

Chapter 3

The Diaspora of Identity. A *Cuir* Look upon Identifications in the Photograph of Lariza Hatrick



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3.1 Introduction

Along the last decade of the twentieth century, the irruption of Judith Butler's ideas questioned the naturalness of the body as a stable and prediscursive foundation of identities (Butler, 2007, 2008). Since then, her concept of *gender performativity* has gained ethical, theoretical, epistemic, and political potential. Although the impact of her ideas has radically questioned the exclusionary logic of identities, queer thought runs a risk of universalizing its theoretical tools, closing its explanatory potential and destroying its critical force. On the basis of this concern, I would like to highlight the fact that no queer postulate – Butlerian or not – configures a transcendent principle able to establish its context of emergence (the epistemological Global North) as a universal and a historical *a priori*.

Judith Butler has pointed out the potential risks of linguistic imperialism. She has also emphasized that we must observe the torsion operation within any language or context (Cano & Fernández Cordero, 2019). The epistemological vigilance that reinforces criticism inherent to queer horizon demands that the situatedness of the production of knowledge be observed. In order to reflect upon our Latin American contexts, we must test the letter of the queer theory that emerges and is amplified in the Anglo-American context against local dissident aesthetic expressions. When Butler (2007) presents gender as a “stylized repetition of acts” (p. 273), we must understand that the stylized character of acts can only be apprehended in concretely situated contexts. The performative aesthetics that hold the potential of becoming subversive are always contextual.

Donna Haraway (1991) affirms that the biased and situated character of the statements of knowledge involves the material, historical, and social conditions under

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which they emerge. Following this approach, in our geographical and political South, the epistemological and ontological reformulations of the queer perspective must be deemed like general ethical-political keys aimed at radically critiquing any version of subjective localization that self-proclaims as an original, authentic, and stable version. Even Butler has affirmed that “normalizing the queer would be, after all, its sad finish” (Butler, 1994, p. 21).

To regard the queer in an abstract and decontextualized way poses, paradoxically, a threat to its critical force. This chapter aims to counteract the normalization of queer theory. With that purpose, we consider a local dissident aesthetic proposal that we will label *cuir*.¹ From the photographic itinerary of a local Argentinian artist, we can extract reflections that allow us to radicalize the criticism regarding queer (North American) thought. It is known that the queer Global North constitutes a sounding board that inevitably imposes on us the conceptual categories from which we view sex and gender dissidences. In our local contexts, queer theoretical tools can only become critical potential through a resistance of the Souths to any form of epistemicide. Subversive appropriations are a requirement when it comes to criticizing the geopolitical mark that the reception of northern theory entails. The interest in challenging the theoretical categories that come from queer theory against local *cuir* aesthetic proposals forces us to examine and restage the abstract letter of the concepts we resort to. *Cuirizing* the queer puts in motion the critical dynamic that detotalizes any pretension of unity, even, paradoxically, that of queer theory.

In this context, the present chapter departs from Judith Butler’s – Foucaultian imprinted – critique of the notions of representation and identity. The concept of identification² is emphasized as a psychoanalytical conceptual resource that queer theory has used to conceive the possibility of dismantling the violence of the norm that imposes identities as supposedly essential, fixed, stable, and coherent constructs, with limits drawn by the rejection and exclusion of the other. Upon a photograph by the Argentinian activist Lariza Hatrick, we suggest *cuir* contributions that aim to indicate the deficiency of postulates that do not radically criticize the limits that organize the *one* and the *other*.³ From some photographs, we speculatively offer

¹From our perspective, adopting a *cuir* perspective does not imply abandoning any theoretical frame generated by hegemonic knowledge factories (located in the Global North). The incorporation of local intellectuals does not guarantee an epistemological overturn capable of subverting hegemonic takes (even within the field of queer studies). We trust the potential of challenging the theoretical categories that we count on with local aesthetic-political proposals. We cannot think outside of the prevailing categories – regardless of their geopolitical origin – but we can critically scrutinize said categories from aesthetic expressions stemming from epistemological Souths.

²Identification is a psychological process in which the self is constructed throughout life. The self assimilates an aspect of another subject. Kaja Silverman (1996) notes the frequent “incorporative logic” through which an “external” element is incorporated into the “internal” psychic organization. Silverman emphasizes the fact that identification also functions through an “excorporative logic” that allows the link with what is different and a transformation that shakes the permanence of *the same* in the heart of identity.

³Butler (2007, 2008) indicates the existence of a discursive space in which the intelligible – what counts as human – is articulated. This matrix of intelligibility has been called *one* -frame of refer-

the notion of *diaspora of identity*. This notion brings us to a more radical epistemological critique of the way in which representation organizes the way of looking. The *diaspora of identity* is an ontological critique of the notion of identity as identical to itself without disregarding the political dimension tied to the vulnerability of the materiality of the bodies marked as abject. We have selected a photograph of Shirley Bombón, a migrant Peruvian *trava*⁴ that lived big part of her life in Argentina. This photograph allows the prioritizing of a *cuir* analysis off-centered of Shirley's *travesti* identity and centered on the way in which the photographs offer technical elements that suggest a pulsional dimension of pure negativity where the representational domain that underlies identities crumbles. Hatrick's work also brings us closer to a notion of *cuir* that does not reject canon queer North American conceptualizations but rather emphasizes the need to clash the abstraction of theory against situated, material, and embodied aesthetical-political expressions.

3.2 Representation and Identity

In the early 1990s queer theory began tackling the issue of identity and representation. Lorey (2017) notes the seminal place that the critique of the idea of representation gains in Butler's thinking that disassembles the idea of representation as a relation of copy with reality. This path leads Butler towards the conflictive relation between matter and sign. From an exclusively linguistic frame of analysis, Butler denies any bond between identities and essences outside language. Identities do not represent extralinguistic substances because they are not copies firmly sustained by natural or necessary foundations. No form of nature prior to signification brings authenticity to some identity positions at the expense of others classified as illegitimate copies.

Butler dismisses the existence of any correspondence with a prelinguistic reality, and the consequence of this affirmation is the dismantling of any fixed and monolithic identity. There are no legitimate or true identities because no gender representation is an identical copy of reality, and this is due to the fact that reality does not preexist representation. In Lorey's words (2017):

Representations operate here as a productive moment in the construction of reality because meaning is established through difference with other signs, with other representations, not through a relation with a referent prior to the process of signification. [...] language does not refer to a reality of previous objects or subjects. It rather produces a rupture with the phenomenological world. In this sense, language is non-representing representation. (p. 105)

ence from which all differences are organized. All lives that do not meet the normative requirements of this (heterosexual) matrix are constituted as *other*, or *abject*.

⁴*Trava* is the short version of the term *travesti* but also covers the category of transgender. The *travesti* collective has appropriated this denomination as an identity claim that positively resignifies its strong derogatory and injurious component.

As of Judith Butler's queer thought, no self-portrait can be deemed true copy of an authentic core – no (self)representation is copy of a substance or inner essence. Perhaps one of the main ethical and political actions of this set of theoretical-aesthetical inquiries (Newton, 1972; Butler, 2007) gathered under the political reappropriation of slurs and abjection (Butler, 2008) resided in noting that under the compact, realistic, and substantial surface of gender, a fluctuating, strictly unstable process effervesces.

Judith Butler highlights the fragile basis of identitary constructions. She also theorizes “the critical dimension of the unconscious which, as a site of repressed sexuality, reemerges within the discourse of the subject as the very impossibility of its coherence” (Butler, 2007, p. 90). Any pretense of coherence can only fail, since “the inadvertent reemergence of the repressed reveal not only that ‘identity’ is constructed, but that the prohibition that constructs identity is inefficacious” (Butler, 2007, p. 90). In this way, Butler denounces the radical instability of all identitary categories. An identity is articulated through repetition, and from this reiterative practice:

acquires its naturalized effect, and, yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labor of that norm. This instability is the reconstituting possibility in the very process of repetition. (Butler, 2008, p. 29)

The immutable and stony sense surrounding the conception of identity – too close to the metaphysics of substance or presence (Flax, 1990) – incited Butler's interest (2008) in explaining the subjective constitution without landing on essential substrates or necessary foundations. That is how the concept of identification – from psychoanalysis – offered an ironic counterpoint to the very notion of identity as well as to its political and ontological complement: the idea of representation.

Identifications point towards the destinies imprinted by the norm. Butler takes an interest in identifications because they never find rest. If identity is stable, like a plot of land, delimited and parceled once and for all, Butler notes that, beneath, multiple identifications gather under the effect of the normative force, consolidating, as a dim effect over time, the body limits and borders of conventional identities. On the other hand, Butler notes that the non-substantial character of identifications reveals the phantasmatic structure of any identity. On a subject level there are no stony identities but rather identifications that find a more or less stable arrangement through the normalizing source of normative schemata (Butler, 2007, 2008), also denominated discursive spaces (Silverman, 1983). In any case, it is a subjectivation matrix that, as such, provides a normative space that makes the subject consist of the alienation of a plausible identity. Butler remarks that “every identification, precisely because it has a phantasm as its ideal, is bound to fail” (Butler, 2007, p. 134).

Identifications that gather under hegemonic gender identities find their course through the imposition of a cultural taboo, a threat of punishment that signals certain identification destinies as sanctionable places (Butler, 2008). Butler states that due to their phantasmatic character:

not all gender identification is based on the successful implementation of the taboo against homosexuality. If feminine and masculine dispositions are the result of the effective internalization of that taboo, and if the melancholic answer to the loss of the same-sexed object is to incorporate and, indeed, to become that object through the construction of the ego ideal, then gender identity appears primarily to be the internalization of a prohibition that proves to be formative of identity. (Butler, 2007, p. 147)

3.3 From Excorporative Identifications to the Diaspora of Identity

Kaja Silverman (1983) observes that Benveniste and – quite frankly – Lacan distinguish two forms referring to the subject in any discursive event: the *speaking subject* and the *subject of speech*. The first participates in discourse as speaker or writer. The second refers to the discursive element with which the first identifies, and in doing so is constituted as an identity, a place in discourse, an effect of a process of production of meaning. Although both forms can only be comprehended in relation to each other, they can never, Silverman states, be collapsed into one unit. They remain inevitably irreducible to each other, separated by the distance between reality and representation.

As a film theorist, Kaja Silverman has expanded the distinction between the *speaking subject* and the *subject of speech* to a variety of wider discursive formations. She differentiates between a level of enunciation and a level of fiction that directly involves photography – even more so if concerning self-portraits. The *photographing subject* is the agency responsible for the capturing of the image. The subject of the photograph, on the other hand, is the fictional character, that figure that irrupts within the narrative of the photograph equivalent to that occupied by the speaker using the first-person pronoun. As we have noted, the way in which modern representation organizes the world establishes the fantasy of a subject whose relation with its own image in photograph is of full identity – photography understood as capture, copy, or register of an original and authentic self.

As stated by Butler (2009), there is no recognition outside normative frames and their keys of intelligibility. Therefore, self-recognition before a self-portrait is a discursive event. Now, how does identification operate in this process? Recognizing oneself in an image (specular or photographic) requires identification with the image. That is how the image is one's own. Butler remarks that any discursive event through which we self-name, self-perceive, and self-recognize assumes the consolidation of an identity which must be understood as a normative frame that constantly regulates the direction of identifications towards the *same* and the *self-identical*. As a counterpart, this process exorcizes alterity and difference – realms that identity's own logic requirements exclude (Weir, 1996).

Silverman (1996) highlights the structuring role that the process of identification plays in identity. Just like Butler, she turns to Lacan's mirror stage to note that identity involves identification with a visual image (Lacan, 1988). Identity keeps its

frontiers insurmountable with the principle that Silverman calls *the self-same body*. Identification ties together the emergent image with the specular image. The normative logic that underlies identity closes the possibility of identifying with visual images that are incongruent with its form. This process constructs identities from the internalization of a limit that restricts mobility and the wide spectrum of identifications. Silverman suggests that the mirror image fulfills a role as limit – it is that which cannot be crossed. The unified sense of identity seems to be sustained in the propagation of this coherence. These identifications constitutive of identity, Silverman affirms, require a constant symbolic confirmation propagated by the normative hegemony that structures (self)recognition.

However, Silverman is interested in “the ego’s ‘otherness’ and its peculiar insistence on ‘self-sameness’” (p.14). She states that the image that identification directs towards implies alterity and fiction. Identification places the image where nothing has existed before and, in this way, enables the array of an identity constitutively clinging onto an image of self that can never be strictly its own. Between identity and the image that grants its existence, there is only an imaginary connection that the identification process upholds at every instant. The complexity of the process increases when Silverman confronts us with the normative dimension that controls the identification destinies that crystalize in identities. After all, normative frames operate as identities. Thus, the look is never one’s *own*, and the dilemma lies in how the cultural look sees and perceives us.

The subject assumes an identity based on culturally constructed images. Identifications take as destinies those hegemonic versions that culture offers as ideals. Identity is articulated according to these ideals that *within* identity reinforce values like totality, unity, and narcissism. When the image is located within the spectrum of the idealized by the culture, identifications reinforce the coherence of identity taking the image as a reflection of self. On the contrary, when the image is deeply dis-idealizing, identifications are interrupted, and the subject experiences it as an external imposition. But let us recall that all images, ideal or not, are external. Aulagnier (2007) offers a psychoanalytical approach to the way in which the socio-cultural register participates in the identificatory construction of the subject. The author states that:

in adhering to the social field, the subject appropriates a series of statements that his voice repeats; this repetition brings him certainty of the existence of a discourse in which the truth about the past is guaranteed, with as its corollary a belief in the possible truth of predictions about the future. (p. 162)

The ideals offered by the discourse of the social set are places where the subject directs its identifications to. Under this dynamic, the subject acts and propagates the sociocultural senses in the same identificatory process through which it is constituted. In Aulagnier’s words:

The ideal subject [...] refers to the idea of itself that the subject demands of the group, as concept, a concept that designates him as an element belonging to a whole that recognizes him as a part homogeneous with it. In return, the group expects the subject to lend his own voice to what was stated by a voice now silent, to replace a dead element and ensure the immutability of the group. (p. 163)

The discourse of the group can be preserved only insofar as the majority of subjects cathect⁵ the same ideal group. The subject needs to project himself into the place of an ideal subject. However, fortunately, those idealized places of language do not always become the normative frames that, through identification, are internalized as hegemonic subjective identities. Silverman (1996) affirms that it is possible to identify with what is culturally disprized. She states that “it is crucial that this identification conform to an externalizing rather than an internalizing logic—that we identify excorporatively rather than incorporatively, and, thereby, respect the otherness” (p. 2).

Before incorporative identifications, which carry idealized models towards a yet to exist self, Silverman suggests the dynamic of the excorporative identifications that opens the possibility for identifications to dissociate from normative circuits and thus embrace difference and alterity breaking the cultural ideal of coherence and unity (Martínez, 2018). It is possible, according to Silverman, to interrupt the *self-same identity*. The politization of identification can be a bridge built towards difference, towards outside ourselves.

Let us examine our local context to grasp the resonances of these postulates in *cuir* ways of life. Let us take some photographs by the Argentinian artist Lariza Hatrick, self-identified as a Third-World lesbian. Her photographic itinerary⁶ is not concerned by technical and aesthetic requirements either – she photographs under the idea of *bursting into images*. This makes complete sense when she tells us that her identity is multiple and that, for some strange reason, she chooses to stand with all her uncertainties, social questionings, and insecurities behind a camera. Guarded by the 35 mm analog color film, she takes pictures to create her own historiography and find in that history a poetics of life. The way in which we understand *cuir* manifests in this local artistic expression tending towards building a refuge for the memory of dissident existences in the city of La Plata (Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina).

Hatrick, among her work, holds a photographic itinerary dedicated to portraying Shirley Bombón, a migrant Peruvian *travesti* determined to identify with abject places. Shirley clarifies for us the complex subjective transactions that occur when identifications distance culturally idealized places and manage to derail from the circuits that respect the normative terms and requirements. Butler (2007, 2008) resorts to the notion of identification, among other conceptual resources, to combat the density and solidity that gravitate around the substantial conceptions of identity, which is no surprise. The circuits of identification define subjective territorialities that can only be upheld through reenactment and repetition over time. There is no original substance that gender represents. Then again, Hatrick’s intriguing photographic work, rich with portraits of *travas*, does not set out to portray Shirley

⁵The concept of cathexis refers to the psychic energy that connects with objects (other people, body parts, representations, etc.).

⁶Hatrick publishes part of her work on her Instagram account [<https://www.instagram.com/lariz-ablood/>]. There, she describes herself as “Third-World non-binary Wittigian lesbian” and her work as “lesbian images, dissident to the cisheterosexual norm.”

performing a part or putting on a mask with no authentic underlying face. Neither, as we have noted, does it seem to affirm that the identification with otherness is capable of subverting the normative division between the hegemonically legitimate and the hegemonically illegitimate. *Cuir* is not a positive identitary attribute – legitimized by the hegemony of normative frames or not. It is not an adjective. *Cuir* rather means that radical negativity that interrupts the normative circuits of identifications and invades identities with a form of alterity that radically escapes any fixed localization of the heterosexual matrix – “negativity that the logos of the subject represses” (Kristeva, 1984, p. 95) (Image 3.1).

Hatrick offers a series of experimental photographs achieved through the mechanical intervention of her camera. Among several portraits of *travas*, *maricas*, and *tortas*,⁷ we will privilege Shirley’s to further our speculations. Shirley faces her mirror, but she appears multiplied and dislocated herself. From the margins, Shirley observes us, invading and contaminating the image. Now her look seems capable of becoming a utopian space of resistance.

Silverman (1996) has made it clear: normative frames project axes of power that organize social differences. These normative frames are discursive spaces where subjectivities are constituted. This process implies the internalization of identities structured under a logic that rejects difference. But even as she emphasizes the possibility of an identification capable of ejecting the subject outside itself, Silverman seems to accentuate the possibility of affirming and reconciling with otherness within sameness. Just like Silverman, Hatrick’s photography might suggest the irruption of otherness within sameness and thus, through the production of the other as implausible, hold the potential of disarticulating the intelligibility that constitutes us as *one* before the *other*. But this would mean continuing to emphasize the

Image 3.1 Photograph by Lariza Hatrick (personal archive). Untitled. Portrait of Shirley Bombón facing her hand mirror



⁷*Marica* can be roughly translated as *faggot* and *torta* as *dyke*. *Trava* was covered in footnote 2. However, we choose to name these identities in Spanish in order to preserve the several sociocultural and historical meanings that they convey. These reappropriations of slurs are deeply rooted in Latin American dissident history.

hegemonic terms that assign its plausibility to image and disregarding that which becomes alienness and radical alterity – the spaces repudiated and inhospitable for our identifications.

In the portrait, neither Shirley nor the spectator competes with one another or fight to be *locus* of representation. It is a dismantling of the terms that organize the point of view and any act of visualization structured by the terms subject/other. With a shifting and unpredictable maneuver, Hatrick's photography forces spectators to continually change their perspective and let go of any stable or absolute position. Shirley is unfolded disturbing the idea of a coherent referent. Inevitably, the point from where we observe Shirley is altered when her sameness spills out of the given identitary limits. Although Shirley crosses the abyss of difference, she is the difference that her own differing produces and embraces. Hatrick's experimental photography – that many would easily indicate as mistaken or flawed – highlights the fiction of in-out, internal-external. Through a small hand mirror, Shirley can see herself turned in the reflection behind her. It is the irruption of a spectral presence that contaminates the very limits between identity and otherness.

Shirley looks at herself in the mirror's reflection and, at the same time, irrupts in her margins and directly observes us. The risky superimposition that the artist accomplishes by manipulating the camera entices us to unfold ourselves – not becoming otherness within ourselves but rather becoming ourselves outside the limits that contain the sense of our identity. By disturbing the logic of identities and not their legitimate or illegitimate staging, Hatrick upsets the coherent comfort of the point we are at and from which we observe not only Shirley in the picture but ourselves. Our involvement as spectators does not need the mirror that Shirley holds in her hand – where she observes herself outside of herself. Hatrick confronts the subject of the photograph and the spectator in the same ontologic situation where sameness and coherence are impossible. The constant process through which identity identifies with herself is continuously undermined by an alterity that, paradoxically, constitutively involves us.

Hatrick leads us to the heart of *cuir*, because her photography confronts us with the implausible – not because it has Shirley, a migrant *travesti* whose gender is ruled as inauthentic under the principles of intelligibility of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 2007), but because it radically disturbs the limits that conventions have sedimented in our gaze. The duplication of otherness exceeding its own limits reveals the constitutive fluctuation and instability of identifications that attempt to maintain any identity as fixed, stable, and under clear and exclusive limits.

Shirley is no longer the other herself – rather, her sameness unfolds into otherness. The image propagates a divided subject whose sameness is thrown outside. Hatrick shows us how Shirley's identity, like our, is continuously undone, and this revelation not only desecrates the rules of modern representation – which feeds the notion of a limiting and limited identity – but also highlights that a disturbing negativity constantly underlies any identity. And this nuisance that ignites the realization of the logic of identities does not refer to the potential malleability of the identificatory circles but to the limit that any attempt of subjective totalization under discursive categories inevitably hits.

Silverman proposes the concept of identity at a distance: the possibility to identify with the other and the difference as a means of contaminating the fixed limits of identity. In her words:

the infant initially responds to the reflection of its body as a separate thing [...] that reflection provides an image in relation to which it somehow orients itself. The reflection offers what, for lack of a better expression, I will call ‘identity-at-a-distance’. Such an identity is, of course, inimical to the very concept implied by that word, which literally means ‘the condition or quality of being the same’. Identity-at-a-distance entails precisely the opposite state of affairs—the condition or quality of being ‘other’. (Silverman, 1996, p. 15)

This is possible due to the – little explored – excorporative character of identifications capable of crossing the difference. However, as suggested by Hatrick’s photography, this conceptual supply is not enough to radically question the criteria that organize exclusion. Before this requirement, I put forward the potential of conceiving a *diaspora of identity*. The idea of identifications in process – linked with Butlerian gender performativity – must be met with another implicated aspect: drive.⁸ Silverman states that the aesthetic work is one which resists our attempts to assimilate the ideal image. Hatrick’s aesthetic work embraces failure and thus opens the way for the irruption of the pulsional dimension that underlies the dispossession and loss of any ideal image of self capable of exorcizing otherness in an absolute way. Regarding this, loss of self in terms of *diaspora* must not necessarily evoke the sense of pain associated with forced and unwilling dispersion or confinement and exile (Gilroy, 1994). If we understand identities with the spatial metaphor of territory and accept the normative violence of operations that divide their plots into discrete exclusive identities, then the banishment of diaspora that we propose here from a *cuir* prism becomes positive dispersion. The diasporic territory involves agitation and dissemination of identifications.

Hatrick allows us to think about the agitation and dispersion of the multiple unfoldings that underlie the dominant and unsustainable fiction of unity and coherence. We are disseminated, fractured not only by an overwhelming difference. After all, any identity is constitutively implicated in otherness. The supposed identity coherence erases the existence of “differences within” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 166). But this is not enough to fracture the normative terms that organize recognition, even less so to admit the loss of ourselves that it entails. Within this frame we propose *cuir* as that potential that dissolves and interrupts the logic that divides the intelligible and the unintelligible to the point that subjective localizations only count for the desiring potential of their situational singularity. This potential comes about in diasporic territory.

⁸Drive refers to a constant force whose source lies within the body. Through drive’s path, sexual satisfaction is attained. According to Freud (1920), drive exceeds and ruins, from the interstices, the normative representations that the self imposes upon sexuality. Drive is a persistent call to a state of stillness and full satisfaction (unattainable), the backdrop that shakes all psychic life. Drive takes us, through the unstoppable realization of desire and fantasy, to a point where the self, its identities, and (hetero)normative mandates shatter.

The diasporic character of the failure of identities refers to the pulsional dimension that unhinges identifications. The *cuir* diaspora refers to a radical negativity that, as such, does not find a place in fixed and stable identitary territories. The dispersion that dissolves identities is attached to the logic of drive that does not exclude pain or death. Thus, *cuir* irrupts in our artist's photographic material with an antisocial characteristic of some contemporary theoretical positions.⁹ If, as Freud (1905/1979) signaled, human sexuality implies the existence of a "polymorphously perverse" (p. 173) stronghold that the demand of sexual identities cannot conquer, then we must recognize the acephalous and antisocial character of these drives that overthrow the wishful ambition of rationally commanding our objects of desire.

The exquisite work of Bernini (2015) allows us to be in contact with those margins of queer theory that understand desire as overflow of the symbolic order. Resorting to the notion of death drive (Freud, 1920/1979), they conceive sexuality as what rationality and order stumble over. The radical uninterest in being assimilated – or even excluded from – a model of humanity appears as the hallmark of Hatrick's political-aesthetical view. Much has been written on this matter. de Lauretis (2008) comments that:

Freud's notion of an unconscious death drive [...] conveys the sense and the force of something in human reality that resists discursive articulation as well as political diplomacy, an otherness that haunts the dream of a common world. [...] I want to recover Freud's suspicion that human life, both individual and social, is compromised from the beginning by something that undermines it, works against it; something that may transcend it not from above or beyond, but from within materiality itself. (de Lauretis, 2008, p. 9)

Freud states that drive is "a concept on the frontier" (Freud, 1915/1979, p. 117) capable of leading us, Teresa de Lauretis signals, to an odd, nonbinary place, a place where categorical oppositions between the psychic and the biological, between the level of the signifier and the materiality of the body, or between the organic and the inorganic no longer stand. Drive confronts us with what dismantles the pretension of coherence of any stable identity. Drives turn identities into heterotopic, nonhomogenous places, places of transit and transformation. The drive is located in an in-between, precisely where there is no room for the binary logic of exclusion (Grosz, 2001) and where we only find constant movement of discompleting fluctuation. Drive is not reducible to the normative pretense of homogenizing our erotic practices, it unhinges our gender identifications and any sedimentation of identitary categories. Therefore, the diaspora of identity marks a non-territorialized area where the death drive lies. There, the implicit or latent cadaver located in the absent core of our impossible identity is constantly insinuated.

⁹Theorists such as Leo Bersani (2010) and Lee Edelman (2004) subscribe to the antisocial thesis of queer thought (Bernini, 2015). They note that Butler heads for the utopian horizon of social rearticulation where multiple identities can legitimately coexist. In the eyes of a queer antisocial positioning, Butler's proposal is frustrating because it shatters the critical potential that the queer element brought along in its early 1990s version. If queer promised a frame to embrace all radical oppositions to the norm, its own unfolding degraded before the force of the taxonomies that Foucault well pointed out in the components that weave together the apparatus of sexuality.

Before the continuous pulsional distotalization, identities face the normative mandate of being reinstalled in a repetition that entails a constant differing, “it is difference as difference, a deferral of any resolution into self-identity” (Butler, 2008, p. 140). Like this, the idea of spatial permanence of the identity territory with no interruptions or temporal scissions hides the existence of a continuous process of self-translation. The idea of permanent identity banishment, typical of the idea of diaspora, dismisses the sacredness of the idea of an original. Alongside Butler, we affirm the nonexistence of an original substrate that petrifies the authenticity of normal subjective localizations. Thus, the diaspora of identity entails pure movement as, since there is no original identity territory, the displacement becomes ontological condition – close to what Butler (1988) has named, in passing, “an ontology of present participles” (p. 521). Subjectivity is deterritorialization, so there is no *other* territory to appeal to widen or question one’s own identity. The *diaspora of identity* allows us to demarcate a chaotic and strange instance for normative pretensions, a spectral area of turbulent pulsional flow that overthrows any pretense of territorialization in frailty and instability.

According to Kristeva (1984) the symbolic dimension where language and its sought after semantic totalization tumble upon the semiotic dimension. This

semiotic chora is no more than the place where the subject is both generated and negated, the place where his unity succumbs before the process of charges and states that produce him. We shall call this process of charges and states a negativity. (p. 28)

Drives lie in that semiotic dimension where “a permanent negativity that destroys the image” (p. 47) that the normative frames impose occurs. The semiotic witnesses the “return of the drive functioning within the symbolic, as a negativity introduced into the symbolic order, and as the transgression of that order” (p. 69). It is impossible to represent the semiotic. The force of the drive is not reducible to any identity. Even when the process of constitution of the subject inevitably adopts the limits that sociosexual identities impose, it is not possible to suffocate the desiring flows. Drive acts as an underlying polymorphous perverse, acephalous, incapable of being organized under nominations proposed by identities.

The blind pulsional spot entails a perverse core, unacceptable for the heteronormative pretense of intelligible identities. Undisciplined drives expose the subject’s defeat. Authors like Bersani (2010) project this disruptive perverse potential capable of even fostering the self-destruction correlating the desiring unfolding of fantasy, the loss of domain and diluted, deregulated meaning. Edelman (2004) suggests the adoption of a figurative identification with death drive as antisocial enjoyment, a figure capable of undoing the senses that integrate identity and heteronormativity (de Lauretis, 2008).

Pulsional negativity is capable of dismantling identifications from the display of the acephalous force that recognizes no ordering in the way of representation that organizes identities. This pulsional dimension that circulates in a hyperbolic manner in areas not legitimized by heteronormativity becomes allegory of the abject and of radical alterity regarding language. The drive underlies as unwanted surplus below all intelligible forms and, at the same time, recognizes no social order. The constant

kindling of the unarticulated in language leads to the failure of the identifications that intertwine conventional identities.

Freud confronts us with a radical dispossession. We have less control over ourselves than the *dictum* of the modern subject and its imperative of rationality and pretense of autonomy might be willing to admit. Affirming that we are pervaded by irrationality means wounding the pretense of totalization that the register of sense intends. Fantasy detotalizes and pulverizes what Deleuze (2002) names as the shackles of symbolic mediation. Identities, in any of their shapes are not exempt from fantasy. Even those identities that gravitate near the heterosexual norm cannot rid themselves of the perverse drama characteristic of fantasy and pulsion.

The categories of drive and unconscious fantasy confront us with the constitutive irrational stain of or subjectivity, as well as undermine the distinction between normal and pathological. This is one of its most important political implications. Every subjectivity must withstand the siege of the anti-communal component, perhaps the rawest form of irruption of the negativity that is intrinsic to death drive. If, as Silverman (1983) and Butler (2007) note, the subject is articulated as such when it finds a place in discourse that makes it intelligible, there is no place for drive there. Drive returns to us a vibrant bodily surface with flows that recognize no predetermined course. It dissolves not only any pretense of biological determinism but also of willfulness and rationality. Antisocial queer theory recognizes the polyvalent forms in which desire is produced, experienced, and expressed. The willful, rational, free, and autonomous self is disturbed by a multiple, polymorphous, perverse sexuality. Desire confronts us with the possibility of being thrown outside ourselves.

What is experienced as desire, fantasy, longing, pain, risk, incoherence, and irrationality does not respond to the logic of identities but to the overflow of drives. Thus, the *cuir* must be preserved as a signifier whose greatest value is recognizing its own limits – as any nomination – when it comes to capturing and totalizing desiring valences. *Cuir* does not mean the diverse identities of those who do not identify as heterosexual. *Cuir* confronts us with the stamp of that negativity that guarantees the impossibility of capturing desire. We must understand *cuir* as the field of dispossession where identities cannot control themselves, where desiring experiences and expressions of pulsional sexuality grow and manifest in those places where the subject collapses, in the shadows of *cuir* excess that slips past the identitary categories that try to produce, institute, discover, capture, and finally control the subject.

The collision between identity and drive is what we here name *diaspora of identity*. The diasporic identity challenges the inevitable emergence of the subject under normative identitary frames with the pulsional negativity that detotalizes the intention of diluting the subject in the level of sense. It also holds in itself the epistemological potential to suspend the idea of frontier. The way in which Butler (2007, 2008) and Silverman (1996) resort to the idea of identification does not question the binary structuration of inclusions and exclusions. Hatrick offers us an aesthetical-political support from which we can suspect the *cuir* potential that we are interested in signaling. Hatrick's art, as Kristeva notes on art in general, is the only means of transgressing and the way of maintaining the symbolic function under the assault of negativity. Her photographic itinerary offers local expressions that find deep echoes

in what Sedgwick (1993) understands as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” (p. 8). In the same way, for Halperin (1995), the term “queer” does not define a person or substantial attribute, or particular identity feature, but rather states a position, “whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant [...] demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative” (p. 62).

3.4 Concluding Remarks

Butler (2007) suggests thinking of identity as *fantasy of a fantasy* to emphasize the absence of an original that provides solid ground for the array of identities. Thus, “the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin” (Butler, 2007, p. 269). As we have stated before, Hatrick is not interested in the processes from which our identities are produced and sustained over time but rather on their dispossession and annihilation. Hatrick’s photographs captured Shirley’s death on August 14, 2018. On this occasion, she crudely portrays a world too small, with no air and no room for aspects like desire, fantasy, contradictions, the instability of identifications, and the pain that flows throughout identities. But the rawness of a big part of her photographic record suggests that Shirley’s death is a moment as poetical as it is political. And thus our *cuir* look must admit the material life of bodies – unquestionably diasporic as the habitat of drive. The *cuir* negativity that we have referred to is linked to the materiality of bodies as affluent of drive. Alongside Kristeva (1984) we regard “negativity as the very movement of heterogeneous matter” (p. 113).

Butler (2009) dedicated ample space in her recent production to the reflection upon the dispossession and vulnerability we are subjected to due to the materiality of our bodily existence. Cavarero (2009) states that every body is vulnerable given that it is always open to the other’s wound. This ontological feature is redoubled when social norms exert violence upon the body and worsen its vulnerability. In Butler’s (2009) terms, *precariousness* becomes *precarity*:

a new bodily ontology, one that implies the rethinking of precariousness, vulnerability, injurability, interdependency, exposure, bodily persistence, desire [...]. The ‘being’ of the body to which this ontology refers is one that is always given over to others, to norms, to social and political organizations that have developed historically in order to maximize precariousness for some and minimize precariousness for others. [...] The more or less existential conception of ‘precariousness’ is thus linked with a more specifically political notion of ‘precarity.’ (p. 15)

Undoubtedly, lack of intelligibility ended Shirley’s material existence. The idea of *diaspora of identity* is not reduced to a discursive trope to epistemologically and ontologically reflect upon identities. The idea of *diaspora* never abandons its sense of forced, unwilling dispersion and the ongoing, continuous pilgrimage or

nomadism that can jeopardize life itself. Shirley is nomadic in several senses. She incarnates the diaspora of identity whose normative consequences are coercion or desertion involving those who unfold the poetic existence of dissolving territorializations. The idea of *diaspora of identity* ontologically questions the notion of identity but, as its denomination evidences, still holds, within, the notion of identity in a political sense. Unquestionably, the course and material existence of abject people imprint political – not ontological – relevance on the notion of identity. The strategic appeal to essentialism is considered by Judith Butler when stating:

My concern is that, if we accept the ruling norms that govern recognition, we might end up abandoning those who are in the margins [...] or creating a new series of margins [...]. I am in favour of 'becoming intelligible' and, at the same time, I am aware of the need to be critical about the ruling forms of intelligibility. (Cano & Fernández Cordero, 2019, p. 26)

Cuir, as we have posed, needs to operate as a political supplement and epistemic vigilance of this strategic essentialism. *Cuir* negativity alerts us about the naturalization/depoliticization of invariable identities covered in an exterior of change and transformation. *Cuir* reflections regarding Hatrick's photographic proposal alert us about the queer turned perfect camouflage for fixed and stable identities.

The political look that Hatrick proposes short-circuits the impregnable distance between identity and otherness, emphasizing that both otherness and identities are unfolded and out of themselves. On one hand, her portrait of Shirley unfolded and dislocated signals that, ontologically, the identification with culturally idealized or dis-idealized identity frames inevitably fails. On the other hand, she invites us to face the experience of deficiency and disintegration of that diaspora that recognizes no identity territory. In this diasporic non-place, drive disturbs identification, and our sameness scatters erasing the frontiers that separate us from otherness. Once again, this does not imply denying the relevance of those political keys that allow us to explain the demonization of certain abject destinies of identification.

Hatrack's photographs suggest that every identity is sieged by drive. The deadly aspect of drive confronts us with a rationality that stumbles upon sexuality (Freud, 1920/1979). It also marks our collective failure of creating space for abject aesthetics signaled as punishable places. Our photographer confronts us with the limits of every identity, with lacking, drive, masochism, desire, pain, fantasy, and the entire dimension of sexuality that locates us outside ourselves and dissolves every identity frontier. In this sense, the notion of *diaspora of identity* refers to a spatial dislocation that annihilates the idea of frontier and, at the same time, denounces the obsession over an inexistent origin. The way in which, here, we prefer to interpret Hatrick's aesthetic proposal suggests that the illusion of domain, self-control, coherence, unity, and stability is culturally projected as a political operation that territorializes the social field in areas where recognition circulates and others where it is denied. In this sense, the notion of *diaspora of identity* highlights the need to recognize the material consequences of those identities that are confined to abject territories.

Hatrack values and eroticizes failure – that thorn in the side of the pretense of coherence – and that is precisely where the potential of her photography lies. She

does not offer a set of subjective identities for us to identify with or redeem. She shows us that diversion, interruption, failure, incoherence, dispossession, and death are a part of the way in which we constantly and ontologically become, are done, and undone. In this sense, Hatrick's photographic work is *cuir*. It makes us look at ourselves from "where we are not," because "there" the fracture of our sameness is more evidently jeopardized – the forces that disturb the identifications that wander around foreign areas. The *diaspora of identity* notes that we simultaneously *are* there where we cannot *be* and *are* here where we are not – that area with no clear territory where we disintegrate in a constitutive failure.

Hatrick's photography allows us to reflect upon the *diaspora of identity* as it suggests more than the existence of identifications that escape the normative mandate that imposes hegemonic identities. Although capable of crossing the abyss of difference, identifications must struggle to recompose stable forms of identity facing the pulsional magma that makes sexuality a quest for pleasure that is acephalous, perverse, and polymorphous. The *diaspora of identity* confronts us with the incoherence, with the drive that dispels identifications from the fantasy of a stable, permanent, and coherent identity. *Cuir* aesthetic leads us, by the hand of Hatrick, to make contact with that negativity that dissolves us and marks the continuous dispossession of ourselves.

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