7 juillet 1954 », pages 453-475.

⁶⁵ One of the first contemporary figures that outlined this asymmetrical structure proper to the Hegelian scenario where recognition is supposed to happen was Jean Hyppolite, though, as I said before, I will not deal with his reading of Hegel owing to the fact that it would drive me to another issue. For a further approach on this question, see Hyppolite, Jean (1946): *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit de Hegel*. Paris, Montaigne.

leads to the death-struggle inasmuch as desire fails in its aim to obtain the fantasied object. What follows is an exclusionary operation: either the lord lives or the slave does⁶⁶. Therefore, each one sees the other as a mortal rival for its autonomy and for the achievement of its desire, though the structure of desire always reveals to be lacking of an external and concrete object, which pushes self-consciousness to an alienation in which the alterity that the slave incarnates is crucial for its ek-sistence.

In this situation, Hegel argues for reconciliation between these two consciousnesses. It would allow a fusion and a suppression of alterity – and the body, too – that would guarantee the acquisition of this beloved autonomy that would provide self-consciousness with the required certainty. In spite of this longing for autonomy and freedom, the question is clear: is the outcoming self-consciousness the same as it was before?

This double sense of surpassing its being-other is also a double sense of returning to itself, because at first instance it [self-consciousness] receives itself from the very start, it becomes again equal [to itself] thanks to the surpassing of its *being-other*; secondly, nonetheless, it gives to itself again the other self-consciousness, owing to the fact that it had a self-certainty in the other; it overcomes this *being* in the other, which consequently enables the other to be free again (Hegel, *op. cit.*: 195).

What I am pointing at is that the Hegelian goal becomes impossible to realise inasmuch as it requires a purely spiritual subject, this is to say, a subject deprived of its bodily dimension, including its death. Autonomy, as a result, works as a fantasy that never finds any concrete materialisation. The subject is, thus, forced to have a social existence that deprives it of any autarchical life. There is no “I” that could emerge without a bond with the other.

Furthermore, the Hegelian subject tries to hide that its ek-sistence is structured by means of dependency. Such a notion of dependency also means that the subject, in its initial stage, has the form of a child whose very existence is radically based on the response of the Other to its demand. If the Other does not respond to its demand, it simply dies. It needs the desire of the Other in order to be, which installs it into the

⁶⁶ As Jacques Lacan asserted concerning lordship and bondage, it reflects the founding alienation of the self [*Moi*] where the subject sees itself reflected on the body of the other, which leads to an aggressive bond between the two where each one considers the other as a threaten for its *jouissance* and for achieving its desiring object. See Lacan, Jacques (1975a): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre I: Les écrits techniques de Freud 1953-1954*. Paris, Le Seuil, and (1978): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II: Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique psychanalytique 1954-1955*. Paris, Le Seuil.

domain of the social reality through its inscription into the Symbolic. If this operation does not occur, the subject, to put it simply, becomes expelled from the domain of the social sphere.

In my perspective, language is the key element that Hegel that does not properly consider because his paradigm is still focused on the domain of consciousness, in spite of the displacements desire entails. This is why I would assert that in the Hegelian discourse there is an impossible goal: an autonomous self-consciousness tied to the negativity of desire. The synthesis is doomed to fail because desire also puts the subject outside of itself. Such a remark is literally outlined by Jacques Lacan regarding the process of nomination, which situates the subject into a symbolic reality:

C'est dans l'autre, par l'autre, que le désir est nommé. Il entre dans la relation symbolique du *je* et du *tu*, dans un rapport de reconnaissance réciproque et de transcendance, dans l'ordre d'une loi déjà toute prête à inclure l'histoire de chaque individu (Lacan, 1975a : 277).⁶⁷

In relation to this question, the Lacanian reflection on desire opens the Hegelian schema to a broader perspective in which the master and the slave are not two isolated elements, but they participate into a wider structure: language as the symbolic law where the subject ek-sists. Therefore, instead of a binary conflict, what Lacan introduces is a subjective interpellation. Such a remark is also made clear by Butler in her *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative* (1997b): “Language sustains the body not by bringing it into being or feeding it in a literal way; rather, it is by being interpellated within the terms of language that a certain social existence of the body becomes possible” (Butler, 1997b: 5).

Regarding the dimension of the bodies implied in the Hegelian encounter, the master, in order to become such, must get rid of its embodied figure, which is an attempt to avoid its mortal condition. Through such a process, what the master aims to obtain is an identification with itself that might exclude alterity, though the result is at odds with its (failed) attempt. Once it renounces to the body, its dependency towards the

⁶⁷ Nonetheless, this quotation refers to the first period of Lacan's teaching, in which the notion of the Imaginary prevails over the Symbolic because he firstly considered them in a quite independent way. However, since his schema of the looking-glass phase, Lacan had asserted that the construction of the *corps imaginaire* and the self [*Moi*] depended on the symbolic position of the subject, its reference to language as a symbolic structure bond to metonymy and metaphor. For an analytical approach on this issue, see Julien, Philippe (1985): *Pour lire Lacan. Le retour à Freud*. Paris, E.P.E.L. (1990), mainly « Mon cher semblable, mon miroir » (pages 43-52) and « La chose lacanienne » (pages 63-72).

slave increases: the slave is the occasion for its *jouissance*, for its (partial) satisfaction, and it needs the slave in order to maintain its socio-symbolic position:

For the lord, bodily life must be taken care of, but just as well by an Other, for the body is not part of his *own* project of identity. The lord's identity is essentially beyond the body; he gains illusory confirmation for this view by requiring the Other to *be* the body that he endeavours not to be (Butler, 1999 [1987]: 53).

As Hegel declares, the slave assumes the status of a pure object-cause of desire, this is to say, its sole function is to nourish the master with its labour, which means that the slave becomes further alienated by the process of labour, deprived of a "being-for-itself": "One of them is a sufficient consciousness for whom the being-for-itself is its essence, whereas the other is an insufficient consciousness for whom life or being-for-another is its essence. The former is the *lord*, the latter the *slave*" (Hegel, *op. cit.*: 200).

However, the social bond between master and slave illustrates the paradox of desire: the illusion of the voluntarist account of freedom is a mere fantasy deceived by the negativity of desire inasmuch as desire alienates the subject, and it never obtains its final satisfaction, which illustrates a relational existence that puts a limit to any final reconciliation: "Desire is thus always an implicit struggle against the easier routes of death; domination and enslavement are metaphors for death in *life*, the presence of contradictions, that keep one from wanting life enough" (Butler, *op. cit.*: 55. 1).

Concerning this deceptive circuit that traverses recognition, Butler and Malabou, in « *You Be My Body for Me* » (2011), argue for a bodily relationality at the core of the Hegelian scene that would ban any effort towards a subjective reconciliation, installing a structural impasse within the mechanism of the Hegelian logic. According to what they claim: "Although there is no body that is mine without the other's body, there is no final expropriation of one's own body, and no final appropriation of another's body" (Butler and Malabou, 2011: 611). In other words, if I recognise my body thanks to the body of the other, my body – though in this case it would be important to stress that the notion of the body refers to its imaginary reality – is lost in front of the Other, which entails that no final re-appropriation occurs. As a result, the body becomes the occasion of a relationality that dislocates the clear distinction between "me" and "you", articulating a space by means of a topological instance: "in-between".

What the Hegelian scene illustrates is the dis-possession implied by the body, which forces consciousness towards a worldly reality in which the psychic dimension is not produced as a rejection to what is alien to consciousness, but it rather transcends such a binary logic. The subject, thus, is always outside of itself by means of a dependency towards what defies the imaginary division between what is recognised and what is rejected, signalling a negative rest that interrupts such a presumably evident operation. This is why Jean-Luc Nancy, in his *Hegel. L'inquiétude du négatif* (1997) asserts that the Hegelian subject does not any longer account for the epistemological subject derived from the Cartesian *Cogito, ergo sum*:

Le sujet hégélien ne se confond pas avec la subjectivité en tant qu'instance séparée et unilatérale synthétisant des représentations, ni avec la subjectivité en tant qu'intériorité exclusive d'une personnalité. L'une comme l'autre peuvent bien être des moments, parmi d'autres, du sujet, mais lui-même n'est rien de tel. Pour le dire d'un mot : le sujet hégélien n'est d'aucune façon le soi à part soi. Il est au contraire, et il est essentiellement, cela ou celui qui dissout toute substance - toute instance déjà donnée, supposée première ou dernière, fondatrice ou finale, capable de reposer en soi et de jouir sans partage de sa maîtrise et de sa propriété (Nancy, 1997: 7-8).

Following Nancy, the Hegelian subject refers to an ecstatic being the existence of which is not uprooted from the world in terms of an abstract mind whose function would simply be to synthesise representations, but the fracture of substance in classical and modern terms, a desiring fissure the encounters of which with alterity in its body and others prove to be a limit to a totalitarian attempt to build an incorporeal subjectivity. In addition to this, negativity as an incessant transcendence incarnated by desire involves that a subject is always in an ecstatic dis-position that involves that the roles acquired by the lord and the slave are not immutable, but constantly dynamic. This question was explicitly outlined by Hegel concerning the inversion of the roles that takes place in the anxious moment in which death is experienced by the slave, which enables him to be aware of its mortal condition and its bodily life not only as a labouring entity, but as a transformative one too. Indeed, the disgraced consciousness is the result of the impossibility of recognition and reconciliation between these two figures that incarnate the never-ending drama that traverses ek-sistence, confirming the primordial alienation that *subjects* any subject through language and its several identifications with the Other.

To conclude this first section devoted to desire, body and recognition, the desiring subject always goes after something other than itself, which means that becoming a subject does not imply an identity in metaphysical terms, but a sort of

mutable identifications rooted in a body the exposure of which inoculates an alterity that decentres any sort of recognition that pretends to be universal and univocal.

What will be discussed in the next section is the link between desire and language, with its consequences concerning the role of desire by means of the notion of vulnerability as an exposure to otherness by means of dependency. This is why I will proceed to analyse the Lacanian remarks on desire and the body from his clinical and theoretical apparatus. At this level, a first divergence between psychoanalysis and the notion of vulnerability as it is elaborated by Cavarero and Butler will explicitly emerge regarding the Real, the status of language, and sexual difference

2.2.1.1. Jacques Lacan's Reformulation of Desire: Desire as the Incarnation of Otherness.

The Lacanian reformulation of desire, which goes far beyond the notion of recognition, is a good occasion to enlighten the sinister dimension of recognition: the imaginary relationship it tries to impose, which is bound to violence and aggression by means of segregation. Such a dyadic relationship is, according to Butler, what produces the zone of abjection, though I would like to go beyond such a notion in order to highlight that recognition cannot operate without the dimension of what Foucault named disciplinary power (Foucault, 1975). At its turn, recognition, as I will argue, always finds an impasse: it institutes a group by means of the rejection of certain individuals, which become the necessary outside that guarantees the logic of recognition.

However, before discussing such a dimension, I will proceed to analyse Lacan's articulation of desire, which is a fundamental element for my dissertation in order to give a critical account of the limits of the notion of vulnerability, and, at its turn, Lacan's notion of desire is linked to a subject that, strictly speaking, does not coincide with the subject mobilised by Butler and Cavarero. Hence, my task is, then, double: to which extent desire constitutes the subject, and which kind of subject is derived from such a dialectic process.

Needless to say that it is impossible to take into account all the remarks developed by Lacan in his seminars regarding this issue, which, to some extent, points to the central dimension of psychoanalysis. In this sense, my approach towards Lacanian

psychoanalysis will be a partial reading of it, highlighting certain concepts and notions in the detriment of others.

2.2.1.1.1. The Unconscious, Desire, and the Three Registers

As it is well-known, one of the fundamental concepts for psychoanalysis is the unconscious. But some problems emerge when the unconscious is defined by certain discourses, reducing it thereby to a textual opacity that leaves aside the dimension of the drives, or when the unconscious is literally identified with an ontological re-articulation of the subject⁶⁸. Lacan states that the unconscious is the product of a discontinuity between cause and effect due to the impact of language onto the body. This operation produces the subject as a residual entity that is not strictly produced by the Other of discourse: “L’inconscient est la somme des effets de la parole sur un sujet, à ce niveau où le sujet se constitue des effets du signifiant” (Lacan, 1973: 116). Hence, the unconscious refers to negativity, this is to say, the internal scission of the subject, which dislocates the domain of subjectivity from any paradigm related to identity. In this sense, the unconscious is a lack-of-being, this is to say, the loss of a coincidence of the subject with itself, which situates the subject outside of itself due to the effects of the Symbolic as a signifying structure, which, by the way, is based on the two processes of signification: metaphor and metonymy.

Considering the articulation of the unconscious next to the structure of language, the processes of signification of which are not univocal, but they are rather based on equivocity, the unconscious, then, responds to the formulation of being the discourse of the Other since as there is no subject outside language. This subject is not founded on certainty – at least in the neurotic structure –, which reminds of the cogito, because the

⁶⁸ Lacan explicitly stressed that the unconscious was not a new ontological re-articulation of the subject inasmuch as the philosophical notion of the subject was attached to sense, this is to say, the Imaginary, which does not refer to the unconscious, but to the *moi*. Hence, his definition of the unconscious is based on a re-reading of the Freudian legacy and the appropriation of certain notions derived from Saussure’s and Jakobson’s linguistics.

In relation to ontology, he declared that it was a modality of discourse based on an oscillation between being and non-being that responded to the articulations orchestrated through the discourse of the master, this is to say, the institution of a world traversed by sense according to a bond between subjects thanks to the circulation of the signifier. For a further approach to this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris Le Seuil, and (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: L’envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil.

fundamental interrogation that surrounds the subject refers to its being. Indeed, the subject wonders about its being because a signifier represents the subject for another signifier, this is to say, the subject is introduced by the Other into the domain of the Symbolic: “L’Autre, latent ou pas, est, dès avant, présent dans la révélation subjective. Il est déjà là, quand quelque chose a commencé à se livrer de l’inconscient” (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 118).

The Lacanian subject is not reduced to a pure discursivity or textuality, which would place psychoanalysis into the domain of social and linguistic constructivism, which is at odds with Lacan’s *realism*. The subject is articulated by means of a triple structure, which is well synthesized by the psychoanalyst Ana Cecilia González in her unpublished dissertation *Usos y estatutos del cuerpo: Lacan y el pensamiento contemporáneo* (2013):

De modo extremadamente sintético y simple, definamos cada uno de ellos: lo imaginario es la dimensión de las imágenes ilusorias y fascinantes, con la que el “yo” se identifica y que dotan de consistencia al cuerpo; lo simbólico es la estructura diferencial del lenguaje, que mediante la cadena significativa organiza la producción de significación; lo real es el punto traumático que resiste a la simbolización y a la captura en la imagen (González, 2013: 38)⁶⁹.

The Imaginary register proper to consciousness provides an illusionary vision of a total shape of the body when the baby, fascinated by this vision, can make its own body as a totality in discordance with the anatomical maturity of it. Moreover, the creation of this embodied “I” is possible thanks to one of the symbolic functions inherent to language: metonymy, which consists of taking a part as a whole. In other words, the shape of the body that the subject observes outside of itself is taken as a whole, being the reverse of this image the fragmented body that makes its recurrent appearances in dreams. This is why Lacan stated that “le moi est structuré exactement comme un symptôme. À l’intérieur même du sujet, il n’est qu’un symptôme privilégié. C’est le symptôme humain par excellence, c’est la maladie mentale de l’homme” (Lacan, 1975a : 30-31). In other words, the “I” is a linguistic fiction in the realm of neurosis, one of the possible symbolic configurations of the subject, all along with

⁶⁹ In spite of the fact that in this quotation the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real are written in lower case letters, Lacan established their use in capital letters from the twenty-second seminar on. In fact, Ana Cecilia González is also aware of this question, given the remark she also makes in her work. See Lacan, Jacques: *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XXII: RSI 1974-1975* (non-published and for electronic use only), and González, Ana Cecilia (2013): *Usos y estatutos del cuerpo. Lacan y el pensamiento contemporáneo* (unpublished dissertation).

psychosis and perversion⁷⁰. The subject, then, is always an anomaly, a “pathological” entity.

Highlighting that consciousness is not the fundamental register of the subject means that the Hegelian scenario reduces the subject to a presumably autonomous dimension in which self-consciousness might fully become self-consciousness, that is, might fully *know itself*. What Hegel asserts is that the dimension proper to the subject would be the “I” [*Moi*], which ties one self-consciousness to another self-consciousness in an aggressive union governed by a complementary logic according to which the existence of the former depends on the latter. From a Lacanian perspective, this relationship can be undone through a logic of desire in terms of a demand that is held up by what Lacan called the fundamental fantasy [*le fantasme*]. According to the logic of desire, the subject undergoes an internal scission, which entails that the subject of the enunciation and the subject of what is enunciated do not coincide. While the former is related to the unconscious and the *Je* - which refers to Roman Jakobson’s notion of the shifter⁷¹ -, the latter belongs to egotistic identifications. Desire is formulated by means of a demand that requires to incorporate the signifiers given by the Other. Such operation does not emanate from the *moi*, but from the *Je*, that is, from the unconscious, which explains why the subject of the unconscious can never represent the desiring object.

This subjective scission is what decentres recognition as far as a desire for recognition is simply related to the Imaginary and its partial identifications, while the *Je*, resultant from the effect of the Symbolic as a signifying chain, is what escapes any binary logic. The issue inherent to recognition, therefore, is its aggressive attempt to institute an intersubjectivity by means of erasing the unconscious and reducing the subject to the identifications that cover the lack-of-being that the unconscious is. As a result, the relationship merging from recognition is a struggle for the hegemony of

⁷⁰ As Jacques Lacan made clear, nothing grants in advance which will be the configuration of the subject. This depends on the subjective response in front of the Symbolic, which further conditions the articulation of the Imaginary and the Real. In this sense, a neurotic subject is not, strictly speaking, a “normal” subject, but responds to one of the three possible psychic structures for the subject all along psychosis and perversion.

⁷¹ The notion of shifter, in Jakobson’s linguistics, refers to a term the meaning of which cannot be determined without referring to the message that is being communicated between a sender and a receiver. This implies that the Lacanian *Je* is not a solipsistic notion, but it is connected to another signifier that allows the interconnection with the symbolic Other, from which the signifier comes. See Jakobson, Roman (1957): « Shifters, verbal categories, and the Russian verb » in *Selected Writings*, volume II, *Word and Language*. The Hague, Mouton, page 132.

certain identifications in detriment of others, which produces an exclusionary social reality. Hence, recognition is always deceiving: its attempt to grasp the subject constantly fails because the negativity of the unconscious is never susceptible of being captured by any representation. In other words, the *being* of the subject exceeds any representation, pointing to a singularity at odds with any pretension to acquire an identity derived from recognition.

In addition to this, the sphere of recognition reduces the subject to a dual alternative between activity and passivity, namely, the instance of recognition and what is recognised. Thereby, *jouissance*, implied at the *real* level of identifications, is erased. This polarity leaves aside the reflexive turn that Freud discovered regarding the drives, which means that a subject might obtain a parcel of enjoyment through a process of segregation⁷², this is to say, through being expelled from a recognised group as its wretch. In other words, the operation of opposing to what is said to constitute the domain of normativity for a process of recognition might lead to a further binding of these norms, rejecting the chance to subvert or question them, which authors like Judith Butler never properly consider.

Lacan outlines that the Imaginary is not an independent register from the Symbolic understood as the differential signifying chain exemplified by the symbol as the element that separates and joins. Consequently, there is no pure imaginary bond, but it is always conditioned by the relation that the subject has to the linguistic Law: “Qu’est-ce que c’est la liaison symbolique? C’est, pour mettre les points sur les i, que socialement, nous nous définissons par l’intermédiaire de la loi” (Lacan, 1975a: 222). A Law that, as a matter of fact, is deprived of a background beyond its usages, which entails that it lacks a final justification outside of its pragmatic dimension.

⁷² Freud, concerning the driving dynamics on sadism and masochism - which are not to be seen as two complementary elements -, remarked that the subject that enjoys punishing its *partenaire* might also enjoy inflicting a damage to *itself*, which is evident in masochism, in which the subject pretends to be vexed by someone else or by *itself*. In this sense, *jouissance*, as an indeterminate point to be found between the pleasure principle and the death drive, is not merely an active or passive feature, but also a reflexive one, an issue tight to the driving and erogenous dimension of the *real* body. See Freud, Sigmund (1915): « Instincts and Their Vicissitudes », in Volume XIV of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. London, Hogarth Press (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey; (1924): *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, in Volume XIX of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. London, Hogarth Press (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey. See also Lacan, Jacques (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI : les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil, mainly the section « La pulsion partielle et son circuit », pages 159-170.

Therefore, in the Hegelian scenario, the master and the slave are not two independent monadic elements from a symbolic and social structure, but two subjects that incarnate two roles conditioned by its desiring ek-sistence in which each one deploys several actions that appeal to a discursive reality in the sense of a socially sanctioned bond⁷³. As far as their desire is concerned, Hegel clearly states that it is a desire of recognition, and this entails that one's desire is always the desire of the Other. The very structure of the Hegelian desire, thus, involves that desire takes place thanks to this structural and dependent link towards the Other. Desire does not entail that the recognition the master obtains from the slave will set the former free of any restriction, but it exemplifies the paradox of desire: freedom requires life in order to be, and any life requires an embodied subject the freedom of which will become a transformative action. Thus, what desire shows is an embodied subject where there is no synthesis between the psyche and the body that provides an omnipotent autonomy, but a tensional configuration. Pure "consciousness" is an imaginary phantasy with no factual reality:

L'inconscient échappe tout à fait à ce cercle de certitudes en quoi l'homme se reconnaît comme *moi*. C'est hors de ce champ qu'il existe quelque chose qui a tous les droits à s'exprimer par *je*, et qui démontre ce droit dans le fait de venir au jour en s'exprimant au titre de *je* (Lacan, 1978 : 17).

This opacity proper to the *Je* always governs the desiring dynamics of the subject and its phantasmagorical status, lacked of a concrete object. Thus, desire always exceeds any conscious register and fixed domain, being an incessant oscillation linked to language and the demanding subject of the unconscious, which radically differs from a representational subject such as the Cartesian one. This desiring subject, radically different from any individualistic or personal notion, is a signifying reality, which means that there is a hiatus between all the egoistic identifications that depart from the imaginary body the birth of which happens in the looking-glass phase and the subject strictly speaking: "Le sujet est personne. Il est décomposé, morcelé. Et il se bloque, il

⁷³ According to what I have mentioned in the introduction, the Lacanian notion of discourse is a reply to the Foucauldian thesis, in which discourse incarnates the net between knowledge and power exemplified by historical modes of production of subjectivity and institutions known as modes of *assujettissement*. While Foucault focuses his notion of discourse on a mastery dimension deployed by dominant power relations and the knowledge that institutions produce in alliance with them, Lacan adds another feature. Discourse, in Lacanian terms, is a socially sanctioned form of *jouissance*, which means that the liaison that it produces between subjects as discursive effects does not merely appeal to knowledge, but to the libidinal dimension of the subject, which is rooted in the unconscious. See Foucault, Michel (1971): *L'ordre du discours*. Paris, Gallimard; (1975): *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Paris Gallimard ; (1976): *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir*. Paris, Gallimard, and Lacan, Jacques (1991) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII : L'envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil, namely « Production des quatre discours », pages 9-30, and « Le champ lacanien », pages 79-98.

est aspiré par l'image, à la fois trompeuse et réalisée de l'autre, ou aussi bien sa propre image spéculaire. Là, il trouve son unité" (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 80). Desire, then, means to be lost in the domain of alterity, being the roles of the lord and the slave unstable and mutable⁷⁴.

Desire does not entail reaching autonomy in terms of a self-governing subject, but it is linked to a structural lack deployed by language, which inoculates the unconscious dimension at the core of the subject. Besides, this desire, contradicting the Spinozist view of pure immanence, never becomes realised in a concrete reality, having a deceiving nature. This is why Lacan held that "le désir est un rapport d'être à manque. Ce manque est manque d'être à proprement parler. Ce n'est pas manque de ceci ou de cela, mais manque d'être par quoi l'être existe" (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 306). The lack that desire expresses does not refer to the Aristotelian privation nor to the binary division between potentiality and actuality. It is a lack radically bound to a negativity that points to the fact that the subject has no self-foundation, being on the very contrary a fracture within being. In order to illustrate and to give an account of the circuit of desire, Lacan designed what he called the graph of desire [*le graphe du désir*], which is governed by a set of elements. The first one is the signifying chain in which the subject places itself by entering into a symbolic world and the code. Nonetheless, the code is later transformed in terms of a Big Other in relation to the *Je*, the subject as long as it becomes a speaking creature. These two elements are linked to the signifier, the primary identification that takes place through the metonymic nature of desire, the message that the subject wants to transmit to the Other, and the *id*⁷⁵ [*Ça*] from which would emerge a need that becomes a linguistic demand with no proper object. This schema exemplifies the infantile dimension of desire, the first expression of which takes place in the cry of the baby, in which there is a need that requires being satisfied.

⁷⁴ Catherine Malabou, in her dissertation devoted to Hegel, pushed further this question, and she asserted that the Hegelian subject is not merely unstable, but its main attribute would be plasticity, a question that Butler and herself further developed in her reading of the dialectic of lordship and bondage. See Malabou, Catherine (1996): *L'avenir de Hegel: plasticité, temporalité, dialectique*. Paris, Vrin, and Butler, Judith, and Malabou, Catherine (2011): *You Be My Body for Me*. London, Blackwell.

⁷⁵ The "id" [*Ça*] refers to the second Freudian reformulation of the psyche. It is the silent mechanism of the drives, which aim to obtain their object of enjoyment. See Freud, Sigmund (1923): *The Ego and the Id*, in the volume XIX "The Ego and the Id, and Other Works" of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

The baby cries in front of a subject that, at its turn, has a desiring structure that mediates in linguistic terms any supposed infantile need. This linguistic mediation involves that the need that would emerge from the *id* becomes a desiring dimension, this is to say, a demand for love that involves that it is not merely related to a pure biological necessity. Hence, this circuit is always governed by the primacy of the signifying chain in which the infantile subject is introduced through the voice of the Other that supports it⁷⁶. In its translation into a desiring demand, the presumed need loses any concrete object, acquiring a phantasmagorical status governed by the so called *objet petit a*, a rest which is, therefore, not susceptible of being incorporated or reduced to any fixed category, as I will explain later in this section in relation to the fundamental fantasy [*phantasme*] that sustains desire.

This first dimension of desire related to the infantile subject refers to an *infans*, this is to say, a being deprived of speech. Its immersion into the Symbolic, then, is made by the Other, the figure which occupies a maternal role in the Lacanian framework, regardless of its anatomical sex. Such bond with the maternal Other is what enables the metonymic function that provides the primary identifications of the subject and the alienating structure of any desiring demand. The desiring subject, thus, is from the very beginning a de-centred creature that is radically attached to an Other that precedes and enables it, being this Other a necessary support for its ek-sistence as a speaking subject, a *parlêtre*, a neologism created by Lacan through the fusion of the French verb *parler* [to speak] and *être* [being] (Lacan, 1975b). Besides, this Other towards which the subject is structurally attached incarnates the possibility to deprive or fulfil its demand, which entails that desire is always the desire of the Other, and it also means that desire expresses itself in terms of a call, a demand.

In a further development of the graph of desire, what Lacan had introduced as the message is modified and transformed into what the Other means [s(A)], which is in tension to the signifier provided by the Other, [S(A)]. This tensional relation involves

⁷⁶ In the dynamic of desire, there is another crucial question that, unfortunately, I will not be able to analyse because it would lead me to another path, a specifically clinical aspect unrelated to my research. This dimension refers to the metonymic nature of the desire of the mother, which becomes barred through the paternal metaphor as the Name-of-the-Father, the castrating function of language and the primordial loss of *jouissance*. This metaphorical structure is linked to what Lacan expressed in terms of *noeud borroméen*, which joins the three registers for the subject, which define the psychic dimension: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. See Lacan, Jacques (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil, and *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XXI: Les non dupes errent 1973-1974* (unpublished).

that demand is retroactively signified by the Other, signalling a transition of the *infans* into speech:

À partir du moment où la structure de la chaîne signifiante a réalisé l'appel de l'Autre, c'est-à-dire où le procès de l'énonciation se distingue de la formule de l'énoncé et s'y superpose, la prise du sujet dans l'articulation de la parole, prise qui était d'abord innocente, devient inconsciente (Lacan, 2013 : 26).

The moment in which the subject is called by the Other, this is to say, the moment in which language becomes speech, involves also the beginning of the formation of the unconscious. In this relation with the signifier that speech entails, the role of the Other incarnates the symbolic apparatus under which a subject ek-sists. Nonetheless, an additional operation results from the immersion into language: castration and a loss of *jouissance*. In fact, if language involves that desire, which is articulated by means of the demand, and is not the same as a need to satisfy any sort of instinct, the reverse of this dynamic is the fact that the body, becoming such thanks to the linguistic structure provided by the signifier, undergoes a cut through language. This entanglement between language and body implies a loss and a further plus-of-enjoyment [*plus-de-jouir*] that a subject might find in its social world.

What supports the dynamic of desire, in relation to the castrating dimension of language, is what Lacan called the fundamental fantasy, the *phantasme*: “La fonction du fantasme est de donner au désir du sujet son niveau d'accomodation, de situation” (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 30), being at the same time a reaction in front of the threatening and enigmatic status of the Other that precedes and enables the subject. A desiring subject, then, is a subject the desiring status of which depends on a fundamental fantasy that, as Lacan would argue at the end of his teaching, has its consequences regarding the sexed positioning of the subject, mainly for the subject the enjoyment of which [*jouissance*] is all-phallic or masculine, I will develop in the next subsection.

The phantasmatic articulation of desire, based on a fantasy that gathers the barred subject of the unconscious to a plus-of-enjoyment related to its body – what Lacan would rename the *objet petit a* – shows that autonomy in terms of the Hegelian lord is an impossible goal that masks its primordial *alienation* towards a necessary Other the reaction of which is always unexpected, unknown. Thus, desire implies exposure from the start, which further means that violence and aggression are not two accidental or accessory issues, but they are tied to the very constitution of the subject. There is no harmonic reconciliation between the subject and the Other the desire of

which operates as a cause for the dialectic path of the desire of the subject, which Lacan stressed by means of the impasses that such a relationship has: “La relation du désir du sujet au désir de l’Autre est dramatique, pour autant que le désir a à se situer devant le désir de l’Autre, lequel pourtant l’aspire littéralement, et le laisse sans recours” (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 502).

The fact that the Other operates as an object-cause of desire entails a further element: if the Other interrogates the subject it means that the Other is not complete, but it pursues what exceeds its being, this is to say, it is a barred Other traversed by its own lack-of-being. Hence, at its core, inasmuch as desire is the desire of the Other, desire does not possess a fundamental consistency, which explains why the subject must invent, in front of the Other, a fundamental fantasy to sustain its desire. The Other, then, is deprived of a final signifier that would assure an omnipotent sense that might saturate the lack. This absent signifier, which installs desire as an expression of a lack for which there is no final object, is what for Lacan is the *phallus*, the signifier that governs the unconscious. It is by means of the phallus that castration occurs, and the repression of its signified. Both operations have huge consequences regarding sex and sexual difference because they are detached from any biological evidence.

It is the very operation of castration that signals the rest that the subject detects in the Other, which contains a glimpse of the Real: the *objet petit a*, which causes fascination. By means of the metaphor that the fundamental fantasy executes, the subject establishes a link between itself and the piece of the Real it captures thanks to the signifier. This link, then, is also based on a metonymy because the object-cause of desire always avoids being fully captured. Instead, it is constantly displaced from the domains of representation.

I shall now analyse the connections between desire and the sexed dimension of the body, paying attention to its erogenous zones and the drives. This is the body that belongs to the Real, which is the process of *sexuation* derived from castration.

2.2.1.1.2. Desire and Sexual Difference: The Real and the Two Sides of Sexuation

According to the aforementioned, desire does not belong to consciousness and, indeed, it does not belong to a neuter subject, this is to say, a subject deprived of a sexed

status. Nonetheless, according to a Foucauldian approach, sex might be described as a regulatory strategy based on imposing a compulsory heterosexuality that rejects other object-choices, which explains why gender has become a substitute for sex for many feminist and *queer* theorists. On the contrary, Lacan does not reduce sex and sexual difference to discourse, though it does not mean that his perspective signals a subjective reading of a previous biological datum linguistically interpreted. In this sense, when Lacan asserts that sexuality signals the Real, he does not articulate the Kantian dialectic between phenomenon and noumenon – being noumenon the Real –, as Butler has suggested in some occasions (Butler, 1993; 2000b), but he rather refers to the traumatic status of sex for the subject due to the impact of language onto its body. As a result, sex is a hole at the core of being and sense, a void for which there is no suitable discursive device due to the de-naturalizing effect of castration, which deprives the subject of a “natural” background regarding sexuality. It signals, hence, a deadlock for signification, which is *symptomatically* foreclosed by the nominalist discourse that sustains the notion of vulnerability, the notion of the subject of which is deprived of sex. Following these remarks, then, my approach is based on the second formulation on sexual difference made by Lacan, which refers to the logical perspective that he elaborates towards sex, leaving aside the discursivity based on attributes and the production of sense.

In his sixth seminar, *Le désir et son interprétation* (2013), Lacan had already offered his first formulation of sexual difference, which was based on a grammatical difference concerning the role that the phallus had for the sexes. By means of this initial articulation, the masculine subject was defined through recourse to *having* the phallus, which by no means involves a tacit identity between the phallic signifier and the penis. In this first formulation of sexual difference, this *having* implies that the phallus *is seen as* the penis, being this mistake an effect of the symbolic discourse on sexual difference, in which a set of subjects are said to be the bearers of the phallic organ. As far as the feminine subject is concerned by means of this grammatical differentiation, it is said to *be* the phallus, this is to say, it occupies the position of an *object-cause* of desire for the

masculine subject, acquiring the status of a fetish placed at the centre of the partner's fundamental fantasy⁷⁷.

However, my interest does not fall on this previous formulation of sexual difference⁷⁸, but on the second formulation provided by Lacan in the last period of his teaching, which is based on an *asymmetrical* logic concerning the sexed status of the subjects, and a reconsideration of the body as an enjoying substance [*substance jouissante*].

As far as sex is concerned, psychoanalysis signals its constitution by means of the drives. Inasmuch as the drives are not instinctual dispositions because of the de-naturalizing effect of language onto the body, the object for satisfaction is not previously programmed, but the subject must find it. Such infra-determination by any biological, hormonal or genetic goal is what explains that the speaking being makes an object-choice. Regarding the object of satisfaction that the drives pursue, it refers to the enigmatic status of the *objet petit a* as a plus of enjoyment [*plus-de-jouir*] structurally bond to castration and the primordial loss of *jouissance*.

The structural loss caused by language, which implies a traumatic dimension that connects the subject to the Real as a gap never susceptible of being symbolically translated, splits the core of the subject. Affected by this split, the subject is fascinated by the diverse and plural incarnations of the Real that the *objet-petit a* represents, which is related to the partial dynamic of the drives⁷⁹. Lacan identifies five drives, which are attached to their object: the scopic drive, the object of which is the gaze; the invocative

⁷⁷ Concerning this “mistake” made by the discourse on sexual difference - a remark that I will analyse again in a different way in relation to the stereotypical version in Lacanian psychoanalysis that identifies transsexuality to a psychotic symptom -, see Lafuente, Carmen (2003): « Actualidad del transexualismo », in www.psicoolisisysociedad.org. Last hit on the website: 02/11/2014

For the status of women as the phallic object in the dynamic of desire in relation to this first formulation of Lacanian sexual difference, see Lacan, Jacques (2013): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI: Le désir et son interprétation 1959-1960*. Paris, Éditions de La Martinière-Le Champ Freudien, namely the section untitled « L’objet Ophélie », pages 363-382.

⁷⁸ In his first account of sexual difference, Lacan elaborates a differential logic in relation to the grammatical position of the subject concerning the phallus as the master signifier that vertebrates the unconscious, instituting an asymmetry between having and being.

⁷⁹ It is important to highlight that what has a *partial* structure is the drive and not the object. This is why Freud and Lacan stated that the drives were an incessant deviation from a supposed goal: reproduction. For a further detailed explanation on this issue, see Freud, Sigmund (1915): « Instincts and Their Vicissitudes », in the volume XIV of The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, “On the History of the Psychoanalytical Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works (1914-1916)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey, and Lacan, Jacques (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil.

drive, being its object the voice; the anal drive, the of which object is shit, and the oral drive, the first object of which is the maternal nipple. What conditions the constitution of each drive is the object, deprived of a purely biological consistency, which points to the articulation between the organism and language:

C'est ici que j'avance que l'intérêt que le sujet prend à sa propre schize est lié à ce qui la détermine – à savoir, un objet privilégié, surgi de quelque séparation primitive, de quelque automutilation induite par l'approche même du réel, dont le nom, en notre algèbre, est objet *a* (Lacan, 1973: 78).

This tiny object, designated by this *a*, is fascinating because it is related to the body as a piece of flesh that the subject imagines as having lost. This is the fantasized effect produced by castration as the symbolic operation organizes desire and the drives by means of the Law of the signifier: “L'objet *a* est quelque chose dont le sujet, pour se constituer, c'est séparé comme organe. Ça vaut comme symbole du manqué, c'est-à-dire du phallus, non pas en tant que tel, mais en tant qu'il fait manque” (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 95). In this sense, the *objet petit a* becomes a crucial notion for Lacanian psychoanalysis, being the motor of desire in its phantasmagorical status, and symbolizing the lack of a signifier, the *phallus*, which is absent in any subject, regardless of its anatomical sex⁸⁰.

Hence, if desire implies the loss of any instinctual need through the dynamic of the demand and its link to the Other, the drives do not entail any sexual need, this is to say, there is no reproductive destiny in them. This is a crucial remark that Freud had already noticed, though Butler, in her many criticisms against psychoanalysis, never mentions it. In his *Three Essays on a Sexual Theory* (1905), he had remarked that the drives did not have an object in advance, but they looked for it according to what Lacan would call *jouissance*, this interstice between the Freudian pleasure principle and the death drive⁸¹. Owing to this structure, the drives are a frontier between biology and

⁸⁰It is important to outline this feature because many feminist and queer theorists have accused psychoanalysis, namely in its Lacanian perspective, of being a masculinist discipline focused on a phallogocentric assumption that wrongly identifies the phallus as a hypostasis of the penis, and a theoretical and clinical domain that attributes men a pre-eminence over women. Such a criticism aims to install at the core of the psychoanalytic corpus a sexist vision that, in some cases, can be imputed to certain *psychoanalysts*, though it is unfair to attribute it to psychoanalysis as such. Some criticisms of this kind can be seen, amongst others, in Rubin, Gayle (1975): « The Traffic in Women: Notes on the “Political Economy” of Sex », in Reiter, Rayna (ed., 1975): *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York, Monthly Review Press; Wittig, Monique (1985): « La Pensée Straight » in *Questions Féministes*, 7; Butler, Judith (1990): *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge; (1993): *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. New York, Routledge, and Preciado, Paul B. (2000): *Manifesto Contra-sexual*. Barcelona, Anagrama.

⁸¹At the same time, it is worth mentioning that the lack of a “natural” object that would satisfy any drive is reformulated in Lacan according to his statement on the non-complementarity between the signifier and

culture, radically determined by the signifier and the symbolic constitution of the object. Thus, there is neither a primordial heterosexual norm that would have to be obeyed, nor a restricted vision of sexuality in terms of reproduction. Freud had already remarked that the link between the drive and its object is mutable according to historical and social changes, having a contingent bond, which by no means involves that this relation is based on a conscious deliberation. In other words, as he asserted in « Instincts and Their Vicissitudes » (1915c): “The drive, as it is seems to me, is a frontier notion between mind and body, a psychic agent (...) of the stimuli that comes from the inner of the body and reaches the soul as a measure of the efforts imposed to the mental area due to its bond to the somatic area (Freud, 1960 [1915c]: 117).

The partial status of the drive means that no object can completely provide satisfaction, an issue linked to the deceiving nature of desire, which is always present and surrounding the subject, impelled by this enigmatic *objet petit a*. The drives and desire, then, are always located in this structural lack, the negativity at the core of the barred subject, determined by the lack-of-being that the unconscious is said to be: “Si la pulsion peut être satisfaite sans avoir atteint ce qui, au regard d’une totalisation biologique de la fonction, serait la satisfaction à sa fin de reproduction, c’est qu’elle est pulsion partielle, et que son but n’est point autre chose que ce retour en circuit” (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 163).

What makes the drive change its predilection towards certain objects in this self-referential circuit is not biological maturity, but the effect of the Other on the subject. In other words, the status of the *objet petit a* as this enjoying rest does not emerge from any “inner” disposition, but it is an effect of the constitutive role that alterity has for the subject. Therefore, there is no positive “truth” concerning the subject, but a negative circuit that forecloses any *positive* statement concerning its process of becoming.

In addition to this, the sexed status of the subject does not presuppose any “truth” about sex that would be written in the unconscious. Sex, for the psychoanalytical discourse, is neither attribute nor a predicate, but the failure of the signifying chain. Thus, the sexed status of the embodied subject is the impossibility to grasp any truth

the signified, which had also been outlined by Ferdinand de Saussure. The drives, then, are conditioned by the primacy of the signifier on the subject, which again reinforces the thesis that establishes that the drive is not the instinct, but a frontier between nature and culture. See Saussure, Ferdinand de (1916): *Cours de linguistique générale*. Paris, Payot, and Lacan, Jacques (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI : les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil.

concerning *who* it is, which places sex as a deadlock that bans any complete and fixed sense. It is placed within the register of the Real as the impossibility of a compact language, and the suspension of any totalitarian attempt to reduce the subject to an immutable substance. Following this path, Lacan held that “ce qu’il faut faire, comme homme ou comme femme, l’être humain a toujours à l’apprendre de toutes pièces de l’Autre” (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 186). In this sense, being a sexed subject involves that *performing*⁸² as such implies a dependency towards a symbolic and social Other where any subject can act as such, with no “nuclear gender identity core”⁸³.

In addition to the negativity of the barred subject, *jouissance* becomes the key notion for a new approach towards sexual difference. While in the first formulation of sexual difference Lacan introduced a grammatical difference, the new formulation concerning the sexed status of the subject involves that any sort of fusion or equality becomes a logical impossibility. The two sexed positions, which are articulated by means of the role of *jouissance* in relation to castration, are two: either all-phallic or male *jouissance*, or not-all phallic or feminine *jouissance*, being these two modes of *sexuation*⁸⁴ the two ways in which the signifying chain contradicts itself.

Sexual difference, in Lacanian terms, exceeds the ontological notion of relationship as it is articulated by Jean-Luc Nancy and post-metaphysics. Hence, while Nancy introduces relation as a universal difference that refers to a disseminated body deprived of a substantial substratum in order to deconstruct the metaphysical tradition, Lacan introduces a further twist. Regarding the sexed status of the body and its

⁸² The notion of gender performativity, as it was introduced and developed by Judith Butler, will be critically analysed in the next subsection. For a further preliminary approach on this notion, see Butler, Judith (1990): *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge; (1993): *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. New York, Routledge; (1997a): *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, Stanford University Press; (1997b): *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*. New York, Routledge, and (2004b): *Undoing Gender*. New York, Routledge.

⁸³ The psychologist term of “gender identity core” can be found in the several volumes of DSM III, IV, and V for pathologising “transsexualism” and transsexuality as two psychiatric deviations from gender norms that shall assure a stable identification between the physical body and gender in terms of a psychological inner expression. For a further approach on this issue, see The American Psychiatric Association (1987): *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; (1994): *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV*. Washington D.C., American Psychiatric Association, and Narrow, William E.; First, Michael B.; Sirovatka, Paul J, and Regier, Darrel A. (2007): *Age and Gender Considerations in Psychiatric Diagnosis. A Research Agenda for DSM-V*. Arlington, American Psychiatric Association.

⁸⁴ This Lacanian notion was introduced in his twentieth seminar to develop the logical configuration of the *jouissance* of the subject in relation to its link to the phallic function, which allows these two possible logical configurations. Concerning the concept of “phallic function”, it aims to elaborate a formal approach towards the phallus, referring to the mathematical notion of function.

differential mode of becoming a *substance jouissante*, it entails the impossibility of relationship inasmuch as the unconscious only knows *one* sex: the sexed position inscribed under the phallic signifier. Sex, thus, displaces being as it is formulated by ontology, which concerns the domain of sense and signification, this is to say, the assimilation of the subject into being. The Lacanian criticism of ontology appeals to the economy that erases what exceeds the phallic logic. It signals a *supplementary register* that defies the logical construction of a set and its exclusion: feminine *jouissance*, which is deprived of a signifier that makes of it a logical set. Because there is a single signifier for sex, this is to the phallus, sexual relationship [*rapport sexuel*] is impossible to articulate. Between phallic and not-all phallic *jouissance* there is a structural asymmetry that bans any opposition or complementarity. At this level, even dissemination becomes inoperative because it can only deconstruct symbolic constructions, which is not the point in Lacan's logical formulation of sexual difference. Sexual difference is anchored into the Real-impossible to represent:⁸⁵

Mais l'être, c'est la jouissance du corps comme tel, c'est-à-dire comme asexué, puisque ce qu'on appelle la jouissance sexuelle est marquée, dominée, par l'impossibilité d'établir comme tel, nulle part dans l'énonçable, ce seul Un qui nous intéresse, l'Un de la relation *rapport sexuel* (Lacan, *op. cit.* : pages 12-13).

Lacan outlines that the philosophical approach towards sex by means of sense forecloses its symptomatic reality as a gap that defies a compact and stable predication⁸⁶. In his view, philosophy reduces the subject and, hence, discourse, to the registers of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, foreclosing the Real as a rest that becomes not susceptible of being assimilated into the philosophical *logos*⁸⁷. Instead of a fully

⁸⁵ In his critical revision of the Lacanian axiom « Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel », Jean-Luc Nancy offers a re-elaboration of the notion of relation as a frontier that never transcends negativity. Even though, he reduces sex and sexual difference to the Derridean notion of *différance*, radically bound to writing, which means that he inadvertently persists on a discursive reductionism that identifies sex and sexual difference to disseminated predicates. Thus, his approach towards the sexed status of the body remains trapped in the registers of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, placing the body as an empty surface that supports writing and sense in a tensional way, which also means that he empties the body of any sexed dimension, this is to say, he erases the register of the Real and *jouissance*. For a further approach on this issue, see Derrida, Jacques (1967): *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris, Le Seuil, and Nancy, Jean-Luc (2001): *L'« Il y a » du rapport sexuel*. Paris, Galilée.

⁸⁶ Joan Copjec, in her « Sex and the Euthanasia of the Reason », proposes a brilliant attempt to reconsider Kant's antinomies as the modes in which reason contradicts itself concerning the double sexed status of the subject. See Copjec, Joan (1994): *Read My Desire. Lacan Against the Historicists*. Cambridge, MIT Press, pages 201-236.

⁸⁷ It is worth outlining that the hegemonic discourse on gender studies and sexuality reduces the subject and its body to a discursive production made of an interaction between knowledge and power – following, the Foucauldian legacy –, which involves a discursive monism for which the body is merely a fleshy, technical and textual surface that accumulates different predicates and meanings, being radically sterile.

inscription of the subject into the domain of sense and representation, the Lacanian discourse states that what breaks any metaphysical substance is the sexual positioning of the subject inasmuch as it is not a question of identity or identifications, but a collapse of them. This is the powerful subversion of psychoanalysis: discourse does not *totally trap* the subject, but there is a radical negativity that challenges any process of signification.

However, in order to argue for the impossibility of the sexual relation as such – which by no means involves that sexual practices are impossible in everyday life –, it is necessary to analyse the formulas of *sexuation*. Concerning their logical mechanism, the left side refers to the modality of the all-phallic *jouissance*, fully concerned by the phallic function or castration, which creates a set the validity of which is confirmed by the *exclusion* of, at least, one of its members. The fact that a set is a logical structure with no further label concerning *what* and *who* must be their subjects involves that it is not a normative claim, it does not prescribe or regulate if their members have to be *men* or *women*, a question linked to the fact that the unconscious is just governed by the phallus, the empty signifier always deprived of a signified.

Regarding the right side, the not-all phallic *jouissance*, it defies the logical set by virtue of a radical indeterminacy of its members, which cannot be reduced to a whole. It is a limit to any systematic attempt to reduce discourse to a monolingual entity, which reinforces the Lacanian thesis according to which philosophy, in spite of its post-metaphysical trend, still remains trapped in a “discourse-for-all” dynamic that leaves aside the *supplement* that the not-all phallic *jouissance* incarnates.

These formulas refer to the logical structure of *jouissance* in relation to the phallic function, and they do not involve that any subject, placed in any of the two sides, shall have a concrete anatomy: “En effet, la logique, la cohérence inscrite dans le fait qu’existe le langage et qu’il est hors des corps qui en sont agités, bref l’Autre qui s’incarne, si l’on peut dire, comme être sexué, exige cet une” (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 15). The not-all phallic *jouissance*, thus, is placed beyond the phallic function, which implies that the pre-eminence of the phallic function is not universal for all the subjects. It also involves that this *supplementary* mode of *jouissance* is a limit for discourse inasmuch as

The body, then, is a mere prosthesis for discourse. For a further approach on this issue, see Copjec, Joan (2012): « The Sexual Compact », in *Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 17:2, pages 31-48.

it exceeds any universal claim, being a rest not susceptible of being assimilated to any stable category. Hence, Lacan stated that “il n’y a pas *La* femme, article défini pour désigner l’universel. Il n’y a pas la femme puisque (...) de son essence, elle n’est pas-toute” (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 68)⁸⁸.

This logical structure of an asymmetrical constitution is what bars any sexual relationship [*rapport*] in terms of a fusion between subjects. Hence, the different symbolic articulations of sexual difference are several attempts to supply this absence, placed at the core of the psychoanalytical discourse, in its clinical and theoretical perspective. In Lacanian terms, “(...) le langage (...) fonctionne pour suppléer l’absence de la seule part du réel qui ne puisse pas venir à se former de l’être, à savoir le rapport sexuel (...)” (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 47). Therefore, sex is what breaks ek-sistence in a radical way, inoculating at its core, as an insurmountable gap for which no signifier can give a proper account, the impossibility of a universal based on a discourse “for all”.

From this horizon, which might be the bond between vulnerability and sexual difference? According to Butler and Cavarero, vulnerability is an ontological condition linked to the social relationality of the subject and its dependency towards the Other. The issue, then, is to analyse which discursive register operates regarding desire and sexual difference as far as the embodied subject is concerned. Indeed, the risk inherent to an ontological universality is its declension through the formulation of the logical set, which would mobilise the Other through recourse to two figures: the Other of desire and what causes a vulnerable condition for the subject as the exception to such a condition.

However, vulnerability is ethically and politically introduced in order to undo those exclusionary practices that condemn certain subjects to a social and psychic rejection. Yet, exclusion is supported by a totalitarian discourse for which the subject is a pure effect of a net of knowledge and power that creates a global subjection⁸⁹, with no rest to such operation. Therefore, what seems problematic from the notion of vulnerability is the discursive monism that erases the register of sex from a

⁸⁸ It is important to outline that, in this context, the notion of “essence” that does not point to any eternal truth or substratum concerning the not-all phallic *jouissance*, but to its logical structure.

⁸⁹ A remarkable critical approach on this question is offered by Slavoj Žižek while disputing the Foucauldian notions of power and resistance, and the re-elaboration of subversion and identifications proposed by Judith Butler, namely in her *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997a, Stanford, Stanford University Press). See Žižek, Slavoj (1999): « Passionate (Dis)Attachments, or Judith Butler as a Reader of Freud », in *The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London, Verso, pages 247-312.

psychoanalytic axis: what defies and challenges representation. The issue at stake, thus, is to analyse which forms of resistance are attached to this notion, and which can be their impact and power for subverting the existing socio-symbolic order.

2.3. Adriana Cavarero's Account on Vulnerability: Difference and Exposure

Adriana Cavarero focuses on a narrative articulation of desire, according to which desire refers to language as a symbolic apparatus⁹⁰, and to the subject as an unfinished entity that incessantly transcends itself. As I have asserted in the introduction, there are two crucial concepts concerning the vulnerable subject that Cavarero, following Arendt's legacy, outlines: the *what*, and the *who*.

Besides, she elaborates an ontological and political approach towards the notion of relationship in order to articulate a new logic based on *difference* that will oppose the traditional hegemony of the abstract universal, which always leaves aside any consideration concerning singularity and, as Cavarero remarks, uniqueness: "Knowledge of the universal, which excludes embodied uniqueness from its epistemology, attains its maximum perfection by presupposing the absence of such a uniqueness" (Cavarero, 2000 [1997]: 9).

Cavarero's notion of difference is founded on her consideration of narration as a subjective disposition. Such disposition refers to the singular dimension of existence, which is not reducible to the modern self. Indeed, as Cavarero remarks, the self that emerged from Cartesianism was said to be an atomic parcel that shared a space with others according to the coordinates of *sameness*, being the universal a law that guaranteed political cohabitation. This is why Cavarero constantly remarks that the very first political consideration must depart from cohabitation, though not in atomic terms, but in terms of a bodily exposure that entails a dependent scenario that diminishes the abstract claims concerning autonomy. Hence, narration emerges as a key feature that makes evident this dependent cohabitation owing to the fact that any narration, as

⁹⁰ This remark concerning language as a symbolic apparatus and as a signifying chain is mine, obtained through my critical approach towards Lacanian psychoanalysis, while Cavarero – as I will argue in this section – restricts language to narration.

Hannah Arendt had stated, requires an Other⁹¹ that enables ek-sistence. It is by virtue of the Other that any story can be told. As a result, there is an ontological relationality at stake, which is not reducible to an individualistic approach.

Nonetheless, there is a first missing crucial point in Cavarero's consideration of language and Otherness: language, as a chain of signifiers that precedes and enables the subject, does not simply refer to narration, in spite of the important role that it has concerning the ek-istence of the subject. Language exceeds narration inasmuch as it involves any symbolic configuration in which subjects live, having a structural role that organizes any worldly scenario. In this sense, any narration has to be able to perform different instances that enable to establish a voice as a narrative device that tells a story, which narration to the social sphere. Hence, the imaginary⁹² role of recognition should not be taken for granted, which deploys a normative framework that governs this very recognisability.

It is necessary to reconsider Cavarero's notion of language, which is fully determined as the narration deployed by the Other, because it can lead to a reformulation of humanism where language is merely considered as a tool to give an account for subjectivity. Such a paradigm does not pay attention to the logical pre-eminence of language, which implies that a subject is the result of a *linguistic subjection*, and, also, that a tension is given between the two narrative poles outlined by Cavarero, namely the *who* and the *what*.

Cavarero founds the notion of identity on the experience of birth, a perspective that she also extracts from Arendt, and her reformulation of politics. In this way, the subject is structurally understood as passive, that is, as depending from from the Other preceding it. Dependence is the key of bodily relationality. Thus, autonomy is reformulated by means of a fracture beyond a self-sufficient subject, which entails a consideration of childhood as a fundamental period, just as Lacan outlined in the desiring constitution of the *infans*. This relational dependency of the subject involves a radical *méconnaissance* of *who* it is, which at the same time bans any kind of Cartesian

⁹¹ In Cavarero's approach, the role of the Other incarnates the figure that enables any subject to have a narrative life, and, therefore, memories. This is a third perspective on alterity that differs from the Lacanian as from the Levinasian.

⁹² The use of the adjective "imaginary" refers to the Lacanian notion of it in terms of the aggressive bond that governs recognition in a triadic structure between two selves and the Symbolic. See section 2.2.1.1. in this dissertation.

introspection as a source to obtain a solitary knowledge concerning anyone's ek-sistence.

Cohabitation does not only mean that there is a radical dis-possession, but also that the subject lives in an embodied decentring way. This rises a new question, namely *who* the Other is. The Other, then, from the horizon of vulnerability, reveals itself as an incessant instance that calls upon each singular ek-sistence, bond to alterity. It implies that there is a contingent area that makes impossible to predict in advance any certainty regarding the subject, which is also argued by Butler through recourse to the concept of performativity. Performativity denies the notion of an inner truth that might be expressed by means of reason, and it appeals to an embodiment of cultural frameworks through repetition.

The story of the subject does not sepak to an abstract prediction, which also means that there is no privileged observer who might tell in advance how it will be. There is no subject that might tell its story beforehand, and no subject that might tell it in dialectical terms, that is, without discontinuities, gaps, and disruptions. Subjective narratives are always fragmentary and disseminated inasmuch as the possibility to have a subjective narrative is given by the Other. Hence, to have a story is also a differing process from identity in terms of sameness, which also reinforces the thesis regarding a structural *méconnaissance* that bans any possibility of a reconciliation of the subject.

2.3.1. The Reduction of the Subject to the Imaginary: Textuality and the Self

Cavarero's discursive perspective does not consider the material conditions concerning subjective ek-sistence, and, concretely, it does not consider precariousness. The signifier of precariousness refers to the social conditions of support and maintenance that anybody, in order to ek-sist, needs. Cavarero's approach, despite its aim concerning the body, erases the bodily reality of the subject, which is transformed into pure textuality and deprived of a social inscription. In relation to discourse as a social bond, Cavarero never mentions anything related to the processes of inclusions and exclusions that govern identifications in their imaginary and symbolic dimension. Hers is a perspective that clearly differs from the discourse articulated by Judith

Butler⁹³, who carefully analyses social dynamics bond to the constitution of the subject, which opens a broader framework for analysis.

The notion of vulnerability that Adriana Cavarero proposes seems to be more focused on an analysis of narration than on a critical approach towards the way in which a subject ek-sists in a socio-symbolic world. In relation to this, what Cavarero names “the body” reminds of a textual surface based on a fragmentary meaning. In other words, the notion of subject and, hence, of the body that she elaborates on, is, following Lacan, reduced to the Imaginary. Her notion of subject is only concerned by the self, which is provided by imaginary identifications that create the fascinating fantasy of a textual subjectivity. Her notion of alterity is always situated in a dyadic scenario between two selves, whereas the crucial feature outlined by Lacan in relation to alterity is the structural splitting of the subject due to the unconscious. The subject, then, is not simply confronted to the other with whom it cohabits, but it becomes another for itself, which means that the notion of the subject transcends the self as the imaginary parcel made of primordial identifications.

The *who*, which has a great relevance for Cavarero in order to elaborate the link between vulnerability and exposure, becomes problematic according to what I have mentioned. Indeed, the uniqueness⁹⁴ and radical singularity of any subject is placed at the very limits of narration as a rest not susceptible of being inscribed into a representation based on a totality of sense. This uniqueness, according to her approach, has a structure that transcends language as a complete system, and it is embodied in performances by non-neutral and non-abstract agents, but by singular beings. In other words, the subject, according to Cavarero, does not refer to processes of what Foucault

⁹³ Judith Butler’s analysis are focused on the regulatory devices that establish in advance the epistemological and representational frameworks that dictate *who* will count as a subject under several normative mechanisms that the subject is said to reproduce in order to be recognised as such. See, mainly, Butler, Judith (2004a): *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York, Verso; (2005): *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York, Fordham University Press, and (2009a): *Frames of War. When Is Life Grievable?* New York, Verso.

⁹⁴ As I will explain and I will analyse in the second part of this dissertation, what is radically singular in each subject from a psychoanalytic approach is its symptom, which is understood as its solution after encountering the real and experiencing the traumatic dimension of sexual *jouissance*, which exceeds the paradigm of discourse. In this sense, through symptomatic responses, each subject creates its own modality of *jouissance* by means of the operation of castration, the imaginary support of desire that the fundamental fantasy incarnates, and its sexual positioning. For a further remark on this issue, see Soler, Colette (2009): *Lacan, l’inconscient réinventé*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, and (2011): *Les affects lacaniens*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

called *assujettissement*⁹⁵ as ritualised reproductions of norms, but to a becoming that expresses a unique perspective: “Each one of us is only capable of exhibiting it, of exhibiting that unrepeatable uniqueness which he is, as he appears to others in the actual context of his exhibition” (Cavarero, *op. cit.*: 23).

Cavarero suggests a notion of singularity bound to a uniqueness that is “materialised” through expressive mechanisms. Yet, it remains unclear what is meant by expression and how it becomes such.. Moreover, this notion of uniqueness, despite Cavarero stresses that any ek-istence is a narrative one that demands an Other that shall give an account of it, in several moments is expressed as ontologically previous to narration, which would mean that narration simply works as a representation of a uniqueness which is fully alien to sociality. What remains obscure is the triadic relationship that Cavarero articulates regarding uniqueness, narration, and otherness, as it can be seen in the following quotation:

Even before another can render tangible the identity of someone by telling him/her his/her story, many others have indeed been spectators of the constitutive exposure of the very same identity to their gaze. In other words, a human is so far as he/she is unique and shows him- or herself to be such from the time of his or her birth, is *exposed* (Cavarero, *op. cit.*: 20).

According to this quotation, there is an ambivalent status of exposure concerning two key elements: the gaze of the Other as the first testimony of the relational interdependency constitutive of the subject, and the narrative account of the uniqueness and singularity of the subject. What seems problematic is the fact that these two elements suggest that there would be a pre-linguistic status of identity linked to the bodily exposure that would be later transformed into a story for which a storyteller is required. Thus, exposure becomes unexpectedly a revelation of a *substantial* reality that might have a narrative nature. There is a nuclear contradiction in Cavarero’s approach that assimilates the notions of singularity and uniqueness to a previous stage to narration.

⁹⁵ In the Foucauldian framework, the notion of *assujettissement* [subjection] refers to the regulatory and disciplinary processes according to which subjects incorporate and repeat a normative apparatus that enables them by means of diffused norms. As far as Butler is concerned, she re-articulates this notion by means of the notion of performativity, which contains the possible subversion of those very norms thanks to catachretical usages, which produce unexpected effects that create new forms of subjection and different forms of resistance. For a further conception of this notion, see Foucault, Michel (1975): *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Paris, Gallimard, and Butler, Judith (1993): *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. New York, Routledge.

Following my critical analysis, the Lacanian remarks on desire allow an approach towards singularity as the bond that a subject has with the Other through language as a symbolic structure that enables this union through metonymy. By means of language, any bond can be made through several identifications. Yet, identifications are also attached to what is radically absent in the considerations that Cavarero provides on the body: the drives and the crucial role of the *objet petit a* as a libidinal rest resultant from the operation of castration that language inflicts over subject. Thus, the body *is not merely* a textual surface that supports narration, but it is also invested through its bordering erogenous zones⁹⁶.

Nevertheless, Cavarero might provide some possible answers to these objections when she introduces the notion of the desire of being somebody, which involves the desire to have a story. This desire would come from the fact that this bodily exposure that emerges from a dependent constitution implies that to have a story requires action, an action in concert. Cavarero's notion of desire echoes Hegel's in the sense that it entails that desire is always the desire *of the Other*. In this account, existence requires the recognition of one subject by another subject, an operation that meant the loss of subjectivity in the domains of alterity. The Hegelian scenario had already introduced a further feature: desire incessantly defies the sovereignty of self-consciousness, and it follows a path irreducible to consciousness, which already points to an unconscious logic governed by the pre-eminence of the Other.

Differently from Hegel, however, Cavarero's formulation of desire is reduced to the desire to have a story that might reflect the uniqueness and singularity of every

⁹⁶ As far as the drives are concerned, there is another clinical notion that should not be left aside, though I will not develop it here because it would lead me to other paths: sublimation. Sublimation refers to all the mechanisms that the drives have in order to find an unexpected object that might satisfy them, which entails the possibility of deviations when the usual object cannot be found, or it is not accessible. Freud began to develop this notion quite early, analysing infantile sexuality and its polymorphous structure, further developing it when Freud dealt with the very logic of the drives, and their autonomy regarding anatomy, being a frontier between the mind and anatomy. Following the Freudian legacy, Lacan reformulated in a substantial way the notion of sublimation, which he analysed tied to the crucial relevance of *jouissance* and the *objet petit a*, using as an example courtly love poetry and the ideal status conferred to the beloved lady. For a further approach on this notion, see Freud, Sigmund (1905): *Three Essays on Sexuality*, in the volume VII of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, "A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works (1901-1905)", and (1915c): « Instincts and Their Vicissitudes », in the volume XIV of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

Concerning Lacanian remarks on sublimation, see Lacan, Jacques (1986): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII : L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil.

subject. Thus, the notion of desire she evokes refers to a fragmentary “self” made of multiple identifications. Identifications do not simply refer to roles or incarnations that the “self” can deploy, but also to libidinal positions that provide an enjoyment [*jouissance*] because of the effect of the signifier onto the subject’s body. This is why I have previously stated that Cavarero merely appeals to textual figures as fragmentary and multiple characters:

What is more, since the scene of action is contextual and mutable, the reality of the self is necessarily intermittent and fragmentary. The story that results therefore does not have at its centre a compact and coherent identity. Rather, it has at its centre an unstable and insubstantial unity, longed for by a desire that evokes the figure – or rather, the unmasterable design – of a life whose story only others can recount (Cavarero, *op. cit.*: 63).

The prevalence of what should be called the Imaginary register in Cavarero’s account on vulnerability reveals a theoretical weakness in her project from which no political consequence can be inferred, mainly because of the oblivion of any social and material conditions for vulnerability in bodily terms. Her definition of the *what* and the *who* as the two elements that compose subjectivity are to be challenged as well. She defines them in these terms:

The *what* – that is, the qualities, the character, the roles, the outlooks of the self – changes and is inevitably multiple and may be judged or interpreted in many ways. The *who*, on the other hand – as the uniqueness of the self in her concrete and *insubstitutable* existence – persists in continual self-exhibition, consisting in nothing else but this exposure, which cannot be transcended (Cavarero, *op.cit.*: 73).

According to the definitions she provides it seems that the primordial element in any subject is the *who*, radically tied to birth as a foundational event of subjectivity, just like in Arendt.. Nonetheless, the further remark provided by Cavarero on the persistence of the *who* as an incessant exposure reminds of the characteristics of a substantial entity that transcends any contingent element that the *what* expresses. Indeed, what remains unclear is to which extent the role of the Other and narration are relevant to the *who*, especially if she had previously introduced it as the bodily exposure previous to any narrative story provided by the Other. Therefore, despite Adriana Cavarero makes a strategic use of these two terms in order to decentre a Hegelian lecture of recognition that would emphasize a dyadic structure, what she eventually elaborates is a metaphysical approach based on the pre-eminence of a substantial *who* that transcends any sort of identification proper to the *what*. She continually oscillates between the

fragmentary constitution of a disseminated self, and the completeness of a *who* that would undo any supposedly synthetic logics based on the universal *logos*.

The further addition of a feminine disposition towards storytelling as the very way in which women are supposed to live in terms of this radical singular exposure adds another issue: the elaboration of sexual difference based on the nature of women as opposed to men, identified by Cavarero as subjects that refer to the logic of the universal. What she provides is an essentialist notion of the feminine that rebuilds the imaginary binary register between men and women by means of opposition.

Therefore, Cavarero's discursive approach on vulnerability, although she stresses the relational and exposed character of ek-sistence as dis-possession, does neither overcome dichotomy nor universality as the ontological standpoint. Her perspective is merely focused on narration, which means that the relevance of the body and the subject become blur due to the pre-eminence of textuality. There is a prevalence of an ontological register that merely refers to a "romantic" scenario between a *you* and an *I*, which leaves behind any suitable reflection on the social conditions of the emergence of the subject, and the relevance that vulnerability might have in relation to them.

2.4. Judith Butler's First Account on Vulnerability: Gender Norms, Recognition, and Bodily Subjection.

In order to analyse Judith Butler's notion of vulnerability, I shall pay attention to the different stages this notion has undergone all along her philosophical work. I shall begin by focusing on the first formulation of vulnerability she elaborated in relation to gender performativity, sex as a regulatory norm, and subjection. Hence, I will discuss her debate with psychoanalysis in relation to what Butler names the spectre of abjection that she attributes to the Lacanian notion of sexual difference. Butler aims to elaborate a Foucauldian translation of Lacan's work, which means that the Imaginary is transformed into the region of norms and their binary logic; the Symbolic becomes the linguistic sanction of these norms by means of regulatory power, and the Real is rejected as a noumenic element that would reassure the validity of the symbolic order. According to this re-appropriation of the psychoanalytical apparatus, Butler's first conception of vulnerability is linked to gender and recognition.

2.4.1. The Oblivion of the Subject of the Unconscious: Desire and the Self

Butler's mobilisation of the notion of vulnerability is linked to the struggle for wider forms of recognition⁹⁷ for those subjects who are expelled from the domain of cultural intelligibility, and placed in the domain of abjection. In this sense, Butler always considers the embodied subject a discursive effect derived from the Foucauldian couple of knowledge and power. As a result, the subject is inscribed into social regulatory mechanisms, the devices of which are norms that dictate criteria of recognisability. Vulnerability, therefore, appears as a reflection on the subject of the effects of the processes of subjection it undergoes depending on gender norms.

In relation to this issue, in *Subjects of Desire. Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France* (1987), Judith Butler had already formulated a notion of the subject bond to desire through her critical exposition of Hegel's lordship and bondage dialectic by means of an analysis on contemporary reformulations of desire. Taking into account the unconscious, Butler notices that the Lacanian notion of desire is not a synonym to any logic that oscillates between satisfaction and dissatisfaction, but it points to a phantasmagorical negativity, which is constitutive of the subject. She expresses this remarkable feature asserting that "the subject can no longer be understood as the agency of its desire, or as the very structure of desire itself; the subject of desire has emerged as an internal contradiction" (Butler, 1999 [1987]: 187). In other words, the subject of desire, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, is a split subject with an internal contradiction that bans any possible reconciliation within its logical structure, radically determined by the unconscious as the domain of the Other in terms of an unknown knowledge.

⁹⁷ In her attempts to redefine and re-elaborate her appropriation of Hegel's notion of desire in terms of the desire for recognition, Butler tries to widen the Hegelian framework that might enable new and more inclusive kinds of subjective formations, based on the social dispute of what a subject is meant to be. Whereas Cavarero focuses on the subject by means of uniqueness and singularity, Butler sticks to the normative apparatus that a subject is said to reproduce in order to be recognised as such, with all the disruptive and presumably subversive consequences that it might have. The emphasis on misrecognition, based on the formal and abstract nature of norms – which cannot specify the different incorporations that the subject executes – is a recent reformulation in her work. For a broader approach on this issue, see Butler, Judith (2015a): *Senses of the Subject*. New York, Fordham University Press.

However, the unconscious is substituted from the beginning in Butler's approach by an opacity of consciousness that does not take into account all the consequences of the crucial role of the unconscious as the instance that inoculates alterity at the very core of the subject. Hence, what she states is that "desire can longer be said to reveal, express, or thematise the reflexive structure of consciousness, but is, rather, the precise moment of consciousness' opacity" (Butler, *op. cit.*: 186). Whereas the metaphysical tradition focused on the subject through recourse to consciousness, Butler's formulation on the subject points to an opacity as a process of fragmentation and dissemination. In other words, she takes the "I" with the subject since the very beginning. The difference can be expressed in Lacanian terms when he discusses the nexus between desire and the Other through the lack-of-being of the unconscious: "Le sujet aliène toujours son désir dans un signe, une promesse, une anticipation, quelque chose qui comporte comme tel une perte possible. Du fait de cette perte possible, le désir se trouve lié à la dialectique d'un manque" (Lacan, 2013: 127). Explicitly leaving aside the Lacanian notion of the *objet petit a*, Butler inscribes the desire of the subject into the sphere of social recognition, focusing on the Imaginary and the Symbolic through recourse to a different status conferred to the Other, and the inscription of the subject into norms.

However, Butler is aware of the deceptive circuit of desire regarding any attempt to positivise its object-cause, which belongs to the negativity of the Real. Though she never takes into account the Real, she outlines the non-coincidence between signifier and signified due to the metonymical status of the object of desire, and the metaphor of demand: "What is posited, the sign, is only arbitrarily related to what is negated, the signified, and there is no logical way to discover the signified through an examination of the sign" (Butler, *op. cit.*: 188).

Nevertheless, in her analysis of Lacan's legacy, she misconiders another crucial feature: the phallus, which she wrongly identifies as a synecdoche of the penis⁹⁸. Yet

⁹⁸ This reading of the phallus as a hypostasis of the penis in Lacan is formulated by Butler already in *Gender Trouble* (1990), when she analyses the role of masquerade in the (non) relation of the sexes in the first formulation of sexual difference in Lacan's sixth seminar, devoted to desire. She later attributed to the phallus this synecdochal constitution in *Bodies that Matter* (1993), where she stated that the first formulation of sexual difference in Lacan – in spite of the fact that she *never* refers to the logical forms of *sexuation* that Lacan offered in *Encore* (1975b) – entailed the rejection of the effeminized gay man and the masculinized lesbian. For a further approach on this issue, see Butler, Judith (1990): *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge, mainly «Lacan, Riviere, and the strategies of masquerade », pages 59-77; (1993): *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*.

the phallus is the master signifier that structures the unconscious, regardless of the anatomical sex of the subject. Indeed, it is the always-absent signifier in any signifying chain, which introduces the lack as the structural dimension of desire. As Lacan outlines: “Il s’agit de savoir en quoi la prise de position du sujet dans le signifiant implique la perte, le sacrifice, d’un de ses signifiants entre autres” (Lacan, 2013: 237). The phallus, then, is the absent and lost signifier through castration, which by no means implies that it is synonymous to the male genital organ, but a missing element in the signifying chain that, at its turn, mediates desire in terms of the ambivalence of the presence and the absence of the Other. Its loss is also related to the fact that the castrating function of language imposes a limit to *jouissance*, the major instance of which is the taboo against incest. This is why Lacan claimed that “le phallus est ici ce quelque chose de sacrifié de l’organisme, de la vie, de la poussée vitale, qui se trouve symbolisé” (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 355).

2.4.2. The Symbolic and the Law: Butler’s Foucauldian Translation of Psychoanalysis

In her discussion of the Symbolic and the limit imposed by the Law of the signifier, Butler re-elaborates the role of the incest taboo regarding desire and *jouissance* appealing to its supposed status concerning the regulation of gender norms⁹⁹. She reduces the Symbolic to a heterosexist law that would dictate a complementary

New York, Routledge, mainly « The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary », pages 28-57, and « Phantasmatic Identifications and the Assumption of Sex », pages 58-80.

⁹⁹ Indeed, Butler’s reading of Antigone, disputing Hegel’s and Lacan’s previous readings of the Sophoclean tragedy, establishes that the character incarnates all those subjects who are declared abject by the symbolic Law because they defy the heterosexist logic of the juridical mechanisms of a regulatory apparatus, which would punish Antigone as a metaphor of non-normative kinships. However, as I will argue in this section, the Lacanian definition of the Symbolic as the Law of the signifier refers to a sociability radically conditioned by language in which the subject exists. As a matter of fact, it does not prescribe which sexual desires count as normative, and which do not. In addition to this, the status of sex in Lacanian psychoanalysis is not a mere product of the Symbolic as the differential signifying chain that arranges the reality in which subjects exist, but it appeals to the Real, the domain in which any symbolic configuration fails. Thus, the Symbolic always configures contingent translations of sex and sexual difference that are constantly susceptible of being reconfigured, especially if the later modifications of sexual difference in relation to *jouissance* are taken into account, which lead to the axiom “Il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel”. This is a perspective that clearly refutes Butler’s thesis against Lacanian psychoanalysis as a normative approach towards gender and sexuality. For a further approach on this issue, see Butler, Judith (2000a): « Unwritten Laws, Aberrant Transmissions », pages 27-56, in *Antigone’s Claim. Kinship between Life and Death*. New York, Columbia University Press; Lacan, Jacques (1986): « Antigone entre les deux morts », pages 270-290 in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII: L’éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil.

logic between men and women. This reduction of the Symbolic to a binary logic is what allows Butler to assert that the regulatory circuit of the law works as a homophobic device that dictates a compulsory heterosexuality that relegates homosexuality to the spectre of abjection. There is no trace of the Real in Butler's account¹⁰⁰. Hence, she affirms that: "For Lacan, it seems, desire is still in search of the Absolute, but this desire has become specified as a male desire, and this Absolute is understood to be the fantasy of maternal fulfilment that women are obliged to represent" (Butler, *op. cit.*: 203).

The pursuit of an Absolute is not what Lacan stated regarding the circuit of desire. Indeed, this fantasied "Absolute" as what has been lost is an *imaginary illusion* created by the signifier, pointing to a fantasied pre-linguistic stage in which a full *jouissance* could have been complete. Therefore, Lacan does not claim that desire attempts to obtain completeness, but it is the expression of a lack-of-being, a question that Butler seems to know as well when she exposes the split characteristic of the subject as an effect of the unconscious. Despite this, her reading of the Lacanian reformulation of desire as the expression of a heterosexist norm that would coerce the subjects to a gender identification based on a binary logic that would impose a union between men and women is one of the questions that are at the core of her reformulation of gender and sexuality as performative.

In her critical re-appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis as a regulatory norm of gender and sexuality, Butler has rethought the body (1) as an effect of ritualised repetitions that create an illusory stability concerning gender and sexuality, (2) and as a notion of matter, referring to a process of intelligibility regarding certain bodies, in relation to those repudiated owing to a lack of recognition. This is the theoretical and political transition that can be found from *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), to *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993), which introduced a first draft on the notion of vulnerability in terms of the dispossession and exposure towards regulatory norms that dictate which lives are worthy of being considered as human lives, and which ones are expelled to a realm of

¹⁰⁰ In a dispute with Slavoj Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), Butler reduces the Real to a noumenic entity that would ensure the solidity of the Symbolic. The Symbolic, then, is said to be a repressive law that would threaten the subject under the spectre of psychosis in order to impose a heterosexual hegemony, relegating homosexuality and any other gender identification to a domain of disdain. For a further approach on this issue, see Butler, Judith (1993): « Arguing with the Real », pages 181-222, in *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York, Routledge.

unintelligibility and, therefore, abjection. In this first attempt towards a reformulation of gender and sexuality as performative, Butler has an intense dialogue with psychoanalysis, yet her views on it, as I will argue all along this subsection, are based on a misreading caused by her Foucauldian affiliation.

As far as *Gender Trouble* (1990) is concerned, Butler elaborates her notion of performativity in order to subvert those hegemonic political regulations that dictate in advance which bodies will be allowed to count as subjects, and which ones will be underestimated, occupying an unliveable position. In order to undo these very exclusionary mechanisms, her view will focus on a genealogical procedure the aim of which is to render visible the contradictions, contingencies and processes of subjection [*assujettissement*] in order to elaborate an exceeding proliferation of new possibilities for gendered and sexual subjects that *subvert* heterosexist pres- and proscriptions. Thus, she states:

A genealogical critique refuses to search for the origins of gender, the inner truth of female desire, a genuine or authentic sexual identity that repression has kept from view; rather, genealogy investigates the political stakes in designating as an *origin* and *cause* those identity categories that are in fact the *effects* of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin (Butler, 1990: VIII-IX).

From a Nietzschean and Foucauldian approach, she argues against an essentialist and psychiatric notion of gender as an expression of a nuclear identity core that would refer to a psychological consciousness immediately bonded to the body as its surface. Butler attempts to elaborate a critical discourse based on the procedures that shape the *embodied subject* as an effect of power relations that *subject* it according to regulatory and juridical devices, creating the illusionary effect that the subject they created is its own cause. Thus, as Foucault clearly claimed, power relations are not simply repressive structures, but they are productive, building regimes of truth and of intelligibility through which the modelling of a subject occurs by means of a normative criterion that has an exclusionary dynamic. The goal is to bring into crisis the categories of “men” and “women” as insufficient predicates the meaning of which is not exhaustive, but always partial and fragmentary, which radically conditions her notion of performativity as an incessant repetition of incomplete predicates.

This methodological and political criterion involves that her notion of the subject is reduced to the sphere of identifications, this is to say, of the *ego*, an illusionary vision of a compact fantasy that provides the subject with an *enjoying* unity based on its

imaginary body. Yet, as I will further argue in this subsection, all the enjoyment present in identifications, in their imaginary and symbolic domain, is radically absent in Butler's project, which has some consequences in relation to the concept of the body she introduces in this first period of her work: a surface on which all predicates are written and put to work.

According to this notion of the subject and its gendered nature, Butler asserts that:

If one "is" a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pre-gendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained (Butler, *op. cit.*: 3).

She highlights that "man" and "woman" are not neutral predicates that pretend to represent a pre-discursive reality (male and female), later translated into cultural and social categories (man and woman). On the contrary, Butler outlines the performative dimension of gender, which appeals to concrete sociocultural contexts that generate a certain consistency regarding the subject. Thus, gender, in its bond to language following Austin's performativity¹⁰¹, has a creative power not merely referred to utterances, but to all the normative apparatus associated to it. Butler presses to the limits the hegemonic notions related to gender and sexuality in order to performatively produce different subversive strategies that rearticulate those very norms. Gender, then, does not primarily refer to something that *is*, but it becomes a ritualised and reiterative *doing* according to bodily coercions. This kind of *doing* is conditioned by a heterosexual matrix that, to some extent, Butler imputes to the Lacanian notion of the Symbolic, which would concede a political, social and cultural prerogative to heterosexual identifications, desire and sexual practices:

¹⁰¹ John Austin attributes to several linguistic expressions the power to bring to reality what is being declared, which entails that some sentences do not refer to external referents in a denotative way, but in a *per-formative* one that produces the referent and its consequences. Disputing the Austinian notion of performativity because it meant it could happen only if there were several conditions and intentions at stake, Derrida widened this notion to language in a structural level, mainly through his notion of *différance* and his analysis on writing. As far as Butler's gender performativity is concerned, there is a certain mixture of these both approaches towards performativity, bond together thanks to the tropic figure of catachresis. See Austin, John (1962): *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, and Derrida, Jacques (1988): « Signature, Event, Context », in *Limited Inc.* Evanston, Northwestern University Press, pages 1-23. Translation by Gerald Braff.

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender and desire (Butler, *op. cit.*: 22-23).

The heterosexual matrix would configure a binary regime according to which there would be a primary vulnerability referred to a normative gendered framework that would prescribe “normal” identifications and sexual practices, sanctioned as “natural”, in front of other forms of desire, gender and sexuality, which would be relegated to a spectre of unintelligibility. These “deviations” incarnated by certain bodily subjects are not external to the normative apparatus, but they are produced by its procedure, which would confirm the validity and hegemony of compulsory heterosexuality, a matrix that creates unexpected effects that undermine its universal powerful status and supposedly “naturalness”.

This strategy based on the deconstruction of the categories of “man” and “woman” already has some issues at stake, above all because it reduces sex – gender in Butler’s vocabulary, owing to the fact that, following Foucault, she reduces “sex” to a regulatory ideal¹⁰² – to a universal predicate the gendered/sexed individuals of which deviate from the regulatory ideal. Using an Aristotelean syllogism¹⁰³, what Butler establishes as a universal premise is sex, bond to the particular instances of man and woman as two insufficient predicates the exhaustiveness of which is always fragmentary and multiple. Following this same criticism, Joan Copjec, in her essay entitled « Sex and the Euthanasia of the Reason » (1994), affirms:

¹⁰² Foucault, in his genealogical analysis of sexuality all along the Western history from Christianity to the XIX century, denounced “sex” as a regulatory ideal based on a bio-medical, juridical and political device in order to obtain a fixed “truth” of the subject according to a historical alliance between several scientific domains such as psychiatry, psychology, psychoanalysis and sexology, amongst others, and new forms of normalisation based on the binary distinction between the normal and the pathological. For a further approach, Foucault, Michel (1976): « Le dispositif de sexualité : Enjeu » in *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, pages 99-120, and (1978): « Le vrai sexe » in *Herculine Barbin, dite Alexina B.*, Paris, Gallimard, pages 7-17. Related to the origins of the “normal” and the “pathological” in Foucault’s work, see Canguilhem, Georges (1943): *Le normal et le pathologique*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

¹⁰³ The classical logical form of the Aristotelean syllogism is based on three parts: firstly, there is a universal premise; secondly, a general one, and, thirdly, a particular instance on which there must be done a logical union between the two first premises that leads to a right particular conclusion. Sex, then, is the universal premise, being “man” and “woman” the general ones, which would lead to confused conclusions because of the mutability, contingency and historicity of sex/gender. For mainly Aristotelean examples of this logical structure, see Aristotle (1980): *Aristotle’s Prior and Posterior Analytics*. New York, Garland Publications. Translation by W.D. Ross, and (1971): *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*. London, Oxford University Press. Translation by Sir David Ross.

In other words, Butler proceeds as though she believes that the deconstruction of the fiction of innate or essential sex is also, or must lead to, a rejection of the notion that there is anything constant or invariable about sexual difference, that sex is anything but a construct of historically variable discursive practices into which we may intervene in order to show “subversive confusion” (Copjec, 1994: 202).

The deconstruction of what Butler considers a binary structure that defines man and woman as two complementary entities according to a heterosexual matrix is based on the assumption that these two categories imply each other, which involves that Butler elaborates an imaginary relation between “man” and “woman”. The main issue is the fact that the Imaginary, as a possible bond between two subjects, entails a radical violence between them, as Lacan remarked in his reading of Hegel’s lordship and bondage. Hence, related to desire in its imaginary stage, Lacan stated: “À l’origine, avant le langage, le désir n’existe que sur le seul plan de la relation imaginaire du stade spéculaire, projeté, aliéné dans l’autre. La tension qu’il provoque est alors dépourvue d’issue. C’est-à-dire qu’elle n’a pas d’autre issue (...) que la destruction de l’autre” (Lacan, 1975a : 266).

I am putting into question the fact that “man” and “woman” are merely constructed predicates based on a complementary union. Yet, I do not pretend to deny the violence against sexual identifications and practices that defy certain socio-symbolic contexts. This is one of the main problems in the first perspective provided by Butler on performativity, and on her first attempt to elaborate a vulnerability based on the subjective dependency on norms in order to become a subject. Reducing sex to a sociocultural gendered version, the doing that Butler claims to be intrinsic to gender performativity becomes a parody of regulatory gender norms that can only widen their inclusions and exclusions, yet they remain trapped in the complementary logic. The first version of vulnerability that comes from this theoretical horizon is also a binary concept referred to those included in a hegemony based on a social recognition because they are able to reproduce the norms that build the subject, and those who are expelled from this domain, incarnating abject bodies the always-possible parody of which might subvert the hegemonic logic. Nevertheless, the logic that governs this mechanism wrongly translates the Lacanian notion of the Imaginary into an opposition between man and woman, and the Symbolic is reduced to the heterosexist norm that threatens any homosexual practice, identification, or desire.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, an additional feature should be outlined: if sex is reduced to its different and historical articulations that take place in the symbolic world, there is a social reductionism of the subject as a pure discursive effect the possibility of which to subvert these norms is already trapped within the normative apparatus, with no *real* chance to repeat *new* performative configurations. There is, then, a repetition based on the notion of sameness, with no difference, in a political and ontological level. This is why in psychoanalysis, as Joan Copjec puts it, sex is not a mere predicate with a fragmentary structure, but the short-circuit of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, being a parasite that invades the signifying chain, inoculating within it a structural gap:

Sex is, then, the impossibility of completing meaning, not (as Butler's historicist/deconstructionist argument would have it) a meaning that is incomplete, unstable. (...) For sex is here not an *incomplete* entity but a totally empty one – it is one to which no predicate can be attached (Copjec, *op. cit.*: 206-207).

What Butler disregards is the Real as the domain of sex and sexual difference, with its asymmetrical logic. Nonetheless, Butler elaborates a reformulation of her first approach on gender performativity based on a critical analysis of Lacan's first formulation of sexual difference – based on the grammatical difference between *having* and *being* the phallus–, and a link between the notions of matter and abjection. A reformulation that, in addition to this, would try to refuse the criticism of social constructivism regarding the notion of the body that Butler deployed in *Gender Trouble* (1990), radically influenced by the Foucauldian vision of the body that the French philosopher introduced in « Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire » (1971b) :

C'est le corps qui porte, dans sa vie et sa mort, dans sa force et sa faiblesse, la sanction de toute vérité et de toute erreur, comme il en porte aussi et, inversement, l'origine-provenance. (...) Sur le corps, on trouve le stigmate des événements passés, tout comme de lui naissent les désirs, les défaillances, et les erreurs ; en lui aussi ils se dénouent, entrent en lutte, s'effacent les uns des autres et poursuivent leur insurmontable conflit (Foucault, 1971b : 153-154).

The Foucauldian conception of the body refers to a textual surface the signifiers and signifieds of which can be genealogically deciphered, emerging from this task *all* the conceptions, historical changes and modes of discursive *assujettissement*. It refers, then, to the body in its imaginary dimension, this is to say, the set of fascinating images made through the constitutive bond with the *similar* other in a specular relation. It also means that this reduction of the body to a textual surface – a common feature with Cavarero's account of the ambivalent bodily exposure that she attributes to the *who* –

involves a refusal of the drives, sex and sexual difference, providing a neutral and *neuter* body, more linked to a voluntarist account of agency that appeals to a nuclear entity of the self.

2.4.3. Recognition and Bodily Subjection

In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler offers a new perspective on the embodied subject by rethinking the notion of “construction”:

Thinking the body as constructed demands a rethinking of the meaning of construction itself. And if certain constructions appear constitutive, that is, have this character of being that “without which” we could not think at all, we might suggest that bodies only appear, only endure, only live under the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory schemas (Butler, 1993: XI).

As she had been accused of being a social constructivist for her account of performativity concerning gender, Butler firstly proceeds by interrogating the very notion of construction inasmuch as the body is concerned. She introduces a conception of the body as an instance that depends on a previous regulatory apparatus that supports its ek-istence, which also entails that the body is not a merely organic entity, but an effect produced by power relations that depends on social recognition in order to be. The body is here placed in a relational framework in which alterity reveals itself as fundamental, a feature that in *Gender Trouble* (1990) had not been properly accounted for.

Now, the notion of “sex” is analysed from a different perspective, having abjection a crucial role in its definition. “Sex” is not described as an anatomical datum that later has a cultural translation in terms of gender, an issue that Butler’s notion of performativity had already tried to dismiss because it involved that the body might have a pre-cultural and cultural status, which would situate sex on the domain of a genital evidence for gender. On the contrary, “sex” – following again the Foucauldian legacy – is said to be a regulatory ideal that coerces the subject in order to provide a cultural intelligibility tied to a normative structure that requires a compulsory reiteration:

In other words, “sex” is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static conditions of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize “sex” and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms (Butler, *op. cit.*: 2).

Therefore, “sex” is not simply a neutral ideal, but it is bound to matter. Indeed, the English word “matter” is an ambivalent concept that might have two possible meanings: matter as a physical property, or matter as what is relevant, important, and might give some intelligibility. Thus, the union between sex and matter, in Butler’s reformulation of gender performativity, refers to a forcible repetition regulated by the phantasmagorical status of “sex” as a norm that has diverse materializations on the body, conferring to it a cultural intelligibility and, consequently, the possibility of a social recognition. If the status of matter, in relation to sex, demands a coerced repetition, it means that matter is not complete in advance, but it requires a never-ending reiterative structure as its *condition sine qua non*. If it requires such a reiteration, its structure does not involve an eidetic nature that becomes particularly incarnated on different bodies, but its forcibly coercion demands a repetition thanks to which it gains its validity, which means that sex is not previous or subsequent different reiterations, but it is incessantly updated thanks to it: “Sex is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the “one” becomes viable at all, what which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility” (Butler, *idem*).

Butler adopts a similar argumentative line concerning sex as a predicate that has diverse manifestations on embodied subjects through coerced repetitions, though this time the key notion in order to reflect on these coerced repetitions is the concept of matter in its ambivalent double meaning. At the same time, matter, as I have already stated, is structurally tied to – in Butler’s approach – to the notion of abjection, which means that the cultural and regulatory production of gendered/sexed bodies is *exclusionary*. In other words, in order to achieve a materiality and, therefore, *to matter*, bodies need to ritually repeat the norms that enable their cultural intelligibility, which at the same time involves another issue. This issue refers to the reiterative status of the regulatory ideal of sex, which entails that, because it only has a performative structure, deviations from the regulatory ideal belong to any gendered subject, which inoculates into the subject a *queerness*, a strangeness that decentres recognition from a supposedly binary mechanism:

The abject designates here precisely those “unliveable” and “inhabitable” zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the “unliveable” is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject (Butler, *op. cit.*: 3).

However, Butler persists on reducing sex to other socio-cultural marks like class, race and ethnicity. This epistemological and ontological criterion reduces the subjection to a net made of coerced identifications that finally inoculate at the core of Butler's project the impossibility of difference. In other words, any subject is incessantly made of several attributes governed by an inclusionary and exclusionary logic, reducing the sphere of the subject to the logic of the set, the validity of which is confirmed by the exclusion of, at least, one of its members, this is to say, the abject body. By constantly reducing the subject to the self, the imaginary relationship, based on the aggressiveness of complementarity, is mobilised as the regulatory mechanism that dictates any subjective emergence. As a result, this imaginary logic condemns the subject to be placed in a never-ending violent stage in which its existence always depends on an aggressive bond that, in Butler's perspective, is materialized by means of the heterosexual matrix, which entails that any supposedly subversive attempt to undo those very norms is simply a new articulation based on the repetition of the *same* norms. Her argument, then, is always bound to the impasse of the phallic logic, a group for which the Other always incarnates a threaten owing to its *jouissance*, the key concept for the psychoanalytical account of the body, which is always radically absent in Butler, who incessantly reduces the body to a textual surface made of multiple meanings. The body, thus, is suppressed by virtue of discourse¹⁰⁴:

Indeed, the construction of gender operates through *exclusionary* means, such that the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of foreclosures, radical erasures, that are, strictly speaking, refused the possibility of cultural articulation (Butler, *op. cit.*: 8.).

Lacanian psychoanalysis, thanks to the *triadic* structure of the subject, this is to say, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, twists such a perspective: sexual difference, in its *real* articulation, is based on an asymmetrical logic between the two modes of *jouissance*. In this sense, relationship as union or communication becomes barred. Such a gesture means that no fully signifier can absorb the subject, which

¹⁰⁴ It is important to outline that, while in Lacanian psychoanalysis discourse has, among other elements, a bond based on the signifier and *jouissance* as a rest incarnated by the *objet petit a*, in Butler's account of discourse, it is reduced to the alliance between several institutional practices and a net of power relations, always placing the discursive reality in the domain of knowledge, for which any notion not susceptible of being reduced to a stable category is a trouble. For a further approach on this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: L'envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil, where Lacan introduces the modalities of the four discourses : the master, the hysterical, the university, and the analyst.

involves that the subject is not, strictly speaking, a pure discursive effect, but it appears as a *failure*, a void at the core of the Other:

To say that the subject is sexed is to say that it is no longer possible to have any knowledge of *him* or *her*. *Sex serves no other function than to limit the reason, to remove the subject from the realm of possible experience or pure understanding*. This is the meaning, when all is said and done, of Lacan's notorious assertion that "there is no sexual relation": sex, in opposing itself to sense, is also, by definition, opposed to relation, to communication (Copjec, *op. cit.*: 207.).

While Butler reduces sex to a regulatory ideal, psychoanalysis introduces sex detached from identity. It is, then, a suspension and an interruption of the signifying chain, the manifestation of which is always *negative*: sex, in its differential modalities regarding the all-phallic and the not-all phallic *jouissance*, is what breaks sense and bans any systemic approach towards the subject. The *supplementary* structure of the *not-all* phallic *jouissance*, which exceeds any binary structure, is a limit position that dislocates the logical modality of the group, being an obstacle for any discursive procedure. It is the realm of singularity, based on a structure of one-by-one, inaugurating a new form of bond with the Other that breaks any normative attempt. In this sense, sexual difference also has an ethical domain: the safeguard of difference beyond oppositions, shortcircuiting a discourse based on the rejection of alterity:

Why insist, then, on the distinctions? The answer is that the very sovereignty of the subject depends on it, and it is only the conception of the subject's sovereignty that stands any chance of protecting difference in general. It is only when we begin to define the subject as *self-governing*, as subject to its own laws, that we cease to consider her as *calculable*, as subject to laws already known and thus manipulable. It is only when the sovereign incalculability of the subject is acknowledged that perceptions of difference will no longer nourish demands for the surrender of difference to processes of "homogenization", "purification", or any other of the other crimes against otherness with which the rise of racism has begun to acquaint us (Copjec, *op.cit.*: 208).

The distinctions provided by psychoanalysis regarding sexual difference at the level of the Real do not refer to an exclusionary means between those who obtain a social recognition, and those who are deprived of it. Indeed, for psychoanalysis, recognition is an imaginary bond that involves the infliction of violence on the other, trying to reduce alterity to a domesticated status based on the privilege of sameness. Recognition does not refer to the subject in its split and barred dimension, but to its imaginary sphere, made of multiple identifications given by the Other, foreclosing the unconscious as the internal splitting of the subject.

To be a sexed subject is not to merely internalize diverse symbolic and imaginary identifications, but it also entails that the body is not simply made of

performatively notions such as gender, but it is also an enjoying substance. The paradox of the enjoying substance is based on the dissolution of being as a predicate that would be symmetrically distributed among *all* the subjects, inoculating at its core a difference that bans any possible homogeneity. Sex is a fracture, an impasse for being, regardless of its declination as a substance or through dissemination:

Se postula que el cuerpo no es del orden del ser en tanto que se afirma que no somos un cuerpo en la medida en que el cuerpo no se sostiene en/como orden binario alguno. Más bien se tiene (...) en/como entre-dos, marcado por el significante y la diferencia sexual, y en tanto que apertura a una multiplicidad de goces y afectos siempre inciertos (González and Saez Tajafuerce, 2013: 21).

The body is not *only* inscribed into the notions of surface or frontier, but its sexed status breaks meaning, being *jouissance* the kernel for a historicist and deconstructionist strategy. The affects and singular bonds that any subject establishes in relation to the Other inaugurates a realm for which no signifier can give a complete account, while Butler places a regulatory ideal that divides into a *binary* logic the subject, which means that her approach finds an incessant impasse. Hence, what she incessantly does is widening the shaping of recognition based on the oblivion of a difference which is not susceptible of being deconstructed: the sexual difference.

2.4.3.1. A Sterilised Body: The Voidance of the Drives from the Body

In Butler's discussion of the Lacanian notions of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, there is an analysis of the institution of a stable bodily morphology. Following her hypothesis on a compulsory heterosexuality that incessantly pushes the subject to identify as a man or as a woman according to a bond based on complementarity, she proposes to undo idealised morphologies, which prescribe and proscribe certain desires and sexual practices: "But precisely because prohibitions do not always 'work', that is, do not always produce the docile body that fully conforms to the social ideal, they may delineate body surfaces that do not signify conventional heterosexual polarities" (Butler, *op. cit.*: 64). Butler outlines that the body and its morphology do not always conform to regulations, which allows the possibility of the eroticization of new bodily parts that defy a heterosexist norm, a remark that Freud had already outlined in his *The Ego and the Id* (1923). Despite this, Freud had not suggested that the process of eroticization merely depended on practices or on voluntarily strategies, but the eroticization of bodily parts is conditioned by what Butler erases from

the body: the drives. Indeed, the mechanism of the drives point to a fundamental element: an anatomical infradetermination. Freud had highlighted the autonomy that the drives had in relation to anatomy, which also involves that their object is not given in advance.

In addition to this, the Lacanian analysis on the drives is based on their partial status, this is to say, on the fact that they constantly deviate from what could be considered as the main biological function: reproduction. The basic element that explains the reason for this deviation is that in each drive there can be seen several manifestations of the *objet petit a*, a rest of enjoyment resultant from castration that desperately attracts the subject, which confers to the drives a circular structure: “Si la pulsion peut être satisfaite sans avoir atteint ce qui, au regard d’une totalisation biologique de la fonction, serait la satisfaction à sa fin de reproduction, c’est qu’elle est pulsion partielle, et que son but n’est point autre chose que ce retour en circuit” (Lacan, 1973 : 163).

The non-necessary bond between the drives and their objects entails that, according to psychoanalysis, there is no such thing as a heterosexist norm that would compel the subject towards a heterosexual matrix that would proscribe homosexuality and other sexual desires. What the drives of the barred subject try to catch in order to obtain a satisfaction is not reduced to the Imaginary or the Symbolic, but it also includes the Real. There is an impossibility to normalise human sexuality, which is also modelled by several and historical configurations that are governed by the Law of the signifier. Sexuality is, then, deprived of a defined area:

Lo sexual no es una sustancia para ser correctamente descrita y circunscrita, es la imposibilidad misma de su propia circunscripción o delimitación. No puede ser completamente separada de las necesidades y funciones biológicas, orgánicas (dado que se origina dentro de su reino, se inicia habitándolas), ni puede ser simplemente reducido a ellas. Lo sexual no es un dominio separado de la actividad o la vida humana, y es por esto que puede habitar todos los dominios de la vida humana (Zupancic, 2013: 28)¹⁰⁵.

On the contrary, Butler refers to a bodily projection circumscribed to the specular image, which is at the core of the ego, as Freud signalled: “The “I” is above all

¹⁰⁵ This quotation belongs to a monographic work that collects three lectures given by Joan Copjec, Alenka Zupancic and Rithée Cevasco, which were pronounced in Barcelona, during the summer of 2012. Hence, the originals are not available, but just the Spanish versions, which were translated by Ana Cecilia González.

a bodily-essence; it is not simply a surface-essence, but it is itself the projection of a surface” (Freud, 1980 [1923]: 27).

Furthermore, Butler finally reduces the body to an unstable signifier with an incessant *différance* that challenges fixed representations, which reduces the body to a textual writing deprived of any transcendental signifier: “The linguistic categories that are understood to “denote” the materiality of the body are themselves troubled by a referent that is never fully or permanently resolved or contained by any given signified” (Butler, *op. cit.*: 67). In this sense, while psychoanalysis does not assert what sex *is*, Butler reduces it to a regulatory ideal that forces the subject towards a binary identification, saturating of meanings a domain that, in a psychoanalytical vein, entails the suspensions of sense, and, thereby, of any supposed norm or classification. Indeed, when Butler accuses Lacan of imposing a heterosexist norm concerning his first formulation of sexual difference, based on the grammatical difference between *having* and *being* the phallus, she commits the mistake that Lacan repeatedly denounces: confusing the signifier that structures the unconscious with the organ. Butler’s reading of this first account of Lacanian difference is based on a forcibly identification of men and women according to a compulsory heterosexuality that reduces homosexuality to a psychotic spectre:

Implicit in the figure of castration, which operates differently to constitute the constraining force of gendered punishment, are at least two inarticulate figures of abject homosexuality, the feminized fag and the phallicized dyke; the Lacanian scheme presumes that the terror over occupying either of these positions is what compels the assumption of a sexed position within language, a sexed position that is sexed by virtue of its heterosexual positioning, and that is assumed through a move that excludes and abjects gay and lesbian possibilities (Butler, *op. cit.*: 96).

Accordingly, Butler assumes that the emergence of the sexed subject implies a foreclosure and a repudiation of a certain domain of its structure, a feature that she would later develop and analyse as a gender melancholy bond to the repression of any homosexual bond¹⁰⁶. Thus, sexual difference would be based on a psychotic threatening

¹⁰⁶ Butler develops her notion of gender melancholy through an analysis of the Lacanian notion of psychosis that she identifies with abjection. This notion comes from Julia Kristeva, which she mixes with the Freudian analysis of mourning and melancholia. As far as gender melancholy is concerned, Butler asserts that the resolution of the Freudian Oedipus complex entails the foreclosure of a homosexuality that, in a sense, Butler introduces as before the Law, which is a contradiction regarding the psychoanalytic notion of object-choice. This previous homoerotic disposition should be suppressed by virtue of the regulatory status of compulsory heterosexuality, creating a gender melancholy referring to those bodies declared as abject. For a further approach on this question, see Kristeva, Julia (1980): *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: essai sur l'abjection*. Paris, Le Seuil; Freud, Sigmund (1917): « Mourning and

in relation to a subjective intelligibility. Abjection, then, would be represented by gays and lesbians, what leads Butler to assert that Lacanian psychoanalysis deploys a homophobic account of sexuality concerning the subject. Such a conclusion derives from the confusion between two clinical notions: foreclosure and repression, which refers to the rejection or acceptance of the phallic signifier, regardless of the sexual choice of the subject. It is this misreading that allows her to wrongly claim that sexual difference is equal to heterosexism, yet she clearly disregards the second formulation on sexual difference provided by Lacan in *Encore* (1975b).

In addition, if sexual difference is, for the Lacan of the late 1970's, a void at the core of the Symbolic and of the Imaginary, its historical meaning is susceptible of being disputed in the socio-symbolic arena by means of the discursive dynamic of inclusions and exclusions concerning identifications within social bonds. Such is the important emphasis highlighted by Slavoj Žižek in *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporaries Dialogues on the Left* (2000, co-authored with Judith Butler and Ernesto Laclau):

Lacan's claim that sexual difference is "real-impossible" is strictly synonymous with his claim that "there is no such thing as a sexual relationship". For Lacan, sexual difference is not a firm set of "static" symbolic oppositions and inclusions/exclusions (heterosexual normativity which relegates homosexuality and other "perversions" to some secondary role), but the name of a deadlock, of a trauma, of an open question, of something that *resists* every attempt at its symbolization. Every translation of sexual difference into a set of symbolic opposition(s) is doomed to fail, and it is this very "impossibility" that opens up the terrain of the hegemonic struggle for what "sexual difference" will mean. What is barred is *not* what is excluded under the present hegemonic regime (Žižek, 2000: 110-111).

The register of the Real-impossible is what Butler rejects through her notions of gender performativity, and the concept of vulnerability, tied to normalizing devices and their exclusionary operations. From this horizon, the notion of vulnerability is structured by means of a binary logic in which those exposed to the spectre of abjection are potential victims in front of the strategies of regulatory power. Butler's performative subversion of norms just leads to a temporarily widening rearticulation of inclusions-exclusions, which entails that her notion of vulnerability is radically bound to an identity

Melancholia », in the volume XVII of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, "An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works (1917-1919)". London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis. Translation by James Strachey (1953-1974); and Butler, Judith (1997a): *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, mainly « Gender Melancholy/Refused Identification », pages 132-150.

politics that incessantly appeals to the imaginary “I”, leaving aside a proper reflection on the subject.

However, in the next chapter devoted to violence, analysing her *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection* (1997a) and *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997b), I will provide an analysis of her account on psychic and linguistic violence that might provide for a re-articulation of the notion of vulnerability, which could be the occasion for a disruption beyond the normal and the pathological (abject). At the same time, a reconsideration of her work *Undoing Gender* (2004b), in which she re-articulated her approach towards sex as a limit to bodily autonomy, could be the occasion for a fruitful strategy to undo the pathologizing diagnosis concerning transsexuality and a critical analysis of the implicit violence in any binary regime, which governs normalizing surgery onto intersexual subjects.

2.5. Demand and Alterity: Hannah Arendt’s *Who are you?*, or How to Live in Concert.

In this section, I will offer a first approach of the political connotations of vulnerability in Hannah Arendt’s terms and according to her performative discourse on politics, which is based on co-habitation and acting in concert. These two notions point to the recovery of the Aristotelean concept of community, based on *praxis* understood as an action made in common, this is to say, *with* other subjects that share a space.

Arendt elaborates a normative approach towards the political that explicitly rejects labour and work. Such a division reminds of the Greek distinction: on the one hand, there is a private domain referred to the house, the Greek *oikos*, and, on the other hand, there is a public space that conforms a political community, the domain for concerted actions. Besides, the action that Arendt evokes is attached to speech, which inscribes the political into the production of a common sense related to a symbolic context. If action is related to speech, there is no political action that might be performed by a solitary subject, especially because speech is structurally directed to the Other. Politics *necessarily* implies cohabitation with others.

Concerted politics based on speech and action requires a fundamental equal right for speech for all its members. In this sense, Arendt already outlines that the power of

speech resides in shaping the reality of what is lived and felt, which entails that any political situation is discursively created. Hence, a first approach concerning performativity related to speech and language is evoked by Hannah Arendt by stressing the creative role of language, which means that it is not primarily a descriptive account of an external referent, but it operates as a reiterative and ritualised spoken narration. Language, then, is *a condition sine qua non* for creating a world. A world that, according to Arendt, is constantly built and rebuilt by the founding event of birth, which enacts *living with* in terms of a social dependency among the members of a community. Alterity, therefore, is what constitutes the political subject, who is constituted in a social relationship with others through the mediation of demand, exemplified by Arendt with the formula: “Who are *you*?”

However, the role of the body in her account of politics is ambivalent. Politics, as a spoken action that requires a narration that gives a consistency to ek-sistence – which also means that a narrator, this is to say, an Other, is crucial, highlighting the relational nature of human politics –, rethought from the event of birth, implies a primarily exposure. This exposure, besides from implying a constitutive dependency, also means that the body, apparently, is not alien to politics, but it rather is inseparable to any political agency, namely if political associations like assemblies, an occupation to denounce the abusive actions of the State or a strike orchestrated by workers are considered. Besides, since Arendt excludes work from the dimension of politics, the bodily dimension is ambiguous in such a definition of a community.

The relevance of the body concerning politics entails a performative bodily action, which also means that the body does not simply reproduce previous standards or norms, but each bodily agency introduces certain deviations that elaborate new disruptive political possibilities. This transformation that requires a bodily existence and, hence, an embodied subject, is what also makes possible to outline the material conditions that are crucial to support a political community, which would mean that, contrary to the thesis held by Arendt, work is not simply referred to maintenance, but it also shows that any political community does not simply refer to the Greek notion of *agora*. Excluding work from politics is an *ideological* decision that elaborates a normative perspective on politics inasmuch as it builds a notion of it detached from material conditions of existence.

The exclusion of work from politics has an unexpected consequence that highlights the ambivalent considerations that Arendt elaborates regarding the body, which supposedly refers to agency and political action in a broader sense:

The body becomes indeed the quintessence of all property because it is the only thing one could not share even if one wanted to. Nothing, in fact, is less common and less communicable, and therefore more secure shielded against the visibility and audibility of the public realm, that what goes on within the confines of the body, its pleasures and its pains, its labouring and consuming (Arendt, 1958: 112).

On the one hand, if a political action, though inseparable from speech in its performative way, involves a transformation, the body, in its dependency and exposure, becomes the first and basic political agent that incessantly disrupts what Arendt introduces as a public space. On the other hand, this approach towards the body as a living organism that subtracts from a political status, reduced to a physical support, invites to the following question: is there any political agency that does not require a bodily exposure, even in its tiniest expression? The very possibility to act entails an embodiment without which action reveals itself impossible, unless Arendt is thinking in a politics linked to a subjectivity for which the body is just a secondary feature taken care by another subject. Thus, the very division she draws between a private domain reduced to the *oikos*, the goal of which is the fulfilment of life in biological sense, and a public space where free speech happens in a communitarian sense reinforces the assimilation of the body to an organic entity.

On the contrary, I want to assert that the human body is not merely brute flesh because it has a *name* which provides it with a *singularity*, this is to say, it is a body traversed by *affects*, and discursively articulated. Hence, a body reduced to a pure biological entity seems to be quite impossible unless Arendt evokes the free-men that Aristotle - in his *Politics*¹⁰⁷ - had in mind: the proper citizens, those for whom the body was an affair taken care by slaves, who were enclosed into private functions deprived of a human status, all along with women, enclosed at their homes, with their children, and foreigners. Pretending to elaborate a clear division between two regions of life, this is to

¹⁰⁷ The political subject that Aristotle always has in mind is the citizen, a notion that merely referred to Athenian adult male individuals, who did not have to work, and who were owners of lands and of an *oikos*. Thus, this entailed an exclusionary political subjectivity that repudiated from the agora women, children, foreigners and slaves, who were not considered human beings. For a further approach on this issue, see Aristotle (1971): *The Nichomachean Ethics of Aristotle*. London, Oxford University Press. Translated by Sir David Ross, and (1932): *Politics*. London, William Heinemann. Translated by H. Rackman.

say, between culture and nature, dismisses that any human affair, even its feeding, is tied to a linguistic and symbolic mediation, which means that there is no pure parcel radically alien to a political consideration. Hence, Arendt seems to reproduce the exclusionary logic according to which politics has been thought since Greece until and including liberalism, which hides a political decision *par excellence*: a distributive account of reality according to certain interests, which refer to those of a dominant group or class, as Marxism would claim.

Therefore, the renewal that politics is said to incessantly perform because it refers to an undetermined action is confined into a space regulated by social recognition, which leaves behind that the subjection of those confined into a private domain with no representation is derived from a political distribution. And this puts into question the notion of a “pre-political” or “biological” reality¹⁰⁸. Indeed, what Arendt does not consider refers to the conditions that make possible the emergence and production of the political subject, a remark that authors like Judith Butler incessantly analyse.

As a result, there is a contradiction at the core of Arendt’s political philosophy, especially since her political maxim is cohabitation, as already developed in her brilliant analysis against totalitarianism¹⁰⁹. Hence, this strict division between a public and a private space also sustains an exclusionary dynamic regarding the processes of social invisibility. Indeed, Arendt’s account on a deliberative democracy leaves behind the material conditions that differentially distribute a vulnerable disposition towards violence and dispossession of rights, which is bound to a precariousness that depends on the exclusionary and inclusionary modifications that incessantly transform the public

¹⁰⁸ In this sense, an accurate philosophical analysis of the subjugation of women at the core of the *polis* is extremely well provided by Mercè Rius in her last published essay. In this work, Rius explores several (bio)political considerations that, all along the refusal towards matter and material social conditions, reduced women to reproductive individuals, deprived of any socio-political attribute. Thus, the domination exercised onto women’s bodies is not a pre-political instance, but a *political* one based on the exclusionary production of the political subject. For a further analysis on this issue, see Rius, Mercè (2014): *Contra filósofos, o ¿en qué se diferencia una mujer de un gato?* Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva.

¹⁰⁹ However, the analysis that Arendt provided in relation to totalitarianism referred to situations in which there was a fusion between a concrete political party and the State, two features that could be found in the Third Reich and the communist dictatorship of Stalin, excluding from this consideration Franco’s dictatorship in Spain. What she incessantly stressed was that a totalitarian regime, elaborating a fundamentalist ideology based on notions of racial purity, political nepotism and the suspension of freedom through violent means, entailed the elimination and repression of any sort of protest and difference, being a paradigmatic example the industrialized extermination of Jews in Germany, the Shoah. For further remarks on this perspective, see Arendt, Hannah (1951): *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York, Schocken (2004); (1963): *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York, Viking, and (1972): *Crises of the Republic: Lying in Politics; Civil Disobedience; On Violence; Thoughts on Politics and Revolution*. New York, Harcourt.

space and, hence, democracy as such. In this sense, Arendt emphasizes that a life with no right to a social speech is no human life at all:

A life without speech and without action, on the other hand – and this is the only way of life that in earnest has renounced all appearance and all vanity in the biblical sense of the word – is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 176).

2.5.1. Acting in Concert: Demand and Alterity

Following Arendt's approach, a human life for which no speech is available is a life deprived of a *recognisable* humanity, a life that cannot obtain a different status from a biological notion of it, reduced to a fulfilment of basic needs. What is at stake in this notion of public appearance through speech and action is recognition. According to the analysis that I have offered on the Hegelian and Lacanian remarks on this concept, recognition involves a violent domestication of alterity based on the logic of identity. Alterity is reduced to a paradigm governed by the regulatory ideal of sameness, which entails that a political bond based on the recognisability of subjects involves an *exclusionary* mechanism based on the institution of a social group that departs from a master signifier that works as a source for identification for *all* its members.

However, Arendt mobilises alterity through recourse to an action understood as *praxis*, this is to say, a concerted action that configures the political inasmuch as action introduces unexpected and new elements at the very centre of a shared public space. This novelty can happen and transform the community in which subjects live together because the major concept that structures Arendtian politics is not a sovereign "I", but the "you". In this sense, any encounter with alterity is a chance for a new beginning, for the creation of something new that introduces a modification. Exposing the constitutive bond between language and existence, Arendt situates demand, in its reiterative process, as what allows the emergence of a singular subject that transcends a life rooted in merely biological functions.

In addition to this, the relationship between speech and alterity entails an ontological displacement where the Other exceeds any closure of sense. It is the Other that gives raise to the possibility of acquiring a narrative ek-sistence, being the storyteller who allows that any subject has a story, which is made of fragmentary and contingent events. As I have remarked regarding Cavarero's notion of vulnerability,

Hannah Arendt outlines the plurality at the core of the subject in relation to its qualities and attributes, which conforms the *what*, which is tensionally related to the singularity of the *who*: “This disclosure of “who” in contradiction to “what” somebody is – his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide – is implicit in everything somebody says and does” (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 179).

The notion of recognition linked to the question *Who are you?* does not signal any possible reconciliation based on the assumption of a “we” as a synthesis made of several singularities within a universal. The bodily exposure of the *who*, whose embodiment and speech are the two key elements for any concerted action, defies any neutral approach towards the subject, radically tied to alterity, and mainly to this Other that originates a passionate attachment according to a desiring liaison. Such a desiring relationship is a never-ending dynamic because desire is never satisfied. Desire expresses a demand that, at its turn, the Other sends back. As Ana Cecilia González declares:

Puesto que el Otro es tanto capaz de satisfacer como de privar, todo lo que sea concedido será transmutado en prueba de amor. Y, así, la demanda deviene infinita, porque cada nueva demanda supone la insatisfacción respecto de un goce mítico, supuesto como absoluto retroactivamente, de modo que el goce obtenido nunca coincide con lo esperado. El deseo es insatisfecho por estructura (González, 2013: 76-77).

In this sense, the psychoanalytic perspective on desire introduces an important modification concerning the Arendtian analysis on alterity and social relationality. Indeed, whereas Arendt suggests a bond with alterity through a speech by means of an interpellation that designates an alterity beyond sameness, Lacanian psychoanalysis adds a further twist as far as the Other of desire is concerned. In this sense, the Other to which Lacan refers is not merely an Other that holds and guarantees some sort of possible conciliation, yet it is also a figure that might negate and deprive of a satisfaction, which means that the bond that the subject can establish with it is always governed by the notion of negativity. The demand that the subject directs to the Other is not merely looking for apprehending, though in a decentred way, *who* the Other is, but it is a demand for love that longs for some satisfaction that alterity might provide. There is an incessant reappearance of negativity as a lack that structures the subject, mainly because any answer to any demand incessantly experiences a displacement between what the subject expected and what the Other offers. It is not simply that the Other is not reducible to a notion of sameness, but it deviates the demand because it must pass

through the paths of a symbolic chain of signifiers according to which a demand can be made. Hence, the Other does not simply appear to me and decentres any possible recognition, but it is also traversed by a desire that I do neither understand nor control, surpassing any possible volition.

Consequently, the approach that Arendt tries to configure in relation to alterity in order to undo any binary logic on recognition reveals itself as insufficient, mainly because it does not take into account the negative determination of desire, and it does not analyse the crucial role of the body as a *singular* exposure.

Nevertheless, Arendt stresses the enigmatic character of the *who* in order to avoid any totalitarian view on alterity, which is a crucial aspect inasmuch as her defence of this notion is inseparable from her condemnation of the genocide and the technical extermination of those deprived of a human status. Thus, Arendt incessantly outlines that any encounter with others is governed by equivocity, in which the *who* hides behind the *what*, which means that what avoids a representative regime is the being of the subject:

The moment we want to say *who* somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying *what* he is; we get entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or a “character” in the old meaning of the word; with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 181).

Singularity is, therefore, the deadlock for representation. The subject is, thus, neither a pure representative result nor an entity enclosed in an absolute tight secrecy, but it oscillates between signification and its margins. In other words, acting in concert does eventually point to a relationship between subjects, but there is also an impossibility towards the success of this very relationship owing to the crucial role of alterity concerning the subject. A structural *méconnaissance* bans any possible apprehension concerning *who* the subject *is* and, at its turn, *who* the Other is.

Notwithstanding with that, this impossibility of knowing the Other might also lead to a reification of alterity, this is to say, it might bring about reducing its existence to a mere formal principle from which only accidents can be known. In fact, this dual approach towards alterity, in terms of a radical singularity and several qualities, suggests that the *what* is some sort of layer that covers an ontological depth beyond language. Thus, I would suggest that in Arendt’s notion of alterity there is an ambivalence between a differential and a metaphysical approach towards the subject.

By “metaphysical” approach I mean that there is a parallelism between the notions of the *who* and the *what*, and the Aristotelian concepts of substance and accident. There is a problematic account on the disclosure of the “who” referring to the context where it happens that seems to contradict the previous statement referring to the ungraspable notion of the *who*: “The disclosure of the “who” through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always falls into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt” (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 184).

On the one hand, Arendt might reinforce the impossibility of reducing the singularity of any subject to a notion of sameness, which, nonetheless, does not entail that the disclosure of singularity incessantly involves a radical modification of a political space, but the fact that it becomes mixed with previous cultural patterns. On the other hand, it could also suggest that, contrarily to what she had stated on this matter, the disclosure of the “who” occurs in the middle of several symbolic webs of signification, which might entail that what seemed not possible to read begins to be decipherable once it reveals itself through a performative existence. In this sense, there is a conceptual confusion at the core of Arendt’s distinction between the *who* and the *what* that does not allow to properly analyse which is her point on this matter.

2.5.1.1. Stories as the Background of History: The Hero

Every ek-istence, according to Arendt, is a story made of speech and action, an ek-istence based on *praxis*, this is to say, an action in concert: “In other words, the stories, the results of action and speech, reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author or producer. Somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author” (Arendt, *idem*). In other words, ek-sistence is preceded and enabled by an Other and, besides, it can be told and have some consistency thanks to the Other.

Stories, as an *in-finite* constellation made of singularities become the condition for history, which also entails that history is not governed by an internal motor or directed toward a concrete purpose. History, in Arendtian terms, is made of singular existences, a reformulation of history highly different from an encyclopaedic vision based on a recapitulation of “facts” and events that are categorized according to standards governed by the regulatory ideal of progress.

In addition to this, inasmuch as a narrative has no author, but it is made through the relationship with alterity, which entails an unpredictability of its features, stories are fragile. Such fragility implies that concerted actions are deprived of consistency because they are relational: “Because the actor always moves among and in relation to other acting beings, he is never merely a “doer”, but always and at the same time a sufferer” (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 190).

There is a difference between the notions of vulnerability and fragility: vulnerability is structurally attached to bodily exposure towards the Other as an ontological condition, whereas fragility, in Arendt’s case, is strictly referred to a story in which the body has a secondary role concerning the notion of relationship. Hence, being vulnerable does not simply entail that my story is inseparable from alterity, but that my ek-sistence begins through dis-possession, which also entails that the vulnerable subject is a decentred being for whom the possibility of a deliberative autonomy is a fantasy in front of a co-originary dependency.

Arendt aims at finding a solution for fragility appealing to the possibility of a composition of a unity based on the figure of the historian, the character that elaborates different interpretations departing from the fragile stories that are proper to the subjects. As a result, the sense of narrative stories is graspable for the storyteller, which again is at odds with the previous notion of the *who* and singularity: “Action reveals itself fully only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants” (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 192). Indeed, the notion of historian that Arendt evokes refers to what she calls “the Greek solution”, where figures like Herodotus construct a history of the *heroes* and their circumstances. It is, thus, a written history that is inseparable from a possibility of a memory, collectively defined, in which each existence is entangled with others.

History is not dissociated from politics in Arendt’s view, but they both stress the fact that any ek-sistence requires a public appearance surrounded by others. History, then, is the narrative account made by historians that configure a *communitas*, this is to say, a common world governed by the emergence of characters that do not blur themselves in a totality, but they live in an agonistic space, which is incessantly re-articulated by means of the question *Who are you?* Hence, it is not simply the subject who performs its existence, but the very public space is performatively created through ritualised repetitions of cultural signifiers that configure symbolic institutions: “It is the

space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but make their appearance explicitly” (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 198-199).

The notion of story that Arendt establishes as the basis for history place at their core a character that, because of its classic Greek reminiscence, evokes the figure of the *hero*, the taken-for-granted male figure that allows a collective cultural recognition and identification. In this sense, the *hero* is the subject who is alien to affairs related to labour and work, which also leaves aside any consideration of affects and the body. It is absolutely rooted in a public space devoted to an agonistic deliberation, forgetting those subjects who are not unentitled as such through exclusionary political devices such as citizenship in Nation-States, and gendered imaginaries that privilege the male active subject as paradigmatic of the public space.

The cultural legacy on heroic figures is radically separated from one of the main attributes that Arendt confers to human stories and lives: fragility. Hence, fragility is left aside by means of this stereotypical character, which would entail that the heroic subject is able to surmount fragility, achieving then a glorious story and heritage. It is a character at odds with the notions of singularity and dependency that Arendt had previously evoked concerning each singular appearance in a space shared with others.

Therefore, Arendt, in spite of being an important referent for contemporary ontologies and politics that depart from vulnerability, reveals as an insufficient and even contradictory theorist. Indeed, by means of an Aristotelean paradigm, she eventually argues for a subject that would abandon its dependency and relationality through the narration provided by a privileged Other. Following this remark, her notion of fragility seems to be textually restricted to the story proper to each subject, which leaves behind any further consideration on embodiment, and the exposure that inaugurates ek-sistence in a dis-possession that bars any compact approach towards it. A fragility that, in addition, appeals to the unpredictability of actions and deeds owing to a relationality that, nonetheless, becomes banished by virtue of a communitarian notion of a history that elaborates different heroes, who work as several cultural referents.

However, the problematic status of the embodied subject is not an issue restricted to the Arendtian perspective, but it can also be found in Judith Butler and Adriana Cavarero. They both conceive the body as a surface that, a performative

instance in Butler, and as exposure in Cavarero, resides exclusively installed in the Imaginary and the Symbolic. It is a neuter body with no structural difference, which entails that *all* subjects participate in the same vulnerability that is later socially distributed according to differential items.

2.6. Alterity and Precariousness: Emmanuel Levinas' Vulnerable Other.

The notion of vulnerability calls for an ethical turn for which a notion of alterity becomes a nodal point. In this sense, Levinas' work is an important contribution. Indeed, his discourse departs from a pre-eminence for ethics, though Levinas does not aim at arguing for an ethical relationality between subjects through epistemic categories based on the apprehension of alterity according to a normative framework. Hence, Levinas does not offer an ethics attached to ontology, but his ethical twist attempts to exceed the domain of being. His criticism on ontology refers to what he names the exclusion of alterity into the register of being, which would confer a prerogative to the "I" as the sovereign element that reduces any action to the regulatory ideal of sameness. In this sense, Levinas outlines that the primacy of ontology becomes a metaphysical epistemic structure orchestrated by means of a binary regime between the subject and the object.

Levinas stresses that ontology is a refusal of difference, this is to say, alterity. In other words, Levinas suggests that ontology operates according to an indifference towards what inhabits the world, being its most genuine expression the verbal form "there is", which points to the Heideggerian reflection of the unauthentic way of being, the *Das Man*¹¹⁰. Levinas claims that being is just a predicate that, by itself, does not add anything else to what exists, which reminds of the Kantian argument against a rational

¹¹⁰ According to Heidegger, the everyday-life in which the *Dasein* ek-sists is the *Das Man*, the inauthentic mode of being, the main attribute of which is indifference towards the world. Hence, Levinas would radicalise this Heideggerian notion, which also enables him to offer a different critical approach towards ontology as the exclusion of alterity and difference. For a further approach on this Heideggerian notion, see Heidegger, Martin (1927): *Being and Time*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell (1962), specifically « B. The everyday Being of the "there", and the falling of the *Dasein* », pages 210-224. Translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson.

procedure based on ontological demonstrations¹¹¹. This also involves that being, as an epistemological category, would finally be bound to a pure epistemological speculation:

L'être se refuse à toute spécification et ne spécifie rien. Il n'est ni une qualité qu'un objet supporte, ni le support de qualités, ni l'acte d'un sujet, et cependant, dans la formule « ceci est », l'être devient attribut, puisque nous sommes immédiatement obligés de déclarer que cet attribut n'ajoute rien au sujet (Levinas, 1947: 17).

Ontology is, thus, the domain of homogeneity, where no subjectivity can take place because there is no alterity. Indeed, this remark is crucial: if there is a subject, there is an alterity by means of a negativity that transforms existence into ek-sistence, this is to say, beyond what simply *is*. In this sense, the “there is” proper to ontology is an epistemic reduction of the world according to a Cartesian landscape based on a pure extension where objects are susceptible of being apprehended by consciousness. It is, then, a scenario of pure immanence, with no element susceptible of transcending it.

The breaking of ontology, according to Levinas, responds to the following logic: inasmuch as being does not add anything concerning the subject, the pursuit of a subjective singularity requires action, this is to say, being outside of oneself, exceeding the categories of identity. Such a notion of action does not appeal to will as the supreme gift that enables such a possibility, but it rather refers to the division that Levinas elaborates between what *is* [*l'existant*], a mere immanence governed by an ontology reduced to the Cartesian operation of epistemology based on the division between a subject and an object, and *existence*, which cannot be taken for granted. Ontology is, therefore, deprived of existence, and it merely signals the domain of what exists, *l'existant*.

However, it is uncertain as to which extent such a division between *l'existant* and *l'existence* is not, strictly speaking, an ontological division. In this sense, Levinas seems to reduce any ontological approach to foundational metaphysics, in which the subject, understood as the region of pure consciousness, becomes the principle of apprehension and enunciation. To assert that any ontological discourse is strictly binary would mean that the notion of relationship elaborated by authors like Jean-Luc Nancy signals a

¹¹¹ In his attempt to re-elaborate metaphysics according to a synthesis between empirical data, understanding and reason, Kant stated that being does not prove the existence of anything because it is a mere predicate that remains foreclosed in a tautological trend, a question that he asserted concerning the possibility to argue for the existence of a supreme entity such as God is said to be. For a further approach on this issue, see Kant, Immanuel (1787): *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1998). Translation by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood.

notion of being still inscribed into the classical tradition, which does not prove to be true, according to what I have discussed it in my introduction and in the section devoted to Nancy's ontology of the body. From the Heideggerian horizon, being is not attached to the Cartesian epistemology, but it points to an ek-tatic disposition that decentres the subject from the domain of sameness, which is radically obviated by Levinas's criticism of ontology.

Levinas's approach in order to dismantle the priority of metaphysics is based on a phenomenological paradigm that precisely does what he denounces as an ontological operation: reducing being to what can be known. In this sense, the main trouble is the fact that Levinas is implicitly reducing being to knowledge, which forbids him to undo this metaphysical legacy. What is left aside from such a perspective is the nexus between being and language, this is to say, being is not a pure category, but it appeals to a symbolic apparatus that constitutes a world made of signifying realities and practices. By means of his division between *l'existant* and *l'existence* Levinas reinstalls the same binary logic he was presumed to deplore, which finally situates him into a metaphysical paradigm again. The Levinasian aim of undoing ontology is trapped into a phenomenological schema by virtue of which epistemic categories trap the fundamental twist of post-metaphysics: there is no being outside language as a process of signification.

2.6.1. Ek-sistence, the Body and Action

Ek-istence, according to Levinas, is defined as an ecstatic disposition rooted in a transformative and creative role given to the body, being any ek-sistence singular and situated due to embodiment. Following the importance of ecstasy concerning existence, Levinas outlines that by existence he does not mean a line of events that make a total story governed by the notion of a progressive becoming, but a being outside of oneself by virtue of disruptions and temporal fractures. Hence, while ontology for Levinas would be caught up in an absolute dimension of the present, ek-istence involves, according to a structure made of several constellations, the interrelations of the past as a legacy that must be assumed, a present that involves an irruption in a material world as

an event¹¹², and the future as a projection towards what cannot be foreseen. According to this temporal and ecstatic framework, ek-istence becomes the domain of a contingency the expression of which can be found in action, which is deployed by a body that situates the subject in concrete and singular circumstances.

The disruptive structure of ek-istence entails that it breaks any regulatory ideal of sameness, inoculating negativity at the core of the subject and banning any possible affirmative claim about its ek-sistence, being a perpetual difference that cannot coincide with itself. Thus, the subject is an incessant *differing* entity with no possibility of coincidence with itself, fractured in an irrecoverable way, living in a historical horizon where, rather than being, it *becomes*. The notion of difference that derives from such an ontological paradigm, regardless of Levinas' disdain of ontology, does not point to a binary register. It is rather a *relational* framework that entails that before any "I" can emerge, the subject is placed in a tensional bond towards a world that makes it another for itself, being always dis-possessed of any background that guarantees an individual persistence.

Being in a differential relation also entails that a subject does not live on its own in a world, but it is compelled to *co-habitation*. This *co-habitation* implies, as Levinas remarks, that the Other is *the indispensable figure* for the temporality of the subject, being alterity the element that breaks any framework closed in a dimension governed by a universalized present. Hence, *co-habitation* and temporality are two elements that are crucial in the ethics based on the Other that Levinas provides, despite that the role that the Other displays is ambiguous, as I will analyse in a detailed way in what follows.

As far as ek-istence is concerned, what Levinas affirms is that to exist involves inscribing oneself into the structure of being in a disruptive way, breaking any abstract and universal map. In this sense, ek-istence refers to the process of an opening, an event that dislocates the Cartesian framework: "C'est dire que l'acte est l'inscription même dans l'être" (Levinas, *op. cit.*: 37). From the perspective of ek-istence, being is not

¹¹² Unfortunately, I cannot offer an extended analysis of the notion of "event" in connection to ek-sistence owing to the fact that it would lead me to another investigation. However, the notion of event is crucial for contemporary philosophy, namely for those discourses focused on a notion of the subject as an irruption that is not governed by a progressive succession of experiences that can be subsumed under a regulatory ideal of linearity. For a further approach on this issue, and to analyse the historical, political and ontological implications of the notion of "event", see Badiou, Alain (1988): *L'être et l'événement*. Paris, Le Seuil.

merely reduced to an epistemological register absorbed by phenomenology, but it rather points to the ontological structure of the subject beyond metaphysics.

However, what remains unclear in the analysis provided by Levinas is the relevance of language regarding the subject, an element totally absent in his criticism of ontology. I would affirm that Levinas assumes that language is what provides the elaboration of categories according to the structure of subject and predicate. The oblivion of language as a *condition sine qua non* for the subject could be a good reason to bring into question his analysis on ontology and, above all, the fact that, despite his refusal of an ontological project, it is present everywhere in his discourse. An ontology that, notwithstanding with that, incessantly appeals to phenomenological conceptions that elaborate the epistemological reductionism based on oppositions that Levinas denounces as proper to metaphysics.

2.6.1.1. The Body and Desire: The Other of Ethics

Regarding sociality as the feature that characterizes cohabitation and interdependency, Levinas signals a further notion: desire. In his view, desire is understood as an attachment to objects that surround the subject, and, above all, as a bond between the subject and the Other Other in front of which it is bodily exposed, being the body the topology that materially incarnates this nexus to alterity.

Yet Levinas does not specify the structural role of desire. In Hegel and Lacan, desire does not primarily point to the attachment towards objects that surround the subject, but it incarnates an expression of a lack-of-being, that is, the negative specificity of the subject as a split entity with no fundamental background. As Hegel had remarked, desire is an incessant strength that pushes the subject to a transformation of the world by means of a negation that cannot be finally satisfied. In a more radical way, Lacan adds, through his analysis of language as a symbolic structure that precedes and enables the emergence of the subject, a crucial element in order to understand the always-deceptive circuit of desire: the desiring structure is a demand that is always directed towards an Other that can satisfy or deprive the subject concerning the fulfilment of its desire. Hence, desire, both in Hegel and Lacan, refers to the fact that negativity entails that the subject is always discordant, being an impossibility in relation to a fusion of a compact sociality that would exhaustively regulate the subject.

For Levinas, desire implies an attachment to the Other, though the usage of this concept in his work is more concerned by the notion of a “need”. The issue with such a perspective is the misconception of the relationship between desire and language inasmuch as the structure of demand coerces the subject to incorporate the signifiers given by the Other. Otherwise, the subject would remain outside the symbolic net at the core of any cultural scenario, which would imply its death and ruin.

The phenomenological approach adopted by Levinas is also problematic regarding the link between desire and the subject inasmuch as phenomenology is concerned with the register of perception, this is to say, the imaginary level of consciousness. What psychoanalysis emphasizes is the internal splitting inflicted on the subject by means of language as an apparatus that produces a surplus beyond the “I”, this is to say, the unconscious. The lack-of-being that the unconscious entails, inasmuch as the being of the subject is not equivalent to the representation of the signifying chain in which the subject becomes inscribed through the register of the Symbolic, must be considered along with the impossibility to satisfy desire because the object-cause of desire exceeds perception, and any effort to reduce the unconscious to a text susceptible of being transformed into a sum of predicates fails.

In relation to the liaison that Levinas aims to inscribe relating to the social inscription of desire, the Other is the pre-eminent figure because it challenges the domain of pure objects, this is to say, the objects that the subject finds in order to satisfy its needs:

Dans le monde, autrui n’est certes pas traité comme une chose, mais il n’est jamais séparé des choses. Non seulement il est abordé et donné, à travers sa situation sociale, non seulement le respect de la personne se manifeste par un respect de ses droits et de ses prérogatives ; non seulement, à l’exemple des installations qui nous livrent les choses, les institutions nous mettent en rapport avec les personnes, les collectivités, l’histoire et le surnaturel – autrui dans le monde est l’objet de par son vêtement même (Levinas, *op. cit.* : 60).

The circuit of desire, then, is structured by means of social mediations, where human relations are based on symbolic categories and institutions in which subjects are bodily situated. Inasmuch as sociality is beyond sameness because it also appeals to what does not coincide with the subject, difference structures the subject according to inclusions and exclusions. It is in the worldly reality where the encounter with the Other, the entity for which phenomenology is insufficient, occurs. The ethical is, thus, the internal limit for any dialectical mediation.

Nonetheless, Levinas mobilises a dialectical link between the subject and the Other by means of a dichotomy: while the subject is absorbed into a sociality regulated by the ontological principle of sameness, the Other is situated on the horizon of difference through recourse to pure negativity. The bond between these two figures is the relationship between sameness and difference, though Levinas does not aim at producing a synthesis between them. Indeed, ethics, as the site of reaction in front of the Other, Other is what disrupts such a nexus inasmuch as it is not an epistemological issue, but the failure of the production of sense.

Ethics is not directly attached to a normative approach, which would redirect the discussion to an epistemic frame, but it rather appeals to a subjective dis-possession by means of an Other that, according to Levinas, precedes and decentres the subject in its *existential* reality. Thus, ethics is not based on an ontological condition such as the Heideggerian *Mitsein* because it would assume the privilege of the subject over the Other. In its connection to sociality, ethics dislocates the relationship between these two figures as far as communication is concerned: the Other is radically *other*, which means that any ethical intercourse is *a*-symmetrical.

Following this radical alterity of the Other, what is extremely original in the Levinasian notion of ethics is the fundamental role of the body, being the site of incarnation of the precariousness of existence. Through ethics, the body becomes a topological entity that inaugurates the event that ek-sistence is meant to be through exposure:

Le lien, avant d'être un espace géométrique, avant d'être l'ambiance concrète du monde heideggerien, est une base. Par là, le corps est l'avènement même de la conscience. En aucune façon, il n'est chose. Non seulement parce qu'une âme l'habite, mais parce que son être est de l'ordre de l'événement et non pas du substantif (Levinas, *op. cit.* : 122).

This bodily exposure highlights the most radical difference that bans any translation of the Other into the "I": "La relation avec autrui ne saurait être pensée comme un enchaînement à un autre moi, ni comme la compréhension d'autrui qui en fait disparaître l'altérité, ni comme la communion avec lui autour de quelque troisième terme" (Levinas, 144: *op. cit.*). The ethical relation, therefore, entails that any process of recognition, this is to say, the domestication of alterity, is an aggressive bond that aims at erasing the difference of alterity.

Vulnerability and ethics, according to the Levinasian turn, cannot be separated. The vulnerable and exposed dimension of existence puts a limit to univocity, this is to say, the assimilation to homogeneity, which implies a social violence that erases difference. Violence against difference is a result of the fact that alterity, in its uncanny appearance, defies any possible mediation, which entails that any sociality based on the hegemony of the “we” is exclusionary against those subjects placed as a “they” that incarnate a menace for a community.

Levinas further stresses that the Other signals an infinity that transcends any sort of finitude referring to the contingency of the subject, a feature proper to the Jewish deity, Yahveh, whose name is unnameable. This infinitude of the Other is linked to the temporal dimension of ek-sistence, a time that defies any chronology, and refers instead to the instant as the founding event:

Le temps, est-il la limitation même de l'être fini ou la relation de l'être fini à Dieu ? Relation qui n'assurerait pas pour autant à l'être une infinitude opposée à la finitude, pas une autosuffisance opposée au besoin, mais qui, par-delà satisfaction et insatisfaction, signifierait le surplus de la socialité (Levinas, 1948 : 8).

Levinas stresses that the Other, as the instance of a supreme alterity, is introduced by means of a paradox. It is neither an opposition between finitude and infinitude, nor a diminishing point between autonomy and dependency, but a relational ecstasy. An ecstasy that places the subject in a sociability that breaks any notion of an interior “ego” before the world as the *res cogitans* is said to be in the Cartesian idealism. In other words, alterity is the reverse of the subject, the other side of a finite creature the contingency of which finds an *impasse* in the negative instance of the Other.

The notion of exposure that results from Levinas' elaboration of ethics in terms of alterity is much more radical than the cohabitation highlighted by Arendt. Indeed, in the Arendtian approach, the mediation of a third element, the historian, allows for the possibility to create a synthesis of different stories, which finally enables a comprehensible narration that deciphers alterity according to universal categories. On the contrary, for Levinas the Other is a deadlock for sense, and this erases any certainty concerning the subject. The alterity of the Other has a similar status than the Lacanian Real: it brings sense to a contradiction, and this makes impossible any symbolic articulation that might provide some guide concerning alterity. The Other, thus, is what

makes the subject feel odd at home, deprived of concrete and universal norms susceptible of being applied according to the concordance between particular circumstances and universal procedures:

Le temps signifie ce *toujours* de la non-coïncidence, mais aussi ce *toujours* de la *relation* – de l’aspiration et de l’attente : fil plus ténu qu’une ligne idéale et que la diachronie ne coupe pas ; elle le préserve dans le paradoxe d’une relation, différente de toutes les autres relations de notre logique et de notre psychologie, lesquelles, en guise d’ultime communauté, confèrent, au moins, la synchronie au leur termes. Ici, relation sans termes, attente sans attendu, aspiration inassouvissable (Levinas, *op. cit.* : 10).

Concerning the *relation* with the Other, it is characterized by a waiting that points to an asymmetry between the subject and the Other, with no available mediation. It is a waiting lacked of an object that would put an end to this process, this is to say, it entails waiting for the *in-finite*, which is beyond representation. This notion of an incessant waiting belongs to the Jewish theology in relation to the Messiah, the Godsend that is said to be the disruptive character *par excellence*.

However, does it mean that the Other is the incarnation of a Law? Indeed, if relation becomes banned by virtue of the radical alterity of the Other, what emerges is an insuperable distance that introduces a void for which no concept is available. A distance that, as a matter of fact, installs a notion of transcendence similar to the theological status of Yahweh, the Jewish deity with which there might only be a “sacred” relation. Levinas intends to stress a paradoxical relation that defies a notion of proximity with the Other, which means that alterity is beyond signification.

In fact, the bond between the Other and the Law is outlined by Levinas through the bodily nudity of the Other, which is linked to one of the fundamental commandments: “You ought not to kill”. Yet, the relevance of the body in the encounter with the Other introduces a pure non-representable negativity beyond any commensurable relation, being bodily a precariousness at the core of ethics. Hence, the basis for the asymmetrical relation with the Other is based on its mortality, exemplified in the anxiety provoked by the possibility of losing the Other to whom the subject is attached. It is the face of the Other that incarnates a founding dis-possession in the ek-sistence of the subject, thrown in a world in which it must endeavour a project radically conditioned by alterity. This has a double dimension: the mortal condition of ek-sistence, and, at the same time, the anxiety in front of the death of the Other, exposed in its precarious bodily ek-sistence: “Mais la mort ainsi annoncée comme autre, comme

aliénation de mon existence, est-elle encore *ma* mort ? Si elle ouvre une issue à la solitude, ne va-t-elle pas simplement écraser la subjectivité même ? Il y a en effet dans la mort un abîme entre l'événement et le sujet auquel il arrivera" (Levinas, *op. cit.* : 65).

Death is, thus, constitutive of alterity, this is to say, what exceeds ek-sistence, which suggests that it might end unpredictably, and it becomes clear to the subject through the bodily nudity of the Other, which can be violently exploited. In this sense, the responsibility *for* the Other must be taken into account along with precariousness and vulnerability, bond to the anxiety produced by the possibility of the Other's disappearance. Hence, in ethics, any drive towards self-preservation is discarded as a non-legitimate basis for any relation with alterity. This is why Levinas incessantly disputes the Spinozist notion of the *conatus* as the basis for desire and ethics because, according to his reading, it would entail self-preservation at the expense of alterity. Following his argument, ethics is mandatory towards an exercise of freedom based on the *responsibility of the subject for the existence of the Other*.

However, Levinas' notion of the Other is ambivalent. Indeed, it seems that the Law incarnated by the Other mobilises a notion of responsibility that may end to an inscription of ethics into morals, which further involves a displacement from responsibility towards guilt. In order to outline and analyse this issue, I shall firstly pay attention to Levinas' notion of the face of the Other.

As far as the bodily incarnation of the Other is concerned, the ethical relation does not involve a phenomenological apprehension of alterity. Hence, the body, in ethical terms, is a metaphor of the ineffable law against murder, which cannot be comprehended through perception. It is, then, a very peculiar body : "La manière dont se présente l'Autre, dépassant *l'idée de l'Autre en moi*, nous l'appelons, en effet, visage" (Levinas, *op. cit.*: 21). The exposure of the face of the Other transcends any notion of the Other that the subject might have, which involves that there is a *necessary* non-coincidence between alterity and sameness. In this sense, the Other cannot be trapped in any conceptual net because it is the limit that surpasses any word, though it is what allows discourse, yet marked by an unsurpassable rest.

Levinas underlines that the face of the Other brings a strong normative feature: it is a wish for justice that, according to Levinas, desire is said to express, which involves

that he implicitly assumes that desire as the desire of the Other is a desire for a fair relation with the Other. This issue also implies that desire can only be the desire for justice in order to benefit the Other, which has as a consequence a confusion between desire and the notion of an ideal good. Hence, the subject must restrict its desire in such a sense that it can only want justice for the Other, which requires the execution of a repressive mechanism. This twist links the dimension of ethics to morals, which, as Freud had stressed regarding the super-ego as a moral instance, becomes an infinite demand for justice impossible to fulfil that leads to a sadistic self-punishment. More explicitly, the Other, in Levinasian terms, becomes the *master*: “La justice consiste à reconnaître en autrui mon maître” (Levinas, *op. cit.*: 44). The Other, thus, embodies the supreme commandment that *dictates* an ethical good departing from the vulnerable dimension of life.

Ethics demands an active response regarding the subject, while the Other remains in a veiled and enigmatic passivity. This dichotomy between activity and passivity is what introduces an analogy between ethics and sexual difference: the former is assimilated to the “masculine” subject”, whereas the latter occupies a “feminine” position of silence. However, instead of an asymmetry, what Levinas eventually articulates is a relationship of opposition and complementarity between the masculine and the feminine. Hence, when Levinas states that sexual difference is a referent for ethics, and that the sexed status of the subject is a fracture within being¹¹³, he produces a reification of the masculine and the feminine as two independent regions. It involves that the “feminine”, as the ineffable and passive reality, becomes an ideal of femininity that awaits the action of the “masculine”. Such an articulation of sexual difference is based on what Lacanian psychoanalysis names the aggression of the Imaginary register, where the subjects are compelled to perform co-dependent roles in which the meaning of the latter depends on the former.

¹¹³ On the contrary, the fracture that sex and sexual difference entail regarding any possible fusion between the subjects stated by Lacan is radically different from this binary horizon. When Lacan established, through his axiom “Il y a de l’Un”, that sexual difference involves the impossibility of a union between the sexes, he does not mean the masculine and the feminine are two different entities, but two modes of incarnating the failure of sense. In other words, it is not that the masculine is active and the feminine passive, but their logic are asymmetrical, despite being both conditioned by the role of the master signifier, the phallus, in relation to human sexuality. Hence, complementarity can only happen through the violent union of the Imaginary register. For a further approach on this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (2011): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XIX: ...ou pire 1971-1972*. Paris, Le Seuil.

This oppositional perspective of sexual difference also traverses the status that Levinas confers to the Other as the Law that is internalized by the subject. It seems, then, that this dual and opposed notion of the sexed status of subjects is present in Levinas' characterization of the Other as a commandment that requests a responsibility that can never be fulfilled. The subject, then, becomes a slave in front of an Other that acquires the role of a master, which always demands more submission to the Law inasmuch as the subject aims at acting ethically: "C'est précisément dans la mesure où entre autrui et moi la relation n'est pas réciproque, que je suis sujétion à autrui; et je suis "sujet" essentiellement en ce sens. C'est moi qui supporte tout" (Levinas, 1982: 105). Indeed, if Levinas states that who must assume the entire pressure in an ethical relation is the subject, the consequence is a slave morality, as Friedrich Nietzsche had analysed in his *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887): responsibility becomes a priceless duty. In other words, as Freud declared concerning the perverse role of the super-ego: "It torments the sinner ego with (...) fearing feelings, and it keeps watching while it waits for the chance to punish the subject appealing to the exterior world" (Freud, 1980 [1930]: 102). Indeed, a coincidence between the Levinasian ethics and the super-ego can be furtherly outlined: the punishment inflicted by the super-ego over the subject entails a never-ending resignation, which commands a submission to an authoritative instance that the moral law is said to perform, a goal for which the key mechanism is the feeling of an infinite guilt. Thus, when Levinas states : "Est-ce que j'ai droit d'être? Est-ce qu'étant dans le monde, je ne prends pas la place de quelqu'un ?" (Levinas, *op.cit.*: 131), he makes of the subject a sinner that might be occupying the place of the Other without *knowing* it, which translates it into an unpayable debt that, nonetheless, demands for a more severe submission of the subject.

As a matter of fact, what does it mean to be responsible for the existence of the Other? According to what I have analysed concerning Levinas, it involves that the subject must renounce to any narcissistic drive by virtue of a wish for justice regarding the vulnerability of the Other. Nonetheless, if vulnerability is mobilised as an ontological condition, it will not be erased by justice inasmuch as it is always revealed through the exposed ek-sistence of the Other. The responsibility for the existence of the Other becomes, thereby, an infinite and an eternal duty. Ethics, then, becomes a morals based on guilt and repression, where the Other acquires the status of a sadistic master, this is to say, it is the Other of the super-ego.

3. DANGEROUS LIAISONS: DESIRE AND VIOLENCE

After an ontological analysis of the notion of vulnerability, and showing its *structural limits*, I will now proceed to give an account of the connections between vulnerability and violence through recourse to the Hegelian statement of desire as desire for recognition. In the Hegelian scenario of lordship and bondage, governed by a desire in terms of a life-death struggle, recognition operates by means of a process of erasure of alterity. In this sense, recognition allows for a synthesis between the subject and the other that entails some sort of fusion, which finally reveals itself as deceptive because the subject cannot go beyond a founding alterity towards the Other. Hence, the bonds between recognition and vulnerability mobilised by Judith Butler are quite problematic because they are rooted into the discursive procedure of a set and its exception, which means that it is orchestrated according to the phallic economy, the logical structure of which belongs to the universal.

The three forms of violence that I will analyse, contextualised in a discursive reality governed by bio-politics and neoliberal capitalism, show the problematic of recognition. In this sense, as far as transsexuality and intersexuality are concerned, one of the main elements implied in the process regulated by the psychiatric and bio-medical discourses calls upon the ideal of coherence regarding the body in its anatomical reality, and the domain of identifications. Hence, the psychiatric protocols to “diagnose” transsexuality are based on a coercive requirement to perform and to incarnate idealised and stereotyped socio-symbolic notions of sexual difference through the imaginary relationship of recognition. Such requirement leaves aside the impossibility pointed out by sexual difference, that is, the impossibility of successfully translating subjectivity into the socio-symbolic regime. Besides, inasmuch as recognition is strictly based on imaginary identifications, it *knows nothing* of the singular response of the subject in front of the Real of sex, which in psychoanalysis is taken into account by means of the symptom, a subjective response due to the logical impossibility to introduce sexual difference into the paradigm of relationship.

In the case of intersexuality, regulated by the discourse of science, the reduction of the body to a biological organism, foreclosing the subject that inhabits it by means of

its link to the desire of the Other, the process of surgical “normalization” has other consequences, which can be catastrophic when the subject discovers what has happened to its body, as I will analyse in the next chapter. Indeed, trying to impose, by means of scientific devices, a regulatory schema according to which *indeterminacy* must be expelled has large psychic consequences inasmuch as the story of the subject is attached to the desire that gave birth to its existence, which had already given a *singular place* in the domain of the Symbolic. To make an intersexual body recognisable, mutilation is the price to be paid.

The consequence derived from recognition regarding the subject under biopolitical regimes is the binary structure that oscillates between normalcy and pathology, which reduces the subject to the domain of scientific knowledge in alliance with all the political devices that sustain its mechanism. The subject of the unconscious, understood as a point of radical negativity that exceeds any discursive monism, is erased. The body as a biological reality susceptible of being tamed and controlled is the product pursued by such a dynamic of knowledge-power, where the Other of discourse pretends to encapsulate subjectivity into its domains.

3.1. Violence and Recognition: Segregation and Sameness

My point is not to argue for the fact that violence can be, to put it simple, overturned or eradicated once and for all beyond recognition. In this sense, I think it is interesting that the discourse on vulnerability does not attempt to articulate a utopian reality where violence would be eliminated, producing a kind of idealised sociality. Indeed, violence emerges from the aggressiveness that governs the domain of the Imaginary, which must be furtherly considered next to the impossibility to *write a relationship* amongst subjects, which is translated into the Symbolic. In this sense, violence is not an anecdotal phenomenon, but it is at the core of cultural processes, and it also appeals to the dynamic that Freud discovered in the death drive, which might lead to fatal consequences.

In relation to this inscription of violence as a region of the subject in its social existence, Walter Benjamin, in his *Critique of Violence* (1921), offered an accurate reflection on this human reality. What is interesting in Benjamin’s approach is the fact that violence does not primarily point to an intentional core placed within the subject,

which would offer a humanist vision of it according to which the subject would be the cause and the effect of violence, but it rather exceeds such a perspective. Following Benjamin's remarks, violence also refers to the socio-symbolic mechanisms that perform coercive and restrictive limits under a given political configuration. Violence, then, sustains and imposes the socio-symbolic reality.

The fact that violent devices are not considered in a humanist focus does not mean that there is not any subjective complicity in its validity and functioning. On this point, the Lacanian notion of *jouissance*, which is not without the signifier, this is to say, which is not without the symbolic Law, can also be taken into account in relation to violence: the passionate attachment articulated by the fundamental fantasy, where the Other can be conceived as an enemy for the subject. Therefore, violence can be said to belong to what Lacan named *extimité* (Lacan, 1986), this is to say, that which is at the same time intimate and exterior to the subject, producing disturbing effects. In this sense, owing to this paradoxical link between the domain of subjectivity and violence, in the ordinary life violence is discursively made invisible.

Regarding this issue, Benjamin referred to two sorts of violence: founding violence, and the violence sustaining a given socio-symbolic order. This double nature of violence points to a relevant feature: firstly, the rupture and foundation of a new socio-symbolic paradigm entails the destruction of a previous socio-symbolic order. This gesture implies the proliferation of several forms of violence that do not any longer sustain what had been articulated as the possible reality, being the reverse of this process the fact that violence will perform a crucial role at sustaining a new social reality. In other words, each discursive regime creates several limits that are protected by violent devices, such as the police in the State¹¹⁴.

¹¹⁴ As I will clearly specify in the next chapter devoted to the links between violence and bio-politics, the notions of sovereign and bio-political power that I will use and analyse refer to the Foucauldian apparatus, and in the specific context of Immigration Detention Centres, to Giorgio Agamben's notion of sovereignty, inspired by the Schmittian approach towards this concept. For a further approach to these concepts, see Foucault, Michel (1976): *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir*. Paris, Gallimard, mainly the chapter six, « Droit de mort et pouvoir sur la vie », pages 175-211 ; (2004b) : *Naissance de la biopolitique 1978-1979*. Paris, Gallimard, and Agamben, Giorgio (1995): *Homo sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, Stanford University Press (1998). Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen.

As to the forms of violence that sustain social bonds, Benjamin¹¹⁵ refers to them appealing to juridical forms of power. Thus, violence is also (re)produced by the institutionalisation of human relations, which also refers to the dimension of the law as a universal that demands the sacrifice of singularity¹¹⁶. From this horizon, the ideological operation elaborated by violent devices legally sanctioned entails that “law sees violence in the hands of individuals as a danger undermining the legal system” (Benjamin, 1968 [1921]: 280). Such a gesture, as Benjamin outlines, blurs the fact that the founding of a new socio-political reality has emerged from a founding violence, which has produced an *act*¹¹⁷ as a rupture of a past regime, and has inaugurated a new socio-symbolic paradigm¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁵ I will not deeply deal with the founding form of violence that Benjamin calls “mythical violence”, clearly tied to a messianic notion of history that Benjamin developed in works such (1968): « Theses on the Philosophy of History » in *Illuminations* (1968). New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, pages 253-264. Translation by Harry Zohn. This is why my main interest on Benjamin will focus on the parallelisms that can be found between his reflections on the sustaining violence and the notion of disciplinary power in Michel Foucault.

¹¹⁶ Concerning the intricate relations between universality and singularity in the domain of the law, it is important to outline the Hegelian dialectic referring to the sacrifice of singularity required by right in relation to the State as the supreme totality in which the individual and the universal would be synthesized under a regulatory whole. Hence, the State becomes a global region that reduces every individual feature by virtue of the supremacy of a law for which there is no other limit than what right sanctions. See Hegel, G.W.F. (1821): *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1991). Translation by H.B. Nisbet.

¹¹⁷ The notion of “act” has a double dimension in contemporary philosophical discourses. The first one refers to the notion of “event” as a transformative process that radically changes a given context, creating a new dimension according to a historicity that is not said to be lineal, but it is rather made of discontinuities. This notion of “act” can be found in thinkers like Martin Heidegger and Alain Badiou, who both refer to the inaugural moment that breaks a legacy through the introduction of a new reality that recomposes the world. As far as the former is concerned, see Heidegger, Martin (1936): *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press (2012). Translation by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu. Concerning the latter, see Badiou, Alain (1988): *L'être et l'événement*. Paris, Le Seuil, and (2010): *La philosophie et l'événement*. Paris, Germina.

The second meaning of “act” is also tied to the former, though it has a psychoanalytic connotation, bond to the notion of repetition. In every repetition, there are two implied elements: the *automaton*, which refers to the battery of signifiers that are always there before the emergence of the subject, which provide an order and a relevance to the social reality, and *tyché*, the hazardous manifestations of the Real that radically transform the previous experienced reality. The Lacanian definition of the “act” as a repetition that can lead to unexpected and transformative circumstances derives from Aristotelean physics, for which these two concepts refer to the two poles that condition human existence. The notion of the act as the unexpected appearance of the Real is what allows a radical rupture within a previous Symbolic domain, elaborating another discursive reality. In Lacanian terms, Antigone would be the eminent character that represents the notion of the act, which also shows the bond that there is between the act and the death drive. For a further approach of this notion, see Lacan, Jacques (1986): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII: L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil; (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil; Žižek, Slavoj (2014): *Event: A Philosophical Journey Through a Concept*. New York, Penguin; (2008): *Violence*. London, Profile Books LTD, and (1992): *Enjoy Your Symptom!* London, Routledge.

¹¹⁸ From this perspective, it is extremely suggestive the different analysis of forms of violence that Slavoj Žižek offers in one of his recent books, evoking the Benjaminian distinction between a founding violence and a sustaining violence that protects and defends a concrete regime anchored in a socio-symbolic

What Benjamin analyses in relation to the juridical form of power, which exercises violence by means of legal mechanisms, could be related to the Nietzschean and Foucauldian genealogy of the subject in relation to power relations. Hence, when juridical forms of power attribute a violent responsibility to the subject through a causal explanation based on a volitional intentionality, what is at stake is a metonymical operation. Such a metonymy situates the subject as a mythical origin from which would emanate any violent action, leaving aside the constitutive role of power and its mechanisms. In other words, what power relations elaborate is an operation according to which the subject that emerges as its effect becomes introduced as a self-sufficient agent. Hence, any violent attitude would be attributed to the subject as an autonomous being responsible for its own existence, which can be found in the liberal notions of the political, and the role that juridical dispositions must have in relation to this. The subject, thus, is instituted as a threat that must be controlled.

Yet there is still another relevant connotation of violence that needs to be pointed at. Namely, a dimension of violence that is not simply external, but it is rather rooted into the psychic apparatus of the subject, which appeals to the instance of the moral law: the super-ego. Freud introduced the dimension of the super-ego as the sadistic reverse of the moral law, outlining the reflexive operation of violence by means of guilt. Indeed, as Friedrich W. Nietzsche had declared in his *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), guilt is the psychic product that shapes consciousness in its reflexivity, which he called “bad consciousness”. It is based on the fiction of the self-caused agent as a linguistic operation that introduced a doer in the middle of a performative process through punishment: “There is no “being” behind doing, acting, becoming, “the agent” has been fictionally added to the doing, the doing is everything” (Nietzsche, 1994 [1887]: 59). Following Freud and Nietzsche, the psychic dimension of the moral law that does not refer to an internal core of morality, but it points to the internalisation of the discourse of the social Other, this is to say, the sum of ideals and cultural imperatives. These features are at the core of the formation of the super-ego, which commands the subject towards an extenuating effort in order to satisfy its demands. On this issue, it is worth noticing the historical modifications of the super-ego. Indeed, in current regimes governed by neoliberal capitalism repression has been substituted by

dimension. For a further approach on this issue, see Žižek, Slavoj (2008): *Violence*. London, Profile Books LTD.

means of a compulsory mandate towards consumption and production, which I will analyse regarding the capitalist form of the moral law, which does not exactly coincide with the forms of psychic violence analysed by Freud and Nietzsche.

The nexus between vulnerability and violence needs to overturn traditional visions that reduce violence to the domain of intersubjectivity, expanding its scope to a broader scenario regarding discourse and power relations. In addition to this, the reality shaped by bio-politics has created new forms of violence in which the bodily reality of the subject is highly compromised, proliferating new discursive devices according to which the scientific discourse becomes an ally for governing neoliberal strategies and social modifications. In addition to this, the relationality that the notion of vulnerability underlines concerning the social dimension in which the subject exists refers to relations of interdependency that might lead to situations of exploitation and violence.

3.2. Bad Consciousness and Inner Censorship: Psychic Violence.

Psychic violence could be considered apart from the body. Hence, there can be a psychological account of its processes that leaves aside a further reflection on the subject and its body. I disagree with such division regarding psychic violence. Indeed, the psychoanalytic approach on the subject analyses how psychic violence has its symptomatic translations into bodily manifestations inasmuch as the subject *inhabits* the body.

A good example of psychic violence can be found in the protocols that regulate transsexuality, which unveil power relations between the psychiatrist and the patient concerning the pathology of “gender dysphoria” and its diagnosis in DSM III, IV and V¹¹⁹. Besides, intersexual subjects are often subjected to, apart from the normalizing surgery, a psychological control in order to “guarantee” a coherent “gender identity” in

¹¹⁹ After finishing this research, I took notice of an important modification in the Catalan system of public health. The government elected by the Catalan people in 2015 has established that those subjects who have decided to begin sexual transition will not require a psychiatric diagnosis of gender dysphoria, which means that their treatment will not be undertaken by the Hospital Clínic de Barcelona and their department of gender identity. Instead, the public service – leaving aside the surgical modification if it is desired by the patient – will be provided by *Trànsit*, a clinical service that belongs to the Manso Primary Care Centre, which has developed a psychological team beyond pathological discourses on gender dysphoria, offering a singularised accompaniment that puts into question the compulsory recourse to hormones and surgery. For a further notice on this important change, see <http://www.naciodigital.cat/noticia/118436/persones/transsexuals/podran/canviar/sexe/sense/diagnostic/psiquiatric> Last hit: 01/03/2015

relation to their anatomical morphology, which, to a certain extent, transforms anatomy into a subjective destiny, excluding any perspective on the unconscious. At the same time, in places as the Immigration Detention Centres, those deprived of any legal and civil rights because of having being declared “illegal immigrants” suffer situations of extreme vulnerability, which expose them to any kind of aggression and violence.

3.2.1. Friedrich Nietzsche’s Account on Punishment: Guilt and Debt

The analysis on psychic violence departs from a discursive strategy that entails a radical transformation of the subject, questioning the founding status it acquired with Cartesianism. Nietzsche dismantles the metaphysical notion of the subject by a genealogical procedure according to which the subject becomes an effect resulting from several historical devices that provide a certain form of consistency.

Yet, in the discussion on psychic violence, there is a difference between Nietzsche and Freud to be noted: while the former elaborates a deconstruction of a doer in terms of the “I”¹²⁰, the Freudian super-ego has as its referent the figure of the barred subject, the constitution of which appeals to a structural division. In this sense, through recourse to metaphor and metonymy, along with the German notion of *Trieb*, which Freud would later refer to the partial structure of human sexuality, Nietzsche offers an inaugural account of what psychoanalysis would elaborate regarding the unconscious.¹²¹

¹²⁰ In other works, notwithstanding with that, Nietzsche also introduced a discordance at the core of the enunciation principle when he asserted that there was an ontological difference in the Cartesian axiom “Cogito, ergo sum” concerning the thinking self and the self that exists. Hence, it would be licit to claim that the Lacanian difference between the *moi* and the *je* is also present in the Nietzschean genealogical strategy, despite the fact that in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887) his aim is to deconstruct the agent, the “I”. For a further approach on this issue, see Nietzsche, Friedrich W. (1886): *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. New York, Random House (1966). Translation by Walter Kaufman.

¹²¹ Nietzsche re-articulated the subject by means of a struggle between two principles: the former offers a consistency by means of order and harmony, while the latter is the annihilation of this fictional coherence: (namely, also in psychoanalytical terms): to the “I”. Thus, in Nietzsche there is a primitive attempt to explore what would later be called the unconscious and the drives, which are crucial for a contemporary approach on the subject and its processes of subjection. For a further account of this issue, see Nietzsche, Friedrich (1872): *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *The Basic Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*. New York, Modern Library (2000). Translation by Walter Kaufmann; (1882): *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. New York, Vintage Books (1974). Translation by Walter Kaufmann, and (1888): *Ecce homo*. New York, Vintage Books (1967). Translation by Walter Kaufmann.

The relevance of genealogy in relation to morals points to a deconstructive and critical account of the notion of transcendence as the ground for morality, which, according to Nietzsche, ends up by becoming a refusal of life, and, hence, of the body. This refusal of a substantial approach towards morality does not entail an individualist perspective, but it rather involves a critical discourse concerning the traditional aim of ethics, this is to say, a general distribution of a universal good. In this sense, genealogy argues for an immanence where what is analysed refers to the finite subject that historically emerges. And this entails that the subject is not an origin, but an effect. An effect that, according to the genealogical strategy, is structurally tied to language as a metaphorical reality that exceeds any instrumental vision of it. This means that the subject is not a sovereign figure in relation to language, but it rather is conditioned by it. Here it is made evident an important feature concerning the reflexivity of consciousness.

Genealogy offers a methodological strategy to put into question abstract universalisms that intend to elaborate a synthetical operation through which the subject is reduced to a part of a broader dialectical system. In relation to a systemic analysis of the subject through the negation of the singular by means of the universal, genealogy attempts to render visible the discursive procedures that have conferred to some *perspectives* a hegemonic status. It also involves that each universal claim concerning the subject and its constitution is a particular perspective that pretends to be neutral and abstract. By means of this methodology, genealogy takes into account the temporal dimension of the subject, this is to say, it argues for the historicity of the subject. The subject, thus, goes through formative processes, which disputes the eternity conferred to the subject by a foundational metaphysics. This implies that contingency and mutability constitute it. In addition, the contingency that disputes the teleological notion of the subject absorbed into the domain of extemporal necessity is what makes possible to unravel which are the power relations that invest the very viability of the subject. A subject that, according to Nietzsche, is created thanks to a linguistic operation.

The subject, thus, is not a purely representational and epistemic being, but it is the result of a metonymical linguistic gesture: the plurality of actions and struggles of reality are *partially* selected in order to create their point of departure, which would refer to a previous agent as its source. Hence, inasmuch as the subject is a linguistic function, there is no *truth of the subject*, this is to say, it is deprived of any

substantiality. Nonetheless, there is an additional gesture in order to reinforce the status of the subject as an origin and an agent, which is at the basis for reflexivity: punishment. Punishment, according to Nietzsche, is the action at the background for the emergence of consciousness, which is accompanied by a sinister feeling: guilt, which, as Nietzsche and Freud both declared, is bond to the articulation of a moral law that commands a submission in front of its imperative power. In this sense, the notion of psychic violence does not appear as a psychological instance detached from the social world, but it is produced by the very internalisation of cultural mandates, which originate and demand such a submission to certain ideals.

The submission to the moral law through the coercive operation of punishment points to another feature, which Foucault would later develop as a specific form of power: discipline. In this sense, the figure of bad consciousness and disciplinary power both refer to different processes of subjection [*assujettissement*], the aim of which is to shape a docile subject. Such an enterprise takes as its referent a stylisation of the body by means of a politics of anatomy, this is to say, the conception of the body as a machine from which a benefit can be obtained¹²². Hence, both Nietzsche and Foucault point to the agent or the doer as discursively sanctioned by virtue of a bodily coercion, bond to a reflexive instance, which becomes *guilty* for its actions.

Bad consciousness is not, thereby, disembodied, but it rather imposes a *bodily subjection*. Indeed, the body becomes the prisoner of the notion of *free will*, a fiction instituted by guilt in order to establish a psychic source for actions. Nietzsche makes clear the power gesture in this very free will, retroactively sculpted by what Foucault named power relations. In other words, power relations create the illusionary scenario that dictates that the “I” is previous to any further circumstance, which entails the

¹²² Foucault, in his analysis based on the connection between knowledge and power as the key elements that elaborate several discourses, which are crucial in the different processes of subjection, began to elaborate an analysis based on the relevance of punishment in this dynamic. It would be in his *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (1975) where he would analyse all the techniques implied in such a purpose, taking as the first evidence the more primitive forms of industrialisation in textile factories, the school and, finally, the prison. In these places, there was a subjective domestication through a bodily spatial distribution according to the maxim of high benefits at low costs. According to his thesis, a disciplinary regime – based on the model of the army and projected to other domains – would produce a psychic dimension in terms of consciousness through this subjection of the body, based on what he would call an anatomical politics of the body, focused on the individual. For a further approach on this issue, see Foucault, Michel (2013): *La société punitive. Cours au Collège de France 1972-1973*. Paris, Gallimard; (1975): *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Paris, Gallimard, mainly « La punition généralisée », pages 75-85, and « Les corps dociles », pages 137-171, and (1976) : *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir*. Paris, Gallimard, mainly pages 182-184 in chapter six « Droit de mort et pouvoir sur la vie ».

reification of the self, and its reduction to a *res cogitans*. The crucial point here, regarding the existence and permanence of the “I”, is linked to the ability to make promises, an example that has been incessantly used in classic works on ethics. In this sense, if promises must be kept, there must be a presumably previous element that constantly remains, a *substratum* that guarantees the viability of promises. As Nietzsche clarifies, the issue at stake regarding promises is oblivion, which entails that the subject that makes a promise, in order to keep it, *must* remember it. A remembering that, indeed, becomes the debt inoculated into consciousness:

That particular task of breeding an animal with the prerogative to promise includes, as we have already understood, as precondition and preparation, the more immediate task of first *making* man to a certain degree necessary, uniform, a peer amongst peers, orderly and consequently predictable (Nietzsche, *op. cit.*: 36).

Following Nietzsche, the *condition sine qua non* for keeping promises, which requires a constant principle that does not forget which is *its duty*, is the creation of a self that must fit under universal and regulatory categories that require the sacrifice of any singular feature. No difference is allowed in the constitution of such an entity, which involves that the prevailing principle is non-contradiction and coherence: the “I” must coincide with itself, being at the same time the instance of enunciation and of maintenance. Nietzsche suggests that the required effort for such a task is not a spontaneous or “voluntary” activity, but a violent coercion. It also means that the mandatory and repressive dimension of mechanisms of power is not reduced to a negative instance alien to the self, but it works as its creative source. Hence, there is no “I” previous or posterior to this regulatory instance of the law, but it appears thanks to it by means of subjection.

The process of subjection does not point to a unique event that gives birth once and for all to a self that will continue its existence as a formal principle, but it rather demands a *performative reiteration*. In other words, subjection is a reiterative process the goal of which is not achieved in isolated moments, but it needs a temporal durability, this is to say, it must be re-inaugurated and reinforced each turn. As a result, it is due to the performativity of subjection that the self at the core of morals emerges, this is to say, it is produced by the very mechanism of punishment. Yet, it implies that, during the reiterative process of subjection, there can be a certain deviation that introduces new and unforeseen horizons, which becomes clear when a promise is forgotten.

Despite this possibility of failure, Nietzsche adds that punishment is solidary with another psychic mechanism, which appeals to the reflexivity of consciousness: memory, this is to say, the imperative expression of “You had to do this because it was your duty”. Such a formula reminds of the self-inflicted punishment at the core of the super-ego, in which the subject simultaneously performs as the punisher and the punished: “‘A thing must be burnt in so that it stays in the memory: only something that continues *to hurt* stays in the memory’ – that is a proposition from the oldest (and unfortunately the longest-lived) psychology on earth” (Nietzsche, *op. cit.*: 38). Consequently, the “I” becomes subjected to a slave morality based on an infinite demand, which works as an impossible goal to achieve that, nonetheless, inflicts a passionate attachment to it that incessantly attacks the self in a sadistic way. The impossibility of attaining what the law demands is what produces a feeling of guilt deprived of a concrete object.

3.2.1.1. Bad Consciousness and Gender Identity Core

In this last subsection on Nietzsche’s notion of bad consciousness, I shall pay attention to the psychiatric notion of gender identity core, and how it is sanctioned in the regulatory treatment of transsexuality. The diagnosis of transsexuality, which is inscribed into a psychiatric discourse, is said to rely on the discordance between gender and anatomy, which was firstly elaborated by DSM III (1987). According to DSM III, a “normal” subject is articulated by means of the principle of non-contradiction regarding anatomical sex and identifications:

Gender identity is the sense of *knowing* to which sex one belongs, that is, the awareness that “I am a male”, or “I am a female”. Gender identity is the private experience of gender role, and gender role is the public expression of gender identity. Gender role can be defined as everything that one says and does to indicate to other or to oneself the degree to which one is male or female (DSM III, 1987: 71).

Following this clinical definition, in the assumption of a sex position there are two items at stake: gender identity, which means to “know” to which sex a subject belongs, and the pre-discursive dimension of genital organs, this is to say, anatomical sex. Following this binary division, gender is a social expression of a pre-cultural *datum* that is socially performed according to several actions and rites that, as the definition says, includes any dimension of our existence. Nevertheless, gender identity is said to be a private and psychological experience, rooted into consciousness, and gender role

becomes the *expression* of the inner psychological evidence of one's gender. Therefore, there must be a transitive relation between sex and gender that guarantees gender identity, which seems to be based on performative acts sanctioned through an operation of social recognition that divides individuals into men-males and women-females.

However, what the definition does not consider is how the subject becomes aware of its sex. Does it depend on a coerced determination or on a free choice? In addition to this, how is the transition between gender identity and gender role structured? Is it a univocal translation of anatomy into cultural signifiers? Indeed, such awareness, based on psychological criteria, depart from a normativity by means of which a subject born with a penis must identify with a man, while an individual born with a vagina must become a woman. These identifications, following Butler's account on performativity, require a reiteration of these very norms that guarantee the cultural intelligibility of gender. The process of sexual transitioning, which departs from a previous distinction between normal and abnormal gendered identifications, consists of disciplinary techniques inflicted onto the body in order to produce the psychiatric ideals of a coherent man or a coherent woman. Anatomy, thus, is destiny.

The psychological tests used to diagnose "gender dysphoria", this is to say, a non-coincidence between one's *assigned* sex and gender identity endeavour to place a subjective truth in the domain of the psychological self, which must be tamed in order to normalise its relationship with anatomical sex. What this protocol veils under the psychiatric doctrine is the violence that such a treatment entails, which might end up producing the sense of guilt for not fitting into the regulatory ideal of normalcy. As a result, the very medical category of transsexuality¹²³ derives from this very disciplinary and regulatory technique.

¹²³ The film *The Danish Girl* (Tom Hooper, 2015) narrates the story of the first documented case of transsexuality: a subject who is convinced of a divorce between its body and its gender identity, which forbids him/her to perform a *correct* and *recognisable* gender role in a socio-symbolic scenario. Such a discordance will be "corrected" through a surgical intervention. This already stereotypical narration is what psychiatrists and psychologists expect to hear through the confession of those patients who are said to desire a transformation of their bodies in order to fit in their psychological identity. For a sociological approach on this issue based on the notion of gender performativity elaborated by Judith Butler, see Soley-Beltran, Patrícia (2009): *Transexualidad y la matriz heterosexual. Un estudio crítico de Judith Butler*. Barcelona, Edicions Bellaterra. Concerning an institutional discourse specifically directed towards all those persons that (are) define(d) themselves as trans – which goes beyond the psychiatric notion of transsexuality – see *Guia de recursos per a persones trans de la ciutat de Barcelona* (2015) in w110.bcn.cat/DretsCivils/Continguts/Multimedies/GUIA_RECURSOS_TRANS.pdf .

Consequently, the Nietzschean notion of bad consciousness outlines the perverse reverse of the presumed possibility of having the desired body that coincides with the subjective identification: psychic punishment and pathologization, which reduces the body to a pure bio-machine that science can shape and control, regardless of its psychic consequences.

3.2.2. Sigmund Freud's Super-Ego: Contemporary Discontents.

While Nietzsche analysed the notion of morals through bad consciousness and the reflexivity of punishment, the Freudian concept of the super-ego speaks about the psychic internalisation of the sadistic and obscene moral law, which is impossible to satisfy. In this sense, the relationship towards the super-ego might be articulated through a passionate submission to the moral law, which might be the occasion for a mortifying *jouissance*. This is not considered in the Nietzschean analysis, which, on the contrary, refers to the imposition of a slave morality that rejects life and the body. Nevertheless, to a certain extent, the Freudian definition of the super-ego also refers to a repressive instance that inflicts a psychic frustration onto the subject. Indeed, it was Lacan's analysis of the historical mutations of the super-ego under the capitalist discourse that allowed him to remark the twist that such a social transformation entailed. In this sense, while Freud discovered a sadistic moral instance that was said to cause a repressive malaise, the Lacanian description of the capitalist moral refers to the pressure towards *jouissance*, this is to say, to never stop consuming and producing, which finally causes an atomization of social bonds by means of an autistic form of *jouissance* between the subject and the gadgets produced by the market.

According to Freud, the super-ego¹²⁴ is situated in a historical context and inscribed into the cultural legacy of the Judeo-Christian culture, in which the subject is

¹²⁴ The Freudian reference for the super-ego is the father of the horde, murdered by his sons because of the envy they felt in front of his unlimited sexual activity with women, which can be found in his *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurosis* (1913). Freud suggested that the murder of the father acquired the status of the origin of guilt, which by no means entails that it has a factual relevance, but a metaphorical recourse inscribed into psychic reality. Concerning Lacan, he would later use the metaphor of the father susceptible of having sex with all women in relation to the phallic or masculine *jouissance* as the fantasied subject with no restriction concerning its enjoyment, being the exception that confirms the group. See Freud, Sigmund (1913): *Totem and Taboo*:

said to be a sinner that must incessantly explore its inner psychic life in order to find any hint of temptation or lust referring to a radical evil, as Kant once said¹²⁵. Instead of this vision fully concerned by a punishing instance, the contemporary form of the super-ego, transformed into an incessant requirement to enjoy, becomes the occasion to analyse how this mutation is also tied to new forms of bio-power, which regulate life to its minimal expression, being the body the key element at the centre of their net¹²⁶.

Despite this difference in relation to the commandment, what remains from the Freudian super-ego, which is quite similar to Nietzsche's bad consciousness, is the psychic structure of the split subject. Thus, the super-ego does not refer to the modern subjectivity, but to a decentering of the subject of knowledge, for which the "I" is the sovereign reference:

Normally there is nothing we are more certain of than the feeling of our self, our own ego. It seems to us an independent unitary thing, sharply out lined against everything else. That this is a deceptive appearance, and that on the contrary the ego extends inwards, without any sharp delimitation, into an unconscious mental entity which we call the id and to which it forms a façade (...) (Freud, 1946 [1930]: 10).

However, in the analysis of the moral instance rooted into the psychic apparatus, there is a difference that must be noted between Nietzsche and Freud: while the former deals with bad consciousness through a deconstruction of the subject thanks to the unveiling of metonymic operations, the latter pushes the critique further. It does not merely entail that language operates as the enabling structure of the subject, but, due to language, the subject is barred. Therefore, consciousness is a partial region of the psyche, the core of which refers to an *un*-conscious dynamic that radically subverts the

Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurosis in the volume XIII of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo and Other Works (1913-1914)". London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey. Concerning the structure of the phallic *jouissance*, see Lacan, Jacques (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil.

¹²⁵ Kantian ethics draw a form of consciousness that is an heiress of Christian morality, which refers to a reflexivity that entails that the subject must writhe in pain in order to check its own passions, being coerced by an autonomous and incorporeal will attached to the notion of duty. Hence, the task that the Kantian notion of duty requires is a sadistic gesture onto the subject in order to fit in the never-ending demands of the moral law, incarnated in the categorical imperative. As far as the Kantian notions of categorical imperative and duty are concerned, see Kant, Immanuel (1785): *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. New York, Broadview Press (2005). Translation by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, and (1788): *Critique of Practical Reason*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (2015). Translation by Mary Gregor.

¹²⁶ The unbelievable proliferation of devices and products explicitly or implicitly bonded to sex is extraordinary in our era. Any fetish seems to be able to be created, any fantasy can be realised without restrictions as long as consent is given, any sort of sexual products can be bought. The imperative is, then, towards *jouissance*. Such is the super-egotistic commandment of the present: "Enjoy, enjoy!"

previous account of the subject. Following Freud and Lacan, the unconscious becomes the discourse of an Other that irrecoverably fractures the subject, which ignores its desire and the enunciation principle.

By means of the fracture that constitutes the subject, Freud endeavours to elaborate an analysis of the conflictual relation of each subject with the culture it stems from, all along with the impact that culture has onto the drives. The relationship that Freud aims at articulating between sexuality and culture will be governed by a repressive instance inasmuch as human sexuality lacks of an instinctual programme, being a frontier between nature and culture. In relation to this, Freud had mentioned: “Thus, from the point of view of psychoanalysis the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact (...)” (Freud, 1989 [1905]: 245)¹²⁷. The tensional bond between culture and sex will be based on the mutable and different attempts to regulate what, in itself, challenges any normativity inasmuch as sex does not belong to a concrete realm, but it can only be assumed through fantasmatic apparatuses because it lacks of a univocal referent. It also means that the socio-symbolic configurations that try to regulate sexuality create flexible limits of “acceptability” because they depend on cultural and symbolic constructs¹²⁸.

Freud offers a description of cultural limits imposed onto the drives and human sexuality as the cause for many malaises. Malaises become structural and definitory of the human condition because there is not any subject outside culture. According to the

¹²⁷ Therefore, psychoanalysts who identify Lacanian notions such as the Symbolic to a heterosexist model of family, equalizing heterosexuality to a privileged and necessary sexual orientation, elaborate a purely conservative ideological operation that leaves aside the radical novelty of the notion of the drives, and, above all, the asymmetry that Lacan stated concerning the non-complementarity between the sexes. In other words, homophobic and sexist discourses in Lacanian psychoanalysis are purely manipulations of a clinical and theoretical corpus that by no means condemns forms of kinship and sexuality beyond heterosexuality.

¹²⁸ Hence, the Lacanian axiom “Il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel” involves that any attempt to symbolically translate sexual difference and sexuality is a provisional failure. The main reason resides on the fact that sex and sexual difference are impossible to acquire through a “suitable” translation because they belong to the region of the Real, the dimension where language becomes impotent. It is also crucial to remark that complementarity is denied because there is only one signifier for sexualisation: the phallus, which entails that the masculine side and the feminine one do not refer to stereotypical and binary discourses such as “Men are from Mars, and women are from Venus”. Indeed, the phallic inscription governs both sides, though according to two different logical operations. For a current approach on this issue, see Butler, Judith; Laclau, Ernesto, and Žižek, Slavoj (2000): *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London, Verso. See mainly Žižek, Slavoj: “*Da Capo Senza Fine*”, pages 213-262, and Lacan, Jacques (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore (1972-1973)*. Paris, Le Seuil.

Freudian diagnosis, cultural devices cause a repressive moral law that inflicts a suffering on the subject, depriving it of satisfaction. On this point, both Nietzsche and Freud coincide, asserting that culture has a repressive dimension that produces subjective frustrations¹²⁹: “Our so-called civilization itself is to blame for a great part of our misery, and we should be much happier if we were to let it up and go back to primitive conditions” (Freud, *op. cit.*: 44).

This quotation seems to suggest that there was a previous stage to civilization in which subjects could obtain a complete satisfaction of their drives, what in Lacanian terms is equivalent to the illusionary fiction according to which there was a full and complete *jouissance* previous to castration, this is to say, before being subjected by the signifier. In other words, from a Lacanian perspective, the fantasmatic constitution of desire produces the fiction of a pre-linguistic moment of an unlimited enjoyment.

Despite culture’s distresses over the subject, Freud clearly outlines that culture is at the same time the only available tool for the subject in order to protect itself from damages. The paradox is clear: the cause of suffering simultaneously provides some defences in front of pain. This paradox makes clear the circular dynamic according to which the only alternative to be protected from cultural mandates is to create new forms of sociality, this is to say, new cultural manifestations. In this sense, the previous possibility of a pre-cultural stage becomes a pure myth, which entails that *jouissance* does not point at a pre-cultural satisfaction, but it is rooted into cultural devices. Such a dimension refers to what Lacan named the *plus-de-jouir*¹³⁰ produced by social bonds, which questions the notion of a repressing culture that merely punishes and coerces the subject.

¹²⁹I cannot explore here in depth the link between culture and sublimation regarding the satisfaction of the drives. According to Freud, sublimation is the process by which the drives obtain a different object of satisfaction, which differs from the one that could be expected. Therefore, it is a mechanism that reinforces the lack of any biological determinism in the circuit of the drives. In « On Narcissism. An Introduction », Freud affirms: “Sublimation is a process that concerns object-libido and consists in the instinct’s directing itself towards an aim other than, and remote from, that of sexual satisfaction; in this process the accent falls upon deflection from sexuality” (Freud, 1989 [1914]: 558).

¹³⁰ The notion of *plus-de-jouir*, in the context of Lacanian psychoanalysis, refers to all the processes through which there can be an acquisition of *jouissance*, which is crucial in the elaboration of the four discourses as social bonds amongst subjects. For a further approach on this notion, see Lacan, Jacques (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: L’envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil.

Following this Lacanian remark, the repressive side of culture also entails an eroticization of prohibitions¹³¹. In this sense, the moral law, in its paradoxical structure, is partially alien to the subject's understanding, which ignores the final foundation of the Law it obeys. Thus, Freud outlines the impossibility to understand, to consciously decipher, the submission that morality commands. As Lacan stresses:

Le surmoi est un impératif. Comme l'indique le bon sens et l'usage qu'on en fait, il est cohérent avec le registre et la notion de la loi, c'est-à-dire avec l'ensemble du système du langage, pour autant qu'il définit la situation de l'homme en tant que tel, c'est-à-dire en tant qu'il n'est pas seulement l'individu biologique (Lacan, 1975a : 164).

Inasmuch as the moral law derives from the systemic structure of the symbolic dimension, it attempts to grasp the totality of the subject's existence. In its limiting structure, it is capable of producing new erotic objects that, nonetheless, become banned to the subject. This mechanism, in order to be operative, requires a repetitive use of it, being deprived of an external referent that could grant its regulatory power. In other words, the validity of the Law is inseparable from all the invocations that incessantly renew its status, which also renders visible its circular nature: the Law acquires its status by all the invocations, being a self-referential element. The consequence from such a performative nature of the Law is that its success or failure can never be foreseen, but they are confirmed *après coup*, this is to say, after its effect. In this sense, despite the subject's submission to the Law, it always depends on a subjective adhesion; otherwise, it would collapse.

In relation to the link between eroticization and prohibition¹³², the effective consistency of this operation depends on the *jouissance* produced by repression, outlining its productive devices. Besides, repression does not indicate a singular moment, but it commands a never-ending submission, which, despite the efforts made

¹³¹ Indeed, when Lacan explores the ethical dimension of psychoanalysis, what he analyses is the constitutive bond between the Law – taking as a paradigmatic example the Ten Commandments –, repression and transgression. In this sense, the link between repression and transgression does not entail that to transgress the Law is to be outside of it, but the fact that repression and transgression cooperate between them and, as a result, they solidify and confirm the Law rather than subverting it. For a further approach on this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (1986): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII: L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil.

¹³² Indeed, there is a strong similitude between the Foucauldian device of confession, which he attributes to Christianity, and the Freudian super-ego. Nonetheless, what Foucault dismissed was the erotic status that confession had in itself, being a moment of *jouissance* for the subject watched by the priest, creating a discursive bond where the enjoying parcel is governed according to the circuits of the discourse of the university, where the student or the believer is the one that possesses a knowledge that the priest or the teacher wants to obtain. For a further approach on this issue, see Žižek, Slavoj (1999): « Passionate (Dis)Attachments, or, Judith Butler as a Reader of Freud », in *The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London/New York, Verso, pages 247-312.

by the subject, is never enough for the super-ego in its obscene requirement: “Quiconque s’applique à se soumettre à la loi morale voit toujours se renforcer les exigences toujours plus minutieuses, plus cruelles, de son surmoi” (Lacan, 1986: 208). Indeed, the subject that ends up by being radically absorbed by the super-ego suffers a self-annihilating gesture that points to the destructive power of the death drive, a source for devastation if it is not re-oriented by any sublimatory process.

The double gesture of the Law by means of prohibition and eroticization implies a relationship between the Law and desire: transgression. Desire, which results from the loss of a primordial object due to the effect of castration, is expressed through the formulation of a demand, this is to say, it must integrate the signifiers given by the Other. In addition, if the Symbolic as the dimension of language refers to the Law of the signifier, desire does not oppose to the Law, yet it would cease without it. Entangled with the Law, desire never obtains a final satisfaction, which implies that desire is always pursuing something other than what the “I” might think. In this sense, its movement is eternal.

The object-cause of desire, which moves according to a metonymical displacement, is what is banned for the subject. It is a rest of pure negativity that never obtains a concrete incarnation, being for this very reason so attractive. It is a dimension of what resists the representation of significations, pointing to the traumatic hole that the Real is said to be. It is the object banned by the Law, which explains why transgression is the reverse of prohibition. Transgression is, thus, the eroticization of prohibition, a movement that eventually reinforces the very Law that the subject pretended to overcome: “La transgression dans le sens de la jouissance ne s’accomplit qu’à s’appuyer sur le principe contraire, sur les formes de la Loi” (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 208). Such is the impasse regarding the relationship between the subject and the Law, which can never be abolished, but only rearticulated according to new symbolic notions that operate through inclusions and exclusions.

In spite of the sadism of moral consciousness, the super-egotistic dimension of capitalism is no longer reduced to repression. Indeed, Lacan signals how capitalism exploits the lack of desire through recourse to a mandatory *jouissance*, which pushes the subject into an infinite circuit. The consequence of such a reformulation of the super-egoistic structure is the loss of a crucial form of relationship towards the Other: love. Indeed, the commanded *jouissance* by the capitalist super-ego has a fetishist nature, for

which any gadget can be exchanged with another gadget, regardless of being another subject, excluding alterity by virtue of the logic of consumption and production. In other words, the super-egoistic structure of capitalism points to what Foucault named the entrepreneur of oneself (Foucault, 2004b), a contemporary subject the life of which, in all its dimensions, is an uninterrupted economical investment. The reverse of such a demand based on a subjective output is the exclusion and the rejection of those who are not able to perform such a hyperbolized character, rejected from the labour market.

In addition to this, the capitalist super-ego shapes sexuality by means of the laws of the market, which entails that what capitalism wants to erase as such is, paradoxically, the hole at the core of the sexed status of the subject, this is to say, it forecloses the Real. Owing to this, the body is exploited to its minimal expression, being a fleshy entity from which a presumably infinite enjoyment shall be obtained. According to a capitalist logic, the bond between *jouissance* and sex transforms the latter into a regulatory fiction, as Foucault asserted in *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (1976: 206).

The malaise that Freud had outlined is not susceptible of being surmounted by a “sexual liberation”, but it responds to the very process of subjection. In this sense, violence is not a marginal phenomenon, but it is constitutive of any socio-symbolic configuration. Each socio-symbolic configuration institutes its own ideals and imperatives, which are internalised by the subject, creating several spaces and zones of inclusion and their reverse, this is to say, areas of exclusion.

Regarding the capitalist turn of the super-ego, transsexuality and intersexuality will not exist without the capitalist discourse. In this sense, inasmuch as the relations of power that sustain capitalism put the body and its processes at the centre of the political terrain, sexuality and sexual identifications are also introduced into this chain. Hence, the egocentric ideology of neoliberalism, for which free will is understood as the consumer who might order anything that it wishes for, aims to erase the register of the Real. The body, thus, becomes a product for which a personalised design is available. This fantasy of omnipotence is the background for the proliferation of new discourses on sexuality, transmuted into a malleable surface that must be safeguarded by *scientific experts*, the function of which is to transmit and to reinforce the stereotyped versions of gendered identifications, which are reduced to a psychological notion of the self. The displicinary techniques that it displays are oriented towards the tiniest regulation,

aiming at producing the “true” versions of “man” and “woman”, which, paradoxically, become fantasies deprived of a subject. Instead, what is promoted is a reductionary self, inhabited by plural and disseminated norms, which refer to different forms of knowledge in order to domesticate the subject by means of surgery and tests. What this promise of well-being and “happiness” hides – the dogma for neoliberal capitalism – is the brutal psychic violence that such a performative process entails inasmuch as the subject is coerced to incarnate an impossible ideal: the regulatory figure of coherence and identity with itself.

In this sense, while psychoanalysis outlines the impossibility to find a proper solution for the sexual relationship because “man” and “woman” are not two identities, but the internal shortcircuit of sense, the bio-political machine that sustains the capitalist discourse tries to write a complementarity between subjects through recourse to the scientific discourse. The body, then, is said to be a neuter organic entity that can be grasped through different and diverse techniques, which, paradoxically, produce new forms of exclusions because its goal is to erase the internal split of the subject, this is to say, the unconscious. In other words, for the capitalist discourse there is just a single modality of *jouissance*: the all-phallic, which can be discursively regulated, and it can be imperatively commanded inasmuch as it is the *jouissance* trapped by the Symbolic and its usages. On the contrary, the supplement that escapes its regulations is expelled as an exception to the set, a threat for the existence of the group.

3.2.3. Michel Foucault’s Discipline: Psyche as a Prison.

Psychic violence, as I explained in the introduction of this section, is not seen as opposed to the body from a psychoanalytic perspective. Indeed, the bodily reality of the subject is the dimension in which the symptomatic responses are inscribed, this is to say, the body is in *itself* a symptom because it is the domain of *jouissance*, which cannot be considered apart from the discursive reality of each socio-symbolic regime.

In order to further focus on the body, I will now pay attention to the specific disciplinary techniques analysed by Foucault, who made evident to which extent, since Modernity, the alliances between knowledge and power have attempted to capture the body for economic and political aims. I shall hold that the disciplinary violence onto the body, besides determining regulations on transsexuality and intersexuality, is especially

explicit in the case of Immigration Detention Centres. They are created as spaces for capturing all those bodies rejected by the laws of the market in order to expell them from the State to which they arrived.

There is also a tensional relationship between Foucault and psychoanalysis, above all with its Freudian version, which needs to be discussed. Indeed, Foucault considered the psychic reality as a political fiction strategically mobilised by the mechanisms of subjection. I shall proceed to this methodological and conceptual discussion after analysing of the notion of discipline in order to argue, against Foucault, that psychoanalysis does not sustain a disciplinary account of the subject and the body.

For Foucault, the notion of the body implied by disciplinary power does not point at the capture of a pre-discursive bodily reality that would be later introduced into discursive mechanisms. On the contrary, the strong thesis highlighted through the analysis of disciplinary techniques is how these techniques shape and create a specific bodily dimension focused on an individual perspective in order to produce docile subjects: “Ces méthodes qui permettent le contrôle minutieux des opérations du corps, qui assurent l’assujettissement constant de ses forces et leur imposent un rapport de docilité-utilité, c’est cela qu’on peut appeler les « disciplines »” (Foucault, 1975: 139). Hence, Foucault inscribes disciplinary power into a historical dimension, which means that the body, which is discursively constructed by these techniques, does not point to an atemporal reality, but to a reality which can be situated, dated and elaborated through recourse to different and diverse forms of knowledge.

Disciplinary devices are historically situated during the progressive emergence of an incipient capitalist context, in which the first factories required a new economic strategy in order to obtain high benefits at low costs. To issue at stake was the spatial distribution of workers, who were coerced to spend most of their time producing the goods that were to be sold.

Regarding this issue, a new institution appeared at the beginning of the XVIII century, which also required a specific spatial distribution of bodies: the school. According to Foucault, the model for the distribution of bodies in these new spatial realities was the army. It all points to the fact that the creation of new socio-political configurations involved a discursive modification that had broader implications. Indeed, since space becomes a criterion for governance, it involves the proliferation of new

power relations¹³³. Hence, geometry and extension become new epistemic categories that will enable the proliferation of individualised techniques of subjection.

Scientific discourse, as an example of the alliance between knowledge and power, was and still is crucial for the development and consolidation of disciplinary power. Thus, the bodily machine held by mechanistic physics, which enabled a political anatomy of the body by means of its reduction to several parts that could be studied and analysed, offered the epistemic background for disciplinary devices. Indeed, inasmuch as the body was said to be a living machine, what was required referred to ameliorate its functioning and perfection thanks to a study of anatomy and the inherent regulations of the organism. As a result, the body of disciplinary power becomes an anatomical surface represented according to geometrical criteria, and regulated through the binary logic of benefits-costs regarding the laws of the market. It is a body that must be studied in order to be used and shaped with an extreme detail and precision. And this implies repetitive training in order to achieve a successful domestication. Such a body refers to the notion of mechanism elaborated by, amongst others, La Mettrie and Descartes, who take as a model a body that cannot speak because it is no longer alive: the corpse¹³⁴. The body is here reduced to pure anatomy, and it allows the acquisition of a knowledge for which there can be no rest, no limit. All must be apprehended, which requires a silent body.

Disciplinary power is exercised thanks to diffuse and disseminated techniques, which lack of a definable core. It means that disciplines bring about different processes of *assujettissement* [subjection], which lack a concrete beginning and ending:

La « discipline » ne peut s'identifier ni avec une institution ni avec un appareil ; elle est un type de pouvoir, une modalité pour l'exercer, comportant tout un ensemble d'instruments, de techniques, de procédés, de niveaux d'application, de cibles ; elle est une « physique » ou une « anatomie » du pouvoir, une « technologie » (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 217).

¹³³ The analysis of the disciplinary devices that are coercively used in spaces of confinement will be developed in relation to my approach on the IDC's in order to argue for contemporary alliances of disciplinary regimes and a bio-political administration of the territory and the population.

¹³⁴ As to the notion of the body that discipline entails, its anatomical discursiveness had been previously analysed by Foucault concerning the bond that medicine had established between the dimension of the corporeal and sickness, which involves that Modernity took as a referent the dead body according to different discursive mutations. It is, again, the body absorbed by knowledge, what Lacan would call the discursive formation of the body proper the discourse of the university, where *jouissance* is placed in the acquisition of knowledge. See Foucault, Michel (1963): *Naissance de la clinique. Une archéologie du regard médical*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

Disciplines, thus, do not mobilise a primary notion of repressive power, but they illustrate the productive dimension of it in its alliance with forms of knowledge like demography, anatomy, psychology and criminology. Following this feature, Foucault leaves behind any consideration of power inscribed into the liberal tradition, for which it operates as a purely negative and prohibitive limit:

Il faut cesser de toujours décrire les effets du pouvoir en effets négatifs : il « exclut », il « réprime », il « refoule », il « censure », il « abstrait », il « masque », il « cache ». En fait, le pouvoir produit ; il produit du réel ; il produit des domaines d'objets et des rituels de vérité. L'individu et la connaissance qu'on peut en prendre relèvent de cette production (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 196).

Unveiling the productive domain of power is, at the same time, a strategy to point to the ideological operations at the core of a formal subjectivity that is sanctioned by the law as a juridical mechanism allied to the State, which becomes repressive in the liberal tradition. Individuality cannot be analysed without taking into account its corporeal dimension, mainly because the goal of disciplinary techniques and devices is to produce this very body, an issue that connects the Foucauldian project with the genealogical enterprise undertaken by Nietzsche regarding the circuits of bad consciousness. Indeed, while Nietzsche claimed that punishment, through the mechanism of guilt, invested the subject as the origin and source of its actions and intentions, Foucault asserts that discipline creates a new and docile body:

Cet objet nouveau, c'est le corps naturel, porteur de forces et siège d'une durée ; c'est le corps susceptible d'opérations spécifiées, qui ont leur ordre, leur temps, leur conditions internes, leurs éléments constituants. Le corps, en devenant cible pour de nouveaux mécanismes du pouvoir, s'offre à de nouvelles formes de savoir¹³⁵ (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 157).

It also entails that “le pouvoir disciplinaire a pour corrélatif une individualité non seulement analytique et « cellulaire », mais naturelle et « organique »” (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 158). Individuality, then, is made by virtue of a coerced and reiterative procedure of shaping and limiting a body that cannot be separated from a socio-

¹³⁵ Nevertheless, Foucault had previously introduced a different notion of the body that, in a certain sense, was extremely similar to the Lacanian notion of *corps imaginaire*. It can be found in a posthumous publication: *Le corps utopique* (2009). In this work, the body as an extended surface is analysed as what enables the subject to place itself in a world based on a process of embodiment. In fact, the notion of the utopian body, in terms of an exposure that enables a world by virtue of its spacing ability, is at odds with an individual body fully absorbed by the discursive devices of discipline. For a further approach on this issue, quite remarkable in the Foucauldian reflection on the body, see Foucault, Michel (2009): *Le corps utopique. Les hétéropies*. Paris, Éditions Lignes.

This book also collects a radiophonic lecture given by Foucault in 1966, when he began to develop his notion of counter-space, which is at the core of the later concept of resistance as a dynamic that traverses and disrupts the hegemonic power relations.

economic apparatus where its existence is equalized to a mechanical entity. Foucault analyses that the regulation and control of such a body demands a process of normalization that, at this stage of his work, begins to suggest what would be the domain proper to the body-species shaped by bio-power. The norm, as a formal device that dictates and creates a concrete form of reality, divides the bodies through a binary regime: those normal, and those abnormal or pathological. This division adds another feature concerning disciplinary power, namely that its dissemination is linked to its invisible status, which allows that it can be in every parcel related to the individual subject:

On comprend que le pouvoir de la norme fonctionne facilement à l'intérieur d'un système de l'égalité formelle, puisque à l'intérieur d'une homogénéité qui est la règle, il introduit, comme un impératif utile et le résultat d'une mesure, tout le dégradé des différences individuelles (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 186).

Individuals become governed by means of a net of devices that designate the bodies that are useful and susceptible of being maintained, and those the docility of which is not so easily given. This demands a punishing instance that reinforces the coercive process, the result of which is a catalogue of different subjectivities. Thus, discipline hides violence while it confers a visibility to the individualised subject, the incarnation of which is found in an atomistic body, the minimal expression for the maintenance of the whole structure: “Le pouvoir disciplinaire, lui, s'exerce en rendant invisible; en revanche il impose à ceux qu'il soumet à un principe de visibilité obligatoire” (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 189).

I shall now elaborate on the problems related to the Foucauldian notion of discipline as a normalizing process that gives birth to an individual body inscribed into socio-economic strategies that tend to transform the embodied subject as a source for the acquisition of benefit at the expense of a minimum cost. The first one is unnoticedly outlined by Foucault when he claims that “dans toutes les sociétés, le corps est pris à l'intérieur de pouvoirs très serrés, qui lui imposent des contraintes, des interdits ou des obligations” (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 138). In this quotation, there seems to be a tacit presupposition that points to a pre-cultural or, at least, pre-social status of bodies that are later translated into cultural significations, which are always related to a historical, economic and social context. Hence, the question is: does the body pre-exist the very processes of subjection according to which the body is said to be? The answer seems to be ambivalent, mainly because Foucault is operating with a notion of discourse that

reduces the body to two exclusive dimensions: knowledge and power, expelling any further consideration about it, which also partially explains his disagreement and dispute against psychoanalysis.

The body resulting from this paradigm is a surface where several attributes such as docility, efficiency, morphological boundaries and individuation are inscribed. Such a body is, thereby, radically immaterial, a question that many feminists have argued against Foucault¹³⁶, stating that the neutrality of his approach does not properly make clear the differential marks that operate on bodies, such as gender, class and ethnicity. It also involves that the body is approached in the terms of a unidimensional reality, where it plays the role of a determined entity with no possible agency, this is to say, no possible resistance. This is what confers a compact status to power that, despite its disseminated nature, according to Foucault, results in reification.

In this sense, the body that Foucault introduces in this work is radically alien to any psychic entity. This reality, from a Nietzschean result, is what results from the process of subjection deployed by punishment and guilt, creating the reflexivity attributed to consciousness. Following the Nietzschean path, Foucault states that what is later articulated in terms of a psychic parcel where the intentionality of the subject would be placed is resultant from the very process of bodily subjection: “L’âme, effet et instrument d’une anatomie politique; l’âme, prison du corps” (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 34). Producing an inversion of the ontological dualism that traversed the metaphysical reflection between the body and the soul, what Foucault elucidates is that what was understood to be pre-eminent in relation to the subject is a disciplinary effect. The psyche, then, cannot be separated from the procedures and ritualised repetitions that

¹³⁶ The status of the body in the Foucauldian scheme is quite problematic inasmuch as it is reduced to a pure effect of the interconnection between several domains of knowledge and power that deploy processes of *assujettissement* according to normalizing procedures. Such a perspective has some crucial consequences in relation to the notion of political resistance referred to the body. The contradictions and limitations of such a notion have been highlighted by feminist thinkers like Judith Butler, Jana Sawicki, Lois McNay, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and, implicitly, Karen Barad, amongst others. Most of them highlight that the body that Foucault elaborates is neuter, with no further demarcation beyond the process of *assujettissement*. See Spivak Chakravorty, Gayatri (1988): « Can the Subaltern Speak? » in *Selected Subaltern Studies* (edited with Guha, Ranajit). Oxford, Oxford University Press, pages 66-111; Sawicki, Jana (1991): « Foucault and Feminism: A Critical Reappraisal » in *Foucault. Feminism, Power, and the Body*. New York, Routledge, pages 95-110; McNay, Lois (1992): « Power, Body and Experience » in *Foucault and Feminism*. Cambridge, Polity Press, pages 11-47; Butler, Judith (1993): « Phantasmatic Identifications and the Assumption of Sex » in *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*. New York, Routledge, pages 93-120, and Barad, Karen (2001): « Reconfiguring Space, Time, and Matter » in *Feminist Locations. Global and Local, Theory and Practice* (edited by Dekoven, Marianne). Piscataway, Rutgers University Press.

pretend to create a nuclear core placed into the interiority of the subject, which also leads to the Nietzschean diagnosis: the creation of consciousness as a psychic and free-will capacity is tied to punishment. The excess that power produces is an illusionary effect according to which the result constructed by means of disciplinary circuits is retroactively instituted as the *primum datum*, the region where the truth of the subject resides. Power creates a fictional origin and in this way enables the success of subjection, which habitates the proliferation of several devices such as confession in order to trap the subject under fixed categories that elaborate a coherent and totalitarian identity.

3.2.3.1. Foucault and Psychoanalysis: The Limits of Discourse

There seems to persist an Aristotelean notion of the body in Foucault: the material reality is shaped by several techniques and devices – which would occupy the status of a formal principle – that *conform* it according to regulatory ideals, which are inseparable from a socio-historical context. In this sense, the discursive monism that Foucault attributes to the body radically conditions its notion of a subject fully trapped by a net of power relations in the middle of which notions such as agency become problematic. Hence, despite his brilliant analysis of the clinical dimension of the body according to the model of the corpse, which meant a notion of life bond to sickness, Foucault traps the body into an *impasse*, which would be later reinforced by his works on sexuality as a regulatory device of subjection. The inevitable consequence of such a theoretical nominalism is the erasure of what exceeds any concrete discourse, merely showing some symptomatic hints that cannot be trapped by compact articulations: the libidinal dimension of the body.

In relation to the psychoanalytic perspective, what Foucault names the psyche as an excessive product resultant from the discipline exercised onto the body is radically bond to a consciousness from which everything can be known once it is stimulated. It is a transparent element, not for the subject itself, but for the *expert* that incites it to speak: the psychiatrist, the psychologist, the judge, the criminologist, and – according to his diagnosis - the psychoanalyst. In other words, Foucault, through his sterilising operation that reduces the body to the circuit of knowledge-power, assimilates the subject to the Freudian and Lacanian notion of the ego, which, certainly, is inseparable from an

imaginary account of a bodily reality that is seen as a signifying totality, though what he clearly neglects is the *jouissance* proper to this dimension. In fact, *jouissance* is the incessantly absent element in the whole Foucauldian corpus. At the same time, equating the subject to the ego entails that the unconscious as the domain of the Other, this is to say, the fracturing principle of consciousness, is left aside. This twist reinforces the Foucauldian thesis on confession and his suspicion on the unconscious as a merely repressive entity that deprives the subject of autonomy. The unconscious, thus, would incarnate, according to Foucault, a juridical fiction based on the alliance between power and the law in a restrictive sense, without considering the subversion that Freud introduced in the foundation of psychoanalysis.

In his further analysis on sexuality, where Foucault combines the disciplinary power with the introduction of a regulatory power that has as its goal the production of life, Foucault discards psychoanalysis by denouncing that Freud did not produce any remarkable advance in relation to what psychiatry had previously articulated. Analysing what he names the “repressive hypothesis” that would perversely promise a liberation of sexuality at the expense of a redoubling status of subjection through processes like confession, Foucault establishes that the notion of desire that Freud elaborates pursues a liberation from the oppression inflicted by culture.

However, Foucault simply assimilates the unconscious to a repressive instance, which seems to suggest that Foucault confuses the super-ego, this is to say, the psychic introjection of the moral law, with the discourse of the Other that fractures the subject. In fact, the barred subject cannot be transparent to itself, which entails that trapping the subject through an incitement to speak through a confession of its sexuality is not an easy path. Indeed, as Freud had discovered, the subject cannot give an account of its sexed status beyond fantasies, partial articulations, and obscure labyrinths the meanings of which are not obvious at all. Hence, the unconscious is, in a sense, a focus of resistance against attempts to reduce subjectivity to an illuminating truth that knowledge could trap in alliance to several power relations. On the contrary, what Foucault implicitly presupposes is that the nexus power-knowledge is able to fully circumscribe the subject into a compact net, being no rest alien to such a process of subjection.

The repressive status that Foucault attributes to psychoanalysis by focusing his attention on the notion of the superego leaves also aside an additional remark: repression does not merely prohibit through mechanisms of censorship, but it can also

lead to an eroticization of what is forbidden, a remark further developed by Lacan through his analysis of transgression. As a result, when Foucault analyses that repression promises a liberation the reverse of which is the eroticization of what is banned, he does not consider that psychoanalysis had previously highlighted this issue in its Freudian and Lacanian corpus. Nevertheless, the notion of repression highlighted by Freud and Lacan in relation to the Law does not entail that there can be unlimited possibilities of an erotic proliferation. The reason for such a remark is that the drives and the unconscious do not appeal to a subject located in any notion of a free-will, but it involves opaque dynamics of desire and libidinal fixations.

Psychoanalysis would not, therefore, necessarily refuse that pleasure and power feed back each other, as Foucault asserts: “Plaisir et pouvoir ne s’annulent pas; ils ne se retournent pas l’un contre l’autre; ils se poursuivent, se chevauchent et se relancent. Ils s’enchaînent selon des mécanismes complexes et positifs d’excitation et d’incitation” (Foucault, 1976: 66-67). However, what psychoanalysis outlines is that this circuit does not merely refer to discursive creations based on an interaction between knowledge and power, but it rather appeals to the enabling effects of the signifier onto the subject. This question points to what Foucault incessantly leaves aside in his denounce of sexuality as a device of reification: in any process of subjection, which is socio-symbolically regulated, the subject obtains several forms of *jouissance*. This has two further consequences: the unconscious adherence of the subject to a symbolic reality by means of the phantasmatic structure of desire, and a different notion of the body that argues for a constitutive tie between the signifier and the corporeal dimension of the subject, the *substance jouissante*. In other words, apart from a reiterative procedure that performatively gives birth to subjection, there needs to be a fixation unconsciously orchestrated by the subject, which clarifies why the subject might remain trapped under social realities that oppress it: there it finds parcels of enjoyment. A parcel of enjoyment that Foucault does not take into account when he analyses the process of subjection that confession, in domains such as psychology or psychiatry, involves through an eroticization of the speech to grasp the “truth” of the subject. Hence, what confession elaborates is a sexualisation of power, producing further parcels of enjoyment under contextual and historical socio-symbolic regimes. In devices such as confession, the aim to produce a coincidence between the subject of the enunciation [*Je*] and the subject of what is enounced [*Moi*] is based on the fantasy of an internal coherence of the subject. It

means that, contrarily to what Foucault claimed, for psychoanalysis, sex is alien to truth inasmuch as it is a void for sense:

L'obtention de l'aveu et ses effets sont recodés dans la forme d'opérations thérapeutiques. Ce qui veut dire d'abord que le domaine du sexe ne sera plus placé seulement sur le registre du péché, de l'excès ou de la transgression, mais sous le régime (qui n'en est d'ailleurs que la transposition) du normal ou pathologique ; on définit pour la première fois une morbidité propre au sexuel ; le sexe apparaît comme un champ de haute fragilité pathologique : surface de répercussion pour les autres maladies, mais aussi foyer d'une nosographie propre, celle de l'instinct, des penchants, des images, du plaisir, de la conduite. Cela veut dire aussi que l'aveu prendra son sens et sa nécessité parmi les interventions médicales : exigé par le médecin, nécessaire pour le diagnostic et efficace, par lui-même, dans la cure. Le vrai, s'il est dit à temps, à qui il faut, et par celui qui en est à la fois le détenteur et le responsable, guérit (Foucault, *op. cit.* : 90).

Thus, the Foucauldian diagnosis on psychoanalysis as a re-elaboration of the device of confession is wrong. Nonetheless, this does not mean that confession is not at the core of disciplines such as psychiatry and sexology¹³⁷ in relation to what sex *is*, which entails a discursive reduction of sex to a concrete symbolic articulation that leaves aside a crucial dimension for psychoanalysis: sex is the failure inherent to discourse, the gap for which no signifier is suitable. In this sense, what psychiatry performs when it diagnosis a “mental disease” to a subject that has been discursively instituted as a sufferer of gender dysphoria is to reduce its speech to what the psychiatrist wants to hear according to a discursive modality governed by the *jouissance* found in knowledge, presupposing a gender identity core as the truth of its subjectivity. Accordingly, the diagnosis made by Foucault is impeccable in relation to new discursive formations where power and knowledge are strictly allied, creating new subjective formations for which sex must be eliminated, this is to say, what resists representation must be turned down.

The body resulting from such a pathological discourse is a sterile one filled in with several attributes where the element that produces a *jouissance* obtained by the psychiatrist is the knowledge that can be extracted from the patient according to a *ritualised speech that produces what is already expected*. The erasure of any unconscious and libidinal dimension of the subject is the guarantee for the production of a very well domesticated subject that will say what the doctor wants to hear. Yet, the

¹³⁷ In fact, sexology and psychiatry are two good examples of the university discourse, the aim of which is to erase the subject and its unconscious net by means of the pre-eminence of scientific knowledge, sustained by the practitioner's desire to know.

ironic situation also derived from this scenario is a patient who can also pretend to perform what the doctor wants to hear, which finally produces a paradoxical situation. Indeed, the psychiatrist can be misled by its patient, though this misleading might produce the *jouissance* that this discursive modality wants to obtain: a “truth” concerning the subject, yet illusionary.

Instead what psychoanalysis asserts, mainly in its Lacanian version, is that the subject is deprived of a substantial background, this is to say, there is no truth in terms of subjection that could be obtained through an incitation to speech. Consequently, when Lacan, in the last period of his teaching, signals that the sexed status of the subject is neither its anatomy nor the symbolic articulations according to which the bodies are said to be regulated, points to a further dimension. It is a dimension fully concerned by the impossibility to articulate an accountability of sexuality, being an excess for which no symbolic discursivity is suitable, which entails that sex is always wrongly translated in any social context: “Le discours analytique ne se soutient que de l’annoncé qu’il n’y a pas, qu’il est impossible de poser le rapport sexuel” (Lacan, 1975b: 14).

Sex and sexual difference are not, therefore, two elements that could be clarified through the device of confession because they are not two attributes proper to the subject, but the suspension of the signifying chain in the middle of which the subject exists. At the same time, the articulation of these two notions that Lacanian psychoanalysis undertakes is radically alien to any fixed “truth” that could be snatched from the subject, which introduces a subversive notion of a subject for which, owing to its sexed status, lacks a final cause¹³⁸. Sex is, as Joan Copjec claims (Copjec, 1994), the euthanasia of reason. Hence, the status that psychoanalysis confers to the subject is not reduced to the relation cause-effect, but it rather is an effect for which there is no pure cause. It is rather an incessant deviation, an anomaly that transcends any positive determination.

Notwithstanding with the psychoanalytical criticism of the discursive monism inherent to Foucault and his historicist nominalism, I do not mean to reject the notion of disciplinary power. Indeed, the Symbolic, understood as the orchestration between the

¹³⁸ This crucial remark was also outlined by Lacan when he asserted that there was no Other of the Other, this is to say, the Other is also castrated, it is deprived of a completeness that would assure its status of cause in the Aristotelean sense. See Lacan, Jacques (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: L’envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil, and (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil.

signifier and the signified, institutes the social reality where the subject ek-sists, which also means that its usages and possible articulations depend on social and historical modes. In this sense, there is a symbolic subjection of the body that refers to the status that is conferred to it under different circumstances and social regimes. In order to confer a “civilized” status to the body and *jouissance*, there are coercive mechanisms that assure the historical legitimacy and validity of these usages referred to the body, which also points to the performative status of the signifier in order to confer a reality to what is being regulated through inclusions and exclusions. Disciplinary techniques also produce identifications that come from the social Other, which points to the enjoying and affective dimension of the body. It entails that there is an unconscious complicity of the subject with the Big Other that shields the distribution of power relations symbolically distributed.

What is crucial to remark, as Foucault himself did, is the capitalist bias of contemporary disciplinary techniques, which points to the re-articulation of the body as a productive resource from which an economic energy can be extracted¹³⁹, which finally leads to the notion of a body as an investment. The subject attached to such a notion of the body is the entrepreneur of oneself¹⁴⁰ (2004b). In addition, what is also crucial to outline is that discipline points, above all, to the violent mechanisms and devices that are made invisible and that sustain any concrete socio-symbolic regime. The reverse of this situation is the progressive exposure of a violence directed to the body, which becomes clear in those subjects the docility of which is not easily obtained. In other words, disciplinary regimes involve a link between being vulnerable and violence that is not anecdotic, but constitutive of inhabiting a world articulated in terms of a differential

¹³⁹ For a brilliant explanatory approach in relation to this issue, related to contemporary concepts such as the capital value of life (biocapital) and the consideration of life in economic terms, this is to say, benefit and cost (bioeconomics), see Rose, Nikolas (2007): « Biopolitics in the Twenty-First Century » in *Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, Princeton University Press. Pages 9-40, and Braidotti, Rosi (2013): « The Inhuman : Life beyond Death » in *The Posthuman*. Cambridge, Polity Press, pages 105-142.

¹⁴⁰ Besides, the last book of his trilogy on a history of sexuality was devoted to the “cura sui”, the reflexive turn that requires that the subject takes care of its life as an investment exposed at several risks and potential damages. Hence, a health and life insurances are two items that have become part of current human lives, being their existence, even in its organic level, something for which an entrepreneur of oneself is required.

However, Foucault also developed that the expression of “cura sui”, in Ancient philosophy, was devoted to a spiritual, ascetic and dietetic turn that, since neoliberalism assumed its hegemony, experiences a new dimension that transforms the biological reality into an economic source by means of a surplus, in the Marxian sense of the word. For a broader approach on this issue, see Foucault, Michel (1984b) : *Histoire de la sexualité 3: Le souci de soi*. Paris, Gallimard ; (2004b): *Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France 1978-1979*. Paris, Gallimard.

distribution of what is permitted and what is forbidden, what is licit and illicit, and this implies a perpetual renegotiation of inclusions and exclusions.

At the core of renegotiation, violence is exercised by performative means that produce what they enunciate or describe, which implies the possibility to exercise to oneself or to another this sort of mechanisms that tend to fix and circumscribe the body to hegemonic spheres in relation to its meanings, and its practical articulations. Discipline constitutes, thereby, a political regulation of the public appearance of the body, and its cultural bond, a detail clearly outlined by Foucault in relation to the visibility that discipline confers to the atomic subject, while the normalizing strategies developed by disciplinary devices become invisible.

What is important to notice is the social distribution of discipline according to economic criteria, which in our current world is more and more tied to the productive status of the subject. Hence, in order to assure such a status, disciplines are focused on deploying a control and regulation over the embodied subject, which is especially evident in current migration policies, as I will develop in the next chapter. Disciplinary techniques, then, try to absorb and reduce the body to a bio-machine from which an increasing benefit is susceptible of being snatched, which is inseparable from the several gadgets that capitalism produces in order to generate new enjoying parcels that reinforce the atomistic nature imprinted by discipline onto the body through a process of mercantile individuation. The reverse of such a situation is the progressive and catastrophic precariousness that governs existence nowadays, given the fact that domains like health and education are becoming private services. Both domains, health and education, depend on individual enterprises, which clearly shows the applicability of a class analysis. The social individual that neoliberalism creates is not simply the bourgeois, but one the primary investment of which is, *tout court*, its life as an economic resource, leaving out from this domain all the bodies produced as mere excrements, deprived of material and symbolic conditions.

3.2.3.2. Exceeding Discipline through Recourse to Ethics: Pleasures and the Self

In the last period of his life and work, Foucault began to explore the legacy of Antiquity, which led him to another path, and, to a certain sense, to a re-articulation of the notion of discipline. He introduced a new perspective on his genealogy of the processes of subjection that took as a referent the Ancient ethics and the role of the Other in this context. I shall strictly refer to this issue in order to critically outline the modifications that he introduced.

While Foucault had previously disdained the notion of desire as a concept that would supposedly appeal to a juridical notion of power through recourse to privation and repression by means of the law¹⁴¹, in his *Histoire de la sexualité 2: L'usage des plaisirs* (1984a), he undertook a new horizon, even if similar to his previous work. The novelty introduced by Foucault mainly refers to a new consideration of desire as an experience that ties the subject to the culture where it exists, outlining its historicity, which is also bond to the subject resultant from desire. The experience that desire is, all along the consideration of culture in terms of a plural and multiple apparatus, allows an analysis of the disciplines that are at the basis of knowledge, the normativity that is implicit in the articulation of processes of subjection, and the forms of subjection that derive from them. At the core of culture, traversed by several devices that configure the subject, Foucault outlines that to become a subject is an existential project governed by what he names games of truth¹⁴². They regulate what is considered to be true and false

¹⁴¹ In his analysis of bio-power and, more specifically, desire in this historical turn inaugurated by liberalism and reinforced by neoliberalism, in a quite explicit dispute against psychoanalysis, Foucault stated what follows: “La population, c’est un ensemble d’éléments à l’intérieur duquel on peut remarquer des constants et régularités jusque dans les accidents, à l’intérieur duquel on peut repérer l’universel du désir produisant régulièrement le bénéfice de tous, et à propos duquel on peut repérer un certain nombre de variables dont il est dépendant et qui sont susceptibles de le modifier”, in Foucault, Michel (2004a): *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France 1977-1978*, page 76. Therefore, according to Foucault, desire works as a regulatory device that reassures a new subject susceptible of being governed and controlled, the population, which begins to be the basis for bio-politics thanks to new forms of knowledge that take as their core life in its biological expression. This new massive subject is distributed in a territory according to criteria of several policies of national security. However, it is an analysis radically alien to Lacan’s, despite the fact that desire is governed by the Law of the signifier and its usages, being always the desire of the Other. Nonetheless, the interesting question on this analysis of desire provided by Foucault is that he appeals to the social Other that, undoubtedly, conditions desire and its expression, though Foucault seems to exhaust desire on this question, which, as I have previously argued via Lacan, is the most problematic notion due to the constructivist interpretation that it entails.

¹⁴² Using an expression related to what Wittgenstein introduced as linguistic games, Foucault re-elaborates truth in terms of a normative apparatus that conditions which forms of subjectivity are legitimate, which would emphasize the historicity of any discursive reality, and it also points to a quarrel

according to socio-historical criteria that create the conditions for the realization of subjective experience, this is to say, that allow for thinkable domains proper to the spheres of the subjectivity.

From this perspective, Foucault refers to morals and ethics in a sense that is not primarily reduced to the pre-eminence of norms, but to the emergence of moral concerns, which leads him to an ethical notion of stylization. In other words, the subject is not simply concerned by processes of normalization, but there is an aesthetic regime that points to its very representability as an ethical agent. It is through this ethical-aesthetical praxis that the subject relates to the normativity proper to culture in all its dimensions. The subject interiorizes, then, the norms that pre-exist its existence, being the process of subjection a game of representation and truth. From this paradigm, subjection becomes “la façon dont l’individu établit son rapport à cette règle et se reconnaît comme lié à l’obligation de la mettre en œuvre” (Foucault, 1984a: 34). Hence, to become a subject entails a reflexivity that diminishes the previous passivity that subjection contained, trying to highlight the active role of the subject by taking care of itself.

Becoming a subject implies that subject and object coincide, and this becomes even clearer when Foucault asserts that ethics demands a process of transformation of the subject when it must face action¹⁴³, which refers to character or habitus as a mode-of-being. In this sense, Foucault seemed to move from a paradigm of a subject fully

proper to the disciplines of knowledge, the validity of which does not merely rely on systemic criteria proper to each area, but on broader items bond to economic and social elements. As a result, the historicity of discourse acquires the status of a grammar with an ontological status based on its usage, as Wittgenstein had highlighted. For a broader approach on this issue, see Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1953): *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers (2001). Translation by G. E. M. Anscombe. Concerning the historicity and legitimacy of different forms of knowledge and their articulation, see Foucault, Michel (1997): « Cours du 7 janvier 1976 » in « *Il faut défendre la société* ». *Cours au Collège de France*. Paris, Gallimard, pages 6-19. Foucault uses the notion “savoirs assujettis” in order to express this issue relating to knowledge and its mutations.

¹⁴³ In fact, the so-called “late Foucault” developed an archaeological task that was directed towards a further genealogy of the subject, aiming at bringing into crisis the modern forms of subjectivity, the origins and implications of which had been previously analysed from *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (1966) to *Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France 1978-1979* (2004b). In *L’Herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France 1981-1982* (2001), Foucault undertook a huge path to decipher the implications that alterity had in Antiquity in the process of becoming a subject through a ritualised stylization according to cultural practices of meditation and *askésis*. The issue at stake is that Foucault, in his analysis of Ancient Greece and Rome, seemed to pretend to recover a form of autonomy close to what Lacan named the ethics of the master, governed by the wish to know, leaving aside other considerations regarding the subject. Such a twist remains trapped into a philosophy of consciousness, limited to the analysis of the “I” or ego.

absorbed by power relations that articulate processes of subjection to an aesthetic regime related to the becoming of a subject through disruptive means:

Il n'y a pas d'action morale particulière qui ne se réfère à l'unité d'une conduite morale ; pas de conduite morale qui n'appelle la constitution de soi-même comme sujet moral ; et pas de constitution du sujet moral sans de « modes de subjectivation » et sans une « ascétique » ou des « pratiques de soi » qui les appuient » (Foucault, *op. cit.* : 35).

From a paradigm focused on discourse and power devices devoted to assure and produce forms of subjection, Foucault moved his attention to the modes according to which the self becomes legible and legitimate as a subject in front of an Other that, in Antiquity, was the master, who taught his disciples how to become their own spiritual guides. The self becomes, thus, a relational being through the mediation of an Other that possesses a knowledge obtained through a praxis that requires a reflexive activity.

What remains in this last philosophical project refers to the reduction of the subject to the different practices that conform the ego, the imaginary entity that gives to the subject a certain coherence and stability, and the non-consideration of the constitutive and structural alterity of the subject. Related to this issue, there is a further consideration that needs to be outlined: the reflexivity that Foucault asserts as proper to the self in the stylisation that gives birth to its existence seems to presuppose that the subject *knows* which are the legitimate games of truth that provide the regimes of intelligibility. This “knowing how” clearly leaves aside the Nietzschean account of subjection as a process of punishment and discipline, focusing the question instead on the volition of the subject as a free-will, this is to say, it reduces the sphere of the subject to pure consciousness. At its turn, Foucault offers a quite romantic scenario where coercion and violence seem to have vanished. The ethics of the master of the Ancient Greece and Rome is articulated by Foucault as a process of subjective stylisation that would not entail subjection in regulatory or disciplinary means, which might promise a new horizon where to become a subject would entail to know oneself. The subject would find, then, the existential point that assured its autonomy.

Therefore, the Foucauldian reflection on subjection is quite problematic. Despite his useful and brilliant theoretical tools, the subject is either reduced to a pure effect of several social structures discursively instituted according to the pre-eminent status of knowledge, or it is finally re-articulated through a voluntarist account where a reflexive stylization reduces desire to the homeostatic concept of pleasure. Moreover, the last account on the aesthetic regime at the core of the emergence of the subject seems to

become unable to give an account of the coercive processes that condition the liveability of the subject in its socio-symbolic scenario, a remark that the notion of discipline highlights.

3.2.4. Judith Butler's Performativity: Power and Language.

Whereas Foucault considered the psychic dimension of the subject as a regulatory strategy, Butler aims at deepening into this dimension in order to widen the nets of subjection. Hence, following the Foucauldian genealogical project that re-articulates the subject as an effect traversed by power relations, Butler affirms that the subject is the result of power relations that are imbricated in all the devices that give birth to subjection: “ ‘Subjection’ signifies the process of becoming subordinated of power as well as the process of becoming a subject” (Butler, 1997a: 2). To become a subject entails, then, a dependency towards power relations in order to survive and to exist. In this sense, the subject is not defined by a self-determined agency that would be its core, but its very nature would rather point to a previous passivity that entails that it requires something other than itself, being this *other* reality constitutive of *who* it is. In a quite Nietzschean way, the subject is defined as an effect that, nonetheless, illusionary appears as self-caused, which involves that power operates according to devices that are not self-evident or clear, but that present its effect as a cause through metonymical operations, which ties the subject to language¹⁴⁴ as a pre-existing structure.

If power relations are said to be constitutive of *who* the subject is, they have a productive role that does not simply point to the body as a signifying entity indispensable for any kind of agency, but it also produces the psychic dimension of the subject. The production of this dimension is introduced by Butler through an Althusserian notion: interpellation. In other words, the subject emerges as an effect of the interpellation of an Other that precedes and enables it. This *call of the Other* operates as the enabling process of the subject by means of recognition, which clearly reminds of the Hegelian scenario of lordship and bondage, where the two self-consciousness are brought about by the desire for recognition, and, consequently, by the

¹⁴⁴ However, in *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection* (1997a), Butler exclusively refers to discourse, not to language in the sense that I will develop in this chapter, which refers to the Lacanian notion of the Symbolic.

death-struggle. Hence, Butler states that “in the exchange by which that recognition is proffered and accepted, interpellation – the discursive production of the social subject – takes place”. (Butler, *op. cit.*: 5). Accordingly, the intelligibility of the subject, following Butler’s argument, demands a recognition that produces a psychic subjective identity as a consciousness inaugurated thanks to this Other, which in a certain sense *might remind of* the Lacanian articulation of the unconscious as the discourse of the Other.

The notion of interpellation that Butler articulates, despite her Althusserian heritage, does not entail any sort of social determinism, this is to say, the subject is not an automatic effect that would be orchestrated through the embodiment of social categories that come from the Other. Thus, the desire for recognition at the core of interpellation involves a paradoxical turn: it gives birth to a subject that becomes such through a normative apparatus, though norms will be questioned by this very subject due to its reiterative mechanism. Hence, as Fabienne Brugère and Guillaume LeBlanc state in the introduction of *Judith Butler. Trouble dans le sujet, trouble dans les normes* (2009):

Partant du primat des normes sur la construction du sujet qui les incorpore, Judith Butler s’intéresse à la manière dont leur incorporation, effet de la logique des relations de pouvoir, produit une vie psychique originale, à la fois déployée à l’intérieur des normes et les parasitant dans le même moment par les circuits de désir auxquels elles renvoient (Brugère and LeBlanc, 2009 : 9).

The subject is not simply, therefore, a product of the Other, but in subjection there is a deviation between the subject and the normative claim that supports it because the subject, despite being attached to a set of norms, is *not* the same as the norm, this is to say, there is a founding misrecognition. In other words, as Lacan put it, a subject is represented by a signifier to another signifier (Lacan, 1991), which entails a negativity that is not reducible to any predicament at the subjective sphere.

Becoming a subject means to be subjected by the Other, this is to say, be called in linguistic terms that habilitate the subject, which needs and demands a recognition in order to exist. This leads the argument to what Lacanian psychoanalysis structures through recourse to the Imaginary, a further detail concerning the misunderstanding of the “I” and the subject in Butler’s discourse. The linguistic operation that produces the subject through an original passivity that diminishes any presumed free-will that would be the entrance to a self-determination in a voluntarist account involves that the

individual and the subject are not two similar entities. In other words, the process of subjection does not refer to a previously determined self with some attributes of its own, but to an activity of becoming something other radically conditioned by alterity. Thus, to give an account of the interaction of power and language onto the subject leads the issue to another sphere, related to the fact that the subject is not a positive notion, but an effect governed by a constitutive negativity, this is to say, the subject always points to something other than itself:

The subject is the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency. No individual becomes a subject without first being subjected or undergoing “subjectivation” (a translation of the French *assujettissement*). (Butler, *op. cit.*: 11).

However, the notion of “individual” becomes problematic in this quotation for two further reasons: the first one refers to the definition of the unconscious as a lack of autonomy in liberal terms, and the second one points to a contradiction at the core of the concepts of subjection and power. As far as the unconscious is concerned, which seemed to be introduced in the notion of interpellation, it is re-articulated as an original passivity that precedes any sort of agency. It is clear that Butler is not formulating subjectivity by referring to a founding fracture – such as the fracture of which the unconscious witnesses. Instead, Butler resorts to a kind of opacity that bans the possibility to elaborate a full history of the subject. The issue at stake with this re-articulation of the unconscious as a prior passivity bond to the subject as an effect of power relations leads to a textual version of it, this is to say, reduces the subject to the region of the “I” and its imaginary dimension.

As far as the second problem is concerned, Butler implicitly suggests that, prior to the subject, there is a pre-linguistic entity, the individual, which is alien to intelligibility. Hence, the individual is placed as a pre-linguistic and a pre-subjected entity that later becomes a subject through a productive effect of power, and this is clearly at odds with the notion of a subject as an effect of discourse and power relations. From the theoretical horizon that Butler is introducing, where agency and performativity determine each other, this pre- or extra-subjective nature of the individual is not plausible.

In *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection* (1997a), Butler outlines a question that she had previously remarked concerning the gendered status of the subject: power relations are performative, which confers a normative status to the

process of subjection. By performative she means that power relations, in her interaction with discourse, institute a subject that does not come first or after them, but emerges *within* and *as a result* of them. This highlights again the troubling status conferred to this notion of individual¹⁴⁵. Thus, power is not simply a juridical or repressive instance, but a productive one that requires a forcible repetition that confers a fictional status of priority to the subject as a consequence of its reiterative mechanism. Indeed, the repetition that is said to be proper to power relations is bound to what Butler elaborates by means of the agency of the subject, which appeals to the capacity to act that the subject has under given circumstances.

Despite this, the notion of agency derived from such a characterization of the subject, yet tied to the reiterative structure of power, entails further problematic elements. The first one has been highlighted in relation to the Foucauldian notion of power: the subject is trapped by the mechanisms that enable it, being placed in a structure where the key concept is the “I”, resultant from a normalizing process that, in Butler’s case, implies the repetition of sameness, with no radical change. An “I” that ends by being an effect determined in advance. In order to clarify this first critical argument, there are two further elements that should be outlined in order to analyse the filiation of repetition that Butler invokes in her notion of performativity concerning the process of subjection.

On the one hand, Butler departs from the Austinian notion of a performative speech act, which refers to an act which is not descriptive, but executes an action, this is to say, it produces something new that was not previously contained in the enunciation. To be felicitous, a performative speech act requires a reiterative context and an audience, this is to say, its effectiveness is not guaranteed by the intention of the speaker, but it is confirmed by the effect that it produces. This would be the first theoretical framework of performativity, which suggests a chain of actions executed by a subject who acts in concert. In order to avoid the possible scenario of a relation between the signifier and the signified in terms of identity, this is to say, *sameness*, what

¹⁴⁵ A plausible solution for this incongruous discussion would be to refer to the disciplinary notion of individual, developed and articulated by Michel Foucault, a detail that I had previously developed in the precedent section of this dissertation. Nonetheless, Butler refers to the disciplinary regime elaborated by Foucault in relation to the processes of subjection applied onto the body as a distinct and unified entity, which wrongly identifies the Lacanian notion of the Imaginary with the Foucauldian concept of discipline.

a performative speech act also entails its inherent possibility of failure. The requirement of a contextual scenario introduces a discontinuous temporality that decentres any pre-existent goal concerning any performative act, which will be the occasion for a subversion for the prevailing normative schema.

On the other hand, the strategic use of the concept of performativity implies a subjective agency, which is attached to the unforeseen consequences derived from the process of subjection. Agency derives, then, from the specificity of the Foucauldian norm. Indeed, the articulation of power that Butler is elaborating is a synonym to the process of normalization. Thus, the mechanisms of power are exclusionary, this is to say, the formation of the subject requires the erasure of a certain sphere in order to acquire a cultural intelligibility, which refers to what she enunciates as the foreclosure that is at the core of the origin of the subject. Nonetheless, what Butler outlines is the performative status of the norm, which appeals to the productive nature of power. If a norm is performative, the subject brought to life by the very norms is not previous or simply created after it, but *it is produced* through the normative process of reiteration, which diminishes any possible teleological dimension. As a result, a norm, being a formal scheme that enables the subject, depends on a repetitive process that must be undertaken by the subject, this is to say, its agency:

Agency exceeds the power by which it is enabled. One might say that the purposes of power are not always the purposes of agency. To the extent that the latter diverge from the former, agency is the assumption of a purpose unintended by power, one that could not have been derived logically or historically, that operates in a relation of contingency and reversal to the power that makes it possible, to which it nevertheless belongs. This is, as it were, the ambivalent scene of agency, constrained by no teleological necessity. (Butler, *op. cit.*: 15).

The paradox between agency and power entails that there is no subject prior to the power relations as its background, though the subject itself is not reduced to those power relations that have enabled it, which guarantees a capacity to act as an agent that is not teleologically determined. Hence, the subject, through its reiterative existence by means of a normative apparatus, might subvert the power relations that have enabled its being, though it can never surpass them.

In this sense, the notion of vulnerability is reformulated from a new horizon, despite some continuities in relation to *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993): subjection is a necessary operation for the existence of the subject. This dependent

ontological constitution, which entails that the subject cannot be without alterity, already places the subject in a dis-possessioned frame that might lead to certain forms of exploitation in psychic and physical levels. From this framework, the relational dependency of the subject, as an effect of power relations discursively distributed, institutes its ek-sistence as desiring according to Butler. The subject cannot be without an Other to whom or to which it becomes passionately attached, with effects that cannot be predicted. This passionate attachment reconfigures ek-sistence in terms of a bodily exposure that does not simply imply being-in-front-of the Other, but becoming another for oneself, this is to say, the impossibility to remain the same in a temporal and in an ontological horizon.

Nevertheless, there is something problematic in this diagnosis, despite its powerful structure: the regulatory role conferred to recognition, and the assimilation of power to the norm in a Foucauldian translation of the Lacanian notion of the Imaginary, being the Symbolic a heterosexist norm that would reify the imaginary regime. As far as recognition is concerned, Butler asserts:

Social categories signify subordination and existence at once. In other words, within subjection the price of existence is subordination. Precisely at the moment in which choice is impossible, the subject pursues subordination as the promise of existence. This pursuit is not choice, but neither is it necessity. Subjection exploits the desire for existence, where existence is always conferred from elsewhere; it marks a primary vulnerability to the Other in order to be. (Butler, *op. cit.*: 20-21).

Outlining the crucial role of recognition for the existence and the liveability of the subject, Butler highlights that subjection occurs as an emergence in the middle of a world symbolically regulated, this is to say, made of categories that the subject does not choose, but it rather internalizes. This internalization tries to give an alternative answer for the Foucauldian refusal of the psychic dimension of the subject, placing desire as the keyword in this dynamic. Desire becomes, animated and sanctioned by the normative social Other, bound to recognition. It is the Other that confers intelligibility to the subject, yet this process imposes the ability to reproduce those very norms that shape the domain of subjectivity.

Butler's discursive monism obviates two crucial features that Lacanian psychoanalysis poignantly outlines: language and the negativity proper to the unconscious. Prior to the ideological structures sustained by power, which are discursively regulated by virtue of social bonds, language impacts onto the bodily

organism, introducing a radical feature that will condition the subjective ek-sistence: the loss of any primordial *jouissance* by means of the lack made by the linguistic structure that comes from the Other. As Colette Soler highlights: “Le langage introduit du manqué dans le réel, ce manque qui permet aux sujets de penser l’absence et la mort et qui se décline en manque à être, manque à jouir, manque à savoir (...)” (Soler, 2011: VIII-IX). The effect of language on the living body entails a radical overturn that cannot be surpassed, this is to say, it places the subject in a domain of the absence of a background for its existence, which is reinforced by the unconscious dynamic of desire as the desire of the Other. In other words, language compels towards an interpretation of each demand, which is deprived of any “natural” substance, depending on the Other. This is why the unconscious is always the discourse of the Other, this is to say, the *necessary* – which by no means resounds of any sort of teleology– link towards which discourse exceeds the subject and fractures it. There is not, then, a “pure” access to the subject, but only to the signifiers that partially represent it, inserted in the middle of a signifying chain that is never complete. There is always a lacking signifier, which also means that the Other is also barred. In this sense, the neurotic uncertainty concerning who one is, which becomes clearly manifest in any analytic session, proves that the subject of the unconscious is always an excess regarding any positive predicament.

The reduction of discourse to a set of norms – this is to say, a Foucauldian translation of the Symbolic as a regulatory hyposthesis of the Imaginary, according to Butler’s diagnosis –, is more troubling than solving. Discourse, understood as a complex net made of mobilized signifiers that institute a social reality, in a complicity with a set of practices and knowledge, is a regulatory category the political manifestation of which is the norm. The consequence from this perspective is that the emergence and liveability of the subject is articulated according to a binary scheme: either it incorporates and reproduces the norms that assure its existence, or it becomes a monstrous creature deprived of a recognition that would provide an existence.

On the contrary, the Symbolic is not a reification of a normative scheme that would enable the subject according to a notion of a regulatory power based on the operation of foreclosure, but – in the neurotic structure – it represses a signified by virtue of the emergence of an empty signifier that works as a metaphor for the subject’s desire, signalling a lack-of-being at the core of the subject. In fact, articulating the emergence of the subject according to what Butler names foreclosure entails another

issue, similar to the conflictual relationship between the individual and the subject: if foreclosure means the repudiating process by which the subject must expel certain elements or desires, it implicitly involves that what is foreclosed was previous to the operation of subjection. What Butler names “gender melancholia”, which is a further translation for the repressive and repudiating effect of the “heterosexual matrix” (Butler, 1990) outlines something that implies an absolute contradiction: the rejection of a pre-discursive homoerotic bond by virtue of the social hegemony of heterosexuality in its normative vein. In a misreading of Freud’s *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), Butler elaborates her hypothesis on a primary repression of sexual drives towards non-heterosexual *partenaires*, which is clearly at odds with what psychoanalysis states. Indeed, according to Freud, there relation between the drives and its objects is by no means necessary. This is further reinforced by the absence of any genital drive, this is to say, there is no complementarity between the sexes. Paradoxically, her notion of gender performativity institutes a normative approach in a domain that, for psychoanalysis, defies any symbolic articulation: sex, which is declined in the domain of the Real, lacking of a purpose or any compulsory expression, as Freud himself had declared since his *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905).

The limit for Butler’s analysis of psychic violence is based on its reduction of the subject to the realm of the segregationist mechanism of a totality, this is to say, she assumes that any subject is always fully concerned by the phallic function¹⁴⁶, which leads to the logical category of the group. Hence, it is worth outlining the following quotation concerning what she names the regulatory power that governs desire:

As foreclosure, the sanction works not to prohibit existing desire but to produce certain kinds of objects and to bar others from the field of social production. In this way, the sanction does not work according to the repressive hypothesis, as postulated and criticized by Foucault, but as a mechanism of production, one that can operate, however, on the basis of an originary violence (Butler, *op. cit.*: 25).

This quotation is relevant for, at least, two reasons. The first one confirms what I have been discussing all along this pages concerning the violent and exclusionary mechanisms that Butler’s diagnosis introduce in relation to the formation of the subject: a power effect of foreclosure, which is discursively regulated. Such a dynamic presupposes that what is excluded remains included in terms of a constitutive outside

¹⁴⁶ However, it must be noted that Butler never uses this notion. It is me who, through a Lacanian perspective, offers a critical argument of her approach.

that, indeed, confirms the regulatory process of such a logics, creating a group that expels, at least, one of its members. It is the structure of the all-phallic or masculine *jouissance*, as Lacan developed this category of logical sets. In this sense, Butler is incessantly reproducing and reifying as exclusive to any social regulation a modality of *jouissance* that, in her philosophical account, is shield as the mechanism proper to the emergence of *all* subjects, being the repudiated ones the necessary exclusion that is required in order to confirm a closed group.

As far as the second issue is concerned, it refers to the notion of repression elaborated by Foucault in his dispute against Freudian psychoanalysis. In fact, Foucault – as Freud had previously remarked in relation to the super-ego – states that any repressive mechanism orchestrated by power relations ends up by being productive, which implies the creation of new erotic dimensions that exceed the previous limits that have been wielded. Following this Foucauldian remark, Butler argues for the incessant possibility to subvert hegemonic power relations by virtue of the non-teleological effects produced by repression, which creates new desiring areas that question the previous rejection of certain subjects from the realm of cultural intelligibility. Thus, it also reinforces the non-determined role of agency as the capacity to subvert a hegemonic context, creating new possibilities that quarrel against a totalizing version of desire and liveability. Nonetheless, exclusion remains as a logical procedure proper to the emergence of the subject: what Butler's notion of subversion allows is a broader articulation of the structure of the set, but it entails that there would be a new repudiated and rejected region.

Regarding this process, there is a problematic detail concerning the relevance that Butler confers to those bodies sanctioned as abject which, by their very existence, seem to be subversive. If her first notion of subversion was bond to the effect of parody of regulatory gender norms that produced an unpredicted effect of widening the normative apparatus by a proliferation of non-coherent gendered identities (Butler, 1990; 1993), subversion acquires now a new dimension. It is a result produced by the foreclosure proper to the normativity that governs the subject, which creates a sphere of repudiation that, nonetheless, is susceptible of becoming a site of contestation that diminishes the status of “purity” attributed to those subjects that are sanctioned as normal. What is required for such a subversive consequence is the agency of the subject, which refers to its ability, through its very existence as excluded, to undo those binary

procedures that determine in advance who will count as a subject. In order to obtain such an effect, there must be a subjective action that quarrels against such a hegemonic regime, which re-invokes a voluntarist account of the subject. Hence, the only available strategy susceptible of avoiding a discursive monism to the process of emergence of the subject that Butler elaborates, tied to her notion of subversion, is a re-elaboration of what she pretended to question and to leave aside, which finally absorbs the subject into the domain of the Imaginary, reduced to a textual proliferation of bodily pleasures and malleable gendered identities.

However, Butler might reply to this criticism by trying to redefine her notion of discourse and diminishing the appearance of its totalizing figure by disputing two notions: formation and cause. Following this attempt to presumably avoid the reduction of the body to a textual surface that could be written and rewritten, she asserts that: “The claim that a discourse ‘forms’ the body is no simple one, and from the start we must distinguish how such ‘forming’ is not the same as a ‘causing’ or ‘determining’, still less is it a notion that bodies are somehow made of discourse pure and simple” (Butler, *op. cit.*: 84).

In spite of this, her clarification on this subject is more problematic than solving. Indeed, it seems that what discourse cannot grasp echoes a notion of matter in terms of physicalism in order to avoid an accusation of being a constructivist. It involves, then, a biological notion of the organic dimension of the body in order to put a limit to discourse. Therefore, she implicitly introduces what would be a non-discursive dimension of the body, which would mean that the body would have a double status, or, at least, a frontier dimension¹⁴⁷, being what inhabits between an organicist account of matter and discourse as a set of structuring and regulative signifiers. The problem, notwithstanding with that, remains. Indeed, she contradicts her previous analysis of the body, which she had undertaken in *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990):

¹⁴⁷A frontier that, notwithstanding, has nothing to do with the Freudian notion of the drives as an interstice between biology and culture, which is referred to the status of human sexuality. For a broader development of this question, see Freud, Sigmund (1905): *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in the volume VII of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, “A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works” (1901-1905), and (1914b): « Instincts and Their Vicissitudes », in the volume XIV, “On the History of the Psychoanalytical Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works (1914-1916)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953-1974. Translations by James Strachey.

Always a cultural sign, the body sets limits to the imaginary meanings that it occasions, but is never free of an imaginary construction. The fantasized body can never be understood in relation to the body as real; it can only be understood in relation to another culturally instituted fantasy, one which claims the place of the “literal” and the “real”. The limits of the “real” are produced within the naturalized heterosexualization of bodies in which physical facts serve as causes and desires reflect the inexorable effects of that physicality (Butler, 1990: 71).

Butler is, therefore, trapped into an imaginary account of the body as a discursive surface for which she attempts to assert a certain kind of limits, though the textual dimension constantly persists in her symptomatic refusal of the drives and the register of the Real. Her notion of the body, then, might not be an incomplete sheet of paper, but a sheet of paper after all. This problematic account is again clear when the unconscious is merely reduced to what cannot be subjected by norms, being a domain of opacity, this is to say, what troubles the textuality proper to the subject: “This viable and intelligible being, this subject, is always produced at a cost, and whatever resists the normative demand by which subjects are instituted remains unconscious” (Butler, 1997a: 86).

Slavoj Žižek, in *The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (1999) insists on the misunderstanding of the notion of the barred subject that Butler elaborates in her Foucauldian account of psychoanalysis. Žižek outlines that the barred subject is not reduced to the identifications that provide some consistency (what Butler calls its gendered status), but it is rather rooted into an uncertainty, this is to say, it is crucially conditioned by the unconscious, being the discourse of the Other that exceeds any concrete identification. Hence, it is also a path to undo the imaginary structure of recognition that Butler situates as the regulatory matrix from which the subject emerges in front of the Other, despite the fact that the reiterative operation required by norms entails an incessant displacement that create spheres of failure in the domain of what is susceptible of being recognised. Thus:

Whenever we recognize ourselves in the call of the Other, there is a minimum of such a misunderstanding at work; our recognition in the call is always a misrecognition, an act of falling into ridicule by boastfully assuming the place of the addressee which is not really ours... (Žižek, 1999: 259).

The failure inherent to recognition is not merely because the matrix of power relations that gives birth to the subject is a set of norms performatively sustained, but it also refers to the fact that the subject is not an effect always-trapped into a discursive net governed by normativity. On the contrary, *there is no proper cause that might give*

an account of the subject, which by no means is the same as claiming that the subject is self-caused. The barred subject cannot be purely reduced to the imaginary and symbolic identifications – which are simply unified in Butler’s account, being gender norms what is part of the Imaginary, while heterosexism would be the compulsory complementarity imposed by the Symbolic –, but there is an excessive dimension that goes beyond them. The unconscious *is* this negative excess proper to the subject, but what must be also remarked is the element that Butler rejects in her analyses of the violent effects of the regulatory power inherent to the process of subjection: the Real as the dimension proper to the subject that resists any concrete representation. As a result, any attempt to articulate a scenario of recognition is never completely successful, mainly because the subject never achieves to recognise itself in such a call. There is a structural impossibility to fit into the relation between the signifier and the signified that reinforces what Butler incessantly obviates: the non-reciprocity between them, which refutes her thesis according to which the Symbolic would be a heterosexist logic.

However, Butler does not merely reduce her analysis on the violent devices that regulate the formation of the subject to this dimension. In *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative* (1997b), she attempts to re-articulate to some extent her approach, offering a new consideration of language that does not seem to be a simple synonym to the concept of discourse. Butler engages in a critical analysis of the linguistic vulnerability that traverses the subject, the emergence of which depends on something other than itself, which, indeed, pre-exists its concrete existence. In this sense, she states: “If we are formed in language, then that formative power precedes and conditions any decision we might make about it, insulting us from the start, as it were, by its prior power” (Butler, 1997b: 2). From this horizon, there would be a primary vulnerability based on the process of subjection that language imposes over the subject, which entails an ontological dispossession as the condition through which the subject comes to existence, being a feature that persists in any of its experiences in the social field where it lives in a relational mode.

This analysis based on the formative power of language is referred again to interpellation, though this time what keeps Butler’s attention is the insulting dynamic that it might acquire, with all its violent consequences. In other words, what is analysed is the symbolic violence exercised through language, focusing on the parallelism between physical and verbal violence. The interpellation is not only, then, introduced as

a mode of providing a social existence to the subject, but it is also a device susceptible of promoting and sustaining an exploitation against the liveability of this very subject.

Nevertheless, what Butler neither considers on this occasion, nor in the former one is a further element that radically questions the binary structure of recognition and the Althusserian notion of interpellation. Such an element is the voice that vertebrates the call proper to interpellation, which ties the subject to the Other, while at the same time incarnates an excess, the *objet petit a*. The relevance of the voice in the formative process of the subject points to something more than the identifications that might be assumed through the performative power of interpellation, referring to what Butler constantly obviates owing to her reduction of the subject to discourse: *jouissance* and the Real as what resists any attempt of being absorbed by socio-symbolic configurations. The voice inherent to any addressing operation done by the Other does not merely point to meaning, but to a surplus that cannot be reduced to any unary or binary structure, being an opening of signification proper to the domain of subjectivity. It entails an alterity that affects the subject by decentering it, eluding the possibility of a final cause that would give a compact background of the subject's existence. In other words, if in the voice there is an excess that goes beyond the Symbolic, though invading it, inoculating at its core a radical negativity, there is no guarantee of the solidity of the Other. The Other is, at its turn, castrated.

The voice, as Mladen Dolar puts it in his *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006), is an excessive supplement that diminishes any solidity of power, being its reverse in terms of what always returns to the same place in a shocking manner. It is the domain of a *jouissance* produced by the dynamic of the signifier, which by no means involves that it is reducible to it, but it rather points to a barrier that cannot be acquainted, suspending the signifying chain:

For what endows the Law with authority is also what irretrievably bars it, and attempts to banish the other voice, the voice beyond *logos*, are ultimately based on the impossibility of coming to terms with the Law's inherent alterity, placed at the point of its inherent lack which voice comes to cover. This structural point is what Lacan, in his algebra, has designated by $S(\bar{A})$ [the barred big Other], the point of the always-missing ultimate signifier which would totalize the Other, the point of the absent foundation of the Law, and also the point which has an intrinsic relation with femininity and the nonexistence of The Woman (Dolar, 2006: 56).

The voice, incarnating a surplus that invades the Symbolic, generates a *plus-de-jour* that diminishes any possible completeness concerning the symbolic regulations

that structure each discourse, a notion that, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, refers to the articulation of social bonds (Lacan, 1991). Each invocation towards the subject produces an extra element that goes beyond the process of subjection, creating a domain of what is useless, a definition that Lacan gave concerning *jouissance* (Lacan, 1975b). *Jouissance*, a realm that designates the hole within the Symbolic that the Real is said to inflict on it, breaks any causality between the Other and the subject. The barred subject, being always the missing element, is devoted towards an enjoyment of its socio-symbolic identifications, which points to the real of the body, this is to say, the drives. Hence, in the interpellation, the voice has an autonomy concerning ideology and its procedures, which fractures the possibility of subjection in terms of immanence by virtue of the negativity that the Real and *jouissance* perform. Thus, as Mladen Dolar says:

‘I know very well that the voice must have some natural and explicable cause, but nevertheless I believe it is endowed with mystery and secret power’. It taunts and troubles us, against our better judgement. It presents a puzzling causality, as an effect without a proper cause (Dolar, *op. cit.*: 67).

Being called by a name confers a singular trait, which will be part of who the subject is, a name inscribed into the metonymical displacement of desire, and symbolically articulated by the castration proper to metaphor. This founding event, which refers to the scenario of the new-born and its radical dependency towards the Other that gives it a language that will radically transform its ek-sistence, points to the most intriguing feature of the voice: it emerges from a mouth, though the subject can never see what is actually producing such a sounding chain.

Nevertheless, it does not entail that a phonological explanation will suffice to fill this gap. Within the domain of the voice, it is not a matter of knowledge, but the fascination produced by what will constitute the invocative object, which signals the driving constitution of the body in terms of a *substance jouissante*, as Lacan put it in *Encore* (1975b). As such, it is an anomalous cause, one which is not based on the supposed complementarity between cause and effect that the imaginary dimension might suggest, but it rather refers to a causative reality that is assumed retroactively, *après-coup*. The absence proper to the emergence of the voice is allied with the lack inflicted by the always missing signifier, this is to say, the phallus, despite the refusal that such a concept *symptomatically* produces on Butler’s discourse. By virtue of the metonymical dimension, it confers an omnipotence to the Other who calls the subject,

while at the same time shows a gap that cannot be filled in, a question proper to the metaphorical aspect of signification.

However, this critical analysis does not mean that language does not hurt when, for instance, an insult is proffered, which Butler signals concerning the injury inflicted on the subject abusively interpellated, transformed into an execrable creature. Yet, if an injury can be disputed, it is thanks to the excess that this very interpellation produces, going beyond ideology and its regulatory mechanisms:

The subject is exposed to the power of the other by giving his or her own voice, so that the power, domination, can take not only the form of the commanding voice, but that of the ear. The voice comes from some unfathomable invisible interior and brings it out, lays it bare, discloses, reveals that interior. By so doing it produces an effect which has both an obscene side (disclosing something hidden, intimate, revealing too much, structurally too much), and an uncanny side (...). (Dolar, *op. cit.*: 80).

Butler seems to concede this dealing with a revision of the nexus between language and the body via interpellation, placing the body as “something more” beyond the speech act. Even though, she merely signals it, which finally does not allow her to show the limits of subjection and the subversive effects produced by the *jouissance* it implies:

In speaking, the act that the body is performing is never fully understood: the body is the blind spot of speech, that which acts in excess of what is said, but which also acts in and through what is said. That the speech act is a bodily act means that the act is redoubled in the moment of speech: there is what is said, and then there is a kind of saying the bodily “instrument” of the utterance performs (Butler, *op. cit.*: 11).

While psychoanalysis points to the real of the body as what defies discursive regulations, Butler strategically uses it to render visible the abuses that language might cause over the subject, deconstructing the liberal perspectives that reduce violence to a doer and a sufferer: “The one who acts (who is not the same as the sovereign subject), acts precisely to the extent that he or she is constituted as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints from the outset” (Butler, *op. cit.*, 16).

Action, then, presupposes a previous subordination according to which existence entails a dependency towards the Other, which would be further confirmed by the fact that the subject is *subjected* by a signifying chain that allows a quarrel for the hegemony of the signifier. Owing to the performative mechanism that Butler confers to the signifier and discourse, acting involves *being acted upon* by means of iteration. Linguistic violence, thereby, does not simply begin and end with the single net of actions executed by a subject that might appear as its sole cause, but it rather depends

on a historicity of uses of the signifier in order to produce degradation against certain subjects: “The subject who utters the socially injurious words is mobilized by that long string of injurious interpellations: the subject achieves a temporary status in the citing of that utterance, in performing itself as the origin of that utterance” (Butler, *op. cit.*: 49-50).

Such a perspective is useful to dismantle the juridical fiction of an original subject that would have made the injury, which might require a punishment and a restitution of harm. The cost inherent to this operation is that it maintains the hegemony that allows such an abuse, without changing the previous situation that gives birth to such circumstances, which can be applied to the current legislations that aim to prosecute hate crimes:

The constraints of legal language emerge to put an end to this particular historical anxiety, for the law requires that we resituate power in the language of injury, that we accord injury the status of an act and trace that act to the specific conduct of a subject. Thus, the law requires and facilitates a conceptualization of injury in relation to a culpable subject, resurrecting “the subject” (which could just as well be a corporate or group entity as an individual) in response to the demand to seek accountability for injury (Butler, *op. cit.*: 78).

Nonetheless, if the performativity of the signifier and, hence, to subjection implies the possibility of subversion thanks to the catachretical usages that the signifier might acquire through each reiteration done by the subject, there is a trouble at stake. What will be repeated, because of reducing the domain of subjectivity to an opaque side of multiple and fragmentary identifications, is regulated by the notion of sameness, which is confirmed by the very notion of performativity, based on a disruptive possibility to rearticulate the existing hegemony. In other words, performativity does not allow the irruption of a radical novelty that crucially disrupts the previous significations. It excludes the *act*, this to say, the rupture that the Real entails: “Le réel est au-delà de l'*automaton*, du retour, de la revenue, de l'insistance des signes à quoi nous nous voyons commandés par le principe du plaisir. Le réel est cela qui gît toujours derrière l'*automaton*” (Lacan, 1973: 53-54).

Binding the subject under an immanence proper to the Foucauldian notion of power relations, what is rejected is what resists any discursive attempt to provide a symbolic translation for what reveals itself to be uncanny, impossible to reduce to a domesticated familiarity. The Real incarnates, then, a sinister surplus that points to the anomalous status of a causality that opens a new temporality, proper to the event that

breaks and opens a new possible reality that requires a re-articulation of the past usages of the signifier and the addition of something *more*. This *other* causality was called by Lacan *tyché*¹⁴⁸, which breaks any sort of continuity. The irruption of the violence of the Real, breaking the previous socio-symbolic discourse, offers the possibility for a new horizon which, nevertheless, will institute new socio-symbolic realities and violent mechanisms to sustain the social bonds that it creates. A new world the possibilities of which come from the Other, this is to say, the battery of signifiers that others give to us, and in the middle of which subjects live, which highlights the structural role that alterity has for the subject. This remark is especially present in Butler when she affirms that:

Positioned as both addressed and addressing, taking its bearing within that crossed vector of power, the subject is not only founded by the Other, requiring an address in order to be, but its power is derived from the structure of address as both linguistic vulnerability and exercise (Butler, *op. cit.*: 30).

However, Butler does not take into account an unexpected issue: violence can be done against another subject, but it can also be executed against a subject *itself*. Hence, abjection is not simply a unidirectional phenomenon, but it can be articulated in reflexive attempts in order to recover a fantasized portion of the lost *jouissance* because of the symbolic castration inflicted by language. In this situation – a remark that Freud began to consider regarding the mechanism proper to masochism –, the longing for recognition does not demand the acquisition of what Butler names cultural intelligibility, but the rejection from what is seen as a normative apparatus. An apparatus that, through this reflexive exercise, becomes the occasion for an eroticisation of the prevailing hegemony, which reinforces it.

In the intricate relation between subjection, interpellation and performativity that Butler offers in *Excitable Speech* (1997b), she joins the dynamic proper to insult to foreclosure, this is to say, the rejection from the region of what counts as a subject, reinforcing a primary vulnerability that is at stake in becoming a subject:

The subject is constituted (interpellated) in language through a selective process in which the terms of legible and intelligible subject-hood are regulated. The subject is called a name, but “who” the subject is depends as much on the names that he or she is

¹⁴⁸ In fact, in his reformulation of the Freudian notion of repetition, Lacan used these two concepts (*automaton* and *tyché*) to articulate a reiterative dimension where two elements coincide in a conflictual manner: a regular principle, proper to a homeostatic equilibrium, and the periodic introduction of novelties that exceed the given frame. He imported this resignification of repetition from Aristotle's physics. For a further perspective on this matter, see Lacan, Jacques (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil.

never called: the possibilities of linguistic life are both inaugurated and foreclosed (Butler, *op. cit.*: 41).

The consequence of such a discursive and political strategy is reiterative: a necessary exclusion of those injured, which reinforces the legibility of those awarded with recognition, a continuity that Butler maintains since *Gender Trouble* (1990). Such a logic constantly maintains a binary structure between those included and those excluded, quarrelling for a more inclusive and less violent normativity against those bodies that have been sanctioned as deprived of a liveable life.

3.2.5. Beyond Knowledge and Power: Sociality and *Jouissance* in Jacques Lacan's Four Discourses.

Foucault and Butler, in their analysis of violence, both situate the subject within a discursive reality. Their notions of discourse are understood as the relationship between knowledge and power. This relationship is the site where the subject is produced. In order to expand and to offer a different approach towards discourse and the subject, I shall give an analysis of the Lacanian notion of discourse, which is defined as a social bond. From a *realist* perspective, the key element for such a discursive modality does not simply point to a production of the subject, but also to the proliferation and regulation of different modalities of *jouissance* resulting from discourse, which further entails that the status of the body differs in each discursive articulation.

In this sense, Lacan signals that discourse is a construction beyond the word, this is to say, it is a linguistic modality that institutes a collective instance, which is not contradictory to what Foucault and Butler hold: “Par l’instrument du langage s’instaurent un certain nombre de relations stables, à l’intérieur desquelles peut certes s’inscrire quelque chose qui est bien plus large, va bien plus loin, que les énonciations effectives” (Lacan, 1991: 11)¹⁴⁹. Language, according to the notion of discourse that Lacan introduces, is not simply a speech act, but it institutes a social context where the

¹⁴⁹ In this sense, authors like Rosi Braidotti or Judith Butler, who criticise Lacan for offering a monist principle concerning the role of power in social relations, merely refer to the early stage of his seminars, where he emphasized a more or less structuralist perspective on the master signifier or phallus. Nonetheless, in his articulation of discourse – which goes beyond the Freudian term of “civilisation” as it was developed in *Civilisation and Its Discontents* (1930) –, Lacan does not refer to a single signifier as the orchestrator of collectivity, but to an intertwining connection in terms of a battery of signifiers that institute differential and contingent bonds.

subject emerges. This assumption echoes the performative character that Butler attributes to discourse in its productive dimension.

Lacan further adds a feature that is absent in Foucault's and, to a certain extent, also in Butler's approaches: discourse operates according to the creation of a collectivity by means of the signifier, being the signifier that regulates each context an empty one, this is to say, lacking a pre-determined content; namely, a master signifier. The master signifier has a universal status, which means that it allows for different declinations. In other words, each collectivity is gathered not by a uniform dynamic, but it depends on the particular effect that is stressed in different contexts¹⁵⁰. Hence, it does not presuppose a homogenous notion of the group, but it rather remarks that in each one of them there are dialectical disputes that pretend to control the signifier and its effects, which incessantly leads to a certain failure inasmuch as the signifier exceeds any subjective intention. Each mobilisation of the signifier, then, might lead to unexpected consequences that offer the chance for a resignification, a question that Butler subscribes too.

The master signifier¹⁵¹, which enables each different discourse, operates as the representative instance of the subject, this is to say, it regulates the subjective positions that discourse, in terms of a *social bond*, creates. Such operation does not point to a disembodied notion of the subject, yet the body is radically present in each discursive modality. Its relevance can be found in the discursive production and regulation of *jouissance*, which points to the body as the instance where *jouissance* is incarnated. Asserting that the body has a discursive constitution does not entail that it is merely performatively instituted by the repetition of the signifier, or the Foucauldian notion of

¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Butler, in works such as *Who Sings the Nation State? Language, Power, Belonging* (2007) and *Dispossession. The Performative in the Political* (2013) has offered a more accurate version of the role of the signifier within discourse, though she persists in maintaining a notion of the subject reduced to the performativity that she attributes to the iterative dynamic inherent to identifications. In Lacanian terms, she constantly dismisses the realm of the Real and *jouissance*.

¹⁵¹ Unfortunately, I cannot offer a full extended version of further implications of the Lacanian notion of discourse, which would require a new investigation. Contemporary thinkers like Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek have referred to what Lacan named the empty signifier, which is the occasion for the dispute of a hegemonic context in the aspiration towards the creation of a collectivity. This is also what Lacan called *le point de capiton*, signalling a feature proper to the signifier: it gathers a group, though it distributes its members in a differential mode, in asymmetrical terms, due to the lack of a proportion of the sexed subjects. For a further perspective on this topic, see Laclau, Ernesto, and Chantal Mouffe (1985): *Hegemony and the Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London, Verso, and Butler, Judith, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek (2000a): *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues in the Left*. London, Verso.

a disciplinary individuation. It rather entails that the body, due to the effect of the signifier, becomes a *topos* for affects and enjoying instances.

However, the body is instituted as an enjoying reality through a paradoxical operation: while language, through its effects by means of the signifier, is a castrating apparatus that produces a loss of any primordial *jouissance* that installs the subject in a lack-of-being, it also permits the production of an enjoying rest that is tied to the body. It refers to the role deployed by what Lacan named the *objet petit a*, which in every discourse signals the enjoyment that is produced, and the role conferred to the body.

The first remark outlined by Lacan¹⁵² that clearly differs from what both Foucault and Butler assert concerning discourse refers to *jouissance* as a product of the signifier, the collective distribution of which creates a group where the body is instituted as an enjoying parcel. Hence, discourse does not merely signal a union between knowledge and power, but it also implies three other social configurations. The regulative role of the signifier in the creation of a collectivity based on a dialectical bond, this is to say, based on a differential distribution of the subjects that implies an asymmetry among them, is not simply granted by its inaugural effect, but it requires a repetitive mechanism that confers reality to what the signifier produces. Thus, the notion of performativity is not at odds with the relevance of the signifier, though it points to the absent dimension in Butler's and Foucault's theoretical apparatus: each repetition is linked to *jouissance* and its loss: "La repetition a un certain rapport avec ce qui, de ce savoir, est la limite, et qui s'appelle la jouissance" (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 14). In each repetition, the effect of the signifier on the bodily subject has a castrating dimension that, at its turn, ties *jouissance* to death¹⁵³. These two elements, which belong to the register of the Real, structured as a hole that no signifier can successfully represent, point to a limit: the sexed status of the subject is its mortal condition. In fact,

¹⁵² I cannot offer a wide analysis based on the novelty introduced by Lacan concerning the Freudian group psychology, where Freud studied the Church and the army as examples of two collective configurations. Lacan widens this approach, and he offers a new perspective on social articulations that do not simply refer to groups governed by the leader as a hyperbolic instance of the omnipotent father, who would be able to provide a homogenous enjoyment to all the members of the group. Such a mechanism is proper to a collectivity based on identifications with a prominent figure that the subject situates as the element that would give to it what is missing, this is to say, the lack-of-being would be (illusory) resolved through a massive identification. For a further approach on this perspective, see Freud, Sigmund (1921): *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. London, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1949). Translation by James Strachey.

¹⁵³ This remark is focused on the death drive introduced by Freud since his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), which points to the real and irrepresentable dimension of the deathly status of the subject, tied to sex as the suspension of sense.

sex entails the sacrifice of each individual, with the subsequent prevalence of the specie, the maintenance of which transcends each individual subject. From this approach, reproduction, despite not being the goal of human sexuality, institutes death as the reverse of sex.

Each discourse, through the effect of the signifier, produces and regulates *jouissance* in a limiting trend that creates several enjoying instances. This is the novelty introduced by Lacan: the satisfaction of the drives is discursively articulated, that is, it is always rooted in a social dimension, according to which the subject is bound to the signifier of the Other. According to each discursive dynamic, the enjoying instance, which leads to different declinations of the body, is brought about by means of several processes of subjection that determine social configurations too. Hence, the body does not have a unique status, but it is conditioned by each discursive modality. This bars the possibility to approach the body in ontological terms because ontology is alien to the region of *jouissance* and its sexed status.

The four discourses enunciated and logically represented by Lacan are: the discourse of the master, the discourse of the university, the discourse of the hysteric, and the discourse of the analyst. In each discourse, the subject becomes such through a relational dual dynamic: the master and the slave, the teacher and the student, the hysteric and its master, and the analyst and the analysand. The discourse, thus, operates as a bond, and the bond installs a desiring dynamic that pursues certain forms of *jouissance*. What unites the subjects in each social bond is not the gain of a mythical complete *jouissance* – which would destroy the social bond –, but precisely the impossibility of such a goal, which is symbolically sanctioned.

Each discourse has a particular configuration, where the subject is represented by a master signifier (S_1), which points to another signifier (S_2), being the subject the truth resulting from each discourse. The inscription of the subject into this signifying chain is what produces *jouissance*, that is, the excess derived from the impact of language onto the living body. In other words, the subject is an effect of its relation with the master signifier and *jouissance*, which produces several symptoms that, nonetheless, are singular, this is to say, they are own to each subject, and might not become collective. Hence, each discourse does not refer to a harmonic totality, but to a group of mutually implicated subjects that are not a pure social effect because they are installed in an indeterminate position between collectivity and *symptomatic* singularity.

I shall merely analyse the discourses of the master and the university, which are the ones where, in my view, vulnerability is implied. Analysing them, I hope to clarify that a notion of discourse that reduces the subject to a social effect is problematic. The discourse of the hysteric and the discourse of the analyst¹⁵⁴ will not be developed in this dissertation because they refer to two different social configurations that are quite far from this research. In the case of the discourse of the hysteric, I will shortly refer to it regarding the impasses on the current regulations of transsexuality to render visible the short-circuits of this (bio-political) device.

3.2.5.1. The Discourse of the Master: Desire and Domination

The discourse of the master refers to the Hegelian scenario of lordship and bondage, and, indirectly, to its appropriation by Marx in his analysis of industrial capitalism. The situation that it illustrates, as in any other discourse, points at an asymmetrical distribution of the subjects implied. On the one hand, the master incarnates a dominating position, which in the discourse is logically articulated as it follows: the subject is a master, this is to say, it is fully absorbed by the empty (master) signifier. However, *jouissance* is not immediately obtained by the master. In order to obtain a partial *jouissance*, the master, through its relationship with the slave, who becomes the working instance that produces an *objet petit a* given to the master, must renounce to a parcel of its autonomy. The interesting remark is that the bond between master and slave is articulated by means of desire, which entails that the slave occupies the role of the Other that interrogates the master concerning its object of desire. Hence, inasmuch as the master ignores what mobilises its object-cause of desire, it needs a social bond towards the Other that provides it with diverse and plural *gadgets*

¹⁵⁴ These two discourses will not be analysed in this dissertation because they refer to two social bonds that, according to my view, are foreclosed by the signifier of vulnerability. Indeed, the discourse of the hysteric, which refers to the subject the truth of which is a *jouissance* that pushes it towards the pursuit of a master that responds to its demand regarding its sexed positioning, is analysed by authors like Laclau and Mouffe regarding the relevance of demand in the political sphere. Nonetheless, this issue does not traverse the arguments provided by Butler, Cavarero or any other author that I have analysed regarding the notion of vulnerability.

As far as the discourse of the analyst is concerned, it strictly refers to the bond between the analyst and the analysand during the sessions of the talking-cure, which is not the case in this dissertation. Hence, it is not worth introducing them because they do not add any other relevant conceptual apparatus.

The interdependency between master and slave derives from the rejection of the body by the master in order to occupy the role of lordship, which, notwithstanding with that, transforms the master into a dependent instance regarding the slave. In other words, the price of the master's freedom entails an alienation towards the Other. The paradox between the master and the *objet petit a* produced by the slave through its work implies the non-coincidence between these two instances inasmuch as being a master requires a primordial loss of *jouissance* through the delegation of its own body to the slave. *Jouissance*, therefore, becomes impossible, and the master can simply enjoy some gadgets given by the Other.

The discourse of the master institutes a double alienation: the master depends on the body of the slave in order to be a master, while the slave becomes, at its turn, a body condemned to perform labour. Nevertheless, thanks to labour, it is the slave who occupies a transformative position, and, thanks to its work, it is connected to the social reality. Inasmuch as it is the Other of the desire of the master, it is the figure that knows that the master depends on it in order to satisfy a desire the object-cause of which is ignored. And this institutes a conflictual scenario: "L'esclave sait beaucoup de choses, mais ce qu'il sait bien plus encore, c'est que le maître veut, même si celui-ci ne le sait pas, ce qui est le cas ordinaire, car sans cela il ne serait pas un maître. L'esclave le sait, et c'est cela, sa fonction d'esclave" (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 34).

According to the the social bond instituted by the discourse of the master, the status of the body is paradoxical: it incarnates, at the same time, the limit for the omnipotence of a fantasized autonomy, while it also becomes the *locus* of *jouissance*. The body at stake in this paradox is the body of the slave. It must be *disciplined* and *devoted* to the production of a *jouissance* for the sake of the master, which also implies that the figure of the slave must fit into the fantasmatic nature of desire. In other words, the aim of the slave is to incarnate a provisional version of the object that causes the desire of its master, which will be always a deception because the *a* proper to desire and *jouissance* is a void where no concrete reality can fit in.

The Foucauldian analysis on the discipline exercised over the body, which would have as a product the modern creation of the individual in terms of a bio-mechanical entity, gives a proper account of the violent mechanisms inflicted by the social restrictions that must be internalised by the slave. The slave is deprived of the prerogatives that the master obtains due to the exploitation of the bodies that are

expelled from the domain of a social and political legitimacy. The exploitation that defines the relation between master and slave must be considered in order to pay attention to the vulnerability undergone by since it is identified as a *producer*, despite the fact that it is originated by devices that are not necessarily visible or recognisable by virtue of the power of ideology. The life of the slave, even to its minimal parcel, must be regulated and controlled in order to maintain the mechanism of production and consumption, which is at the core of the last discourse that Lacan introduced in the beginning of the 70's¹⁵⁵: the capitalist discourse. Nonetheless, the peculiarity of such a discourse, which at its beginnings was a mutation of the discourse of the master, is the erasure of social bonds, condemning the subject to be an incessant producer and consumer of the gadgets of the market. In this sense, according to Lacan, the capitalist discourse institutes *le corps-prolétaire*, deprived of a broader social bond.

According to the discourse of the master, vulnerability does not emerge as an ontological condition, but instead, as a symptomatic response. The body of the slave, in this discourse, is vulnerable because of the historical modes of subjection related to such a social bond. It is a body reduced to a social function, despite the fact that both the master and the slave, as shown in the above, obtain a *jouissance* from such a social bond: the master enjoys what the slave offers him, and the slave undertakes a fetishist enjoyment concerning its productive and feeding role.

3.2.5.2. **The Discourse of the University: Knowledge and Domination**

The second discursive modality, which refers to the notion of discourse articulated by Butler and Foucault, is a mutation of the discourse of the master: the discourse of the university. According to the logical formulation of this discursive configuration, the main item is knowledge, which is supposed to fall on the side of the character instituted as its bearer: the teacher, the doctor, the psychiatrist, etc. What the

¹⁵⁵ Lacan gave a lecture in 1972 at the University of Milan, where he introduced what he thought was a novelty concerning the discourse of the master: the capitalist discourse, the peculiarity of which is based on the reduction of the subject to a proletarian the existence of which is reduced to the production and consumption of the objects produced by the market. As a result, the paradox proper to the capitalist discourse is its absence of a social bond, which is characteristic to the other four discourses by the creation of several couples. For a further approach on this matter, see Lacan, Jacques (1978): « Du discours psychanalytique » in *Lacan in Italia*. Milan, Salamandra, pages 32-55.

subject of knowledge pursues is a domain referring to another *object*, which is bond to the former: the student or the patient, two paradigmatic figures of such a discourse. The former, then, desires to dominate the latter, obtaining knowledge through this operation as a modality of *jouissance*.

The discourse of the university could be seen as the emancipation from the master thanks to knowledge, which would be a social bond not based on a dynamic of exploitation. Nonetheless, Lacan offers a strong criticism on these pretensions of “liberation” enabled by knowledge¹⁵⁶: as a mutation of the discourse of the master, the discourse of the university has yields at any event under a disciplinary corpus, carefully protected by experts¹⁵⁷. Hence, what it inaugurates is a new form of sociality based on what Foucault named “la volonté de savoir” (Foucault, 1976): to regulate and to dominate subjectivity by virtue of the colonization of science. In addition, knowledge does not point to abstract speculation, but it rather places the body at the centre, trapped under the notion of an organism that contains the “truth” of the subject.

There is a new form of interdependency: the one that wants to become a *master of knowledge* depends on what surrounds it in order to obtain this particular form of *jouissance*, where to know entails the acquisition of power. Such an enterprise demands a fully signifying signifier, this is to say, the articulation of a representation with no rest that traps the subject inside of an immanent net of knowledge and power, where *jouissance* is placed on the side of the one who aims at knowing *all* in an attempt to create a totality. Notwithstanding with that, the irony of the discourse of the university is the non-coincidence between knowledge as an object of *jouissance*, and the subject, which finally means that knowledge acquires a fetishist instance. In its aim to assume its

¹⁵⁶ Indeed, it is not by chance that the analysis of the four discourses took place just two years after the May 68, where students took the universities and the streets of Paris in order to protest against, using a Lacanian analysis, the social devices orchestrated by the master of that historical moment. The Lacanian response to such a revolutionary expectation is a warning concerning the incessant triumph of another tyrannical social bond, the one that promises an “unlimited freedom” and the arrival of a “revolutionary” regime thanks to its *power*: the discourse of the university, with its pretension of reducing every parcel of human existence to cognitive instances.

¹⁵⁷ The refusal of the psychoanalytic talking cure in many public institutions, which has been substituted by cognitive sciences and the cognitive-behavioural psychology, is a good example of the tyranny proper to the discourse of the university, the socio-political legitimacy of which by current socio-symbolic configurations reduces the subject to a parcel that can be absolutely apprehended, and normalized thanks to statistical measurement, which often entails a further medicalization of its everyday-life. The reverse of such a pathological trend is the popularised *doxa* provided by self-help rhetoric, which reduces subjectivity to an instrumental sphere that must proceed by means of a self-made man, based on an incessant improvement. This entails the foreclosure of the unconscious and the symptomatic singularity proper to the subject.

regulatory role, the discourse of the university forecloses the subject to sustain its delirious fiction of an available totality of objects to classify and to control.

3.2.5.3. There Is No Social Totality: The Impossible and Negativity

The two impossibilities for dialectics within the discourse of the master and the discourse of the university point to a structural failure. There is an excessive element that bans the creation of a whole in each discursive dynamic, which means that *it is impossible to write a collectivity in terms of a totality*. This impasse is the crucial role performed by the Real, which manifests itself introducing a novelty within the reiterative mechanism proper to the signifier. It is the impossibility to articulate a social totality, and a *real* lack that bans any pretention to acquire autonomy in terms of autarchy. As a result, the Real as pure negativity is what breaks any signifying chain, which vertebrates each discourse and any symbolic operation, introducing a gap for which there is no plausible solution:

D'abord, le langage, et même celui du maître, ne peut être autre chose que demande, demande qui échoue. Ce n'est pas de son succès, c'est de sa répétition que s'engendre quelque chose qui est une autre dimension, que j'ai appelé la perte – la perte d'où le plus de jouir prend corps (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 144).

In other words, in each discourse and, at the same time, in each subject, there is something missing, there is an absence that bans any possible recovery of plenitude, despite certain social configurations devoted to an exploitation of certain bodies in order to obtain an incessant *jouissance* that would presumably be unlimited. This is why the social bond is never successful, but it is always conflictive, without a final resolution, this is to say, there is no balance between the subjects implied in it.

In addition, the asymmetrical distribution of the subjects in each social context is reinforced by their sexed status. Because there is only just *one* available signifier for sex, the phallus, neither complementarity nor opposition are possible, but an incommensurability between the sexes. There is, then, a *logical* impossibility to join the all phallic and the not-all phallic logic. Each form of *sexuation* is incarnated by each subject according to a symptomatic existence, singular in every situation, with no possible union on the phallic side or on the not-all phallic side.

Regarding this analysis, what Butler and Foucault both offer is an exhaustive analysis of all the devices and procedures according to which subjects are discursively instituted, reducing the notion of discourse to a university version of it, where the subject and the body are placed on the side of what can be known by several disciplines and processes of normalization. Furthermore, in their dynamics, the body is purely reduced to a discursive entity where signifiers are inscribed and re-inscribed, which in Butler's approach is assimilated to the mechanism of a performative repetition that creates what describes, asserting a form of agency that is the possibility to subvert the hegemonic orchestration of signifiers. Consequently, the body becomes sterile. This means that it does not take into account what exceeds any concrete discursive operation, namely, sex and *jouissance*. Such a gesture was previously introduced by Foucault in his analysis of sexuality as a device of subjection, this is to say, reduced to what can be known through an incitation towards an *excitable speech* that attempts to institute a reification of the subject. Their perspective focuses on a process of inclusions and exclusions that takes the subject as a pure effect that emerges from a matrix – according to Butler – of foreclosure: those susceptible of being recognised, who are members of a group, and all those other lives reduced to what is repudiated, those bodily subjects pathologized and defined as abnormal.

3.2.5.3.1. Vulnerability as an Attempt to Articulate a Reverse of Capitalism

Vulnerability emerges here as a feature that diminishes the fiction of a sovereign subject, which is the other side of such an ontological constitution. Thus, the vulnerable subject appears embodied in a vulnerable physicality that requires a bond that, in a capitalist era that compulsively tends to the production of narcissistic gadgets and forms of *jouissance*, has nearly vanished. Hence, vulnerability, mainly in contemporary discourses such as Butler's and Cavarero's, emerges as a symptom of a new discontent: the reduction of the body to an energetic source from which a production of wealth and a capital gain can be obtained at the expense of making it nothing but a disposable entity. The daily violence inflicted on bodies, though differentially administrated, is the requirement to incessantly produce some wealth through new disciplinary mechanisms, which are based on the measurement and evaluation of a life that becomes inseparable

from what is produced. In other words, the subject unable to become an entrepreneur of oneself (Foucault, 2004b) becomes a useless life, a wretch that must be rejected.

Vulnerability, through the erasure of sex and *jouissance*, reduces the subject to a passive entity susceptible of being harmed and radically dependent of an Other, which does not allow analysing subjective complicity in the maintenance of historical social configurations. It entails that desire is not merely stubbornness towards being, but it is also instituted through a primordial fantasy that installs a passionate attachment towards the Other. Instead, the logic of vulnerability produces a new version of all the identifications that vertebrate the “I” in an attempt to displace a liberal notion of autonomy, and pretending to elaborate a social orchestration that facilitates a more or less harmonic solution that might lead to a paternalistic politics.

However, my point is not to assert that current forms of sociality, administrated by neoliberal policies, should be simply condemned, since they would trap our lives to fatality. What I rather want to outline is the need to reconsider the crucial role of Lacanian psychoanalysis in the constitution of the subject according to a relationality that is constitutive of a desiring being. Indeed, what is more urgent to reconsider is a new approach towards the subject that does not merely reduce the debate towards the problem of normalization and abjection, but to explore new possible ways of sociality where a segregationist configuration is not the only possible articulation. Thus, my aim is not to propose a global solution that, again, reproduces the same logic of the set - the reverse of which is the rejection of those subjects that confirm the validity of such a configuration -, but the creation of singular and diverse social bonds articulated one by one in a tensional relation with the traditional form of the group. In order to elaborate this possible social bond, love and its singularity will be the key elements I shall present and develop in the last section of my dissertation.

PART TWO: VULNERABILITY, VIOLENCE AND PRECARIOUSNESS

4. BIO-POLITICS, PATHOLOGIZATION AND PRECARIOUSNESS

After analysing the notion of the body implied by the category of vulnerability from an ontological perspective, it is now time to offer an approach based on its material dimension, this is to say, to which extent it refers to the social modes according to which subjects ek-sist in our current era. The use of the adjective “material” does not entail that I will elaborate a Marxist reading on this issue. I do not mean to devaluate the important discursive legacy obtained from Marxism and its plural traditions, but it is not my aim to circumscribe myself into them. One of the main reasons for not elaborating a materialist analysis in this sense relies on the fact that the theoretical background that I will use for this section is based on the Foucauldian analysis of bio-politics, which goes beyond Marxism, and it offers a new perspective concerning power relations in their regulative aspect. Besides, bio-politics implies an important turn concerning the hegemonic status of current capitalism, which is no longer primarily based on an industrial economy, but it is rather structured by means of a financial apparatus devoted to the endless production of a speculative surplus value. It has huge consequences on the instauration of social bonds and their ordering, which I will look upon the Lacanian analysis of the logical structure of the capitalist discourse.

An analysis focused on bio-politics challenges the parameters of class struggle because, as a regulatory power, it departs from a notion of the subject as an individual that belongs to a biological species the life of which must be promoted, controlled and exploited in terms of an incessant production of an economic energy. Hence, bio-politics produces a homogenization of subjects, *all* shaped as incessant proletarians, this is to say, devoted to the vicious circle of production and consumption. In other words, current post-industrial capitalism destroys the social bond that Marx had articulated between the capitalist and the proletarian, the nexus of which was based on the work of the latter, being absorbed by the former, as Lacan had also remarked concerning the bond applying in the discourse of the master.

As a result, the relevance of the body under bio-political regimes is crucial owing to the fact that their aim is to *regulate life* according to standardized criteria of efficiency and productivity. What is to urgent to be analysed is the effect of such a regulatory power, mainly when bio-politics is tied to precariousness in a socio-symbolic level, and also concerning the *real* of the subject of bio-politics, this is to say, the imperative command towards *jouissance* by means of the capitalist super-ego, as Lacan remarked (Lacan, 1975b). Indeed, current social malaises do not depart from a repressive instance depriving the subject of *jouissance*, but from the extenuation caused by the incessant exigence towards it.

Consequently, the three forms of violence that I will analyse in this chapter, which are located in the city of Barcelona in order to offer a more accurate empirical scenario, are not primarily repressive situations in the traditional sense of the word, but they reflect a regulatory dimension of power. In fact, they illustrate the contemporary alliances between science and the capitalist discourse, which is a thesis hold by Lacan and Foucault, despite their divergent theoretical procedures and diagnoses. A regulatory power requires a subject-object domain that science produces, which is clearly obvious in the psychiatrization of transsexuality through several protocols, and the normalizing surgery exercised on intersexual babies. As far as Immigration Detention Centres are concerned, their existence is based on applying the laws of the market to population, which involves a statistical approach towards the quantity of foreign people that Nation-States, organized in a neoliberal logic, want to incorporate to the economic market. In other words, economy has become the rule for defining what a *subject is* in terms of its productivity: it is either a citizen or a wretch that must be expelled from the circuits of speculative productivity. Thus, a new form of racism emerges, which criminalizes the lack of productivity and, in some contexts – which are increasingly expanding –, there is an call to a biogenetic cause for social behaviours that do not produce wealth.

However, as I have stated in my introduction, power relations do not impose themselves without any subjective adherence. I do not want to offer an apocalyptic analysis by deploring actual material life conditions, which could suggest a nostalgic and imaginary recreation of an idyllic past. In this sense, I shall explicitly distance myself from approaches such as Agamben's, who, in an ahistorical and metaphysical trend, articulates an eternal *logos* that stems from Aristotle's *Politics* to denounce the teleological enterprise of Western civilization: the bio-political regulation of society.

This sort of analysis, inscribed in a pinning-down of ontology that reduces the subject to a pure discursive effect, dismisses politics as such: the struggle and dispute for the hegemony of the signifier, this is to say, the agonistic battle that conforms reality according to the articulation of signifying chains that produce an *enjoying* world. Besides, this analysis inoculates a paranoiac threaten in which every single step seems to be taken in advance, with a determinism that condemns the subject towards a messianic hope that would ameliorate its existence.

These three forms of violence – psychiatrization of transsexuality, normalizing surgery on intersexual babies, and Immigration Detention Centres – will be analysed tied to three forms of political and productive resistance, despite the fact that I do not mean to suggest that resistance is a non-ambiguous response to a concrete political articulation. Resistance is in a permanent risk of becoming an erotization of hegemony, which Foucault noticed, though maybe he was not sufficiently aware of such an issue, a remark made by authors like Slavoj Žižek, who states that the Foucauldian analysis of power is a fetishism of it. In fact, the celebratory tone with which he gives an account of the subjects that would inhabit the “margins” of acceptability tends to such a perspective, which might lead to the maintenance of a concrete hegemonic order owing to the *jouissance* obtained from such a subjective identification. Being aware of such ambivalence, I shall offer an analysis of three forms of resistance: *Espai Trànsit*, *Espai Mixt TransIntersex*, and *Tanquem els CIE*. I shall thereby stress the prevalence of certain forms of domination. In other words, power is not merely discursively instituted by means of knowledge and its strategies, but it allows the proliferation of socio-symbolic identifications to which subjects become *affectively* attached. Such a turn can be found in the erotization of the proliferation of “identities” (*queer* theory is a paradigmatic example of such erotization) in a bio-political era, which reinforces subjection by means of making one’s life a continuous and incessant libidinous investment.

4.1. Vulnerability and Precariousness in a Bio-Political Horizon

As it is well-known, the notion of bio-politics was coined by Michel Foucault in order to analyse the historical forms in which *regulatory power* becomes to be hegemonic through governmental techniques and devices in Modern Europe. According

to Foucault's analysis, this re-articulation of power relations began in the XVIII century. Indeed, it is not by chance that Foucault outlines that bio-politics does not simply emerge as a modification of forms of domination, but it rather institutes a different subject-object, all along with the progressive consolidation of a new economic system: capitalism. Foucault asserts that regulatory power does not tend to *administer the death of subjects*, a political strategy proper to a sovereign power, which could be found in Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651). Such a political articulation was based on the supreme status of the sovereign, mostly identified with the figure of the king, who had an absolute authority as long as he was commanded to govern by a divine legitimacy. This form of power was based, as Foucault signals, on a constitutive asymmetry between the sovereign and its subjects, which entailed that the former could condemn the latter to death when any action could be considered as an attack against the figure of the governor. The sovereign, then, was invested with the right to kill, or to let its subjects live: "Ainsi entendu, le droit de vie et de mort n'est plus un privilège absolu: il est conditionné par la défense du souverain, et sa survie propre" (Foucault, 1976: 178).

What Foucault names the sovereign power, based on the political figure the authority of which is based on dictating who *dies* and who *is allowed to live*, reflects a form of social bond based on what Lacan named the discourse of the master. As I had previously commented concerning this discursive liaison between subjects, it is based on the exploitation of the slave, the function of which is to provide the master with a *jouissance* obtained through its work, while at the same time the slave is reduced to a (re)productive function. This situation is also suitable for the capitalist discourse that Marx described, where the master occupied the role of the capitalist, and the slave was incarnated by the proletariat. Hence, as I had previously outlined, such a discursive modality of the production and regulation of *jouissance* is focused on a discipline exercised over the slave's body, attached to the master through its work, while the master takes the slave as a prolongation of its own body in order to enjoy the *plus-de-jouir* produced by it.

There are further remarks to be made concerning this historical situation, mainly due to the relevant role that the discourse of the university – the regulatory figure of which is the expert that obtains knowledge from what each discipline designs as its epistemological object – acquired from the XVIII century and on. There are new forms

of knowledge that appear alongside the material changes that capitalism and the beginning of the rise of the bourgeoisie imply on the lives of the subjects. Thus, Foucault signals that the consolidation of statistics, the progressive emergence of demography, new urban distributions, and a global medical discourse, the aim of which is to ameliorate the biological conditions of workers, institute a new reality: the regulation of life. A life that cannot be simply eliminated, but it must be promoted in order to increase the benefits that can be obtained through an economy based on the ideological reality of the free-market, exclusively governed by the law of offer and demand. Hence, if in the discourse of the master – proper to a model of sovereign power – the focus was the body of the slave, with the progressive consolidation and expansion of capitalism the body of the master will be also regulated by different devices that point to a limitless proliferation of *jouissance* that encircles the whole subject. This issue is crucial in order to give a proper account of current bio-political administrations and regulations of life in terms of a productive biological value, which will be the fundamental point of this chapter. In this sense, Foucault argues that:

Le bio-pouvoir a été, à n'en pas douter, un élément indispensable au développement du capitalisme; celui-ci n'a pu être assuré qu'aux prix de l'insertion contrôlée des corps dans l'appareil de production et moyennant un ajustement des phénomènes de population aux processus économiques. Mais il a exigé davantage; il lui a fallu la croissance des uns et des autres, leur renforcement en même temps que leur utilisabilité et leur docilité; il lui a fallu des méthodes de pouvoir susceptibles de majorer les forces, les aptitudes, la vie en général sans pour autant les rendre plus difficiles à assujettir. (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 185).

Bio-political forms of regulation are not primarily interested in death because a dead body does not produce any form of wealth, which reinforces the Foucauldian thesis that asserts that life becomes an economic energy. It also entails that, despite the fact that bio-politics focuses on the human body in terms of a biological species, it also requires disciplinary techniques that take as their point of departure the body as an individual parcel. If in *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (1975), Foucault had begun his analysis on normalization and discipline, as far as bio-politics is concerned, new disciplinary devices appear. As he had previously stressed, they do not entail a merely repressive form, but a *productive* one. In other words, bio-politics requires a new subject, both in an individual and in a collective level. Regarding the individual, it does not simply focus on producing wealth during a certain period of time, but its whole life is devoted to such a goal. Life is an incessant resource the exploitation of which seems, at a first sight, continually expanding. This is why Lacan had stated that the

super-ego, within the capitalist discourse, is not based on a morality of slavery that condemns *jouissance*, but it rather commands it, re-articulating the Freudian approach on the internalization of the ideals of the ego.

Bio-politics is articulated according to an alliance between an economicist vision of existence that, in order to regulate and promote life, requires new forms of knowledge, the object of which is the body as a productive organism. In this sense, epidemiology, eugenics, hygienist policies, psychology, psychiatry and sexology, from a Foucauldian perspective, become theoretical domains that provide the basis for a new ontology of the subject, based on the creation of a “truth” that traverses its body. These forms of knowledge, which locate life in a biological sense as its point of departure, produce new identifications based on *what the subject is*, which has its consequences on the social terrain where ideals and norms take place according to discursive dynamics.

4.1.1. Illnesses and Disorders as Two Devices to Regulate the Subject

The reverse of the increasing interest on life in a bio-economic sense is illness. The liaison between life and illness is not something new, of course. Since the beginnings of medicine, human beings have tried to cure diseases and bodily disturbances, which have historically changed according to new discursive creations, narrowly tied to the notion of the body that knowledge has elaborated. Nonetheless, illness becomes a new reality in a bio-political era because it entails a loss of benefits. Hence, if medicine had always tried to stress health, bio-politics undertakes an obsessive compulsion towards the preservation of life, not because of the religious and humanist value of life as a sacred reality, but because it is useful to maintain the functioning of the capitalist economy. At the same time, the goal to control and to regulate health as much as it is possible implies a taxonomy of bodily symptoms, describing its causes and consequences, which entails that each bodily symptom is linked to a disease that will have its medicine.

Despite this ontological and epistemic turn, knowledge by itself is not enough to achieve such purpose. This involves that a new ethics, focused on care in terms of

preserving health and promoting life, is required¹⁵⁸. The promotion and production of values that stand for a stylisation of the body for its well-being as a form of obtaining a social recognition, the emphasis on diets and nutrition, and on sexuality and venereal diseases are not merely discourses based on a knowledge of the body and its troubling dimensions, but they generate also new forms of *jouissance*. Forms of *jouissance* in which human existence becomes a merchandise susceptible of being ameliorated in order to be sold – for instance, the increasing proliferation of chats where photographs of oneself are uploaded in order to attract people and, if possible, to date and to have sex with them –, and consumed.

In addition, such a regulatory discourse elaborates a taxonomy of diseases and the risk to contract them. In fact, what is crucial in current biomedicine is the concept of *risk*. Such a conceptualisation of life, which expands the domains of regulation to the molecular level of a living organism, becomes a new political strategy that institutes biogenetic causes for *social behaviours* that defy hegemonic regimes. Hence, processes of normalization and pathologization - as eugenics and racism have shown - focus on the organic level of life to find causes for “abnormal conducts”¹⁵⁹.

As I shall develop in this chapter dealing with migratory policies, this discourse is absolutely relevant to understand the current alliances between sovereign power and bio-politics in places like Immigration Detention Centres. At the same time, such a discourse, based on the evaluation of life through standards of well-being and the susceptibility of contracting several illnesses, pushes the subject towards an incessant concern on its life. Hence, Nikolas Rose, in his *The Politics of Life Itself* (2007), stated that:

Contemporary concerns with genetic susceptibility thus rework much older beliefs that weaknesses were inherited as predispositions – that might lurk unseen until triggered by external events ranging from excessive drinking to accidents or age – and might be averted by adopting a careful and moderate way of life (Rose, 2007: 23).

¹⁵⁸ By using the notion of “ethics of care”, I do not refer to the feminist discourse that struggles for the recognition of the political status of affects, which allows for a renegotiation of the liberal and capitalist division between public and private space, and the vindication of rights concerning domestic labour. In fact, I use this expression in the sense of a new *cura sui*, which is the title of the third volume of Foucault’s history of sexuality in French *le souci de soi*.

¹⁵⁹ Indeed, the statistic psychopathology, the hegemony of which is stressed by the DSM (Diagnosis of Statistic Mental Disorders), reduces the domain of affectivity and subjectivity to a neuro-biologic cause, which allows for the creation of its proper medicine, elaborating psychotherapies that tend to normalize subjects according to parameters of normality and pathology. Hence, the psychology based on a cognitive-behaviourist approach aims to regulate subjects according to these terms. Subjective realities such as autism and its treatment are paradigmatic of such a current trend.

Following this analysis, it is interesting to outline the characteristics that Lacan attributes to the logical dynamic of capitalist discourse, which has the peculiarity that it does not tie a subject with another subject, but a subject with an object of consumption. In his lecture at the University of Milan in 1972, Lacan develops some of the major questions concerning discourse as the articulation of a social and *common* reality by means of a *bond* between subjects. In the creation of such a bond, which is always asymmetric owing to the real dimension proper to the subject, this is to say, the lack of proportion in the domain of sexual difference in terms of a *logical difference*, desire plays a crucial role. As I have analysed in the first part of this dissertation, desire is always the desire of the Other, which requires a bond with another subject with which the liaison is always phantasmatic, being the object-cause of desire – the *objet petit a* – a subtraction from the signifying chain the Symbolic is said to be. Thus, the liaison between subjects is always mediated by language by means of fantasies that are structured by signifiers according to the dynamic proper to metonymy and metaphor, which entails that the cause of desire is incessantly displaced, while the subject occupies a metaphorical instance, this is to say, it is *represented by a signifier for another signifier* (Lacan, 1991)¹⁶⁰. Just to take one example: in the discourse of the master, the S_1 is performed by the master, while the slave, who provides the master with the *plus-de-jouir* to fulfil its desire to know rooted in the unconscious, is declined on the side of the S_2 , where *jouissance* is produced.

As far as the capitalist discourse is concerned, Lacan firstly outlines that it derives from a mutation of the discourse of the master. A mutation that, nonetheless, has huge consequences because it blocks and disarticulates social bonds, placing *jouissance* as

¹⁶⁰ A brilliant cinematographic recreation of this dynamic can be found in the film *Carol* (2015), directed by Todd Haynes. The film, the photographic texture of which operates as a metonymy that illustrates the object-cause of desire in its incessant displacements, situates Carol as the Other towards whom Thérèse becomes attached, which allows to illustrate two fundamental gestures outlined by Lacan in his analysis of desire. The first one refers to the fact that desire is always the desire of the Other, which the film articulates by means of instituting Carol as a character the most marked attribute of which is the fact that she incessantly asks what Thérèse wants. Such a question is continually answered in metaphorical terms, this is to say, invoking different signifiers that *represent* Thérèse by means of a signifying chain that continually points to a structural negativity concerning the subject of the unconscious, this is to say, its neurotic doubt. At the same time, the mysterious light that surrounds Carol all the time is a representation of the fantasies that Thérèse projects towards her, being the former a collage of images that bars any access to a final reality. Carol is, almost literally, what Thérèse sees in her, an issue that stresses the scopical *jouissance* proper to sight as an *objet petit a* subtracted from the subject, being impossible to represent in positive terms.

the key element, which displaces the bond with alterity that desire entails. This implies the dissolution of the social bond between subjects:



As this graphic shows, the capitalist discourse involves a dislocation concerning the role of the subject. If in the discourse of the master the subject is the place where historical truths occur, being in this case the acquisition of an autonomy that requires the liaison with a slave that *works for* the master, the inversion produced by the capitalist discourse reduces the subject to be an agent of consumption and production. Its historical truth is a bond with the gadgets that can be obtained from the economic market. There is no bond, in a discursive sense, with any other subject, which creates an *enjoying solipsism*. In a very interesting vein, Frédéric Leclerq stresses what follows in an article called « Lacan on the capitalist discourse: Its consequences for libidinal enjoyment » (2006):

The subject can no longer be considered to occupy the position of an agent. In a capitalist discourse, it is not the subject that is in charge any more, but the libidinal object. Put differently, the subject is not exploited by the capitalist anymore, but by the objects of libidinal enjoyment (Leclerq, 2006: 74).

The subject is governed through the production and consumption of a variety of *plus-de-jouir* to which it is attached. In this sense, its body is put at the centre of the whole circuit, being itself a merchandise susceptible of exploitation for an increasing of a capital the surplus of which is not offered to a master, but it is re-inscribed into the energetic chain of consumption and production. Following this analysis, Leclerq asserts:

However, Lacan argues that contemporary capitalism can no longer be considered as a variant of the discourse of the master because the surplus-value is not consumed by the capitalist anymore. On the contrary, the surplus-value needs to be re-invested in the production process. And this seems to be one of the fundamental differences between current and former capitalist systems. In early capitalism, the surplus-value could be enjoyed or capitalized for later libidinal enjoyment. Nowadays, the surplus value must be re-invested in the production process; otherwise production lags behind and finally collapses. Put differently, we must produce to consume, but we must consume in order to be able to produce again (Leclerq, *op.cit.*: 80).

Nonetheless, Lacan thought that the capitalist discourse would consume itself because of its impossible dynamic:

C'est pas du tout que je vous dise que le discours capitaliste ce soit moche, c'est au contraire quelque chose de follement astucieux, hein? De follement astucieux, mais voué à la crevaision. Enfin, c'est après tout ce qu'on fait de plus astucieux comme discours. Ça n'en est pas moins voué à la crevaision. C'est que c'est intenable. C'est intenable... dans un truc que je pourrais vous expliquer... parce que, le discours capitaliste est là (...) une toute petite inversion simplement entre le S_1 et le $S/...$ qui est le sujet... ça suffit à ce que ça marche comme sur des roulettes, ça ne peut pas marcher mieux, mais justement ça marche trop vite, ça se consomme, ça se consomme si bien que ça se consume (Lacan, 1978b : 10).

Unfortunately, Lacan's hope or diagnosis concerning the disappearance of the capitalist discourse is, up to now, false. Capitalism is still present as a hegemony for an economic, social and political order. In fact, a discourse based on the relation between a subject and a libidinal object cannot produce a bond. On the contrary, in the discourse of the master, the discourse of the university, the discourse of the hysteric and the discourse of the analyst there is not a direct link between a subject and the *plus-de-jouir*, but one signifier, which designates the position of a subject, points to another signifier that *represents another subject*: master-slave, teacher-student, hysteric-master, analyst-analysand. The bonds are constructed by means of socio-symbolic signifiers that institute a group through desire and demand, which also appeal to the different symbolic representations of ideals that institute a social world and, at the same time, they regulate it. Indeed, the link between desire and the symbolic Law, as I had developed it in the first part of this dissertation, is not based on opposition, but rather on mutual implication. Hence, each social reality and its multiple spheres are not instituted by a-historical structures radically independent from the subjects to which they appeal and conform. They are maintained by the *unconscious adherence* to what Lacan named the Big Other (Lacan, 1978a), this is to say, the symbolic fundament towards which a subject is attached in fantasmatic terms through the dialectic of desire. As a result, the Big Other that *each social reality is* cannot exist and persist without a subjective adherence, which is articulated through the *affective dimension that discourse produces* as the *jouissance* implicit in identifications, assumed from a constitutive lack-of-being that the unconscious is said to be.

The bond between a subject and the *plus-de-jouir* that the capitalist discourse articulates does not entail that desire is vanished. Desire *always* persists as the negativity proper to the subject, derived from the *effect of the signifier* on the living

body, and it is the rest that emerges between satisfaction and demand. Nonetheless, the object-cause of desire that the capitalist discourse orchestrates does not refer to another subject libidinally invested, but to a gadget. Just an example: smart-phones and the attachment of subjects towards them as an *objet petit a*, creating a bond through which the subject obtains a (partial) satisfaction.

Such a liaison has consequences concerning the relationships that take place between subjects, amongst which there is the command towards obtaining an incessant *jouissance* that, despite this super-egotistic aim, is always partial and never complete. Regarding this question, a new economic ideal governs social relationality: efficiency and productivity, this is to say, the other becomes a means for the acquisition of enjoyment.

Notwithstanding with that, a “pure” capitalist discourse, in the Lacanian sense of the word, could not persist because, if his analysis is followed, it would entail the dissolution of any social group¹⁶¹. In this sense, the capitalist discourse is in cohabitation with other discourses, mainly the discourse of the master and the discourse of the university, which can be seen in the successive dynamics of loss of civil and social rights, which are increasingly linked to the ability or inability to become a productive subject. Precariousness is, indeed, the result of the bio-political effects derived from the capitalist discourse in its alliance with the discursive modality of the master. This alliance causes a division between an increasingly minimal portion of population that becomes the member of a capitalist group, and the precarious rest. The latter refers to the mass of people the material conditions of which are deprived of stability and coerced to perform an incessant effort to provide one’s living. In fact, the

¹⁶¹ According to Lacan, there is a way out to the capitalist discourse, which is clearly in contrast to the catastrophic diagnosis of authors like Adorno, Horkheimer or Agamben, who foreclose any possibility to subvert its order. Nevertheless, Lacan - who was not especially fond of “revolutionary politics” because they entail the elaboration of a new order by means of the discourse of the master - proposes a “solution” that does not appeal to a group in phallic terms, but to the one by one proper to the not-all phallic *jouissance*. This is to say, the way out to such a discourse is provided by the discourse of the analyst, with the singular bond that each psychoanalysis creates between the analyst and the analysand. In spite of being a risk of interpreting this diagnosis as a form of proselytism, what Lacan stresses is the fact that an analysis, if the analysand traverses its fundamental fantasy through the cure provided by speech, transforms desire and the role conferred to the Other. It does not presuppose that the subject will live in a paradisiac reality once it leaves the session of analysis, but it transforms its subjectivity, which implies that it re-articulates the socio-symbolic bonds thanks to which it gains an ek-sistence. Thus, Lacan offers a subversive possibility based on the assumption of the subject’s responsibility towards its symptom and *jouissance*, which is an *act of freedom*, in Lacanian terms. For a further approach on this issue, see Lacan, Jacques: *L’acte psychanalytique 1967-1968* (non-published), and (2001): « Télévision » in *Autres écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 509-546.

cruellest example of such a division can be seen in the incessant amounts of people who leave their countries in order to survive, leaving aside wars, natural catastrophes and the jeopardizing effects of a globalized capitalism that speculates with their lives in order to obtain a benefit from it. As Frantz Fanon once said, they are the latest incarnation of the wretch of the earth.

As far as the discourse of the university is concerned in its alliance with the capitalist discourse, science has become the laboratory for the articulation of a new subjectivity, bound to a neurobiological and biogenetic reality that allows for a pastoral power on subjects. The symptomatic dimension of the subject becomes pathological and it is susceptible of being regulated in terms of *efficacy and efficiency* in order to continually ameliorate its existence. This implies a medicalization of any subjective domain by means of a statistical standard to establish the rates of normality and pathology. This is, then, the fundamental paradox of bio-capitalism: life, in order to be promoted, has to be stimulated to its extenuation, which entails a pathologization of the effects inflicted by the capitalist discourse.

4.2. The Symptom and the Bio-Political Subject: Precariousness as a New Malaise.

I shall assert that vulnerability is a *symptom*, a signifier that aims at expressing a current malaise at a social sphere, instead of stressing it as an *ontological condition*. The reason of this fundamental critique on which my thesis stands and falls is that an ontological approach bars the possibility to take into account the foreclosed¹⁶² dimension that incessantly returns: the lack of proportion between the sexes, which is at the core of the asymmetry proper to every and each social bond. Thus, the material expression of vulnerability, according to my analysis, is precariousness¹⁶³. It is an effect-affect proper to the capitalist discourse and its annihilation of social bonds. Yet

¹⁶² What is foreclosed in the unconscious is the impossibility to achieve proportion in relation to the Other that sex is because it belongs to the “impossible-to-represent” of the Real. Hence, it has nothing to do with the Butler’s use of foreclosure, which confuses the absence of liaison with the phallic signifier proper to psychosis with the process of subjection.

¹⁶³ I will not refer to the Italian tradition of “post-operatism” to argue for this hypothesis. This philosophical tradition includes authors like Toni Negri, Maurizio Lazzarato, and Paolo Virno. My analysis is founded on the connections between Foucauldian bio-politics and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

an annihilation that is never complete, though it reduces the social bond to a sum of individuals, this is to say, aggregates.

What is a symptom from a Lacanian approach? It is important to deal with this question in order to avoid a pathological discourse, this is to say, standards of normality and abnormality, radically alien to psychoanalysis. While the medical sense of this notion entails a subjective disturbance that deviates from a homeostasis proper to health, psychoanalysis shows a new dimension to this. Indeed, since Freud, this notion is crucial, which appeals to *jouissance* and the singular response that each subject articulates in front of the Real, as Lacan later added. Due to its importance and wide development, I hereby offer a summarized version of it.

Lacan firstly articulated the symptom on the side of the Imaginary, this is to say, the “I” [*moi*], referring to the *image* of the body as an extended surface, which is the operation resultant from the looking-glass phase. Since this very beginning, the reference to the symptom as a structuring reality of the subject involves that there is no norm that could absorb the subject. In this sense, discourse knows nothing about the symptom inasmuch as it is a singular response for which there is no “suitable resolution”. What interests me of the symptom is not this first articulation provided by Lacan, but his later reformulations as a *supplement given by each subject* in terms of a singular solution in front an *impasse*: sex as a real-impossible dimension to symbolize. In other words, the symptom is structurally tied to *jouissance*. According to this diagnosis, Geneviève Morel, in *Sexual Ambiguities: Sexuation and Psychosis* (2011)¹⁶⁴, asserts: “The symptom is a compromise between the demand for satisfaction of the drive and the subject’s defence against *jouissance*” (Morel, 2011: 30).

From a Lacanian perspective, the symptomatic dimension of the subject does not point to a disease or a pathology, but to a constitutive trait of it. The unconscious, in terms of the scission that fractures the subject in an irrecoverable way, finds an impasse concerning the sexed status of the subject, which means that there is no successful procedure to deal with sex and its enigmatic specificity. There is no chance to successfully give an account of sex because the unconscious, in terms of the discourse of the Other, is only structured by the phallus, the signifier that represents the lack-of-

¹⁶⁴ I could not find the original French version of this psychoanalytic essay, which implies that the quotes of this work will refer to its English translation. The original French essay was published in 2000.

being inflicted by the symbolic operation of castration. Hence, each subject tries to articulate a reaction in front of this existential scenario, which has its translation into the several identifications that shape *jouissance*, which provide a certain consistency to the barred subject.

What is interesting from the definition offered by Geneviève Morel is the fact that the symptom is a subjective operation derived from the demand the drive always articulates, pursuing the *objet petit a* subtracted from *jouissance* due to castration, and the excess in front of which the “I” elaborates a defensive strategy, splitting the subject. From a clinical perspective, the first reactions that any subject feels concerning its symptom is a strange suffering, not being able to give sense to such a disturbing experience, a question that reminds of the Freudian notion of *unheimlich*¹⁶⁵. The reason for such a suffering is that the subject refuses to identify itself with its symptom, this is to say, it is felt as an unbearable strangeness that invades its being. Hence, the symptom – which always persists, though as a lesser troubling experience, because sexual relationship is impossible to be articulated – is a sign that the bond with the register of the Real, where *jouissance* is located in terms of a surplus added to the Symbolic, is never harmonic, but always paradoxical.

The symptom changes all along history in relation to discursive mutations. Such a remark is later verified by the psychoanalytic clinic, mainly because it proceeds without taking for granted some kind of psychotherapy based on a protocol that would be suitable for *all* subjects. Indeed, if psychoanalysis can give an account of the multiplicity and singularity of symptoms, it is due to proceeding by means of the logic of singularity, without protocols, and letting the subject speak through a free association of signifiers. Symptoms are not, thus, uniform or susceptible of being reduced to a single category, yet they are a subjective creation in front a dimension that exceeds language. As Colette Soler signals in *Les affects lacaniens* (2011):

Il n’y a pas de sujet sans symptôme, ce qui implique que le symptôme, loin d’être simplement un désordre, une perturbation, est aussi une solution. Disons, sans paradoxe, que chacun est adapté par son symptôme. Adapté à quoi ? Pas aux normes du discours,

¹⁶⁵ Freud, in his paper entitled « The Odd One In » (1919), gives an account of the unconscious as a strangeness that is not alien to the subject, but it rather traverses it, which entails that what is supposed to be the most familiar reality always contains an odd element. For a further approach on this issue, see the volume XVII of the Standard Edition of his complete works, “An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works (1917-1919)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

car, par rapport à elles, il apparaît en effet plutôt comme désordre objecteur individuel des régulations du discours. Mais il est adapté à une donnée de structure qui résulte de l'inconscient, qui se met au jour dans l'analyse même, que Lacan a appelé le réel propre à l'inconscient et qui se formule : « Y'a pas de rapport sexuel » (Soler, 2011 : 41-42).

The strangeness of each symptom refers to the impossibility to decipher it as a text with a transparent meaning. The link between the Real and the Symbolic that the symptom is said to be, which is also tied to the identifications that belong to the Imaginary, implies that, despite the metaphors that can give a (partial) account of the symptomatic *reality* of the subject, there is a parcel that resists such a reading. Such is the *real* dimension in the unconscious, which is tied to what Lacan introduces in his seminar *Encore* (1975b): *lalangue*, this is to say, the enjoying operation of the incarnation of the signifier onto the body in terms of a *substance jouissante*. The peculiarity of *lalangue* is that it does not observe the production of sense as a symbolic concatenation of signifiers, but it is the enjoyment obtained from the insertion into language by means of the voice of the Other, and the intimate liaison derived from it. Hence, *lalangue*, as the enjoyment produced in the encounter between the body in its real dimension and the signifier, can never be reduced to a discursive modality, but it rather points to the symptomatic singularity of each subject, which emerges from the first vowel experiments of the child in the *bla-bla* in its aim to call the Other. The *real* of the unconscious refers, then, to the individual who *has* a body from which it obtains an enjoyment:

Un inconscient « savoir sans sujet », comment serait-il celui du sujet, sinon par la médiation de ce qui, dans la structure, n'est pas langage – à savoir, la substance jouissante du corps, du corps qu'il a le sujet et qu'il faut pour jouir ? Cet inconscient peut être dit du sujet, car ses signifiants sont ceux que l'on extrait de son symptôme, par déchiffrement. Si, avant d'être déchiffrés, ils ne le représentent pas, ils affectent de moins sa jouissance comme événement de corps (Soler, 2009: 22).

Therefore, the symptom expresses a malaise and a modality of *jouissance* not simply caused by the normative apparatus of a discursive order. It is not a mere result derived from a repressive cultural apparatus that does not allow the subject to access to a complete and absolute *jouissance*. Such a claim, which reduces the subject to a social constructivist prism¹⁶⁶, elaborates a discursive monism mostly based on a perspective

¹⁶⁶ Two authors are representative of such a claim, which could be qualified as perverse because they disavow the castrating dimension of language: Paul B. Preciado and Guy Hocquenghem. As far as Hocquenghem is concerned, his analysis is based on what could be called an "identitarian politics", focused on a homosexual desire that is repressed under the regime of a heteronormative socio-symbolic structure that repudiates non-heterosexual identifications. Thus, the plenitude of desire could be enjoyed by new forms of sociability, with no further restrictions than those based on the free-will of the subjects

focused on the discourse of the master, creating a perverse fetishism concerning the access to the totality of *jouissance*. In this context, the adjective “perverse” does not imply a negative moral connotation, but a relationship towards castration in terms of disavowal, this is to say: “I know very well that I am castrated by language, but still...”. Asserting that it is a subjective position referring to the master means that, in order to obtain this *jouissance*, a new order must be built, focused on an identitarian politics that reproduces the same exclusionary schema against what it intended to fight. In other words, it is an eroticization of a discursive regime to obtain a *jouissance* by being excluded from it. As Colette Soler remarks in *Lacan, l'inconscient réinventé* (2009):

Encore faut-il ne pas oublier que l'identification ne préside pas nécessairement à la conformité et que la division identitaire se traduit aussi bien en effet d'anticonformisme, car nombreux sont les sujets qui, choisissant des contre-modèles, croient se séparer de l'Autre alors même qu'ils ne sont pas moins captifs de sa régence que les sujets plus conformes. Ainsi voit-on parfois dans les fratries des frères antithétiques, issus d'un même noyau d'injonction (Soler, *op. cit.*: 118).

The Lacanian approach on the symptom and the impossibility of a full access to *jouissance* does not stand for the creation of a new regime based on a new order of the social reality, which is vindicated by *queer* discourses on *jouissance*¹⁶⁷, but on the subversion implied by the notion of a barred subject.

Signalling the symptomatic historical mutations implies a discursive modality implicit in it. In fact, affirming that each symptom is a subjective supplement for the impossibility to symbolize the sexual relationship is not the same as asserting that the symptom is necessarily autistic, this is to say, totally alien to discourse. This becomes clearer when the insertion into language is taken into account: any new-born is introduced into a socio-symbolic context by the Other, which means that the symptomatic solution that it provides for itself concerning the Real-impossible towards which the unconscious is confronted involves the entrance into the social bond. Such an

implied. For a further approach, see Hocquenghem, Guy (1972): *Le désir homosexuel*. Paris, Éditions Fayard. Concerning Paul B. Preciado, his notion of “counter-sexuality” and the administration of testosterone in order to dispute the hegemonic discursive reality concerning sex and sexual difference is devoted to the acquisition of a totality of *jouissance* that, quite surprisingly, is developed as the assumption of heterosexual male identifications. It is not only a perverse discourse, but also clearly phallic, which signals the fantasm of omnipotence as its core. See Preciado, Paul B. (2000): *Manifiesto contra-sexual*. Barcelona, Anagrama, and (2008): *Testo Yonki: Sexo, drogas y biopolítica*. Madrid, Espasa-Calpe.

¹⁶⁷ A fine and accurate critique concerning the perverse slogans in the dispute for hegemony, inasmuch as it entails the impossible search for a lost paradise of *jouissance*, can be found in Stavrakakis, Yanis (2007): *The Lacanian Left*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press. Concerning the perverse dynamics in certain *queer* discourses, see http://elpais.com/diario/2010/06/13/eps/1276410414_850215.html. Last hit: 02/02/2016

operation entails that, through its identifications and socio-symbolic regulations of *jouissance* of each culture, the subject internalizes ideals of the “I”, norms regarding its body, the use of language in different contexts, and any social aspect proper to human existence. Indeed, one of the first symptomatic reactions of the subject is a dissonance with the world it inhabits, a discomfort concerning its social reality, which *affects* its existence. The subject does not know why it suffers from a malaise that is neither transparent nor susceptible of being controlled by its will in an omnipotent way. It feels odd with itself, without understanding why. It will be all along the process of analysis that some fragments of its symptomatic singularity will emerge, which will allow a certain decipherment thanks to the metaphors it elaborates by virtue of the free association of signifiers that the discourse of the analyst creates.

4.2.1. Precariousness as a New Malaise: The Material Axis of Vulnerability

Hence, new historical modalities, based on mutations of the discursive reality, generate new symptoms. The notion of vulnerability that I have developed in the first part of my research points to a social mutation that affects discourse understood as the device that allows for the creation and maintenance of a *bond* between subjects. The stress on the Other of both Butler and Cavarero coincides with a historical moment where there have been certain changes in relation to current forms of sociality. Indeed, before Cavarero and Butler, Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas highlighted what could be interpreted as a progressive individuation of the subject, not simply in the Modern sense of the word inaugurated by Cartesianism, but also in the sense of a progressive dissolution of the social bond.

Arendt herself, in a trend that would be later developed by Foucault, offers some hints concerning this issue. Analysing the structure of the society of her time, Arendt remarks something that is worth quoting concerning the links between the capitalist discourse and vulnerability:

It is decisive that society, on all its levels, excludes the possibility of action, which formerly was excluded from the household. Instead, society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behaviour, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to “normalize” its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement (Arendt, 1958: 40).

Arendt introduces what in Foucauldian terms is a disciplinary regime. Such a regime is based on a proliferation and dissemination of power relations that, if one follows Foucault, point to the body and its process of *assujettissement*, which, as Foucault noticed, is linked to the birth of industry and subjection by virtue of work. In other words, normalization and discipline are at the basis of the process that ties a subject with the object it produces and consumes, which effaces the bond between a subject (S₁) with another subject (S₂).

For Arendt, such a historical turn meant a scorn against politics, mainly if her conception of politics is considered: acting in concert, this is to say, the creation of a common shared world in agonistic terms, this is to say, in terms of a struggle between equals who share the same right to speak. It is quite remarkable, above all in Butler's elaboration of vulnerability, how this dimension is present in the claiming of the body as a political agent that allows for the creation of social bonds, an echo that traverses Butler's *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004a). In this work, she endeavours to create a new common horizon through mourning in terms of a loss that equalizes *all* subjects, sharing a vulnerability that exposes them to the susceptibility of being hurt. Indeed, there is a constant attempt to articulate a nexus between who I am and the Other, which, to some extent, means that such a bond is considerably diminished:

Each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies as a site of desire and physical vulnerability, as a site of a publicity at once assertive and exposed. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure. (Butler, 2004a: 20).

It is quite astonishing how this quote by Butler might be the reverse of another one from Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958), where the latter points to a constitutive trait of the capitalist discourse in its bond of a subject to an object, which refers to the chain of production and consumption:

But this "collective nature of labour", far from establishing a recognizable, identifiable reality for each member of the labour gang, requires on the contrary the actual loss of all awareness of individuality and identity; and it is for this reason that all those "values" which derive from labouring, beyond its obvious function in the life process, are entirely "social" and essentially not different from the additional pleasure derived from eating and drinking in company (Arendt, *op. cit.*: 213).

The remarks made by Arendt concerning labour, taking for granted the division between public and private space, would be disputed by Butler and by any other

feminist thinker – I have elaborated a critique in that very sense in the introduction and in the first part of this dissertation –. Nonetheless, there is an issue at stake that seems quite important: Arendt's stress on the increasing dimension of labour in detriment of any sort of human sphere. Aside the Aristotelean connotation of labour as something alien to the dimension of the political, I think Arendt underlines a quite important trait: the more labour expands itself as a domain of the subject, the lesser there is a social bond in terms of a discourse. Labour, which is linked to the sustenance of one's living, does not presuppose a link of a subject to another subject, but a link between a subject and an object, not merely on the level of need, but of desire and *jouissance*. In this sense, both Butler and Arendt, despite their important theoretic-political divergences, refer to a common phenomenon: the dissolution of bonds between subjects.

I shall assert that Butler points to a new master signifier or *point de capiton* (S_1) that might offer the chance to elaborate a new social bond between subjects. In doing so, she illustrates a discursive reaction against socio-symbolic precariousness, which is the paradoxical turn of the capitalist discourse. Capitalism, in terms of a social articulation, does not offer any *symbolon* proper to its dynamic to elaborate a pair of what Lacan called *semblants* (Lacan, 1991) because the Real of sexual relation is impossible to represent. On the contrary, the dynamic of capitalism merely focuses on the solitary and singular dimension of *jouissance*, which is alien to a relation based on a couple of subjects; *jouissance* is a matter of single individuals. Thus, Butler sees in vulnerability and mourning the chance to offer a new modality of bond that would not reproduce exclusionary dynamics, but the occasion for the articulation of an alliance allowed by different signifiers in order to make a new form of sociality.

Nevertheless, what I will still develop concerning her work, and according to what I have analysed of her previous discourses, is, according to my view, a mere corroboration of the effects of the capitalist discourse, which remains reified in Butler. Her discursive monism and the attempt to elaborate an ontological re-articulation of the subject by means of a normative process shows to be a *cul de sac*. This is the thesis that I will hold against Butler's further considerations on the epistemic and ethical elements that she adds on her reflection on vulnerability in works such as *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), *Frames of War. When Is Life Grievable?* (2009a), and *Dispossession. The Performative in the Political* (2013).

4.2.1.1. Population as the New Bio-Political Subject

The capitalist discourse does not erase the subject. Instead, capitalism binds the subject to libidinal objects and thereby shapes a new ontological dimension, which affects discourse and its effects. In this respect, there is a notion introduced by Foucault that needs to be taken seriously, namely, population.

Foucault does not offer a definition of population in a pure demographic sense, despite the fact that statistics, as a technique offered by knowledge to govern in more efficient terms, counts. Foucault defines the bio-political subject as a sum of individuals that are not simply a result of discipline, but of security too. Security refers to the territory where subjects live and to its political frontiers. Security implies that the role of the State, despite some discourses that assert that neoliberalism destroys it, still applies. Yet the State becomes the incarnation of a sovereign power exercised on a territory where a population lives: “On pourrait dire comme ça, au premier regard et d’une façon un peu schématique : la souveraineté s’exerce dans les limites d’un territoire, la discipline s’exerce sur le corps des individus, et enfin la sécurité s’exerce sur l’ensemble d’une population” (Foucault, 2004a : 13).

A population would not, according to Foucault, pre-exist a political turn based on efficiency and prevention of risks, but it is a *result* of the interaction between discourse and power relations, mainly if the Foucauldian notion of discourse is considered. Affirming that security is what produces the articulation of a population resounds of a defensive strategy against a danger or, at least, a threat. What the Foucauldian analysis suggests is a logic based on riskiness as a jeopardizing threat against the subject and object of bio-politics: life. As a result, securitarian devices work as immunological weapons, and this requires a new process of normalization concerning population: it must be able to manage risks concerning their lives. A managing of risk primarily focused on the maintenance and promotion of a body in terms of a bio-machine from which there must be an increasing benefit. This is why Foucault, concerning population, asserts that it is structured as “individus qui sont et qui n’existent que profondément, essentiellement, biologiquement liés à la matérialité à l’intérieur de laquelle ils existent” (Foucault, *op. cit.* : 23). According to this definition, a population is the creation of a set that is governed in terms of a biological body that

must be protected and defended against possible attacks. Government becomes, then, a technique to provide immunology.

The interesting element in the rhetoric and tactic of security is its aim at governing beyond traditional parameters and in a more efficient manner. If current health policies are considered¹⁶⁸, they are primarily based on a statistics of population that is devoted to detect how many people might suffer from a concrete disease. Once this calculation has been established, the next step is to demand for security concerning one's life. This is followed by a demand for healthy habits on behalf of the new governors, namely, experts, who have the knowledge for which no subject is required. As a result, what emerges from such a strategy is a regulation of life in order to maximize its productivity with the lowest cost. This feature also traverses other domains such as the protection of the frontiers of States by officers that do not belong to any public department, but they are members of an externalized service – as it is the case with FRONTEX, the securitarian agency that protects EU frontiers.

Security is a governmental technique not primarily based on the ancient mantra of classic liberalism: “laissez-faire”, this is to say, the economic market has its own laws, and no public administration must interfere with it. Current devices based on security, in order to provide a more efficient governmental logic, need to actively transform the social reality. A good example of this trend can be found in the restructuration of the State members of the EU, which have to create the optimum conditions for the growth of speculative capitalism by reducing the amount of salaries and diminishing social services, which has as a consequence an *ethos* rooted in a subject wholly installed in an individual-private domain. Such power dynamics create a new

¹⁶⁸ For instance, the new epidemic threat that has been defined by the HWO: the virus of the zika, which is transmitted by a mosquito that lives in tropical areas. There seems to be an increasing expansion of this illness, which seems to have firstly appeared in some forests of South America. The preventive strategy developed by governments, linked with pharmacological and epidemiological discourses, offers a new alliance between sovereign and regulative power: in countries like Brazil, the army is being taught to explain the population susceptible of being infected which habits they should acquire, and which ones they should abandon. At the same time, the epidemic alarm has re-opened a debate on abortion in some South American countries like Brazil or Argentina, where abortion is illegal or it is merely accessible in very specific circumstances, such as rape or a danger for the mother's life. Recent analyses on the microcephaly of new-borns suggest that the virus of the zika could be a pathogen element for such an anomaly in the development of the foetus. Hence, in a narrow alliance between science and governance, selective abortion begins to be stressed as a mechanism to avoid such a pathology, which in fact re-invokes a eugenic argument in relation to the regulation of population and health. For further information concerning this issue, see <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/> and <http://www.npr.org/2016/01/30/464995788/zika-virus-reignites-abortion-debate-in-brazil>, amongst other on-line sources. Last hits: 14/02/2016

subject-object that no longer relies on an inherent progress, but it requires the actualization of the conditions that would guarantee the maximization of benefits at the lowest cost:

Que la population soit ainsi à la base et de la richesse et de la puissance de l'État, ceci ne peut se faire, bien sûr, qu'à la condition qu'elle soit encadrée par tout un appareil réglementaire qui va empêcher l'émigration, appeler les immigrants, favoriser la natalité, un appareil réglementaire aussi qui va définir quelles sont les productions utiles et exportables, qui va fixer encore les objets à produire, les moyens de les produire, les salaires aussi, qui va interdire encore l'oisiveté et le vagabondage (Foucault, *op. cit.* : 71).

The consequence of such an atomization is the dissipation of the social bond and the instituting of precariousness, a new symptomatic reality for the subject, who, under the commands of the capitalist super-ego, is in the pursuit of more *jouissance*, without finally obtaining it. Under such a regime, the symptom is considered as a disorder from the discursive schema, this is to say, a deviation from the regulatory strategy of incessantly producing and consuming. Thus, psychological and psychiatric discourses, all along a redefinition of life in epidemiologic terms, bring about what Foucault would call a "pastoral power" (Foucault, 1976), this is to say, a redefinition of the subject through a normalizing process that pretends to administer each parcel of its life. For each normal state, there is its consequent pathology, with its subsequent remedy provided by the expert, who is in charge of governing of bodies¹⁶⁹:

La population, c'est un ensemble d'éléments à l'intérieur duquel on peut remarquer des constantes et des régularités jusque dans les accidents, à l'intérieur duquel on peut repérer l'universel du désir produisant régulièrement le bénéfice de tous, et à propos duquel on peut repérer un certain nombre de variables dont il est dépendant et qui sont susceptibles de le modifier (Foucault, *op. cit.* : 76).

To a certain extent, then, the Lacanian analysis of the capitalist discourse and the Foucauldian one regarding the nexus between capitalism, bio-power and neoliberalism offer a similar diagnosis. A similarity that can be stressed if the productive domain of power is taken into account, a question that Foucault incessantly signals, which also refers to the *jouissance* that it produces.

¹⁶⁹ Indeed, the most recent version of the DSM, the DSM-V, categorizes as a psychological pathology the stress and discomfort that some women suffer when they are about to have their period, the pre-menstrual syndrome. There is also a huge pathologization of a quite diverse multiplicity of affects, such as shame, or the statistical difference between a healthy and a pathological mourning, which is based on a period of time that should not surpass a month. For further information on this issue, see American Psychiatric Association (2013): *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-V*.

The Foucauldian analysis offers also the chance to analyse the subjective condition derived from this political turn, which I have remarked along this chapter: precariousness. Precariousness produces subjects that are fundamentally worried about their material sustenance, and it is conditioned by an incessant uncertainty concerning their lives. Taking as an example Spain and its labour reform, passed in 2012¹⁷⁰, jobs have become unstable, with a shorter durability, and conditioned by a flexibility concerning a reformulation of the labour market that has reinforced the status of the labourer as an obsolescent bio-machine that can be dismissed when the standards of productivity are not achieved. Foucault brilliantly exposed this issue concerning the status of the entrepreneur of oneself:

Autrement dit, la compétence des travailleurs est bien une machine, mais c'est une machine qu'on ne peut pas séparer du travailleur lui-même, ce qui ne veut pas dire exactement, comme la critique économique, ou sociologique, ou psychologique [le] disait traditionnellement, que le capitalisme transforme le travailleur en machine et, par conséquent, l'aliène. Il faut considérer que la compétence qui fait corps avec le travailleur est, en quelque sorte, le côté par lequel le travailleur est une machine, mais une machine (...) qui va produire des flux de revenus. Flux de revenus, et pas revenus, parce que précisément la machine constituée par la compétence du travailleur n'est pas, en quelque sorte, vendue ponctuellement sur le marché du travail contre un certain salaire. En fait cette machine, elle a sa durée de vie, sa durée d'utilisabilité, elle a son obsolescence, elle a son vieillissement (Foucault, 2004b : 230-231).

The new subject shaped by precariousness has as its primary identification unlimited flexibility. It perform labour with no further restrictions than those imposed by the chain of production-consumption. It is a living machine reduced to a functioning that, as Foucault remarks, expires. This means that its productivity is reduced to a certain period of time, which must be used (and abused of) in all its potentialities. Indeed, such a figure of the entrepreneur of oneself is not merely applied to work in terms of a substitution of the Marxist figure of the proletariat, but it entails a new territorialisation of what is considered to be susceptible of being exploited in order to obtain an (enjoying) surplus from it. It is not simply an extraction of labour, an issue proper to the modality of the discourse of the master, but the entire life is subsumed under the capitalist dynamic of production and consumption, which opens an incessant regulatory field that reaches almost any parcel of the subjective dimension.

¹⁷⁰ This law was passed thanks to the absolute majority that the conservative and right winged Partido Popular (PP) obtained in the elections of 2011. Its passing was very polemical because it entailed a reduction of the liquidation of worker's dismissal, reducing the days that were formerly paid, and an impoverishment of labouring conditions. Such a change has allowed a facilitation concerning dismisses and a reduction of stable jobs. For a further approach on this issue, see <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2012/02/11/pdfs/BOE-A-2012-2076.pdf>. Last hits: 20/02/2016

In a parallel way to such a territorialisation of the subject-object proper to the process of subjection that gives birth to the entrepreneur of oneself, the life of which is considered a bio-value from which wealth can be obtained¹⁷¹, there is a progressive dissolution of the material conditions that enable the sustenance of a collectivity in social terms. In other words, what current capitalism produces is an increasing emphasis on the individual dimension of any aspect of someone's life, which entails that the former rights, such as health public policies, pensions or public education become services for which there is a customer. The social reality becomes an economic machine based on the acquisition of high benefits at the minimum of costs, which entails that the State in terms of the creation and maintenance of common rights becomes a firm. Precariousness, then, is practically an inevitable *symptomatic reality*. It is interesting to quote this extract from Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman* (2013), which highlights some of the schizoid dynamics proper to bio-political capitalism concerning its regulative frame:

Thus, a socially enforced ideology of fitness, health and eternal youth goes hand in hand with increased social disparities in the provision of health care and in mortality rates among infants and youth. The obsession with being "forever young" works in tandem with and forms the counterpart of social positions of euthanasia and assisted death (Braidotti, 2013: 114).

What Braidotti introduces as schizoid dynamics proper to bio-capital illustrates the duality produced by the current hegemony based on the alliance between neoliberalism and the capitalist discourse: a *real* division between those dis-possessed, deprived of the material conditions that would guarantee their existence, and the minority of those who accumulate an increasing wealth. Nonetheless, the two groups are both included in the same mechanism of consumption and production, although it does not entail that it applies for both in a homogeneous way. The only equality provided by current capitalism is that we are *all* proletariat, this is to say, we are *all*

¹⁷¹ In fact, one of the best allegories of the entrepreneur of oneself can be seen in the figure of the surrogate mother, the entire body of which becomes a productive entity that gives birth to a new consumption good, incarnated in the baby "bought" by consumers. It is, indeed, a strategy to colonize the bodies of women through the circuits of bio-capital, which is especially notorious in countries like India, where women from the poorest classes are, quite literally, made into reproductive machines. They give birth to babies that will be adopted by Western foster-parents, producing a movement that mimes the dynamic proper to colonialism and the logic of imperialism. The common expression used for surrogate motherhood in India is "renting a womb", which reinforces this logic. For a further approach on this specific issue, see "Surrogacy laws in India" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=On1pxx-PAU8>), and "Wombs for Rent in India" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSXZSdMmRdg>). Last hits: 27/02/2016

members of processes of consumption and production. It is the radicalisation of a phallic *jouissance* based on a frenetic consumption of the *plus-de-jouir*¹⁷².

Yet, I find it necessary to expand on a twofold approach to precariousness: a first one rooted in its material conditions, and a second one related to its symbolic and affective dimension. Such an analytical approach does not entail a disjunction, but, instead a way to provide a more detailed analysis of precariousness as a symptom that affects subsistence precisely because it entails a material dimension. Indeed, most of analyses based on the current modalities of precariousness elude the role of affects and, hence, *jouissance* in this contemporary symptom. Silvia Federici offers an extraordinary analysis based on the alliances between Marxism and feminism¹⁷³. Nonetheless, in her case, there is a constant reference to economic and discursive mutations by means of the transformations of the capitalist strategy, leaving aside further considerations. Instead, I shall found my analysis in Judith Butler's *Precarious Life. The Power of Mourning and Violence* (2004a) and *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013), and Isabell Lorey's *State of Insecurity. Government of the Precarious* (2015). Both authors, from a feminist and a Foucauldian perspective altogether, take the notion of precariousness in a double sense. The first definition of it relates to what I have exposed in the first part of this dissertation in terms of an existential condition of the subject in its bond to alterity. Hence, I will not discuss again anything specifically related to that, but I will focus on the use of the notion in terms of a reconstruction of a new bond, which entails that precariousness symptomatically exposes the effect-affect produced by the capitalist discourse: a dissolution of the social bond. I will reconsider the arguments provided by Butler in this domain, which appeal to a reconfiguration of the subject through a plural and multiple relationality by means of a discourse focused on loss and mourning. As far as precariousness is concerned in terms of a material condition of existence, I will deal with the neoliberal strategy that institutes the process of

¹⁷² Another good example for the perverse equality provided by the capitalist discourse: each time that Apple sells a new technological product, the same phenomenon occurs. There are huge queues of people waiting for buying it. In these moments, the variety of people that can be seen is enormous, which is motivated by Apple itself, since it offers the possibility of a fractioned payment, which expands its market. The fetishism created by the capitalist discourse can be seen in its pure obscenity: offering the same product to anyone in order to veil the *real* inequality between those included and those excluded. *Jouissance*, then, becomes a regulatory mechanism, mainly in the mandate executed by the super-egotistic psychic mechanism: "Enjoy! Enjoy!"

¹⁷³ Two good examples of Federici's Marxist and feminist analysis, which depart from a materialist perspective to give an account of the dynamic of capitalism in relation to the body and women's labour can be seen in Federici, Silvia (2004): *Caliban and the Witch*. New York, Autonomedia, and (2012): *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. New York, PM Press.

individuation as a technique of governance, which has implications for the subject at the level of its identifications in a social sphere.

4.2.2. Judith Butler's Precariousness: Loss and Mourning as an Attempt to Reconstruct the Social Bond.

In her work *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004a), Butler offers a detailed analysis on three domains: what means to be vulnerable, its bond to the processes of loss and mourning, and the regulatory power of violence. Hence, what she proposes is a consideration, through her emphasis on the discursive processes that produce subjection, of the epistemological and ontological frames that dictate which lives are grievable, and which ones are expelled from the sphere of the subject. Certainly, this topic is not new, but it rather traverses all her philosophical contributions.

What Butler elaborates in this reflection is an analysis based on the strategies that legitimate subjects, this is to say, that allow for social recognition, or that identify as threats. In this sense, it entails an inscription of her own discourse into a perspective more framed by a bio-political axis, echoing the Foucauldian link between security and risk as far as a population is concerned. Her main arguments are highly influenced by the impact that the terrorist attacks of the 9/11 had in the narcissistic construction of the United States as an impenetrable political construction, and the paranoiac reaction that "legitimated" a new crusade against a threat that vanished the dream of omnipotence. The main arguments exposed by Butler reflect a symptomatic positioning against an increasing dynamic in recent years. Racist reactions and the demand for higher security have been articulated altogether by regulatory forms of neoliberal surveillance, which implies a paradoxical turn: the increasing of anxiety, derived from the construction of a menacing alterity that might violently irrupt at any time.

As far as Butler's analysis of precariousness is concerned, she uses this category in a similar way to vulnerability, which suggests that these are two interchangeable notions. Despite this initial synonymy, in her development of precariousness, Butler adds a consideration of a question that she had partially introduced when she gave an account of what she called "gender melancholia" (1997a) in relation to the abjection

referred to those identifications that challenge the heterosexist hegemony: loss and mourning. The mobilization of these two concepts, which she uses in relation to the Freudian corpus, mainly *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), is an attempt to undo the individualist notion of the ego that is built under contemporary neoliberal regimes, which has ethical and political implications since it discusses the social existence of the subject. Thus, the experience of grief and loss is conceived as a possibility for the creation of a new community, based on a negotiation of a shared vulnerability.

Regarding the experience of mourning, Butler mobilises loss as an experience that points to the limits of narration and, hence, of any discursive construction. An affective element that points to the fact that the loss in reaction to which one mourns entails a fracture for the “I” inasmuch as the lost person was part of the identifications of the subject. Mourning introduces, then, a void within the ego because that Other to which the subject was attached has vanished. Hence, such an experience would be a corroboration of the intrinsic relationality of the subject, the existence of which is impossible without another subject.

Due to the relationality of mourning and loss that Butler stresses, an issue that she recovers again in *Frames of War. When Is Life Grievable?* (2009a), what she proposes is the occasion for the articulation of what she calls a tenuous “we” derived from such an experience in universal terms. Universal inasmuch as it entails a bond to alterity that is constitutive to any subject in its imaginary and symbolic parameters, which can be perfectly summarised by the fact that each subject is introduced into the world by the Other, in which there is a discursive historicity implied. At the same time, arguing against an individualistic account of the subject becomes an occasion for rethinking the social bond that attaches one subject to another subject, and the terms by which such a bond is constructed. The interdependency given by the social dimension of the subject blurs any definite and determined ontological claim concerning who counts as a subject, a remark that traverses the whole reflection of Butler’s analysis of discourse and its regulatory strategies, which create inclusions and exclusions by virtue of the mobilization of certain identifications and signifiers.

The precariousness that loss and mourning outline, according to her argument, refers to the fact that ek-istence, for any subject, is not assured in advance, but it rather depends on a bond that dispossesses the subject from a neutral autonomy. In this sense,

Butler echoes some of the Lacanian remarks concerning imaginary identifications, which entail that the subject becomes alienated in front of the gaze and invocation of the Other, creating a tensional bond that oscillates between joy and aggression. Nevertheless, Butler constantly pushes the discussion towards the social scenario as a normative and regulatory mechanism of discourse, questioning the criteria according to which some losses are considered legitimate and worth of grieving, while others are rejected, reduced to a domain of spectrality¹⁷⁴ and abjection. Such a reflection is especially poignant in our current times, where lives such as those sanctioned as illegal migrants are considered by State apparatuses as “problems” that need to be solved, expelled from the domain of the protection provided by law inasmuch as they are deprived of any citizenship.

This reduction of mourning and loss to the discursive interpretation made of it by prevailing norms has further consequences. As far as mourning is concerned, Butler’s main interest relies on the discursively regulated identifications thanks to which a subject is recognised, in its imaginary dimension, as a member of a collectivity, while others, through their exclusion, confirm the existence of such a group. In other words, the approach that Butler mobilizes in her analysis of loss and mourning calls upon the ego in its relational constitution. From a psychoanalytic focus, what she misses is what concerns the unconscious and the dynamic of desire in such a process, a feature that was already present in Freud’s contribution concerning the libidinal investment on the lost object. Hence, in the work of mourning, derived from the loss of a beloved and desired object, there is not only a discursive regulation – concerning the forms of grieving and their legitimacy through symbolic articulations – at stake. The subject is compromised in this very process because it is made evident the lack inherent to the Other to which it is/was attached. Butler is certainly aware of this aspect when she signals the loss that is provoked in the subject by the disappearance of a singular Other to which it was attached, but she constantly pushes the reflection to a discursive monism concerning identifications and their recognisability. The reason can be found in her constant identification of the “I” with the subject: mourning points to the lack inherent to the Other one is attached, which appeals to a negativity that resides at the core of the

¹⁷⁴ A further consideration of the spectre as an indeterminate zone that dislocates any attempt to achieve a full presence concerning the representative dynamic of the subject through an analysis of the tensional relation between signification and the supplement derived from it can be found in Derrida, Jacques (1993): *Spectres de Marx*. Paris, Galilée.

subject, split by the unconscious. Owing to this structure, there is no discursive construction that might capture in its totality such a grieving experience because the subject affected by such a loss exceeds any specific identifications, being a point of negativity deprived of a discursive immanency. Patricia Gherovici, in her essay *Please Select Your Gender. From the Invention of Hysteria to the Democratizing of Transgenderism* (2010) outlines this crucial question:

In the work of mourning, we make the other lacking to represent their lack. Only then can we mourn the one whose desire we caused. Since love is “to give what one does not have” (...), it is when we face the loss of the loved object that we do not have comes back to us. Mourning entails a signifying reorganization that attempts to border the hole left in the Real by the disappearance of the object. Then, and only then, can the subject restart the process of desire (Gherovici, 2010: 199).

What Gherovici outlines, despite not being totally opposed to what Butler stresses, points to a dimension that is not taken into consideration by the latter: if the work of mourning cannot be simply reduced to discourse and its regulatory mechanisms, it is because it points to the lack of the subject as a structural element. In other words, mourning does not primarily inscribe itself into the Imaginary and the Symbolic in the normative sense that Butler attributes to them, but it rather produces an *affect-effect* in the Real of the subject. Mourning unveils the hole that subtracts from discourse and from any socio-symbolic dimension, referring to the *real* of the subject that cannot be properly represented because it is traversed by a lack-of-being that no identification can cover or subvert, despite its relational nature. At the same time, if mourning might become a mortifying experience it is because the Real does not only refer to the hole of pure negativity proper to the subject, but to the lack present in the Other. Thus, mourning operates as the reverse of love: if Lacan defined the latter in terms of giving what one does not have (Lacan, 1973), the former is the painful corroboration of the impossibility of completeness, with an insurmountable gap that cannot be properly fulfilled. Mourning confronts the subject with the affective experience of a pure lack, the assumption of which offers the chance to reshape desire and the bond with the Other.

What is lost in mourning is not simply the other, but what the subject attributed to the other, this is to say, the parcel of alterity that fascinated the subject and enabled the attachment. In other words, in any attachment with someone, one sees something else that defies any concrete representation; something that is and remains a rest that

challenges any attempt to circumscribe it to a discursive definition: the *objet petit a*. Because the subject of the unconscious is always constituted by means of a lack-of-being resultant from the castrating effect of language on its body, any relation to alterity is always mediated by signifiers that structure a fantasmatic approach to the one we desire and/or love. Such a construction is not simply traversed by social regulations of *jouissance*, but it points to singular traits proper to each subject in its first relations with the Other, a remark that Lacan introduced through the expression of *lalangue* (Lacan, 1975b).

There is an impasse to any attempt to universalize mourning and loss as two fundamental experiences that could work as master signifiers because they resist a discursive capture, being a rest proper to the singularity of each form of *jouissance* derived from the passionate attachment to the Other. Despite this difficulty, it is interesting the strategic use of the category that Butler offers, yet she merely considers a form of collectivity in terms of a universal, this is to say, the modality proper to the phallic logic and its segregationist procedures, dismissing the structural limit of the not-all.

Nonetheless, a mobilization of the signifiers that orchestrate the assumption of certain identifications allows for a chance to re-articulate the modalities according to which subjects are discursively included and excluded by the performative role of the signifier, and a critical approach towards prevailing hegemonies and disputing their articulation. Such a question will be analysed in relation to the political action brought by the organization TANQUEM ELS CIE, which struggles for a radicalization of democracy by undoing the bio-political regulations that deprive “illegal immigrants” of a political status in terms of individuals and citizens. In relation to this question, it is interesting to pay attention to the following quotation in Butler’s work:

It is not a matter of a simple entry of the excluded into an established ontology, but an insurrection at the level of ontology, a critical opening up of the questions, What is real? Whose lives are real? How might reality be remade? Those who are unreal have, in a sense, already suffered the violence of derealization. What, then, is the relation between violence and those lives considered as "unreal"? Does violence effect that unreality? Does violence take place on the condition of that unreality? (Butler, 2004a: 33).

Indeed, this quotation entails an invitation to articulate a social bond not based on a segregationist dynamic that might reify inclusions and exclusions, and even

naturalize them. Hence, the outlining of alterity that Butler tries to do by means of mourning and loss is a questioning of the normative apparatus of discourse and the embodiment of norms, which is linked to violent mechanisms.

Despite this attempt, Butler – as I had already noticed in the first section of this research – dismisses the *real* of jouissance that attaches a subject to certain identifications by means of its fantasmatic logic, which links the subject with a specular and a symbolic Other, a Big Other. Her attempt to institute precariousness as a master signifier that enables the institution of a more “inclusive” sociality merely appeals to discourse and its regulations, placing the subject as an effect that possesses an agency in a non-teleological sense of subjection. Nonetheless, it is not a libidinal subject, but a plural and fragmented entity, according to which alterity is reduced to an imaginary dimension.

However, Butler might respond to such a critical statement from another paradigm, linked to an ethical re-articulation of social relationality. In the last years, Butler has revisited Emmanuel Levinas' notion of the face of the Other, and an ethics based on responsibility that might enable plural forms of political alliance. Hence:

To respond to the face, to understand its meaning, means to be awake to what is precarious in another life or, rather, the precariousness of life itself. This cannot be an awokeness (...) to my own life, and then an extrapolation from an understanding of my own precariousness to an understanding of another's precarious life. It has to be an understanding of the precariousness of the Other. This is what makes the face belong to the sphere of ethics (Butler, *op. cit.*: 134).

The liaison between precariousness and the face of the Other by means of an ethical demand was also present in Levinas. The relationality of the subject points to a precarious constitution of ek-sistence because the bond with alterity is not accidental, but it is structural since a subject is born. It also stresses an interdependency that is the occasion for an ethics not primarily based on what Levinas had denounced as narcissism, this is to say, a prerogative of the “I” over the Other. As far as Butler is concerned, the re-appropriation of such an ethical frame entails that precariousness is not merely a factual element in anybody's life, but it is the occasion for a relation towards the Other through affection and responsibility. In other words, the encounter with alterity provokes a radical chiasm into the subject, placing it in a scenario where the Other is an enigmatic being bodily exposed, challenging current norms according to

which identifications are produced and reproduced. Alterity gains, then, a surplus value regarding the subject because it is the occasion for a renegotiation of forms of sociability through difference, this is to say, provoking an ecstatic transformation of the subjective sphere, rooted in a social world where its ek-sistence is attached to an Other the presence of which always results in a strangeness concerning who one is.

The notion of face in the Levinasian corpus defies discourse, because it entails an excess that no socio-symbolic representation can absorb. This gives to alterity a status of ineffability and, at the same time, it is the condition for any concrete ek-sistence. The main question in this approach is the responsibility of the subject in front of the Other it encounters, which is further highlighted by the ambivalent circumstances that Levinas points at: the Other shows a complete nudity that becomes an invitation towards violence and, at the same time, it assumes the role of the primordial law: “You ought not to kill”. This ambivalent status of the Other in Levinas is evoked by Butler, who mobilizes precariousness as a social and existential condition that interrupts any presumed sovereignty of an individualistic and homogeneous notion of subjectivity. It is the body which becomes the exposure of such a difference. Hence, as Levinas had also stressed, the body in its ethical dimension incarnates the role of the face in terms of what subtracts any attempt to construct a harmonic and segregationist form of collectivity.

Nevertheless, Butler remains quite suspicious concerning the ineffability that Levinas attributes to the face due to a suspension of ontology¹⁷⁵, introducing an incommensurable dimension proper to the ethical scenario between the “I” and the Other, understood in Levinasian terms as a an elusive element beyond a phenomenological apprehension. In her discursive strategy, which puts into question the epistemic and ontological regimes of intelligibility proper to identification and dis-identification, Butler asserts that:

¹⁷⁵ Indeed, in her *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), Butler argues that even Levinas’ notion of the face of the Other has a limit, since it expels from this domain the alterity incarnated by Palestinians and Muslims. Hence, Butler aims to stress the inherent limits of any formalist universalism, which might become the occasion for a silent exclusionary dynamic, and the construction of identitarian politics, an accusation that Butler throws against Levinas in his liaison between the Other and the Jewish. For a further approach on this issue, see Butler, Judith (2005): « Responsibility. Laplanche and Levinas: The Primacy of the Other » in *Giving An Account of Oneself*: New York, Fordham University Press, pages 88-94.

The possibility of an ethical response to the face thus requires a normativity of the visual field: there is already not only an epistemological frame within which the face appears, but an operation of power as well, since only by virtue of certain kinds of anthropocentric dispositions and cultural frames will a given face seem to be a human face to any one of us (Butler, 2005: 29-30).

Interestingly, Butler mimes Levinas' argument in relation to the non-ontological status that he confers to the Other as the irrepresentable face as she had previously articulated in *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993), in her dispute with Slavoj Žižek concerning the Lacanian register of the Real. There is an identic reaction, despite the difference between the Lacanian Real and alterity in Levinas, which reminds of the theological figure of the Jewish deity, and the impossibility to apprehend any feature related to its image. Butler, on her turn, constantly reduces the subject to a discursive set of predicates, being precariousness a new one that she mobilizes in order to elaborate a further displacement in the domain of the subject. What she does not consider in her nominalistic approach is the resultant petrification of the subject at the core of discourse and power relations. From such a scenario, "subversive" performative acts within a given historical conditions becomes the only possibility, foreclosing any further irruption into the dimension of the social.

Consequently, Butler equalizes the subject to the factual conditions in which identifications are currently regulated by means of the capitalist discourse. Such a gesture transforms precariousness, understood as a symptom mobilised as a master signifier that creates a logical set by means of segregation, which relegates the use of this signifier to the binary register proper to the Imaginary, translating the Symbolic into a regulatory power. In fact, such a logical consequence is what she insistently repeats in extracts like this one, which can be found in *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013):

In other words, if prevailing norms decide who will count as a human or as a subject of rights, then we can see that those who remain unrecognised are subject to precarity. Hence, the differential distribution of norms of recognition directly implies the differential allocation of precarity (Butler, 2013: 89).

The same exclusionary logic is reproduced in the mobilization of precariousness as a signifier that articulates a criticism of prevailing norms, linking a radicalization of democracy to recognition. As a result, the Real is rejected, which bans the possibility to radically bring into question the hegemonic orchestration of reality inasmuch as it is a

traumatic phenomenon that exceeds imaginary and symbolic constructions. Hence, what Butler erases from her reflection of precariousness is the *real* dimension of the body as a *substance jouissante* mortified by the sadistic demand of the capitalist super-ego, which compels the subject towards a self-exploitation that, paradoxically, bans the access to the *jouissance* that is ordered. Hence, if precariousness – or vulnerability in Butler's instance – is placed in the sphere of ontology, it embraces a pretention of totality that binds the exclusionary mechanisms of the phallic logic. Such operation expulses the limit of closure that the not-all is, incarnating a *supplementary* modality that bans any totality, inoculating within it another logical modality not primarily based on oppositional identifications. Indeed, Butler symptomatically reacts in front of the feminine *jouissance* or not-all, pushing singularity to an outside in terms of a useless notion in political terms:

Insofar as “this” fact of singularizing exposure, which follows from bodily existence, is one that can be reiterated endlessly, it constitutes a collective condition, characterizing us all equally, not only reinstalling the “we”, but also establishing a structure of substitutability at the core of singularity (Butler, 2005: 34-35).

Despite her aim at dealing with a Levinasian corpus, Butler takes precariousness as the ethical and political occasion for elaborating a normative attempt that guarantees a liveable life for any subject, which means a subversion of the current hegemonies through an insurgency of the prevailing discursive structures that regulate social bonds. It is the occasion for the elaboration of an ethics that installs at its centre a responsibility towards the Other not in an identitarian logic, this is to say, allowing an identification with a *similar* alterity, but to *anybody*. It implies, then, a renegotiation of the articulation of universals and their concrete materialization, taking into account the historicity of discourse in order to permit political alliances based on situated demands performatively articulated:

But when bodies assemble without a clear set of demands, then we might conclude that the bodies are performing the demand to end conditions of induced precarity that are not livable. Such bodies both perform the conditions of life in public – sleeping and living there, taking care of the environment and each other – and exemplify relations of equality that are precisely those that are lacking in the economic and political domain (Butler, 2013: 102).

Stressing the embodiment that the struggle against precariousness has implied in recent times¹⁷⁶, Butler suggests a new configuration of the social bond that departs from the symptomatic consequence of capitalist discourse in its neoliberal form. Hence, in order to push to the limits the exclusionary division between those included and those excluded in the representative and political dynamics bio-politically regulated, she places demand at the centre of the political struggle, which echoes the radical democracy envisaged by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe¹⁷⁷.

Nevertheless, her conception of the subject as a diverse multiplicity of identifications that are susceptible of being renegotiated involves a notion of the social bond derived from the demand in terms of symmetry. Stating this claim does not entail that Butler does not consider difference as negativity constitutive of the subject, but she rather reduces it to a plurality of egotistic identifications that cannot be regulated under a uniform discourse. Underlying the constitutive passivity of the subject, which results from the process of subjection in front of an Other, and the performative embodiment of norms that Butler attributes to such a logic, does not help either. Her reduction of the body of the precarious subject to a surface where signifiers are inscribed tends to

¹⁷⁶ Since the explosion of the “Arabian Spring” in 2010, the major symbol of which was the occupation of the Egyptian Tahrir Square, there have been many local demonstrations against the current regime of governing through precariousness by neoliberal political devices that have acquired a global status. Just to name a few more: the occupation of Plaza del Sol in Madrid and Plaça Catalunya in Barcelona during the weeks that the movement of 15-M began to consolidate itself, and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States of America, and its strategy of a human microphone in order to subvert the prohibition of using technologies to widespread their demands.

Concerning Spain, several social movements preceded the emergence of 15-M, amongst which the PAH (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca, created in 2009) became a symbol in the struggle for housing and the quarrel against fraudulent mortgages, which still causes hundreds of evictions every day in the whole State. At the same time, the 15-M enabled the creation of several district assemblies that allowed a further political alliance that could represent popular demands fighting for a radicalization of democracy. Besides, after the 15-M, in a state level, different platforms in defence of public services and rights – which are called “mareas” in Spanish, and include demands on education, health, culture and mobility – irrupted in the political scenario. It has helped on the coordination of different strategies that have had a certain impact regarding the dynamic of representative institutions and political parties.

¹⁷⁷ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, in the middle of the 80’s, elaborated a political theory based on radical democracy, this is to say, enlarging the dynamic contained in the representative mechanisms of democracy in order to give a response to popular demands. Recuperating the notion of hegemony of Antonio Gramsci, they re-elaborated the Marxist tradition to enable a political approach not based on a subject of History in a nearly teleological trend (the proletariat) and a single axis (class struggle). Their model is based on the notion of agonism, which refers to a democratic space in terms of a struggle that takes as its basis freedom and equality. For a further approach on this issue, see Laclau, Ernesto, and Chantal Mouffe (1985): *Hegemony and the Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London/ New York, Verso; Laclau, Ernesto (1996): *Empancipation(s)*. London/ New York, Verso; Butler, Judith, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Zizek (2000a): *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues in the Left*. London/ New York, Verso, and Laclau, Ernesto (2005): *On Populist Reason*. London/ New York, Verso.

configure a notion of subjectivity that universalizes the Imaginary, binding again and again the exclusion that is said to subvert. Expulsing the Real from the social bond and from subjectivity means the erasure of what cannot be grasped by the Imaginary and Symbolic. Such is the specific role of the Real: the “outside” that fractures sense and the aspiration towards a totality that the *objetit petit a*, in terms of *Das Ding*, creates. Hence, the Real is, in Lacanian terms, a *trou-matique* (Cevasco, 2010) that exceeds the ontological discourse focused on being and language, being its enjoying parasite.

Notwithstanding with that, there are moments of vacillations in Butler’s discourse that, though finally become subsumed under her nominalist and historicist strategy, point to this issue:

The “I” is the moment of failure in every narrative effort to give an account of oneself. It remains the unaccounted for and, in that sense, constitutes the failure that the very project of self-narration requires. Every effort to give an account of oneself is bound to encounter this failure, and to founder upon it (Butler, 2005: 79).

Is the Real what bars any possible reduction of the subject to what can be attributed to it through the logic of identification. It is also the occasion for processes of dis-identification, outlining the role of the subject as far as the drives are concerned in the maintenance of a concrete and historical socio-symbolic reality by the surplus produced by the signifier. Indeed, *jouissance* is a crucial feature in the political arena, since there are some identifications that produce a huge attachment, while others do not produce any mobilizing effect or their impact is politically irrelevant. A good example of this question is racism and the maintenance of national identifications, which point to forms of symbolic regulation of *jouissance* that produce what Lacan named *semblants* (Lacan,1991), this is to say, forms of alterity towards which one becomes linked to, while others are excluded, presented as threatening for the “purity” of a community.

Concerning precariousness, it has become a signifier that provides the occasion for the institution of a social bond or, at least, it is an occasion for representing a symptomatic malaise. The problem of precariousness as Butler articulates it is, nonetheless, that it seems to be impotent to subvert the capitalist discourse and its effects, reproducing the division occasioned by the former, with no *real* alternative. As Slavoj Zizek said concerning her notion of gender performativity, Butler’s analysis forecloses the possibility to subvert the limits imposed by the capitalist discourse and its symptomatic reality since it merely describes it. Her discourse is exemplary of the

equality provided by bio-politics and neoliberalism: anequality based on the exploitation of bodies by means of the fetishism of the *plus-de-jouir* that perversely promises a plenitude of the subject. In relation to this, the symmetry that traverses Butler's notion of social interdependency as a discursive articulation in a Lacanian sense is a sign of what has become typical of current critical theory: the refuse of asymmetry by means of absorbing the subject into the performance of neutral identifications, this is to say, deprived of singularity, proper to the differential modes of *jouissance*. Hence, discourse as a bond becomes impossible when *all* subjects are neutralized in the sense of a homogeneous gendered status that expulses sex, the deadlock that bans any possible correspondence between subjects.

As a result, the notion of precariousness that Butler develops constantly finds the same impasse. This is the main trouble to the prerogative she confers to recognition in its dyadic structure: the set of those included and rightly sanctioned by the norm, and those who are expelled from such a set, which confirms the binary and aggressive structure of recognition, and the existence of a group. Regarding recognition, she states what follows: "Recognition becomes the process by which I become other than what I was and so cease to be able to return to what I was. There is, then, a constitutive loss in the process of recognition, since the "I" is transformed through the act of recognition" (Butler, *op.cit.*: 27-28).

Certainly, the Hegelian echo that Butler stresses concerning the desire for recognition entails a loss of the subject in front of the Other, which implies that, in order to ek-sist, the subject must be constantly outside itself, being-in-the-world. Despite this, the virtuosity that she attributes to such operation redoubles what she presumably denounces: the articulation of an imaginary and binary schema between those included and those excluded, with the further consequence that linking precariousness to recognition is condemned to an impasse: an incessant production of abject bodies, merely changing who occupies such a position.

4.2.3. Isabell Lorey's Analysis of Precariousness as a Governmental Device: Neo-Liberalism and Individuation.

Lorey offers a diagnosis of precariousness as a result of bio-politics in its narrow alliance with neo-liberalism. Although she begins her reflection evoking the ontological sense conferred to it by Butler, she focuses on its material dimension in terms of a product of new regimes of regulation of subjectivity and power relations. Hence, in a narrow connection with the Foucauldian genealogy of bio-politics, the main concern of her analysis is the contemporary production of subjects extremely worried by a material uncertainty in relation to their daily lives, which becomes a strategy of governance. In a foreword written by Judith Butler, precariousness is summarized in of Foucault's governmentality (Foucault, 2004b). By it are meant political strategies that create new ontological and epistemic frames where individuals become more and more attached to regulatory forms of power: "In the place of critique and resistance, populations are now defined by their need to be alleviated from insecurity, valorizing forms of police and state control, promises of global investment, and institutions of global governance" (Butler in Lorey, 2015: VIII-IX). Subjection to the regulatory category of precariousness is also tied to a progressive mutation of the State, since the State is no longer a safeguard of rights, material conditions and liberties, but it is transformed into an apparatus that, as Foucault asserted, regulates populations as organic entities. The State operates, thus, as an immunological element that links the vector of sovereign power to security, despite the paradox therein implied. In other words, security entails the propagation of the ghost of a threat, a silent danger with no concrete figure, which leads to subjective states of paranoia: "In the terms of later modernity, the sovereign people, and the sovereign subject, are threatened by forms of illness, contagions of sexual panic, waves of criminality, possible invasions of many kinds"¹⁷⁸ (Butler in Lorey, *op. cit.*: IX).

¹⁷⁸ The strangeness proper to the body inasmuch as it involves a *having* and not a *being* is extremely recurrent in cinema, above all from the last decades of the XX century to our days. A body threatened by unexpected visitors or nearly invisible microscopic forms of life such as viruses or bacteria. One of the paradigmatic films of such a paranoid representation of the body, where health and illness cohabit in a limit where being healthy entails a securitarian strategy in which any form of alterity becomes a potential danger, is *Alien* (1979). In this film, the body incarnates a recipient for the generation of a monstrous

In this sense, what both Butler and Lorey outline is the primordial role conferred to the body under the signifier of precariousness, which expresses a new configuration of the subject in recent times. The body becomes the exposure of a jeopardizing operation of material conditions that guarantee the liveability of one's existence, and, at the same time, it is articulated by the capitalist discourse in terms of an agent and a consumer of the goods produced by the market. There is a paradox at stake that precariousness shows: while the subject is subsumed into the vicious circle of production and consumption, it is deprived of a background that enables its existence within a social bond. Thus, the result of the entrepreneur of oneself is a flexible subjectivity the entire life of which is captured by the labour market, being a neutral atom that could be replaced by any other. Following this issue, Lorey aims at defining the specificity of precariousness:

Precarization means more than insecure jobs, more than the lack of security given by waged employment. By way of insecurity and danger, it embraces the whole of existence, the body, modes of subjectivation. It is threat and coercion, even while it opens up new possibilities of living and working. Precarization means living with the unforeseeable, with contingency (Lorey, *op. cit.*: 1).

Besides material conditions and labour market, precariousness points to another element, which is characteristic of the capitalist discourse, namely, there is a process of devouring what could be called the symbolic capital, this is to say, the sum of cultural ideals and values, which are at the core of the construction of a social bond as well. In this sense, Lacanian psychoanalysis offers further theoretical hints to understand the current strategy of neoliberal capitalism concerning the administration of life. What psychoanalysis outlines is that while the symptom creates a bond towards the Other inasmuch as every subject is introduced in language by an Other, the capitalist discourse aims at vanishing such a link, creating autistic modes of *jouissance*. This move entails

creature, a metaphor of life in terms of the menace of pathology. A few years after its release, *The Thing* (1982), following the premise of the imbrications between the body and pathology, created a story where a group of explorers are menaced by the terrifying presence of an extra-terrestrial organism that has the ability to mime the body it devours, which reminds of the Freudian notion of *unheimlich* concerning his analysis of Hoffman's automat. In more recent years, science-fiction cinema is more concerned on epidemic plots with catastrophic consequences, which provokes a generalized state of unbearable anxiety in front of the imminence of the real of death. Just to name a few that have constructed the liaison between the zombie and the infected body: *28 Days Later* (2002), *REC* (2007), *Contagion* (2011), or *War World Z* (2013). Most of these films are curiously made in the USA, where the paranoid reaction after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 clearly contributed to forge a new imaginary where biology, the body and bacteriological threats are linked together. Paranoia has become, then, a new mode of regulation and representation of the body, with its subsequent fears and deliria.

the articulation of a subject deprived of a social bond that enables a supplementary creation for the lack of proportion between the sexes:

Le symptôme social du « tous prolétaires » qui globalise le rapport conforme de chacun aux produits du marché est disruptif du lien social, n'établissant qu'un seul lien, très peu social, de chacun aux plus-de-jour prescrits. Ce n'est pas le cas du symptôme fondamental – ou, mieux, du *sinthome*¹⁷⁹ qui n'exclut nullement le lien social s'il est bien (...) symptôme borroméen, qui noue pour chacun, de façon singulière, jamais globale, le désir et les jouissances, l'Imaginaire, le Symbolique et le Réel (Soler, 2009 : 107).

Precariousness also refers, thus, to the unveiling of the Real of sex, with a discourse that does not provide any imaginary and symbolic constructions that enable the bond with another subject, a bond that love allows to make. On the contrary, the capitalist discourse bounds the subject to the domain of *jouissance*, which is a solitary dimension where each subject enjoys differently according to a singularity that does not allow any social link inasmuch as it is the suspension of the signifying chain:

Au niveau du désir, il y a bien un couple: celui du fantasme, (...) solidaire du sens ; au niveau de l'amour, (...) un couple de sujet à sujet (...) ; mais, au niveau de la jouissance, rien, pas de couple. La jouissance n'est pas liante, à elle seule, elle ne préside pas au lien social (Soler, *op. cit.* : 133).

The consequence of such a regulatory strategy in producing the sphere of subjectivity and its identifications under the sign of capitalism is the creation of aggregates, which by no means is the same to a bond. Indeed, a social bond provides for historical and contingent modes to deal with the impasse proper to the Real in terms of the impossible to symbolize that always manifests itself in the same place. In order to deal with such a logical modality regarding what cannot be grasped, which always remains as a constitutive exterior to the production of sense and reality, a discourse, as I had previously declared, institutes different instances of *semblants*. Such a notion refers to the disproportional figures that operate as discursive modalities that create a

¹⁷⁹ The notion of “*sinthome*” was introduced by Lacan when he was dealing, in the last years of his seminars, with the writing of James Joyce. While the notion of “*symptôme*” referred to the supplementary and singular response of each subject to the Real to which the unconscious is confronted, this is to say, the absence of a sexual relation between the subjects and their *jouissances*, the “*sinthome*” points to another dimension. It refers to the “*artistic gesture*” that enables the link between the three registers – Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real – thanks to the Name-of-the-Father, this is to say, the phallic signifier that links them, providing a certain consistency that is radically absent in psychosis, where the link with the Other and *jouissance* are nearly immediate. For a further approach on this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (2005): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XXIII: Le sinthome 1975-1976*. Paris, Le Seuil ; Morel, Geneviève (2000) : *Ambiguïtés sexuelles. Sexuation et psychose*. Paris, Economica ; Soler, Colette (2009) : *Lacan, l'inconscient réinventé*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, and Gherovici, Patricia (2010): *Please Select Your Gender. From the Invention of Hysteria to the Democratization of Transgenderism*. New York, Routledge.

supplementary articulation in front of sex as a gap that no signifier can properly catch (e.g.: master-slave, teacher-student, hysteric-master, analyst-analysand).

On the contrary, a bond between a subject and the object of its *jouissance* dissolves the social bond as such, which signals the paradox of capitalism that Jacques Lacan had highlighted. It produces precarious subjects inasmuch as they are not only deprived of guaranteed material conditions, but they are deprived of a social bond in a large scale, which involves that cultural ideals transcending the individual are erased from the hegemonic constructions of reality. Desire and love, being both paradigmatic manifestations of the liaison with the Other, are re-articulated in differential terms, which finally involves that the capitalist discourse pushes desire and the circuit of the drive towards the endless production and consumption of the gadgets of the market, while love is displaced. In fact, love is substituted by an instrumental and calculating operation that places *jouissance* at the core of discourse, which implies several subjective exchanges that hardly reach to create a bond in term of a pair of subjects¹⁸⁰.

From psychoanalysis, precariousness can also be articulated as a symptom and a regulative strategy that increases as long as the neoliberal attack against the public space in terms of a shared and common reality gains further terrain. In this sense, from a Lacanian perspective, bio-politics can be understood as an administration of life that has its symptomatic translation into the equality provided by a reduction of subjectivity to a proletariat status. In this logic, scientific knowledge erases the subject from its discourse, which becomes substituted by statistics, stereotyped figures and a mix of standard behaviours. Thereby, scientific knowledge becomes an ally of capitalism, which resounds of the Foucauldian notion of discourse in terms of an imbrication between knowledge and power:

Or le biopouvoir capitaliste est allié à l'idéologie de la science et aux valeurs de performance qu'elle soutient, il ne considère donc plus pour l'essentiel que les bio-symptômes soient des dissidents politiques, même s'ils ont des conséquences politiques. Il les pense comme des dysfonctionnements ou des pannes d'une machine humaine neurologique, hormonale, sociale, etc., qui se détraque, comme se détraquerait n'importe quelle machine (Soler, *op. cit.* : 200).

¹⁸⁰ As a matter fact, love involves a risk of not knowing how the *partenaire* will respond to our demand, and the fact that loving is based on the operation of giving oneself to the Other, a remark introduced by Lacan. Badiou, through his Lacanian influence, links the proliferation of social networks that promise to find the right person for the subject as a symptomatic reaction against love, reducing such a bond in terms of a consuming operation. For a further approach on this issue, see Badiou, Alain (2009): *Éloge de l'amour*. Paris, Flammarion.

Under the contemporary regime of the so-called austerity, which diminishes discourse by virtue of an extreme individuation of existence, there is a mutation of precariousness that reinforces the quasi-solipsistic nature of the neoliberal subject, mostly concerned by uncertainty and insecurity concerning itself: “Contrary to the old role of a domination that demands obedience in exchange for protection, neoliberal governing proceeds primarily through social insecurity, through regulating the minimum of assurance while simultaneously increasing instability” (Lorey, 2015: 2).

The diminishing of the social bond that precariousness expresses also points to a question that Lorey perfectly reflects in her analysis, which derives from the Foucauldian insight concerning the exercise of governing oneself by means of the neoliberal dimension of the *cura sui*: a proliferation of identifications in terms of a subjective stylization and discipline. Identifications, in the capitalist logic, become consuming goods susceptible of being ephemerally enjoyed, which are incessantly renewed. I would like to give two examples of this trend. The first one refers to the multiplication of the uses of the signifier *queer*, which has become some sort of a label for fashion, museums, and the expansion of an ideological turn based on the supposition of a primordial neutrality concerning the subject, furtherly surmounted by the narcissistic operation of the “I”. Concerning this operation, the psychoanalyst Patricia Gherovici gives some hints on what she calls a democratization of the notion of “transgenderism”, which is usually tied to queer theory¹⁸¹:

What could be more democratic, more essentially American, than giving everyone the choice of turning transgenderist, with a gender that can be changed on demand? In such a context, technology and market rules play a crucial role because contemporary transsexual transformations depend on a surgeon and an endocrinologist (Gherovici, 2010: 1).

In this sense, the proliferation of the notion of transgenderism is a symptomatic reality instituted by bio-politics: the rejection of the Real-impossible to decipher. Thus, those multiple and diverse identifications are stressed to be, in a quite impossible way,

¹⁸¹ Authors like Paul B. Preciado speaks about a malleable subjectivity understood in prosthetic and plastic terms. Hence, the transgender subject is placed beyond masculinity and femininity, which are criticized for being heteronormative concepts that naturalize a notion of the body and sexuality and have a discursive historicity. Through a nominalist account, what Preciado elaborates is a genealogy of the bio-political body, and he proposes as an alternative a fluidity of identity in terms of contingent identifications self-transformed and self-created. I would add that it is a strategy that sustains the illusionary belief on an omnipotent *jouissance* that could be obtained if cultural barriers were surpassed and abolished, a feature proper to the procedure of perversion in Lacanian terms. For a further account on this notion, see Preciado, Paul B. (2000): *Manifiesto contra-sexual*. Barcelona, Anagrama.

self-identifications. Sexual identifications are by no means excluded from such a logic, which implies an alienation of the subject to the regulations of a social Other that offers a diversity of gadgets. Hence, there would be no distinction between the market and existence, which, as Colette Soler affirms, reduces singularity and the symptom as a subjective response to the lack of proportion between the sexes to the sphere of pathologization, articulated by the figure of the expert in terms of the authority produced by the university discourse.

Another example of such a trend can be found in the so-called hipster¹⁸² urban culture, which has its major impact in European urban capitals. The paradox of the hipster movement can be properly seen in cities like Barcelona, where it is highly present in districts like the Raval, one of the poorest areas of the zone. Hipsters attend to clubs of this area, which become popular thanks to a huge affluence of people, but they finally abandon them, which involves that all the economic wealth derived from this activity goes somewhere else, in a miming procedure of speculative economy.

These two examples illustrate a characteristic of precariousness: it is a symptom that cannot be represented by a unitary scope but it is rather disseminated and plural, which means that it cannot be properly articulated by a single signifier such as race, sex/gender or class:

The precarious cannot be unified or represented, their interests are so disparate that classical forms of corporate organizations are not effective. The many precarious are dispersed both in relations of production and through diverse modes of production, which absorb and engender subjectivities, extend their economic exploitation, and multiply identities and work places. It is not only work that is precarious and dispersed, but life itself. In all their differences, the precarious tend to be isolated and individualized, because they do short-term jobs, get by from project to project, and often fall through collective social-security systems. There are no lobbies or forms of representation for the diverse precarious (Lorey, *op. cit.*: 9).

In its regulative dimension, precariousness grants the subjection to the Big Other, and it causes a homogenization of subjects and their existences. It is a strategy of exploiting life and bodies, which can be clearly observed in the state attitude towards migration. When the speculation was at its highest level, there were massive political campaigns to legalize illegal immigrants, whereas in countries like Spain, since 2009,

¹⁸² Etymologically, “hipster” refers to the jeans that are worn at the height of the hips, which reminds of the fashion trend of the 70’s and the 80’s. Nowadays, it is used to refer to people who recycle the fashion culture proper to these decades, who wear big and old-fashioned glasses, and who usually go to “alternative” clubs.

with a reform of migratory policy¹⁸³, the criteria for obtaining the citizenship became stricter and migration began to be considered as a non-profitable excess. It illustrates the binary and exclusionary division of the capitalist discourse.

Lorey further mobilizes the signifier precariousness in similar terms to Marxist feminism, vindicating a renegotiation of the division between the public space where labour is recognised, while private and domestic affairs are relegated to a non-legitimate area in mainstream economic and political consideration. Thus, evoking Butler's reflection concerning the coextension between precariousness and vulnerability, Lorey re-articulates a social bond focused on a materialist account of existence:

Precariousness becomes “co-extensive” at birth, since survival depends from the beginning on social networks, on sociality and the work of others. The fundamental social dependency of a living being due to its vulnerability, due to the impossibility of living a wholly autonomous life, also highlights – going beyond Butler – the eminent significance of reproductive work. Because life is precarious, it is crucially dependent on care and reproduction (Lorey, *op. cit.*: 19).

In Lorey's case, precariousness is something more than an ontological condition. Precariousness is placed at the middle of a struggle that enables an analysis of the current socio-symbolic order, which is crucial in order to understand the mechanism of bio-politics and neo-liberalism. Leaving aside ethical considerations on precariousness such as Levinas', whose reflection hardly impacts on the political dimension because of a super-egotistic structure conferred to alterity, what is pointed out refers to material conditions regulated by an administration of life according to several processes of subjection. In this sense, Lorey's analysis points to potential forms of resistance that do not simply balance on the renegotiation of norms and their process, but a quarrel that might enable a struggle for a new hegemonic context. Asserting that precariousness cannot be properly grasped by a single master signifier or *point de capiton* involves that the struggle must be based in the creation of alliances that, nonetheless, place at the middle of the political arena the paranoid dynamic of contemporary bio-politics. On the

¹⁸³ Indeed, in 2009, the government of the PSOE (Spanish Labour and Socialist Party) introduced a dispositional claim in the legislation that regulates the juridical status of those sanctioned as illegal immigrants to harden the conditions for their regularisation. Before this reform, a common way to obtain the citizenship was marrying to a Spaniard, but this disposition removed this condition as a way out for this situation. What was proposed instead was the requisite of being hired, during at least one year, for 40 hours per week. Hence, the legal modification was not an isolated affair, but it took place just after the economic crisis that began in 2008 in order to reduce the presence of migrants in a context of recession, while at the same time it had an important impact in increasing underground economy. For a further account on this issue, see https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2009-19949. Last hit: 01/03/2016

one hand, the capitalist superego demands an incessant enjoyment that, at its turn, shows a more obscure reverse: the dimension of a death drive proper to a gear that consumes the living body up to its extinction. On the other hand, thus, the regulation of life means, at the same time, destroying life, letting it die when it becomes useless: "Domination turns existential precariousness into an anxiety towards others who cause harm, who have to be preventively fended off; and not infrequently even destroyed, in order to protect those who are threatened" (Lorey, *op. cit.*: 21).

The equality constructed by the capitalist discourse concerning the universalization of the proletarian status of the subject also involves another element, which is tied to the neo-liberal figure of the entrepreneur of oneself: each subject is, at least, an owner of a property, its body, a merchandise offered in the context of the labour market. According to this economic logic, neo-liberal bio-politics captures the bodily life of the subject and, through a metonymic operation, reduces subjectivity to the living organism, which finally means that the bio-political configuration of the subject is a body with no singularity, yet a homogeneous fleshy entity. In relation to this, Lorey analyses the strategy of building a coherent subject that must match with the identification of producer-consumer:

Normalizing self-government is based on an imagination of coherence, identity and wholeness that goes back to the construction of a male, white, bourgeois subject. Coherence is in turn one of the preconditions for modern sovereign subjects. "Inner", "natural" truths imagined in this way, constructions of authenticity of this kind, continue up to the present to nourish notions of being able to live one's own decisions, in other words being sovereign (Lorey, *op. cit.*: 30).

However, what Lorey fails to outline in her analysis of precariousness as a symptomatic product of bio-politics is the exploitation that it inflicts on the threatening dimension of otherness that exceeds discursive articulations. Due to her Foucauldian filiation to a nominalist account, what she leaves aside – as Butler does – is the most troubling dimension of the Other, this is to say, *jouissance*. Such a reaction in front of alterity demonstrates that there is a portion that, despite being a rest of negativity from each socio-symbolic configuration, returns, questioning the discursive reality: the Real. She implicitly refers to it, though it is quickly integrated into discourse, without being considered as the irrupting element that splits and fractures reality:

What is to be protected can be a political community, a social constellation, from which an evil coming from "within itself" must be differentiated in order to protect this community. First, this kind of evil must be discursively positioned at the social margin – frequently supported by a process of *othering* - in order to then be split: into one part

that is considered, in relation to immunization, as "capable of integration", and another part that is constructed as "incurable" and deadly for the community, and that must therefore be completely excluded. The security of the community is regulated through the integration of a neutralized and domesticated potential danger, which is in part produced by security techniques for their own legitimization (Lorey, *op. cit.*: 43).

The paranoid dynamic that Lorey attributes to the bio-political regulation of what Foucault named a population does not simply belong to the tradition that sprang in Modernity, but it is rooted into the logical structure of the phallic logic. Indeed, what is being described refers to a logical set the viability of which depends on a foreclosing operation that expels the element that defies collectivity. The reverse of such a mechanism is the threatening feature attributed to alterity, usually seen as a feminization and an excess that escapes the regulatory limits of discourse.

However, it is true that since the XVIII century there has been an increasing hygienist turn concerning the body and the most stranger of traits of alterity, this is to say, *jouissance*. The consequence of such a mutation has been discursively articulated in terms of a pathological behaviour the origin of which might be found in an abnormal functioning of the organism, which is one of the characteristics of racism. Therefore, normalization is based on a paranoid dynamic where the Other is seen as a constant threat, which at its turn refers to the most troubling element of each subject: its body. Hence, from a bio-political perspective, the driving body, the body in its *real* dimension, is a menacing entity that must be – despite the incessant failures in such an aim – domesticated.

4.3. Vulnerability, Bio-Politics and Violence: Three Scenarios.

The previous discussion of the notion of precariousness, according to the analysis provided by Judith Butler and Isabell Lorey, has been the occasion to enlighten the current conceptual map on neo-liberal capitalism and bio-politics. Hence, it offers the context to place my analysis on three forms of violence where the body and the subject are traversed, mainly, by the alliance knowledge-power, which is explicitly present in current medical treatments of transsexuality and intersexuality. In these two cases, the notion of the body at stake is properly concerned with an organic dimension, this is to say, the object of discourse proper to science and, more specifically, biomedicine. This remark is important to be outlined because it implies two issues: the first one refers to a notion of an organism that is susceptible of being regulated

according to taxonomy and anatomical functionality, and the second one entails that the subjective-symptomatic dimension is erased. In other words, both cases depart from a notion of a *silent body*, this is to say, an entity deprived of a linguistic signification and inscription. Any symptomatic reality is considered as a perturbation from a scale of normalcy statistically elaborated, which further involves that the singular paths of desire and *jouissance* are expelled from such a bond, governed by the expert.

Concerning transsexuality and surgical sex reassignment, there is a further modality at stake, which is proper to the discourse of the hysteric. The psychiatrist is instituted as the master holder of a knowledge concerning the being of the subject who requests such a bodily transformation. In a certain way, several transsexual demands aim at reaching an impossible goal: to acquire a complete and absolute identification, a coherent configuration of a “truly” self. Such a request is simultaneously fuelled by the Other performed through the psychiatric and neurobiological discourse. It is this very discourse that promises the chance to achieve an “actual” incarnation of a man and a woman concerning stereotyped standards.

As far as intersexuality is concerned, it reopens a debate related to morphology and genital anatomy, with its subsequent bioethical debate. Indeed, the intersexual body represents indeterminacy in relation to taxonomical criteria, which is currently resolved in most countries¹⁸⁴ through a surgical reassignment of its anatomical sex. It is an extreme metaphor of the power and impact of biomedical discourse over the body through a reduction of its existence to an organic entity with no further consequences, producing a split between body and mind. The search for a chromosomic cause for what is said to be an anatomical “abnormality” clearly erases the dimension of desire, which in this case is especially present in the bond parents-child through the name that a newborn is given. At its turn, it allows for a consideration of bioethics as a discourse that might be an ally for current forms of bio-power rather than preserving the “autonomy” and “integrity” of the subject regarding medical interventions.

¹⁸⁴ In countries like Nepal, Australia and Germany, the LGBTBIQ+ groups have pressured governments to recognise specific rights to intersexual subjects to avoid a forcibly surgical operation when they are just born. In the case of Germany, the alternative has been the creation of a third option in the national identity document, which is neither male nor female, but “X”. Legal authorities let intersex people and their families decide the future of intersex people, diminishing to a certain extent the huge power that the biomedical discourse had in this situation. For further information on this issue, see <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/10/germany-third-gender-birth-certificate>. Last hit: 10/03/2016

These two scenarios point to a dimension of bio-power and its regulatory dynamic, this is to say, its logic of controlling life according to established standards where subjects are fit in by means of parameters of scientific knowledge. Hence, the Lacanian analysis that institutes science as an ally of capitalism is clarified through the erasure of singularity, where the symptom is transformed into pathology. This issue is explicitly relevant in relation to transsexuality, a category born within the devices of the discourse of psychiatry and its binary division between normal and abnormal forms of subjection. What will be an important task of this section is to analyse to which extent the bio-medical axis impacts on transsexual activism. In this sense, in countries deprived of a public health policy such as USA a paradox emerges: in order to sustain the subjective desire to obtain a sex reassignment, pathologization becomes the available alternative to have the operation done.

Concerning Immigration Detention Centres, the further axis of bio-politics and neo-liberal capitalism is at the root of migratory policies: those confined in such institutions are declared illegal as long as they do not have a labour contract. Freedom of movement, then, is constrained by the mechanisms of speculative economy, and the circuits of production and consumption of the capitalist discourse. Hence, immigrants declared illegal become a rest that is expelled from the labour market and the super-egotistic imperative of transforming life into an enterprise. From this horizon, it is not simply a juridical issue, but the fact that economics is at background for the acquisition and recognition of rights as a citizen.

Indeed, groups like TANQUEM ELS CIE in Barcelona point to a crucial question, which is vital for a project the goal of which is a radicalization of democracy: in the era of bio-power, rights, even Human Rights in this scenario, are threatened or even vanished by a global capitalism that produces an internal contradiction. On the one hand, the fluidity of the capital is constantly intensified by means of speculation and an incessant accumulation of wealth; on the other hand, the reverse of this situation is the creation of boundaries that attempt to maintain symbolic barriers that the very mechanism of capitalism destroys. What the Nation-State attempts to maintain is, then, a form of exclusionary social bond that the internal logic of capitalism ruins.

These three forms of violence, linked to an induced precariousness by current forms of social regulation, are not primarily tied to an ontological notion of vulnerability, but they rather illustrate what I had previously analysed: vulnerability is

the malaise induced by the capitalist discourse and its segregationist schema. The challenge for political resistance is not simply to push to the limits the internal fractures of neo-liberal capitalism, but to create new forms of political orchestration of reality that do not simply reinstall a modality proper to the discourse of the master and its subsequent servitude.

4.3.1. The Discourse of the University Allied with Bio-Politics: “Gender Identity”

Dealing with transsexuality and its current debates might lead to a binary division: to be either for the right to choose a “free expression of gender” the performative dimension of which demands a surgical transformation of the body, or the psychiatric and bio-medical discourses that argue for their pathological nature, expressed under the diagnosis of gender dysphoria. In my view, reducing the debate to these two perspectives involves an incessant impasse that produces certain short-circuits referring to the discourse of the university in relation to the sphere of subjectivity in its sexed dimension.

To elude such an impasse, which has further political and ethical consequences, I will structure my analysis on current forms of regulation of transsexuality by means of a twofold approach. First, I will explore the arguments provided by a version of social constructivism and queer theory, the main source of which derives, despite some subsequent modifications, from Foucault’s genealogy on sexuality. Indeed, in many activists groups against the pathologization of transsexuality this is the hegemonic discourse, which clearly conditions the possible forms of resistance in front of the power exercised by psychiatry and biomedicine. Secondly, I will give a critical account of the two Lacanian approaches towards transsexuality, which differ between each other. In this sense, whereas queer theory and many transsexual activism reduces sexuality to a malleable and plastic reality socially constructed, psychoanalysis, thanks to the dimension of desire and the symptomatic reality, enlarges the debate, focusing on a perspective that is not exclusively based on scientific knowledge, but on the assumption of a sexed position according to castration and *jouissance*. Nonetheless, it is important to outline a certain tendency towards a too much taken for granted assimilation of transsexuality to psychosis by several Lacanian psychoanalysts, which

might involve a redoubling effect of the psychiatric discourse denounced by those critical arguments against the pathologization of transsexuality. There are, however, alternative visions of transsexuality in the middle of the plural area of psychoanalysis, which point to a hysteric symptom and, in some cases, to argue for the fact that the assumption of a sexed position, regardless of the recourse to surgery, is inherently transsexual because sex is not reduced to symbolic and imaginary identifications.

4.3.1.1. The Psychiatric Discourse: DSM III, IV, and V

In order to understand the reaction against pathologization by transsexual activism, it is important to understand the relationship between psychiatry and transsexuality, which, to a certain extent, collapses into a vicious circle. Nonetheless, I will not offer a historical approach towards transsexuality, but I will rather analyse its discursive articulation by means of the discourse of the university, articulated in biopolitical means, and its impasses.

From a genealogical perspective, the term “transsexualism” was introduced by the endocrinologist Harry Benjamin, in 1953, in the United States of America. Hence, the biomedical discourse has been present since that moment, though it could be argued that even before there was a mutual implication between biomedicine and transsexuality, especially if the first taxonomies of “sexual abnormalities” are considered, which were elaborated at the end of XIX century, and all along the XX century¹⁸⁵. A few years later, in 1968, the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Robert Stoller redefined transsexuality from a specific psychiatric perspective, arguing for the existence of a gender identity core that did not coincide with the anatomical sex. Following this definition, the transsexual subject had to undertake a hormonal treatment and a surgical sex reassignment to pursue its desire for a sexual transitioning. The scenario produced by the interrelation of the hormonal discourse and psychiatry is what enabled the existence of transsexuality as it is currently conceived, this is to say, the expression of a discomfort between one’s gender and the body, mainly regarding the

¹⁸⁵ Some of the first historical references to the notion of “transsexualism” can be found in works by Magnus Hirschfeld, who established a distinction between “effeminized” homosexuality, transvestism, and transsexualism. For a further approach to this issue, see Hirschfeld, Magnus (1914): *Homosexuality of Men and Women*. New York, Prometheus Books, (2000). Translated by Michael A. Lombardi-Nash, and (1910): *The Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress*. New York, Prometheus Books (2000). Translated by Michael A. Lombardi-Nash.

genital organs. In this sense, transsexuality is a product of the scientific discourse and the aim at reducing being a man or a woman to stable and definable categories according to fixed parameters. The transsexual subject, therefore, cannot exist without the biomedical discourse.

Interestingly enough, transsexuality was not immediately included in the two first editions of the DSM, but it was not until 1973 that the medical term “gender¹⁸⁶ dysphoria syndrome” appeared. The assumption that transsexuality is a psychiatric disorder is based on a binary division concerning the individual. On the one hand, any person is born with a sexed body, this is to say, a body marked by the presence or absence of the penis, and, on the other hand, the assumption of the sexed body depends on a psychological self, the core of gender. Therefore, gender is said to be the expression and embodiment of the fleshy entity, being the result of socialization, where “male” becomes “man”, and “female” is transformed into “woman”:

Gender identity is the sense of knowing to which one belongs, that is, the awareness that “I am a male”, or “I am a female”. Gender identity is the private experience of gender role, and gender role is the public expression of gender identity. Gender role can be defined as everything that one says or does to indicate to others or to oneself the degree to which one is male or female (DSM III, 1987: 71).

Such a definition of gender identity and gender role, though particularly applied to transsexuals when they visit a psychiatrist in order to achieve a sex reassignment, reduces the sphere of the subject to a psychologist vision. While sex is assimilated to the region of an anatomical mark, the experience of being a sexed subject becomes, paradoxically, a desexualized one, expressed by gender. Thus, the notion of gender signals the *certainty* of belonging to either one or the other of the classes: “I have a penis, therefore I am a man, which entails that my gender is socialized and performed according to a masculine criteria, or I do not have a penis, therefore I am a woman, and my gender is socialized in feminine terms”. Being a man or a woman, from this horizon, are two complementary “identities” that can be properly described. From this psychologist vision, a transsexual subject experiences a “mental disorder”, exemplified

¹⁸⁶ Indeed, the notion of “gender” has a biomedical origin too. It was elaborated by the sexologist and psychologist John Money in order to argue for the social construction of identity as a learning process based on the incorporation of stereotypes and roles. For further information, see Money, John, and Patricia Tucker (1975): *Sexual Signatures on Being a Man or a Woman*. New York, Little Brown & Co, and Money John, and Anke Ehrhardt (1996): *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl: Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity*. Northvale, N.J.

in the non-coherence between its sex and its gender. Nevertheless, the bio-medical discourse offers an alternative in order to acquire a “normal” identity: sex reassignment.

The diagnosis for transsexuality, according to the criteria offered by the DSM, departs from a psychiatric and psychological perspective that is radically isolated from the social scenario where a subject inhabits, despite the fact that a gender role suggests a narrow bond between one’s gender and its social context. As a result, a transsexual is not a subject that complains about the different socialization between men and women in the daily discourse, but someone who suffers a psychological discomfort and stress because he or she is convinced of not belonging to the assigned sex. Such a “perturbation”, according to the psychiatric vision, has its roots in early infancy, where there has been a “disorder” concerning the identifications attributed to masculinity and femininity. For instance, wearing boy’s clothes when one is said to be a girl could be interpreted as an early transsexual symptom. However, if this indication is followed up to its latest consequences, it seems to suggest that most of kids, either girls or boys, are potentially transsexual, since wearing the other’s sex’s clothes is a very recurrent game among children. The consequence of a strict division between normality and pathology is quite astonishing: any kid might become a transsexual.

Nonetheless, further features are added in order to presumably avoid such a claim: transsexuality must also be linked to the scission between the psychological and the biological dimension of sex, and, in some cases, according to the DSM III, some homosexuals might become transsexuals. In spite of eliminating homosexuality from the list of mental diseases, there seems to persist a certain link between being homosexual and being transsexual, *which means that homosexuality might be the occasion for a potential case of transsexuality, sanctioned as a psychiatric “disorder”*. The question, then, arises: does such a classification imply that the only guarantee to “prevent transsexuality” is being heterosexual?¹⁸⁷

Concerning the fourth edition of the DSM, the second edition where transsexuality is diagnosed as a mental “pathology”, the notion of gender dysphoria syndrome is substituted by “gender identity disorder”. This concept does not simply entail a discomfort with the assigned sex at birth, but a disorder from a norm, this is to

¹⁸⁷ Homosexuality was eliminated from the DSM in 1987, the very same year that transsexuality was included as the gender dysphoria syndrome. Despite its removal from the DSM in the late 80’s, the World Health Organization did not eliminate homosexuality from its list of mental disorders since 1991.

say, the coincidence between the psychological domain of human sphere with the anatomical realm. This reformulation elaborates a further similitude between transsexuality and transvestism: “This cross-gender identification must not merely be a desire for any perceived cultural advantages of being the other sex” (DSM IV, 1991: 533). Again, then, identification is transformed into a purely and solipsistic psychological reality, isolated from the social scenario where identifications are assumed and performed. In this case, although “homosexuality” is not included as a possible cause for such a “deviation”, the medical discourse uses expressions such as “sexual attraction for males” – in the case of a man –, “sexual attraction for females” – in women’s cases, or even bisexuality or asexuality –. Heterosexuality, again, is excluded from any possible “incitation” towards transsexuality and “mental disorders”.

As a novelty, the figure of the female transsexual is explicitly associated with prostitution and drugs, which would reinforce the thesis of transsexuality in terms of a marginal – and *marginalised* – phenomenon that can be statistically calculated by means of the standards of a certain population. The latest theories that aim at giving a scientific explanation for transsexuality assert that a probable core for the sexed status of the subject is not purely located in the chromosomes or the genitals, but in the brain. Thus, according to the current medical discourse in relation to transsexuality, there is a sexualisation of the brain that institutes a difference between a male brain and a female one. In relation to transsexuality, then, a transsexual is someone whose brain is not in concordance with her or his anatomical body, which requires a surgical intervention in order to offer the patient a suitable solution¹⁸⁸.

In relation to sex reassignment, the patient must be previously diagnosed as a “true” transsexual, this is to say, the psychiatrist and the psychologist must assert that the patient is not lying, but he or she is a transsexual according to the diagnose of DSM.

¹⁸⁸ The TV channel TV3, a regional channel of Catalonia, broadcasted a recent documentary where several underage transsexuals were interviewed. Their testimony was accompanied by the hegemonic discourse concerning transsexuality, which is defended by the “Unitat d’Identitat de Gènere” of the Hospital Clínic of Barcelona. This hospital is the only public institution that has the power to diagnose gender dysphoria as the prerequisite to have an operation of sex reassignment done. Nevertheless, the transsexual activist Miquel Missé published an article where he exposed his arguments against the current medical vision of transsexuality, reduced to a syndrome that requires a suitable solution by means of hormones and surgery, pointing to the fact that the directors of the documentary left aside the testimony of those who oppose the biomedical perspective. Indeed, the major opinion of the documentary was to explain transsexuality according to a divergence between the brain and the body. For a further approach on this issue, see <http://www.tv3.cat/30minuts/reportatges/1984/Transit-menors-transsexuals>, and http://www.idemtv.com/es/2016/04/14/transsexualitat-david-i-goliat/?fb_action_ids=10154496532551494&fb_action_types=og.shares. Last hits: 15/03/2016

For being diagnosed as a transsexual the patient must answer a test to measure its level of masculinity and femininity in terms of gender roles, this is to say, the stereotypes attributed to men and women¹⁸⁹. Again, thus, statistics are instituted as the clue to obtain the “truth” of the patient, and sanction him or her as a “truly” transsexual: the “gender inversion” must have endured since her or his infancy, without any excitement during the periods of transvestism; she or he must be heterosexual or, at least, pretend it in front of the medical team; she or he must not have been married; she or he must not have any children; she or he must not have happily lived in his or her assigned sex, and she or he must reject his or her genitals. Once the test is answered, and the diagnosis is officialised in the certificate of “gender dysphoria”, the hormonal treatment and the surgical intervention will be scheduled:

Desde estas unidades se lleva a cabo un seguimiento psiquiátrico y psicológico, se organizan grupos de ayuda mutua, se controla el “test de la vida real” (periodo de varios meses durante el cual la persona tiene que vivir todo el día según el género sentido antes de iniciar la transformación corporal) y, finalmente, se expide el diagnóstico de disforia de género. El informe médico que certifica la presencia del trastorno no sólo es necesario para la rectificación de la mención de sexo en el Registro Civil, sino también para poder recibir el tratamiento hormonal de forma controlada por un endocrino y para someterse a la reasignación sexual (aunque ésta se lleve a cabo en una clínica privada, como sucede actualmente en la mayoría de comunidades autónomas del Estado) (Coll-Planas, 2009: 110).

Accordingly, the transsexual subject is a statistical product of the discourse of the university, the goal of which is to find and regulate its “truth” through masked power relations that hide that, in the medical discourse, the new master signifier is knowledge, exercised by the figure that incarnates such a mastery: the expert. As Bruce Fink asserts in *The Lacanian Subject. Between Language and Jouissance* (1995): “Systematic knowledge is the ultimate authority, reigning in the stead of blind will, and everything has its reason” (Fink, 1995: 132). In this case, the psychiatric and psychological discourses become the legitimisation for the power exercised by the instance that incarnates the master that executes domination through what it attributes to the other, producing an alienated subject within the zone of the scientific discourse.

However, in the discourse of the university, the element that incarnates the *jouissance* produced in such a social bond is the very subject of the unconscious, this is to say, the split subject that does not coincide with knowledge. In this social bond, it is

¹⁸⁹ The test is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2, which offers a statistical measurement for the grades of masculinity or femininity that the patient says to experience in relation to his or her gender identity.

simultaneously produced and foreclosed, since the discourse of the university aims at regulating and controlling the subject by hiding the mastering position guaranteed by knowledge. This is why I hold that the psychiatric discourse of transsexuality produces another dimension, this is to say, a hysterisation of the subject that demands a sex reassignment. Instituting the psychiatrist as the master who is able to offer a “explanation” of his or her being, the transsexual subject becomes a hysteric that attempts to obtain a final explanation that, notwithstanding with that, always reveals as insufficient due to the lack inherent in the Other:

The hysteric pushes the master – incarnated in a partner, teacher, or whomever – to the point where he or she can find the master’s knowledge lacking. Either the master does not have an explanation for everything or his or her reasoning does not hold water. In addressing the master, the hysteric demands that she or he produce knowledge and then goes to disprove his or her theories (Fink, *op.cit.*: 134).

From this perspective, the transsexual reveals itself as something *more* than the pure product of the discourse concerned by knowledge, this is to say, the truth that it pursues exceeds the medical schema, which in a certain sense might give an account of the forms of activism undertaken by certain transsexual groups. In other words, in front of the impotence of the subject supposed to know that the psychologist and the psychiatrist are said to be, there is a protest concerning the castration inherent to the expert (the Other for the hystericized patient), who pretends to hide it within the veils of knowledge, and its paranoiac mechanisms that long for the production of a totality. If such a protest can happen is because the hystericized subject incarnates the contradiction between conscious and unconscious, and the further conflictual nature of desire, deprived of an object that could be its definite goal.

The impasse of psychiatry in its diagnose of “gender dysphoria” involves the reduction of the subject to a concrete egotistic signified that reveals impossible to sustain, which means that the bio-political project cannot absorb the subject, but just offer an imaginary architecture to reduce the sphere of subjectivity to a medicalised ego. As I will analyse concerning the psychoanalytic interpretations of transsexuality, psychology and psychiatry, despite their powerful gears, foreclose the Real-impossible of sexual difference:

“Production” (the fourth term in the matrix of discourses) does not stand simply for the result of the discursive operation, but rather for its “indivisible remainder”, for the excess that resists being included in the discursive network (i.e. fir what the discourse itself produces as the foreign body in its very heart) (Zizek, 1998: 78).

Unfortunately, such a short-circuit of the discourse of the university in its biomedical dimension does not involve its political failure. On the contrary, thanks to the neutrality that is said to recover scientific research, the power of psychiatry and psychology remains intact in public institutions like the Hospital Clínic of Barcelona. In this hospital, sex reassignment and hormonal treatment are confined to a private subsection named “Barnaclínic”, which fuels the vision of the body as an instrument that can be transformed according to the patient’s will, despite being pathologized by the same medical discourse that offers this option. Indeed, the ideology that sustains such a discourse is based on an ethical perspective focused on a distribution of measurable and diagnosable goods, transforming the patient’s demand into a request for the acquisition of a private product. There is a perverse gesture that pretends to have found the desiring object that the transsexual subject might pursue: the identification with the opposite sex, which is shaped according to predefined medical criteria related to masculinity and femininity.

Consequently, the current mechanism that sustains the pathologization of transsexuality, governed by the psychiatric standards offered by the DSM and its statistical psychopathology, perfectly shows the dimension that bio-politics has acquired regarding the subject. It is transformed into a series of homogeneous individuals the demands of which can be fulfilled thanks to the auxiliary of science, which, indeed, forecloses the subject of the unconscious, providing an illusory fiction of a sovereign and autonomous self that governs its desire in terms of a consuming disposition. Normalcy and pathology are no longer merely regulatory categories concerning social behaviours, but they rather penetrate what is said to be the core of the bio-political subject: its genetic code, the home of its inner “truth”. In this sense, the strategy of sexualizing the brain is not simply a more sophisticated method to safeguard a political control over the subject, but a more refined strategy to redefine a universal and homologous structure that gives an account of “deviation” and, to a certain extent, to find a treatment available for *everybody*, regardless of any singular trait.

4.3.1.2. Struggling against Psychiatrization: Queer Theory and Gender Performativity

Signalling the regulatory role of power within the discourse of university, hidden behind knowledge and the effacement of the subject, is a crucial question in order to properly analyse current strategies of resistance against the pathologization of transsexuality. Indeed, such a dynamic has been enlarged in the fifth edition of the DSM (2103), since even the menstrual period has become susceptible of a pathological discourse in relation to the discomfort that certain women might experience during such moments. As a result, there is a new syndrome that might be medicalized: “the pre-menstrual syndrome”.

However, as I said in the introduction of this section, there is a constitutive ambivalence in relation to psychiatry and transsexuality, since the latter is a product of the mechanisms of biomedicine and its standard measurements of normalcy and pathology. Such an ambivalence, as I will argue, is inevitably present in the resistance against pathologization, especially if the patient wants to have a sex reassignment done, which is being questioned by many transsexuals due to the pain and the conditions of surgical techniques.

Before proceeding to give an account of concrete and specific forms of contestation, it is important to analyse which is the main source for such a political gesture, and its plural tradition. As a point of departure, the analysis of sexuality offered by Michel Foucault in *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (1976) is crucial in discourses such as queer theory, gender studies, and the notion of gender performativity. At the same time, it traverses the political mobilisations articulated by transsexual activism in its definition of sex and gender.

As far as Foucault is concerned, what he elaborates is a nominalist approach to the notions of sex and sexuality in order to unveil the historicity proper to these discursive categories. Indeed, as it is often the case in the Foucauldian procedure, sex and sexuality are interpreted as realities bound to the dimension of knowledge and power, which adds a further remark: the subject, through the historicist-nominalist vein, becomes *de*-sexualised, deprived of any libidinal element. Linking sex to the couple knowledge-power involves that, following Foucault, the former is a strategy of the alliance between the scientific discourse and the pastoral power in order to obtain a “truth” of the subject:

L'existence à notre époque d'un discours où le sexe, la révélation de la vérité, le renversement de la loi du monde, l'annonce d'un autre jour et la promesse d'une certaine félicité sont liés ensemble. C'est le sexe aujourd'hui qui sert de support à cette vieille forme, si familière et si importante en Occident, de la prédication (Foucault, 1976 : 15).

Indeed, Foucault's denunciation of sexuality in terms of a regulatory device appeared in a historical moment that was traversed by a vindication of a "free" and "unrestricted" sexual *jouissance*: the so-called "revolutionary movement" of May 68, and, a year later, the first Gay Pride after the homophobic and transphobic attacks in Stonewall, New York¹⁹⁰. Foucault's discourse is, then, a suspicion directed towards the imperative of a public demonstration of sexuality, which would be tied to a bio-political strategy to regulate the domain of subjectivity by inciting a never-ending enjoyment, which, indeed, perfectly coincides with the Lacanian definition of the capitalist super-ego.

According to the analysis provided by Foucault, sex and sexuality are not to be freed from any sort of repressive cultural instance that would condemn the subject to a lack of absolute pleasure, since it is a myth created by this very repressive hypothesis. Interestingly enough, despite his rejection of psychoanalysis, both perspectives offer a similar diagnosis: a full *jouissance* – in Lacanian terms – is a pure fiction derived from the subjection of the speaking being to language as a symbolic apparatus. Spite of this convergence in the stripping of the chance to obtain a fullness in relation to enjoyment and sexual pleasures, Foucault institutes sex as a product born within the logic of capitalism in order to elaborate new forms of subjection that place the body at the centre of discourse and socio-political life. Sexuality, then, cannot be separated from the

¹⁹⁰ Regarding this historical moment concerning homosexuality and sex, all along the protests against discrimination in relation to homosexuals and the vindication of a sexuality deprived of taboos, the approach provided by Massimo Prearo, who elaborates a discursive and historicist analysis of the mutations of "homosexuality" in relation to knowledge and power, is extremely interesting. For further information, see Prearo, Massimo (2014): *Le moment politique de l'homosexualité. Mouvements, identités et communautés en France*. Lyon, Presses Universitaires de Lyon.

Related to this historical moment, which is traditionally presented as an intense political creativity, Jacques Lacan, in his seminar devoted to the formulation and analysis of the four discourses (master, university, hysteric, and analyst), offered a critical commentary of the May 68. Indeed, what he established is that the "rebellion" of students was not against the figure of the Master, but against a Master that was instituted as a depriving instance of *jouissance*. Thus, Lacan signals that a new Master emerges with such a demonstration: the University-Master, being scientific knowledge a new subject supposed to know that would guarantee the "freedom" and "equality" for men and women. Despite this optimistic reading of knowledge, what Lacan asserts is the mastery executed by the expert, the figure who masks the link between knowledge and power. For a further analysis of this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: L'envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil, and (2001) : « Télévision » in *Autres écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 509-546.

incitation towards a speech of desires, creating a fictional reality that enables a regulatory power. The sexual dimension of the subject is, thus, a historical and discursive product within a medical perspective to create standards of normalcy that elaborates its own areas of pathology, in the middle of which appears homosexuality as a deviation from the pair sex-reproduction, which would be an economical approach towards sexuality.

Translating sex into a device of subjection implies that sexuality and the incitement towards its confession is a political strategy, this is to say, bio-power regulates and creates the domains of pleasures. Thus, vindicating the liberation of sexuality, according to the Foucauldian diagnosis, means to demand more and more from the same bio-political strategy that gave birth to this reality. It means succumbing to the repressive hypothesis that would ban the access to a full realization of sexuality, and a negative notion of power that does not take into account its productive dimension: “La famille est l’échangeur de la sexualité et de l’alliance: elle transporte la loi et la dimension juridique dans le dispositif de sexualité; et elle transporte l’économie du plaisir et l’intensité des sensations dans le régime d’alliance” (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 143).

From this perspective, then, transsexuality is the result of the dynamic of bio-power and its regulatory strategy by means of the articulation of sexuality as the “truth” of the subject. Nevertheless, there are two issues that must be outlined. The first one refers to the discursive monism of such a strategy, which reduces the subject to historical and contingent processes of subjection that are made through the union of knowledge and power, and the second relates to the sterilization of the subject, all along a unidirectional dynamic between subjection and subjectivity. In terms of forms of resistance that might derive from the genealogical strategy elaborated by Foucault, it seems a plausible solution to affirm that, in order to avoid the psychiatrisation that governs transsexuality, sex as such should be erased as a normative notion. The erasure of sex would be the clue for the deconstruction of the binary logic that bounds the subject to be either a man or a woman. Yet, what the nominalist-historicist analysis provided by Foucault cannot consider is the *certainty* that many transsexuals affirm in relation to their sexed position, which points to a psychic economy that is left aside by Foucault, as Judith Butler rightly pointed in *The Psychic Life Power. Theories in Subjection* (1997a). Tied to this question, due to its reading of desire as a negative and juridical conception

of power, what a Foucauldian analysis bans is to take into account the demand formulated by a subject to the Other incarnated by a psychologist or a psychiatrist.

Following the impasses proper to this analysis, queer theory follows this same path, despite enlarging the regulatory set of identifications that intervene in the process of subjection. Hence, in the introduction of *Undoing Gender* (2004b), Judith Butler re-elaborates the subject according to a plural sum of identifications that are normatively regulated through processes of discursive mechanisms of knowledge and power: “The human is understood differentially depending on its race, the legibility of that race, its morphology, the recognisability of that morphology, its sex, the perceptual verification of that sex, its ethnicity, the categorical understanding of that ethnicity” (Butler, 2004b: 2). What queer theory aims at elaborating is a discursive and critical analysis of the normative schema that intervenes in the formation and constitution of the subject by means of what Foucault later named “regimes of intelligibility” (Foucault, 1984a). This strategy deals with two issues: the first one unveils the power inherent to psychiatric discourse and its regulatory dimension on the subject’s desire, and the second one tries to offer an alternative process of subjection that defies normativity. In relation to these goals, the notion of “sex” is said to be a regulatory mechanism proper to a bio-political device that departs from what Judith Butler introduces as “the heterosexual matrix” (Butler, 1990). Sex would be an inherently heterosexist product that compels towards a relation of complementarity between men and women, the two available options that are proposed by a regulatory and a heteronormative power. Since the 1980’s, sex has been substituted by the notion of “gender”, which is said to be the sum of attributes that define a subject in a historical moment, mainly concerned by its performance, and not by any sort of essentialist predicament, which is imputed to sex as a biologist concept:

If gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. One is always “doing” with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary (Butler, *op. cit.*: 1).

In this sense, a performative account of gender becomes a critical tool to undo the psychologist vision of gender as a private sphere that informs the subject of his or her own sex, which would be different from the public role that is later attributed to the cultural reading of having a concrete body. Two forms of constructivism are, then, at stake. On the one hand, the biomedical discourse that regulates current processes of sex reassignment tries to find a neurobiological source that would be the basis through

which a subject becomes acquainted with its anatomical sex, and its psychosocial gender. On the other hand, queer theory and gender performativity signal that behind this form of knowledge there is a normative schema that takes for granted socio-historical articulations of sexual difference by means of a binary logic. Nonetheless, the constructivist procedure persists: the body is translated into a discursive surface normatively regulated by means of processes of cultural intelligibility that dictate who counts as a *normal subject*, and who is expelled to the spectre of *abjection*. Butler is poignant in this issue regarding the social mechanisms of sexual regulation:

What is most important is to cease legislating for all lives what is liveable only for some, and similarly, to refrain from proscribing for all lives what is unliveable for some. The differences in position and desire set the limits to universalizability as an ethical reflex. The critique of gender norms must be situated within the context of lives as they are lived and must be guided by the question of what maximizes the possibilities for a liveable life, what minimizes the possibility of unbearable life or, indeed, social or literal death (Butler, *op.cit.*: 8).

As a result, the main category that articulates the struggle against a pathological consideration of the subject, with its psychic effects, is *recognition* in relation to the conformation of the subject according to a set of identifications that refer to discourse in a *universal manner*. It is through the normative sphere of recognition relating to gender norms and the intelligibility of the body that vulnerability emerges:

It is through the body that gender and sexuality become exposed to others, implicated in social processes, inscribed by cultural norms, and apprehended in their social meanings. In a sense, to be a body is to be given to be given over to others even as a body is, emphatically, “one’s own”, that over which we must claim our rights of autonomy (Butler, *op. cit.*: 20).

What Butler proposes, as an exponent of queer theory and the maker of gender performativity, is an ethical turn towards the desire of the subject and the impossibility to be grasped by any concrete goal since desire is always the desire of the Other, which challenges the circuits of the “I”. Such a strategy clearly defies the psychiatric perspective that pretends to foreclose the demand of the transsexual subject to a measurable standard by means of incarnating a normative ideal of the opposite gender. Sexuality and gender are not, thus, mere social predicaments, but modes of relationality towards alterity, an issue that is clearly absent in the biomedical discourse since it reduces the body to an organic entity that can be remodelled through recourse to standard notions of intelligibility of the human:

Sexuality is not simply an attribute one has or a disposition or patterned set of inclinations. It is a mode of being disposed toward others, including in the mode of

fantasy, and sometimes only in the mode of fantasy. If we are outside of ourselves as sexual beings, given over from the start, crafted in part through primary relations of dependency and attachment, then it would seem that our being beside ourselves, outside ourselves, is there as a function of sexuality itself, where sexuality is not this or that dimension of our existence, not the key or bedrock of our existence, but, rather, as coextensive with existence (...) (Butler, *op. cit.*: 33).

Following this relational ontology regarding gender and sexuality, Butler's aim is to push to the limits the reduction of the sexed body – gendered in her lexicon – to an individualised fleshy entity by means of the sociability that constitutes the living subject. The challenge for the biomedical discourse is to take into account an ontology of the subject redefined as an ecstatic being that, despite being conformed through the convergence of different normative apparatuses, exceeds them because nobody can suitably perform them. In other words, there is not any normal subject opposed to any abject one, but the subject itself is constituted by means of a perpetual deviation from the phantasmagorical and regulatory power of norms and their disseminated effects. Responding to the demand of a transsexual subject who requires the aid of a doctor in order to pursue a transition, whether surgical or not, means that there is no available and abstract solution that might exhaust this very subject under a normalizing category. There is a social intercourse between two subjects confronted by their respective differences and existential paths. Indeed, such a perspective is explicitly formulated by many transsexuals who, after surgery, share their personal experiences with other transsexuals in support groups. This experience enables the creation of an affective bond that is not confined to the limits of what is normal and what is pathological, but it puts at the centre of the debate the question that, according to Hannah Arendt, inaugurates cohabitation: “Who are you?”

As a result, no “gender identity core” might absorb the subject, which means the erasure of singularity and difference through recourse to a statistical and medicalised notion of subjectivity, dependent on the scientific discourse's power, and bio-political controlling mechanisms. Butler's discourse – and also queer theory in general does – renders visible the naturalization of social identifications in the domain of psychological and psychiatric discourse, which have articulated, thanks to genetic development, new spheres to ascertain the “truth” of subjectivity: hormones, neuronal processes, chromosomes, and the genes, taken as objective and irrefutable entities.

However, the debate against the pathologization of transsexuality is not merely “governed” by Butler's discourse, though hers is a powerful one in the political terrain

in order to outline the repudiation that current psychiatry performs in relation to transsexual subjects, and the vulnerability and exposure to violence as a consequence of a normative approach to their desire. Other queer theorists, from a more sociological perspective, argue against the biomedical approach from other paradigms. The pre-eminent arguments against the pathologization of transsexuality depart from certain notions of social constructivism, which, to a certain extent, articulates Butler's perspective as well. The consequence of this strategy, from a methodological perspective, is the assimilation of the body and gender to discourse and its regulations, while the notion of sex – and its libidinal structure – is left aside, or remodelled as a synonym to gender. In other words, what regulates current debates concerning disputes against the hegemony of biomedical discourse and its political influence is a notion of the subject as a sum of attributes conferred by the social Other. The aim is, hence, to expand the domain of social recognition from a perspective that, presumably, avoids a prescriptive notion of what a gendered subject ought to be. In my case, I will name Gerard Coll-Planas, who offers a critical approach concerning sexual regulations; Miquel Missé, a transsexual activist who elaborates an alternative approach related to transsexuality and sex reassignment, and Patrícia Soley-Beltran. The latter offers a sociological approach of Butler's discourse in order to analyse the current legislations of transsexuality in a critical perspective, and to assert that transsexuality is pathologised as a result of the heterosexual matrix.

Gerard Coll-Planas, in his work *La voluntad y el deseo. La construcción social del género y la sexualidad: El caso de lesbianas, gays y trans* (2009), introduces a notion that, since the publication of *Manifiesto contra-sexual* (2000), by Paul B. Preciado, has been often enunciated in the debates concerning transsexuality and gender norms in queer theory: “transgender”: “*Transgénero* es aquella persona que cuestiona la necesidad de escoger entre los roles masculino y femenino y que no considera necesario establecer una correspondencia entre sexo y género mediante la transformación corporal” (Coll-Planas, 2009: 26). This notion is a re-elaboration of gender as a constrained choice, this is to say, the embodiment of social norms historically elaborated in relation to the ideals regarding sexual difference. Transgenderism would be, thus, the ritualised performance of cultural codes that defy traditional standards of masculinity and femininity and, even more, the articulation of a mode of subjection beyond gender in its binary schema. The transgender subject, according to this logic,

evidences that “masculine” and “feminine” are two terms mutually implied with concrete and stable definitions. This notion, despite the strategic use that has been mobilised by certain social claims, is not embraced in a uniform way, since many transsexuals enunciate themselves as men and women, and not as a figure of indeterminacy.

From a queer perspective, heterosexuality is the norm, while other object-choices would be confronted to such a regulatory schema. Thus, a transgender is someone that is not confronted to the binarism of being a man or a woman, all along the constriction towards heterosexuality, but it is beyond this scenario, which, to a certain extent, reminds of the ideal of the “self-made man”. Hence, gender is transformed into an election, outlining the identifications that create the “I” as a product of one’s will, which is mobilised in order to undermine the erasure of autonomy that the medical diagnose of transsexuality implies.

However, what needs to be discussed, as I will analyse in the next section, devoted to the psychoanalytic approach in relation to transsexuality, is the presumption of a fixed and stable norm that would be equally applied to *all* subjects. Thus, such an argumentation installs from the start an exclusionary logic: normal and pathological, which in Butler is translated into normal and abject. Such a problematic approach is crucially influenced by the huge emphasis put on the category of recognition, and the assimilation of the subject to prevailing discursive formations. This line of argumentation, notwithstanding with that, does signal what stands at the core of the “common error” of sex assignation in its *imaginary* dimension, which, in Lacanian terms, does not exhaust the dimension of sexuation and the sexed position of the subject. Such a “common error” is the predication according to which “if X has a penis, therefore X is a man; otherwise, if X lacks of a penis, X is a woman”. Certainly, such a classification is performative to the extent that it inherits the trace of the Other’s desire, which in this case belongs to biological discourse. Despite this, as I will argue, the unconscious is not reduced to biology and to the region of organic life, which means that having a penis and being a man are not necessarily implied. Anatomy, in the case of the subject, must be interpreted through recourse to the signifier and the Symbolic.

In this sense, queer theory, in its denounce of the regulatory power of biomedicine, which installs a normative approach towards the subject, is clearly right when, in relation to being a transsexual, asserts:

Una aproximación realista al tratamiento transexualizador no puede renunciar a plantear este equilibrio imposible (seguramente sólo imposible) entre la identidad y la integridad física, y debe dejar de prometer el final del sufrimiento y preconizar que la operación significa volver a nacer. Por el contrario, debería acompañar a la persona *trans* en las dificultades para coincidir con los estereotipos de género establecidos, en el reconocimiento del dolor y en reconciliarse con su trayectoria vital. Además, implicaría reconocer que, en las actuales circunstancias sociales, la raíz del problema es que una persona con un cuerpo hembril [de mujer] que se sienta hombre o que una persona con un cuerpo machil [de hombre] que se sienta mujer difícilmente encontrarán un lugar en el espacio social en el que sentirse reconocidas y respetadas plenamente (Coll-Planas, *op.cit.*: 219).

What Coll-Plans highlights is the impossibility of a global harmony between identifications, governed by the primacy of the signifier in its link to social bonds and discursive articulations of sexual difference, and the subject's desire, which, in Lacanian terms, is structurally marked by negativity. In other words, being a sexed subject, in the case of the human, means that sex is "denaturalised" as a consequence of the impact of language onto the living body. As a result, the psychiatric diagnosis of transsexuality as a mental illness departs from a synthetic notion that is structurally impossible. Confining the subject to the embodiment of social ideals of masculinity and femininity, which is masked behind the presumable neutrality of scientific discourse, entails the execution of an *institutionalised and legitimised violence* that reduces desire to illness, depriving the transsexual of a right to speak.

In spite of this first dimension, Coll-Planas later reduces the uneasiness that any subject experiences regarding sex and sexuality to social norms. Following his thesis, if a change of discursive regulations is produced, there will be the occasion for non-problematic articulations of sexual difference at a subjective level. The consequence from such a theoretical procedure is, again, a gobbling of the subject to pure constructivism. A consequence, that, indeed, as Patrícia Soley-Beltran remarks in *Transexualidad y la matriz heterosexual: un estudio crítico de Judith Butler* (2009), derives from the disjunction between sex – a conundrum for queer theory and gender performativity – and gender: "La distinción sexo/género permitió construir la falta de conformidad de los pacientes con la identidad que se les había asignado como una contradicción entre su "sexo", entendido como su cuerpo, y su "género", entendido como su rol social" (Soley-Beltran, 2009: 15).

According to these arguments, the notion of gender, despite its original effort to denounce the repudiation against non-heterosexual object-choices and the traditionalist articulations of sexual difference, has become an ally of the biomedical discourse and,

hence, it reinforces a pinning-down of the socio-cultural ideals concerning what is to be a man or a woman. The “real-life test”, the aim of which is to ensure the true gender of the transsexual, is a compulsory requisite to pursue the hormonal and surgical treatment that acquires a clear disciplinary dimension, sanctioning what a “real” transsexual is. Consequently, the patient is constrained to perform the regulatory norms sustained by scientific discourse, which becomes a vicious circle: to be declared a “true” transsexual entails that the subject must embody the ideals that are already contained into the psychiatric perspective according to stereotypes and statistics. Despite this remark, there is also a paradox: though denouncing pathologization, the transsexual patient who attends to a hospital in order to obtain a sex reassignment binds the normative apparatus that is denounced:

Los esfuerzos que realizan los transexuales para citar fielmente los estándares médicos ponen de relieve la circularidad de sus auto-adscripciones como pacientes que merecen tratamiento en la medida en que sus autonarrativas están basadas en el conocimiento previo de los estándares médicos que rigen la diagnosis de la transexualidad (Soley-Beltran, *op.cit.*: 315).

This paradoxical reality poses a real question relating to the chances of subverting a pathological perspective in relation to the power of psychiatry concerning sexual regulations. Miming the hyperbolic incarnations of masculinity and femininity expected by the medical discourse might allow a sex reassignment; still, it does not question the mechanism that reduces the sexed status of the subject to a statistical stereotype. Regardless of the ridiculous consequence from this parody, this is to say, the patient performs what the doctor pretends to diagnose, the relation of domination remains intact because the patient must alienate him or herself into the Other’s desire, which finally binds and maintains this circularity. It is, at its turn, the performative orchestration of a dualistic conception of the subject, understood as a mental and an interior construction, and the body, a pure biological surface susceptible of being modified with no further consequences. A dualism that is further sustained by the division between sex and gender, with the neutralised notion of the body echoed by gender performativity:

El dualismo mente/cuerpo que acompaña a la distinción sexo/género hace posible tratar al cuerpo como un objeto, es decir, como materia pasiva que puede ser moldeada por la tecnología que actúa de parte de la “verdadera” esencia de la identidad que reside en la mente (Soley-Beltran, *op. cit.*: 323).

The huge impact of the biomedical discourse becomes a real obstacle in order to struggle for a redefinition of transsexuality, mainly when the transsexual subject is bond

to the discourse that institutes a social repudiation through the diagnosis of gender dysphoria. Despite this challenge, this is what Judith Butler suggests in her foreword to the co-authored work by Gerard-Coll Planas and Miquel Missé, *El género desordenado. Críticas en torno a la patologización de la transexualidad* (2010):

Aunque nos hemos acostumbrado a la idea interesante de que son los discursos médicos y legales los que han producido la categoría *transexual*, quizás necesitemos adaptar esta concepción a nuestra época. La categoría no se produce de manera unilateral, o, incluso allí donde lo hiciera esto constituiría un caso de mal tratamiento. Si queremos intervenir en las escenas médicas, psicológicas o legales en las que las solicitudes se llevan a cabo y son aceptadas, entonces necesitamos primero expropiar a los discursos de autoridad de su poder establecido y unilateral. Tenemos que entrar en la escena misma de la definición y comenzar por entender que la transexualidad tiene lugar como una escena social de interlocución (Butler in Coll-Planas and Missé, ed., 2010: 11)¹⁹¹.

This quotation, in spite of the ethical demand that sustains for the recognition of difference as a structuring condition of desire, does not consider an important remark derived from the Lacanian notion of discourse: psychiatry is not merely a form of knowledge with political consequences, but it is a sample of a modality of a social bond, the discourse of the university. Besides, if the medical perspective is taken into account, it departs from notions of health and illness. Hence, inasmuch as the discourse of the university forecloses the subject of the unconscious, substituted by a taxonomical version of it according to a social dynamic governed by the expert, it becomes highly difficult to separate transsexuality from a medical perspective. In this sense, the scenario between the psychiatrist and the patient is not structured merely according to rhetoric, but it is articulated through recourse to the instance of the subject supposed to know, which institutes a supreme Other invested with epistemic and social authority.

Nonetheless, I do not mean to suggest, as I had made clear, that the pathologisation and vulnerability, redoubled with a precarious social situation, to which transsexual subjects are exposed is a “natural” consequence. It is discursively produced, and, as such, it is not “natural”. The issue at stake is that the social bond that institutes the notion of “transsexuality” is a bio-political one that could not exist without the scientific authority in epistemic and political dimensions. It is a product of a mutation of the master-signifier that regulates social relations in the public sphere as a bond amongst subjects, and the transformation of knowledge into a means to exercise power. In other words, without the medical perspective, the consideration of transsexuality in

¹⁹¹ It should be considered that this book was originally published in Spanish, which means that the original English version is not accessible. This foreword was translated by Paul B. Preciado.

terms of a “pathological” symptom would not exist, which, at the same time, is linked to a new articulation of the body as a malleable instrument, a status that is inseparable from the hegemonic discourse that orchestrates social reality: the capitalist discourse. It is worth quoting this paragraph from *El género desordenado. Críticas en torno a la patologización de la transexualidad* (2010) regarding the medical diagnosis: “Este modo de evaluación parte de la presuposición del carácter diagnosticable – y no elegido – de la identidad de género, limitando la posibilidad de participación de la persona interesada en el proceso de decisión” (Coll-Planas and Missé, ed., 2010: 37). Reducing sex to a constructivist notion such as gender finally presupposes a voluntarist account of sexual identifications, bound to the register of the ego and its illusory autonomy.

Due to their bond to biomedical discourse, queer theory and gender performativity collapse into a vicious circularity concerning transsexuality because of reducing the subject to the binary structure of knowledge-power, which eventually limits in a considerable way forms of resistance against an induced vulnerable and precarious situation derived from the tyranny of scientific discourse, and its foreclosure of the subject. In order to give an account of transsexuality in a non-normative perspective, which gives an account of the deadlock that sex and sexual difference are, I will analyse current Lacanian approaches towards transsexuality, which exceed the reductionist paradigms of psychiatry and social constructivism.

4.3.1.3. Lacanian Approaches on Transsexuality: Between Psychosis and Hysteria.

To deal with current Lacanian approaches on transsexuality, I would like to quote this extract from the essay *Transsexualitats. Altres mirades possibles*, by Miquel Missé (2012), which introduces a crucial remark that is absolutely absent in a biomedical perspective: the diverse phenomenon of transsexuality, which is beyond medical stereotypes: “El moviment per la despatologització trans emergeix quan l’activisme és l’única manera de reivindicar que, més enllà dels criteris diagnòstics de la transsexualitat, les persones trans tenen alguna cosa a dir – i a decidir – sobre qui són i què volen” (Missé, 2012: 41).

As psychoanalysis highlights, any encounter with a subject involves an ethical disposition towards the symptomatic reality that structures the singular response in front of the enigmatic nature of sex and sexual difference for humans. In this sense, what Miquel Missé echoes is the ethical demand inherent to struggling against the pathologisation of a subject, which diminishes its ethical responsibility concerning its desire, reduced to a pure disorder from a presumed set of norms. In order to analyse the psychoanalytic considerations concerning transsexuality, several concepts will have to be developed. Nonetheless, I do not attempt to exhaust a debate that is currently discussed among psychoanalysts. Indeed, transsexuality, in its contemporary symptomatic reality, requires a reconsideration of certain presuppositions that traverse the Lacanian corpus. As far as I am concerned, I will analyse the Lacanian discourse on transsexual subjects departing from the late contributions made by Lacan, which means that, methodologically, I will primarily reflect on the notions of sexualisation and *jouissance*, two crucial categories in the domain of the clinical work. Hence, the vulnerable exposure to the psychiatric discourse, a mutation of the discourse of the university mixed with the hysterical discourse by placing the subject in a pursuit of a certainty concerning its existence, can be developed from another axis, challenging the narrow approach offered by nominalism and social constructivism.

Transsexuality cannot be considered as an isolated symptom, but it must be related to historical mutations of the discursive reality and the malaise implicit in such a change. As Freud had already outlined in relation to the untameable nature of the drives (Freud, 1930), the junction of the subject with the symbolic order given by the Other is never simple and unilateral. In this sense, transsexuality emerges within a context where sex and sexual difference have been further “denaturalized”, this is to say, the presumed bond between men and women has been put into crisis, which has allowed different subjective responses in front of the Real of sex. Besides, the triumph and hegemonic status of the capitalist discourse, with its incessant command towards *jouissance*, has transformed the body, which has become, in its enjoying dimension, a central focus for current forms of sociability. This remark is especially relevant inasmuch as discourses like gender performativity and queer theory offer a notion of a *unisex* subject, this is to say, a governance of what is fully inscribed under the phallic signifier and its regulatory function. Hence, the element that remains troubling and uncatchable by any specific

discourse, being its excess and its limit, is the feminine position, this is to say, the not-all phallic *jouissance*, and its radical singularity, which has symptomatic consequences.

As the psychoanalyst Geneviève Morel signals, the main issue with a discourse that tends to reduce sex to gender is the recourse to a binary and complementary logic, which can be found in the register of the Imaginary, which belongs to an Aristotelean approach towards the subject, transforming sex into a predicate that can be either masculine or feminine:

In the face of the complex nature of sexual ambiguity, is it appropriate to appeal to gender, that grammatical notion of the opposition between masculine and feminine in language? Is there really such a thing as a definable entity called “gender identity”, which would refer to “the very being of a person” and which in some way would be their physical sex? (Morel, 2011: XIII).

Nevertheless, theorists like Judith Butler would dispute Morel’s consideration of gender theory in terms of a supposed inner identity socially constructed, mainly if performativity and discourse are taken into account. Despite this consideration, what Morel suggests is that the subject is not simply assimilated to the identifications provided by the Other in its familial, institutional, and social dimension. Concerning the subject and sex, there is something *more*. The purpose of this section is to clarify, from the horizon offered by Lacanian psychoanalysis, which is the connection of this “extra” feature in relation to transsexuality, disputing at the same time the psychiatric discourse. In other words, what queer theory and gender performativity foreclose, in a similar trend to other forms of the discourse of the university and its pursuit of scientific knowledge, is *jouissance* as a supplement derived from the Real¹⁹². Therefore, “the choice of being a man or a woman is thus rooted in the subject’s mode of *jouissance*” (Morel, *op. cit.*: XV).

Nonetheless, this notion of “choice” should not be interpreted as a voluntary or conscious election, yet in terms of a subjective position in front of the signifier that

¹⁹² Despite the discursive monism of queer theory, authors like Tim Dean aim to re-elaborate the debate in relation to contemporary modes of subjection that do not reduce the embodied subject to a pure parodic performance that denaturalizes a presumed heterosexist norm. Hence, Dean tries to elaborate a new queer discourse that seriously analyses the consequences derived from the psychoanalytic, mainly Lacanian, discourse. Dean argues for the cohabitation of these both perspectives in order to offer a more accurate analysis in relation to current bio-politics, though the notions of body and subject derived from a nominalist genealogy are at odds with the Lacanian ones. For a further approach, see Dean, Tim (2000): *Beyond Sexuality*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, and « Lacan and queer theory » in Rabaté, Jean-Michel (ed., 2003): *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pages 238-252.

governs the unconscious and its psychic reality: the phallus. In this sense, in front of the impasse that language performs onto anatomy, the subject is confronted to a void, a pure negativity that escapes any attempt to reduce sex to a single attribute or a set of predicates. Sex, from a psychoanalytic point of view, exceeds any operation of predication. This question clarifies the Lacanian assertion concerning the kernel of the Real in terms of a pure negativity that is differently foreclosed by socio-symbolic operations, returning traumatically: “For example, because one says, “I am a woman” or “I am a man”, one believes oneself to be sexuated, but the attributes only support imaginary identifications beneath which the subject hides a fundamental void” (Morel, *op. cit.*: 20).

Despite this psychoanalytic denaturalization of sex and the claim of unconscious mechanisms regarding one’s sexed position, an objection could be made: if sex is declined from the Real as a void that traverses imaginary and symbolic configurations, why is anatomy taken as a criterion for identifying subjects as men or women? Answering this reasonable and licit interrogation requires a further consideration of the Lacanian approach towards the sexed status of the subject. A difference must be made, then, between sexual *jouissance* in relation to the phallus, and sexual discourse, which differentiates subjects as men or women, which is undoubtedly confronted to a further impasse in the case of intersexuality. Three logical moments in relation to sexuation must be considered, which are at the core of the subject’s relation with the Law imposed by the castrating principle of language, and the primordial loss of *jouissance*: “Sexuation is governed by a logic which has three temporal registers: first, that of the natural difference between the sexes; second, that of sexual discourse; and third, the register of the subject choosing a sex, that is, sexuation proper” (Morel in Salecl, ed., 2000)¹⁹³. What do these three logical moments mean regarding sexuation, and the assumption of a sexed position? When any human being is born, the imaginary register of the signifier, accordingly to presence or absence, is the recourse to elaborate a primary differentiation: the possession of the organ places the individual within the group of men, while the absence of the organ means the introduction into the “group” of women. Nonetheless, a further remark must be considered, which, to a certain extent, is related to the performative mechanism of the signifier signalled by Butler. Indeed,

¹⁹³ This work was published in English, which means that the original French version of the contribution made by Geneviève Morel is not available. Her contribution was translated by Sina Najafi and Marina Harss.

nature itself does not indicate anything for the speaking being, but it collapses under the weight of the signifier, which entails that the organ is transformed, through a metonymic mechanism, into a signifier and, in this sense, into a *sign of the Other*. Pure anatomy is, from a psychoanalytic perspective, a mythical moment that cannot be separated from the signifiers and identifications provided by the Other. As a result, the “choice” of the subject oscillates between assuming the limit imposed by language through castration, or a refusal, this is to say, foreclosure, which implies a rejection of the phallus. In other words, the effect of language over the subject means an introduction of a lack, which is imaginary exposed in the female body, referring to what is always absent: the symbolic phallus, the signifier without a signified¹⁹⁴:

For Lacan, the privation of the phallus in the girl is the real lack of a symbolic object (the symbolic phallus); the missing penis is already a symbolic notion imposed onto the Real, in which nothing is missing (...). If there is anything perceived as lacking, what is absent is already the symbolic phallus, and the agent of privation is the imaginary father (Gherovici, 2010: 105).

Castration becomes, thus, the Law that initiates the process of subjection through a lack-of-being. The structures derived from the role that castration has (or does not have) on the subject are three: neurosis, psychosis and perversion. The possible relations with the phallic signifier and the limit it imposes by means of castration are not identical, which means that in neurosis the fundamental principle is repression; in psychosis, there is a rejection or foreclosure of the signifier, while in perversion there is a disavowal of castration. These three operations have subjective consequences in relation to *jouissance* and the Real, the realm that produces a short-circuit within imaginary and symbolic constructions. This complex structuring process is expressed in these terms by the psychoanalyst Manuel Baldiz:

Por estructura entendemos el modo en que el sujeto queda vinculado a la Ley y, simultáneamente, como efecto de dicha articulación, el modo permanente en que construye y elige sus objetos. ¿Y de qué ley se trata cuando, en psicoanálisis, hablamos de la Ley con mayúsculas? La Ley está referida al mismo tiempo al lenguaje, a la diferencia de los sexos y a la prohibición del incesto (Baldiz in Coll-Planas & Missé, 2010: 146).

¹⁹⁴ As Lacan had previously declared in relation to the phallus, being the signifier without a signified is what enables the phallic signifier to be the regulatory principle of any process of signification through metaphor (introduced by the limit and the lack of symbolic castration), and metonymy (the differential sequences that point to the lack of an object that would exhaust desire, which consists of taking a part as a whole). Lack is not, then, *real*, but it is the result of the effect of the signifier onto the subject, this is to say, language collapses any supposed pre-given data. For a further approach, see « La signification du phallus » in Lacan, Jacques (1966) : *Écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 685-696.

The Law imposed by castration is not prescriptive, this is to say, it does not possess a specific content related to what is sex or which object-choice is licit or illicit, but it is a negative instance that puts a limit. In other words, it is the effect of a signifier without a signified. Thus, the phallic signifier is, strictly speaking, an empty signifier, which allows it for becoming the master signifier of the unconscious inasmuch as it is deprived of a precise content, exceeding any attempt to reduce it to the imaginary recreation of a bodily organ. In addition to this, the phallus has a triple status: it is *imaginary* assimilated to its presence or absence in the body as a signifying totality; it *symbolically* incarnates a limit that introduces a void, and it is an *organon*, a structuring principle, in the Real.

From psychoanalysis, the limits of dealing with transsexuality from a constructivist perspective are made clear: queer theory and gender performativity only offer an analysis of the interactions between the subject and the Other from a relation of cause and effect, while they leave aside any singular trait concerning the process of sexuation. The absence of an accurate difference between language and discourse has some further consequences: the subject is a passive surface where signifiers are inscribed by means of power relations, and the subsequent forms of resistance that can be derived from a re-appropriation of hegemonic discursive realities.

On the contrary, what psychoanalysis aims at offering is an explanatory analysis where the subject is not a mere result of socio-historical configurations, but the failure of such a dynamic:

For Lacan, however, *the subject emerges only at the point of a non-recognition*; all formations of the unconscious have this in common, they are accompanied by a “this is not me”, “I was not there”, although they were produced by the subject him/herself (or to put it in the terms of cogito: they cannot be followed by a “therefore I am”) (Žižek, 1998: 14).

In other words, the negativity that language introduces through a void, which refers to the unconscious as the effects of the signifier onto the subject by means of a structural indeterminacy, entails that no discursive configuration exhausts the sphere of subjectivity. Concerning any attempt to elaborate a “sexual identity”, it is constantly governed by certain moments of uncertainty in relation to one’s sex, being a void between the subject of the unconscious and sexual identifications. As the psychoanalyst Patricia Gherovici affirms:

Sexual identity for both males and females is always precarious because the human infant *becomes sexed* without finally symbolizing unconsciously a normal, finished sexual positioning. Psychoanalysis attempts to throw light on the ways in which sexuality *fails* to conform to the social norms by which it is regulated and on the various fantasies that are constructed to veil this structural failure (Gherovici, 2010: 5. My emphasis).

4.3.1.3.1. Transsexuality and Psychosis: A First Approach

In neurotic and perverse symptoms, sex and sexual difference, due to the impasse of the Real of sexual difference, emerge in vacillation, being a doubt concerning one's sex, whereas in psychosis there can be a certainty of one's sexed status. This certainty is what is argued for transsexuality as a psychotic symptom, which is asserted by Jacques Lacan in his XIX seminar, *...ou pire*¹⁹⁵:

Dans ces conditions, pour accéder à l'autre sexe, il faut réellement payer le prix, justement celui de la petite différence qui passe trompeusement au Réel par l'intermédiaire de l'organe, justement, à ce qu'il cesse d'être pris pour tel et, du même coup, révèle ce que veut dire d'être organe, un organe n'est instrument que par le truchement de ceci dont tout instrument se fonde, c'est un signifiant. Eh bien ! c'est en tant que signifiant que le transsexualiste n'en veut plus et pas en tant qu'organe (Lacan, 2011 : 15).

What this quotation clarifies is the process of foreclosure that might be found, through a process of analysis, in *certain* transsexuals. I would like to emphasize this question because psychoanalysis, at least in its Lacanian vein, does not have any prescriptive orientation concerning sexuality and sexual identifications. In other words, psychoanalysis does not provide a "heterosexist norm" in relation to the symptomatic responses that each subject elaborates in front of the impasse that the *real of sex is for the unconscious* since there is only one available signifier for *jouissance*, this is to say, the phallus. The foreclosure that can be found in a psychotic structure, thus, is not understood as a "disorder" from a specific law that should be performed by *all* subjects, but as a subjective "choice" that refuses the limit imposed by the Symbolic register by

¹⁹⁵ Lacan had previously explored the connections between psychosis and *male-to-female transsexuality* in relation to foreclosure as the structural operation that defines the psychotic subject. The refusal of the phallic signifier that characterizes psychosis is what explains the deliria experienced by the subject, which refer to an excessive and non-castrated *jouissance* that invades it in terms of an Other that requires an infinite submission. Nonetheless, it does not mean that, nowadays, all psychoanalysts claim an identity between psychosis and transsexuality, as I will explain in this subsection. For a further approach on this issue, see « D'une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose » in Lacan, Jacques (1966) : *Écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 531-584, and Lacan, Jacques (1981) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre III: Les psychoses 1955-1956*. Paris, Le Seuil.

means of castration. Hence, foreclosure, by means of the refusal of the the phallic signifier, places the subject's *jouissance* without recourse to the master signifier, which becomes translated into an invasion of a mortifying Other, which is phenomenologically experienced in terms of an unbearable and excessive *jouissance*, which translates into the deliria that structure psychosis. According to this clinical perspective, Lacan is strictly referring to what is currently known as the sexual transitioning proper to male-to-female transsexuality, this is to say, the subject that demands a sexual reassignment in order to become a "real" woman, which is often expressed in a conviction that expulses any neurotic vacillation.

The "error" proper to the transsexual, nonetheless, also shows a "lesson" that clarifies the common mistake proper to sexual discourse: taking an organ as a signifier. This is the *imaginary* operation that primarily comes from the discourse of the Other: interpreting anatomy as the presence or absence of the *image* of a signifier that, nevertheless, is symbolically deprived of any concrete signified, always lost due to the impact of language on anatomy. According to this issue, then, the transsexual subject forecloses the circuit of the signifier because it merely interprets the signifier as an organ, this is to say, it rejects the impossibility to elaborate a suitable signified that would exhaust the signifier. Hence, its demand is the desire to get rid of what incessantly returns in the Real as the void deprived of any successful articulation: being deprived of an *organon* that, indeed, cannot have any concrete materialization.

However, a transsexual subject who effectively demands a surgical intervention performs the unconscious impasse in front of the enigmatic and traumatic status of sexual difference:

"If you think that because I have a penis I am a man, that is an error; I can be a woman who has a penis". Or conversely, "If you think that not having a penis makes me a woman, this is an error because I am a man without a penis". And they are absolutely right because for the unconscious somebody with a penis can be a woman or someone without a penis can be a man, Sexual positioning is not based on organ attribution (Gherovici, *op. cit.*: 165-166).

As Gherovici suggests, what the transsexual demand clarifies is that sex is a whole at the core of being: there is no available knowledge that might offer an explanation in relation to the manifestations of *jouissance*, which can be only confronted through the elaborations of symptoms. In other words, the subject "invents" partial solutions in front of an experience that, traversing its body regarding the drives,

defies sense and discourse as such. This is why Freud (Freud, 1905) had declared that there is no norm that might exhaust sexuality in its polymorphous nature. Being a man or a woman, then, is not a matter of imaginary identifications, but a positioning in relation to the phallus, and the access to *jouissance*, referring to the register of the Real. There is, thus, no truth concerning sex and sexual difference because sex is the failure of language to provide a compact solution. Masculinity and femininity are, therefore, pure imposture and masquerade beneath which there is a pure void, the radical negativity of the Real.

Nonetheless, the certainty that *some* transsexuals have concerning their sexual identity as being men or women is the result of a further failure: through the rejection of the phallic signifier, they have access to a *jouissance* that invades them, with no possible mediation. Properly speaking, what some transsexuals foreclose and refuse is the Name-of-the-Father, this is to say, the metaphorical instance of the signifier that puts a limit to the metonymical nature of desire, repressing any sort of mythical object: “The Name-of-the-Father was thus defined as a key signifier granting access to phallic signification: it was the factor that allowed the subject to bestow meaning to signifiers and adopt a position as male or female in the basic sexual division” (Gherovici, *op. cit.*: 159).

Concerning the interpretation of transsexuality as a psychotic symptom, Catherine Millot and Geneviève Morel offer what, according to my view, might be read as a too strict diagnosis that might derive in an unexpected discursive alliance to the psychiatric discourse. They both depart from a Lacanian clinical remark, which, nonetheless, as the clinic of psychoanalysis imposes, should be reconsidered in certain scenarios, mainly if the differential diagnosis and the singularity that it allows concerning patients’ symptoms is well observed. Such a remark establishes that the “madness” proper to the male-to-female transsexual is to get rid of the penis, which is read as the phallus due to the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father. What the transsexual subject would pursue is to obtain an unlimited *jouissance* that might have devastating consequences: “Sa passion, au transsexualiste, est la folie de vouloir se libérer de cette erreur, l’erreur commune qui ne voit pas que le signifiant c’est la jouissance, et que le phallus n’en est que le signifié” (Lacan, 2011: 15).

As far as Lacan is concerned, the symptoms that he could analyse all along his years as a psychoanalyst cannot be separated from the discursive forms of the social

Other that emerged during the 1970's, especially if the latter quotation is considered. Hence, it cannot be obviated that the social mutations that derive from the beginning of the 70's and late 60's of the last century might have been the occasion for a further narcissistic account on sex and sexual difference, a remark that cannot be left aside concerning the symptomatic mutations of the sexed body and sexual positioning. The impact of technique, therefore, as a register that has notoriously increased its influence on the body, trying to reduce it to a surgical notion where it becomes a malleable textuality susceptible of an undoing process by means of the subjective demand, is a crucial issue within the current debate on transsexuality. Thus, "only when technology developed to the point that clinicians could intervene at the level of the body did the term *sex* begin to refer exclusively to the biological realm" (Gherovici, *op. cit.*: 31).

In relation to this discursive scenario, Catherine Millot, in her essay *Horsexe: Essai sur le transsexualisme* (1983), offers an analytic approach towards transsexuality, mainly male-to-female cases, based on her psychoanalytic treatment with some of her transsexual patients. Her diagnosis is clear: a psychotic symptom, being the transsexual subject trapped into the metonymic chain of the mother's desire. Due to the foreclosure of the phallic signifier, what emerges in transsexual subjects is what Lacan named the *pousse-à-la-femme*, this is to say, the attempt to incarnate a universal signification of The Woman:

The *pousse-à-la-femme* [push-to-the-woman] results from the subject's delusional interpretation of the *jouissance* that invades him/her, and is not localized by the phallic signifier: in other words, it is foreclosed. *Jouissance* is now interpreted as being feminine (Morel, *op. cit.*: 60).

In this sense, Millot ascertains that transsexual women aim at incarnating a hyperbolized version of femininity, pretending to be more "women" than "real" women: "En effet, l'idée de la femme dont se réclament les transsexuels est d'un conformisme total. Hors de la star et de la popote, qui sont les deux pôles de l'identifications féminine des transsexuels, pas de salut" (Millot, 1983: 12). Following this diagnosis, Millot argues that, for transsexuals, being a woman becomes a reduction of essentialized identifications, which means a constant confusion between the Imaginary and the Real due to the rejection of the phallic signifier and castration.

Nevertheless, what Millot seems to leave aside is the compulsory notion of a hyperbolized masculinity and femininity that psychiatrists want to discover in their patients, which involves a vicious circle: the transsexual must introduce itself into the

phantasy orchestrated by the psychiatric discourse. In this sense, there seems to be a problematic diagnosis in relation to the symptom that transsexuality is said to be, mainly if psychiatric notions are taken into account, which traverse the signifier “transsexuality” in itself. As I had previously stated, transsexuality, then, at least in its current articulation, is a product of the intersections between biomedicine, and surgical and hormonal techniques, which pretend to trap the real of sex by reducing it to a scientific articulation between psychology and neurobiology:

Pour ces derniers, souvent des médecins non psychiatres, chirurgiens et surtout endocrinologues, le transsexualisme relève d’un trouble localisé de l’identité, dont ils font l’hypothèse qu’il serait consécutif à une imprégnation hormonale du cerveau au cours de la vie intra-utérine, la contradiction entre un cerveau d’un sexe, et un corps de l’autre, étant la cause bien compréhensible d’une souffrance psychique que la rectification corporelle devrait soulager (Millot, *op. cit.* : 23).

While science tries to elaborate a “truth” that would regulate the sexed status of the subject through recourse to an organic notion of the body where the brain has become a new *sujet supposé savoir* the message of which could be univocally interpreted, psychosis signals another dimension. Indeed, in the psychoanalytic lexicon, psychoses, in all their symptomatic diversity, are not understood as mental disorders or illnesses because such a statement implies the erasure of the subject, this is to say, its response in front of the phallus and desire. Thus, psychosis is not a “disorder”, whereas neurosis would be a proper “order”, but it is one of the possible three structures regarding the subjective positioning in front of castration and the Law derived from the knotting of the three registers, this is to say, the Borromean knot between the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. These three registers, in the cases of neurosis and perversion, are tied together thanks to a supplementary element, the *sinthome*, the last reconfiguration of the Name-of-the-Father in the late 1970’s elaborated by Jacques Lacan. Each subject invents, then, a solution to join the three registers together with recourse to the phallic signifier, which by no means provides a normative solution. In psychosis, because of the failure of castration, the subjective solution is extremely precarious, which explains the delusional status and invasive deliria that are usually suffered by psychotic subjects.

Nonetheless, Millot gives an account of the Name-of-the-Father that reproduces the diagnosis offered by Lacan in early stages of his teaching, where this notion was tied to the father as the incarnation of the symbolic law:

À défaut du signifiant du Nom-du-Père qui représente, dans la structure signifiante inconsciente du sujet la fonction paternelle, se produira une carence des possibilités identificatoires du garçon au père, laquelle se manifestera, par exemple, dans l'inconsistance imaginaire de la virilité (Millot, *op. cit.*: 33).

The main issue within Millot's notion of the Name-of-the-Father in terms of the fourth element that joins the three registers that structure the subject is its reference to a classic oedipal schema, where boys should identify with the paternal figure, and girls should identify with the mother. Undoubtedly, imaginary identifications sanctioned by the symbolic instance are at the core of the elaboration of the self and the consistence, mainly a bodily one, they provide. Despite this, an analysis such as hers might resound of a binary schema where "having a penis" involves a masculine sexual positioning, and "lacking of a penis" requires a feminine one. It is worth reminding that, for the unconscious, there is no harmonic configuration of sexual difference, mainly because sexual relationship, this is to say, a complementary differentiation, is structurally impossible because there is only a single signifier. This is why, for Lacanian psychoanalysis, there is not strictly speaking two differentiated sexes, but one and something more because no signifier can represent the Other *jouissance*, the one that exceeds the domain of the phallic economy: the not-all phallic or feminine *jouissance*.

However, Millot adds an interesting hypothesis in relation to sex reassignment as an attempt to elaborate a precarious form of a *sinthome*, this is to say, a strategy to establish a limit to the invasive *jouissance* that is so commonly verified in the clinic of psychosis due to the foreclosure of the phallus:

En ce qui concerne, au moins, le transsexuel masculin, j'avancerai l'hypothèse que le symptôme transsexuel, *stricto sensu*, (conviction et demande de transformation), correspond à la tentative de pallier la carence du Nom-du-Père, c'est-à-dire de poser une limite, un point d'arrêt, de constituer un suspens à fonction phallique (Millot, *op. cit.* : 39).

The issue at stake would be that such a demand tries to deal with the logical modality of impossibility, this is to say, obtaining a technical assurance of a certainty produced by a psychotic foreclosure. In this sense, surgical techniques and psychiatry, through the discourse of university that structure them, produce a further foreclosure of the subject, reduced to an organicist explanation for which there is a suitable and available solution since the demand of the subject is strictly interpreted from the conviction that it enunciates. What is missing in this schema is a crucial element that is incessantly vindicated by the clinical practice of psychoanalysis: the listening to the symptomatic reality proper to each subject, being a singularity not susceptible of

collectivization as a consuming good¹⁹⁶. Following this critical argument, in each demand there is the expectation of obtaining a realization of desire that eventually contains a self-deceiving element because desire, as psychoanalysis shows, is inextricably tied to the Other, who can provide or deprive, being a negative rest that bars the access to a fully realization of the subject's desire.

If desire is considered as an infinite demand for love, each demand for a sex reassignment is not susceptible of being interpreted in homologous terms. Otherwise, there is an ethical and clinical erasure of the singular paths that structure each subject's psychic reality, which is bound to the story that it has in relation to alterity: "From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, one would advise taking the demand for a sex change as a subjective production, thus unique and meriting an analysis in its particularity. No predetermined norm could generalize the particulars of a subjective motivation" (Gherovici, *op. cit.*: 11).

In relation to what Catherine Millot asserts, Geneviève Morel understands transsexuality as a psychotic symptom that requires a delicate analysis in order to allow for the appearance of the singularity of the subject's symptoms. Disputing both the notion of gender and the medical assumption of a required by protocol treatment that forecloses the subject of the unconscious, Morel establishes that transsexuality derives from the failure of castration and, hence, being outside the inscription of the phallic function. The transsexual subject, due to being trapped into the dynamic of maternal desire, either attempts to identify with the maternal figure, or undertakes a feminizing process without an end, this is to say, a *pousse-à-la-femme*. Appealing to the Lacanian formulas of sexuation, what Morel affirms is that the transsexual subject, inasmuch as its symptom derives from psychosis, experiences an unmediated *jouissance* that creates in it the delirious conviction of belonging to the other's sex. The transsexual confuses,

¹⁹⁶ In his seminar devoted to the ethical perspective of psychoanalysis, Lacan had already thrown light on the enigmatic and opaque dynamic of desire as the terrain for an ethics not based on a Sovereign Good susceptible of being shared by *all* subjects, this is to say, a distributive and calculative notion of ethics. Such a perspective has traversed the philosophical discourse for a very long time since the Aristotelean notion of distributive justice. On the contrary, the notion of *jouissance* introduces a perspective that, taking into account the Law of desire that Lacan attributes to Kantian ethics, signals a universality that pursues an enigmatic object that mobilizes the subject, this is to say, the *objet petit a*, or *Das Ding*, being this latter concept the one Lacan uses in the seventh seminar. As a result, Lacan puts at the centre of ethics the tragic dimension that he derives from the lesson obtained by Antigone: desire, despite being solidary with the Law of the signifier, signals a radically singular object that is not represented by any utilitarian or distributive perspective. Each subject, then, in relation to the Law, obtains its form of *jouissance*. For a further perspective on this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (1986): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII: L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil.

therefore, the Imaginary with the Real, pretending to obtain a successful articulation of what, indeed, is impossible: sexual relationship: “It is impossible to write a sexual relationship between the One and an Other characterized by the fact that there is no signifier to identify it, and thus by an absence, a gap” (Morel, *op. cit.*: 65). In this sense, Morel is extremely critical with the offer made by scientific discourse, which attempts to have a “solution” for the symptoms experienced by the transsexual subject inasmuch as it does not take into account the singularity proper to each case, but it elaborates a standardised method based on psychological therapy and verification of transsexuality, hormonal treatment and, eventually, sex reassignment: “To respond to these subjects by acceding to their demand for surgery raises an ethical problem, because in such cases the medical discourse makes itself, in some sense, the instrument of psychosis” (Morel, *op. cit.*: 187).

Concerning Millot’s and Morel’s diagnoses, they both coincide at signalling that the discourse on sex and sexual difference that orchestrates the division between sex and gender is at the core of the psychiatric approach on transsexuality and, indeed, it allows transsexuality as such. Their psychoanalytic perspective is what allows them to render visible that, as far as sexual difference is concerned, there is a structural gap:

In this vein, Lacan’s teaching of the 1970’s proposed a logic of sexuation based on the phallic function and not on identifications. The “not-all” is the acme of this logic: in itself it is the anti-identification *par excellence*. It does not involve existence, the “at least one” necessary for the creation of an identification through a signifying trait (Morel, *op. cit.*: 201-202).

Psychoanalysis is not based on an identity politics, which is the modality referring to the discourse of the master. Hence, their Lacanian orientation defies what seems to have become a new version of our current “common sense”: the narcissistic conception of the body in terms of a malleable surface susceptible of being designed according to imaginary criteria, which, indeed, belongs to the illusionary coherence provided by the formation of the ego. Lacan had already asserted that consciousness, taken as the point of departure of scientific speculations on the subject, does not know anything of the *symptomatic* unconscious formations, which are foreclosed under the hegemonic status conferred to science as a master-signifier:

La dimension du sujet supposé transparent dans son propre acte de connaissance ne commence qu’à partir de l’entrée en jeu d’un objet spécifié qui est celui qu’essaye de cerner le stade du miroir, à savoir l’image de corps propre, pour autant que, devant elle, le sujet a le sentiment jubilatoire d’être en effet devant un objet qui le rend, lui sujet, à lui-même transparent. L’extension à toute espèce de connaissance de cette illusion de la

conscience est motivée par ceci, que l'objet de la connaissance est construit, modelé, à l'image du rapport spéculaire. C'est précisément en quoi cet objet de la connaissance est insuffisant (Lacan, 2004:73).

In other words, the illusion sustained by the scientific discourse that asserts the “truth” on one's sexed position is to take a part, that is, identifications, as the whole of the subject, which forecloses the Real-impossible of sexual difference, the void that the imaginary body hides beneath its articulation. In addition, what this remark enables to consider is the dimension of *jouissance*, which is present in imaginary, symbolic and real instances as the excess that derives from the effect of the signifier on the *speaking body*. On the contrary, what the psychiatric and constructivist discourses perform is a silencing of the symptomatic and singular dimension by virtue of the pre-eminence conferred to discourse as the cause that produces a monolithic effect, a subject reduced to a sum of partial identifications that are considered as an identity. Simultaneously, the vindication of a barred subject inasmuch as it is the subject of the unconscious, this is to say, articulated by means of the discourse of the Other, signals a structural impossibility regarding the subject: no category exhausts its negativity, this is to say, the scission that bans a harmonic reconciliation with itself.

In spite of the crucial remarks that the analyses of Millot and Morel signal, I would say that the assumption that any transsexual symptom is a psychotic manifestation is too taken for granted. It might erase the particularity proper to the clinic of psychoanalysis, this is to say, taking in the singularity of each symptom, which requires that the analyst leaves aside any normative apparatus in order to interpret the signifiers that write the patient's *jouissance*. Otherwise, there is a risk of solidifying the psychiatric and pathological version of the symptom in terms of a disorder that should be “normalized”. Though some transsexual subjects might experience their symptoms through a delusional *jouissance*, reducing *all* transsexuals to such a notion erases the possibility that, for *some of them*, transsexuality might become the occasion for a *sinthome* that puts a limit to the mortifying excess in relation to their body. In this sense, before diagnosing a psychotic structure, it is important to carefully listen to the patient's symptoms without transforming neurosis, psychosis and perversion into standardised versions of subjectivity that could incarnate a pure statistical stereotype.

4.3.1.3.2. Transsexuality and Hysteria: A Second Approach

Considering transsexuality as a psychotic symptom is not shared by all psychoanalysts. Indeed, it is a diagnosis currently disputed in the psychoanalytic clinic. As exponents of this clinical diversity, I will refer to Patricia Gherovici's *Please Select Your Gender: From the Invention of Hysteria to the Democratization of Transgenderism* (2010), and Oren Gozlan's *Transsexuality and the Art of Transitioning* (2015). While the former oscillates between a differential diagnosis on transsexuality as a hysterical or non-triggered psychotic symptom, the latter tries to argue for the "transsexual" articulation of sexed positioning itself.

As far as Gherovici is concerned, she elaborates an analogy between hysteria and transsexuality inasmuch as in both cases, according to her analysis, there might emerge a similar question: "Am I a man or a woman?" From *her clinical experience*, she indicates that a hysterical mutation of our current times is the transformation of this fundamental hysterical question in new terms: "Am I heterosexual or bisexual?", which, indeed, tries to give an answer in front the Real of sexual difference:

Both hysterics (by questioning their gender) and transgender people (by answering it) show a disjunction between the subjective sense of one's body and its material reality. Thus, for hysterics and for transgender people alike, it is indeed sexual difference that appears as a conundrum (Gherovici, *op. cit.*: XII).

Dealing with transsexuality from one of the symptomatic configurations that Freud discovered radically differs from a discourse that elaborates a clear and strict distinction between normal and pathological sexed assumptions. As Lacan had also asserted, what the hysteric pursues is the Real of sex, this is to say, an answer concerning the "truth" that it endeavours to find. This is why hysteric subjects try to find an Other installed in a position of mastery, though performing a further dialectic movement: trying to unveil the lack of the master, which reveals that the "truth" that the hysteric wants to obtain, despite its stubbornness, is a real-impossible, this is to say, exceeds the chain of sense. At the same time, departing from hysteria as a hypothetical approach to deal with transsexuality implies a difference between the organism and the body: "Medical knowledge erases subjectivity by reducing subjects to a set of organs, symptoms, and clearly ascertainable complaints" (Gherovici, *op.cit.*: 56). While scientific discourse is concerned by the organism in terms of a living entity that possesses its regularities, laws and possible malfunctions, psychoanalysis refers to the body, which does not mean that anatomy is erased. The body, though, cannot be

considered apart from the effects of language over the living organism, which introduces a chiasm that involves that the speaking being is deprived of any instinctive reality, this is to say, a pre-defined destiny with definable functions:

A body is not just a collection of organs, but a place onto which culture inscribes itself. The result of such inscription we may call “subjectivity”. The particular words that the symptom represent are very idiosyncratic, each patient’s “writing” being a matter of subjective style that identifies him or her like a signature (Gherovici, *op. cit.*: 53).

The notion of the body as a writing and collection of symptoms is crucial in the debate on transsexuality because it radically challenges the reduction of the body to a mute organism¹⁹⁷. Hence, a demand for a modification of the mark of sexual difference according to the signifier given by the Other, and the identifications that articulate such a trace is more than a physical re-articulation. In such a demand, what is clearly compromised is the desire to pursue an object the fulfilment of which will never be achieved, which explains why there are several groups of transsexuals that are sceptical in relation to what could be obtained from surgery. In relation to this, linking transsexuality to a hysterical symptom in front of the real of sex entails that it is a manifestation in front of the discourse that regulates sex in our days, this is to say, the capitalist discourse, for which the body is a good at the disposal of the self. Thus, Gherovici, questioning a too rigid procedure that links transsexuality to psychosis, signals a feature that should not be forgotten, since unconscious formations cannot be separated from the social reality that structures the discourse of the Other and, consequently, impacts on the emergence of the subject. From her interpretation, a transsexual subject formulates a demand to the medical discourse that sustains the hegemonic approach of transsexuality, which, indeed, is a symptomatic reality of the supreme role conferred to science. In other words, the question posed by the transsexual subject is: “Am I a man or a woman? I have been told that, if I have a penis, I am a man, but why? Can you give me an answer?”, or conversely “If I do not have a penis, I am a woman. But why?”. The issue at stake here, unfortunately, is the failure to achieve an answer, since medicine believes in the possibility of sexual relationship referring to a

¹⁹⁷ A brilliant analysis of the organism that is the object of study proper to medicine and biomedicine can be found in Foucault, Michel (1963): *Naissance de la clinique. Une archéologie du regard médical*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France. As Foucault outlines, the anatomical and clinical perspective of the body departs from the corpse as the standard version of embodiment, this is to say, an organic reality that can be interpreted by scientific knowledge, with no rest in its reading. However, the body that the speaking being has is not a mute reality, but it is, indeed, a *symptom*, this is to say, the surface where the response in front of *jouissance* is incarnated through singular solutions that defy a homogeneous and taxonomical reality.

biological and physiological version of the body that expulses subjectivity. Deception, and, therefore, the lack of the Other reveal themselves as impotent in front of the kernel that sexual difference is for the speaking being. The answer that the transsexual subject seeks to obtain is impossible inasmuch as it signals the inherent hole within knowledge, a fundamental gap that can only be dissimulated through recourse to fantasies, and a subjective-symptomatic response. There is no universal criterion, despite the paranoid attempt to “diagnose” femininity and masculinity through stereotyped tests, able to define what a man and a woman are. It is an answer that, eventually, cannot respond to the demand. This is why psychoanalysts insist on the cautious listening to the transsexual demand that wants to get rid of an organ in order to obtain a “final” answer concerning its sexed being: “All sex changes are formulated as requests that need to be analysed first at the level of demand. If demand is ultimately a demand for love, extreme caution should be exercised because no object can fulfil it”¹⁹⁸ (Gherovici, *op. cit.*: 128).

This feature explains why psychoanalysts try to elude as much as it is possible a mastery position that recommends a sex reassignment for a patient because they might sustain the illusion of a “final” solution after surgery, which is never the case. The relation with the body, mainly in its sexed dimension, is never easy or definite, but everyday life confronts the subject to moments of anxiety and uneasiness in relation to the Real that eludes any concrete and historical symbolic operation. This is why Lacan asserted that the Real is a hole within the signifying chain for the speaking being, a pure void that traumatically returns. Thus, what some transsexuals denounce as an “error of nature” is indeed the result of the inscription of the subject beyond the phallic

¹⁹⁸ Related to transsexuals’ demand in relation to sex reassignment, there are several analyses that show a high number of individuals who commit suicide after surgery or experience a painful melancholic symptom when the failure of surgery to provide a suitable *sinthome* emerges. Unfortunately, the studies are merely statistical, which means that they should be taken into account with some caution because subjects are reduced to population. At the same time, it shows some more light on an issue that some psychoanalysts seem to obviate in relation to transsexuality: hate crimes against transsexuals are extremely frequent, which is a factor that cannot be forgotten in relation to suicide. Indeed, when the socio-symbolic reality inhabited by a subject becomes a never-ending hostile environment, a *passage à l’acte* can perfectly occur. This remark is constantly signalled by queer theorists and many feminists, both activists and scholars. What is more urgent, then, in front of current malaises and symptoms, is to rethink symbolic articulations of sexual difference. For some available sources, see: <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-suicide-attempts-alarming-transgender-20140127-story.html#ixzz2rnTOn3ZM>, <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0016885>, and <http://www.revistapsicologia.uchile.cl/index.php/RDP/article/viewFile/25835/27163>. Last hits: 01/04/2016

signification, which bars the access to castration, and a positioning in front of the phallic function. They rightly denounce the “common error” of the sexual discourse, a mistake that clarifies that, for humans, sexuality is a polymorphous entity that incessantly challenges any normative construction. In this sense, even the “heterosexual solution” is a symptom in front of the impasse that sex is in its relation to signification and language as a symbolic structure:

With the Oedipus complex and the different identifications which it generates, Freud gave consistency to an Other of discourse. This Other connects its norms, models, obligations, and prohibitions with the original anatomical identity. It imposes a standard solution to the castration complex, a heterosexual solution, and rejects all other solutions as atypical or pathological. According to Lacan, an Other, by providing semblances capable of ordering the relation between the sexes, tells us what we should do as men or women (Soler in Salecl, ed., 2000: 40)¹⁹⁹.

Each subject must manage to elaborate a response in front of an enigma that is covered by fantasies that structure modalities of *jouissance*, which exceed mere identifications, a remark that, indeed, signals another element in relation to Gherovici’s hypothesis that introduces transsexuality as a modality of a hysterical symptom. This further element is what follows: while for the hysteric there is no suitable answer for its persistent demand inasmuch as it identifies with the phallus, this is to say, the signifier without a signified, the transsexual subject inverts the hysterical dynamic. The transsexual *believes* in a solution, though nowadays there is an increasing number of transsexuals who choose to live in an indeterminacy concerning their identifications, an element that does not exhaust the process of sexuation²⁰⁰. Consequently, the “transsexual” sustained by the biomedical discourse is an illusion that undermines the subject’s responsibility in front of its desire, reducing its existence to a pure disorder. It is, strictly speaking, a regulatory bio-political fiction that erases subjectivity, a dynamic that is in consonance with the alliance between science and bio-politics, for which there is no subject, but a pure mass named population.

In conclusion, the analysis provided by Gherovici challenges the quick association that links transsexuality to psychosis, aiming to elaborate an analogy

¹⁹⁹ The French original version is not available because this text was published in English. It was translated by Sina Najafi and Marina Harss.

²⁰⁰ An interesting evidence of the plural diversity of the transsexual phenomenon can be found in the following article, published by the Catalan newspaper “La Directa”. The two interviewed people, assuming a “not-all” positioning in front of the medical discourse concerning transsexuality, defy presumed notions such as certainty in relation to belonging to the other sex. See <https://directa.cat/opcions-davant-realitat-trans-son-trencar-esquemes-trencar-persones>. Last hit: 10/04/2016

between hysteria and transsexuality that, despite the absence of certainty in the hysteric subject, gives a hint in relation to the hysterical dynamic of the psychiatric discourse and its false promise on univocal criteria concerning sexual difference. The most troubling issue of the current capitalist discourse in relation to sex is the foreclosure of what exceeds the wholeness of the phallic inscription, this is to say, the feminine position, which, indeed, becomes a symptom for any discursive formation:

Lacan propone concebir la *posición femenina* como posición límite respecto al saber, no sólo al saber del inconsciente mismo – recordar que una de las definiciones del inconsciente es un saber que no se sabe – que J. Lacan escribe con el matema [S2]. Una posición que se sitúa en el borde mismo el universo simbólico. Eso es lo que va a proponer con la formalización de la sexuación (Cevasco, 2010: 22).

The capitalist discourse, in which transsexuality becomes one of its symptoms in a hysterized modality that *might* derive in a foreclosure of the phallic signifier, promises a false notion of equality in relation to the subject and its sexed body. It promotes an incessant push to an insatiable *jouissance* that is inscribed under the logic of an excess susceptible of being re-articulated in a solipsistic discourse of consumption and production, which is, indeed, the rejection of the Real by means of a super-egoistic fetishism: “My contention is that when sexual difference is democratized, universalized, or forcibly inscribed under a logic of all, thus excluding the not-all, or Other sex, then choice is not truly democratic and ultimately denies the intractability of the real of sexual difference” (Gherovici, *op. cit.*: 246-247).

Following the path that traverses Gherovici’s discourse, Oren Gozlan situates the debate on a further level, asserting that any assumption of sexual difference is, in itself, trans-sexual. In other words, there is a logic of alterity that traverses sexual positioning, which radically contests any notion of identity and gender. Indeed, Gozlan rightly highlights that transsexuality is irreducible to the notion of gender performativity inasmuch as it faces the deadlock that sexual difference is. Thus, the displacement of desire mobilised by gender theory involves that its metonymical nature is merely developed through recourse to a nominalist account of discourse, which offers a notion of the subject traversed by norms and egotistic ideals. Such a consideration, hence, signals the conundrum at the core of a subjective reductionism, the scission of which is obviated in discourses where subjectivity is the resultant effect of power relations and ideology. In this sense, while the notion of gender evokes the imaginary surface that departs from the looking-glass phase and the emergence of the body, transsexuality, according to Gozlan, unveils the void that lies beneath any identification, which, as

Lacan remarked, links the anxiety produced by the Real with the constitutive bond of desire to the desire of the Other:

Gender embodiment provides us with the phantasy of completion, a promise of satisfaction. In contrast, enigmatic, unintelligible objects evoke no promise. Like a confrontation with an ambiguous object of art, the concept of transsexuality confronts us with anxieties over not knowing and with a demand to know (Gozlan, 2015: 12-13).

Following this remark, Gozlan aims at outlining that transsexuality should not be only reserved for the subject that effectively demands a transformation on its body and, therefore, asserts that it belongs to the other's sex, but it would traverse the whole process of sexuation as such²⁰¹. Thus, he provides a metaphorical notion of transsexuality according to an incessant transition of the function of the signifier, which finally entails that the being of the subject is never reduced to its representations, this is to say, there is an excess that constantly differs from the process of signification. Indeed, the dialectics of desire, deprived of an object that would fulfil its negative rest, situates the subject in a vacillation, where partial modes of *jouissance* are obtained in relation to the alterity that being sexed is, and the Other towards which or whom the subject directs its demand. In addition, I would even suggest that Ozlan refers to the ambiguous assertion concerning one's sex since it is a matter of *jouissance*, which means that masculine and feminine positions are not univocal, but susceptible of a certain fluidity in relation to the phallic signifier.

However, in his aim to transform trans-sexuality into a signifier that would exemplify the transitional nature of identifications and sexuation, Ozlan introduces a difference between gender and sex, which, from a psychoanalytic perspective, should be discussed. Especially when he refers to presumed "normative" accounts of sexuality within the psychoanalytic discourse. Such a difference, understood in terms of the chiasm between identifications and *jouissance*, is not formulated by Lacanian

²⁰¹ Though Ozlan does not refer to authors like Gilles Deleuze, Deleuze and Félix Guattari had asserted that the sphere of subjectivity, in spite of the illusion of a metaphysics of a perennial substance, is a constant process of accumulation and diversification of intensities and pleasures, which, indeed, transforms the subject into an incessant transition. Hence, the subject would be, properly speaking, a trans-sexual, which recalls the Spinozist notion of the conatus, and the immanent nature of desire as a polymorphous source of expression and potentiality. The movement proper to the subject, thus, would be des-territorialization, this is to say, an ecstatic movement that exceeds any aim of an identity fixation. The multiplicity and intensity of pleasures is the resource that Deleuze and Guattari also use in arguing for a body without organs, this is to say, a regime of intensity that pushes the notion of the subject to the limit, being an undoing of a coherent and self-transparent subject. For a further approach on these Deleuzian concepts, see Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari (1972): *L'Anti-Oedipe. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, and (1980): *Capitalisme et schizophrénie : Mille Plateaux*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit.

psychoanalysis. In fact, the notion of gender effaces a crucial element in relation to sexual positioning: the drives and the insistence of *jouissance*, which becomes evident in the repetitive mechanism that traverses the fundamental fantasy that tries to find a “solution” in front of the real of sex. A “solution” in which the subject becomes attached to *jouissance* through recourse to the Law of the signifier that structures desire, which, according to Lacan, means that “le fantasme est le soutien du désir, ce n’est pas l’objet qui est le soutien du désir. Le sujet se soutient comme désirant par rapport à un ensemble signifiant toujours beaucoup plus complexe” (Lacan, 1973: 168). It is this invention that provides the subject with a recourse to deal with the excessive nature of *jouissance*, sustaining it through a bond between the Imaginary and the Real by means of a metaphor. On the contrary, the division between gender and sex resounds of a binary structure between a performed “identity” embodied by the subject as a citation of the hegemonic discourse that regulates sexual difference, while sex might be reduced to an imaginary mark of the organ.

Lacanian psychoanalysis does not elaborate any heterosexist notion of sexuality, mainly if the Freudian polymorphous nature of sexuality is considered. Hence, Ozlan echoes the notion that belongs to gender studies and queer theory, which reproduces the very binarism they are said to undo, this is to say, normative and non-normative object-choices, which, indeed, could be read as a sign of a segregationist mode of *jouissance*. Indeed, the notion of gender is rooted in a voluntarist account of the subject where the self, despite its multiplicity and plurality, is taken as the root for identifications. Therefore, each subject has its gender, merely conditioned by the limits of the hegemonic discourse of each historical moment. As far as psychoanalysis is concerned, the insistence of the drive and its fixation towards certain objects of *jouissance* point to an incessant circuit that repeats itself because, due to castration, no empirical object can fulfil the drive and desire:

Ce qui nécessite la répétition, c’est la jouissance, terme désigné en propre. C’est pour autant qu’il y a recherche de la jouissance en tant que répétition, que se produit ceci, qui est en jeu dans le pas du franchissement freudien – ce qui nous intéresse en tant que répétition, et qui s’inscrit d’une dialectique de la jouissance, est proprement ce qui va contre la vie (Lacan, 1991: 51).

Psychoanalysis does not elaborate, thereby, a discourse of the master in relation to sex, identifications and sexual practices²⁰². Lacanian psychoanalysis is the reverse of such a discursive apparatus. In this sense, there is no normative approach to *jouissance* and its symptomatic manifestations in the repetitive mechanism of the drives. Hence, Ozlan is clearly wrong when he asserts that:

As a theory of otherness, psychoanalysis needs to examine critically its own investment and complicity in normative discourses of gender while simultaneously allowing itself to be affected and displaced by what non-normative forms of sexed embodiment can teach us about subjectivity and desire (Ozlan, 2015: 31).

What Ozlan seems to miss suggesting a possible alliance between psychoanalysis as discourse and clinical practice, and the notion of gender normativity is the inversion that psychoanalysis elaborates in relation to deconstructionist and nominalist accounts of sex/gender. Authors like Michel Foucault and Judith Butler elaborate historicist arguments of sexuality through recourse to the notion of discourse as an apparatus built up with the couple knowledge-power, whereas psychoanalysis signals the *real* dimension of sex as a gap. For psychoanalysis, there is no identification and discursive representation of sexuality that exhausts the hole that sex is for the symbolic order and the mechanisms proper to the Law of the signifier. If sex has a phantasmatic status for the subject, it is because there is no available signifier that gives a proper account of what sex *is* since sex is the failure of sense and, as such, exceeds the domains of being. Following this argument, *jouissance* as an excess from the effect of the signifier onto the living body is only symptomatically written because there is no discursive knowledge that can grasp the Real-impossible of sexual difference. Therefore, discourse, in its differential articulation as a social bond, offers precarious alternatives that aim at ordering the dimension of the partial drives through recourse to the mechanism of the signifier, which, in itself, is deprived of norms due to the denaturalizing consequence of language over sexuality. In his eleventh seminar, Lacan, according to this logic, pointed to the absence of a concrete goal for the drive, being an excrescence from any biological need, an extra feature deprived of a concrete

²⁰² Related to sex and *jouissance*, the psychoanalyst Jean Allouch develops the huge difference between a normative account of this sphere, which is rooted in claiming that a certain ordering of sex and sexual difference through socio-symbolic configurations is the only available one, and a psychoanalytic one, which challenges the narcissistic nature of the “I”. On the contrary, it points to the fundamental void that sexual positioning is regarding the unconscious and the phallic function. For a further account on this important difference between the discourse of the master and the discourse of the analyst, see Allouch, Jean (2001): *Le sexe du maître. L'érotisme d'après Lacan*. Paris, Exils.

and firm signified: “Si la pulsion peut être satisfaite sans avoir atteint ce qui, au regard d’une totalisation biologique de la fonction, serait la satisfaction à sa fin de reproduction, c’est qu’elle est pulsion partielle, et que son but n’est point autre chose que ce retour en circuit” (Lacan, *op. cit.* : 163).

The notion of *jouissance*, which is not reducible to any sort of evolutionary notion of the pleasure principle, goes beyond the Oedipal schema that Freud offered, which suggested an evolutionary account of sexuality that would derive into a “normal” sexual life ordered through the primacy of genital organs. On the contrary, *jouissance* suggests that, indeed, anything related to sex is perverse inasmuch as it is deprived of any instinctual need, which involves that it is absurd to divide human sexuality between normal and non-normative object-choices.

Nevertheless, it is true that *certain psychoanalysts*, mainly those who belong to the so-called “ego psychology”, stress a normalizing and therapeutic goal to elaborate a coherent notion of the subject, reduced to the imaginary identifications, by means of a coerced identification with the ego-ideal that the analyst incarnates. Nonetheless, Lacanian psychoanalysis clarifies that the symptom, the supplementary creation of the subject in front of the excessive nature of *jouissance*, and the lack of the sexual relationship between the sexes, always persists, being the modality that the subject has created in order to deal with the Real.

Nonetheless, Ozlan signals an issue that should be taken into account concerning a sometimes-quick analogy between transsexuality and psychosis, which might erase the differential diagnosis, and the singular listening that psychoanalysis provides. In order to avoid such a conclusion, he outlines what follows:

For the transsexual subject, the dilemma may be expressed as the wish to have the cohesive body that the other is assumed to have. In turn, the anxiety that the transsexual body evokes around questions of intelligibility and symbolic legitimacy makes apparent our need to disavow the uncertainty that every gender identification unveils. The projection of lack, insufficiency and excess onto the transsexual body reveals that the phantasy of cohesion implicit in the fiction of identity is in itself a container for anxiety over unconscious undecidability, for, as psychoanalysis reminds us, the accidental match between the sexed body and gender identity is tenuous and fragile at best (Ozlan, *op. cit.*: 35).

According to Ozlan, then, what is at stake in a transsexual subject is the non-conformity between an imaginary version of the body, this is to say, the body as an extended surface that offers an illusion of coherence as the possibility for the “I”, and a

void, this is to say, the absence of a signifier. In other words, within the process of identifications symbolically sanctioned, there is a hole that points to a lack in the Other, which implies that the Other *always* fails to provide any presumed synthetic solution in front of an impasse: the Real as the surplus that exceeds the production of meaning. Hence, Ozlan suggests an attempt to enter into the fantasied image of a cohesive identification that would be offered by the Other in the dialectic of desire since desire is the desire of the Other. Following this argument, Lacan, in his seminar devoted to the affect of anxiety, had outlined that, in the gesture of desire as the expression of a lack-of-being, the subject aims at incarnating the *objet petit a* that would be absent in the Other. Such a remark reminds of the scenario between the infant and the subject who incarnates the maternal function, which points to the metonymical function of desire:

L'Autre intéresse mon désir dans la mesure où de ce qui lui manque et qu'il ne sait pas. C'est au niveau de ce qui lui manque et qu'il ne sait pas que je suis intéressé de la façon la plus prégnante, parce qu'il n'y a pas pour moi d'autre détour à trouver ce qui me manque comme objet de mon désir. C'est pourquoi il n'y a pas pour moi, non seulement d'accès à mon désir, mais même de sustentation possible de mon désir qui ait référence à un objet quel qu'il soit, si ce n'est en le couplant, en le nouant avec ceci, le S2, qui exprime la nécessaire dépendance du sujet par rapport à l'Autre comme tel (Lacan, 2004 : 33).

In other words, the dialectic of desire is governed by a lack that the subject, in this case the child, discovers in the Other in its imaginary level. Thus, in order to presumably fulfil such a lack, the subject offers itself as the fetish that would erase such an emptiness. It is, thus, the lack in the Other, the impossibility to provide a cohesive response to the subject's demand, that animates desire. At its turn, this scenario forces the subject to elaborate an imaginary answer in front of such an impasse, this is to say, the elaboration of a fantasy that joints the Imaginary with a parcel of the Real, the *objet petit a*. Thanks to the intervention of the metaphor proper to the Name-of-the-Father, the object-cause of desire, irretrievably lost, is joined with a signifier deprived of a signified. Fantasy, hence, requires a creative solution that is singular for each subject, being no generalizable law on this domain.

On the contrary, Ozlan suggests that, in the case of the transsexual subject, there is an impasse at this level, which tends to an unmediated identification with the Other and, hence, a foreclosure of the phallic signifier. Unexpectedly, then, what he reaffirms is the thesis held by psychoanalysts like Catherine Millot and Geneviève Morel: a transsexual subject is a psychotic subject. Indeed, the anxiety that he outlines in relation to the non-cohesive nature of the transsexual body, this is to say, its incarnation of an

identification that does not match with the genital mark of its sex, which is inseparable from the signifier given by the Other, does not elude such a conclusion. The issue would be at the level of the *sinthome*, the invention in front of the Real-impossible of sexual difference, which resists any concrete socio-symbolic articulation, remaining as the traumatic rest that escapes the laws of the signifier. He signals, thus, the extreme bond between transsexuality and the maternal desire, as the psychoanalyst Carmen Lafuente highlights:

Desde el psicoanálisis sabemos que aunque el deseo materno es siempre esencial para un sujeto, en la neurosis está barrado por el significante del Nombre-del-Padre, mientras que en la psicosis éste está forcluido y el sujeto queda entregado de forma no mediatizada por la ley paterna al capricho materno. No es pues sorprendente encontrar que los transexualistas han sido un objeto privilegiado para su madre, un objeto *a*, y que se han feminizado por una identidad precoz a la madre (Lafuente, 2003: 2).

Therefore, the argument provided by Ozlan can only be sustained if there is a scission between sex and gender that, to a certain extent, would mean falling into the constructionist account elaborated by gender studies and queer theory. Besides, his analysis wrongly identifies the Real-impossible of sexual difference with imaginary identifications sanctioned by the symbolic order that structures the signifier, which finally involves a foreclosure of the Real and, hence, a nominalist account of sexual difference radically alien to Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Furthermore, he offers a quite idealized version of sex reassignment that does not match with the testimony of many transsexuals, who denounce the disciplinary violence to which their bodies are exposed in order to fit into the standard version of the sexed body promoted by bio-medicine and psychiatry:

Sex reassignment surgery becomes a way to rupture the imaginary link to the Other at the same time as leaving a mark (stitch) on the body that becomes a renewed way of linking two spaces that are forever marked by a gap/scar, a sort of link that is born of the impossibility of unity. Surgery then becomes an act – it traverses a fantasy of union, giving up the phantasized Other, but having to live with a scar (Ozlan, *op. cit.*: 81).

Such a “romantic” vision of sex reassignment is clearly at odds with the analysis offered by transsexual activists like Miquel Missé, who is one of the many transsexuals who have denounced the perverse discourse that lies beneath the promise of a final solution after surgery (Missé, 2012). The sexed body, then, defies anatomical notions reduced to organs that coincide like a puzzle. It is important to be cautious to narcissistic mandates that, in fact, might become mortifying and invasive forms of *jouissance*.

4.3.1.3.3. There Is No Final Diagnose on Transsexuality: The Symptomatic Singularity

What I have offered is a diverse debate in relation to one of the social and psychic phenomena that has acquired a major visibility in the past decades. Indeed, inasmuch as I am not elaborating a reflection reduced a clinical dimension, but a theoretical research traversed by ethical and political concerns, I am not interested in offering a definitive response, which, indeed, would be quite contrary to the singularity that characterises Lacanian psychoanalysis. What I hope to have clarified is the mixture of discourses that traverse and constitute transsexuality, mainly in a bio-political era where symptoms are read as disorders from the imperatives directed to population. In this sense, the goal of this subsection is to argue against medical notions that erase the domain of subjectivity, the eccentric parcel that defies presumed universal laws concerning the subject. The subject of the unconscious, inasmuch as it is represented by a signifier for another signifier, cannot be grasped by any scientific theory obsessed with origin and a mythical moment of constitution of what is normal and abnormal.

In this sense, the paradoxes that transsexuality illustrate, which I have developed from the scientific discourse for which there is no subject, but a mere pathology rooted in the brain or as a result of a gender dysphoria, cannot be separated from the reality that structures the capitalist discourse: bio-politics. The psychiatric power that suppresses the subject, which, nonetheless, is produced as the rest that escapes discourse, is a regulatory mode for the governance of the expert, who is invested with a presumed neutrality thanks to science. Nonetheless, the desire to know involves the entrance into a signifier chain where there is already a chiasm, a confrontation with an enigmatic Other that current scientific discourse, mainly in its relation to health, wants to dominate and reduce to an amount of calculability. The progressive tendency to enlarge what seems to be an infinite catalogue of “mental disorders” shows the paradox inherent to current bio-politics: domination requires pathology, a deviation from a standard that allows for the configuration of a subject reduced to docile categories.

Despite the obsession with life to its minimal expression, bio-politics, at least in its current form, is a regulatory power for which the subject is a threat. Therefore, power is exercised through the erasure of the subject, which finally becomes a mute body. In

this sense, the psychiatric discourse that regulates transsexuality in public hospitals through statistical methods such as tests to dictate what is to be a man and a woman expulses a Real that, in spite of its efforts, incessantly returns, which, unfortunately, can have lethal manifestations. The paranoid system for which there is a totality of available signifiers to “diagnose” sexual difference condemns the subject to be a pure puppet in front of a *sujet supposé savoir* who undermines the space of freedom: be in charge of its *jouissance*.

Consequently, an institution like the “Unitat d’Identitat de Gènere” of the Hospital Clínic of Barcelona is a circuit of bad-consciousness, this is to say, it creates a subject through recourse to disciplinary violence that might lead to catastrophic subjective situations. The perversion of current legislations on transsexuality, at least in Spain, is to sustain the patient’s desire through abjection. The false promise of obtaining narcissistic desires is at the expense of subjecting to the dictates of science, being alienated in front of the unquestioned authority of psychiatrists, psychologists, and endocrinologists. It is the tyranny of a “scientific truth”.

As far as psychoanalysis is concerned, the notion of the symptom refers to what escapes any bio-political regulation, signalling that there is no norm and no device that might trap the subject. What is more: the “truth” that psychoanalysis offers in relation to the symptom and sexual difference is the void of pure negativity that lies beneath discursive regulations and socio-symbolic representations. Nonetheless, it is true that, according to what analysts like Gherovici and Ozlan suggest, psychoanalysis must not be governed by any attempt to mime the discourse of the master and its normalizing functioning. It requires a singular listening to the subject’s symptoms, which reveals the path that it covers tied to the Other, and the lack-of-being imposed by the castrating effect of language, which deprives the subject of any harmonious goal. The Real that exceeds the Imaginary and the Symbolic signals the impossibility to grasp what eludes sense and, as such, any given ontology: sexual difference.

4.3.1.4. Resisting Abjection: *Espai Trànsit*.

In order to understand what is *Espai Trànsit*, it is important to give some hints on the legal and medical situations on transsexuality in Barcelona. As I had already outlined, the public institution in charge of the process of “diagnosis” and treatment is

the Hospital Clínic de Barcelona, more specifically its “Unitat d’Identitat de Gènere”. The axis that regulates its medical attention is governed by the paradigm according to which transsexual subjects suffer from gender dysphoria, which is ascertained by means of a test of personality that measures the standards of masculinity and femininity, and which is the subjective identification regarding them. The criteria which are required in order to be declared able to be accepted in the protocol is the conviction of belonging to the other’s sex, and showing clear signs imputable to be a man or a woman trapped in the wrong body. Otherwise, the subject is expelled from the protocol program.

If the subject is sanctioned to be a “true” transsexual – disgust in relation to the genital organs, lack of sexual desire, disconformity with the assigned gender, absence of periods of well-being with its body –, the certificate of gender dysphoria is obtained. There is, notwithstanding with that, a further requisite that the subject must pass: living for two years as a member of the other sex, which will eventually determine if the patient is a transsexual or a fetishist transvestite according to the parameters of the DSM in its diverse editions. Once this process has been successfully performed, the patient begins its hormonal treatment, which is always accompanied by psychological group therapies, which, besides sharing their experiences, has a surveillance function: the status of a “true” transsexual must be constantly verified. Indeed, as I had declared in the section dealing with the scientific standards of transsexuality, a condition *sine qua non* stipulated by the DSM is a desire for a sex change not influenced by hoping to obtain a social benefit from the sexual transitioning. What prevails is, then, a psychologist approach that isolates the subject from a social scenario.

Such a situation can be qualified as a disciplinary reality based on an alliance of a narrow normativity of what a man and a woman ought to be – strictly defined as heterosexual by most of the protocols of sexual transitioning – through recourse to the discourse of science and the discourse of the university. The subject is transformed into a pure fantasy sustained by the scientific discourse, with no further agency than being submitted to the desire of the expert, and the regulatory mechanism behind the units of gender identity. In the middle of this context, transsexual activists, families with transsexual children and other people who aimed at undoing the pathologised version of transsexuality in order to create a space free of a psychiatric discourse gave shape to *Espai Trànsit*, which began in the 2000’s.

The peculiarity of *Espai Trànsit* is the absence of a psychological instance that regulates social encounters. It mainly promotes intercourses between diverse people who, for singular reasons, have decided to begin a process of transitioning that is not bound to fulfil medical criteria in relation to psychiatric parameters. In this sense, what *Espai Trànsit* enables is the creation of affective bonds that offer a destigmatised reality of transsexuality, with people who really want to undergo a sex reassignment, while others place themselves in an indeterminate zone, which, indeed, is not so different from sexuation as such. The absence of a psychologist as the director of the group relieves them of the stress to fit into the stereotypes medically constructed. Having the occasion to share one's fear, pain, or illusion with others is a strategy to break the isolation that many transsexual or transgender people might experience during their period of transition. Simultaneously, it becomes the occasion for families the children of which have decided to rebuild their selves to avoid prejudices concerning any suspicion of a "mental illness".

Nevertheless, as far as children are concerned, the current legislation on transsexuality stipulates that only people who are at least 18 can be assisted in areas not directly connected to gender identity clinics, which establishes a strict and sometimes controversial limit²⁰³. Besides, in recent years, kids and teenagers who express a discomfort with their bodies and identifications are beginning to be diagnosed as transsexuals, which enables processes of hormonal treatment and gender reassignment that might lead to a surgical sex modification in certain cases. What sustains such a turn is to reduce the patient's stress and pain in relation to a situation that produces a psychic and social damage. In spite of this presumed intention, such a process is inseparable from an expanding terrain for the psychiatric vision that attributes this situation to a contradiction between the genetal and chromosomic marks of sex, and the dissociation

²⁰³ According to the regulatory legislation on transsexuality, children must be supervised by the medical teams that work at units of gender identity. Such a separation has been the occasion for multiple disputes between groups which take in transsexuals outside the net of psychiatrists and psychologists, and public hospitals, which assert that children must be advised by professional clinicians according to prevailing standards. In these cases, under-aged patients are also interrogated by psychologists and psychiatrists through recourse to psychological tests to ascertain if the kid is convinced to be a boy or a girl. In recent years, some surgical sex reassignments have been performed on kids who, according to clinical statements, showed clear signs of identification with the other sex. For a further approach on this issue, see http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2010/01/11/actualidad/1263164414_850215.html. In addition, in Catalonia, since the approval of the law that persecutes LGTBI's cases of discrimination, the regional government has enabled the option to demand a modification of the name in the health documentation of children who "manifest" transgender/transsexual symptoms, identifying with the other sex. See <http://www.parlament.cat/document/nom/10b363.pdf>. Last hits: 25/04/2016

from the brain sexuation in this process. In other words, it is a result of a physiological non-concordance, which can be eventually “solved” thanks to a psychological therapy and diagnosis, a hormonal treatment and surgical intervention.

On the contrary, *Espai Trànsit* offers the chance to expose what the scientific discourse forecloses: the singularity proper to each subject, which diminishes the version of a homogeneous group of transgendered or transsexual people. Indeed, it challenges the notion that surgery is a requisite to inhabit one’s body, which is a lifetime experience never easy or unidimensional, but always complex since our body is not a mere organism, but a body traversed by the signifiers given by the Other. For people who specifically desire to be accompanied by psychologists, there is a team of specialists who, leaving aside a pure statistical approach, listen to the patient’s desire, despite their orientation is not psychoanalytic, but influenced by the discourse of gender studies and queer theory.

At the same time, in the primary care centre of Manso, in the city of Barcelona as well, a medical team offers hormonal treatment for those patients who want to undergo it without being supervised by psychiatrists and psychologists from the Hospital Clínic de Barcelona. Their hormonal process is administrated through the public net of hospitals, though it is not planned according to statistical standards of the DSM. Indeed, such a solution supposes an opportunity to obtain hormones aside from the testosterone and oestrogens usually bought in the black market by some transsexuals who distrust the attention given in many hospitals in these situations. To revert this situation, this medical team leave aside the need to elaborate a diagnosis of the patient, which explains why many people who attend to the group therapy and the primary care centre feel relieved.

Despite this is not the hegemonic discourse prevailing in the experience of transsexuality, it is the occasion for the construction of a social bond that exceeds the boundaries imposed by the discourse of the university, which governs the relationship doctor-patient. The pursuit of the knowledge on the transsexual subject is not the master signifier for such a social bond, which enables the configuration of a socialization based on the oscillation and transition that being a sexed subject entails. At the same time, it is the configuration of a social milieu where there is not a prescriptive definition of what a man and a woman ought to be, but it offers the possibility to share uncertainties and difficulties inherent to the ungraspable status of sex for the speaking being. It enables, at

the same time, the consolidation of different affective and political alliances between individuals who, despite the differences that structure and traverse their subjective path, create a bond that works as a counter-balance against a pure medicalization of sexual difference and sexuality.

Besides, I would suggest that psychoanalysts should pay more attention to the transformations inherent to current symptomatic realities in relation to the sexed body, which involves that the diagnosis of psychosis assigned to transsexual subjects should be more carefully considered in order to avoid a stereotyped notion. The fact that the “I” is elevated to the illusionary category of a sovereign principle does not have to imply that subjective responses in front of the Real-impossible of sexual difference have to be scrutinized as some kind of anomalies. Indeed, analysts like Millot and Morel exclusively refer to certain cases, which they seem to consider equal to a universal principle. What is more: psychosis, in terms of a psychic structure, is not exclusive of *some* transsexuals, but it may manifest in any kind of person. In addition, as Lacan suggested, sexual difference is not articulated through recourse to stable configurations, but they are susceptible of being historically modified depending on divergent socio-symbolic operations of articulations that veil the void beneath identifications. Hence, psychoanalysis needs to take into consideration what groups like *Espai Trànsit* have to offer relating the experience of inhabiting a body medically sanctioned as pathological, which places the subject in a position of social and psychic vulnerability in front of a repudiation reaffirmed by current legal realities.

In spite of the struggle for the articulation of spaces that are not governed by the disciplinary mechanism of psychiatric power, the discourse that sustains transsexuality, in both the scientific discourse and the resistance to it, is radically placed in an identitarian notion of the subject. Appealing to the subject of the unconscious, the subject the being of which is perpetually decentred from any account that is provisionally given, is what enables an articulation that is not bound to the logic of identifications proper to the Imaginary, but the void that traverses the symbolic order in all its manifestations, which never succeeds at grasping the subject.

4.3.2. “Doing Justice” to “Abnormal” Bodies: Compulsory Surgery and the Normalisation of Intersexual Bodies.

In what follows, I shall explore the second dimension related to the alliance of knowledge and power concerning the body, which is at the centre of what has already become a politics of life itself, producing the illusion of a normal and standardized subject. It is the case of intersexuality, which is a challenge for the imaginary classification of sexed bodies as being female or male through recourse to the absence or presence of the penis.

From a scientific approach, an intersexual body is said to have both genitalia, though there is often one of them more presumably developed than the other one. In itself, it is a challenge for a classification based on a binary criterion, since the intersexual subject is located in an indeterminacy that is irreducible to either of the two poles. Nonetheless, scientific discourse, on behalf of its notion of the body as an organism regulated by stable and universal laws, offers a solution that excludes a dimension the consequences of which are crucial for the subject, namely: the body as born within the intersection between the organism and language after having been inserted into a symbolic world by means of the Other. Scientific discourse, foreclosing the dimension of the subject, offers a triple solution to intersexual bodies: a surgical sex reassignment, mostly consisting in the creation of a vagina; a hormonal treatment based on the ingestion of oestrogens in order to provide the body with a feminine appearance, and a psychological therapy to grant the results of the whole process. Such a description seems to be (apparently) inoffensive and pragmatic, as it seems to enable the inscription of the body within one of the two options, symbolically sanctioned as boys or girls. The argument that sustains the whole process is the well-being of the new-born, which seems to require a “normal” bodily appearance that does not provoke psychic damages.

However, such a presumed neuter perspective begins to be less neutral and purely scientific once several issues are confronted. The first one is the imaginary criteria regarding the anatomical morphology, conceived as a unitary entity the interpretation of which is guaranteed thanks to the discourse of the university. In other words, anatomy is taken as a purely physical reality that seems to have no story, being a merely stable reality guaranteed by scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, authors like Michel Foucault and Thomas Laqueur largely dispute such an ahistorical notion of the body in terms of a

univocal *datum* susceptible of being deciphered thanks to the gaze of the expert, the *subject supposed to know* what a man and a woman are. What they are, of course, as biological beings, which excludes the dimension of desire introduced by the castrating dimension of language.

4.3.2.1. **The Historicity of Sexual Difference**

Thomas Laqueur elaborates an archaeology of the binary sexual difference according to the absence or the presence of the phallic organ, which has not always been the criterion to determine if an individual belonged to the set of men or women. Hence, Laqueur remarks that before the XVIII century, the anatomical discourse was based on the approaches elaborated by Aristotle and Galen of Pergamon, who elaborated a binary distinction between men and women that did not depart from anatomy, but from the attributes predicated to each sex, which depended on the dual distinction between activity and passivity. What he argues for is the fact that any discourse on sexual difference is not merely a description of an outer reality in a univocal lexicon, but it is rather inscribed into a scenario crossed by multiple relations of power and knowledge, which are local and historical. Following, thus, a nominalist perspective inscribed into the Foucauldian genealogy, he asserts:

The dominant, though by no means universal, view since the eighteenth century has been that there are two stable, incommensurable, opposite sexes and that the political, economic, and cultural lives of men and women, their gender roles, are somehow based on these “facts” (Laqueur, 1990: 6).

Hence, Laqueur points that the pre-eminence given to biology since the XVIII century in order to ascertain the existence of two defined and differentiated sexes masks a further proliferation of discourses that shape subjects according to cultural, social and political criteria more linked to gender roles than to anatomy. Even more: anatomy is constantly interpreted thanks to different signifiers that provide an intelligibility to the body, amongst which there is the scientific ideal of conceiving the body as a purely organic entity. In this sense, Thomas Laqueur holds that the signifiers of “men” and “women” are not univocal, but they are based on a structure of social relations. In other words, the subject, in itself, does not have a concrete sex, but it is culturally invested with a sexual status, which differs according to different contexts and realities: “No image, verbal or visual, of the “facts of sexual difference” exists independently of prior

claims about the meaning of such distinctions” (Laqueur, *op. cit.*: 66). The body is, thus, inseparable from a hermeneutics of the body as a signifying reality.

The construction of a dual sexual difference as a model for the sexed body since the XVIII century recalls the Foucauldian analysis of the inscription of the body within a historical discourse that installs sex as a key element to decipher the body and, thanks to this, the “truth” of the subject. This is why Laqueur affirms that “the nature of sex (...) is the result not of biology but of our needs in speaking about it” (Laqueur, *op. cit.*: 115). His point is, then, to denaturalize sex as a cultural construct that finds in intersexuality its deadlock inasmuch as it appears as the element that questions sexual difference in brute terms.

In consonance with these remarks, Michel Foucault, in his preface of the memoirs of Herculine Barbin, an intersexual nun who committed suicide in the XIX century, analyses the fiction of a “true sex”, a sex susceptible of being scrutinized by the scientific regard, which takes as its departing model the corpse, the mute body. According to Foucault, then, the binary division of sexual difference pushes towards a discourse on sex which excludes and forecloses all the bodily realities that fall outside the normativity implicit in such an epistemic and an ontological model; they are the very same bodily realities that will be furtherly sanctioned by punishment and pathology. For Foucault, the clue does not specifically reside on the privilege given to biology as the domain instituted by an Other that offers a universal knowledge, but, instead, on the representational dynamics of law and its exclusionary procedures instead. In this paradigm, intersexuality is an obstacle for the fixation of a juridical identity, one that must submit to the empire of a disjunctive logic that rejects what escapes the assertion of a formal and stable truth. The reduction of the subject to the mark of a truth the physical and inner inscription of which can be found in sex is at the expense of subjective freedom, that is, a freedom that is subjected by a regulatory power that takes life as its object:

À partir du XVIII siècle, les théories biologiques de la sexualité, les conditions juridiques de l’individu, les formes de contrôle administratif dans les États modernes ont conduit peu à peu à refuser l’idée d’un mélange des deux sexes en un seul corps et à restreindre par conséquent le libre choix des individus incertains (Foucault, 1978 : 8).

Foucault points at two main issues while analysing the juridical representation of the subject, its discursive regulations, and its link to the elaboration of diffused power relations. The first one, which has epistemic consequences, refers to the scientific turn

of Modernity, mainly due to the influence of Cartesianism, and the maxim of clear and distinct ideas that regulate the apprehension of the world. Such a regulatory principle entails that the object known by the subject must be univocal, captured by omnipotent categories that allow a full description of it, with no rest. If the Cartesian dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* is taken into account, the body becomes subjected to a process of deciphering that requires a pure textuality obtainable through a scientific nomenclature which is capable of elaborating a totalizing mapping of the body. In relation to the epistemic and ontological turn that Foucault describes regarding sex as the sign of truth, the sexed body is transformed into an entity forcibly inscribed into dual and exclusionary possibilities, being opposed between them. Hence, what is excluded from the sphere of discursive intelligibility is what defies the principle of coherence that attributes a predicate to a certain substance. In other words, “x is a boy if and only if it has a penis”, and “x is a girl if and only if it lacks a penis”, which entails an implicit exclusion of a rest, this is to say, of what is not inscribable into binary terms on this imaginary level. Intersexuality, hence, is proscribed to the domain of a misunderstanding that requires a coerced correction technically performed. Uncertainty involves punishment.

The second issue contradicts, nonetheless, the Foucauldian apparatus, which asserts that the subject is the effect of discursive and power relations. In other words, the sphere of subjectivity cannot be separated from the symbolic context in which it appears. In this sense, when Foucault claims that the Cartesian epistemic turn and the subjection of life to a new political paradigm have as a result the restriction of free choice for those individuals who suit neither of the two offered possibilities, he implicitly suggests that free choice was not restricted before. It would seem, then, that before the emergence of a *scientia sexualis* by means of a convergence of different forms of knowledge, and diverse mutations of the socio-political reality, strictly linked to liberalism and capitalism, the body and sexuality were not sanctioned or discursively regulated²⁰⁴. This contradiction is intensified when Foucault attributes to intersexuality,

²⁰⁴ In a historical level, the body and sexuality have always been subjected to a discursive regulation, which differs according to the articulation of social bonds in their specificity and, needless to say, the differences inherent to every culture. As far as intersexuality is concerned, Thomas Laqueur and Anne Fausto-Sterling give evidences of the punishment suffered by individuals who passed as women for a period of time until some event was reported to the legal authorities. A common denounced situation was having homosexual affairs or, in heterosexuals marriages, the discovery of the partner's genital “anomaly”, which required a legal change of his or her status. For a further approach on this issue, see

through recourse to the memoirs of Herculine Barbin, the status of a non-identity limbo that offers an intensity of pleasures outside restrictions and punishments:

Ce qu'elle évoque dans son passé, ce sont les limbes heureuses d'une non-identité, que protégeait paradoxalement la vie dans ces sociétés fermées, étroites et chaudes, où on a l'étrange bonheur, à la fois obligatoire et interdit, de ne connaître qu'un seul sexe ; ce qui permet d'en accueillir les gradations, les moirures, les pénombres, les coloris changeants comme la nature même de leur natures (Foucault, *op. cit.*: 5).

What Foucault echoes regarding intersexuality and the non-differentiation of the sexed body seems to be an intensification of pleasures and desire that, notwithstanding with that, obviates that intersexuality is already discursively produced by subjecting the intersexual body to the dimension of scientific discourse, along with its sanctions and regulations. The erasure of the repressive instance in such a quotation, which, indeed, is at odds with the book that comes after his preface, evokes an idealisation that aims at finding a point of zero of pleasure before the juridical status of modern laws. Hence, Foucault introduces a scenario before the loss of the intensity of pleasures, which would be a consequence of a discursive and political mutation, and the subsequent result, focused on attributing a fixed identity to the subject. Such a contradiction with his whole corpus is especially notorious with an author who insistently refused the liberal dichotomy between spheres discursively sanctioned, and the domain of pure free-will, which resounds in his denouncement of a repression of a sexuality that requires to be liberated.

Before discussing the remarks added to this current debate by authors like Judith Butler and Anne Fausto-Sterling, it is worth noticing what psychoanalysis has to say in relation to the subject and its body, the constitution of which is inseparable from the gaze of the Other and the metonymical structure of desire. While a nominalist perspective merely signals the juncture between the subject and discourse, which means that before the emergence of a subject there is an Other, more specifically, a Big Other which has already established a discourse in terms of a social bond, psychoanalysis exceeds such a theoretical reductionism. Indeed, if the subject is purely assimilated to what is discursively predicated by it through recourse to the battery of signifiers that shape its existence, the binary division between normalcy and abnormality is strictly maintained, enumerating the forms of exclusion and inclusion that support such a

Laqueur, Thomas (1990): *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, and Fausto-Sterling, Anne (2000): *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York, Basic Books.

signifying structure. Nonetheless, signalling exclusionary dynamics does not mean that these ones will be, once and for all, abolished. Such an illusion can only be sustained if the sphere of the subject is equalized to the fantasy that enables the scientific discourse: taking the domain of consciousness as the totality of the psychic reality of the subject, which merely refers to disciplinary knowledge, in this case anatomy, endocrinology, and genetics. What is at stake in this debate is the fact that the opaque and *un*-known dimension of the unconscious is foreclosed in a similar way to the discourse of science, which could not exist, at least in its modern and current sense, without the fiction of a sovereign “I” that is *supposed to know*. Nevertheless, it is *supposed to know* what the Other allows it to know, this is to say, which are the standards behind the division of individuals as boys or girls.

In addition to this, psychoanalysis points to the fact that knowing what a boy or a girl are supposed to be does not say anything about the subject, but merely of the identifications that will recover the lack at the core of the subject’s being. Hence, Lacan’s realism points to an absence that pierces being, which fractures the signifying chain, and bars the possibility to reduce the subject to a discursive totality. It involves that the subject is not *purely reduced to discourse*, but there is an extra dimension, which, despite not being fully outside language and discourse, cannot be totally grasped by them. In this sense, if sex is said to belong to the Real, it does not entail that it is a noumenal substance which could only be phenomenologically apprehended by epistemic structures, but it rather defies any attempt to reduce it to a certain predicate and stable definition. Sex exceeds, thus, the elaboration of sense, and it disrupts a classic logic based on attributing certain qualities to an individual. Indeed, in his *Three Essays of a Theory of Sexuality* (1905), the articulation of the drive by Freud remarks the absence of any pre-given data to the sexed being of the infant, whose sexuality is qualified as a polymorphous perversion, seeking to find an object of *jouissance*. Hence, Freud is allied with nominalists like Laqueur and Foucault regarding the fact that biology is not destiny for the speaking subject, but such a coincidence does not imply that Freud aims at reducing sex to a pure predicate. If sex can only be partially found in the circular structure of the drives is because of the lack of any biological instinct which might grant any proper goal to human sexuality.

Therefore, what could be affirmed from a Lacanian perspective is an “ontological” criticism regarding nominalism in the acquaintance of sexual difference:

the absence of a unique and universal definition of sexual difference does not entail that sexual difference is reducible to its attributes, which is a logical confusion that takes the part for the whole. The nominalist strategy to give an account of the symbolic and imaginary articulations of sexual difference is bound to a narrow impasse where everything is already elaborated by knowledge and power, this to say, for a single logic homogeneously applied to *all* subjects. Instead, in departing from the unconscious, this is to say, from the effects of language onto the living organism, which produces a surplus irreducible to either a purely organic entity or purely cultural entity, psychoanalysis adds a different feature. The subject is not the triumph of subjection, but its failure. This is why Lacan affirmed that, properly speaking, the subject is no-body, no concrete identification, but a void: “Le sujet est personne. Il est décomposé, morcelé. Et il se bloque, il est aspiré par l’image, à la fois trompeuse et réalisée de l’autre, ou aussi bien sa propre image, spéculaire. Là, il trouve son unité” (Lacan, 1978: 80).

4.3.2.1.1. Scientific Discourse and Normativity

The body that the surgeon *sees* when an amputation is performed, which requires a later reconstruction of a vagina, is a collection of organs and functions that, from the scope of scientific discourse, does not have an “appropriate” morphology. These surgical interventions leave behind a crucial element for the subject, the erasure of which might have horrible consequences: before any baby is born, the desire of the Other, in this case the parents, has already begun to place it into a symbolic world. The name a baby is given by the Other is not simply a way to identify it, but a name that is marked by the trace of desire and love, by the arrival of a new human being that will be introduced into a symbolic reality thanks to the gaze and the voice of the metonymy of the maternal function²⁰⁵. This dimension is foreclosed by science, and thereby the

²⁰⁵ The notions of maternal and paternal function, in Lacanian terms, do not need to be performed and incarnated by a woman and a man respectively, the classic union that has been re-articulated in many Western countries, and which by no means is a universal evidence. They are structurally bound to metaphor and metonymy, this is to say, to the Law of the signifier, which does not require a heterosexual family to be operative.

Nonetheless, many psychoanalysts reproduce a family-based ideology, which deplores the presumed dissolution of the (heterosexual) family, which might cause a generalised psychotic spectre in children educated by homosexual couples. In these cases, it would be rightly to remember that Lacan insistently repeated that psychoanalysis *must not* – this is an ethical maxim – reproduce the discourse of the master, but it must receive the patient’s symptoms, and elaborate an analysis of culture not based on ideals, but on discursive mutations of structural elements. Indeed, as Lacan himself signalled in *L’envers de la*

singularity that traverses subjectivity, which is also attached to the body created by the subject thanks to the desire of the Other.

In relation to the ideals that traverse the scientific perspective on intersexuality, it is worth quoting the following paragraph from Butler's *Undoing Gender* (2004b):

Indeed, if we consider that human bodies are not experienced without recourse to some ideality, some frame for experience itself, and that this is as true for the experience of one's own body as it is for experiencing another, and if we accept that that ideality and frame are socially articulated, we can see how it is that embodiment is not thinkable without a relation to a norm, or a set of norms (Butler, *op. cit.*: 28).

Following Butler's point on the normative ideals of the scientific discourse on the body, Anne Fausto-Sterling's offers a criticism of the narratives that come from biology and medicine regarding intersexuality and normalizing surgery, elaborating a critical diagnosis from biology itself: "We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender – not science – can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000: 3).

Fausto-Sterling unveils the normative ideals that are at stake in current medical notions of anatomy and morphology, which, according to her, stand for the classification of a body as sexed, that is, as a male or female body, which excludes the indeterminacy referring to intersexuality. In this sense, she evokes the Other of scientific discourse, the pretention of which is the elaboration of univocal signifiers in order to assert, by means of the objectivity of scientific discourse and the presumed erasure of desire, what boys and girls are. Nonetheless, Fausto-Sterling pushes further her objection, suggesting that even sex is a pure construct. Discourse, as the discourse of knowledge, creates, thus, the sexed body.

Following her arguments, Fausto-Sterling outlines that the hegemonic scientific *doxa* declares an intersexual baby as susceptible of being surgically transformed into a boy or a girl according to these criteria: depending on the size of the penis and the possible functionality of the vagina, the new-born will be literally shaped as boy or as a girl:

psychanalyse (1991b), the Oedipus complex is a myth that merely provides a solution for the subject who "chooses" to be situated on the masculine side, which eventually led Freud to be unable to properly analyse feminine *jouissance*, reduced to the symbolic position of the mother. For a brilliant approach to this issue, see Soler, Colette (2003): *Ce que Lacan disait des femmes: Une étude psychanalytique*. Paris, Éditions du Champ Lacanien.

From the viewpoint of medical practitioners, progress in the handling of intersexuality involves maintaining the normal. According, there *ought* to be only two sexes: male and female. The knowledge developed by the medical disciplines empowers doctors to maintain a mythology of the normal by changing the intersexual body to fit, as nearly as possible, into one or the other cubbyhole (Fausto-Sterling, *op. cit.*: 8).

The most remarkable question of this quotation is the violent gesture inherent in the medical discourse that, through an annihilation of the subject-to-come, reduces the body to an organism where signifier and signified *must* coincide through a mutilation of the flesh, a surgical “correction” of what is said to be “abnormal” and, hence, “pathological”. Nevertheless, it is impressive that providing a subjective well-being requires a forcible operation onto a body that is still deprived of speech, radically vulnerable in front of the Other which, in a mimic recreation of the instance of sovereign power, decides if it must be fitted into the category of males or females. The perversion inherent to such a forceful operation relies on the presumed neutrality attributed to the scientific gaze, linked to the object of *jouissance* produced by the discourse of the university through recourse to knowledge as a master signifier: the barred subject. The erasure of indeterminacy is, at the same time, an aggression made over the body, the scars of which are the price for being included into the set of “normal” bodies.

Related to this incessant push towards knowledge, the hysterical trait of science in its aim to define a *real* that temporally eludes prevailing theories, Colette Soler analyses what could be named the alliance of the discourse of the master and the discourse of the university in our era:

De la présence-absence du pénis, à quoi l’anatomie se réduit au départ, dépend qu’on les dise garçon ou fille et qu’on les endoctrine en conséquence, mais il en faut plus, à l’évidence, pour les faire homme ou femme. Or, il y a peu de chances pour que l’on découvre le gène de la normalité sexuelle. Le mot de Freud lui-même, contrairement à ce qui pourrait paraître, ne relève d’aucun naturalisme. Il réfère plutôt à ce fait de « dénaturation » par le langage qui veut que la différence naturelle des sexes ne porte ses conséquences subjectives qu’à être significatisée, et ne se répercute au niveau du « parlêtre » qu’en passant par les chicanes du discours (Soler, 2003: 167).

In relation to this issue – which has become more visible and urgent in current debates and struggles in the re-articulation of the imaginary and symbolic dimensions of sexual difference –, what must be noticed are the ethical implications regarding the embodied and sexed subject. The denounce against the violence inflicted on certain subjects in order to build a “recognisable” morphology requires that scientific discourse takes into account the psychic dimension of having a body, this is to say, the elaboration

of a living reality that provides the imaginary dimension of the self in its social sphere. Hence, it is urgent to enlarge the articulations that defines the division between boys and girls at the moment of birth by means of expanding such a criterion to other forms of bodily beings, such as intersexual babies. Such an initiative does not question the interpretation of anatomy, which refers to the symbolic that differentiates subjects by means of having or being the phallus in the elaboration of the *semblants* of sexual difference, but it might provide a non-violent emergence of a body that defies any dual alternative. In this sense, the presumed neutral scientific practice done according to the well-being of the patient needs to be revisited and re-elaborated, taking into account the dimension of desire and the unconscious. As Fausto-Sterling claims: “In order to shift the politics of the body, one must change the politics of science itself” (Fausto-Sterling, *op. cit.*: 8).

Anne Fausto-Sterling signals that current biology, in relation to sex and its morphology, when a surgical intervention is made on an intersexual body, it binds sex to a dual expression in terms of anatomy. What she outlines is the presence of different biological and genetic signs implied in such a classification, including hormones and chromosomes, the combination of which is not necessarily coherent with genitalia. As a result, a dual expression of sex (male or female, symbolically translated into man or woman) supports prevailing ideals on sexual difference and the juridical status conferred to subjects through legal sanctions rather than biology. What medicine and biology claim to be natural facts are, indeed, discursive realities:

But if the state and legal system has an interest in maintaining only two sexes, our collective biological bodies do not. While male and female stand on the extreme ends of a biological continuum²⁰⁶, there are many other bodies (...) that evidently mix together anatomical components conventionally attributed to both males and females (Fausto-Sterling, *op. cit.*: 31).

The tensions and fractures highlighted by Fausto-Sterling related to current scientific knowledge and its effects on bodies point to the fact that the indeterminacy of

²⁰⁶ A few years earlier, Fausto-Sterling introduced the notion of a biological continuum in relation to the sexed status of the human body as a biological and organic reality. She discussed that the thesis on two prevailing sexed morphological items involved the erasure of other items such as gens, hormones, and chromosomes, the different combination of which does not need to be univocal and stable. Her point is to stress that normalcy and pathology are not derived from natural facts, but from a statistical approach based on an idealised notion of the body, a kind of Platonic idea that is established as a model to classify existing human bodies. She elaborated the hypothesis on the existence of five sexes depending on the combination of gens, chromosomes, hormones, and genitals. For a further approach, see Fausto-Sterling, Anne (1993): « The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough » in *Sciences*. New York, March/April 1993, pages 20-24.

the intersexual body regarding the binary distinction between boy and girl incarnates a limit in relation to the segregationist procedure that excludes intersexuality from the legibility of anatomy. Up to now, the response in front of a *real* that exceeds prevailing discursive procedures has been its erasure. Why should it continue to be like that? Such a foreclosure of the subject, ideologically maintained by the authority given to the expert, entitled as the supreme *subject supposed to know* of the capitalist discourse in its bio-political dimension, might have – as it does – terrible consequences, inoculating a super-egotistic mandate that can ruin one's existence. In this sense, psychoanalysis introduces an ethical dimension not based on a statistic or purely distributive approach, but an ethics of desire, traversed by the irreducible relation between singularity in its symptomatic reality, and its nexus to the Other. The clinical perspective offered by psychoanalysis, based on a singular approach, stresses the symptoms that defy the discourse of the master that structures prevailing identifications and social bonds in each historical moment. Intersexuality is a symptom for the discourse of the university in its aim to assimilate the body by means of a cypher susceptible of calculus and integration into broader categories. The risk of doing so is the sacrifice of the subject itself, which has ethical implications for science.

4.3.2.1.1. Bioethics and Informed Consent on Intersexual New-Borns.

Bioethics emerged as a discipline in relation to the catastrophic effects linked to the World War II, especially the horrors committed in extermination camps against Jews, gipsies, homosexuals, communists, and those repudiated as disabled human beings. Since its emergence to our present, bioethics has experienced many twists and articulations, though its major expression in the relation between a doctor and a patient is the informed consent. I will not offer a historical vision on bioethics regarding intersexuality, but I will rather focus on the pragmatist turn – derived from the utilitarian paradigm – that has become so central in bioethical debates.

In an article published in 1996, named « Clinical Pragmatism: John Dewey and Ethical Pragmatism », Franklin G. Miller, Joseph J. Fins, and Matthew D. Bacchetta attempted to elaborate a new turn on bioethics, more inclusive from the patient's side in a narrower link with medical teams. Their claim is the following one:

Clinical ethics is concerned with analysing and resolving moral problems that arise in the care of patients in clinical settings. In addition, clinical ethics is, or ought to be, concerned with mapping the reform of clinical practice in the light of appropriate moral ideals (Miller, Fins, and Bacchetta, 1996: 28).

There is a normative approach that takes into account that healing patients is not a pure scientific and technical affair, but it involves moral conflicts since the doctor and the patient are not supposed to be subjects with identical motivations. A procedural method is required, which includes both perspectives without implying a pure hierarchical relation, but a more horizontal bond. In other words, the aim is to elaborate a democratic clinical practice. Such a methodology related to caring illnesses and other kinds of disturbances is willing to avoid a paternalism that reduces the patient to a passive element in front of the medical vision:

Traditional medical paternalism, and more subtle forms of physician dominance and patient compliance, operating in contemporary clinical practice, make it seem normal and natural for patients to adopt passive, subordinate roles in relationships with physicians (Miller, *et al.*, *op. cit.*: 43).

Nonetheless, if the Lacanian remark between discourse (which always comes from the Other) and the subject is considered, being the former a bond between subjects united by prevailing master signifiers, which enables the construction of ideals and sanctions, the discourse they elaborate departs from a concrete notion of the subject. Indeed, the subject invoked by such a bioethical rhetoric is supposed to elaborate rational choices, this is to say, capable of finding solutions and suitable alternatives. Hence, such a subject is another version of consciousness, based on a fantasy of autonomy and transparency, capable of knowing what it wants regarding its well-being. It is, thus, a subject supposed to know what must be done concerning its health. Such a subject, placed in a democratic context of discussion and deliberation, would be freed from a subordinated relation of power by virtue of a broader relationship with the physician:

Instead of allocating decision-making sovereignty to the physician or the patient, the democratic model prescribes a shared process of discussion, negotiation, compromise, and consensus. In contested cases it may become necessary to determine who decides; however, this is required only when collaboration breaks down with the prospect of repair (Miller, *et al.*, *op. cit.*: 43-44).

The problem with such a notion of a social bond between a physician and a patient is the oblivion of a social reality that precedes their the encounter. In such a domain, governed by the signifier of knowledge, the one in charge is the one who is said to be the bearer of knowledge, and, more specifically, of scientific knowledge.

Indeed, such a character is even supposed to be neutral thanks to an objectivity provided by science as a discourse with a methodology that leaves aside any subjective trait that might make problematic the validity of the pursued object of knowledge. Therefore, does such a formal sharing out of the social bond not confer a power to the physician in detriment of the patient? Especially if the presumed lack of desire of the physician is taken into account. Subjectivity is foreclosed in such a bond by means of twist from the previous structure that enables this discourse: the discourse of the master.

In addition to the masking effect of power relations within discourse, if the *envisaged* subject is autonomous and able to participate in a democratic negotiation concerning the treatment or intervention that might heal its affection, what about a new-born? Undoubtedly, a new-born is unable to speak because it lacks of the organic maturity for such a task and, besides, it has not yet been spoken by anyone, at least not in a direct interpellation. If the pragmatic-democratic model is followed, it requires a delegation to autonomous subjects, enabled to take in the scenario that such a bioethical model elaborates in its aim to avoid paternalism, and a pure adaption of rigid principles to particular situations.

When an intersexual baby is born, from which paradigm does the medical team make its decision? The most favourable circumstance would be to presuppose that physicians would tell the parents what is going on with their baby. Nonetheless, it would be quite naïf to infer that the information will be transmitted in univocal and evident terms, with no margin of error. If anatomy, as a discipline of medicine, presupposes that boys have a penis and girls a vagina, where will the intersexual baby be placed in such a division? According to what activists and certain authors assert, it will be *compulsorily* classified as boy or as a girl through recourse to a surgical intervention, which in many cases is performed *without* the consent of the parents, as Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Espai Mixt TransIntersex*, and the Intersex Society of North America claim.

The trouble within bioethics in this case is the erasure of desire relating parents' expectations, which have begun to work before the emergence of the baby as such. The name their child was going to be given is the trace of love, which is foreclosed not only by bioethics, but also by science. In this sense, as Margrit Shildrick affirms in « *Beyond the Body of Bioethics: Challenging the Conventions* » (2005), what needs to be discussed in such situations is the very notion of normalcy, based on a statistical

approach that leaves aside any singular and subjective element. Shildrick signals the fact that, as a discourse, bioethics sustains an ideology, a fantasy of a conscious subject willing to be ameliorated, which leaves aside a further element in the *jouissance* of the discourse of science: the destruction that it might entail, linked to the death drive:

The difficulty as I see it – and it is one that bioethicists themselves have largely failed to address – is that the desire to distinguish between right and wrong, between good and bad actions, or to have a determinate assessment of consequences remains undiminished in the face of a set of developments that are marked by their problematization of normative, oppositional, binaries (Shildrick, 2005: 3).

Thus, the point is not to simply to denounce science as a device of domination, but to pay attention to the subjective-symptomatic reality, which is left aside by the scientific discourse in its aim to obtain knowledge, which *knows nothing* of the unconscious. The subject-object of medicine is based on a mute bodily reality conceived as a sum of functions and organs the homeostasis of which must be preserved. In this sense, the issue at stake is not to discredit science, but to enlarge the structures and discourses that shape science, especially when the psychic dimension of the subject is implied. Hence, science needs to progressively incorporate – and I do not mean to suggest that it can be done through a purely accumulative account since any discipline is built up according to fantasies, mainly the fantasy of consciousness – is the aspect of desire. This realm includes the desire of the scientist, whose gaze is already predisposed to see and to detect what discourse creates as a partial object. Taking desire into account requires conceiving the body not simply as an organism, but as a crucial topology for the subject in its life inasmuch as the body is the receptacle of *jouissance*, beyond mere rationality or pure extension.

Science ought to consider that sex, for the speaking being, exceeds the domain of genitalia, interpreted as presence or absence according to the discourse of the Other. Such a division is just a first step that will inscribe the infant into a discourse that will provide it with different identifications according to the Law of the signifier and the paths of desire, which ultimately relate to what goes far beyond what discourse can grasp: sexed *jouissance*, and its asymmetric modalities. In this sense, from a Lacanian perspective, an intersexual body is not condemned to be an anomalous body since the genital mark does not say anything about sexuation, but it is the signifier in its purely imaginary dimension, which is structured according to the metonymical transformation of the organ into a signifier without a signified. Indeed, due to the effect of language,

which cuts the body in erogenous zones, the body is traversed by drives, which deprives the subject and its body of any “natural” destiny, questioning any strict criteria concerning normality and pathology:

All evidence of the actual instabilities, imperfections, breakdowns, and sheer messiness of corporeality – the very things that might be the subject of bioethics – is seen as a failure of form, a lack of wholeness and integrity, that is pushed to the margins as different or is even disavowed (Shildrick, *op. cit.*: 7).

According to this quotation, what Shildrick remarks refers to the diverse and multiple signifiers that construct the object of scientific discourse, which cannot be detached from an interpretation of a real that, in the case of science, points at what defies any dominant explanation. In our current era, what was supposed to be conventional and hegemonic articulations of sexual difference is contested by new organizations of the real of *jouissance* and sex that push for a broader orchestration of the sexed body, even in its imaginary and symbolic operations. Since the discovery of the unconscious by Sigmund Freud, it has become clearer that the unconscious dimension resultant from the effect of language on the human being is deprived of any biological determinism, which means that the child, despite its anatomical organs, might be either masculine or feminine in terms of *jouissance*. It is crucial, then, to clarify that the identifications organized by sexual discourse are a mask that aim at shaping an excess that exceeds a pure anatomical and a mere constructivist account of the sexed body. What is required to stop punishing intersexual bodies is the inclusion of intersexuality as a contingency which, regardless of its statistical expression, refers to a human reality that cannot be incessantly neglected with no consequences.

Furthermore, in relation to bioethics and the body, notwithstanding with the ethical background that pretends to offer a fair medical treatment, there are some other perspectives which dispute the mechanism that sustains such a scope. In this sense, what is more troubling, according to my critical proposal, is the very notion of consent, which seems to merely consider what can be *consciously* agreed and considered, rejecting any other issues at the level of the subject. According to this remark, authors who follow the Foucauldian legacy like Nikolas Rose and Dominique Memmi highlight that both biopolitics and bioethics share a similar (political) domain: the inclusion of life, mainly biological life, to a discursive sphere that regulates the living body according to historical conditions that cannot be separated from the capitalist discourse. While Rose emphasizes the transformation of the subject of current politics and policies into a life

untitled as the supreme benefit and object from an economic point of view, Memmi stresses the administrative and accumulative logic of current capitalism, which entails that contemporary bio-politics pursues a surplus from the body:

La noción de “biopolítica”, entendida en sentido amplio, remite a la *administración pública* de la relación de cada uno con la reproducción, con el final de la vida, con el cuerpo vivo y muerto, con la salud; remite a la administración del ser humano en calidad de ser vivo, es decir, a la aprehensión del hombre desde el plano biológico (Memmi in Quintanas (ed.), 2013: 55)²⁰⁷.

As Memmi recalls, the notion of body implied in such a discursive articulation is primarily defined as a natural and organic entity the very existence of which must be stressed in order to obtain a wealth derived from its very processes in relation to a productive activity. Hence, as Foucault had detected, the body of bio-politics, which traverses bioethics as well inasmuch as it is a discipline that primarily focuses on the body as a living biological creature, is a bio-machine. Indeed, in *Naissance de la clinique. Une archéologie du regard médical* (1963), Foucault had previously analysed how medicine constructed its object of study through recourse to the silent body *par excellence*, this is to say, the corpse, which binds bodily life to disease:

Pour nos yeux déjà usés, le corps humain constitue, par droit de nature, l'espace d'origine et de répartition de la maladie : espace dont les lignes, les volumes, les surfaces et les chemins sont fixés, selon une géographie maintenant familière, par l'atlas anatomique. Cet ordre du corps solide et visible n'est cependant qu'une des manières pour la médecine de spatialiser la maladie. Ni la première sans doute, ni la plus fondamentale. Il y a eu et il y aura des distributions du mail qui sont autres (Foucault, 1963 : 1).

What Foucault outlines is the modern operation that began with the Cartesian elaboration of the *res extensa*, an extended surface inscribed into a geometrical space, the nature of which can be deciphered thanks to the images obtained by the gaze. Nonetheless, the gaze in question is not any sort of gaze, but one domesticated by the circulation of signifiers (ideas in a Cartesian vein) elaborated by means of the supremacy conferred to a knowledge attached to a mathematical ideal that might provide a totality of the universe. In such a universe, the role conferred to the body is a mechanical one deprived of sense if it is not excited by an eye that provides a defining shape and a form, which implies that such a body is silent, outside of language. Such a bodily entity, reduced to its flesh, can only be a *dead body*, which inscribes the *res extensa* into the domain of death, producing a more curious turn: the definition of life

²⁰⁷ This text was published in a monographic book that aims to reflect on the bio-political backgrounds of bioethics, and it was published in Spanish, being inaccessible the original French version.

through recourse to death. The truth of a body is, henceforth, its death, correlatively attached to the sovereign gesture of the medical-scientific gaze. Seeing becomes, therefore, a synonym for saying. If such a binary opposition between the gaze and the body is transposed to the scenario of bioethics, governed by the encounter of a physician – or a team of them – and patients, the former is installed at the level of the sovereign gaze, while the latter is said to be the mute body.

In addition to this, what can be obtained from the analysis offered by Foucault is an additional step in relation to a medical situation where the organism is a text to be deciphered: individuality, understood as a cypher for subjectivity that is neither a pure free-will nor a mere biological creature, must be effaced from the body in order to obtain the organism useful to the medical gaze. The intrusion of death, understood as a pure biological process, comes at the price of the foreclosure of the subject, which, indeed, suits with the bio-political notion of subjectivity: an organic mass of living atomic realities that creates a population situated in a coordinate of time and space. As a result, the division between normalcy and pathology, which is applied to the intersexual body, can only take place once the subject is erased from the body: “L’acte descriptive est, de plein droit, une prise d’être, et inversement, l’être ne se donne pas à voir dans des manifestations symptomatiques, *donc* essentielles, sans s’offrir à la maîtrise d’un langage qu’est la parole même des choses”, (Foucault, *op. cit.* : 95).

In Lacanian terms, it would be licit to assert that Foucault is signalling the structural element that is required to the mutation of the discourse of the master to the discourse of the university, where the master is the expert whose gaze makes coincide being and knowledge. If in the discourse of the master there was a bond between master and slave, in the medical scenario there is the doctor and the patient, being the latter rejected as a subject, and transformed into an organic reality. Nevertheless, the aim of the discourse of the university, as Foucault also suggests, is to enlarge the master signifier of knowledge to the subject, the object of *jouissance* pursued by the scientific discourse, currently legitimated by bioethics through the informed consent method. Indeed, what is this consent if not a consent to the domination exercised by the expert and the supremacy conferred to scientific gaze?

Consequently, without a new articulation of the body that takes into account *jouissance* as the excess derived from the signifier, and the surplus of the unconscious, the exclusionary dynamic of the phallic set will continue to show its catastrophic effects

on those rejected in the name of “health” and “well-being”. This is what Anne Fausto-Sterling refers to, discussing the prevailing opacity in normalizing surgical interventions on intersexual babies: “The goal of the treatment was to assure proper psychosexual development by assigning the young mixed-sex child to the proper gender and then doing whatever was necessary to assure that the child and his/her parents believed in the sex assignment” (Fausto-Sterling, *op. cit.*: 46). In other words, depending on the size of the penis and the morphology of the vagina, surgeons will fabricate a boy or a girl, taking as the only standard an anatomy that must fit into the scientific criteria of intelligibility.

What is even more problematic is the absence of standard protocols at national and international levels, which means that there is a pure arbitrariness concerning medical interventions. In this sense, the consent of parents, which, from a bioethical perspective, would be a compulsory criterion, is not necessarily included. Nonetheless, does a parental consent justify such an intervention and its further consequences? The reduction of subjective life to anatomy involves paying a cost, which in many cases is suicide once the “secret” origin of the scar inflicted on the body is revealed:

Whatever treatment they choose, however, physicians who decide how to manage intersexuality act out of, and perpetuate, deeply held beliefs about male and female sexuality, gender roles, and the (im)proper place of homosexuality in normal development (Fausto-Sterling, *op. cit.*: 48).

This treatment, from a biological and surgical point of view, is synthesized in these terms: once the baby is born and the genital “abnormality” is detected, the medical team *is supposed to* tell the parents about this phenomenon according to organic and chromosomal standards, which are enunciated as scientific criteria that help to understand such a “deviation”. In addition to this, the explanation *is also supposed to* inform about embryological facts concerning the development of intersexuality, claiming that the intersexual new-born suffers from a chromosomal mutation the anatomical deformation of which can be seen in the cohabitation of a dual genital morphology. From this moment on, the treatment consists in a surgical intervention and a hormonal therapy, which ensures a male or female phenotypical expression. There is supposed to be a chromosomal test to find out which is the “actual” sex of the baby, which might be useful in the subsequent operation:

Given such knowledge, medical managers employ the following rule: “Genetic females should always be raised as females, preserving reproductive potential, regardless of

how severely the patients are virilised. In the genetic male, however, the gender of assignment is based on the infant's anatomy, predominantly the size of the phallus (Fausto-Sterling, *op. cit.*: 57).

What is even more challenging, apart from standard ideals that structure the gaze of the scientist that analyses chromosomes as a metaphor for sex, and then decides what to do in relation to a body exposed to its method, is the arbitrariness concerning the notion of a "functional penis". The male organ must have, at least, a size from 2.9 to 4.5 cm, and it is required that urination is performed in a standing position, while the size of the penis is also analysed from a heterosexual perspective: it must be suitable for a vaginal penetration. Up to this extent, is it licit to assert that the medical gaze concerning sex is merely neutral, not reproducing ideals that might, to put it simply, destroy human lives? Mainly when the suggestion of remaining silent regarding the intervention is told to the parents as a strategy that might not influence the "normal" psychosexual development of the child: "Surgeons, psychologists, and endocrinologists, through their surgical skills, try to make good facsimiles of cultural intelligible bodies" (Fausto-Sterling, *op. cit.*: 76). More than cultural intelligible bodies, I would say scientific intelligible bodies that fit into a previously tamed framework. The normalized intersexual body is achieved through abusive practices, amongst which there is the masturbation of the penis in teenagers in order to verify its sexual functionality, or the introduction of dildos into the vagina to assure its viability, which have been denounced by an important amount of people.

Owing to all these arguments, if the informed consent is elaborated from the perspective that ascertains the malfunction and abnormality of intersexuality, which finally effaces it through technical procedures, which is the democratic bond between physicians and the parents? I shall assert that what results from this situation is a scenario where surgeons, psychologists, and endocrinologists persuade the parents to perform such intervention onto the new-born's body, regardless of any subjective element related to love and desire. Indeed, such a situation involves a circle, since intersexuality cannot be known by other parents inasmuch as it is repeatedly eliminated through medical techniques, which perpetuates its status of an exception in front of a presumed norm of a healthy psychosexual state. Hence, as Carla Carreras assert:

El consenso presenta además un problema de desequilibrio porque el enfermo y/o la familia no están en las mismas condiciones que el equipo médico en cuanto a los conocimientos sobre el desarrollo de la enfermedad, las alternativas de actuación y las tecnologías existentes en cada caso (...). Al final, el supuesto consenso no deja de ser el

resultado de una relación asimétrica en la que el equipo médico tiene las de ganar (Carreras in Quintanas (ed.), 2013: 138).

4.3.2.2. Denouncing Violence over Bodies: *Espai Obert TransIntersex*

According to my previous discussion of bioethics relating surgical interventions on intersexual babies, the former seems to perform a legitimacy for the latter, which finally reassures the thesis that current bioethics is the theoretical and pragmatist justification of a bio-political administration of life. Bioethics is, thus, mobilised as a meta-discourse that reassures the authority and knowledge attributed to the expert, who is sanctioned as the bearer of science, which is said to be the most reliable methodological discourse to elaborate an approach on the subject.

Nonetheless, such a discourse is not unquestioned, yet critical concerns on the empire of science over the subject and its effects are elaborated and argued from multiple angles. As far as intersexuality is concerned, in the specific context of Barcelona, one of the most visible and interesting political strategies can be found in *Espai Obert TransIntersex*, a group of recent creation the aim of which is to make visible and to undo the stigmas that shape hegemonic notions of transsexuality and intersexuality as deviations from presumed standards of normalcy. Its diverse and different actions, which depart from making visible other possible discursive constructions of the body in its attachment to the subject to the explicit denounce of contemporary legislations in relation to transsexuality and intersexuality, allow for the possibility to organize a community based on a mutual support of transsexual and intersexual people. It offers the chance to elaborate a social bond not based on a purely scientific account of the subject, but one that includes the singularities of different individuals.

In order to struggle against a normalizing vision that segregates subjects between those included in a set of normal bodies, and the exclusion of those rejected as abnormal, they also work with different groups. In this sense, such a net offers a familial accompaniment for those parents whose children have decided to undertake a sexual transitioning, or whose children have been “diagnosed” as intersexual, refusing to subject them to a surgical intervention. Unfortunately, since the data concerning the birth of intersexual babies is exclusively statistical in a macroscopic sense, there is no

suitable and reliable source that gives some hint of Barcelona new-borns “diagnosed” as intersexual. The main reason for this is the too common practice of performing “corrective” surgery once an intersexual baby is born. The role of an accompaniment is, thus, to undo the extended conception of intersexuality as a malfunction the “treatment” of which ought to be a reconstruction of genitalia and a further hormonal and psychological therapy. Indeed, what the *Espai Obert TransIntersex* elaborates is a discourse to deconstruct the vision that reduces sexed anatomy to a strict division of suitability and unsuitability, trying to elaborate a new articulation of the variability of genital anatomy.

In addition to this, *Espai Obert TransIntersex* is not primarily focused on receiving solely transsexuals and intersexuals, but it is opened to anybody. Such an inclusive perspective displaces a political turn exclusively focused on an identitarian vision of what is to be a subject, which simultaneously allows a chance to re-elaborate preconceived identifications of what a man or a woman ought to be in our socio-symbolic reality. It is also a place where doubts, fears and the uncertainty concerning who any subject is can circulate without any medical protocol that expulses the symptomatic singularity that structures subjectivity. In this sense, each individual narrates itself according to the name that allows for the construction and articulation of its being, which diminishes the obligation to introduce oneself through recourse to the national identity document. Indeed, many people decide not to change their legal status and name since it requires a psychiatric certificate of gender dysphoria, and a hormonal therapy that must have been offered for at least two years in order to obtain a presumed coherent appearance between identifications and ideals concerning the distribution of the sexes. Having the chance to name oneself according to the nomination that allows the articulation of a *sinthome* which offers the possibility to elaborate a new identification in terms of the knotting of the three registers – Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real – is another strategy to contest the regulatory sphere of the juridical instance²⁰⁸ as the exclusive discourse on sexual identifications.

²⁰⁸ Before the socialist Government that began in 2004, the legal modification of the name in case of transsexual and intersexual people was based on the discretionary authority of the judge, who, according to the physical appearance of the person, decided if the legal modification could be performed or not. Since the approval of the marriage and adoption for homosexual couples in 2005, some socio-symbolic modifications could be done thanks to the pressure of many activists, who influenced on the decisions that were taken in the Spanish parliament. Nonetheless, the conservative sectors of the Spanish society, mainly those allied with the Catholic Church and familiarist associations, which defended an

The adjectives “trans” and “intersex” are discursively re-adapted in a different process of enunciation to destabilize the previous usages of these signifiers, extremely attached to the lexicon of science and its regulatory power. In this sense, the queerness of the subject in relation to its non-identity with discourse does not mean that everybody is transsexual or intersexual. Such a massive identification would perversely mask the differential axis of the symbolic utterances and mobilisations of these signifiers, along with the power and ideological relations that sustain them. Therefore, it is not analogous to the status given to the adjective “queer” by queer theory and its implicit voluntarism, which echoes the fantasy of an autonomous subject that shapes itself through a non-

exclusionary perspective on kinship based on the heterosexual monogamous family, and the Popular Party opposed the enlargement of such a social and symbolic transformation, arguing that the well-being of children were at risk. They adduced an epidemic definition of homosexuality, mainly the masculine one, and the propagation of psychosis. From a psychoanalytic perspective, such a claim involves the mutation of the Symbolic into a transcendent order separated from the domain of discourse in terms of a social bond and the usages of the signifier, clearly at odds with the notions elaborated by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. In relation to this issue, it is remarkable the intervention of several psychiatrists who, in addition, were members of the Opus Dei, a Catholic organization that defines homosexuality as a disease, and adduces a presumably biological basis, based on divine mandates, for a traditionalist articulation of sexual difference. Those psychiatrists elaborated a causal relation between homosexuality and psychosis, which implicitly implies that homosexual subjects suffer from a pathological psychic structure absent in heterosexuality, which, from a clinical perspective focused on psychoanalysis, is an absurdity. For a further approach on this debate, see http://www.abogados.com/archivos/ley_matrimonio_parejas.pdf, and http://cadenaser.com/ser/2005/07/01/espana/1120175411_850215.html. Last hits: 01/05/2016

As far as far the legal change of the name in the case of transsexuals and intersexuals is concerned, a new legal disposition was elaborated in 2007, which requires the psychiatric certificate of gender dysphoria, and a hormonal treatment of at least two years to fit the body into the desired identification. Furthermore, the name must be recognised by at least three people who know the subject in question, and its new name must be clearly feminine or masculine, which forbids any nomination that might induce any kind of mistake regarding the identification of the person. In relation to this law, see the following link of the Spanish Government: “Ley 3/2007, de 15 de marzo, reguladora de la rectificación registral de la mención relativa al sexo de las personas” in https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2007-5585. Last hit: 01/05/2016

For a sociological discussion of this regulation, see Soley-Beltran, Patricia (2009): *Transexualidad y la matriz heterosexual. Un estudio crítico de Judith Butler*. Barcelona, Edicions Bellaterra.

Moreover, in the regional parliament of Andalusia, in 2014, the socialist government of the region approved a law that, for the first time in most of the countries of Europe, left aside the pathological classification of transsexuality as a mental disorder, and it guarantees the legal modification of the name without requiring the psychiatric certificate, and the hormonal therapy. Nevertheless, the person must identify as a transsexual, which is defined in the preamble as a transhistorical and universal phenomenon in any culture, formulating a universal notion of the socio-symbolic reality of human diversity that, from an anthropological perspective, is quite doubtful. For a further approach on this issue according to the juridical perspective, see “Ley 2/2014, de 8 de julio, integral para la no discriminación por motivos de identidad de género y reconocimiento de los derechos de las personas transexuales de Andalucía” in <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/boja/2014/139/1>. Last hit: 03/05/2016

Linked to this same issue, the former Argentinian government presided by Cristina Fernández approved a law of gender identity which radicalises in a much more democratic perspective the right to obtain a new legal identification, which does not require any assertion of transsexuality, but merely the desire to be recognised by a new name, regardless of the anatomical sex. For a further approach, see “Ley 26.743 de Identidad de Género” in <http://www.ms.gba.gov.ar/sitios/tocoginecologia/files/2014/01/Ley-26.743-IDENTIDAD-DE-GENERO.pdf>. Last hit: 03/05/2016

coherent sedimentation of diffuse and divergent identifications. Hence, what is at stake is to allow a re-articulation of the signifiers that becomes the occasion for a struggle against stigmatizing and exclusionary bonds by signalling the virulence and violence inherent to a purely segregationist collectivity. It entails, then, that the subject, in its social dimension, is not a production of consciousness, but the effect of the Other and its desire, which creates the subject as a consequence of it, a remark stressed by authors like Judith Butler and Adriana Cavarero, despite their different theoretical gestures.

In spite of this aim to enlarge the domain of the cultural intelligibility of the subject, which refers to the Imaginary and the identifications with the other that it regulates, there is a risk in such a strategy. Such a risk refers to the possibility to mime the very exclusion it is said to denounce through an identitarian turn, this is to say, foreclosing the singularity of the subject as the space that resists any positive predication by means of a pinning down of identifications. In this sense, this process of resignification would constitute a reverse of the hegemony of science and the prevailing discourse of the master of the epoch, which implies that discourse would be reduced to an ideological practice that reinforces this very opposition. The result might be, then, the maintenance of a logical distinction between hegemony (set) and counter-hegemony (the exclusion that confirms the set) thanks to the *jouissance* obtained from this dual confrontation. Such a remark needs to be seriously taken into account if another feature is outlined: transsexuality and intersexuality are two signifiers that primarily orchestrate identifications linked to a discourse based on *knowledge* and the imaginary dimension of *recognition*, which cannot be separated from its aggressive and exclusionary territory. The issue at stake is the reduction of the subject to be a transsexual or an intersexual in the sense of promoting a fusion between subjectivity and discourse through identifications, leaving aside what resists being tamed by the demands and requirements of several discourses and their productions of *semblants*. Such a reduction would mean the absorption of the split subject into the dimension of the ego, elaborating a proliferation of identifications that might enlarge the symbolic space of subjection, though remaining trapped in the same exclusionary dynamic. In other words, what is rejected from such a pluralistic notion of identifications is what exceeds sense and predication, this is to say, the symptom and its “dissidence” to the discourse, which are also sanctioned by the internalization of hegemonic values that defines the super-ego and its sadism. Indeed, as I had remarked concerning the analysis of neo-liberalism

offered by Isabell Lorey (Lorey, 2015), the capitalist discourse is not against the multiplication of “identities”, but it rather encourages them in its vicious and circular structure, where the subject is tied to a *plus-de-jouir* that assumes the role of a solitary gadget offered by the market.

In addition, a discourse mostly concerned by the proliferation and deconstruction of identifications rejects the logic that is mostly attached to singularity, challenging the elaboration of social bonds as a totality. What is erased is, then, the not-all, the insurmountable hole that goes far beyond a set based on identifications regulated by a master signifier, which is articulated as a radical negativity that resists any attempt to elaborate a positive predicament, fracturing being at its core. The fact that the feminine position of the not-all is structured one by one, without the possibility of elaborating a logical set due to the indeterminacy of such a modality, is the limit to the signifier that structures the unconscious. It is the constitutive excess of the feminine position, which destabilises segregation and the empire of the *jouissance* grasped by discourse thanks to the master signifier that puts desire to work.

4.3.3. Capitalism and Racism

In the third scenario that I am going to analyse in this chapter, what is at stake is the very notion of population. The sociological and political phenomenon that perfectly illustrates such a reality, according to my theoretical hypothesis and argumentation, is the so-called illegal migration, related to a specifically material axis of vulnerability and precariousness as two signifiers that give an account of the symptoms derived from the capitalist discourse.

Despite the emphasis given by the media on this phenomenon, from a historical perspective, migration has always existed, even if its magnitude and reality have changed in different times and places according to the different articulations of social bonds, and the distributions of people by means of discursive values and culturally elaborated ideals. Nonetheless, what historically is a new phenomenon is the massive dimension of migration, especially if the current “crisis” of the refugees is considered. Millions of people are forced to leave their countries as a consequence derived from wars, which usually occur in dynamics that reproduce the logic of colonialism, and from environmental modifications and catastrophes, which have increased as a result from the

technological impact on nature by means of the capitalist mechanism of production and consumption of wealth. In addition to this, the so-called illegal migration, if the mutations of the capitalist discourse are considered since the late 1970's, is a clear product derived from a circuit of proliferation of a surplus of wealth that is hugely globalised and universalised. As I will assert, in contrast to what authors like Giorgio Agamben remark, the main issue relating illegal migration is its status of an excessive residue that brings into crisis the segregationist procedure of current European States. The last recreation of this lethal mechanism refers to the incessant deaths in the Mediterranean Sea, a common grave for those who are excluded from any kind of hegemonic identification. In this sense, contemporary migratory fluxes of those who are transformed into disposable bodies susceptible of being exploited by neoliberal policies prove that capitalism does not allow the creation of *semblants* that permit the organization of collective affairs, but merely the circulation of capital. It works according to an exclusive segregationist logic that, in a *real* sense, separates individuals by means of an incessant proliferation of signifiers taken as identifications, the most radicalised example of which began in the extermination camps of the Third Reich, and their mutations into refugees' camps and Immigration Detention Centres.

In this sense, capitalism and the obscene rise of racism are not two casual realities that cohabit in our world, but they are allied one with the other, as Foucault had also affirmed in his genealogy of the Nation-State in « *Il faut défendre la société* » (1997). The other is, therefore, transformed into an intruder that steals *jouissance*:

Dans l'égaré de notre jouissance, il n'y a que l'Autre qui la situe, mais c'est en tant que nous en sommes séparés. D'où les fantasmes, inédits quand on ne se mêlait pas. Laisser cet Autre à son mode de jouissance, c'est ce qui ne se pourrait qu'à ne pas lui imposer le nôtre à ne pas le tenir pour un sous-développé. S'y ajoutant la précarité de notre monde, qui désormais ne se situe que du plus-de-jouir, qui même ne s'énonce plus autrement, comment espérer que se poursuivre l'humanitaire²⁰⁹ de commande dont s'habillaient nos exactions ? Dieu à en reprendre de la force finirait-il par ex-sister, ça ne présage rien de meilleur qu'un retour de son passé funeste (Lacan, 2001: 534).

What Lacan declared at the beginning of the decade of 1970 has become our everyday life in relation to the racism that structures the relation with others, especially those who are declared by national and international juridical apparatuses as intruders who lack an employment. The other is transformed into a threatening Other blamed for

²⁰⁹ "Humanitaire" is a depreciative neologism invented by Lacan, which mixes up "humanism" and "linguistique", another neologism that refers to the singular uses of the signifier that are articulated from the first impact of the language of the Other on the speaking being.

the miseries suffered by the subject under the sadistic commandment of the capitalist super-ego and the progressive atomization of social bonds, which reinforces a precarious existence at the level of a lack of symbolic devices that create a more or less suitable social bond. In this sense, the segregationist dynamic of capitalism collapses at one level: while capital is said to have a global status, the aim to volatilise *jouissance* and to deprive subjects from an adhesion to concrete and symbolically situated *plus-de-jouir* has an aggressive response, which can be seen in the proliferation of forms of fanaticism, especially religious fanaticism. The consequence is the imaginary bond where the other is reduced to a pure obstacle for the acquisition of a complete *jouissance*, blaming its otherness for the castration inflicted by language as a structure, which is exploited by capitalism itself in its compulsion towards *jouissance*, inscribed under the regime of the phallic signifier. Colette Soler describes such a paradoxical circuit in an article untitled « Perversión generalizada » (2011)²¹⁰:

El goce en juego en el vínculo social, digamos, en la realidad, ¿qué es sino una alianza del goce fálico y el plus de gozar? Goce del poder en todas sus formas (política, epistémica, artística, etcétera), tal es la definición del goce fálico, que se conjuga con el de poseer los objetos de consumo fetichizados (Soler, 2011: 204-205).

Since what is at stake in discourse is the *jouissance* inscribed by the phallus, the only signifier known by the unconscious, capitalism can only command towards the consumption of what can be ciphered and regulated, knowing nothing of the Other *jouissance*, the supplement that exceeds language as a process of signification. At its time, phallic *jouissance*, in its partiality and ephemerality, illustrates the subjective division orchestrated by language. Therefore, *jouissance* requires more *jouissance*, being always a gap between the commandment and what is obtained, which installs at the core of the subject the frustration and resentment proper to the super-ego, as Nietzsche had also highlighted. The perverse twist of capitalist discourse is the false promise of the acquisition of fullness if only the other was not an obstacle for such enterprise, inoculating a racist attitude towards otherness, the catastrophic effects of which can be verified in migratory policies and its segregation.

²¹⁰ This article is included in a monographic volume devoted to several lectures and articles given or published in analytic circles by Colette Soler. The volume in question, untitled *Incidencias políticas del psicoanálisis* (Barcelona, Ediciones S&P, 2011. Translated and edited by Rithée Cevasco and Jorge Chapuis) includes several of them, which refer to different analysis of Colette Soler that oscillate between 1987 and 2009. As a result, their original version is not available inasmuch as they merely circulate in congresses or were published in reviews that belong to psychoanalytic schools, mainly the Institut de la Cause Freudienne and the Forums du Champ Lacanien.

Dealing with migration and the regulatory strategies elaborated by state apparatuses cannot only be reduced to a kind of cultural study based on the articulations of different predicates or attributes over the subject, which would merely imply a constructivist approach based on further re-articulations of what already structures the *statu quo* of everyday life. According to my research, what is required in order to reflect on the liaisons between bio-politics, racism and migration in relation to the symptoms produced by the capitalist discourse demands another kind of scope. In this sense, I would firstly refer to the notion of population, analysed by Foucault as the subject-object of bio-political techniques of governmentality, which would presumably reduce the subject to an undifferentiated organic entity.

As far as the notion of population is concerned, as I had already remarked, its articulation, from the Foucauldian corpus, cannot be separated from security and a territory, which links the notion of a population to the juridical and political fiction of the Nation-State. Nonetheless, in order to offer an analytically ordered account, I will begin with the notion of population, considering what Foucault signals in *Sécurité, territoire, population* (2004a). From a bio-political perspective, a population aims at producing a totality of individuals conceived as a systemic reality, this is to say, a set the parts of which cannot exist independently from each other. In this sense, the metaphorical expressions that refers to population as a bodily figure echoes the idea of an organism the existence and survivability of which requires a homeostatic equilibrium. A population is structured, thus, by means of attributing certain and concrete properties to its members, which sets a limit from the start: in order to be recognised as a member of a population, each individual considered as a part of it must be sanctioned by the characteristics that are said to be defining of the whole. In other words, there must be a correspondence between the species – population –, and the individual – the member, the *citizen* –.

From such a perspective, then, if a population is understood in biological terms, it is also defined by means of a spatial resonance, which entails that any population occupies a territory, which must be defended against the entrance of non-recognised individuals. A population, therefore, cannot be properly articulated without some other elements that do not belong to a merely biological notion of life, which involves some extra elements: security and territory.

On the one hand, security does not appeal to an abstract sense of protection, but it refers to possible aggressions and attacks, which means that a population can always be potentially threatened by elements that are alien to its existence and survival. Besides, security is not only performed on a population, but in a territory that is delimited and differentiated from other possible territories. Its current structure in Europe since the XVIII century is the Nation-State, which is a fundamental element in the elaboration of migratory policies.

Furthermore, security points to a double dimension of the bio-political subject: it concerns any individual recognised as a member of the population – which refers to the subject untitled as a citizen –, and, at the same time, it protects the whole. It includes, hence, a disciplinary dimension applied on the individual body, and it has a regulatory angle, tied to the social body as an organic being. Following this argumentation, security cannot be separated from a broader concept, which had been the focus of debate of political philosophy since the realm of law increased in order to organize a society, namely, sovereignty:

Disons pour résumer tout cela que, alors que la souveraineté capitalise un territoire, posant le problème majeur du siège du gouvernement, alors que la discipline architecture un espace et se pose comme problème essentiel une distribution hiérarchique et fonctionnelle des éléments, la sécurité va essayer d'aménager un milieu en fonction d'événements ou de séries d'événements ou d'éléments possibles, séries qu'il va falloir régulariser dans un cadre multivalent et transformable (Foucault, *op. cit.* : 22).

Such a connection between security, territory and sovereignty reminds of the analysis that Foucault had previously begun to articulate in relation to the disciplinary techniques that he attributes to the Modern Age. In other words, a population is technically administrated in order to produce a totality governed by an instrumental procedure. What cannot be included in this whole will be expelled, relegated to the spectre of marginality and strategic silence according to the norms and regulations of discourse.

The combination of security, territory, population and sovereignty, mainly under the political, social, and juridical form of the Nation-State, which remains the hegemonic political artefact despite the push towards an incessant globalisation promoted by financial capitalism, must be considered in relation to another element, crucial to understand the segregationist expression of “illegal migration”: the nation. The nation, the gestation of which cannot be separated from the Enlightenment

movement, designates a collectivity that shares an *origin*, the paradigmatic manifestations of which can be detected in a *common* history as people, a *common* language, and *common* mores, which provide an identity. Its reverse is the exclusion of those who are said to be foreigners. One of the basic elements that are usually designated as typically different is the language of those who arrive from a foreign country, which is tied to *other* sorts of *jouissance*. Such a political and cultural construction cannot be left aside if European and Spanish migratory policies are to be seriously taken into account, mainly because, through recourse to the nation, there is a scission amongst individuals as citizens and non-citizens.

This division is at odds with the presumptive spirit of equality and universality materialised in the famous *Déclarations des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* (1793). The issue at stake in this declaration is the separation between “man” – a universal category that, at the moment of its elaboration, specifically left aside the half of the population, this is to say, wo-men –, and “citizen”. This kind of exclusion means that each subject can be considered a man – at least in Western states –, but the inverse operation is not true, since to be a citizen requires a belonging to a broader set, regulated by the nation, which finally questions if “man” is so universal as it is presumed to be. This exclusionary dynamic, which can be seen at the background of the legal and juridical manifestation of a socio-symbolic map, leads to different paradoxes, which are highlighted by Foucault:

Que la population soit ainsi à la base et de la richesse et de la puissance de l'État, ceci ne peut se faire, bien sûr, qu'à la condition qu'elle soit encadrée par tout un appareil réglementaire qui va empêcher l'émigration, appeler les immigrants, favoriser la natalité, un appareil réglementaire aussi qui va définir quelles sont les productions utiles et exportables, qui va fixer encore les objets à produire, les moyens de les produire, les salaires aussi, qui va interdire encore l'oisiveté et le vagabondage (Foucault, *op. cit.* : 71).

Interestingly enough, in such a dynamic, Foucault is adding an element that discursively institutes the increasing relevance of the discourse of the university. Indeed, if a population is structured through the aid of different disciplines, its bond to the domain of knowledge, perversely instituted as a neutral reality the goal of which is to enable a progress of humankind – the liberal standard promoted by the Enlightenment and the positivism founded by August Comte –, becomes necessary. Inasmuch as it is a subject articulated by a knowledge that aims at distributing, calculating, and administering, what will be regulated is designated by a purely statistical element. This

is the major element currently applied to the exclusionary logics that governs migration, which divides migrants between those who are legal, the status of which is assured by a documentation and a *job*, and those illegal, expelled from the set, and which obstruct the circle of consumption and production.

This segregationist separation and regulation of the social body was also analysed by Foucault through the notion of race, specifically applied to all those subjects sanctioned as alien to recognisable devices imaginary sanctioned through narcissistic operations of identification, which at the same time reinforces the belonging to a collectivity. A segregation that Foucault signals as a rhetoric that presupposes a war between races, which is the racism proper to the repudiation of the *jouissance* of a threatening other the existence of which is said to corrupt the purity and normalcy of a presumably defined social group, with the epidemic echo that it has. A form of racism that, according to Foucault – and the history of colonialism and current neo-colonialism confirms his hypothesis – is based on a State racism, this is to say, forms of repudiation from citizenship and belonging to a population, the subsistence of which must be fiercely protected²¹¹. The aim to protect a population, therefore, leads to a paranoid state of governance in which purification requires an incessant process of amelioration, being life a potential threat for the living body that the State is said to administer: “Un racisme qu’une société va exercer sur elle-même, sur ses propres éléments, sur ses propres produits ; un racisme interne, celui de la purification permanente, qui sera l’une des dimensions fondamentales de la normalisation sociale” (Foucault, 1997 : 45).

²¹¹ One of the latest manifestations of the execution of a sovereign action in order to protect the integrity of the population and the State territory could be evidenced in the murder of at least 15 migrants who were trying to cross the frontier between Morocco and Spain. Because of the physical obstacles they found in the interdiction of the police to cross such a frontier by foot, they decided to traverse it swimming. The response was implacable: they were shot by the police with rubber bullets guns, which finally caused their deaths because they could not keep floating in the sea and resisting the attack at the same time. Once the situation was denounced, arguing a violation of Human Rights, the judge absolved the accused policemen.

As far as the corpses are concerned, they were buried in a common grave, forbidding the families to mourn their beloveds because they did not presumably submit the required documents to cross the border. For further information on this case, see http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/Guardia-Civil-disparado-balas-media_0_226078058.html, which reports what happened that day, and also the juridical verdict that absolved the accused, which can be found in <http://www.poderjudicial.es/stfls/SALA%20DE%20PRENSA/NOTAS%20DE%20PRENSA/Instrucci%C3%B3n%206%20Ceuta-Sobresimiento%20Tarajal.pdf>. It is also worth reading the official response given by the former Spanish Minister of Internal Affairs, Jorge Fernández Díaz, in his defence of the policing that day in <http://www.eleconomista.es/inmigracion/noticias/5538916/02/14/Fernandez-Diaz-reconoce-el-uso-de-material-antidisturbios-en-Ceuta.html>. Last hits: 10/05/2016

In this sense, the racism that Foucault points at, which I maintain that is still hegemonic in prevailing political realities, does not simply refer to relations of knowledge and power, but it points at another element that permanently escapes the perspective of the discourse of the university. It is a persecutory circuit against what exceeds discursive regulations, signalling the inherent limit of a nominalist account of racism: *jouissance*. Yannis Stavrakakis, in his *The Lacanian Left. Psychoanalysis, Theory, Politics* (2007), illustrates this issue in relation to nationalist discourses based on hatred, signalling a guilty figure for the chronic malaise that the subject experiences due to the castration inflicted by the Symbolic. Bio-politics, as a result, is a defence from and a simultaneous strategy of producing *jouissance* as a surplus value derived from the effect of the signifier onto the body, elaborating a delirious attempt to create a totality based on expelling what seems to question the creation and maintenance of such a global reality:

Nationalist hatred can be explained, then, as a way societies or social groups attempt to deal with their lack of enjoyment, attributing this lack, this structural impossibility, to the action of an external force, the national enemy or the Other, who is fantasied as enjoying more (having stolen what is thought to have been “essentially ours” (Stavrakakis, 2007: 202).

The obscure consequence obtained from such an analysis, apart from the social, historical and political modifications discursively sanctioned, is the racist dynamic of discourse inasmuch as the articulation of a social bond is concerned, a perspective that, from a different vision and with a divergent purpose, Foucault had also highlighted in *L'ordre du discours* (1971). Exclusions and inclusions, thus, are not purely reducible to a historicist approach based on the creation and modifications of identifications and egotistic ideals, but they are rooted into the structure of the signifier, which goes beyond the discursive monism that characterizes the notion of bio-politics, regardless of the strategic and political benefits obtained from such a scope. Racism, indeed, is not only linked to the history of modern colonialism, but it is radically attached to the social distribution permitted by language, which is given by the Other, more specifically, the Big Other, as far as social relations are concerned.

Following this line of argumentation, the institution of *semblants* by discourse tries to regulate *jouissance* by means of the partial capture that the signifier allows through processes of signification, which hide the *real* lack of being that lies beneath discourse, constantly masked by identifications and the fantasies that govern reality.

Contrarily to what philosophers like Butler might think, this is not some division between a phenomenal world discursively instituted, and a noumenic order that is beyond language, but a breaking *within* the very structure of language as such, an excess that signals an extra element that attaches the subject to a prevailing discursive order. Stavrakakis, in relation to the hatred against the *jouissance* of the other, which has assumed a huge relevance in current migratory politics as a result of the capitalist circuit of an infernal production of a surplus value, summarizes this issue perfectly:

By focusing on the “theft of enjoyment”, by conveying the idea that somebody else – the Jew, for example, or the national Other – has stolen our enjoyment, it succeeds on both fronts. It preserves our faith in the existence and the possibility of recapturing our lost enjoyment – a faith enhanced by the partial enjoyment we get from our experience – but projects its full realisation onto the future, when we will manage to get it back from the Other who has stolen it from us. This way enjoyment is kept at a “healthy” distance, not too far but not too close either; close enough to support the appeal of an object of identification, but far enough from letting us entertain the vision of full satisfaction as an imminent possibility – something that would kill desire, induce anxiety and put identification processes in danger (Stavrakakis, *op. cit.*: 197-198).

The always complicate bond with the other, inasmuch as it does not merely incarnate a strange alterity, but it simultaneously involves what is odd in the subject itself, inoculates an aggressive bond at an imaginary level, an issue explicitly present in our infancy since the first thing that the subject desires is the desire of the Other. In addition, the governance that bio-politics implies, in its narrow bond with the capitalist discourse, is a hyperbolic administration of *jouissance* as the excess partially barred by the subject due to the fantasmatic structure of desire. Since the real of life and death is supposed to be governed through the circuits of the capital, the subject finally becomes a threat, which is discursively sanctioned through lethal fantasies that enable a violent division regarding the intruder who is also responsible for everyday’s disgrace²¹².

What racism illustrates is the *jouissance* obtained from a massive identification to a certain master-signifier, which reinforces a belonging to a community that must be protected against the “intruders”, those who put at risk the survival of a nation. The hatred implicit in the belonging to a group had been previously analysed by Freud in his

²¹² Such rhetoric is circulating nowadays in Europe, which has had as a consequence a huge rise of the extreme right-wing parties like UKIP in the United Kingdom, the Front Nationale in France, Golden Dawn in Greece, and Plataforma per Catalunya in the Spanish region of Catalonia, amongst others. Indeed, the favourable result of the “Brexit” is a good symptom of the dynamic of blaming the other for the disgraces that, as a matter of fact, are inflicted due to the capitalist discourse and its delirious regulations of *jouissance*.

Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921), where he had argued for the constitutive bond between the social dimension of discourse and the emergence of the subject as the subject of the unconscious. Belonging was explained by Freud in terms of the *Ideal Ich* (ego ideal), which discourse elaborates and transmits to the subject through the Other. This explains why the unconscious cannot be conceived in solipsistic or psychological terms: “In the individual’s mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent, and so from the very first Individual Psychology is at the same time Social Psychology as well” (Freud, 1949 [1921]: 1-2). Hence, Freud gave an account of the social sphere as a mass, and his paradigmatic examples are the Church and the army. The mass understood as a social group is a crucial notion to give an account of the racism that governs the hatred directed against the other accused of troubling the homeostasis of a collectivity, which signals at the same time the chiasm between the subject and the subject-in-the-group, with no complete identity or fusion between these two realities.

The social dimension of the subject, inasmuch as it is one of the causes of its malaises, makes evident the conflictual bond that structures any group. A malaise that, as Lacan and Stavrakakis remark, is structural, derived from our condition of speaking beings deprived of a natural link to life and *jouissance*. In relation to this question, Markos Zafiropoulos, in *Dicen que dijeron de lo social... Freud y Lacan. Cinco ensayos de antropología psicoanalítica* (2010)²¹³, refers to the discursive production of subjects invested as the incarnation of a malaise that the discourse of the master of each epoch pretends to impute to those who defy prevailing norms, masking the chronic lack-of-being:

El malestar es, pues, crónico, marcado por el discurso social de su tiempo que nombra a quienes no podemos aún llamar sujetos del inconsciente, pero que se alinean en la galería de retratos que van desde el toxicómano al delincuente, de los deprimidos a los psicósomáticos (Zafiropoulos, 2010: 137).

Following Freud’s analysis on the social dimension of the subject, Zafiropoulos recalls the obscene reverse beneath any massive identification such as patriotism and nationalism, traversed by a brutal hatred against the other. Such is, in fact, the notion of mass evoked by Freud: a collective identification based on diverse and diffuse libidinal

²¹³ This work is a monographic compilation of several essays and lectures given by Markos Zafiropoulos, which have been translated into Spanish by the psychoanalysts Rithée Cevasco and Jorge Chapuis. Since as many of these essays have not been published yet in French, the original version is not available.

bonds that institute a leader as the supreme incarnation of the ego-ideal, in front of which subjects show their submission:

Una suma de *individuos que han puesto un único y mismo objeto en el lugar de su ideal del yo*, un conjunto de individuos que mantienen con su líder una sumisión humilde, una ausencia de crítica y una docilidad tal que el amor por el líder en su forma culminante aparece como nada más que lo que Lacan fijará en 1938 con la hermosa expresión de “el amor de la larva” (Zafirooulos, *op. cit.*: 29).

This is the attitude that the European Union has had with the “refugees”, who have been discursively segregated from the migrants, especially “illegal migrants”, inasmuch as Europe is said to have the “moral obligation” to take them in²¹⁴. Nonetheless, the reappearance of neo-fascist movements such as PEGIDA, a German association with a particular “crusade” against the “menace” of a presumed Islamization of Europe, has illustrated again the force of national identifications, true master-signifiers for social groups, despite the efforts to re-articulate their signifying chain. It is not simply that these identifications are productive effects of power, but they generate a subjective adhesion thanks to the *jouissance* obtained from such signifiers, inscribed within cultural forms of enjoyment and social orchestrations:

What determines the movement between different subjective positions? Are all the components of a multiple identity of equal importance? The answer psychoanalytic theory provides is that there is always a fantasy scenario which organises and supports the apparent multiplicity of identity and determines the “rules of engagement” between its different levels, a mapping which prioritises particular modes of enjoyment, particular libidinally invested components and nodal points (*points de capiton*) and not others, which remain structurally and emotionally peripheral (Stavrakakis, *op. cit.*: 219-220).

However, racism, despite its structural link with discourse, is not merely tolerated or accepted, but there are also forms of resistance in front of it. Before analysing political forms of contestation, I would like to pay attention to the analysis given by Judith Butler in her *Frames of War. When Is Life Grievable?* (2009a), and her

²¹⁴ Interestingly enough, even asylum policies are oriented by the supreme values of the labour market: offer and demand. Such a “curious” detail has been verified in the sharing of refugees by the European States, which illustrates that, for capitalism, such an individual is a pure wretch that puts an obstacle to the circuit of consumption and production. What has been applied, then, is the criterion of distributive justice, which is, paradoxically, the criterion that, since Aristotle, has been applied to the consuming goods and properties, amongst which there were slaves. It makes sense to think that refugees might be “used” by the labour market as an extremely cheap workforce in exchange for this “humanitarian” attitude. For the debate that has taken place in the EU in relation to this political affair, see http://ec.europa.eu/echo/refugee-crisis_en. Last hit: 23/05/2016

Indeed, the European Commission attributes current migratory fluxes to “displacements”, which seems to be a euphemism for masking the war industry and geopolitical interests that lay beneath such human movements, especially if Syrian migrants-refugees are taken into account, apart from other countries that have been systematically bombed and even ecologically destroyed.

co-authored book with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak *Who Sings the Nation State? Language, Politics, Belonging* (2007). In these two works, Butler analyses how discourse produces vexed forms of otherness, which bind prevailing inclusions and exclusions, and create forms of abjection that expel different subjective spectres in order to produce a coherent social identity. In relation to racism and, more specifically, the international state war against terrorism that began after 11-S, her theoretical scope moved towards the discursive frames at the core of the production of racialized subjects, the exclusionary division between those lives recognised as griveable, and those repudiated to the sphere of silence and the margins of liveability. Such a theoretico-political turn cannot be separated from the incessant rise of migratory movements specifically related to the jeopardizing effects on States that were former colonies of Western countries, which indicates that there is a historical and symbolic logic that continues in such a segregationist movement. In order to give an account for such a political articulation, Butler insists on the importance of defining and identifying the epistemic frames that allow to recognise an individual or a set of individuals as belonging to the category of human, which recalls the historicity of any concrete concept, with its different mobilisations and social effects. In other words, to be sanctioned as a member of a recognisable life, a subject has to incorporate, in a performative way, a normativity implicit in the ontological, ethical, and epistemic constitution of what a life is. Such emphasis is directed towards the outlining of the precariousness that would be constitutive to the social being and, besides, to stress the increasing precariousness produced by current regimes of political administration, which produce a huge number of dispossessed groups. At the same time, precariousness, according to Butler's analysis, is a strategic notion that destabilises the normative and binary structure that she attributes to recognition, which pushes for broader frames of liveability, which, amongst other questions, quarrels for non-racialized versions of the subject:

Precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. It implies exposure both to those we know and to those that we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all. Reciprocally, it implies being impinged upon by the exposure and dependency of others, most of whom remain anonymous (Butler, 2009a: 14).

Butler does not simply focus on an ethical relationality that struggles against abjection, but to found a new universalism based on the extension of precariousness to *all* subjects, which appeals for a normative claim against the destruction of life, which

does not exclusively refer to human life, but to life as such. In this sense, given the interrelation of current migratory policies elaborated by States, the referent of which is the circulation of financial capital, and forms of sociality based on promoting an incessant productivity, precariousness sets a limit to the reduction of the subject to an entrepreneur of oneself. It signals the sphere that resists a discursive reduction to a bio-machine condemned to enter into a chain of infinite consumption and production, promoting at the same time new egotistic ideals based on the finite and vulnerable condition of life, its dependency on others, and its fragile status:

The reason I am not free to destroy another – and, indeed, why nations are not finally free to destroy one another – is not only because it will lead to further destructive consequences. That is doubtless true. But what may be finally more true is that the subject that I am is bound to the subject I am not, that we each have the power to destroy and be destroyed, and that we are bound to one another in this power and this precariousness. In this sense, *we are all precarious lives* (Butler, *op. cit.*: 43. My emphasis).

Nevertheless, this new universalism, as any attempt to produce a universal ontological condition of the subject in an extended version, finally collapses in front of a limit that is the constitutive exteriority for the consolidation of a set, a logical set to put it more clearly. Indeed, such a twist in the definition of precariousness institutes the Big Other as the constitutive outside of the logical set of precarious lives, with the alienating structure referring to the signifier, as Lacan had recalled in *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (1973).

In addition to this, as Stavrakakis remarks in his analysis on the hegemonic status given to certain master signifiers, what remains unquestioned is the subjective adhesion to certain identifications, which provide a belonging that is not a pure discourse susceptible of being undone, but there is a *jouissance* too. A *jouissance* that involves a notion of the body, racialized or not, that is not a pure effect, but the locus of the affects-effects of the signifier, which explains why social changes do not occur so easily. Even in situations of extreme vulnerability and segregation, the subject might find its fantasmatic parcel of *jouissance*, the *plus-de-jouir* offered by discourse in its attempt to organize the Real-impossible, irreducible to a simple linguistic reality. In this sense, racism is not exclusively a consequence of binary epistemic and ontological frames, but it primarily appeals to the excess that disturbs the subject inasmuch as it is beyond the Freudian pleasure principle, which refers to the insistence of the drive in its

persistence to obtain a (partial) satisfaction, which cannot be considered apart from the death drive.

Despite this issue, in a further turn to undo what she diagnoses as the exclusionary matrix that produces the subject, Butler, in a dialogue with Spivak, aims at deconstructing the nationalist rhetoric that traverses the notion of belonging. Indeed, current migratory policies operate at two levels: the first one binds citizenship to the acquisition of a labouring permission, while the second one binds nationality to citizenship, which finally produces a dual exclusionary logic, especially if the pre-eminence of the nation over the juridical status is considered²¹⁵. The nation, then, overlaps the juridical form of citizenship, which leads to a notion of belonging articulated in segregationist terms, the maintenance of which can only be paradoxically reassured through juridical mechanisms of power, and the racialized exclusions derived from such a mechanism.

Following this intricate structure of power relations, the police devoted to safeguarding borderlands is a crucial piece in the political apparatus that aims at regulating migrations, which produces the figure of the illegal migrant, expelled from the nation and, at its turn, expelled from citizenship. In this sense, current migratory policies offer a combination of the sovereign power, paradigmatically defined by Foucault as the form of power the main interest of which is the protection and integrity of a territory where sovereignty is exercised. Such a political gesture proceeds through decreeing death, leaving aside life. Through the interconnections that migratory policies have with the fluxes of the financial capital and the labour market, the sovereign power is allied with a bio-political administration of life, the paradigmatic forms of which can be seen in the segregation of individuals who lack of a job and their confinement in camps, separating them from population. This is what Butler also points at in her

²¹⁵ Indeed, such is the situation concerning the Spanish Constitution, the second article of which establishes that the sovereignty of the people derives from the nation, posed as a previous socio-historical reality the historicity of which is, nevertheless, foreclosed. This is the paradoxical nature of origins: it finally appeals to a mythical situation in order to justify the present *statu quo*. The Constitution states the following legal disposition: “Artículo 2: La Constitución se fundamenta en la indisoluble unidad de la Nación española, patria común e indivisible de todos los españoles, y reconoce y garantiza el derecho a la autonomía de las nacionalidades y regiones que la integran y la solidaridad entre todas ellas”. To see the full juridical text: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1978-31229>. Last hit: 30/05/2016

reference to the nation and the State: “If the State binds in the name of the nation, conjuring a certain version of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes” (Butler and Spivak, 2007: 4-5).

Concerning current debates on the alliances between sovereign forms of power and bio-politics, Butler explicitly stresses that there must be a differentiation between power in all its plural manifestations, and law. The absence of such a distinction might lead to a pure repressive instance of power, which traverses most of contractual and liberal notions of the State and power, which, at its turn, would not allow to analyse how the figure of the migrant is *produced* by diffuse and disseminated power relations. In this sense, the elaboration of the figure of the migrant cannot be separated from the discourse of the master. It is this discourse that produces a division between the figures said to enjoy the *plus-de-jour* forcibly produced by those who are placed in the area of the slave, and the discourse of the university, since the notion of the migrant, at its turn, is inscribed in a historical chain of significations linked to epidemiological, hygienist, ethnological, and anthropological signifiers. Such a remark challenges analyses on bio-politics such as Agamben’s, who elaborates a strict division, following Hannah Arendt’s classification of life, between *bíos*, a qualified life, and *zoé*, life reduced to its biological and minimal expression. Agamben’s thesis, as I will discuss in this chapter, argues for the incessant reduction of life in terms of *bare life* as a result from the effect of bio-politics on the status of the subject, which seems to involve an expansion of *zoé* over *bíos*.

Butler’s critical appreciation regarding this argument stresses that the very notion of bare life already departs from a binary scission between life as a political qualification, and life as a biological parcel that can be accurately distinguished from the former. In this sense, it would seem that the figure of the illegal migrant incarnates a paradigmatic notion of bare life inasmuch as it is expelled from the imaginary and symbolic identifications that qualify a recognizable life. Thus, Butler ascertains that the very notion of *bare life* is a political configuration of the subject, which invalidates the divided area between a form of life discursively articulated, and a brute, “natural” life separated from discourse: “No one is ever returned to bare life, no matter how destitute the situation becomes, because there are a set of powers that produce and maintain this situation of destitution, dispossession, and displacement” (Butler and Spivak, *op. cit.*: 10). Such a twist from a discourse based on the notion of a subject deprived of any

singular feature is, according to my theoretical perspective, a very important discursive position to assert, which enables to dismantle the paranoid account that might traverse the notion of bio-politics, especially if it is reduced to a massive population understood in pure biological terms. Indeed, if it were true, it would imply a universalization of a psychotic structure that would dissolve the subject, an element that would derive from a purely capitalist discourse dissociated from the other four discourses.

The segregationist figure of the “illegal migrant”, named in French the *sans-papiers*, is not the annihilation of life, but a radical mutation of the discourse of the master clearly allied with the flux of the financial capital and the economic speculation that it involves. The paradoxical political reality involved by such a structure can be resumed in these terms: while the circuits of the capital are nearly volatilized, borderlands are increasingly reinforced due to the devastating effects of such a socio-symbolic reality in the mortifying push to produce a surplus value inseparable from consumption and production. The reaction from such a discursive organization is the increasing of racism and the forms of hatred against alterity, which spread through paranoid practices and rhetoric, and traverses more powerfully Europe since the terrorist attacks that shocked France in November 2015. The response in front of such a manifestation of the Real of capitalism due to its devastating segregation has been a new appellation to the nation over the State, reinforcing an immunological barrier: “A fair amount is at stake when we consider how best to think about the Nation-State as a political formation that requires periodic expulsion and dispossession of its national minorities in order to gain a legitimating ground for itself” (Butler and Spivak, *op. cit.*: 33)²¹⁶.

What must be taken into account in the analysis of current policies that produce a racialization of the subject is the narrow nexus between bio-politics and capitalism, which produces a social vulnerability and precariousness to those subjects expelled from the sphere of the nation and citizenship, inhabiting in a limbo of no man’s land. Indeed, such a limbo can be attributed to Immigration Detention

²¹⁶ Concerning the periodic interconnections between rituals of rejection of those who are said to incarnate forms of impurity and social threat, along with the structure of civilization in terms of the orchestration of social groups, Étienne Balibar analyses the social mutations that are supposed to release social groups from the intruders that introduced dissonancies. For a further approach, see Balibar, Étienne (2010): *Violence et civilité: Wellek Library Lectures et autres essais de philosophie politique*. Paris, Éditions Galilée.

Ceentres, which put a *real* limit between a territorial population sanctioned by sovereign and regulatory forms of power, and its constitutive exterior.

4.3.3.1. Immigrantion Detention Centres: Discipline and Regulation onto the Rest Expelled by the Circuit of Capital

My analysis on Immigrantion Detention Centres will focus on the IDC of Barcelona, which is located in a slum of the city, Zona Franca, near to the airport. Indeed, though this IDC was constructed and opened in 2006, the existence of IDCs in Spain dates from 1985, which coincides with the first Law on Aliens. Specifying this date is also important in order to avoid a blur ideological criticism that might impute restrictive migratory policies to right-wing governments, which is a falsehood since the middle of 1980's. From that moment on, migratory policies, at least in the European Union, have been perfectly attached to the demands and needs of the labour market. In the particular case of Spain, IDCs were opened during the first government of the PSOE, and their existence has been maintained by its successors. In other words, capital in terms of the production and consumption of gadgets suits any sort of ideology as long as it does not put into question the logic that sustains such a discourse, and, in the case of Spain, none of the hegemonic regulations has pursued this goal.

Since 1985, in coincidence with the opening of these centres, the structure of which, as I will argue, is nearly identical to the one of a concentration camp, IDCCs have been used by the regulatory role conferred to migratory policies and the police apparatus without a proper legislation. All the successive governments claimed that they required a specific regulation, though it never arrived until 2014, this is to say, 29 years after their construction. Many social movements, in their struggle for overcoming migratory regulations and their stigmatizing effects, denounced the opacity and complete arbitrariness that such a juridical situation, similar to a limbo, involved. As a consequence of such denounces and those related to the systematic violation of Human Rights due to physical aggressions and vexations suffered by the prisoners, the right-wing government of the PP elaborated the specific legislation the aim of which was to offer a juridical guarantee for the prisoners, and the functioning of the institution.

Nonetheless, it is important to clarify a remark often omitted regarding the reason to be imprisoned in an IDCC, which has nothing to do with the commission of what the law sanctions as a crime, which is typified by the Penal Code of each State. The imprisonment into an IDC is the result of an administrative fault: the lack of legal papers that vouch for the belonging of an individual to a State, and its legal permanence at the State it has arrived. From a legal perspective, then, all those people imprisoned in a IDC have not committed any crime, but just a fault, which, from a juridical perspective, could be compared to not showing your Identification Document (ID) because you have forgotten it at your home, just to put an ordinary example. It is crucial to clarify that being named an “illegal migrant” does not refer to a legal breach, which involves that the person should not be deprived of its freedom because no punishable crime has been committed. There are two legal documents that support such a conclusion: the Spanish Constitution, and the Law on Aliens of 2009.

Concerning the Spanish Constitution, it is important to highlight what it makes clear concerning the right to freedom that *anybody is supposed to have*, regardless of its race, sex, sexual orientation, age, class, or whatever item. Hence, in the article 17.1, the Constitution is very clear on this matter: “Toda persona tiene derecho a la libertad y a la seguridad. Nadie puede ser privado de su libertad, sino con la observancia de lo establecido en este artículo y en los casos y en la forma previstos en la ley” (1978: 4). In addition to this, the Constitution remarks its commitment with Human Rights, which are said to be fundamental and inviolable rights. Therefore, if a person does not possess any legal document concerning its belonging, and its entrance into Spain cannot be verified, the person might still claim the inviolable right of freedom, which can only be restricted through recourse to a juridical verdict that passes so, which firstly requires, according to the juridical mechanism, the commission of a crime. When anybody is said to have committed a crime, there must be a trial, in which the accused is entitled to have a defence in front of the presumed charges. In relation to this issue, the Law on Aliens asserts that the imprisonment in a IDC must be reserved for exceptional situations in which a) the person cannot be located by the police, and b) if there is a flight risk. Otherwise, what the Law on Aliens clarifies is the obligation to pay a fine, and the compulsory requirement to legalise its situation in the State, which requires the acquisition of an employment contract of 40 hours per week, the term of which must be of a year at least.

The regulation presumably applied to IDCs in Spain, the applicability of which began in March 14th, 2014, reaffirms that these centres are not penitentiary institutions. This feature reinforces the absence of a commission of crime of the imprisoned people in these centres: “Los centros (...) no tienen carácter penitenciario y los extranjeros en ellos internados estarán privados únicamente del derecho de ambulatorio, limitación que será conforme al contenido y finalidad de la medida judicial de ingreso acordada” (Real Decreto 162/2014: 1).

According to what the Penal Code clarifies, what the Spanish Constitution affirms, the specific remark made by the Spanish Law on Aliens, and what this regulation claims, why are there so many migrants imprisoned in IDCs, despite the fact that these centres are not a prison? The answer can be found in the logic that governs current migratory policies, which are not simply typical of Spain, but they rather characterize the European Union on this matter: a concentration of those said to be illegal migrants in order to accelerate their deportation to their countries of origin. Nevertheless, because in this process there is a detention, there must be a legal guarantee, which prevents from a violation of their fundamental and inviolable rights. Related to this situation, the Spanish Constitution, in its 17.3 article, claims that:

Toda persona detenida debe ser informada de forma inmediata, y de modo que le sea comprensible, de sus derechos y de las razones de su detención, no pudiendo ser obligada a declarar. Se garantiza la asistencia de abogado al detenido en las diligencias policiales y judiciales, en los términos que la ley establece (Constitución Española, 1978: 4).

Despite this, the same impasse is repeated: what is regulated by the law in these situations refers to circumstances in which somebody is accused of having broken the law, which involves the commission of a crime. Instead of this presupposition, when an “illegal migrant” is imprisoned, no crime has been committed, which involves that its right to freedom has been violated. In order to avoid what is a juridical and a political abuse, the Law on Aliens and the regulation for IDCs explicit that the interment is executed under the auspice of the authority of an examining magistrate, which would provide some legacy to the imprisonment. Notwithstanding with this, a paradox must be pointed at: in order to install a regulatory power that imprisons those declared as “illegal migrants”, the law must be suspended by the sovereign gesture of the State, which involves that the very existence of the IDCs is located beyond the law, being an exception allowed by the rule of law.

According to the testimony of many people who are or have been imprisoned in a IDC in order to be expelled to their native country, many of them ignore the reason of their detention²¹⁷. In this sense, it could be inferred that the order given by the examining magistrate is not, properly speaking, a trial, but a pure formality to pretend to lard with legitimacy what is illegal. The sovereign gesture concerning the defence of a territory by means of security apparatuses goes to the extent of abolishing the law in order to maintain the empire of the State, regardless of the juridical consequences of such operation, and the defence of a further element: the rules of the labour market, and the circulation of capital. The violation of Human Rights in order to shield the *statu quo* entails that those expelled from the domains of the law as “illegal migrants” are just “men”, deprived of the attribute of “citizenship”, which gives a further political and juridical status. As a result, the State has no obligation to protect their rights, being its goal to expulse them. Consequently, another constitutional right is violated, which, again, is not restricted to a question of citizenship, but to the auspices provided by international laws and Human Rights. Hence, in its 24.2 article, the Spanish Constitution asserts what follows:

Todos tienen derecho al juez ordinario predeterminado por la ley, a la defensa y a la asistencia del letrado, a ser informados de la acusación formulada contra ellos, a un proceso público sin dilaciones indebidas y con todas las garantías, a utilizar los medios de prueba pertinentes para su defensa, a no declarar contra sí mismos, a no confesarse culpables y a la presunción de inocencia (*op. cit.*: 5).

Such a juridical and political limbo implies that current migratory policies are inscribed into a bigger circuit in which the bodies sanctioned as “illegal migrants” are not treated as subjects the rights of which must be respected, defended and protected, but as an excess expelled from the logic of accumulation and production. Indeed, those imprisoned in IDCs, at least in Barcelona, are not simply people who have just arrived to Spain, but in many cases people who have been living for many years in the city or other parts of the State. One might wonder why a person who arrived many years ago at

²¹⁷ These testimonies can be found in the websites of different platforms and organizations that struggle for the abolition of current migratory policies, and a new articulation of State frontiers that exceed the limits imposed by the labour market, which diminishes democracy by virtue of the circulation and accumulation of capital. Amongst others, I would like to mention *Tanquem els CIE*, *SOS RACISME*, *Migra Studium*, and *Stop Mare Mortum*. Their profiles and different activities can be easily found in the Internet, where some testimonies of imprisoned people in the IDC of Barcelona are evidenced regarding their situation in the institution, and the violation of Human Rights at the centre. In addition to this, the documentary “Sobre Raons” narrates the situations lived during the detention and during the confinement by relatives and those who, unfortunately, were arrested by the police because of lacking of an ID. For a further approach, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iz8ScsBOLVU> Last hit: 01/06/2016

Spain can be arrested due to a lack of a proper ID. The answer is simple: this person could never obtain a legal employment contract, which means that its situation as a worker was illegal because the superior or the firm did not make the contract, or because, after losing a job, the person also lost the residence permit, which is conditioned to be a legal worker. Curiously enough, the entrepreneur who made the worker remain in the spectre of illegality is rarely punished, which suggests another element concerning the status of “illegal migrants”: they are pure workforce susceptible of being expelled when the market, legal or illegal, does no longer need them.

What is important to analyse in a more detailed manner, apart from the machinery that sustains migratory policies, is the specific operation of IDCs, in particular the IDC of Barcelona. Such an institution comprises a double dimension: it has a disciplinary dimension coercively applied on individual bodies, and, at the same time, it has a regulatory dimension, inscribed into a bio-political logic that literally segregates bodies, applying different mechanisms depending on whether they are recognised or not as citizens. In the case of the IDC of Zona Franca, which is under the jurisdiction of the Spanish Ministry of Internal Affairs, people can be confined for a maximum of sixty days (two months). The aim of such a confinement, as the *Manual para la defensa de los derechos humanos de las personas extranjeras encerradas en los Centros de Internamiento* (2014) makes clear, is clear: “Los CIE son centros de internamiento en los que se encierra a personas extranjeras que se encuentran en España sin autorización administrativa de estancia y permanencia con el objetivo de tramitar o ejecutar su expulsión o devolución a sus países” (Ríos, Santos & Almeida, 2014: 27).

However, according to yearly statistics, the function that the IDC of Barcelona is said to perform is, from the perspective of confinement and deportation, quite deficient²¹⁸. In this sense, the IDC is not maintained due to its efficacy, but rather

²¹⁸ Organizations like *SOS Racisme* and *Migra Studium*, which collaborates with further Jesuit platforms, elaborate nearly every year reports on the conditions of the confinement, how many people are confined, under which circumstances they were confined, if they knew their rights during the detention and the arrest, and how many people are expelled. As far as deportations are concerned, they can only be performed if the origin of the native person can be verified. Once it has been verified, there must be political and legal contacts between Spain (in this case) and the State of origin, which must recognise the person in question as its citizen. If this protocol is achieved, the deportation is programmed through the renting of airplanes, which are paid by the State through a public competition that is renewed each year. According to the reports provided by *SOS Racisme* and *Migra Studium*, the conclusion is clear: if the difference between those confined and those expelled is considered, the number of deportations does not reach the 50 % of confinements. Therefore, the IDC is not maintained due to its efficacy, but to its role within the regulatory mechanism of migration, regardless of the efficiency. For a further approach on

because it is one piece of the whole puzzle that regulates migratory policies: frontiers, situations of induced precariousness because of the restriction applied on the Law on Aliens, confinement, deportations, and the insertion of “illegal migrants” into the circuit of black economy, which provides huge benefits at an extremely low cost.

The rhetoric on security is also hoisted in order to justify the existence of the IDC, claiming that those confined are criminals. It could seem contradictory since, as I have already stated in the above, a person with no legal ID has not committed a crime, but just an administrative fault. Nevertheless, from a police perspective, being arrested due to the lack of legal documentation constitutes a criminal record, which will hinder the further process of obtaining the status of a citizenship in the State. Besides, the Spanish Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Spanish Ministry of Justice decided to add a further disposition: to commute an imprisonment for deportation to someone arrested for having actually committed a crime. Therefore, there can be a legal evidence of the presence of criminals inside IDCs, which pushes towards the elaboration of a public opinion that prevents its closure.

Eventually, thus, the sovereign gesture concerning the regulation of migration consists in the political rejection of those declared as illegal migrants to a spectre of invisibility where opacity is justified by virtue of the defence of society in front of the threatening presence of criminals, who in some cases are presented as dangerous and ferocious. In spite of the paranoid rhetoric that aims at isolating the legitimate population from the wretch that seems to be a pollutant enemy, what is perversely hidden is the fact that many of those “criminals” are people who, because of losing their job, have lost their residence permit, which is verified once they are arrested. The consequence for such an illegal situation is paradoxically sustained by the Law on Aliens, which contributes on the production of the figure of the illegal migrant:

En un buen número de casos la pérdida del contrato de trabajo que poseían ha conllevado el incumplimiento de los requisitos que la legislación de extranjería exige para su renovación, decaendo, por tanto, en una situación de irregularidad sobrevenida, en otros la denegación de la renovación se ha basado en la tenencia de antecedentes penales, aunque sea por delitos leves (...) (Ríos, Santos & Almeida, *op. cit.*: 97).

these issues, see <http://www.sjme.org/sjme/item/794-expulsiones-expres>, elaborated by the *Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes*, organization that includes *Migra Studium*, and http://www.sosracisme.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SOS_Informe2014_A41.pdf, an annual report elaborated by *SOS Racisme* concerning racist situations in Catalonia. As far as deportations are concerned, see Campaña Estatal por el Cierre de los CIE (2014): *Pararnos los vuelos. Las deportaciones de inmigrantes y el boicot a Air Europa*. Madrid, Cambalache. Last hits: 07/06/2016

As far as discipline is concerned, what Foucault signals as one of its main characteristic is its cellular structure, this is to say, it is executed onto a single body, which differs from the bio-political reality inasmuch as the latter is discursively elaborated as a biological species. Such a peculiar structure is, at its time, an economic distribution of space and time that isolates the individual figure from any broader context, which has as a result a discursive division regarding the social bond, and this is substantially modified within an IDC because the individual is *really* separated from society.

The environment created into a disciplinary institution is, therefore, a microcosmic context that, to a certain extent, creates a new world in the sense of a signifying scenario. It is a scenario where each individual occupies a single space where certain tasks are performed through the surveillance of police officers, who are in charge of the security of the centre. These tasks, in IDCs, contrarily to what sometimes occurs in prisons, are none, this is to say, the individual is confined to a cell with six other people, and they have nothing to do but waiting for their release or deportation. Such a confinement reinforces the uselessness attributed to those whose life is not attached to the mechanism of the labour market, imprisoned in a place where time is separated from any concrete activity. One of the usual complaints of the prisoners is the feeling of an unbearable lapse of time that seems to be eternal, being the sole activities eating when they are allowed to, going to the ground of the centre where smoking is allowed, and going back to the cells²¹⁹. Such a mechanical distribution of time in an extremely constrained space involves a coercion over the body similar to the shaping of a puppet susceptible of being modelled according to pre-given parameters, which reinforces a submission to the law that, in many cases, creates an apathy in the individuals. It is, therefore, a process of ritualised subjection based on a repetition that aims at reproducing a situation of absolute indifference.

As Foucault had declared in *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (1975), a disciplinary regime works along an economy of punishment and terror that might happen any time, which leaves the subject in an incessant anxiety concerning the

²¹⁹ Many of the details that I will provide of the IDC of Barcelona are related to my experience as a member of *Tanquem els CIE* in visiting prisoners. These visits were scheduled to check their psychic state, how the detention had occurred, which was their former situation, who were their relatives, their information concerning their right to have a lawyer, and if they had had any interview with their legal representative.

moment of a possible aggression, which is narrated by some prisoners relating the arbitrariness of pains inflicted by police officers. To a certain extent, the figure of the police officer is said to performatively symbolize the current form of the super-ego: the annihilation of those declared as useless for the survival of the circuit of capital, which do not contribute to the economical chain of the elaboration of a surplus value. Such a dimension is what links present forms of sovereign power to bio-political ones: IDCs, contrarily to the extermination camps constructed by Nazis, do not aim at *really* killing those confined in there, but they transform them into invisible beings, the invisibility proper to the category that capitalism has created for the useless individual: the loser. It is not a matter of killing, but of rejecting the bodies that are said to be a burden for the circuit of the capital inasmuch as capitalism is not a form of social bond, but a pure administration of *jouissance* that links the subject to a gadget, foreclosing the Other inherent to a social bond.

The exercise of such a political gesture must be hidden from society in a large scale, which explains why IDCs are usually located in the outskirts of cities and towns, reinforcing isolation. Veiling IDCs allows for a pure administrative logic of punishment, which attempts to create domesticated subjects who do not challenge the machinery that sustains such an institution: “Le ceremonial de la peine tend à entrer dans l’ombre, pour ne plus être qu’un nouvel acte de procédure et d’administration” (Foucault, 1975: 14). The operation of confinement, punishment and deportation acquires an automatic appearance that is latterly mobilised into a public rhetoric that appeals for the necessity of strict migratory policies, which are supposed to be orchestrated in terms of efficiency, which pretends to negate the contingency of discourse. In fact, such is the repeated mantra of neo-liberalism: “There is no other way”, the purpose of which is to ban forms of resistance and agonism.

In relation to current migratory policies, their justification relies on an economic administration of bodies rejected from the market, which are bio-politically racialized. This discursive gesture creates the figure of the illegal migrant, sanctioned by the figure of the expert, the new bishop of the capitalist discourse. Hence, psychology – in its behavioural and cognitive trend –, and criminology, combined with the new version of psychiatry that imputes a neurobiological determination for crime, are strategically used. In this sense, during trials and explanations concerning IDCs, the judges refer to psychological tests in relation to the riskiness of the individuals who are confined, who

are sometimes introduced as “subjects unable to control their impulses for breaking the law”, which would justify their imprisonment. As Foucault highlighted, the criminological turn implied that the law began to have a new object for the elaboration of judgments: not only deeds, but also the person as the object-cause that must be controlled and penetrated through recourse to the figure of experts.

As a matter of fact, the Law on Aliens and migratory policies reduce those sanctioned as migrants to illegal subjects, this is to say, subjects the existence of which is expelled from any legal guarantee, at disposal of whatsoever sovereign decision:

L’expertise psychiatrique, mais d’une façon plus générale, l’anthropologie criminelle et le ressassant discours de la criminologie trouvent là une de leurs fonctions précises : en inscrivant solennellement les infractions dans le champ des objets susceptibles d’une connaissance scientifique, donner aux mécanismes de la punition légale une prise justifiable non plus simplement sur les infractions, mais sur les individus ; non plus sur ce qu’ils ont fait, mais sur ce qu’ils sont, seront, peuvent être (Foucault, *op. cit.* : 24).

Following this remark, which links together capitalism, migratory policies, and the power to organise the social reality through the discourse of the university based on the production of the figure of the illegal migrant according to standardised and scientific criteria, IDCs are not exclusively connected to a racist logic in a traditional sense of this expression. They are connected to an administration of induced precariousness. In other words, institutions like the IDC of Barcelona administrate poverty, to which the legal system has become stricter since being poor is sanctioned as a result of an individual fault that deserves punishment. Therefore, the disciplinary regime of confinement commanded to those declared illegal migrants is not identical to the discipline Foucault appointed to the prison and the production of the prisoner. It is a form of rejecting and socially elimination of the individual that breaks a law that, as such, is not juridical, but moral: existence is merely deserved if production is achieved; otherwise, the individual must be eliminated. Such an operation is said to be justified for the sake of the integrity and cohesion of society.

This final remark is important because, according to my point of view, there are many criticisms that, despite their good aim, tend to reproduce a narration only focused on the signifier of race, leaving aside a broader frame linked to the redefinition of the subject elaborated by the capitalist discourse²²⁰. Certainly, racialization adds an extra

²²⁰ Political decisions like eliminating the right to being assisted in Spanish hospitals for people who have left the country after a period of 90 days, or blocking the health insurance card for people who have been

element attached to a rhetoric of hatred against the *jouissance* of the other, the other expelled from the *semblants* discursively articulated in a social community in order to produce a “national identity”.

Moreover, the emphasis that certain groups put on race and the criticisms of certain left-wing movements in terms of “white left” has a dangerous reverse: the imaginary dual scenario that institutes a battle for the recognition between two opposed poles, which involves that the survival of one of them entails the death of the other. Producing an identity is not, therefore, an undoing of exclusionary dynamics, but the shielding of such a logic, structurally rooted in the phallic operation of the logical set, which finally rejects alterity as an obstacle for purity.

4.3.3.1.1. From Citizens to Entrepreneurs of Ourselves: Dealing with Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*.

My approach on the link between capitalism and migration is not guided by a description and discourse mostly concerned by identifications, but to the subject in its relation to discourse in terms of a social bond. This is why my main concern is to illustrate the nexus between the circuit of consumption and production at the level of *jouissance*, this is to say, the *plus-de-jouir* as the *objet petit a* produced by the market, and migratory policies. Such a methodological axis does not aim at invalidating a postcolonial approach, but I intend to go beyond such a perspective, which, in my view, is limited to the dimension of the phallic economy regarding identifications, and a normative account of them. In other words, what I have tried to offer is an analysis of bio-politics that signals its structural limit, illustrating the impossibility to produce a notion of the subject reduced to a massive population in a biological account, that would involve the abolition of subjectivity .

Therefore, in order to finish my analysis on the third scenario related to vulnerability and precariousness as the two symptomatic realities of our current era, I will offer a critical analysis of an author whose influence has been quite remarkable in the analysis of bio-politics in relation to regulatory strategies of domination: Giorgio

in the dole for a long time reproduce a similar maxim: to induce the social disappearance of the subjects expelled from the market.

Agamben. Indeed, Agamben's notion of the *homo sacer* has been largely used as a metaphorical instance to reflect on new regimes of subjection, and the conditions according to which social bonds are produced and regulated. Authors like Achille Mbembe, who has emphasized the mortifying dimension of bio-politics relating to those lives which seem to be produced to be immediately destroyed in order to obtain a benefit from such a subjective and bodily erasure, recalls the dynamic of annihilation for those subjects systematically repudiated by the capitalist discourse. His neologism of *necropolitics* reminds of the Foucauldian emphasis on the specific mechanism of bio-politics: promoting life, which entails an incessant regulation of such a process, to the extent that such a goal involves the destruction of those lives who are expelled from the hegemonic circuits of different discourses and socio-symbolic realities²²¹.

Following these remarks, Giorgio Agamben's analysis of bio-politics refers to a situation which can be used to offer different approaches on the links between capitalism, bio-politics and racialization, though his perspective is specifically orientated by a juridical reflection that aims at paying attention to law as a technique of governmentality. By this expression, I mean that Agamben's interest on law refers to the expansion of its dimension, which, according to his analysis, has entailed an impoverishment of ethics, and a notion of sovereignty bond to, following Carl Schmitt, the state of exception as the paradigm of governance. The political result from such a gesture would be the camp, which involves the reduction of the subject to a *homo sacer*, this is to say, an ambivalent expression present in Roman law to refer to the individual the life of which was simultaneously saint, though it could be also killed at any moment.

²²¹ Achille Mbembe, in an article that became quite famous shortly after its publication, invented the neologism of necropolitics in order to give a more refined account of the bio-political dynamic, paying a more accurate attention to the colonial and racial administration of those bodies condemned to perform a role of slavery within contexts of production of economic benefit. In a quite similar argumentation used by other thinkers like Angela Davis or bell hooks, he referred to the specific role given to slavery during the story of colonialism. Hence, Mbembe outlines the new forms that slavery has acquired in many countries, which is parallel to the formation of certain forms of social distribution like the Mexican *cartels*, where many individuals are, literally speaking, killed in order to obtain a benefit from such event. While Davis referred to the analogy between prisons and slavery, Mbembe offers a new turn on the process of racialization of black people, whose bodies were used as tools of production, which involved a coerced alienation that deprived their existence of a subjective status, acquiring an attribute of pure object used for a concrete task. His reflection can also be applied – as I have done following a different path – to the socio-political situation of “illegal migration”, which creates a mass of bodies susceptible of being exploited and expelled according to the commandments of the market in its laws of offer and demand. For a further approach on this discourse, see Mbembe, Achille (2003): « Necropolitics » in *Public Culture*, 15(1). Durham, Duke University Press, pages 11-40. Translation by Libby Meintjes; Davis, Angela (1983): *Women, Race, and Class*. New York, Vintage Books; (2003): *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Toronto, Open Media, and hooks bell (1982): *Ain't I A Woman? Black Women and Feminism*. London, Pluto Press.

However, due to an Arendtian influence in the notion of what kind of life would be typically human, Agamben departs from a dualism between *bíos*, a life provided with certain attributes, and *zoé*, which in classic Greek referred to life in a pure biological process. By means of this binary distinction, Agamben's aim, through a trans-historical dynamic, is to assert that bio-politics was at the core of Western politics since Aristotle's *Politics* inasmuch as the domain of *zoé* - life at its reproductive level - was included in the sphere of the political thanks to an exclusionary operation. In other words, by excluding it from the domain of politics, it was included as a prerequisite deprived of a political status, reduced to the *oikos*, which would be reformulated since Roman law and the much later liberal tradition as the space of private affairs. This domain, which belongs to what Arendt called the labour, is defined by Agamben through the expression of *bare life*, this is to say, a life reduced to its minimal and biological mechanism. In an attempt to join the Arendtian and the Foucauldian approaches, Agamben highlights that the fundamental gesture of Modernity is the legislation at the level of bare life: "In any case, however, the entry of *zoé* into the sphere of the polis - the politicization of bare life as such - constitutes the decisive event of modernity and signals a radical transformation of the political-philosophical categories of classical thought. It is even likely that if politics today seems to be passing through a lasting eclipse, this is because politics has failed to reckon with this foundational event of modernity", (Agamben, 1998 [1995]: 4).

According to this remark, Agamben defines a new political space that, to a certain extent, can be applied to the reality of Immigration Detention Centres, a current transformation of the concentration camps used by the Nazi regime to eliminate the Jews, communists, gypsies, homosexuals, and those reduced to the category of "deficient human beings". Nonetheless, as far as I am concerned, despite the interesting elements derived from his analysis, the issue is the strict division that Agamben proposes between *bíos* and *zoé*, without questioning its articulation since Aristotle. Especially because what Agamben veils through his analysis is the equivalence of what Lacan called the discourse of the master to the realm of subjectivity, expelling from his reflection any other consideration. In other words, what has been placed on the field of *zoé* since Aristotle and during the liberal tradition is all the human activities where the body is discursively situated as a working tool that produces economic benefits, this is to say, the realm of the goods susceptible of being consumed by the master. In such a

discourse, what becomes the truly political realm is a detachment from the body, for which the slave is used as a prosthetic element in charge of *jouissance*. Using such a discourse as the only socio-political reality is what legitimates Agamben to claim that the contemporary form of bio-politics, as Foucault stressed, is a body deprived of any further status than a bio-machine, which, as a matter of fact, hides a discursive gesture.

What Agamben leaves behind due to a total focus on the dimension of law and its historical turns is the alliance between capitalism and science in the progressive aim to abolish the domain of subjectivity. In this sense, his claim that “in Western politics, bare life has the peculiar privilege of being that whose exclusion founds the city of men.” (Agamben, *op. cit.*: 7), does not take into account the *impossible* gesture that Modern science has been trying since the XVI-XVII centuries: to legislate onto the Real. Indeed, Lacanian psychoanalysis is again useful to critically analyse such a discursive strategy. What Agamben describes refers to what Foucault took as a primordial object of interest in an epistemic and political sense: the hegemony obtained by scientific discourse, which, through its foreclosure of the subject, created the illusion of a complete administration of the world and life itself. Therefore, a notion like *bare life* cannot be separated from a purely biological sense of the body, which does not depart from a living body, but from a corpse. Thus, Agamben bases his approach on the impact of the combination between the discourse of the master and the discourse of the university, for which the subject is a rest that exceeds its own logical mechanism, in order to introduce a bio-political scenario where life is pursued to its minimal expression. There is no place for a subject in this approach.

However, as Judith Butler remarked, if bare life is a product from a historical mode of discursivity, it is not simply an irreversible destiny imposed by what Agamben suggests as a teleological disposition of Western politics, yet forms of resistance can appear in order to diminish the impact of contemporary forms of governance. Regarding this later question, resistance is curiously absent in a thinker who is inspired by the Foucauldian analysis of bio-politics. Hence, in *Who Sings the Nation-State?* (2007), Butler recalls that “after all, if to be a “bare life” is to be exposed to power, then power is still on the outside of that life, however brutally it imposes itself, and life is metaphysically still secured from the domain of the political” (Butler and Spivak, 2007: 39).

Taking into account these theoretical ambiguities, what remains interesting from the analysis elaborated by Agamben is the notion of *homo sacer* and its link to the camp. Despite he refers the notion of this former category to the Roman law, I would like to suggest that *homo sacer*, in our present, refers to all those lives reduced to bio-machines susceptible of being exploited and later rejected by the market. In this sense, the figure of the *homo sacer* would not simply be a radicalization of the instance of the slave sanctioned by the discourse of the master, but it is the figure of the dispossessed by the capitalist discourse, the only possession of which is its body. In other words, the *homo sacer* has become the subject produced by the capitalist discourse, reduced to a proletarian the life of which is attached to the gadgets of the market, and the circuit of consumption and production. Such a twist on the figure of the *homo sacer* allows for pushing the discussion to a further level that Agamben obviates: the instance of the entrepreneur of oneself, the super-egotistic imperative mobilised in our current era in order to enjoy without restrictions.

Regarding this issue, the forms of segregation derived from the capitalist discourse, as I had mentioned earlier, are linked to the *letting die* of those lives repudiated by the laws of the market, which transforms certain subjects into a provisional excess that can be used and expelled by virtue of the law of the offer and demand. In this scenario, the figure of the illegal migrant is paradigmatic: its arrival is only celebrated when the market requires its presence, while it becomes an abject element once the mechanisms of the capitalism discourse reduce it to a useless rest.

In relation to this question, Agamben's analysis of the paradoxical relationship between the sovereign and the *homo sacer* is relevant:

It is as if, by means of a striking symmetry, supreme power, - (...) always founded on a life that may be killed but not sacrificed - required that the very person of sovereign authority assume within itself the life held in its power. And if, for the surviving devotee, a missing death liberates this sacred life, for the sovereign, death reveals the excess that seems to be as such inherent in supreme power, as if supreme power were, in the last analysis, nothing other than the capacity to constitute oneself and others as life that may be killed but not sacrificed (Agamben, *op. cit.*: 100-101).

The paradox, if Agamben's quotation is considered, signals the following issue: the instance of sovereignty and the *homo sacer* seem to occupy equal roles inasmuch as their status is, simultaneously, inside and outside of the law, this is to say, their inclusion imply a successive exclusion. Nevertheless, such a parity is later undone: while the exceptionality of sovereign instances of power is the possibility to declare a

state of exception where the law and its subsequent rights are suspended, the *homo sacer* becomes a representative instance of the group of all the dispossessed by the sovereign power. A figure of dispossession that is not simply expelled, but it is included into the regulatory strategies of power *through* an exclusionary operation, which refers to a situation with no reversal, yet a pretension of totality that devours anything.

In relation to this issue, a more illustrative example of this situation could be the following one: the subjects declared as illegal migrants, due to such a legal sanction, are, on a first moment, excluded from the realm of law and rights because they are not recognized as citizens. However, such exclusion further *includes* them into discourse, understood as a social bond, transforming them into pure labourers, which could be read as a regulatory strategy that aims at producing a more refined and total form of social subjection that pushes the subject towards a more complete bio-political reality. Being expelled from *bíos*, understood in this context as being deprived of the status of citizen and a subject of rights, is what transforms the individual into a form of *bare life*: “The absolute capacity of the subjects' bodies to be killed forms the new political body of the West.” (Agamben, *op. cit.*: 125), which reminds of the notion of population elaborated by Foucault as the subject-object of bio-politics.

This binary distinction is what stresses the peculiar nature of the *homo sacer*: a sacred form of life that, notwithstanding with that, because of being deprived of any further attribute, can be eliminated at any time. The last images and news on the European response in front of the migratory movements of refugees gives a good example of such a situation: theirs are bodies susceptible of a pure calculation once they have died owing to the segregation articulated thanks to borderlands. They are deprived of a name and of any singularity by the hegemonic discourse of the master, incarnating the wretched of the earth, using Fanon's expression, who have become huge masses of individuals repudiated by the capitalist discourse.

In addition to this, this latter group of population is placed, following Agamben, in a new political space governed by exception, this is to say, the lack of rights and legal guarantees, which perfectly resounds of the Immigration Detention Centres, which mimes the mechanism of the concentration camps:

If the essence of the camp consists in the materialization of the state of exception and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction, then we must admit that we find ourselves virtually in the

presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independent of the kinds of crime that are committed there and whatever its denomination and specific topography (Agamben, *op. cit.*: 174).

A camp that, despite Agamben's genealogical study of the Nazis' extermination process, refers nowadays to an accumulation of bodies dispossessed of any rights, even the most elemental ones. Nonetheless, the issue at stake is not purely and solely a juridical one, but it is rather the juncture between juridical instances and regulatory forms of power that have allowed the socio-political configurations of new forms of apartheid. This sort of segregation cannot be separated from the historical moment of our time, and the new forms of governmentality created by neoliberalism.

In spite of the socio-political reality of the camp as the paradigm of the state of exception as a new form of governance, the realm of the political is not reduced to an unstoppable hegemony of the destruction of the subject's domain, the metamorphosis of which into a bare life would imply its annihilation. Indeed, without the subject there is no political dimension at all, and this requires a further analysis of the strategies of resistance and counter-hegemony in front of such a reality. The consideration of the political as an agonistic reality is what makes possible to introduce a scenario not reduced to a purely bio-political environment where the subject would be no more than a zombie completely attached to discourse, which suggests a paranoid reality where there is no escape. To undo this conclusion derived from Agamben's teleological and metaphysical diagnosis, I will pay attention to the strategies of response in front of regulatory forms of power that are articulated by *Tanquem els CIE*, a group of people from Barcelona who have achieved to put migration at the centre of the political arena.

4.3.3.1.2. Struggling against Current Migratory Policies: *Tanquem els CIE*

As far as Immigration Detention Centres are concerned, there is also a struggle at stake. A struggle that, indeed, does not only consider the crucial problems regarding migratory policies, but it also signals the need to push for a new social bond beyond the capitalist discourse. Such affirmation does not mean that this social reconfiguration will be easily articulated, though it refers to a discursive reality that needs to be re-articulated.

In relation to *Tanquem els CIE*, it is an organization that appeared at the beginning of 2012 after the death of a migrant inside the IDC of Zona Franca, in Barcelona. What began as a more or less spontaneous reaction as a response for a crime has now become a fundamental element within the social movements of Barcelona. Indeed, one of the first elements that were urgent to struggle for a new social reality where forms of racism could be radically contested was to make visible what had become discursively invisible. In other words, the prevailing hegemony needed to be brought into question. The first action on this matter was directed against the background of the Law on Aliens and its regulation on the legality or illegality of certain individuals. Therefore, the claim had to be clear: there must not be any sort of distinction between legal and illegal human beings, yet anybody is entitled to be respected because it is a human being. Such a remark resounds in what Javier de Lucas, in his article « La herida original de las políticas de inmigración » (2002) has remarked concerning the dichotomy at stake at the level of the discursive articulation of the figure of the migrant:

La negación de la condición de sujeto de derechos del inmigrante como tal, una negación que se produce como consecuencia de la restricción del concepto mismo de inmigrante, que, contra lo que dicta el sentido común y la razón, no es el sujeto, el ser humano que ejerce su libertad de movimiento, con el propósito que determine su libre autonomía, sino sólo el que se mueve dentro de los límites del inmigrante económico, el inmigrante trabajador, que es el *verdadero y buen* inmigrante (de Lucas, 2002: 66).

In other words, what *Tanquem els CIE* began to discursively elaborate was to unveil the inclusions and exclusions that built the stereotypes and the socio-cultural imaginary on the figure of the migrant, which were primarily attached to the relation of the figure of the migrant to the labour market. In this sense, as Javier de Lucas outlines, the migrant does not suggest simply a foreigner individual in an abstract sense, but it is attached to work, this is to say, the circulation of goods. The strategy elaborated by *Tanquem els CIE* was not to mobilise moralistic adjectives, but to devise several alliances with different groups, amongst which there were other migrants, the PAH (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca, which could be translated as “Troubled by Mortgages Platform”), and health staff who denounced the discriminatory treatment that migrants received.

One of the common signifiers that helped to unite all these people was the situation of induced precariousness that they were suffering as a consequence of the rise of segregation due to the economic crisis, and the discursive racialization that shaped

them as intruders, which was reinforced by European and state policies. It involved the undoing process of the reigning universalism and its exclusions, while at the same time the claims for an equal treatment gave form to a new universal status based on Human Rights, this is to say, referring to a transnational justice in order to struggle against situations of inequality, marginalization and poverty. As Javier de Lucas asserts: “El primero de los derechos humanos, como explicaba H. Arendt, es el derecho a tener derechos, es decir, al reconocimiento como persona, como miembro de la comunidad jurídica y política” (de Lucas, *op. cit.*: 69).

This rhetoric and political strategy, the main claim of which was “No one is illegal”, is an attempt to enlarge and radicalize the universal principle of the liberal tradition, the major expression of which can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). It requires, thus, a struggle between two notions: citizen and human being, which in current Nation-States are not necessarily homologous. It also entails that enlarging the limits of any sort of universalism does not invalidate inclusions and exclusions as such, which belong to a structural modality of the logical operation of the set, but it contributes to deconstruct their processes of sedimentation. It is, therefore, an effort to undo a previous imaginary scenario where alterity is expelled as an obscene reverse petrified into a strange other, which aims at destabilizing the assumption between “natives” and “foreigners”.

The further strategy deployed by *Tanquem els CIE*, which cannot be considered apart from the social alliances with other groups by means of master-signifiers that enable such operation, is to elaborate the nexus between the IDC, explaining its reality, and its connection with the current functioning of global capitalism. Such a political action implies situating the IDC and migratory policies into a context of dissolution of social bonds as a consequence of the present state of global capitalism. This exceeds the binary distinction between citizen and foreigner since precariousness has become a shared symptom for many subjects, regardless of their national status. It is not, thus, a perspective focused on an identitarian rhetoric, which would maintain the binary logic sustained and reproduced by exclusionary processes, but on their perverse effects and mechanisms. Amongst other strategies related to this issue, one of them was to destabilize the image of Barcelona in terms of a multicultural city where difference was celebrated as an exotic fetish, which required an agonistic procedure to dispute such an imaginary. In this sense, they performed an action according to which they passed as

commercial agents in the Mobile World Congress 2014. This commercial event offered the chance to inform the tourists who came to the city of the existence of the IDC. Such an action does not entail an immediate effect, but it becomes a piece of a larger work in progress in order to articulate a counter-discourse that places the domain of state policies on migration as a part of a bigger mechanism connected to hegemonic forms of economic production. In relation to this later issue, a specific group within the national net of the Spanish anti-racist movement devoted its efforts to inform passengers about the existence of deportations in the same planes that they were going to take to go on holiday. In some cases, it has created sporadic forms of resistance by several passengers, who have refused to take that plane if a person was going to be forcefully expelled from Spain.

Taking into account that the IDC isolates its prisoners from a larger social context, *Tanquem els CIE* considered a necessary and important dimension: the need to articulate social bonds with the migrants imprisoned there. Articulating a bond with someone deprived of freedom is not only a way of giving it a presence into discourse, yet it creates at the same time a connection presided by solidarity. It constructs an ethical relationship that breaks the binary distinction between citizens and migrants, reconfiguring a social space that the regulatory strategies of power have tried to foreclose, which makes possible to return the singularity as a subject to the person who had been previously imprisoned. Hence, the periodic visits that are organized by the group do not merely try to check on the living conditions in the IDC, but it also helps to maintain and reinforce the bonds with their friends and relatives, and to contact with the lawyer if there is any complaint on this matter.

The boundary between the inside and the outside is constantly redefined with these periodic encounters, despite not abolishing immediately the whole gear that sustains such a confinement policy. It works as a demonstration that these lives, in spite of the state and European policies, matter, that they are not simple ciphers or obstacles, but subjects who have a story and affective bonds that shape their existence. In some cases, these encounters have helped to free them from the IDC, which proves that the struggle against current hegemonic racist policies is not impossible, regardless of the difficulties.

Making evident these forms of resistance against IDC's and migratory policies is a way to resituate Agamben's thesis on the camp and his analysis on bio-politics. If the

domain of subjectivity is left aside, what is obtained is a diagnosis where the subject is erased by means of a discourse that founds a totality, a compact reality where everything can be accounted for, with no rest. On the contrary, the re-articulation of the social bond exceeding the prevailing scission between those included and those excluded refers to the fact that the discourse of the master that organizes the distribution of a society is not the only possible reality. Indeed, the struggle against the IDC of Barcelona by the civil society is what enabled that the government of the Generalitat de Catalunya publicly denounced this institution, which had never happened before, and after this positioning, many other city halls have adhered to such a public denounce. Such a final step is not simple or easy, but these symbolic reconfigurations concerning the current state of migratory policies suppose that the social reality is *actually* changing. This means that a new hegemonic paradigm is being constructed in a narrative and factual way. The vindication against IDC's is not simply a marginal sphere, which would entail a certain risk of reducing it to a certain domain allowed by the prevailing discursive articulations, but it has succeeded in piercing certain boundaries, despite the difficulties and reluctances of a social transformation. In other words: "To make a claim on one's own behalf assumes that one speaks the language in which the claim can be made, and speaks it in such a way that the claim can be heard" (Butler, Laclau, and Žižek, *op. cit.*: 178).

5. FEMININE JOUISSANCE AND WHAT EXCEEDS DISCOURSE: LOVE AND DESIRE

The last chapter of this dissertation is devoted to what exceeds the current discourse on vulnerability elaborated in the terms of a nominalist philosophy. In this sense, referring to the limits of discourse through recourse to the feminine position is a way to make visible the impossibility of a totality within social reality, pointing to this Real that periodically returns to remind that a systemic context is impossible. Nonetheless, the impossibility of a whole is a remark that the signifier of vulnerability also highlights, though it does so through the logic of foreclosure, this is to say, through the exclusionary mechanism of the exception in front of a defined group.

In relation to this question, I finished the previous chapter referring to the transformation of social reality that the struggle for the signifier and its articulations enables. The concrete situation to which I was referring was the IDCs and migratory policies inasmuch as pushing for a more radical and inclusive version of democracy undoes the given social frame to a certain extent. In order to refer to the limit that feminine *jouissance* is for discourse, it is important to recall that discourse does not produce a whole, but it produces a reality that is always partial since a social context forecloses certain possibilities by virtue of others. Hence, what will be at stake in this last chapter is the power of the Real, this is to say, the negativity that exceeds the discursive operation. This very negativity is the rest produced by the operation of inclusion and exclusion. Concerning this issue, what Lacan named feminine *jouissance* is what refers to the *real* limit of discourse, this is to say, the rest that no definition might grasp. It *symptomatically* questions prevailing socio-political relations, signalling an impossibility that obstructs the realization of a totality that any social configuration aims at producing. In other words, beyond the phallic *jouissance* there is a radical singularity which does not operate in complementary terms, but as a *supplement* that defies socio-symbolic categories, traversing them in a traumatic way.

The influence and impact of feminine *jouissance* will be analysed from the dimension of the act, which refers to the irruption of a real that allows a radical novelty, which is not homologous to the repetition of the symbolic signifier, creating a new frame that will be discursively articulated. Such a radical novelty will be approached

from a double axis: the figure of Antigone, and the tensional role of love concerning *jouissance* and desire. This consideration will lead me to a final analysis of the Lacanian redefinition of being not as an ontological reality, but as the domain of a subtraction.

5.1. Jacques Lacan’s “Between Two Deaths”: The *Real* Dimension of the Act.

Taking into account the Lacanian reading of Antigone, a mythical character who has traversed contemporary philosophy since the renewal on its interpretation thanks to Hegel and Goethe, might seem a paradoxical gesture. Indeed, the three evoked and analysed scenarios of this dissertation refer to social situations made of a plural relationality. At the same time, vulnerability – if considered either as an ontological condition or as symptom –, refers to a situation where the subject is attached to the Other. In other words, it would seem that my focus on a presumably solitary character like Antigone depoliticizes my previous theoretical analysis. However, my aim is to prove that the figure of Antigone shows that singularity is not opposed to a notion of a social bond, but it rather outlines its excessive dimension, its *supplement*.

5.1.1. A Different Dimension for Ethics: The Real

Despite noticing the non-contradiction between these two questions, it is also true that Lacan’s reading of Sophocles’ tragedy is not focused on what has been traditionally accepted as a collective notion of the political. What is more: his interpretation of *Antigone* is not found in the seminar where he explicitly analyses the socio-political dimension of psychoanalysis, this is to say, *L’envers de la psychanalyse* (1991), but it is the crucial part of the ending concerning *L’éthique de la psychanalyse* (1986). In this sense, a primary hypothesis could link to a well-known division within philosophy concerning the difference between ethics and politics, a difference that emerged during Modernity. Nevertheless, I would not say that Lacan stands for such a division in a philosophical sense²²², but he rather attempts to elaborate a different

²²² Indeed, through recourse to a polemic rhetoric, Lacan defined his theoretical and clinical gesture as an *anti-philosophical* because it is not primarily concerned with a notion of being identified with thought, which is the background of the discourse of the master and the discourse of the university, the master-

structural axis, in which ethics involves a surplus concerning politics. Such a tensional relation, in fact, could be tracked from the beginning of his teaching, where he began to explore the imaginary dimension that belongs to what is said to name a discursive identity: “Car le moi est fait de la série des identifications qui ont représenté pour le sujet un repère essentiel, à chaque moment historique de sa vie, et d’une façon dépendante des circonstances” (Lacan, 1978: 228). Hence, what I endeavour to say is that Lacan places a figure like Antigone in an ethical register rather than in a political one because her gesture defies the dimension of the *semblant*, this is to say, the imaginary and symbolic architecture that produces and regulates subjective identifications and social relationships. Concerning this dimension, then, the ethical is not exclusively attached to the Law, and even less to the domain of the moral, which, from a psychoanalytic perspective, belongs to the super-ego, but to the domain that exceeds the signifying chain, this is to say, the Real.

What could be affirmed is a radical difference between the ethical turn that governs vulnerability as an ontological condition attached to the other as an Other, and the Lacanian reconfiguration of ethics at the level of the Real, this is to say, what exceeds and even interrupts the registers of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. In other words, while authors like Levinas and Butler attempt to elaborate a bond with the Other in terms of what exceeds any egotistic discursivity, conferring to alterity a primary role where the Other is who is in charge of the ethical value of life, Lacan adds something more. He places ethics as a sphere that interrogates the subject in relation to the bond that it has with the Other, which is not reduced to the domain of a moral or ethical law. It is, thus, a domain not assimilated to the intersubjectivity conferred to the sphere of recognition, but it rather moves to a more fundamental question, which signals the negativity of desire regarding *jouissance*. An ethics, then, not concerned by

signifiers of which aim at producing an *ordered* social reality. In this sense, since *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (1973), where Lacan gives an account of the subject of the unconscious as the subject of the signifier, the Symbolic produces onto the subjective realm a structural alienation in terms of a disjunction. As a result, being and thought do not imply each other because, while thought appeals to the illusionary prerogative of consciousness, being refers to what exceeds thought. In this sense, thought requires a metaphorical effort to produce an additional signification that constantly finds an impasse: the object that would stop such operation is incessantly displaced by metonymy. Therefore, the unconscious emerges in terms of an *impossible* election between two possibilities, which involves a coerced choice. Being, thus, is *not-all* translatable into the domain of thought. This is the crucial distinction between philosophy and psychoanalysis, being the former characterized by Lacan as an *hontologie* (producing an homophonic game between *honte* -“shame” in French- and ontology) that represses the dimension of the drives and the sexual reality inasmuch as it works according to two categories: being and nothingness.

identifications and normativity, but by the radical alterity of the subject of the unconscious, this is to say, the subject the being of which is always eccentric to discourse. An eccentricity that, in fact, cannot be separated from the lack-of-being expressed by desire in its pursuit of what Lacan firstly introduced as *das Ding*, and later translated as the *objet petit a*: “Le désir est un rapport d’être à manqué. Ce manqué est manque d’être à proprement parler. Ce n’est pas manqué de ceci ou de cela, mais manque d’être par quoi l’être existe” (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 306).

As Charles Freeland outlines in his *Antigone, in her Unbearable Splendor* (2013):

A new domain and strategy for ethics emerges here: neither the ideality of the summits nor of the hidden mysteries of the depths, rather, this is an ethics of surfaces, the surface of language, of images, of bodies and desire; the surfaces of a voice; surfaces that are acoustic, that are felt, touched, and embraced; surfaces that double and twist, that turn and tangle one upon another (Freeland, 2013: 5).

The domain of desire is not approached from a normative dimension, but in its radical singularity, which refers to the negativity proper to its object, which entails that what desire pursues is not, properly speaking, an epistemological entity, but a piece of the Real, this is to say, a piece of the hole that pierces the Symbolic. This is why in his sixth seminar, *Le désir et son interprétation* (2013), Lacan stated that desire has a subversive dimension due to the fact that, even in its fantasmatic articulation, it defies any given discourse: “L’expérience originale du désir apparaît contraire à la construction de la réalité. La recherche qui est la sienne a un caractère aveugle. En somme, le désir se présente comme tourment de l’homme” (Lacan, 2013: 405). Following this remark, Lacan approached the ethical dimension of psychoanalysis as a domain that goes beyond the phallic dimensions of goods, this is to say, the parcels of *plus-de-jour* that nourish the primordial fantasy²²³. This implies that the subject, inasmuch as it is a subject of desire, is never reduced to any given discourse, but there is a parcel, proper to the register of the Real, that cannot be captured by the relations of

²²³ As Slavoj Žižek outlines (Žižek, 1999), the ethical value of psychoanalysis resides in traversing the fundamental fantasy, which allows the encounter with the Real thanks to the disarticulation of the imaginary illusion of a coherent Other as the guarantor of the fantasmatic structure that sustains the pursuit for the object of desire. Hence, the ethics of psychoanalysis consists in a subtraction from the domain of phallic goods by virtue of the not-all characteristic of being. Unfortunately, I cannot expand this issue, which would lead me to a clinical analysis of the organization of identifications, and the internal logic of the fundamental fantasy in relation to the Real and the Imaginary. For a further approach on this issue, see Žižek, Slavoj (1999): « Passionate (Dis)Attachments, or, Judith Butler as a Reader of Freud » in *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London/New York, Verso, pages 247-312, and Zupancic, Alenka (2000): *Ethics of the Real: Kant and Lacan*. London, Verso.

sociality. Desire, thus, has a paradoxical nature: while it has a bond with the Law concerning its linguistic structure, its object is *not-all* concerned by the Symbolic, which implies that is not completely tamed by any given cultural imperative.

In relation to the presumed relationship between recognition and desire, in his tenth seminar, *L'angoisse* (2004), there is a further effort to show the semblances and crucial differences between the Hegelian structure of desire, which orchestrates Butler's notion of desire through recourse to the Foucauldian apparatus of norms, and what Lacanian psychoanalysis signals as a new specific twist. In this sense, desire emerges as a necessary path by which demand is structured, which forces to introduce any sort of need into the signifier. At this point, thus, desire is understood as an interpellation to an Other from which the symbolic structure that regulates language comes, and that, at the same time, forces the subject to introduce itself into the signifier through metaphorical and metonymical operations. However, in *L'angoisse* (2004), Lacan outlines an additional perspective relating his previous formulation of desire, which refers to the fact that desire also questions the Other. In other words, desire is not simply unidirectional, but it also situates the subject in an element of incertitude regarding its structure inasmuch as desire is always the desire of the Other.

What is at stake is “Che vuoi?”, this is to say, what does the Other want from me, and who and what I am for the Other²²⁴. In this sense, the crucial point in the Lacanian interruption of desire reduced to desire for recognition is the difference between the Other implied in the Hegelian dialectic and the Other reformulated by psychoanalysis. In the struggle for recognition, the Other introduced by the encounter between the two self-consciousness is a notion of alterity that belongs to consciousness, this is to say, a region of autonomy understood in terms of transparency for itself. This is why Lacan asserted that the Hegelian Other of desire is related to a consciousness that directs its gaze to the subject, which is later translated into the asymmetric position between the master and the slave, followed by the final reconciliation between these two figures. Instead, when Lacan refers to the fact that desire cannot be assimilated to a

²²⁴ Such a peculiar structure of desire reminds of the discourse of the hysteric, which suggests that desire, as far as its circuit of demand is concerned, always is placed, to a certain extent, in a more or less hystericized domain since the Other is the figure who can satisfy or frustrate the incessant demand for love that characterizes desire. It is not by chance that the discovery of the unconscious could happen thanks to the clinical practice that Freud had with his hysterical patients. They showed him the unconscious path of desire, and its symptomatic manifestations.

linear and uniform relation of cause and effect, he implies that the subject is attracted by the desire of the Other inasmuch as this Other is characterized by a lack²²⁵. Hence, the subject offers itself to the Other in an attempt to fulfil such a lack, which supposes an impossible operation because of the negativity proper to desire, deprived of a final object that would satiate it. As Lacan outlines:

L'Autre intéresse mon désir dans la mesure de ce qui lui manque et qu'il ne sait pas. C'est au niveau de ce qui lui manque et qu'il ne sait pas que je suis intéressé de la façon la plus prégnante, parce qu'il n'y a pas pour moi d'autre détour à trouver ce qui me manque comme objet de mon désir. C'est pourquoi il n'y a pas pour moi, non seulement d'accès à mon désir, mais même de sustentation possible de mon désir qui ait référence à un objet quel qu'il soit, si ce n'est en le couplant, en le nouant avec ceci, le S2, qui exprime la nécessaire dépendance du sujet par rapport à l'Autre comme tel (Lacan, 2004: 33).

This quotation offers fundamental clues to understand why the structure of desire is not reduced to a pure specular relation with alterity. On the one hand, desire is structured by means of a relationality where the main issue is not the encounter between two self-consciousness that need a recognition in order to be, but it signals that desire emerges as a consequence of a lack inherent to the Other. Such a lack is not understood as an absent attribute or possession that might be later acquired thanks to a process of recognition, but a lack that traverses the Other inasmuch as it is a subject of language, this is to say, it is not a complete being, but it rather incarnates the hole that belongs to being. A lack that, indeed, is not reduced to the Imaginary, but it signals another register, the one that imposes a non-correspondence between signifier and signified as

²²⁵ Unfortunately, I cannot develop a further relationship between the child and the mother's desire, the first subjective encounter with the Big Other, which would lead me to a clinical reflection regarding the ontogenesis of the subject. Nevertheless, concerning this primary bond, it is important to say that, in this relationship, the child wants to be the mother's phallus, this is to say, it offers itself as a fetish in order to satiate the maternal desire. Despite this, such attempt to make one with the maternal Other is interrupted by the prohibition of incest that the Symbolic law of castration imposes, and the later discovery of the mother's lack since, in an *imaginary level*, she does not possess the phallus, but she rather shows a lack, a hole that cannot be properly fulfilled. In relation to this lack and the efforts to cover it, Freud signals that the function of the fetish is to veil castration, this is to say, a strategy to cover it.

Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that the discovery of the lack in the maternal body does not equalize the psychoanalytic notion of lack with the concept of privation that comes from Aristotle's physics, which cannot be taken account apart from the possibility to transform it in a positive reality thanks to its actualization. On the contrary, what the child discovers in its relation with the maternal Other is the *real lack*, this is to say, that the object that would fulfil the hole is already lost. In this sense, it is a notion of lack that refers to the impact of language onto the body, with its psychic consequences in relation to the lack-of-being that the unconscious is, expressed through the dynamical nature of desire. Needless to say that the maternal Other does not exclusively imply the *imaginary* notion of a feminine body, but it refers to a symbolic function, which entails that the "mother" can be performed by a man or woman, regardless of his or her *anatomical* sex. For a further approach on this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (1994): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre IV: La relation d'objet 1956-1957*. Paris, Le Seuil, and Lacan, Jacques (2013): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI: Le désir et son interprétation 1958-1959*. Paris, La Martinière-Le Champ Freudien.

the principle of any possible signification: the Symbolic. On the other hand, desire cannot be trapped under a unique regulatory principle because the lack that the subject detects in the Other shows that the Other does not count on any guarantee of completeness, but it rather pursues *something else*. Such a reality is not confined to a norm, regardless of the social expressions by which desire manifests itself, but its referent is lost. In other words, in spite of the subjective offer to fulfil the Other's desire, such a dialectic is bound to fail inasmuch as the subject reveals itself as impotent to occupy, in a coherent and total manner, the role of object-cause of desire. *There is an extra element at stake here: the Real impossible to represent, which points at the fact that the object of desire resists any representation.*

Nonetheless, the structure of desire, inasmuch as it is expressed through demand, elaborates an illusionary relation of equivalence between the Other's desire and the subject's desire. In this sense, the motor of the subject's desire cannot be separated from the interrogation that points to what the Other wants, which, at its turn, implies the subject as a cause for the desire of the Other. It is this structure that explains why desire is articulated as a metaphor with a metonymical object. Desire, as the expression of a lack-of-being, has a metaphorical procedure inasmuch as it produces a signification with no available referent, which points to the fact that something resists the elaboration of a clear and transparent construction. In this sense, the object that is pursued, always lost from the start due to the effect of language, is inscribed into a metonymical chain that suffers an incessant displacement, with a constant misunderstanding between signifier and signified. Therefore, if recognition were the goal of desire, it would produce a final reconciliation between signifier and signified, establishing a reciprocity between desire and its object, which would finally imply a paradoxical conclusion: desire would be abolished, with the consequence of a pure positivity where no dynamism would happen, this is to say, the subject would be annihilated.

Following this argument, the failure of the desire for recognition is not, properly speaking, linked to the structure of the norm, but to the impossibility of a reconciliation resulting from the introduction of a lack due to the effect of the Symbolic. This at its turn, produces a surplus: the Real, an inaccessible realm for the subject by means of representation. Taking into account the structure of the four discourses logically elaborated in *L'envers de la psychanalyse* (1991), recognition veils a perverse reverse: the subject is not recognised by the Other as a subject, but as an object from which the

Other, instituted as the master in the Hegelian schema, obtains a *jouissance* by means of reducing the figure of the slave to a prosthetic bodily entity. It involves, thus, a mediation inscribed into an aggressive bond where the illusion of symmetry hides what lies beneath recognition: alterity is tamed to the slightest level, which might even involve the destruction of the subject. What these impasses show, then, is the impossibility to articulate a relationship between the subject and the Other, which means that, as Lacan claims, there are not two available signifiers to situate the two elements involved in the structure of desire. There is just a single one, which regulates discourse and demand: the phallus, which is the signifier without signified that confirms a lack impossible to fulfil. A lack that, inasmuch as signifier and signified are not able to coincide, is a lack of nothing, which points to the third dimension, a crucial one in the domain of ethics for psychoanalysis: the Real, the failure of sense.

5.1.2. Antigone and the Ethical Act: The Real beyond the Law

Following these arguments, Antigone is analysed by Lacan in ethical terms because her gesture, which constitutes an interruption of the rules of the city is, properly speaking, a subtraction from discourse as a social bond, and from identifications in their imaginary and symbolic level, which cover the Real. In this sense, thus, Lacan shows a certain mistrust regarding the dimension of the political because, contrary to ethics, which pushes the subject towards the Real and its radical singularity, the domain of the political is the domain of the discourse of the master. Why? Because there is no political regime which does not have as a purpose the institution of a socio-symbolic order, the mechanism of which cannot work without identifications, which produce an enjoying adhesion concerning subjects, creating the illusionary fiction that one *is* what is discursively sanctioned. This is why Lacan would not have considered Antigone as a revolutionary character, but rather as a subversive figure, which signals the internal collapse of the Symbolic, which is not the same as founding a new socio-political order. If it were the case, there would be the crowing of a new master, gaining the statute of the Big Other. As Freeland remarks:

In other words, even if “God is dead”, certainly the demand for God, the demand for new masters, like the demand for happiness, have not yet died, and no doubt, never will. Hence, the resistance that unfolds in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* is a resistance against all the new masters that might arise so as to fill-in the emptiness traced and left by their now dead predecessors (Freeland, *op. cit.*: 10).

Hence, ethics works as a *supplementary* region, a register that exceeds any imperative proclaimed by a master, which explains why the Lacanian gesture is atheist, clearly challenging an ethical turn such as the Levinasian one, where the face of the Other becomes internalised as a new super-egotistic moral law. The “master” of ethics, so to speak, is desire, the law of which is, paradoxically, *singular-universal* inasmuch as desire is constitutively attached to the Law understood as the symbolic prohibition of incest and the defile of the signifier, which bans any immediate or direct relation with a *mythical jouissance*, always lost from the start.

It is the Real, as the topological domain of the impossible to represent, which gives an account of the displacement from a discourse of the master that would inscribe ethics as a regulatory principle in relation to have a “good life” attached to the *ego ideals* to a *not-all* apprehensible object of desire. It is, therefore, a collapse within ontology and its being by means of a hole that *no relation* can fulfil inasmuch as it is not a *symbolic deficiency*, but a *real hole*. Such a twist is well expressed by Joan Copjec in her *Imagine There’s No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation* (2002): “What does Lacan substitute for the vast and shareable being of the philosophers? Object *a*, or *jouissance* as that bit of nonbeing at the subject’s core” (Copjec, 2002: 6).

Ethics refers, then, to the tensional relation between desire and its object-cause, which is a metaphor for the non-synthesizable relation between desire and *jouissance*, which means that the Symbolic and the Real are not two identical topological registers, but the latter is a *supplement for the former*. In this sense, the ethical domain is not, in a traditional sense of the notion, a political arena inasmuch as the impossible dimension for politics is the regulation of *jouissance*. Such a parcel always partially exceeds any discursive order, a remark that the four discourses symbolize in their logical structures²²⁶: “With the inscription into the symbolic order comes order, comes

²²⁶ To a certain extent, this would be a point of convergence between Foucault and Lacan’s analysis of discourse. Despite the former reduces discourse to the formulations of the discourse of the master and the discourse of the university, they both coincide at signalling that the taboos and prohibitions that each discursive regime elaborates is an invitation towards *transgression* that might work as a further solidification of a discursive-social bond rather than its failure. However, due to its nominalist and historicist methodology, Foucault finally elaborates a subject that remains trapped in the nets of power, without any possibility of an *act* that disrupts its mechanism. Unfortunately, Foucault’s life ended when he began to re-consider the *askesis* of the Classical tradition, which could have led him to a re-elaboration of his previous work.

regulations, and the reign of moral law. The real is whatever disrupts that order and that law; whatever breaks the operation of the symbolic order” (Freeland, *op. cit.*: 23).

Therefore, ethics is the occasion for a new social reality, based on a *not-all* domain beyond a set and its exceptions, referring to a series of individuals that are not possible to grasp by means of a group. It is the structure of radical singularity²²⁷, which is outlined by Guy Le Gaufey in his *Le pastout de Lacan. Consistance logique, conséquences cliniques* (2006): “Ici commande le *pas-tous* dans le sens qu’il n’y a pas aucune *x* pour satisfaire la fonction phallique et que, néanmoins, ceux qui la satisfont ne créent pas *l’ensemble* des éléments satisfaisants” (Le Gaufey, 2006: 104).

In *L’éthique de la psychanalyse* (1986), Antigone is a metaphorical character that represents the antinomy between the Law, understood in Symbolic terms, and desire, with its object not-fully graspable by the Law of the signifier. In this sense, when Lacan asserts in the context of this seminar that “le rapport dialectique du désir et de la Loi fait notre désir ne flamber que dans un rapport à la Loi, par où il devient désir de mort” (Lacan, 1986 : 101), he is introducing the paradoxical dimension that Antigone incarnates regarding the connections between the Symbolic and the Real. The link between desire and death is articulated through recourse to an element that, for Lacan, is crucial: the death drive. As a result, from a re-reading of the Freudian *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, 1920), Lacan asserts that any object-cause of desire, inasmuch as has as a “referent” the primordial object, banned by the paternal metaphor and the inscription of the phallic signifier of the Name-of-the-Father, is pursued by the subject according to a repetitive mechanism that is animated by what exceeds life, and the homeostasis that the pleasure principle aims at regulating. What finally animates the

Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that Foucault elaborates a discursive re-appropriation of Classical ethics, which is narrowly attached to the discourse of the master, pursuing a self-sufficiency in its attachment with the Other. For a further approach on this question, see Allouch, Jean (2015): « L’analyse sera foucauldienne ou ne sera plus » in Laufer, Laurie, and Squverer, Amos (2015, ed.): *Foucault et la psychanalyse*. Paris, Herman Éditeurs.

²²⁷ Therefore, from a logical set based on its extension and its structural limit, Lacan adds a supplementary intensity by means of an incessant multiplication of finitude, creating a logical infinitude that cannot be contained by any set. Joan Copjec, in her *Imagine There’s No Woman* (2002), refers to the analogous procedure between the Lacanian not-all, and the paradox formulated by Bertrand Russell regarding the impossibility of a set that might include *all* the remaining logical sets, which had been also expressed by Lacan in his assertion of the inexistence of a meta-language. In other words, there is no Other of the Other.

subject in this pursuit of *Das Ding* is the death drive, the force that goes far beyond life, aiming at reuniting with what the Symbolic prohibited²²⁸.

Following Lacan, what compels Antigone is related to the Real as the pursuit of the impossible to represent, what exceeds the production of sense. In other words, *Das Ding* involves a primary articulation of the *objet petit a* as a subtraction from the signifying chain, this is to say, the loss of a referent that would stop metonymy. Le Gaufey also outlines this partial nature of the object-cause of desire, subtracted from the Symbolic, which refutes any attempt to reduce the signifying chain to a compact whole: “*Das Ding*, étant donné sa prétention d’échapper à la représentation, tout incarnant ce qui constitue la partie inarticulable du jugement, ouvrait un chemin pour arriver à soutenir l’existence d’un objet qui aurait rompu les attaches avec l’unité” (Le Gaufey, *op. cit.*: 62).

There is, then, a displacement from the Imaginary and from the dyadic dimension of recognition, which echoes what goes far beyond the signifier²²⁹, attracting the subject through the sparkles it projects. In this sense, to enjoy *Das Ding*, the forbidden object by the Law, what is required is a transgression, which implies a paradoxical gesture²³⁰: in order to transcend the Law, the subject is coerced to traverse

²²⁸ Certainly, at this period of his teaching, the Symbolic acquires the notion of a limit that pierces the body, inflicting on it a mortification by means of subtracting any immediate and absolute *jouissance*, this is to say, depriving the body of the speaking being of any kind of instinct.

²²⁹ It is also in this seminar that Lacan offers an accurate and brilliant analysis in relation to the excess that Sade is concerning Kantian ethics, especially regarding the stubbornness of the universal dimension of the Law of desire, which is never satisfied by any empirical object, pursuing what is unconditional. This is why Lacan develops, in « Kant avec Sade » (Lacan, 1966), the argument that ethics is based on the perseverance of desire, which is never properly satisfied by the diverse fetishes that might encounter in its path. Desire, then, obeys to a law that knows no empirical restriction, which connects to the headless subject of the drive in its reiterative mechanism to enjoy the *plus-de-jouir*. For a further approach on this issue, see Lacan, Jacques (1966): « Kant avec Sade » in *Écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 765-792, and Lacan, Jacques (1986): « La jouissance de la transgression » and « La pulsion de mort » dans *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII : L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 225-256.

²³⁰ Indeed, the paradox of perversion – later translated by Lacan into *père-version*, this is to say, the attempt to simulate the unrestricted mythical *jouissance* of the Freudian father of the horde – is to succumb to the illusionary promise of an infinite *jouissance* made by an Other that would incarnate a complete obscenity. The paradoxical gesture comes when the pervert sees that to sustain such a fantasy involves a complete subjection to the Law through the disavowal of castration. The pervert, then, confirms the validity of the Law rather than its failure. For a further approach on the fantasmatic structure of perversion, which can be inferred from the analysis of the Sadean work in the seventh seminar, see Lacan, Jacques (2004): « La cause du désir » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre X: L'angoisse 1962-1963*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 119-134, and Laurent, Éric (2007): « Feminine Positions of Being » in Voruz, Véronique, and Wolf, Bodgan (2007, ed.): *The Later Lacan. An Introduction*. Albany, State University of New York Press, pages 222-242. In this text, Laurent explains the metaphor of perversion, which consists in inverting the roles of prohibition and *jouissance* of the neurotic structure.

it, and this finally confirms its validity²³¹. This is the sense, then, of a first reading of Antigone: she is “between” the two deaths: the *symbolic* and the *real*. She is, hence, condemned by the Symbolic, and by a *real act* too, which refers to an interesting issue: the incest committed by her mother and sister, Jocasta, who broke the fundamental symbolic law having sex and children with her son and husband, Oedipus. As Guillem Martí signals in « La *Antígona* de Lacan » (2015):

El deseo es el enigma de la madre deseante, de la madre castrada, es el no saber qué desea la madre. De ahí la necesidad – ésta es la operación del Edipo – de que se introduzca el Nombre-del-Padre como punto de detención del deslizamiento del deseo bajo los significantes maternos. Pero la hija de Edipo, Antígona, complejiza este esquema con la siguiente certeza: el deseo no tiene bastante, y esta terquedad amenaza con arruinar la soberanía del Padre. Porque el deseo de Antígona no proviene de una madre deseante, sino de una madre que gozó. El deseo que hereda Antígona, entonces, ya no es un interrogante, y por eso no puede ser embaucado; es un deseo que paradójicamente se origina a partir de una respuesta, tan definitiva e inequívoca como imposible de articular: el goce. Pero el goce, lo sabemos, es el crimen. El deseo, por tanto, está sentenciado de antemano; no puede ser de otro modo en la estirpe de la madre incestuosa (Martí, 2015: 117).

In this quotation, Guillem Martí refers to a dimension that is clearly absent in Butler’s reading of the tragedy, as I will later analyse: Antigone incarnates an element that is impossible to be simply absorbed by the Law inasmuch as she illustrates an excessive element regarding language and its representative mechanism. She has been born from a primary transgression, which, indeed, illustrates the contingent uses of the Symbolic. It is a transgression that, nonetheless, has condemned her from the start, placing her in a realm where no symbolic instance can satisfy her impossible demand: a non-mediated fusion with the *real* object of *jouissance*, which is what lies beneath her desire and her ferocity. Antigone claims to be in possession of what would satiate the displacement between signifier and signified, which appears with clarity in her stubborn attachment to Polynices’ exequies in her determination to provide him with a dignified funeral, regardless of the cruel disposition made by Creon: to be buried alive if she disobeys his orders. Her gesture, thus, is not a simple subversion of the political regime of Thebes, but what she produces is the *occasion* for the irruption of a Real that no performative re-articulation could reabsorb: it is a radical negativity that detaches her

²³¹ Nonetheless, such a perspective would be overturned by Lacan in his later treatment of the Real as the register of the impossible that adds a supplement to the Symbolic by means of an excess, which would be one of the final definitions of *jouissance*. In conclusion, the dialectical relationship that he is elaborating in the seventh seminar is only concerned by the phallic logic, anchored in the Symbolic by means of being *all* concerned by the phallic function, while the Real appears according to a foreclosure: a set and its exception. Therefore, Antigone is introduced as the *exception* that confirms the validity of the Law. This perspective will be radically questioned in *Encore* (1975b).

from the socio-symbolic order, entering into the domain of the death drive. Indeed, it is thanks to the excessive element of *jouissance*, linked to the dimension of the drives that goes far beyond any given discursive dynamic, that Antigone disrupts the order, and she occasions an act in her perseverance towards her object-cause of desire. The consequence is *necessary*: the detachment from life and from the Symbolic, and the entrance into the realm of death, a pure *real* detached from language, where no new order can emerge.

5.1.2.1. Ethics and the Act: From the *Passage à l'acte* to the (Imperfect) Act

Antigone, thus, in her strict perseverance that claims to obey the law of her desire, finally penetrates into a domain that, to a certain extent, reminds of an epic of the death drive²³², refusing to be *limited* by anything else than the impossible to fulfil: the

²³² It is quite legitimate to assert that Lacan, in his reading of *Antigone*, is elaborating a new sense for the Heideggerian concept of being-towards-death. Such a notion had been introduced by the German philosopher in order to develop the idea according to which death constitutes a deadlock that, through a paradoxical gesture, becomes the (im)possibility that guarantees any other existential possibility. Heidegger elaborates this philosophical argument referring to what he characterizes as the constitutive existential traits of the *Dasein*, amongst which anxiety has a peculiar and even privileged status. Indeed, anxiety is what elevates the human being to a more “authentic” existential sphere, detaching the human being from the flux of every-day life. Anxiety, therefore, constitutes the existential phenomenon that allows the subject to glimpse the rest of negativity that transcends language, which might allow the assumption of finitude as the ontological structure of the human being, which, at its turn, would be the anchoring point to assume death as the most authentic and singular (im)possibility of the subject. For a further approach on this Heideggerian notion, see Heidegger, Martin (1927): «Division Two: Dasein and Temporality. I. Dasein’s Possibility of Being a Whole, and Being-Towards-Death» in *Being and Time*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers. Translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (1962), pages 279-298.

However, two thinkers – amongst others – offered different, though equally stimulating, critical arguments regarding the Heideggerian notion of being-towards-death. The first one was Jean-Paul Sartre, who, according to his existentialist ontology, refuted the idea of death as an ontological condition inasmuch as death was an event deprived of comprehension, a point of absurdity, and the second is Jean-Luc Nancy. As far as Nancy is concerned, he brings into question the Heideggerian *dictum* according to the testimony provided by the Shoah, the atrocity of which consisted in even depriving the exterminated prisoners of their own deaths inasmuch as they were condemned to the status of a zombie, creatures who were dispossessed of their human status. For a further approach on their critical counter-arguments, see Sartre, Jean-Paul (1943): *L’être et le néant. Essai d’ontologie phénoménologique*. Paris, Gallimard, and Nancy, Jean-Luc (2003): « La muerte robada » in *La representación prohibida*. Buenos Aires, Amorrortu. Translation by Isabel Vericat, pages 55-61.

In relation to Lacan, in his seventh seminar, he re-articulates such an ontological characterization through recourse to Greek tragedy, specifically highlighting the crucial role that for the Ancient Greece had *athé*, this is to say, what escapes any presumed voluntarist account of the subject. This dimension points to the Law that knows no restriction, which coerces the subject to execute a radical choice, which involves the loss of any fantasied totality. Nonetheless, his re-articulation of the Real and the notion of *lalangue* would imply a radically different perspective since *Encore* (1975b), where *jouissance* is constantly re-articulated

object-cause of desire. The consequence that can be derived from a Lacanian perspective is univocal: to claim to be able to give a full positive content to the object of desire, the pierce of the Real that compels the subject to pursue the incessant dynamism of the *lack-of-being*, is suicide, which was defined by Lacan, in his *Les quatre concepts de la psychanalyse* (1973), as a *preliminary* model for the *notion* of the *act*.

However, in *L'acte psychanalytique 1967-1968* (unpublished), Lacan would re-articulate the notion of the act in terms of being able to respond in front of the Real, what a figure like Antigone cannot do because she incarnates one of the possible reactions in front of the hole that the Real is: a *passage à l'acte*²³³ inasmuch as she has stopped to be an Other in terms of *object-cause of desire* for his deceased brother, Polynices. It is this unbearable condition that pushes her towards a *suicidal act*, depriving her action of the possibility to *elaborate a new political regime not-all concerned by what can be written*. According to the definition of freedom that Alenka Zupancic attributes to the ethics of desire, Antigone cannot respond in front of it, this is to say, she is impotent regarding the absence of a final fundament, which is the Real in topological terms:

The subject of freedom is indeed the effect of the Other, but not in the sense of being an effect of some cause that exists in the Other. Instead, the subject is the effect of the fact that there is a cause which will never be discovered in the Other; she is the effect of the absence of this cause, the effect of the lack in the Other (Zupancic, 2000: 41).

due to the enjoying dimension of speech, and its impact onto the body. It is this seminar that undoes the notion of the Symbolic as signifying chain by virtue of the series of signifiers, which become attached to the body as a *substance jouissante*. This operation refers to the *real* unconscious as the individual who speaks and enjoys *with* its body. For a further approach to this question, see Žižek, Slavoj (2006): *Lacan: The Silent Partners*. London/New York, Verso, and Soler, Colette (2009): *Lacan, l'inconscient réinventé*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, and (2011): *Les affectes lacaniens*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

²³³ In *L'angoisse* (2004), Lacan introduced the notion of *passage à l'acte* as a determination of a subject in front of the Real referred to its situation regarding the Other that caused its desire when this Other does not sustain any longer its desire. It involves, thus, that psychoanalysis considers anxiety as the primordial affect in the encounter with the traumatic dimension that suspends sense and the production of signification inasmuch as it involves the unveiling of the lack *in* the Other which, as a matter of fact, has allowed the emergence of the subject, introducing a *radical* contingency into necessity.

Nevertheless, subjective responses in episodes of anxiety are not at all univocal or homogeneous, but they are *radically singular*. In other words, there cannot be any law regarding the emergence of the Real because the Real is beyond the ability of the Symbolic to produce significations, this is to say, it is its *structural* and *internal* limit. For a further approach on this issue, which is indispensable in the clinical terrain of psychoanalysis, see Lacan, Jacques (2004): « Passage à l'acte et *acting out* » and « L'angoisse, signal du réel » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre X: L'angoisse 1962-1963*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 135-154, and 185-198. Anxiety, thus, is a sign of the Real, but it is not a signifier, which belongs to the Symbolic.

The difference between an act and a passage to the act (*passage à l'acte*) does not mean that the ethical dimension of psychoanalysis is a suicidal gesture that pushes the subject towards its *real* annihilation. Hence, the Real is the dimension of ethics because it is the element that subtracts from the dimension of goods²³⁴, which coerces the subject in relation to be able to sustain its *object-cause of desire*. The challenge, then, is to persevere on one's desire without succumbing to the mortifying temptation of the death drive, which might finally condemn the subject to an *actual death* that cannot be symbolically translated. In other words, it is the unsolvable tension between what is inscribed under the domain of the signifier, and the enjoying excess produced from such a symbolic operation.

Following this remark, Slavoj Žižek outlines that Antigone is a good example of how the ethics of psychoanalysis transforms the traditional scenario of politics. Such a twist entails the introduction of the radical negativity that belongs to the Real, pushing the political to the *im-possible*²³⁵. This gesture is an attempt to join desire and *jouissance*²³⁶, which becomes the occasion for an intervention into the socio-symbolic sphere not restricted to the subversion of an existing order, allowing its disruption.

²³⁴ Consequently, at this point, both Lacan and Kant coincide. Ethics is not a matter of the fundamental fantasy that sustains desire in its *imaginary* attachment to the Real through a metaphorical operation of the signifier, but it refers to the *un-conditional* dimension of desire, which knows no final satisfaction inasmuch as the *object-cause of desire* belongs to the region of the Real. Therefore, Kant was (partially) right regarding the categorical imperative, the law of which is, paradoxically, the law which is not restricted by any empirical phenomena, though its failure was to situate the dimension of ethics in the illusionary site of consciousness, this is to say, the I (*moi*), a confusion that traverses a great deal of the philosophical discourse. For a further issue on this question, see Zupancic, Alenka (2000): *Ethics of the Real. Lacan, Kant*. London/New York, Verso.

²³⁵ Which by no means should be confused – at least as far as Slavoj Žižek's work is concerned – with the notion of the *unpolitical* that has been popularised by philosophers like Roberto Esposito, and Massimo Cacciari, amongst others. For a further approach on this latter notion, see Esposito, Roberto (1988): *Categorie dell'impolitico*. Rome, Il Mulino; (1998): *Communitas. Origine e destino della comunità*. Milan, Einaudi; Cacciari, Massimo (1990): *Dell'Inizio*. Milan, Adelphi; (1997): *L'Arcipelago*. Milan, Adelphi; (2009): *The Unpolitical. On The Radical Critique of Political Reason*. Fordham, Fordham University Press. Translation by Massimo Verdicchio.

²³⁶ It is important to be cautious on this matter because it does not entail a coincidence between the Deleuzian politicization of affects, and the Lacanian approach on an ethics of desire. The main reason resides in the Deleuzian misreading of the notion of negativity, which Deleuze equals to an Aristotelean definition of lack of *something*. Indeed, I would suggest that the Deleuzian consideration of affects into the register of the political is *suspiciously* similar to the commandment towards *jouissance* that characterizes the capitalist super-ego, which is also an echo of a perverse *jouissance* in his commitment to satisfy an obscene Other that knows no restriction. For a further approach on this issue, see Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Felix (1972): *L'Anti-Oedipe. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, and (1980): « 28 novembre 1947 – Comment se faire un corps sans organes ? » in *Mille Plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, pages 185-204. In this chapter of *Mille Plateaux*, it is highly remarkable the fantasmatic cover that presides Deleuze and Guattari's approach concerning the experience of *jouissance* in the domain of psychosis – above all in schizophrenia - through

On this matter, however, it is important to remark that Zizek refers to the ethical as the surplus to the domain of politics that would allow the irruption of a revolution, which is radically alien to the Lacanian perspective, focused on subversion instead. Indeed, revolution is conceived with mistrust by psychoanalysis because it entails the inscription of a new master. In this sense, I would claim that Zizek invests the figure of Antigone with a fantasy that, properly speaking, seems to reproduce the clinical structure of perversion. This is what I will discuss in the last part of this subsection in order to clearly show the difference between the *passage à l'acte* and the act.

Since *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), Zizek has been quite interested in the figure of Antigone. In this early work he introduced Antigone as a metaphorical representation of desire's perseverance, which allies with the fact that the approach on the Real permits the outcrop of a radical negativity that no fantasy – in the Lacanian sense of the notion – can properly absorb, which allows a de-subjection from the Big Other. In other words, the moment of the encounter with the Real – which is expressed through the Aristotelean concept of *tyché* – is a *symbolic* suicide of the subject, which pushes itself to the incessant and reiterative mechanism of the death drive, this is to say, the dynamic of the drive that is not satiated by any empirical good. It is a gesture anchored in an excessive *jouissance*, defying any socio-symbolic order and its discursive devices. As Zizek declares in *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan In Hollywood and Out* (1992):

The act differs from an active intervention (action) in that it radically transforms its bearer (agent)²³⁷: the act is not simply something I “accomplish” – after an act, I’m literally “not the same as before” In this sense, we could say that the subject

an analysis that combines both Antonin Artaud's and Spinoza's works. There is no symptomatic dimension for the subjective malaise, but, to put it simply, a demand towards an infinite enjoyment. Such is the pervert gesture, for which even malaise must be susceptible of being enjoyed without restrictions through its denial of the symbolic castration.

²³⁷ From a clinical perspective, the subjective transformation that involves the act is the possibility that the encounter with the Real offers regarding the identification with the subject's symptom, this is to say, the chiasm that establishes a crucial difference between each subject. An identification with the Real, thus, is not simply the assumption of a new imaginary and symbolic reality, but the encounter with the void that deprives any socio-symbolic configuration of a background. Assuming one's symptom is the occasion to become identified with one's *jouissance* in front of the Real-impossible to write: sexual-relationship. In this sense, it is not an adaptation to reality, but a subjective response that does not offer any final guarantee. Such is the experience of freedom: assuming one's finitude. This is also the transition from the symptom to the *sinthome*, which designates the structural role that the symptom might acquire as the fourth register that joins together the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. For a further approach to these questions, see Lacan, Jacques (2005): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XXIII: Le sinthome*. Paris, Le Seuil, and Soler, Colette (2009): *Lacan, l'inconscient réinventé*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

“undergoes” the act (“passes through” it) rather than “accomplishes” it: in it, the subject is annihilated and subsequently reborn (or not), i.e., the act (Zizek, 1992: 54-55).

However, when he considers that the subject might not be reborn from the act, it seems that he misreads and even confuses two notions: the act and the passage to the act, which, following Lacan’s clinical and discursive orientation, are two different reactions in front of the encounter with the lack of the Other. While the former is understood by Lacan as a commitment with the subject’s object of desire, the latter is a reaction in front of the unbearable vision of the lack in the Other, and a self-destructive reaction regarding the Other’s desire relating the subject. In order to justify this distinction, it is important to outline a displacement in the Lacanian notion of the act: while his first paradigm was suicide, inscribed into the phallic logic inasmuch as suicide is an *exception* regarding those who remain attached to an Other²³⁸, the latter refers to an act that, in order to allow the emergence of novelty, must fail to a certain extent. Otherwise, a complete act that maintains itself faithful to the possibility of its completion without a rest cannot produce anything new: it is, purely and simply, the destruction of the subject. How so? Because the act cannot be foreseen inasmuch as it is not an action that presupposes a volitional agent, but it is an irruption of the Real that is *read as an act après coup, this is to say, it is an act if it allows a re-articulation of the socio-symbolic order, which, notwithstanding with that, will institute a new Big Other*:

Tout acte même qui ne porte pas ce petit indice du ratage, autrement dit, qui se donne à lui-même un bon point quant à l’intention, n’en tombe pas moins : exactement sous le même ressort, à savoir que peut être posée la question d’une autre vérité que celle de cette distinction (Lacan, 1967-1968 : 63)²³⁹.

An act, then, requires a certain failure in order to open a space for contingency, this is to say, a space of freedom that will allow the elaboration of new fantasies and socio-symbolic practices that will repress the Real-impossible to represent. It is, so to speak, a transition from one discourse to another, which symbolically transforms the subject. Following this argument, the challenge that poses the ethical dimension is to which extent the subject is capable of sustaining its desire without a submission to a

²³⁸ A veiled partner in his discussion of the *jouissance* inherent to transgression in terms of an eroticization of the Law, and the introduction of suicide as the paradigmatic act is Georges Bataille. Indeed, Bataille analysed the infinite *jouissance* that is said to be found in the fantasmatic scenario of masochism and sadism, which condensates the perverse structures derived from Sacher-Masoch and the Marquis of Sade. For Bataille’s treatment of *jouissance* and eroticism, see Bataille, Georges (1957): *L’Érotisme*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, and (1961): *Les larmes d’Éros*. Paris, Jean-Jacques Pauvert.

²³⁹ For the quotations of this seminar I am using the on-line version of the *Association Lacanienne Internationale*, the electronic edition of which has been made by Charles Melman for psychoanalysts’ clinical training. Last hit: 03/07/2016

master that promises the entrance into the domain of happiness. It is not, thus, an ethics focused on exception, which is the logic of revolution regarding a new Big Other, but an ethics that subverts a given socio-symbolic reality through a subjective detachment from discourse, appealing to the irreducible excess that no symbolic articulation can properly capture. Revolution is, then, substituted by a subversion based on an *indeterminate expansion of finitude*, mobilising the limit imposed by castration in non-exclusionary terms, which attaches the subject to a *barred Other*²⁴⁰.

Indeed, a revolutionary characterization of the act and Antigone is also what Charles Freeland wrongly elaborates concerning the difference between the “ordinary man” and the “hero”, which echoes the Arendtian notion of the exceptional narrative story that evokes Classical figures like Achilles:

Here, the distinction between the hero and the ordinary man: the ordinary man is the man who gives up on his desire, and who, in doing so, is returned to the service of goods, returned to the servile, limited economy of goods that serve for some purpose, some other good, serves in the economy of goods that demands that desire wait, that it comes back some other time, or that it always be there managed, pruned, purged, reduced to being like a wind-up toy (Freeland, 2013: 180).

If the ethical act either fully coincided with the figure of Antigone and her *real* suicide, or the subject after the act was to be conceived from an exceptional perspective, it would be a totalitarian hegemony of the phallic logic. The subject would be, thus, *literally* inscribed into the domain of discourse through an epical gesture, which mimes the discourse of the master. The new regulatory ego ideal would be an exceptional figure the existence of which would paradoxically depend on the slaves that would maintain the material socio-symbolic reality for such an achievement, which leaves behind the Lacanian notion of the act and its radical subversion. On the contrary, the act

²⁴⁰ This explains why Lacan paid so much attention to the mystical poetry, where there is no subjective positioning through exceptionality regarding what remains outside of it, but it refers to the *infinite multiplication of jouissance in the attachment with the Other of love*, the Other not based on consistency, but on *compacity*, this is to say, a diffuse and not-centred structure. It is not, thus, an Other that fantasmatically reproduces the mythical figure of the Freudian primordial Father of the horde, but it is the irreducible excess that transcends any Oedipal structure, the limit without any further limit than itself. Indeed, one of Lacan’s references within the *in-finite* series of the *not-all phallic jouissance* is the mystical poet San Juan de la Cruz. For a further development on the relation between mystics, feminine love and compacity, see Lacan, Jacques (1975b): « Dieu et la jouissance de La/ femme » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 83-98.

A similar notion of love can be found in Soeren Kierkegaard, where there is an *un-conditional* gesture towards what exceeds the production of sense through the trope of the paradox, and a bond with an alterity that is not absorbed by any of its possible empirical manifestations, an Other structurally deprived of consistency. As far as Kierkegaard’s notion of love is concerned, see Kierkegaard, Soeren (1847): *Works of Love*. Princeton, Princeton University Press (1949). Translation by Donald F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson.

is more than a pure enlargement of the symbolic field inasmuch as what results is a symptomatic reality, this is to say, what puts an insurmountable obstacle for a complete discursive synthesis. It is the Real, hence, which works as the safeguard of the freedom of the subject, and the failure of the ideological devices to subjugate the domain of singularity to their empire.

Regardless of this important distinction, Žizek, as Yannis Stravakakis sustains, seems to be fascinated by the unbearable splendour that Antigone irradiates in her firm decision of not giving up her desire²⁴¹. Through his admiring analysis, Žizek dismisses the fatal consequences of such a passage to the act: becoming reduced to an exception assimilated to a socio-symbolic regime, depriving the notion of the act of its radical subversion as the expression of the subject's freedom. Antigone, hence, is reduced to a fetish that veils what Žizek obviates: the subject cannot inhabit the Real because being absolutely anchored in this register bans any possible re-articulation. Therefore, the parcel of the Real unveiled in its traumatic irruption needs to be socio-symbolically represented, though its new re-articulation will not exhaust negativity, remaining a rest that operates as its symptom. Such a remark is literally absent when he claims that "Antigone effectively risks her entire social existence, defying the socio-symbolic power of the City embodied in the ruler (Creon), thereby 'falling into some kind of death' (i.e., sustaining a symbolic death, exclusion from the socio-symbolic space" (Žizek, 1999: 263). The problem, of course, is the fact that Antigone condemns herself to a *real death*, which seems to be justified by Žizek by virtue of what fantasmatically sustains his argument: revolution as the promise of what has been foreclosed in the previous socio-symbolic regime²⁴². It is a disavowal of the limit imposed by castration, as Stravakakis also outlines:

²⁴¹ This fetishist account on Lacan's ethics of desire by means of the figure of Antigone is also disputed by the Lacanian psychoanalyst Pierre Bruno, who recalls that any truly act, regardless of its nature, *must* enable the irruption of a new symbolic articulation of the subject after its encounter with the Real. It is not a simple revolutionary act, but the subversion of the discourse of the master in its aim to reduce the subject to the imaginary and symbolic identifications discursively sanctioned in the plural social contexts that condition the subject's existence. For a further account on this issue, see Bruno, Pierre (2010): *Lacan passeur de Marx. L'invention du symptôme*. Toulouse, Érès.

²⁴² However, in his essay *Violence. Six Sideways Reflections* (2008), Žizek does offer a distinction between the act and the passage to the act following Benjamin's notion of divine violence regarding the undoing process of a previous social order, and the further required libidinal energy in the forging of a new one that adds an excessive element regarding the former. Curiously enough, his vision of Antigone remains identical to his previous thesis. For a further develop on this question, see Žizek, Slavoj (2008): *Violence. Six Sideways Reflections*. New York, Picador.

Risk entails a minimum of strategic or pragmatic calculation, which is something alien to Antigone's pure desire. Suspension presupposes a before and an after, but for Antigone *there is no after*. In that sense, this was never a case of an act effecting a displacement of the status quo. Her act is a *one-off* and she couldn't care less about what will happen in the polis after her suicide (Stavrakakis, 2007:115).

Consequently, Žižek transforms Antigone, so to speak, into a Marxist who fights for a social revolution in the name of class struggle, a perspective that he insistently asserts as the crucial one in the arena of political movements and vindications²⁴³. Žižek, therefore, positivises Antigone's suicidal act miming the Hegelian notion of *Aufhebung*: the suicide of Antigone becomes *the necessary historical moment for the irruption of the revolution of the proletariat*. The act, then – at least in the subversive notion that Lacan confers to it – is erased by virtue of the abolition of social classes, which reproduces an idealistic moment that would require the creation of society as a whole. He dismisses, then, the crucial point that Župancic stresses in her reading of the ethical act:

They [Kant and Lacan] situate the ethical act in a dimension which is neither the dimension of the law (in the usual, sociojuridical sense of the word) nor the dimension of a simple transgression of the law (Antigone is not an activist, fighting for "human rights" that are being trampled down by a tyrannical state), but that of the Real (Župancic, 2000: 58).

Žižek disregards the *not-all* structure of ethics, transforming it into an eroticization of the (legitimate) struggle against a *statu quo*, without considering what is a *necessary* logical step: the institution of a new reality that would still be a proof of the impossibility of the Hegelian reconciliation.

²⁴³ In his crossed dialogue with Judith Butler and Ernesto Laclau, Žižek reduces any regulatory power on the domain of identifications into a pure determinism derived from a materialistic organization of social bonds. To a certain extent, this analysis reintroduces an organicist vision of society that is simply regulated by the dialectical relation between the infrastructure and the superstructure. In this sense, it would seem that the abolition of capitalism would involve a new and radical orchestration of society freed of relations of domination. From a Foucauldian and a Lacanian perspective, it is a pure idealistic gesture that ignores the plurality of power relations that traverse any discourse. For a further development on this question, see Žižek, Slavoj (2000): « Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, please! » in Butler, Judith; Laclau, Ernesto, and Žižek, Slavoj (2000): *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues in the Left*. London/New York, Verso, pages 90-135.

5.1.3. The Structural Limit of Vulnerability: Judith Butler's Erasure of the Symptomatic Singularity of the Subject, or the Failure of Nominalism.

Despite my efforts to introduce Antigone as a disruptive figure that goes far beyond the notions of discourse and subjectivity articulated by the notion of vulnerability, which I have endeavoured to clarify through my analysis on Lacan's ethics and Žižek's fetishist account on the tragic figure, it could be argued that the theoretical relationship has not been sufficiently elaborated. Therefore, in this penultimate section of my dissertation, I will enlarge the debate with Judith Butler's reading of Antigone in her *Antigone's Claim. Kinship Between Life and Death* (2000a). I shall assert that it was her first systematic approach towards vulnerability as an ontological condition. In this sense, the Lacanian notions of ethics and the act will be at the core of my dispute regarding Butler's analysis of the tragedy, and her criticism against psychoanalysis as a heterosexist logic that condemns non-coherent forms of kinship and gender to a spectre of abjection.

Concerning her interpretation of the Greek tragedy, the first theoretical gesture mobilised by Butler is to place Antigone as a figure of transgression in a Foucauldian sense. She incarnates a political character the very existence and gesture of which render accountable the limits of representation and *representability*, this is to say, *Antigone cannot be understood outside the logic of misunderstanding*:

Indeed, it is not just that, as a fiction, the mimetic or representative character of Antigone is already put into question but that, as a figure for politics, she points somewhere else, not to politics as a question of representation but to that political possibility that emerges when the limits to representation and representability are exposed (Butler, 2000a: 2).

Following Butler, then, Antigone is a metaphor of anomaly within a presumed ordered and well-distributed social reality. This very condition is linked to what Butler claims to be a primary vulnerability in front of a social, political, linguistic and familiar Other. Such an articulation of the constitutive attachment and dependency of the subject towards the Other had already been developed by the author in her *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection* (1997a), and in *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*. Such a dependency towards the Other is what Lacan, in his 6th seminar, *Le désir et son interprétation* (2013), introduced in relation to desire as the desire of the Other. In this sense, Antigone, for Butler, works as a literary recourse to reflect on the

possibility of being destituted as a desirable being, this is to say, a monstrosity expelled from the social space as she is born from a primary transgression that bans her access towards a cultural intelligibility. In other words, there would be no egotistic suitable identification for Antigone's queerness.

To sustain this theoretical departure, Butler suggests that Antigone is rejected from the domain of cultural intelligibility due to a heterosexist logic that involves a reification of social relationships. In other words, the fact that the newborn is introduced through the Oedipal triangle into the domain of the Symbolic involves, for Butler, a transcendental operation that deprives kinship of its historicity and, hence, of its contingency, transformed into a non-historical cultural framework: "Hence, for Lacan, kinship is rarefied as an enabling linguistic structure, a presupposition of symbolic intelligibility, and thus removed from the domain of the social (...)" (Butler, *op. cit.*: 3). My initial criticism against such a reductionism of Lacan's notion of the Symbolic points to the fact that, since his first seminar, Lacan *had never detached the Symbolic from the social scenario inasmuch as the symbolic register is not a domain of metaphysical reality, but that of the usages of the signifier*. In *Les écrits techniques de Freud* (1975a), Lacan had already clarified the social function of the signifier inasmuch as it is the domain of linguistic mediation, which refers to the meaning of *symbolon*, this is to say, what simultaneously joints and disjoints, creating a bond that has its concretion in the terrain of the social reality. Such a contextualisation of the Symbolic refers to language as the structure that enables social reality: "Qu'est-ce que c'est que la liaison symbolique? C'est, pour mettre les points sur les i, que *socialement nous nous définissons par l'intermédiaire de la loi*" (Lacan, 1975a: 222. My emphasis).

This notion of the Law does not refer to a previous content that coerces the social to coincide with its formal structure²⁴⁴, but it must be understood according to the Hegelian *dictum*: the name – language as a signifier chain – destroys any presumably primary referent – the Hegelian thing –. In a Lacanian sense, it refers to the operation of

²⁴⁴ Therefore, the Symbolic is not what Foucault named a juridical instance of power, which sanctions in advance which categories will be permissible, and which ones will be rejected, instituting different subjective realities for the social agents, traversed and regulated by diffused power relations. In this sense, the Symbolic is neither a disciplinary notion of power nor a repressive instance, but it is articulated by virtue of the Saussurean concept of the signifying chain and its endless process of signification, the historical incarnations of which depend on its usages. In her Foucauldian translation of psychoanalysis, Butler leaves aside such a crucial dimension, which also involves the oblivion that the subject of the unconscious is the subject of the signifier.

subtraction that the Symbolic executes onto the Real²⁴⁵. Such a piercing cannot be properly understood without the notion of negativity, which explains why the Symbolic cannot exist without its *signifying usages*: language institutes a world through its pragmatic dimension, which requires the existence of a subject the most typical attribute of which is *speech*: “Car c’est en tant que le symbole permet cette inversion, c’est-à-dire, annule la chose existante, qu’il ouvre le monde de la négativité, lequel constitue à la fois le discours du sujet humain et la réalité de son monde en tant qu’humain” (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 271). From this quotation, it is difficult to assert, as Butler does, that the Symbolic is a pre-social category, since the usages of the signifier cannot be properly analysed outside a contextualised and a historical space.

In addition to this, such a notion of the Symbolic makes coincide at the same structural level necessity and contingency. On the one hand, language is the *necessary* structure for the constitution of the subject because, for psychoanalysis, the subject is linked to the unconscious, which refers to the significations the impact of which on the body have symptomatic consequences²⁴⁶. On the other hand, the usages of the signifier are *contingent*, this is to say, they cannot be predicted before their execution. Such is the consequence derived from the concept of negativity: none of the usages of the Symbolic exhaust their subsequent materialization and impact regarding the ordering and institution of a social world.

However, in the whole essay, Butler never mentions this question, which is also present in the Lacanian notion of discourse. Indeed, discourse, in the psychoanalytic sense, further proves the link between the Symbolic and its articulations, which is at the core of the logic formulations of the four discourses and the social distribution they institute²⁴⁷. Instead, she characterizes the Greek heroine as a representation of abjection,

²⁴⁵ It is, thus, a double piercing operation: while the irruption of language entails a subtraction from the compacity of the Real, breaking any presumably fixity between the image and the void of the Real, in such a operation there is a traumatic rest of negativity that exceeds signification, repressed by language, though it comes back to the subject due to the logic of contingency. This is why it can be asserted that the Symbolic and the Real are not equivalent to the Kantian pair of phenomenon and noumena.

²⁴⁶ As a result, if Lacan and Freud defined the symptom as a metaphor that substitutes a primary repressed satisfaction, it entails that, during the period that a psychoanalysis takes place, the free association of ideas that the analysand’s unconscious elaborates must be understood as the series of master signifiers that have had their inscription onto the body, which transforms the symptom, at its turn, into a singular modality of *jouissance*. Another demonstration that proves that the relationship between the Symbolic and the Real is not simply epistemological, but it refers to the dialectical process of desire, and the dimension of *jouissance* obtained from the impact of the signifier over the body.

²⁴⁷ Indeed, Lacan even gives four historical examples that work as references for the four discourses: Socrates incarnates the discourse of the hysteric; Hegel is the referent for the discourse of the master;

this is to say, the sum of foreclosures that are required, according to Butler, for the materialization of the subject at a discursive level. Antigone is, thus, simultaneously expelled from the domain of politics as the rest that must be rejected by means of the criterion of a subjective coherent identity coercively produced by discourse but, at its turn, she will be included as its necessary outside, which would reinforce the exclusionary matrix for the appearance of the subject: “She is outside the terms of the polis, but she is, as it were, an outside without which the polis could not be” (Butler, *op. cit.*: 4).

Butler’s argument has already situated Antigone in an insurmountable position: she is the exception for a logical set. Consequently, Antigone, due to the *logical dimension proper to the phallic register, is necessary excluded*. Despite this, Butler’s strategy will consist in stressing her subversive existence, which, to some extent, is quite idealistic: why the notion of abjection, the constitutive outside, should have an intrinsic potentiality to subvert a given regime? To a certain extent, such a hypothesis reminds of a volitional characterization of a subject the actions of which *are supposed to be able to undo and to enlarge an existing socio-symbolic order*. This supposition, thus, obviates the unconscious as the fracture of the illusionary topological instance of consciousness, substituted, instead, by a non-coherent and diffuse notion of the self, which, at its turn, erases sex from the subject, transporting it to the regulatory ideals of subjection. This solution entails a pre-Freudian notion of subjectivity that reminds of the Jungian theorization of cultural archetypes and a collective unconscious made of common signifiers²⁴⁸. In this sense, Butler’s criticism against psychoanalysis understood as a discourse that reinforces and safeguards the heterosexual matrix is

Charlemagne works as a historical figure for the discourse of the university, and Freud is the pioneer for the discourse of the analyst. History, therefore, cannot be excluded from the articulation of the four discourses. For a further account on this question, see Lacan, Jacques (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: L’envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil.

²⁴⁸ This crucial remark is also analysed by Slavoj Žižek regarding the impasses and misunderstandings of nominalism, which assimilates the instance of the Real to the Kantian concept of noumena, disconsidering its theoretical affiliation with the Hegelian negativity and its structural indeterminacy regarding its partial incarnations. In other words, what nominalism does not properly understand is the fact that a notion like the Real does not point to a metaphysical re-articulation of substance, but to the impossible maintenance of such a notion inasmuch as the Real is the internal fracture of predication and signification. Therefore, the subject contains a plus due to what cannot be fully captured by signification, which, as Freud remarked regarding sex in his *Three Essays on a Sexual Theory* (1905), is neither nature nor culture, but its border, which is also present concerning the drives and their polymorphism. The organism, for instance, becomes a *substance jouissante* because of the effect of the Symbolic onto the biological, which adds a further element that, without leaving aside anatomy, decentres it from any pre-given determination. For a further development of this issue, see Žižek, Slavoj (1998, ed.): *Cogito and the Unconscious*. Durham/London, Durham University Press.

simply based on a partial reading of Lacan's work, although I think that her reading offers some other interesting elements regarding the three empirical scenarios that I have elucidated earlier in this dissertation.

In relation to this latter question, Antigone, as Butler remarks, is a trope for ambiguity that, from a different paradigm than hers, works as a subversive element regarding Antigone's desire and her determination towards it. Indeed, as Begonya Saez outlines in her « Antígona, sujeta por la fuerza del deseo » (2015), the suppression of ambiguity and misunderstanding as the two defining elements for desire can only be exercised through *violence*:

Sólo hay una forma posible de cancelar la ambigüedad y de fijar el sentido y la norma y es mediante la violencia. La muerte de Antígona da testimonio de ello. Pero la violencia cobra doblemente cuerpo si tenemos en cuenta, con Butler, la renuncia constitutiva del habla de Antígona, en particular en lo que podría ser considerado un extravagante ejercicio de ventriloquía, muerte del habla propia, en su canto fúnebre final (Saez in Llevadot and Revilla (ed.), 2015: 165-166).

In order to sustain what Saez outlines regarding Antigone's final moan in relation to her impossibility to enjoy phallic goods inasmuch as they are inscribed into the domain of the signifier²⁴⁹, this is to say, the Symbolic, Butler's approach is a failed one because it condemns Antigone to a pure re-articulation of a given structure of power relations. On the contrary, the psychoanalytic analysis of the play offers the chance to point to what resists a complete inscription into the circuit of the signifier, which becomes explicit in the refusal that Antigone demonstrates concerning Creon's prohibition. In her passionate and limitless attachment to Polynices resounds the same claim for a dignified funeral for the lives that are expelled by the hegemonic discourse of the master. Such a recall is especially remarkable if current migratory policies are taken into account. In this sense, Antigone is not disputing kinship, but her perseverance on desire is attached to a further fundamental dimension: the love for those who have been our partners, our friends, our siblings, regardless of the restrictions imposed by a discursive hegemony. Her stubbornness can also be found in the constant efforts to

²⁴⁹ As Mark Griffith stresses, the Greek name of "Antigone" is a neologism that derives from "anti" and "genos", this is to say, the impossibility to have descendants, which is the tragedy that persecutes the Labdacides, who, since Oedipus and Jocasta sexual relationship, are condemned for committing the primordial transgression: incest. For a further etymological and dramatic approach on this issue, see Griffith, Mark (2010): "Psychoanalysing *Antigone*" in Wilmer, S.E., and Zukauskaitė, Audrone (ed., 2010): *Interrogating Antigone in Postmodern Philosophy and Criticism*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pages 110-134, where Griffith, regardless of some imprecise references to Lacanian psychoanalysis, makes a brilliant philological treatment of the play.

struggle against racism in the demand for a funeral of all those subjects who are sanctioned as illegal migrants, remembered by all the affective nets that supported them. It is, thus, a stubbornness that does not merely refer to a norm, but to the preservation of what discourse ignores: singularity²⁵⁰. The *name*, its sound and all the affects that it entails, points to a sum of elements that are not reduced to the Symbolic, in spite of the fact that outside language singularity would not exist. Therefore, when Lacan, discussing Antigone's gesture, asserts that "on ne peut en finir avec ses restes en oubliant que le registre de l'être de celui qui a pu être situé par un nom doit être préservé par un acte de funérailles" (Lacan, 1986: 325), he points to what passionately bonds us to the Other: with its bond, the subject obtains a glimpse of the Real, a piece of what points to its most characteristic reality, which cannot be properly absorbed by any normative mandate. Antigone, like those who claim for the memory of their relatives, says no to the reduction of her brother to an anecdotic instance, and she insists in her right to mourn the loss of this Other that was an object-cause of desire for her. In this sense, her desiring gesture is not a pure subversion of norms and their regulations, but *she radically interrupts the course of ordinary life, producing an act that instantly joints together the possible and the im-possible.*

On the contrary, Butler, who is concerned by a notion of the Symbolic wrongly translated into the Foucauldian concept of the norm, deprives Antigone of her *ethical act* because she confines her to an immanent net of power relations that can only be enlarged, but they cannot be disrupted in any case. In other words, for Butler, Antigone is trapped into the imaginary struggle for recognition:

Antigone's power, to the extent that she still wields it for us, has to do not only with how kinship makes its claim within the language of the state²⁵¹ but with the social

²⁵⁰ Such a singular dimension is later outlined by Lacan through the neologism of *lalangue*, which refers to the first newborn's encounter with the language given by the Other through its desire. In this sense, despite a subject cannot exist without a social bond, it does not entail that a social bond whatsoever might exhaust the *whole subject's existence*. The traumatic encounter with *lalangue* also points to the radically singularised response in front of the Real through speech, which traverses the speaking being's body. For a further account on the singular trait of *lalangue*, see Lacan, Jacques (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*; Dolar, Mladen (2006): *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge, MIT Press, and Soler, Colette (2009): *Lacan, l'inconscient réinventé*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

²⁵¹ Butler's reference to the State is related to her criticisms against the Hegelian interpretation of *Antigone* in terms of the *necessary* annihilation of the individual, understood as particularity, in order to transcend such a step to achieve the reconciliation of the Spirit with itself by means of a teleological mechanism. Such a relationship between individuality and universality in Hegel's political philosophy can be found in Hegel, G.W.F. (1821): *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Translated by H.B. Nisbet (1991). I am especially referring to the section that includes « Development of the Free Will » to « The System of Right », pages 45-61. However, in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*

deformation of idealized kinship and political sovereignty that emerges as a consequence of her act (Butler, *op. cit.*: 6).

If Antigone is understood as a character who struggles for an expansion of the regulatory categories of kinship and gender – as Butler suggests she does –, her subversive power is annihilated by virtue of effacing her *negative* gesture. I explicitly mobilise the adjective “negative” in order to stress that Antigone’s *act* is deprived of any content, it is a pure expression of desire’s law, which explains why Lacan highlighted that ethics was the pursue of a real that disarticulated a previous socio-symbolic order. Her gesture, thus, is not a vindication since no signification could absorb it. She claims to obey a very peculiar and untranslatable law, which is the law of desire, a law deprived of any further background than itself. In this sense, recognition proves to be impotent regarding her act because her suicidal enterprise is the corroboration of the structural lack of the Other, of its contingency, and the impossibility to produce a compact sense. In other words, Antigone, in her detachment from the circulation of goods, traverses any fantasmatic attachment to discourse, and becomes a paradigmatic notion of the excessive register of the *not-all*. As Saez signals: “Antígona no reconoce en el sentido que no reconoce la ley de Creonte y en el sentido que no se somete a ella; es decir, en el sentido en que contraviene, que desafía, que transgrede la ley” (Saez in *op. cit.*: 169). In fact, Butler seems to contradict herself when she declares that Antigone’s deed is not inscribed into the domain of totality, but she rather places herself as what interrupts discourse in its social signification:

This is a law of the instant and, hence, a law with no generality and no transposability, one mired in the very circumstances to which it is applied, a law formulated precisely through the singular instance of its application and, therefore, no law at all in any ordinary, generalizable sense (Butler, *op. cit.*: 10).

It is quite surprising, then, that Butler persists in affirming that Antigone is an *outsider* who fights for recognition since she even admits that her law is based on a paradoxical structure: while she explicitly denies Creon’s authority by virtue of another law, she asserts that her law is not susceptible of being put into objective terms, crossing at the same time universality and singularity. In other words, Antigone’s law, inasmuch as it is the law of desire, is deprived of a final object, though her suicidal attachment to

(1807), he had already referred to the figure of Antigone as the feminine entity bound to preserve the Gods of the family, which required her sacrifice in the name of the Absolute. See Hegel, G.W.F. (1807): « The law of the heart and the frenzy of self-conceit » and « Virtue and the way of the world » in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. Translated by A.V.Miller (1977), pages 221-235.

Polynices condemns her to the *real* death. At this single point, thus, both Butler and Lacan coincide, since they both argue for Antigone's *necessary* death as she appears as an exception from the symbolic Law. Yet, for Butler, Antigone is the abject rest from gender and kinship regulations, while Lacan, in his seventh seminar, reduces *Das Ding* to the death drive in its purity.

However, a twist can be added in order to go beyond such a structural limit, which is suggested by Lacan in his articulation of the feminine logic, the logic not-all captured by the signifier. It is not, of course, susceptible to be applied with all its consequences to Antigone, who finally embarks on a suicidal attempt to melt herself with the Real through a collapsing operation of metaphor and metonymy, which erases her desire and existence. It is a logic of the ethical act that does not end with the impasse of vulnerability, and its reduction to the phallic logic as the exclusive register that it considers. In this sense, an act that interrupts the functioning of a socio-symbolic order *necessary* involves a process of desubjection through a subjective sacrifice, this is to say, the subject destitutes itself from its symbolic position at traversing the fundamental fantasy, which involves that the ethics of psychoanalysis is an ethics of singularity. It is not, hence, an ethics attached to the elaboration of a programmatic notion of the political, but it evokes the last teaching of Lacan: the symptomatic reality of *each subject*, which cannot be taken into account apart from its bond with the Other, can be assumed through a process of invention, unveiling the lack in the regimes of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. What provokes such an encounter with the Real cannot be predicted, but it appeals to the singular existence of each subject, though it certainly has political consequences inasmuch as it implies that the subject is *not-all* defined by any norm or discursive mandate: "L'éthique de l'analyse n'est pas une spéculation portant sur l'ordonnance, l'arrangement, de ce que s'appelle le service des biens. Elle implique à proprement parler la dimension qui s'exprime dans ce qu'on appelle l'expérience tragique de la vie" (Lacan, 1986: 361).

Nevertheless, I would like to be very cautious regarding this quotation by Lacan. He is not advocating for what, from a Nietzschean perspective, could be considered as a "moral for slaves". In other words, the ethical dimension of psychoanalysis does not mean that the subject must surrender to a Law that imposes a tyrannical restriction, yet the Law, understood as a symbolic castration and the process of signification enabled by the Symbolic, is the condition of possibility for not giving up on one's desire. Hence,

ethics, for Lacan, is an invitation towards the Real, which means the possibility to transform oneself after the encounter with what resists any concrete signification, this is to say, the *objet petit a* as the object-cause of desire, which also works as a *plus-de-jouir*. It supposes, thus, to become responsible for one's desire without succumbing to the mandates of the social Other and to the illusions of the fundamental fantasy, with its tricky structure that is presumed to give an answer in front of any situation. This is why Lacan asserted that the subject's guilt emerges when it feels that it has abandoned its desiring path towards the *objet petit a*, which points to its story in its attachment with the Other as the enigma that pushes the subject towards existence. Such is the question posed by psychoanalysis: "Avez-vous agi conformément au désir qui vous habite?" (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 362).

Consequently, when Butler resumes Antigone's fate to a sentence dictated by a heterosexist and patriarchal law that psychoanalysis would impose on the subject's desire, she clearly misses the point, and she even forecloses the subversion of psychoanalysis:

Those who disagree with me tend to claim, with some exasperation, "But it is the law!" But what is the status of such an utterance? "It is the law"! becomes the utterance that performatively attributes the very force to the law that the law itself is said to exercise. "It is the law" is thus a sign of allegiance to the law, a sign of the desire for the law to be the indisputable law, a theological impulse within the theory of psychoanalysis that seeks to put out of play any criticism of the symbolic father, the law of psychoanalysis itself (Butler, *op. cit.*: 21)

Joan Copjec, in her *Imagine There's No Woman* (2002), proves that the Law is, in a psychoanalytic sense, a pure negative limit the articulations and re-articulations of which invite to freedom as being able to respond for one's desire, which entails an incessant struggle in the terrain of the social. There is no transcendental category at stake, but it demonstrates how the notion of a limit, as Kant had suggested in an epistemic and ethical sense, is the invitation towards assuming one's unconditional *ethical law*, this is to say, the paradoxical autonomy of the object-cause of desire:

For the ethics of psychoanalysis is concerned not with the other, as is the case with so much of the contemporary work on ethics, but rather with the subject, who metamorphoses herself at the moment of encounter with the real of an unexpected event. Lacan's imperative, "Do not give way on your desire", proposes itself as anything but an insistence that one stubbornly conform to one's own personal history (Copjec, 2002: 43).

An ethics based on the subject and its desire, therefore, is not primarily concerned by identifications, which belong to the Imaginary and the Symbolic, but it

appeals to the subject of the unconscious in its radical negativity. It refers to the subject the being of which is always somewhere else, since the process of signification takes the subject as a signifier that represents it for another signifier: “Là où il est représenté, le sujet est absent. C’est bien en cela que, représenté tout de même, il se trouve ainsi divisé” (Lacan, 2007: 10). What identifications do not grasp is its being, a being made of *jouissance*, with its dissidence regarding discourse and its regulations.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that the ethics of psychoanalysis is allied with the liberal fantasy of an autonomous consciousness, the self-sufficiency of which is beyond its material existence. It is, on the contrary, an ethics the maxim of which refers to the singularity of any attachment towards the Other, which involves that recognition and its fantasy of intersubjectivity is not mobilised as the crucial domain for the political struggle. Instead, it stresses the fact that any form of political and ethical violence is related to the attempt to find an operative formula to write the Real, this is to say, the non-existence of sexual relationship. In this sense, authors like Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler propose an ethical paradigm mostly concerned by a normative acquaintance with alterity that transforms the Other into a law in front of which the subject must incline, which finally eliminates the singular domain of subjectivity: its excess regarding any socio-political configuration.

At this point, thus, the philosophical and the psychoanalytic perspective on ethics become radically different inasmuch as psychoanalysis does not pretend to reinscribe the subject into a domain of deliberation and responsiveness in the sense of how to live a good life. Instead, it refers to what is common to each subject in its symptomatic reality: solitude and the *real* obstacle regarding any articulation of a social bond. The task that belongs to the subject is to take charge of such a structural limit in order to elaborate an attachment towards the Other, with its enigmatic existence as it also subjected to *jouissance*. This issue, for which there is never a final solution, will be the central topic of my last subsection, devoted to love as giving what is not possessed, this is to say, to give in its being to the other that always remains an Other for the subject.

5.2. A Chiasm *within* the Subject: Love as the Junction of Desire and *Jouissance*

As a matter of fact, apart from certain authors like Gilles Deleuze and Toni Negri, love has been long considered as an *apolitical* affect, which would primarily belong to a private and intimate realm alien to the social. My aim here is not to argue for love as a purely political and collective dimension. Indeed, what mostly concerns me in relation to love is its dimension regarding the feminine position, the domain of a being *not-all* concerned by the fantasmatic support of desire, which attaches the subject to a castrated Other. It means that the register to which I shall refer is not the phallic domain based on identifications and *semblants*, but I shall point to a love which does not ignore the Real-impossible to write: sexual relationship.

My claim is that love, in its attachment with the partner that does not ignore the Real-impossible, subverts the capitalist discourse, which by no mean entails that it creates a new ontology, but it rather points to an internal short-circuit. In this sense, I will not reduce love to the imaginary fantasy of making One with the other, which, as I will argue, can be a terribly destructive experience, and I will neither aim at grasping love in relation to its symbolic regulations, which does not mean that they do not exist. Taking this into account, I shall refer to love as Jean Allouch mentions in *L'amour Lacan* (2009): “Aimer, c’est laisser l’autre seul” (Allouch, 2009: 10).

5.2.1. Sexed Positions in relation to Love

Nonetheless, this sentence requires a further elaboration of sexual difference in order to sustain such a perspective with all its richness. This is why I would like to insist on the Lacanian approach towards sexual difference, which is radically specific of psychoanalysis. Hence, Renata Salecl, in *Sexuation* (2000) asserts that:

For Lacan, sexual difference is not a firm set of “static” symbolic oppositions and inclusions or exclusions (heterosexual normativity that relegates homosexuality and other “perversions” to some secondary role), but the name of a deadlock, of a trauma, of an open question, of something that *resists* every attempt at its symbolisation. Every translation of sexual difference into a set of symbolic opposition(s) is doomed to fail, and it is this very “impossibility” that opens up the terrain of the hegemonic struggle for what “sexual difference” will mean (Salecl, 2000: 2).

Indeed, the sexed dimension of the speaking being involves that the phallic dimension does not operate in a homogeneous level for all the subjects as far as their *real* position is concerned in relation to *jouissance* and the phallic function. Hence, while Lacan stressed that masculine *jouissance* was a fetishist attraction towards the partner, which is inscribed as the *plus-de-jouir* that satisfies the fundamental fantasy, the feminine position is radically alien to such a dynamic. Feminine *jouissance*, notwithstanding with that, is not an opposition to masculine *jouissance*, which would entail that sexual relationship could be written through recourse to the phallus and another fantasied signifier. In this sense, feminine *jouissance* is the excess ignored by the unconscious, which means that the supplement of the not-all does not refer to castration and the Symbolic, but to the void of the Real as the region of an infinite that cannot be trapped by any signifier. Alenka Zupancic, in her article « The Case of the Perforated Sheet » (2000), specifically stresses this question:

What defines feminine *jouissance* is not simply some supplement of enjoyment, but the fact that it can take on a supplement (or a deficit, for that matter) of enjoyment *without losing its reference to castration*, whereas phallic enjoyment perpetually has to ensure its reference to castration – that is, it has to refer to the inaccessible. For the inaccessible is not some full, uncastrated enjoyment, but precisely the reminder of the function of castration (Zupancic in Salecl (ed.), 2000: 295-296).

Love, hence, as Lacan introduces it, finds a logical impossibility for an imaginary fusion between the partners because there is a single available signifier, the phallus. Thus, the operation of union becomes banned because it offers an illusionary scenario of misleading identity concerning the *real* of sexual difference, and the failure to symbolise it through oppositions: “L’amour est impuissant, quoqu’il soit réciproque, parce qu’il ignore qu’il n’est que le désir d’être Un, ce qui nous conduit à l’impossible d’établir la relation d’eux. La relation *d’eux qui? deux sexes*” (Lacan, 1975b: 12). Love, in its imaginary dimension, finds a wall as far as the Real of sexual difference is concerned, which is not either based on attributes or symbolic *semblants*. It is the dimension of logics, which can only be designated, but it cannot be defined inasmuch as it is the topologic register that exceeds sense, a void for which any partial representation through recourse to the signifying chain is doomed to be always insatisfactory, which explains why the socio-symbolic articulations of sexual difference are susceptible of being constantly re-negotiated.

The relationship with the Real, on the masculine side, responds to the Oedipal schema, this is to say, to the rivalry between the child and the fantasied Freudian father,

who is *imagined* as being beyond any restriction, enjoying *all* women with obscenity. Colette Soler, in *Ce que Lacan disait des femmes* (2003), perfectly resumes this dynamic in its clinical and structural dimension: “C’est celle qui fait l’homme, tout homme, à partir de la grande loi de la castration qui ne lui laisse, en matière de jouissance, que la jouissance dite phallique, limitée et discontinue comme le signifiant lui-même” (Soler, 2003: 19). Instead, the not-all is a love attached to truth, which is internally fractured, this is to say, it is a bond to a fractured Other.

Consequently, the not-all is beyond any possible identification, being a negative rest that no discourse can catch and reduce to a signification, which means that its supplement is beyond the phallic economy of fetishism and the fundamental fantasy. It is a *jouissance* that, in itself, entails a partial de-subjection from the signifier: “Ce trait de néantisation, quasi sacrificielle, est la marque propre qui désigne le seuil, la frontière, de la part pas du tout phallique, du pastout, Autre absolu” (Soler, *op. cit.*: 25). In other words, the not-all is a subtraction from the Symbolic to the pure Real, with its radically singular incarnations because of the logical necessity of such a structure, as Lacan remarked in *Encore* (1975b): “En effet, la logique, la cohérence inscrite dans le fait qu’existe le langage et qu’il est hors des corps qui en sont agités, bref l’Autre qui s’incarne, si l’on peut dire, comme être sexué, exige cet *une par une*” (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 15).

Sexual difference, as far as love is concerned, is divergently articulated: while the masculine side introduces the Other into its fundamental fantasy, the feminine side is attached to love according to what Lacan named, following Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault, an expression of erotomania²⁵². In other words, the feminine subject positions itself in the dynamic of love by means of speech, expecting the *loving sign* of its partner. The non-relationship, thus, can be easily demonstrated: while the masculine

²⁵², The clinical concept of erotomania must be explained. Indeed, de Clérambault used it in relation to psychotic women, whose deliria was articulated by means of a persecutory structure in which the Other constantly confessed them his love, sending them partial signs of it. Following de Clérambault and his own clinical work as a practitioner, Jacques Lacan used the concept of erotomoania to refer to the incessant speech on love mostly typical to the feminine position. In this sense, the excessive supplement of feminine *jouissance* cannot be considered apart from what exceeds discourse in its relation to an Other of love that can be easily found in mystical poetry, where the Other constantly sends messages of infinite love to the lover. For a further approach on this clinical remark, see Gatian de Clérambault, Gaëtan (1942): *Psychoses passionnelles* in Fretet, J: *Oeuvre psychiatrique réuni et publié sous les auspices du Comité des élèves et des amis de Clérambault*. Paris, Théraplix. Volume IV, pages 309-451; Lacan, Jacques (1932): *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*. Paris, Le François ; (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX : Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil, and (1981): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre III: Les psychoses 1955-1956*. Paris, Le Seuil.

position enjoys its fantasy in its attachment to the partner as the *plus-de-jouir* that feeds its fundamental fantasy, the feminine position is *not-all* inscribed into the phallic economy of language, attached to the barred Other of in-finite *jouissance*.

Taking into account that the sexed positions are not determined by the anatomical dimension of sex, there is not any reason to conclude that men will be placed on the masculine side, and “women” – though such a set is impossible because The Woman does not exist – on the feminine. The sexed positions regarding love, which is the crucial topic at this point, is defined by the unconscious “election” regarding the phallic function and castration. In other words, anatomy is not destiny, which means that any presumed binarism concerning Lacanian psychoanalysis is, literally speaking, destroyed: “The unconscious knows nothing of biology and, as far as life is concerned, accomodates nothing other than what Freud discovered in it: the divisions (*morcellements*) of the drives, which are called partial – oral, anal, scopic, and invocatory” (Soler, *op. cit.*: 11).

For the fetishist *jouissance* of the masculine position, the feminine is the absolute Other inasmuch as the masculine partner only enjoys a *fragmented part* of it, which means that the feminine Other is *not-all* for the partner and for itself. Such a fetishist mechanism involves that the masculine subject cannot enjoy the Other because its *jouissance* is wholly mediated by the phallic signifier, the imaginary representation of which in sexed *jouissance* is the penis²⁵³, while the relation between the body and *jouissance* regarding the feminine position cannot be easily located, being disseminated all over its *substance jouissante*.

5.2.2. Love as the Encounter between Desire and *Jouissance*

After this brief consideration of the sexed dimension of love, which is important in order to outline that, for psychoanalysis, love is not alien to sex, I would like to clarify the sentence that presides this last subsection: love as the element that is able to join desire and *jouissance*. Nonetheless, I would like to be very clear on a crucial issue:

²⁵³ As a result, from a *real* dimension, there can also be two sexed positions in relation to homosexual couples, regardless of their anatomical sex, or couples the union of which is fully mediated by the phallic *jouissance*, or by the feminine side. In this sense, psychoanalysis is not, in any sense of the word, a prescriptive discourse on sexuality and desire, but it rather is *descriptive*, referring to the Real-impossible to reduce to processes of signification.

for psychoanalysis, there is no final solution to the historical dynamic of social bonds, which are impossible to articulate in terms of cohesion due to the unsurmountable obstacle imposed by the Real. In addition to this, since Freud, psychoanalysis has long warned about a more dangerous issue: the cruel reverse of love is hate and its exclusionary segregations²⁵⁴. Such a question has been previously developed regarding the aggressiveness of the Imaginary and the emergence of the “I” through the specular mechanism, and its fundamental alienation to the Other. In other words, I do sustain that the reflection exemplified by Freud in his *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) remains intact inasmuch as love and hate are not two affects susceptible of being tamed by any illusionary self-consciousness. Therefore, my approach towards love will be inscribed in a very specific form of the feminine position that does not pretend to overcome the phallic dimension, which, strictly speaking, belongs to language as an apparatus for signification the mythical primary referent of which is repressed. According to this clarification, the side of love that I will stress is, in itself, a dissidence regarding the social bond, working as a limit for the sphere of the political.

In relation to this discussion, love, the existence of which would be impossible outside the frame of the Symbolic as a process of signification that bans any immediate access to the Real, is developed by Lacan from different perspectives. I shall only refer to those that might help to clarify my methodological choices, and to which extent they can have an impact within the logic of the social bond, producing an interruption and the emergence of something new. In order to sustain such thesis, I would like to outline the most fundamental references to love that Lacan elaborates in his eighth seminar, *Le transfert* (2001b). In this seminar, love is analysed from the psychoanalytic concept of transference. In here, Lacan introduces the imaginary dimension of love, which consists in the illusion to make One through a fusion with the partner. Such an illusion, as Lacan signals, is sustained by the bond enabled by the signifier as a *symbolon* that simultaneously separates and joins, the effect of which refers to what allows the loving

²⁵⁴ In his analysis of social groups and the identifications that sustain them, Freud stressed that the leader incarnates a hyperbolized version of a loving father that promises an infinite love to his children, and a full satisfaction for their demand. The cohesion of the group under identifications is, at its turn, a libidinal expression of hatred against the other, which reaffirms the union and the social bonds of the collectivity. Such is the mechanism that Freud described in relation to the Church and the army. For a further account on this issue, see Freud, Sigmund (1921): *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. London, The Hogarth Press. Translation by James Strachey (1949).

dynamic: the lack-of-being resultant from the immersion into language as the structure that deprives the subject from any mythical *jouissance*.

Love involves a pairing not between a subject and an object – which is the case in desire and *jouissance* –, but between two subjects: the lovers: “L’amant comme le sujet du désir, avec tout le poids qu’a pour nous ce terme, le désir – l’aimé comme celui qui, dans ce couple, est le seul à avoir quelque chose” (Lacan, 2001b: 47). What Lacan will constantly outline regarding love cannot be separated from the glimpse of the Real that the subject finds in the partner, which refers to the fact that, in loving the other, something else is pursued: in this seminar, such an object is called *agalma*, which will be renamed, from the seminar *L’angoisse* (2004) on, as *objet petit a*.

Following this same quotation, it can be understood why love allows an articulation between desire and *jouissance*: love transfers the object-cause of desire and the *plus-de-jouir* to a partner by means of an operation of sublimation. Hence, in love the subject believes to find in another subject what its desire, through recourse to the Other, and *jouissance*, which is autistic inasmuch as the subject only enjoys *with its body*, is differently pursuing. Hence, love is the signifying articulation that allows a tie between *two subjects*. A union the guarantee of which, as I have just mentioned, is the lack-of-being, which involves that only a subject deprived of self-sufficiency is able to fall in love with another subject: “C’est que l’amour, c’est de donner ce qu’on n’a pas” (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 46). The encounter between the lovers who dream of making One is beautifully expressed in this paragraph:

Cette main qui se tend vers le fruit, vers la rose, vers la bûche qui soudain flambe, son geste d’atteindre, d’attirer, d’attiser, est étroitement solidaire de la maturation du fruit, de la beauté de la fleur, du flamboiement de la bûche. Mais quand, dans ce mouvement d’atteindre, d’attirer, d’attiser, la main a été vers l’objet assez loin, si du fruit, de la fleur, de la bûche, une main sort qui se tend à la rencontre de la maison qui est la vôtre, et qu’à ce moment c’est votre main qui se fige dans la plénitude fermée du fruit, ouverte de la fleur, dans l’explosion d’une main qui flambe – alors, ce qui se produit là, c’est l’amour (Lacan, *op. cit.*: 69).

What this wonderful passage from *Le transfert* (2001b) explains is the irruption of contingency within the existence of the subject inasmuch as the loving encounter with the other dislocates the subject from its ordinary life. Thus, in the dialectic dynamic of desire and its pursuit of the object-cause, what could not be foreseen occurs, producing a situation that, indeed, supposes an event for the subject. Its relation to the other becomes impregnated by an encounter where two unconsciousness, in their

solitary existence, recognise in the other their lack, producing a new affect that joins them unexpectedly: this is love. The loving situation, nonetheless, situates the partners in two different positions inasmuch as love works as a substitution for which cannot be written, this is to say, the sexual relationship.

Therefore, love detaches the subject from a pure narcissism, as Alain Badiou stresses in *Éloge de l'amour* (2009):

C'est dans l'amour que le sujet va au-delà de lui-même, au-delà du narcissisme. Dans le sexe vous êtes au bout du compte en rapport avec vous-même dans la médiation de l'autre. L'autre vous sert pour découvrir le réel de la jouissance. Dans l'amour, en revanche, la médiation de l'autre vaut pour elle-même. C'est cela, la rencontre amoureuse : vous partez à l'assaut de l'autre, afin de le faire exister avec vous, tel qu'il est (Badiou, 2009: 24).

Regardless of this, as a substitution for the impossible of sexual relationship, love cannot subvert the Real, but it can only provide a contingent solution thanks to the bond between two subjects, the placement of which regarding castration involves two different modalities of *jouissance*, and two radically differentiated existences. Despite what Badiou signals regarding the non-autistic nature of love, which gives a provisional answer to go beyond the *real* solitude of the subject and its *jouissance attached to its body*, it is important to stress the impossibility to make One, which is sometimes hoped from it. This is what Colette Soler signals, in *Les affects lacaniens* (2011), in relation to the *hidden* narcissism of love:

L'amour prétend être don; aimer, c'est en effet « donner ce que l'on n'a pas », son manque à être, mais il ment, car en fait il est demande : « Aimer, c'est vouloir être aimé », L'amour est demande d'être, il cherche son complément dans le manque de l'autre avec l'espoir de faire Un. Illusion par conséquent qui ne veut rien savoir du destin que nous fait le langage (Soler, 2011: 85).

However, I would like to highlight that there can also be a form of love that *does not ignore* the Real-impossible of sexual relationship, and the existential solitude imposed by our nature of subjects determined by the unconscious as the inherent fracture produced by language. Hence, I do take into consideration Soler's remark on the illusionary pretention referred to a love that would work as a fantasied equality that would erase the *real* difference, though I think it is important to stress the ek-static element that Badiou attributes to love. Such an ecstasy is what is most specific of feminine *jouissance*, which is not directed to the illusion of making one, but to the barred Other of truth, this is to say, the impossibility to equal the finite limited by the set and its exception, and the indeterminate proliferation and multiplication of individuals.

In this sense, I do accept that if love is expected to guarantee a fusion in terms of One, the frustration that can be felt regarding the Real-impossible can lead to a destructive violence, the terrible manifestations of which can be daily confirmed in the violence against women, a *true symptom for any civilization*.

5.2.2.1. Love and Impossibility: The Power of Negativity

My goal, then, is to argue for a love that does not ignore the Real, a love that does not foreclose the logical modality of impossibility. The consideration of the impossible as a *necessary* category that bans any fantasied illusion of symmetry does not entail a cynical approach towards power relations and their penetration into any sort of social bond, but it implies to sustain that there can be another form of sociality not fully inscribed into the regulatory mechanism of identifications. Hence, a love penetrated for the Real takes into account a fundamental *méconnaissance* regarding the partner: the subject does not know whom or what it loves inasmuch as the *jouissance* of the Other is the realm of what is *héteros*, radically different from any imaginary configuration of the subject. Thus, love in its feminine side verifies that any presumed form of knowledge and truth is always impotent, which is clarified in a modality of the social bond as the discourse of the hysteric regarding the asymmetry between the *objet petit a* and the knowledge produced by the presumed master: “L’amour a affaire à un trou dans le savoir. Pas de théorie de l’amour” (Allouch, *op. cit.*: 161).

In spite of my arguments, such a form of love could be defined as a depoliticisation. Such a thesis can be sustained if the domain of the political is simply understood as purely inscribed into the Imaginary and the Symbolic, as many current philosophers do. My claim is that such a perspective on the political is simply compelled by the phallic register, leaving aside the symptom and the structural limit that the feminine position entails for any social bond as it is an excess that perpetually eludes any signification. It is, so to speak, the dialectic power of a radical negativity that operates as the impossibility for relation due to its *real* inscription. In this sense, the irruption of a love *not-all* inscribed into the circuit the signifier is, in itself, an *interruption* that can work as the occasion for the appearance of a radical novelty that dislocates a previous socio-symbolic order. Due to its structure, a love that does not foreclose the Real is the occasion for forms of collectivity not governed by massive

identifications to a leader and its subsequent segregation. In terms of love, this is what can be affirmed from what Jean Allouch outlines: “Je t’identifie comme étant l’objet à moi-même inconnu de mon désir. Je m’avance vers toi comme à la fois sachant et ne sachant pas, sachant que c’est toi *et* ne sachant pas ce qu’est toi” (Allouch, *op. cit.*: 196-197).

In this sense, love and its attachment to the Real, as the symptom regarding the discursive ideals and imperatives, constitutes an *impossible element to regulate* by the capitalist discourse and its commandment towards phallic *jouissance* and the proliferations of fetishes elaborated by the circuit of consume and production. It is not, hence, the construction of a new discourse of the master that elaborates an ontology that distributes the subjects according to different identifications attached to the production of a *plus-de-jour*, but it is the fracture inherent to any social bond. Such a remark is what allows me to hold that the subversion that psychoanalysis performs is not based on the promise of a messianic tomorrow deprived of restrictions and, most of all, the finitude imposed by the Symbolic, but it implies an approach towards a real and its singular deployment, one by one. It is not, therefore, the illusion of a present and a future based on a fallacious notion of equality that reduces the subject to a performative reiteration of a normative apparatus of the norm and its presumed subversive consequence. *It is, instead, a passion for what mobilises desire and jouissance, which love can joint through a sublimation: the im-possible to write and represent.* Otherwise, the alternative is an internal guerrilla doomed to reproduce the very same power relations it said to deplore and it pretended to undo.

To summarise it, I would not merely sustain that we are vulnerable subjects, that is, that we are inscribed into the inclusions and exclusions subsequent from it, but that we are subjects who can be extremely passionate for the impossible and the *hétérosexuel*, which entails a jump to the Real-impossible. Such a twist is not, of course, based on political instructions, but it invites the subject to find its *own symptomatic reality*. Hence, the transformation of the symptom into a *sinthome*, and in this process love, a *real* love, has a great role in it.

I can only finish this reflection and dissertation with this quotation by Pierre Bruno and Marie-Jean Sauret in *Deux, l’amour* (2010), in which love and alterity are beautifully joined:

L'amour se présente comme alternative au symptôme, alternative non définitive sans doute, mais qui permet, en constituant une étrangère comme objet, de se séparer de l'Autre maternel et de rendre cette séparation pensable en constituant cet Autre comme objet, sur le modèle de l'amour pour une étrangère (Bruno and Sauret, 2010 : 69).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this dissertation is not guided by a systematic undertaking in order to offer a universalist or nominalist analysis of the subject as a sheer effect of *assujettissement*. Therefore, my research is founded on an approach to the potentialities and limitations of ontology regarding the subject. The signifier of vulnerability has been taken into account as a master signifier for certain philosophical discourses, the aim of which is to elaborate a new definition of the subject by means of a multiplicity of identifications based in its relational character.

As I have made clear in the first part of this dissertation, the issue at stake with such a discursive endeavour is the reduction of the subjective realm to what psychoanalysis calls the exclusions and inclusions derived from the mobilisation of certain signifiers. This endeavour is not simply referred to a historical context, but it appeals to the logical structure of the signifier, and it indicates its limitations if the subject is fully identified with the domain of the production of sense. Indeed, what is suppressed by virtue of this dynamic is the singularity that psychoanalysis highlights regarding the subject, this is to say, its *real* dimension. At the same time, the structural trouble with the philosophical gesture is the erasure of the not-all, which oscillates between a discursive rest, or what is expelled from discourse once being is reduced to meaning.

I have provided a declination of vulnerability as a symptom, this is to say, as a signifier that points to a social and subjective malaise derived from current discursive mutations, has offered a new axis for the discussion. The symptom enables an analysis of the impossibility of a harmonic social reality regarding the interactions between the subject and the Other, and the discussion to the socio-historical transformations resulting from the impact of the capitalist discourse. In addition, the symptom signals what ontology forecloses: *jouissance*, this is to say, the surplus derived from the effect of the signifier, which in this case points to the surplus produced by any discourse in its articulation. From this perspective, vulnerability illustrates the sadistic dimension of the capitalist discourse in relation to its incessant commandment towards the production and consumption of all kinds of enjoyment susceptible of being symbolically regulated, excluding the not-all as the rest that challenges any socio-symbolic articulation.

By virtue of conferring to the notion of vulnerability the status of a symptom that designates a current malaise, it has been possible to go beyond a purely ontological approach, and to render visible to which extent vulnerability might operate as a master signifier for the articulation of a reverse to the capitalist discourse. Nonetheless, in the analyses of Butler's and Lorey's perspectives on the interconnections between vulnerability and precariousness, what I have stressed is the impasse for nominalism, which does not properly consider the structural relevance of language, understood as a Symbolic framework, for the institution of a social reality.

This very same impasse has also been highlighted regarding the Foucauldian notion of bio-politics, which aims at analysing the interconnections between knowledge and powers under a regulatory power the purpose of which is the capture of life as an economic source. If bio-politics was the solely constitutive dimension of the subject, the subject as such would have vanished, after having been reduced to a mass of indifferentiate individuals. Hence, what is more characteristic of the subject, this is to say, its symptom as a dissonance regarding discourse as a social bond, is what constantly resists strategies of homogeneity, pointing to a subjective scission that institutes a difference between the identifications to which bio-politics refers, and the unconscious as a domain of radical negativity.

Accordingly, I want to insist on the subversion introduced by psychoanalysis since the discovery of the unconscious by Sigmund Freud: any attempt to elaborate an ontology of the subject is doomed to an impasse because it simply operates with a notion of being that leaves aside *jouissance*, the dimension of the Real linked to the body and sexual difference. The subject, therefore, is not a simple product of language, but it also *has* a body as the domain where the excess derived by the signifier produces diverse and plural affects, which defy sense inasmuch as they point to the internal failure of sense.

At its turn, this very dimension implies that, any social articulation, regardless of its master signifier, finds an internal collapse, a logical impossibility to provide with a suitable solution for the malaise that language inflicts onto the subject, installed in a lack-of-being that surpasses identifications. Nonetheless, this remark does not necessarily entail a scorn against the realm of the political, but it rather involves an invitation towards new forms of sociality where singularity might have a voice. This is why the last section of this dissertation has been devoted to a re-consideration of the

ethical dimension of psychoanalysis, which signals the subjective responsibility in front of a *real* register that, in itself, is a subtraction from discursive imperatives. An ethical gesture that, differently from what authors like Butler and Levinas assert regarding alterity, puts its emphasis on solitude as the element that characterizes the subject since there is an impossible to write, that is, sexual relationship. An ethics that departs from difference even defies a notion like vulnerability because it does merely refer to symbolic operations, but it also points to the object-cause of desire. Such an issue refers to social bonds governed by a structural and paradoxical constitution between singularity and universality, where the subject has the possibility to act assuming its own freedom, this is to say, the inexistence of a compact Big Other as the background of its ek-sistence.

By assuming a structural solitude caused by language, inasmuch as the relationship with the Real of *jouissance* is fragmentary and deprived of completeness, a new love can emerge. A love which is neither governed by the dyadic scenario of recognition nor by the illusionary fiction of making One, the reversal of which is an absolute aggression once the impossibility is revealed. It is a love that works as a supplement for the wall that the Real of sexual difference is said to be for the speaking being, assuming the dimension of the *im-possible*, which means loving the Other in its radically singular solitude.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

Agamben, Giorgio (1995): *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, Stanford University Press (1998). Translation by Daniel Heller-Roazen.

Arendt, Hannah (1958): *The Human Condition*. Chicago, Chicago University Press.

Aristotle (1936): *Aristotle's Physics*. Oxford, Clarendon Press. Translation by W.D. Ross.

Austin, John L. (1962): *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Butler, Judith (1987): *Subjects of Desire. Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France*. New York, Columbia University Press (1999).

_____ (1990): *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge.

_____ (1993): « The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary » in *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York, Routledge, pages 51-92.

_____ (1997a): « Gender Melancholy/Refused Identification » in *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, pages 132-150.

_____ (1997b): *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*. New York, Routledge.

_____ (2005): « Laplanche and Levinas: The Primacy of the Other » in *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Chicago, Fordham Press, pages 84-100.

Butler, Judith; Laclau, Ernesto and Žižek, Slavoj (2000): *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London/New York, Verso

_____ (2004a): *Precarious Lives. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London/New York, Verso.

_____ (2004b): « Longing for Recognition » in *Undoing Gender*. New York, Routledge, pages 131-151.

_____ (2012): *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Carbonell, Neus (2013): « No hay cuerpo sin discurso. No hay discurso sin goce » in Saez Tajafuerce, Begonya, and González, Ana Cecilia (eds., 2013): *Analizando el cuerpo. La vigencia política del psicoanálisis*. Barcelona, Ediciones S&P, pages 189-205.

Cavarero, Adriana (1997): *Relating Narratives. Storytelling and Selfhood*. New York, Routledge. Translation by Paul A. Kottman.

_____ (2007): *Horrorism. Naming Contemporary Violence*. New York, Columbia University Press (2009). Translation by William McCuaig.

_____ (2014): « Inclinaciones desequilibradas » in Saez, Begonya (ed., 2014): *Cuerpo, memoria y representación. Adriana Cavarero y Judith Butler en diálogo*. Barcelona, Icaria, pages 17-38. Translation by Begonya Saez Tajafuerce.

Cevasco, Rithée (2010): *La discordancia de los sexos. Perspectivas psicoanalíticas para un debate actual*. Barcelona, Ediciones S&P.

_____ (2013): « Perspectivas psicoanalíticas sobre el cuerpo: el cuerpo sexuado » in Saez Tajafuerce, Begonya, and González, Ana Cecilia (eds., 2013): *Analizando el cuerpo. La vigencia política del psicoanálisis*. Barcelona, Ediciones S&P, pages 73-101.

Copjec, Joan (1994): « Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason » in *Read My Desire. Lacan Against the Historicists*. Cambridge, MIT Press, pages 208-236.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Felix (1980): *Mille Plateaux. Capitalisme et Schizophrénie 2*. Paris, Éditions du Minuit.

Derrida, Jacques (1988): « Signature, Event, Context » in *Limited Inc*. Evanston: Northwestern Press, pages 1-23. Translation by Gerald Graff.

Descartes, René (1641): *Discours de la méthode*. Paris, J. Vrin (1970).

Foucault, Michel (1971a): *L'ordre du discours*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (1971b): « Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire », in Bachelard, Suzanne; Canguilhem, Georges; Dagogner, François; Foucault, Michel; Gueroult, Martial; Henry, Michel; Laplanche, Jean; Pariente, Jean-Claude, and Serres, Michel (1971): *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, pages 145-172.

_____ (1976): *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (1976): « Droit de mort et pouvoir sur la vie » in *Histoire de la sexualité I: la volonté de savoir*. Paris, Gallimard, pages 175-211.

_____ (1984b): *Histoire de la sexualité 3: Le souci de soi*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (2001): *L'herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France 1981-1982*. Paris, Gallimard.

Gherovici, Patricia (2010): *Please Select Your Gender. From the Invention of Hysteria to the Democratization of Transgenderism*. New York, Routledge.

González, Ana Cecilia (2013, unpublished): *Lacan y el pensamiento contemporáneo. Usos y estatutos del cuerpo*.

Heidegger, Martin (1927): *Being and Time*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell (1962). Translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson.

_____ (1951-1952): *What is Called Thinking?* New York, Harper & Row (1963). Translation by J. Glenn Gray.

hooks, bell (1981): *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*. Wisconsin, South End Press.

Lacan, Jacques (1932): *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1973a) : « L'étourdit » in *Scilicet*, n. 4, pages 5-52.

_____ (1973b): « Tyché et Automaton » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI : les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 53-62.

_____ (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX : Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1981): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre III : Les Psychoses 1955-1956*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: L'envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2013): « Construction du graphe » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI : le désir et son interprétation*, Paris, Éditions de la Martinière-Le Champ Freudien, pages 11-35.

_____ (2013) : « Le rire des dieux immortels » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI : le désir et son interprétation*, Paris, Éditions de la Martinière-Le Champ Freudien , pages 253-278.

Lauretis, Teresa de (1987): *Technologies of Gender. Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Levinas, Emmanuel (1947): *Le temps et l'Autre*. Montpellier, Fata Morgana (1978).

_____ (1973): *Difficile liberté*. Paris, Albin Michel.

_____ (1982): *Éthique et Infini*. Paris, Fayard.

Nancy, Jean-Luc (1992): *Corpus*. Paris, Galilée (2000).

Nietzsche, Friedrich W. (1887): *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Cambridge, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (1994). Translation by Carol Diethe.

Preciado, Paul B. (2000): *Manifiesto contrasexual*. Barcelona, Anagrama.

Rubin, Gayle (1975): « The Traffic in Women: Notes on the “Political Economy” of Sex » in Reiter, Rayna (ed., 1975): *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York, Monthly Review Press, pages 27-62.

Sáez, Javier (2004): *Teoría queer y psicoanálisis*. Madrid: Síntesis.

Saez Tajafuerce, Begonya, and González, Ana Cecilia (2013): « Presentación » in Saez Tajafuerce, and González, Ana Cecilia (eds., 2013): *Analizando el cuerpo. La vigencia política del psicoanálisis*. Barcelona, Ediciones S&P.

Saez Tajafuerce, Begonya (ed., 2014): *Cuerpo, memoria y representación. Adriana Cavarero y Judith Butler en diálogo*. Barcelona, Icaria.

Soler, Colette (2003): *Ce que Lacan disait des femmes. Étude de psychanalyse*. Paris, Éditions du Champ Lacanien.

Spinoza, Baruch (1661-1675): *Ethics*. Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company. Translation by Samuel Shirley (2002).

Wittig, Monique (1980): "The Straight Mind" in *Feminist Issues* 1.1: 103-111.

Zupancic, Alenka (2008): *Why Psychoanalysis: Three Interventions*. Copenhagen: Aarhus University Press.

THE TOPOLOGICAL FIGURE OF THE BODY AS A FRONTIER: FROM METAPHYSICS TO POST-METAPHYSICS

Adorno, Theodor W., and Horkheimer, Marx (1944, reedited in 1947): *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford, Stanford University Press (2002). Translation by Edmund Jephcott.

The American Psychiatric Association (1987): *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

_____ (1994): *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV*. Washington D.C., American Psychiatric Association.

Arendt, Hannah (1951): *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York, Schocken (2004).

_____ (1958): *The Human Condition*. Chicago, Chicago University Press.

_____ (1963): *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York, Viking.

_____ (1972): *Crises of the Republic: Lying in Politics; Civil Disobedience; On Violence; Thoughts on Politics and Revolution*. New York, Harcourt

Aristotle (1932): *Politics*. London, William Heinemann. Translated by H. Rackhman.

_____ (1980): *Aristotle's Prior and Posterior Analytics*. New York, Garland Publications. Translation by W.D. Ross.

- _____ (1971): *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*. London, Oxford University Press. Translation by Sir David Ross
- Austin, John L. (1962): *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Badiou, Alain (1988): *L'être et l'événement*. Paris, Le Seuil
- Barad, Karen (2007): *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, Duke University Press.
- Birnbaum, Antonia (2008): « To exist is to exist the point » in Nancy, Jean-Luc (1992): *Corpus*. New York, Fordham Press (2008). Translation by Richard A. Rand, pages 145-149.
- Braidotti, Rossi (1994): *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. Cambridge, Columbia University Press.
- Butler, Judith (1987): *Subjects of Desire. Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France*. New York, Columbia University Press (1999).
- _____ (1990): *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge.
- _____ (1990): « Lacan, Riviere, and the strategies of masquerade » in *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge, pages 59-77.
- _____ (1993): *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York, Routledge.
- _____ (1993): « The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary » and « Phantasmatic Identifications and the Assumption of Sex » in *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York, Routledge, pages 28-80.
- _____ (1993): « Arguing with the Real » in *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York, Routledge, pages 181-222.
- _____ (1997a): *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- _____ (1997a): « Stubborn Attachment, Bodily Subjection. Rereading Hegel on the Unhappy Unconsciousness » in *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, pages 31-62.
- _____ (1997b): *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative*. New York, Routledge.

_____ (2000a): « Unwritten Laws, Aberrant Transmissions » in *Antigone's Claim. Kinship between Life and Death*. New York, Columbia University Press, pages 27-56.

Butler, Judith; Laclau, Ernesto, and Zizek, Slavoj (2000b): *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues in the Left*. London/New York, Verso.

_____ (2004a): « Violence, Mourning, Politics » in *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London/New York, Verso, pages 19-49.

_____ (2004b): *Undoing Gender*. New York, Routledge

_____ (2005): *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York, Fordham University Press.

_____ (2009a): *Frames of War. When Is Life Grievable?* London/New York, Verso.

Butler, Judith, and Malabou, Catherine (2010) : « *You Be My Body For Me: Body, Shape and Plasticity in Hegel's Phenomenology of the Spirit* » in Houlgate, Stephen, and Baur, Michael (2011) *A Companion to Hegel*. London, Blackwell, pages 611-640.

Butler, Judith (2015a): *Senses of the Subject*. New York, Fordham University Press.

Canguilhem, Georges (1943): *Le normal et le pathologique*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

Cavarero, Adriana (1997): *Relating Narratives. Storytelling and Selfhood*. New York, Routledge. Translation by Paul A. Kottman.

Cevasco, Rithée (2010): *La discordancia de los sexos. Perspectivas psicoanalíticas para un debate actual*. Barcelona, Ediciones S & P.

Copjec, Joan (1994): « Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason » in *Read My Desire. Lacan Against the Historicists*. Cambridge, MIT Press, pages 208-236.

_____ (2012): "The Sexual Compact", in *Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 17:2, pages 31-48.

Derrida, Jacques (1983): « *Geschlecht. Différence sexuelle, différence ontologique* » in *Cahiers de l'Herne n° 45 : Heidegger*. Paris, Galilée, pages 436-447.

Derrida, Jacques (1967): *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1988): *Limited Inc*. Evanston, Northwestern University Press. Translation by Gerald Braff. Mainly the section untitled "Signature, Event, Context", pages 1-23. Translation by Gerald Braff.

Descartes, René (1641): *Discours de la méthode*. Paris, J. Vrin (1970).

_____ (1637): *Méditations métaphysiques*. Paris, J. Vrin (1965).

Foucault, Michel (1971a): *L'ordre du discours* Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (1971b): « Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire », in Bachelard, Suzanne; Canguilhem, Georges; Dagogner, François; Foucault, Michel; Gueroult, Martial; Henry, Michel; Laplanche, Jean; Pariente, Jean-Claude, and Serres, Michel (1971): *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, pages 145-172.

_____ (1975): *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Paris Gallimard.

_____ (1976): *Histoire de la sexualité I : la volonté de savoir*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (1976): « Le dispositif de sexualité : Enjeu » in *Histoire de la sexualité I: la volonté de savoir*, Paris, Gallimard, pages 99-120.

_____ (1978) : « Le vrai sexe » in *Herculine Barbin, dite Alexina B.*, Paris, Gallimard, pages 7-17.

Freud, Sigmund (1905): *Three Essays on Sexuality*, in the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume VII "A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works (1901-1905)". London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1913): *Totem and Taboo* in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIII "Totem and Taboo and Other Works". London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1915c): *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIV "On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement, Papers on Meta-psychology and Other Works (1914-1916)". London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1917): *Mourning and Melancholia*, in the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XVII “An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works (1917-1919)”. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis. Translation by James Strachey (1953-1974)

_____ (1919): *The Odd One In*, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XVII “An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works (1917-1919)” (1953-1974). London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1920g): *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XVIII “Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works (1920-1922)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1923): *The Ego and the Id* in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIX “The Ego and the Id and Other Works (1923-1925)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1954). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1924): *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIX “The Ego and the Id and Other Works (1923-1925)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1925): « Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes », in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIX “The Ego and the Id and Other Works (1923-1925)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1930): *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XXI “The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents and Other Works (1927-1931)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

González, Ana Cecilia (2013, unpublished): *Lacan y el pensamiento contemporáneo. Usos y estatutos del cuerpo*.

Haraway, Donna (1991): *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York, Routledge.

Heidegger, Martin (1927): « B. The everyday Being of the “there”, and the falling of the *Dasein* » in *Being and Time*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell (1962). Translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, pages 210-224.

Hyppolite, Jean (1946): *Génèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de Hegel*. Paris, Aubier, II volumes.

Jakobson, Roman (1957): « Shifters, verbal categories, and the Russian verb » in *Selected Writings. Word and Language*. The Hague, Mouton, volume II, page 132.

Julien, Philippe (1985): « Mon cher semblable, mon miroir » (pages 43-52) and « La chose lacanienne » in *Pour lire Lacan. Le retour à Freud*. Paris, E.P.E.L. (1990), pages 43-52, and pages 63-72.

Kant, Immanuel (1787): *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1998). Translation by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood.

Kojève, Alexandre (1947): *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*. Paris, Gallimard.

Kristeva, Julia (1980): *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: essai sur l'abjection*. Paris, Le Seuil.

Lacan, Jacques (1966): « Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du *Je* » in *Écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 93-100.

_____ (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1973): « La pulsion partielle et son circuit » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI : Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 159-170.

_____ (1975a): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre I : Les écrits techniques de Freud. 1953-1954*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1975a): « Idéal du moi et moi-idéal » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre I : Les écrits techniques de Freud. 1953-1954*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 205-226.

_____ (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1978): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II : Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse 1954-1955*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1978): « Une définition matérialiste du phénomène de conscience » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II : le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique psychanalytique 1954-1955*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 61-78.

_____ (1986): « *Das Ding* » and « *Das Ding II* » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII : L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil., pages 55-86.

_____ (1986): « Antigone entre les deux morts », in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII: L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 270-290.

_____ (1986): « Les paradoxes de l'éthique *ou* As-tu agis en conformité avec ton désir ? » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII : L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 359-376.

_____ (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: L'envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1991): « Production des quatre discours », and « Le champ lacanien » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII : l'envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 9-30, and pages 79-98.

_____ (2011): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XIX: ...ou pire 1971-1972*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2013) : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI : Le désir et son interprétation 1958-1959*. Éditions de la Martinière- Le Champ Freudien.

_____ (2013) : « Construction du graphe » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI : le désir et son interprétation 1958-1959*. Paris, Éditions La Martinière-Le Champ Freudien, pages 11-36.

_____ (2013): « L'objet Ophélie » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI: Le désir et son interprétation 1959-1960*. Paris, Éditions de La Martinière-Le Champ Freudien, pages 363-382.

_____ *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XXII: RSI 1974-1975* (non-published and for electronic use only. Association Lacanienne Internationale. Edited by Charles Melman).

_____ *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XXI: Les non dupes errent 1973-1974.* (non-published and for electronic use only. Association Lacanienne Internationale. Edited by Charles Melman).

Lafuente, Carmen (2003): « Actualidad del transexualismo » in www.psicoolisisysociedad.org.

Levinas, Emmanuel (1947): *Le Temps et l'Autre*. Paris, Fata Morgana.

_____ (1961): *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l'extériorité*. Paris, Le Livre de Poche.

_____ (1978): *De l'existence a l'existant*. Paris, J. Vrin.

_____ (1982): *Éthique et Infini*. Paris, Fayard.

_____ (1990): *Autrement qu'être ou Au-delà de l'essence*. Paris, Le Livre de Poche.

Malabou, Catherine (1996): *L'avenir de Hegel: plasticité, temporalité, dialectique*. Paris, Vrin.

Nancy, Jean-Luc (1992): *Corpus*. Paris, Galilée (2000).

_____ (1992): « Psyche ist ausgedehnt » in *Corpus*. Paris, Galilée (2000), pages 22-25.

_____ (1997) : *Hegel. L'inquiétude du négatif*. Paris, Hachette.

_____ (2001): *L' " il y a " du rapport sexuel*, Paris, Galilée

_____ (2004): *58 indices sur le corps. Extension de l'âme*. Montréal, Éditions Nota bene.

Narrow, William E.; First, Michael B.; Sirovatka, Paul J, and Regier, Darrel A. (2007): *Age and Gender Considerations in Psychiatric Diagnosis. A Research Agenda for DSM-V*. Arlington, American Psychiatric Association.

Nietzsche, Friedrich W. (1873): *On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense*. New York, Aristeus Books (2012). Translation by Paul F. Glenn.

_____ (1887): *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Cambridge, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (1994). Translation by Carol Diethe.

Preciado, Beatriz (2000): *Manifiesto Contrasexual*. Barcelona, Anagrama

Rius, Mercè (2014): *Contra filósofos, o ¿en qué se diferencia una mujer de un gato?* Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva.

Rubin, Gayle (1975): « The Traffic in Women: Notes on the “Political Economy” of Sex » in Reiter, Rayna (ed., 1975): *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York, Monthly Review Press, pages 27-62.

Sartre, Jean-Paul (1943): *L'être et le néant. Essai d'une ontologie phénoménologique*. Paris, Gallimard.

Saussure, Ferdinand de (1916): *Cours de linguistique générale*. Paris, Payot.

Soler, Colette (2009): *Lacan, l'inconscient réinventé*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

_____ (2011): *Les affects lacaniens*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

Spinoza, Baruch (1661-1675): *Ethics*. Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company. Translation by Samuel Shirley (2002).

Spivak Chakravorty, Gayatri (1987): *In Other Words: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York, Routledge.

Wittig, Monique (1985): “La Pensée Straight” in *Questions féministes*, n. 7.

Zizek, Slavoj (1989): *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London/New York, Verso.

_____ (1999): « Passionate (Dis)Attachments, or Judith Butler as a Reader of Freud », in *The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London/New York, Verso, pages 247-312.

Zupancic, Alenka (2013): « Diferencia sexual y ontología » in Saez Tajafuerce, Begonya, and González, Ana Cecilia (eds., 2013): *Ser-para-el-sexo. Diálogo entre filosofía y psicoanálisis*. Barcelona, Ediciones S&P, pages 23-46. Translation by Ana Cecilia González.

DANGEROUS LIAISONS: DESIRE AND VIOLENCE

Agamben, Giorgio (1995): *Homo sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, Stanford University Press (1998). Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen.

The American Psychiatric Association (1987): *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

_____ (1994): *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV*. Washington D.C., American Psychiatric Association.

Austin, John L. (1962): *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford, Oxford Clarendon Press.

Badiou, Alain (1988): *L'être et l'événement*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2010): *La philosophie et l'événement*. Paris, Germina.

Barad, Karen (2001): « Reconfiguring Space, Time, and Matter » in Dekoven, Marianne (ed., 2001): *Feminist Locations. Global and Local, Theory and Practice*. Piscataway, Rutgers University Press.

Benjamin, Walter (1921): « Critique of Violence » in *Reflections. Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. New York, Schocken Books (1978). Translation by Edmund Jephcott, pages 277-300.

_____ (1968): « Theses on the Philosophy of History » in *Illuminations*. New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Translation by Harry Zohn, pages 253-264.

Braidotti, Rosi (2013): « The Inhuman : Life beyond Death » in *The Posthuman*. Cambridge, Polity Press, pages 105-142

Brugère, Fabienne, and LeBlanc, Guillaume (eds., 2009): *Judith Butler. Trouble dans le sujet, trouble dans les normes*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

Butler, Judith (1990): *Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, Routledge.

_____ (1993): *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York, Routledge.

_____ (1993): « Phantasmatic Identification and the Assumption of Sex » in *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York, Routledge, pages 93-120.

_____ (1997a): *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.

_____ (1997b): *Excitable Speech. The Politics of the Performative*. New York, Routledge.

Butler, Judith, and Spivak Chakravorty, Gayatri (2007): *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Power, Belonging*. London/New York/Calcutta, Seagull.

Butler, Judith, and Athanasiou, Athena (2013): *Dispossession. The Performative in the Political*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

Copjec, Joan (1994): « Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason » in *Read My Desire. Lacan Against the Historicists*. Cambridge, MIT Press, pages 208-236.

_____ (2013): « The Censorship of Interiority » in Copjec, Joan and Jöttkandt, Sigi (eds., 2013): *Penumbra(a)*. Melbourne, re.press, pages 239-264.

Dolar, Mladen (2006): *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge, MIT Press.

Foucault, Michel (1963): *Naissance de la clinique. Une archéologie du regard médical*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

_____ (1966): *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (1975): *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (1975): « La punition généralisée » and « Les corps dociles » in *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Paris, Gallimard, pages 75-81, and pages 137-171.

_____ (1976): « Droit de mort et pouvoir sur la vie » in *Histoire de la sexualité I: la volonté de savoir*. Paris, Gallimard, pages 175-211.

_____ (1984a): *Histoire de la sexualité 2 : L'usage des plaisirs*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (1984b) : *Histoire de la sexualité 3 : Le souci de soi*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (1997): « Cours du 7 janvier 1976 » in « *Il faut défendre la société* ». *Cours au Collège de France*. Paris, Gallimard, pages 6-19.

_____ (1999) : *Les anormaux. Cours au Collège de France 1974-1975*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (2001): *L'herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France 1981-1982*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (2004a): *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France 1977-1978*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (2004b): *Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France 1978-1979*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (2009): *Le corps utopique. Les hétéropies*. Paris, Éditions Lignes.

_____ (2013): *La société punitive. Cours au Collège de France 1972-1973*. Paris, Gallimard.

Freud, Sigmund (1905): *Three Essays on Sexual Theory* in Gay, Peter (ed., 1989): *The Freud Reader*. London/New York, Norton & Company, pages 239-292. Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1905): *Three Essays on Sexual Theory*, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume VII “A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works (1901-1905)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953-1974. Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1913): *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurosis* in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIII “Totem and Taboo and Other Works (1913-1914)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1914): « On Narcissism: An Introduction » in Gay, Peter (ed., 1989): *The Freud Reader*. London/New York, Norton & Company, pages 545-561.

_____ (1915): *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XIV “On the History of the Psychoanalytical Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works (1914-1916)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953-1974. Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1917): *Mourning and Melancholia*, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XVII “An Infantile Neurosis

and Other Works”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1921): *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. London, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1949). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1930): *Civilisation and Its Discontents* in Gay, Peter (ed., 1989): *The Freud Reader*. London/New York, Norton & Company, pages 722-772. Translation by James Strachey.

González, Ana Cecilia (2014): « Cuerpo y performatividad : una revisión crítica desde el psicoanálisis » in *Daimon. Revista Internacional de Filosofía*, n. 63: 131-146.

Hegel, G.W.F. (1821): *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1991). Translation by H.B. Nisbet.

Heidegger, Martin (1936): *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press (2012). Translation by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu.

Kant, Immanuel (1785): *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. New York, Broadview Press (2005). Translation by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott.

_____ (1788): *Critique of Practical Reason*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (2015). Translation by Mary Gregor.

Lacan, Jacques (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1975a): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre I: Les écrits techniques de Freud 1953-1954*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX : Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1978): « Du discours psychanalytique » in *Lacan in Italia/Lacan en Italie*. Milan, Salamandra, pages 32-55.

_____ (1986): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII: L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII: l'envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil.

Laclau, Ernesto, and Mouffe, Chantal (1985): *Hegemony and the Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London/New York, Verso.

McNay, Lois (1992): « Power, Body and Experience » in *Foucault and Feminism*. Cambridge, Polity Press, pages 11-47.

Nietzsche, Friedrich W. (1872): *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *The Basic Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*. New York, Modern Library (2000). Translation by Walter Kaufmann.

_____ (1882): *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. New York, Vintage Books (1974). Translation by Walter Kaufmann.

_____ (1886): *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. New York, Random House (1966). Translation by Walter Kaufmann.

_____ (1887): *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Cambridge, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (1994). Translation by Carol Diethe.

_____ (1888): *Ecce homo*. New York, Vintage Books (1967). Translation by Walter Kaufmann.

Rose, Nikolas (2007): « Biopolitics in the Twenty-First Century » in *Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, pages 9-40.

Sawicki, Jana (1991): « Foucault and Feminism: A Critical Reappraisal » in *Disciplining Foucault. Feminism, Power, and the Body*. New York, Routledge, pages 95-110.

Soler, Colette (2011): *Les affects lacaniens*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

Soley-Beltran, Patrícia (2009): *Transexualidad y la matriz heterosexual. Un estudio crítico de Judith Butler*. Barcelona, Edicions Bellaterra.

Spivak Chakravorty, Gayatri (1988): « Can the Subaltern Speak? » in *Selected Subaltern Studies* (edited with Guha, Ranajit). Oxford, Oxford University Press, pages 66-111.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1953): *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers (2001). Translation by G. E. M. Anscombe.

Zizek, Slavoj (1992): *Enjoy Your Symptom!* London, Routledge.

_____ (1999): *The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London/New York, Verso.

_____ (1999): « Passionate (Dis)Attachments, or, Judith Butler as a Reader of Freud », in *The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London/New York, Verso, pages 247-312.

_____ (2000): « *Da Capo Senza Fine* » in Butler, Judith; Laclau, Ernesto, and Žižek, Slavoj (2000): *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London/New York, Verso, pages 213-262.

_____ (2008): *Violence*. London, Profile Books LTD.

_____ (2014): *Event : A Philosophical Journey Through a Concept*. New York, Penguin.

Electronic sources:

Ajuntament de Barcelona (2015): *Guia de recursos per a persones trans de la ciutat de Barcelona*.

(w110.bcn.cat/DretsCivils/Continguts/Multimedies/GUIA_RECURSOS_TRANS.pdf).
<http://www.naciodigital.cat/noticia/118436/persones/transsexuals/podran/canviar/sexe/sense/diagnostic/psiquiatric>

BIO-POLITICS, PATHOLOGIZATION AND PRECARIOUSNESS

Agamben, Giorgio (1995): *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, Stanford University Press (1998). Translation by Daniel Heller-Roazen.

Allouch, Jean (2001): *Le sexe du maître. L'érotisme d'après Lacan*. Paris, Exils.

Arendt, Hannah (1958): *The Human Condition*. Chicago, Chicago University Press.

The American Psychiatric Association (1987): *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

_____ (1994): *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV*. Washington D.C., American Psychiatric Association.

_____ (2013): *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V*. Washington D.C., American Psychiatric Association.

Badiou, Alain (2009): *Éloge de l'amour*. Paris, Flammarion.

- Balibar, Étienne (2010): *Violence et civilité: Wellek Library Lectures et autres essais de philosophie politique*. Paris, Éditions Galilée.
- Braidotti, Rosi (2013): *The Posthuman*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Butler, Judith (1997a): *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Butler, Judith, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek (2000a): *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues in the Left*. London/ New York, Verso
- _____ (2004a): *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London/New York, Verso.
- _____ (2004b): *Undoing Gender*. New York, Routledge.
- _____ (2005): *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York, Fordham University Press.
- _____ (2005): « Responsibility. Laplanche and Levinas: The Primacy of the Other » in *Giving An Account of Oneself*: New York, Fordham University Press, pages 88-94.
- _____ (2009a): *Frames of War. When is Life Grievable?* London/New York, Verso.
- Butler, Judith, and Athanasiou, Athena (2013): *Dispossession. The Performative in the Political*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Campaña Estatal por el Cierre de los CIE (2014): *Paremos los vuelos. Las deportaciones de inmigrantes y el boicot a Air Europa*. Madrid, Cambalache.
- Cevasco, Rithée (2010): *La discordancia de los sexos. Perspectivas psicoanalíticas para un debate actual*. Barcelona, Ediciones S&P.
- Cleminson, Richard, and Medina Doménech, Rosa (2004): « ¿Mujer u hombre? Hermafroditismo, tecnologías médicas e identificación del sexo en España, 1860-1925 » in *Dynamis*, n.24: 53-91.
- Coll-Planas, Gerard (2010): *La voluntad y el deseo. La construcción social del género y la sexualidad: el caso de lesbianas, gays y trans*. Barcelona, Egales.
- Coll-Planas, Gerard, and Missé, Miquel (2010): *El género desordenado. Críticas en torno a la patologización de la transexualidad*. Barcelona, Egales.
- Copjec, Joan (1994): « Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason » in *Read My Desire. Lacan Against the Historicists*. Cambridge, MIT Press, pages 208-236.

- Davis, Angela (1983): *Women, Race, and Class*. New York, Vintage Books.
- _____ (2003): *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Toronto, Open Media.
- Dean, Tim (2000): *Beyond Sexuality*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- _____ (2003): « Lacan and Queer Theory » in Rabaté, Jean-Michel (ed., 2003): *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pages 238-252.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari (1972): *L'Anti-Oedipe. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit.
- _____ (1980): *Capitalisme et schizophrénie : Mille Plateaux*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Derrida, Jacques (1993): *Spectres de Marx*. Paris, Galilée.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne (1993): « The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough » in *Sciences*. New York, March/April 1993, pages 20-24.
- _____ (2000): *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York, Basic Books.
- Federici, Silvia (2004): *Caliban and the Witch*. New York, Autonomedia.
- _____ (2012): *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. New York, PM Press.
- Fink, Bruce (1995): *The Lacanian Subject. Between Language and Jouissance*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Foucault, Michel (1963): *Naissance de la clinique. Une archéologie du regard médical*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- _____ (1976): *Histoire de la sexualité 1 : La volonté de savoir*. Paris, Gallimard.
- _____ (1978): « Le vrai sexe » in *Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B*. Paris, Gallimard, pages 7-17.
- _____ (1984a): *Histoire de la sexualité 2: L'usage des plaisirs*. Paris, Gallimard.
- _____ (1997): « Il faut défendre la société » *Cours au Collège de France 1975-1976*. Paris, Gallimard.
- _____ (2004a): *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France 1977-1978*. Paris, Gallimard.

_____ (2004b): *Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France 1978-1979*. Paris, Gallimard.

Freud, Sigmund (1905): *Three Essays on Sexual Theory* in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume VII “A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works (1901-1905)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

Freud, Sigmund (1917): « Mourning and Melancholia » in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XVII “An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works (1917-1919)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1919): « The Odd One In » in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XVII “An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works (1917-1919)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.

_____ (1921): *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1949). Translation by James Strachey.

González Vázquez, Araceli (2009): « Michel Foucault, Judith Butler y los cuerpos e identidades críticas, subversivas y deconstructivas de la Intersexualidad » in *Isegoría*, n. 40: 235-244.

Gozlan, Oren (2015): *Transsexuality and the Art of Transitioning*. New York, Routledge.

Hirschfeld, Magnus (1910): *The Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress*. New York, Prometheus Books (2000). Translated by Michael A. Lombardi-Nash.

_____ (1914): *Homosexuality of Men and Women*. New York, Prometheus Books, (2000). Translated by Michael A. Lombardi-Nash.

Hocquenghem, Guy (1972): *Le désir homosexuel*. Paris, Éditions Fayard.

hooks bell (1982): *Ain't I A Woman? Black Women and Feminism*. London, Pluto Press.

Lacan, Jacques (1966): « D'une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose » in Lacan, Jacques (1966) : *Écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 531-584

_____ (1966): « La signification du phallus » in Lacan, Jacques (1966) : *Écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 685-696.

_____ : *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. L'acte psychanalytique 1967-1968* (non-published. Association Lacanienne Internationale. Edited by Charles Melman.

_____ (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX : Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1978a): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II : Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse 1954-1955*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1978b): « Du discours psychanalytique » in *Lacan in Italia/Lacan en Italie*. Milan, Salamandra, pages 32-55.

_____ (1981): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre III : Les psychoses 1955-1956*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1986): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII: L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII : L'envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2001): « Télévision » in *Autres écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 509-546.

_____ (2004): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre X : L'angoisse 1962-1963*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2005): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XXIII: Le sinthome 1975-1976*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2011): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XIX : ...ou pire 1971-1972*. Paris, Le Seuil.

Laclau, Ernesto, and Chantal Mouffe (1985): *Hegemony and the Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London/ New York, Verso.

Laclau, Ernesto (1996): *Empancipation(s)*. London/ New York, Verso.

_____ (2005): *On Populist Reason*. London/ New York, Verso.

Lafuente, Carmen (2003): « Actualidad del transexualismo » in <http://psicoanalisisysociedad.org/Textos/Actualidad%20del%20transexualismo-%20C.Lafuente.pdf>.

Laqueur, Thomas (1990): *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

- Lawrence, Dana J. (2007): « The Four Principles of Biomedical Ethics: A Foundation for Current Bioethical Debate » in *Journal of Chiropractic Humanities*, 2007: 34-40.
- Leclercq, Frédéric (2006): « Lacan on the Capitalist Discourse : Its Consequences for Libidinal Enjoyment and Social Bonds » in *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, n. 11: 74-83.
- Lorey, Isabell (2012): *State of Insecurity. Government of the Precarious*. New York, Routledge (2015). Translation by Aileen Derieg.
- Lucas, Javier de (2002): « La herida original de las políticas de inmigración. A propósito del lugar de los derechos humanos en las políticas de inmigración » in *Isegoría*, n. 26: 59-84.
- Miller, Franklin G.; Fins, Joseph J., and Bacchetta, Matthew D. (1996): « Clinical Pragmatism: John Dewey and Ethical Pragmatism » in *Journal of Contemporary Health Law & Policy*, n. 13, 1: 27-51.
- Millot, Catherine (1983): *Horsexe. Essai sur le transsexualisme*. Paris, Points Hors Ligne.
- Missé, Miquel (2012): *Transsexualitats. Altres mirades possibles*. Barcelona, Edicions Bellaterra.
- Mbembe, Achille (2003): « Necropolitics » in *Public Culture*, 15(1). Durham, Duke University Press, pages 11-40. Translation by Libby Meintjes.
- Money, John, and Tucker, Patricia (1975): *Sexual Signatures on Being a Man or a Woman*. New York, Little Brown & Co.(1996): *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl: Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity*. Northvale, N.J.
- Money John, and Ehrhardt, Anke (1996): *Man & Woman, Boy & Girl: Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity*. Northvale, N.J.
- Morel, Geneviève (2000): *Ambigüïtés sexuelles. Sexuation et psychose*. Paris, Economica.
- _____ (2000): « Psychoanalytical Anatomy » in Salecl, Renata (ed., 2000): *Sexuation*. Durham/London, Duke University Press. Translation by Sina Najafi and Marina Harss.
- _____ (2011): *Sexual Ambiguities. Sexuation and Psychosis*. London, Karnac. Translation by Lindsay Watson.
- Prearo, Massimo (2014): *Le moment politique de l'homosexualité. Mouvements, identités et communautés en France*. Lyon, Presses Universitaires de Lyon.
- Preciado, Paul B. (2000): *Manifiesto contra-sexual*. Barcelona, Anagrama.

- _____ (2008): *Testo Yonki: Sexo, drogas y biopolítica*. Madrid, Espasa-Calpe.
- Quintanas, Anna (ed., 2013): *El trasfondo biopolítico de la bioética*. Girona, Documenta Universitaria.
- Ríos, Julián; Santos, Eduardo, and Almeida, Cristina (2014): *Manual para la defensa de los derechos humanos de las personas extranjeras encerradas en los Centros de Internamiento*. Donostia, Editorial Gakoa.
- Rose, Nikolas (2007): *The Politics of Life Itself*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Shildrick, Margrit, and Mykitiuk, Roxanne (2005): *Ethics of the Body. Postconventional Challenges*. Cambridge, MIT Press.
- Soler, Colette (2000): « The Curse on Sex » in Salecl, Renata (ed., 2000): *Sexuation*. Durham/London, Duke University Press. Translation by Sina Najafi and Marina Harss.
- _____ (2003): *Ce que Lacan disait des femmes: Un étude psychanalytique*. Paris, Éditions du Champ Lacanien.
- _____ (2003): « The Paradoxes of the Symptom in Psychoanalysis » in Rabaté, Jean-Michel (ed., 2003): *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pages 86-101.
- _____ (2009): *Lacan, l'inconscient réinventé*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- _____ (2011a): *Les affects lacaniens*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- _____ (2011b): *Incidencias políticas del psicoanálisis. 45 textos, ensayos y conferencias*. Barcelona, Ediciones S&P. Translation by Rithée Cevasco.
- Soley-Beltran, Patricia (2009): *Transexualidad y matriz sexual: un estudio crítico de Judith Butler*. Barcelona, Edicions Bellaterra.
- Stavrakakis, Yannis, and Chrysoloras, Nikos (2006): « (I Can't Get No) Enjoyment: Lacanian Theory and the Analysis of Nationalism » in *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, n. 11: 144-163.
- Stavrakakis, Yannis (2007): *The Lacanian Left. Psychoanalysis, Theory, Politics*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Sucasas, Alberto (2000): « Anatomía del Lager. (Una aproximación al cuerpo concentracionario) » in *Isegoría*, n. 23: 197-207.
- Zafiropoulos, Markos (2010): *Dicen que dijeron de lo social... Freud y Lacan. Cinco ensayos de antropología psicoanalítica*. Barcelona, Ediciones S&P. Translation by Rithée Cevasco.

Zizek, Slavoj (ed., 1998): *Cogito and the Unconscious*. Durham/London, Duke University Press.

Electronic sources

http://elpais.com/diario/2010/06/13/eps/1276410414_850215.html.

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/>

<http://www.npr.org/2016/01/30/464995788/zika-virus-reignites-abortion-debate-in-brazil>

<https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2012/02/11/pdfs/BOE-A-2012-2076.pdf>.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=On1pxx-PAU8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSXZSdMmRdg>

https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2009-19949.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/10/germany-third-gender-birth-certificate>.

<http://www.tv3.cat/30minuts/reportatges/1984/Transit-menors-transsexuals>

http://www.idemtv.com/es/2016/04/14/transsexualitat-david-i-goliat/?fb_action_ids=10154496532551494&fb_action_types=og.shares.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-suicide-attempts-alarming-transgender-20140127-story.html#ixzz2rnTOn3ZM>

<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0016885>

<http://www.revistapsicologia.uchile.cl/index.php/RDP/article/viewFile/25835/27163>

<https://directa.cat/opcions-davant-realitat-trans-son-trencar-esquemes-trencar-persones>.

http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2010/01/11/actualidad/1263164414_850215.html

<http://www.parlament.cat/document/nom/10b363.pdf>.

<http://www.isna.org/>

http://www.am-abogados.com/archivos/ley_matrimonio_parejas.pdf,

http://cadenaser.com/ser/2005/07/01/espana/1120175411_850215.html.

https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2007-5585

<http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/boja/2014/139/1>.

<http://www.ms.gba.gov.ar/sitios/tocoginecologia/files/2014/01/Ley-26.743-IDENTIDAD-DE-GENERO.pdf>

http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/Guardia-Civil-disparado-balas-media_0_226078058.html

<http://www.poderjudicial.es/stfls/SALA%20DE%20PRENSA/NOTAS%20DE%20PRENSA/Instrucci%C3%B3n%206%20Ceuta-Sobresimiento%20Tarajal.pdf>.

<http://www.eleconomista.es/inmigracion/noticias/5538916/02/14/Fernandez-Diaz-reconoce-el-uso-de-material-antidisturbios-en-Ceuta.html>.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32810887>.

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/refugee-crisis_en

<https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1978-31229>

<https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2014/03/15/pdfs/BOE-A-2014-2749.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iz8ScsBOLVU>.

<http://www.sjme.org/sjme/item/794-expulsiones-expres>

http://www.sosracisme.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SOS_Informe2014_A41.pdf

FEMININE JOUISSANCE AND THE LIMITS OF DISCOURSE: LOVE AND DESIRE

Allouch, Jean (2009): *L'amour Lacan*. Paris, EPEL.

_____ (2015): « L'analyse sera foucauldienne ou ne sera plus » in Laufer, Laurie, and Squerverer, Amos (2015, ed.): *Foucault et la psychanalyse*. Paris, Herman Éditeurs.

Badiou, Alain (1997): *Saint Paul. La fondation de l'universalisme*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

_____ (2000): « What Is Love? » in Salecl, Renata (ed., 2000): *Sexuation*. Durham/London, Durham University Press, pages 263-281.

_____ (2005): *Le Siècle*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2009): *Éloge de l'amour*. Paris, Flammarion.

Badiou, Alain, and Cassin, Barbara (2010): *Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel. Deux leçons sur « L'étourdit » de Lacan*. Paris, Fayard.

Bataille, Georges (1957): *L'Érotisme*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit.

_____ (1961): *Les larmes d'Éros*. Paris, Jean-Jacques Pauvert.

Bruno, Pierre, Sauret, Marie-Jean (2010): *Deux, l'amour*. Toulouse, Érès.

Bruno, Pierre (2010): *Lacan passeur de Marx. L'invention du symptôme*. Toulouse, Érès.

Butler, Judith (2000a): *Antigone's Claim. Kinship between Life and Death*. New York, Columbia University Press.

Cacciari, Massimo (1990): *Dell'Inizio*. Milan, Adelphi.

- _____ (1997): *L'Arcipelago*. Milan, Adelphi.
- _____ (2009): *The Unpolitical. On The Radical Critique of Political Reason*. Fordham, Fordham University Press. Translation by Massimo Verdicchio.
- Copjec, Joan (2002): *Imagine There's No Woman. Ethics and Sublimation*. Cambridge, MIT Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Felix (1972): *L'Anti-Oedipe. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit.
- _____ (1980): « 28 novembre 1947 – Comment se faire un corps sans organes ? » in *Mille Plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2*. Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, pages 185-204.
- Dolar, Mladen (2006): *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge, MIT Press
- Esposito, Roberto (1988): *Categorie dell'impolitico*. Rome, Il Mulino.
- _____ (1998): *Communitas. Origine e destino della comunità*. Milan, Einaudi.
- Freeland, Charles (2013): *Antigone, in Her Unbearable Splendor. New Essays on Jacques Lacan's « The Ethics of Psychoanalysis »*. State University of New York, Suny Press.
- Freud, Sigmund (1905): *Three Essays on a Sexual Theory*. London, Basic Books (2000). Translation by James Strachey.
- _____ (1920): *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*. London, Penguin (2003). Translation by John Reddick.
- _____ (1921): *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. London, The Hogarth Press (1949). Translation by James Strachey.
- _____ (1930): *Civilisation and Its Discontents* in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, volume XXI “The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works (1927–1931)”. London, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis (1953-1974). Translation by James Strachey.
- Gatian de Clérambault, Gaëtan (1942): *Psychoses passionnelles* in Fretet, J (1942): *Oeuvre psychiatrique réuni et publié sous les auspices du Comité des élèves et des amis de Clérambault*. Paris, Théraplix. Volume IV, pages 309-451
- González, Ana Cecilia (2015): « La *Antígona* de Zizek » in Llevadot, Laura, and Revilla, Carmen (eds., 2015): *Interpretando Antígona*. Barcelona, Editorial UOC, pages 179-198.

Griffith, Mark (2010): « Psychoanalysing *Antigone* » in Wilmer, S.E., and Zukauskaitė, Audrone (ed., 2010): *Interrogating Antigone in Postmodern Philosophy and Criticism*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pages 110-134.

Hegel, G.W.F. (1807): « The law of the heart and the frenzy of self-conceit » and « Virtue and the way of the world » in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford, Oxford University Press (1977). Translation by A.V. Miller, pages 221-235.

_____ (1821): « Development of the Free Will » and « The System of Right » in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1991). Translation by H.B. Nisbet, pages 45-61.

Heidegger, Martin (1927): « Division Two: Dasein and Temporality. I. Dasein's Possibility of Being a Whole, and Being-Towards-Death » in *Being and Time*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers. Translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (1962), pages 279-298.

Honig, Bonnie (2013): *Antigone, Interrupted*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Kierkegaard, Soeren (1847): *Works of Love*. Princeton, Princeton University Press (1949). Translation by Donald F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson.

Lacan, Jacques (1932): *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*. Paris, Le François.

_____ (1966): « Kant avec Sade » in Lacan, Jacques (1966): *Écrits*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 765-792.

_____ *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XV : L'acte psychanalytique 1967-1968* (non-published. Association Lacanienne International. Edited by Charles Melman).

_____ (1973): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XI : Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse 1964*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1975a): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre I : Les écrits techniques de Freud 1953-1954*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1975b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX : Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1975b): « Dieu et la jouissance de La/ femme » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore 1972-1973*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 83-98.

_____ (1978a): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre II : Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse 1954-1955*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1981): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre III: Les psychoses 1955-1956*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1986): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII : L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1986): « La jouissance de la transgression » and « La pulsion de mort » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VII : L'éthique de la psychanalyse 1959-1960*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 225-256.

_____ (1991): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVII : L'envers de la psychanalyse 1969-1970*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (1994): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre IV: La relation d'objet 1956-1957*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2001b): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VIII : Le transfert 1960-1961*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2004): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre X : L'angoisse 1962-1963*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2004): « La cause du désir » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre X: L'angoisse 1962-1963*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 119-134.

_____ (2004): « Passage à l'acte et *acting out* » and « L'angoisse, signal du réel » in *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre X: L'angoisse 1962-1963*. Paris, Le Seuil, pages 135-154, and 185-198.

_____ (2005): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XXIII: Le sinthome 1976-1977*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2007): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XVIII : D'un discours qui ne fut du semblant 1971*. Paris, Le Seuil.

_____ (2013): *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre VI: Le désir et son interprétation 1958-1959*. Paris, Le Seuil.

Laurent, Éric (2007): « Feminine Positions of Being » in Voruz, Véronique, and Wolf, Bodgan (2007, ed.): *The Later Lacan. An Introduction*. Albany, State University of New York Press, pages 222-242.

Le Gaufey, Guy (2006): *Le pastout de Lacan. Consistance logique, conséquences cliniques*. Paris, EPEL.

Martí Soler, Guillem (2015): « La *Antígona* de Lacan » in Llevadot, Laura, and Revilla, Carmen (eds., 2015): *Interpretando Antígona*. Barcelona, Editorial UOC, Pages 113-136.

- Miller, Jacques-Alain (2000): « On Semblances in the Relation » in Salecl, Renata (ed., 2000): *Sexuation*. Durham/London, Duke University Press, pages 13-27.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc (2003): « La muerte robada » in *La representación prohibida*. Buenos Aires, Amorrortu. Translation by Isabel Vericat, pages 55-61.
- Saez Tajafuerce, Begonya (2015): « La Antígona de Butler » in Llevadot, Laura, and Revilla, Carmen (eds., 2015): *Interpretando Antígona*. Barcelona, Editorial UOC, pages 163-178.
- Salecl, Renata (2000): « Love and Sexual Difference: Doubled Partners in Men and Women », in Salecl, Renata (ed., 2000): *Sexuation*. Durham/London, Duke University Press, pages 297-316.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul (1943): *L'être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*. Paris, Gallimard.
- Soler, Colette (2002): « What Does the Unconscious Know about Women? » in Barnard, Suzanne, and Fink, Bruce (eds., 2002): *Reading Seminar XX. Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality*. State University of New York, State University of New York Press, pages 99-108.
- _____ (2003): *Ce que Lacan disait des femmes. Une étude psychanalytique*. Paris, Éditions du Champ Lacanien.
- _____ (2009): *Lacan, l'inconscient réinventé*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- _____ (2011): *Les affectes lacaniens*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.
- Stavrakakis, Yannis (2007): *The Lacanian Left. Psychoanalysis, Theory, Politics*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Wilmer, S.E., and Zukauskaitė, Audrone (2010): *Interrogating Antigone in Postmodern Philosophy and Criticism*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Zizek, Slavoj (1989): *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London/New York, Verso.
- _____ (1992): *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*. London, Routledge.
- _____ (ed., 1998): *Cogito and the Unconscious*. Durham/London, Durham University Press.
- _____ (1999): « Passionate (Dis)Attachments, or, Judith Butler as a Reader of Freud » in *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London/New York, Verso, pages 247-312.

_____ (2000): « Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, please! » in Butler, Judith; Laclau, Ernesto, and Žižek, Slavoj (2000): *Hegemony, Contingency, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues in the Left*. London/New York, Verso, pages 90-135.

_____ (2002): « The Real of Sexual Difference » in Barnard, Suzanne, and Fink, Bruce (eds., 2002): *Reading Seminar XX. Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality*. State University of New York, State University of New York Press, pages 57-76.

_____ (2008): *Violence. Six Sideways Reflections*. New York, Picador.

_____ (2006): *Lacan: The Silent Partners*. London/New York, Verso

Zupancic, Alenka (2000): « The Case of the Perforated Sheet » in Salecl, Renata (ed., 2000): *Sexuation*. Durham/London, Duke University Press, pages 282-296.

_____ (2000): *Ethics of the Real: Kant and Lacan*. London/New York, Verso.

_____ (2003): « Ethics and tragedy in Lacan » in Rabaté, Jean-Michel (ed., 2003): *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pages 173-190.

_____ (2008): *Why Psychoanalysis. Three Interventions*. Aarhus, Aarhus University Press.