Border epistemologies: Looking at Almodóvar’s Queer Genders and their implications for Visual Culture Education

Phd Thesis  Belidson Dias
guión y dirección
PEDRO ALMODOVAR
con la colaboración de
Belidson Dias
NUMÉRO TUEURS EN SÉRIE

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**BORDER EPISODEOLOGIES:**
**LOOKING AT ALMODOVÁR'S QUEER GENDERS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR VISUAL CULTURE EDUCATION**

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This thesis is under construction
Abstract

The everyday practices of contemporary art education from grades K-12 are marked by the neglect of the cultural experience of film and the disregard for issues of gender as well as the concealment of issues of sexuality. So it is in the confluence of visual culture, queer theory, art education and film studies that I posit my inquiry. I explore theoretical frameworks for understanding how we look at queer representations of gender and sexuality in visual culture, particularly focusing on Pedro Almodóvar’s filmography and its impact for the teaching and learning of visual culture in higher education and in secondary schools.

The organizing questions are: How do Pedro Almodóvar’s film representations of queer sexuality and gender inform contemporary art education theory and practice? In what ways is the utilization of border epistemologies relevant for understanding representations of genders and sexualities in Almodóvar’s films? How does it inform art education practices? Also, this study fills a gap in the emerging critical literature in art education because, as a study focusing on queer visual representation and border epistemologies, it will consider intersections among these specific sites of knowledge, and such studies are rare in the field.

I adopt a/r/tography and queer theory as my major frameworks because they allow for a transdisciplinary flow of spaces and places in which to engage in dialogue with numerous areas, disciplines and fields of study. The thesis suggests that queer discourses can assist visual culture education to embrace the study of visual representation of social issues - specifically gender and sexuality - as an instrument of critical pedagogy. Further, these discourses confuse and provoke entrenched notions about art, representation, and common sense by continually changing concepts of gender and sexuality, thus encouraging pedagogies of confrontation as opposed to assimilation and uncritical reproduction. These discourses suggest how one might define and establish visual culture education practices, while encouraging interactions between viewer and objects of vision. A discussion of these discourses provides tools for visual culture educators to study cultural domination while empowering and enabling students to become critical producers of meanings and texts as they resist manipulation and domination.
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Dedication

dedicate this thesis to:

Queer borders, queer, thinking, and pedagogy.
Educators concerned with developing visual culture education.
All transgenders who carry on living.
Those who have thought about knowledge and power.
The orixás of Bahia de São Salvador, but particularly Iansã and Shangô.
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evouring: Explaining some terminology to art educators

Since this thesis mainly reflects on film studies and the subjects and concepts of queer theory that are not widely recognized, accepted and used in art education practice, I present here a limited glossary of key concepts employed in this thesis. Based on my experience as an art educator for the past fifteen years, I strongly believe that this introductory explanation of terms will facilitate the reading of this thesis by my chief audiences: secondary visual culture educators, and higher education professors and teachers delivering foundation courses in art schools or involved in teacher education programs. I have structured it in two parts: film terminology and queer studies terminology. Note that the statements below are generalizations because scholars use these same concepts to mean different things.

Film Studies Glossary

Audience - a group of people who engage with media, including films, television, and radio. The audience serves as the basis for spectator studies.

Auteur - in film criticism, a director who so dominates the film-making process that it is appropriate to call her/him the auteur, or author, of the motion picture. The auteur theory holds that the director is the primary person responsible for the creation of a motion picture and thus imbues it with his or her distinctive, recognizable style.

Cinematography - the art of motion picture photography, which involves cameras, film stock, and lighting.

Classical cinema - a style of filmmaking that privileges clarity of narrative. Characters drive the plots, and continuity editing ensures events’ seamless progression

Cult movies - strange, quirky, unusual, or surreal films with a “cult” following. They have outrageous characters or plots which are often considered controversial. They are rare, hard to find and are usually watched over and over again by their admirers.
**Diegesis** - in film, the narrative that includes all the parts of the story including those that are not actually shown on the screen, such as events that have led up to the present action, people who are being talked about or events that are presumed to have happened elsewhere; in fact, all the frames, spaces and actions not focused on visually in the film's main narrative.

**Editing** - the process of arranging shots into scenes, sequences, and, ultimately, a film. Film grammar is defined as follows: A shot is a single continuous recording made by a camera. A scene is a series of related shots. A sequence is a series of scenes that together tell a major part of an entire story, such as that contained in a complete movie.

**Film noir** – genre of films with a grim, urban setting that deal mainly with mysterious and violent passions in a downbeat way, featuring shady characters including the classic femme fatale and the malicious villain.

**Film representation** - how films assign meaning to what they depict, such as social groups.

**Genre**- a French term meaning subject or category; refers to a group of films with similar characteristics such as plots, themes, or styles.

**Kitsch** - art that is considered an inferior copy of an existing style. Kitsch is said to be a gesture imitative of the appearances of art and it is most closely associated with art that is sentimental, self-pitying, or maudlin. It is often said that kitsch relies on merely repeating convention and formula, lacking the creativity and originality displayed in genuine art.

**Melodrama** - as currently used a mildly pejorative word meaning drama primarily characterized by sensational plots with dark subject matter and blatant emotional appeals to conventional sentiment, but which is typically distinguished from tragedy by having a happy ending. When melodrama is used in the pejorative sense, it is usually because the critic feels that the sensationalism of the plot lacks realism, or that the characters are stock heroes and villains with little room for characterization.

**Mise-en-scene** - the elements depicted in the film frame, including lighting,
movement, setting, and costuming. It literally means “staging” - the way in which the elements and components in the film are arranged and encompassed by the camera, or the term usually used to denote that part of the cinematic process that takes place on the set, as opposed to montage, which takes place afterwards.

Montage - the juxtaposition of material (successive shots, or items within a shot) to suggest meaning. That is, a series of short shots edited together to create a certain emotional effect or the art and technique of motion picture editing in which contrasting shots or sequences are used to effect emotional or intellectual responses.

Narration - the various means by which the events of the plot can be placed before the viewer. Also used of voice-over narration, a technique particularly associated with the fatalism of film noir.

Narrative - the story line in a film: the structured series of events, linked by cause and effect, that provides the film’s plots.

Neo-realistm - connected with movement out of the studio, shooting on real locations, sometimes the absence of a script and/or non-professional casts - all designed simultaneously to cut costs and increase the impression of spontaneity.

Parodic film - comedy that satirizes other film genres or classic films. Such films employ sarcasm, stereotyping, and mockery of scenes from other films, inconsequential violence, and the obviousness of meaning in a character's actions.

Slasher film – a sub-genre of the horror film genre. Typically, a masked, psychotic person stalks and kills, in a way that is graphically depicted, teenagers or young adults who are away from adult supervision (and typically involved in premarital sex, drug use, or other illicit activity).

Spectatorship - involves theorizing about the spectator and the nature of the viewing experience. According to Mayne spectatorship is not only the act of watching a film, but also the ways one takes pleasure in the experience, or not; the means by which watching movies becomes a passion, or a leisure-time activity like any other[...]. For spectatorship is not just the relationship that occurs between the viewer and the screen, but also and especially how that relationship lives on once the spectator
leaves the theater. […] Film studies tells us that the difference between experiences of spectatorship is not so much that one is art and the other isn’t, but rather that one kind of spectatorship is “critical”, engaged as it is with the relation between memory and duration, gender and address; while the other is not. One kind of spectatorship makes me think and reflect, while the other makes me act out and forget (1998, pp 2-7).

*Queer Studies Glossary*

**Bisexual** - an individual (female or male) who is attracted to and may form sexual and affectionate relationships with both men and women. However a person does not have to have a relationship to be bisexual and the term does not presume non-monogamy.

**Butch** – a person who is masculine or dresses that way regardless of sex or gender identity. It is usually applied as a sub-identity of lesbian, gay male, or bisexual.

**Closeted, in the closet** – having a concealed identity, as expressed in the phrase “coming out of the closet”. It refers to a person who wishes to keep secret his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. Being “closeted” refers to not disclosing one’s sexual orientation. “Coming out” is the process of first recognizing and acknowledging non-heterosexual orientation to oneself and then disclosing it to others. **Outing** (from “out of the closet”): Publicly revealing the sexual orientation or gender identity of an individual who has chosen to keep that information private.

**Crossdresser** - a general term for anyone who dresses in clothes that are usually considered by society to belong to the opposite sex (including female impersonators, she-males, and gender benders, as well as transgendered people)-- but not necessarily connected to sexual orientation. Cross-dressing is done for a variety of reasons, including entertainment, sexual gratification, or the desire to make a political statement against the rigid gender roles demanded by our society.

**Drag performers** - entertainers who dress and act in styles typically associated with the opposite sex (drag queen for men, drag king for women). Not synonymous with transgender or cross-dressing.

**Drag queen** - A gay man who cross-dresses and often uses exaggerated
stereotypical feminine mannerisms for the entertainment of himself and/or others.

**Drag king** – female-bodied or identified performance artists - usually lesbians or transmen - who dresses in masculine “drag” as part of their routine.

**Fag/Dyke/Queer** - terms frequently used of homosexuals as insults by homophobic people; however they are being reclaimed by some gay and lesbian people who feel that by using them positively, as part of their daily language, they can make the expressions become non-threatening.

**Feminine**: possessing qualities conventionally characteristic of women: conventionally believed to be appropriate for a woman or girl.

**Femme** - displaying feminine or effeminate dress and behavior regardless of sex or gender identity, or a sub-identity of lesbian, gay, or bisexual based on feminine or effeminate dress and behavior.

**FTM** - acronym for “female to male.” A transgendered person who at birth or by determination of parents or doctors, has the biological identity of female but a gender identity of male. Those who have undergone surgery are sometimes described as “post-op FTMs” (for post-operative). See Gender identity and Intersex.

**Gender** - is expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity. It is a term to describe the socially constructed differences between men and women, referring not only to individual identity and personality, but also at the symbolic level, to cultural ideals and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity and, at the structural level, to the sexual division of roles in institutions and organizations.

**Gender identity** - an individual’s emotional and psychological sense of being male or female, but not necessarily the same as an individual’s biological identity.

**Gender queer** (or genderqueer) - a person who redefines or plays with gender, or who refuses gender altogether. A label for people who bend/break the rules of gender and blur the boundaries.

**Gender role** - refers to characteristics attached to culturally-defined notions of
masculinity or femininity.

**Gender-variant / gender non-conforming** - displaying gender traits that are not normatively associated with the person’s biological sex. “Feminine” behavior or appearance in a male is gender-variant as is “masculine” behavior or appearance a female. Gender-variant behavior is culturally specific.

**GLBT** - gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered. Acronym used in politics In order to challenge old concepts about homosexuality, GLBT people have been actively promoting understandings of their identity as healthy, ordinary, common, open-minded, unprejudiced, virtuous, responsible, controlled and cool.

**Heterosexual privilege** - a term which acknowledges that heterosexuals assume full rights to act out their sexual identity in society, e.g., to talk about it, brag about it, show pictures of their significant others, while homo- and bisexuals cannot do so without fear of acts of homophobia.

**Heterosexual assumption** - the assumption that everyone is heterosexual unless otherwise indicated.

**Heterosexism** - the institutionalized assumption that everyone is heterosexual.

**Heterosexual** - someone who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of the opposite sex. **Heterosexuality** is commonly believed to be inherently superior to and preferable to homosexuality or bisexuality

**Homophobia** - fear and hatred of homosexuals; often exhibited by prejudice, discrimination, harassment and acts of violence.

**Homosexual** - someone who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same sex. Many homosexuals prefer the terms lesbian or gay.

**Institutional oppression** - institutional arrangements of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of others, illustrated through the use of language, media, education, economics, religion, etc.
**Internalized homophobia** - the experience of shame, aversion, or self-hatred in reaction to one's own feelings of attraction for a person of the same sex. Lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals who are socialized in our homophobic society often internalize negative stereotypes and develop some degree of low self-esteem and self-hatred.

**Internalized oppression** - the process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate myths and stereotypes about the oppressed group.

**Intersex** - people born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia or an internal reproductive system that is not considered standard for either male or female. Parents and physicians in the past usually have determined the sex of the child, resulting in surgery or hormone treatment. The existence of intersexuals shows that there are not just two sexes and that our ways of thinking about sex (trying to force everyone to fit into either the male box or the female box) is socially constructed.

**Lesbian** - the preferred term for females who have sexual relationship with females.

**LGBT** – acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender; often intersex and questioning (or Queer) are added: LGBTIQ.

**Masculine** - relating or belonging to men and boys rather than women and girls.

**Men who have sex with men** (MSM) - a term often used when discussing sexual behavior, it is inclusive of all men who participate in this behavior regardless of how they identify their sexual orientation. The acronym MSM is conventionally used in medical literature. Also used: Women who have Sex with Women (WSW).

**MTF** - acronym for “male to female.” A transgendered person who, at birth or by determination of parents or doctors, has a biological identity of male but a gender identity of female. Those who have undergone surgery are sometimes described as “post-op MTFs” (for post-operative). See Gender identity and Intersex. N.B. many transgender persons object to the use of this term as it suggests that one has moved from one unambiguous sex to another and therefore upholds a false binary.
Norm- standard pattern of behavior: a standard pattern of behavior that is considered normal in a particular society.

Openly gay/lesbian: as a modifier, “openly” is usually not relevant; its use should be restricted to instances in which the public awareness of an individual’s sexual orientation is germane. Examples: Harvey Milk was the first openly gay San Francisco supervisor. “Ellen” was the first sitcom to feature an openly lesbian lead character. “Openly” is preferred over “avowed,” “admitted,” “confessed” or “practicing.”

Performative –a form of speech in which the issuing of the utterance is also the performance of an action. Judith Butler applies the theory of the performative to the production of gender, arguing that gendering is a reiterated performative process that begins when someone says of the newborn: “It is a girl”.

Queen: originally a pejorative term for an effeminate gay man. Still considered offensive when used as an epithet.

Queer: originally a pejorative term for gay, now reclaimed by some gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people as a self-affirming umbrella term. Used in this way, queer means sexually dissident, but not necessarily gay. Many gays, transsexuals, bisexuals and even heterosexuals whose sexualities do not fit into the cultural standard of monogamous, heterosexual marriage have adopted the “queer” label.

Queer theory: becoming visible in the late 1980s, political critique of normative and putatively deviant categories of sexual and gender identity, later absorbed by academia.

Sexual orientation - the physical and emotional attraction of someone whether to persons of the opposite sex, same sex or both. Three forms of sexual orientation are labeled: heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual.

Straight - heterosexual; describes a person whose sexual and affectional attraction is to someone of the opposite sex.

Transgender - umbrella term referring to people whose biological and gender identity may not be the same. This can include preoperative, postoperative or non-
operative transsexuals, female and male cross-dressers, drag queens or kings, female or male impersonators, and intersex individuals. Many individuals prefer to be called according to their own specificities such as transsexual, drag queen or king, and intersex. Some people use the term to mean a transcendance of binary gender systems altogether so that they identify as neither of a pair of opposites.

**Transsexual** - people who were born with a mind and soul (female or male) and a body (male or female) which do not match. Transsexualism may be treated under medical supervision. Transsexual individuals can be of any sexual orientation.

**Transvestite** - those who get erotic (fetishistic) or emotional pleasure from occasionally wearing clothes of the opposite sex and who feel compelled to do so. Most are male, heterosexual, and many are married. A recently coined term, bigendered, is an alternate term for transvestite which more accurately describes men who are comfortable with their assigned gender role most of the time, but occasionally feel a need to express their feminine side.

escritura: A border of images

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RUMMAGE:
INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON BRICOLAGE,
A/R/TOGRAPHY AND EVERYDAY PRACTICES

This is how I feel as an outsider looking at your work -

outsider
voyeur
sneak
I am the "lurker" now
Rummage: Introductory Notes on Bricolage, A/r/ography and Everyday Practices

Bricolage

From the application process to the final writing of this thesis I uncompromisingly considered this research project as a reproducible painting, a book, a visual artifact, an e-painting, consequently the reader is referred to the accompanying e-book. I have been painting since I was ten years old, and my living vocabulary and grammar primarily derive from it; but if nowadays the presence of painting in my life abounds, it was exactly its absence that made me start the practice of bricolage. Let me explain: in my earlier life in the Northeast of Brazil, painting was a far-off cultural activity mainly accessible by references to it on bi-dimensional graphic artifacts of visuality such as books, magazines, journals, and electronic media, a replication of itself. Now, looking from my current standpoint, I do not imagine that the insufficiency of
the “reliable”, “material” and “truthful” painting objects were a crucial impediment to me engaging in painting. On the contrary, because I was utterly seduced by painting’s allures, and needed to have some tangible tactic to work with, I managed to include that absence through concepts of reproduction, imitation, simulation, iteration, and borrowing as dynamic new strategies to create visual representations, new understandings, and meanings which ever since than have been shaping my painting practice.

As a result, I constantly combine disparate and pre-existing elements from other images into new visual representations. Thus, to create, I have to continuously collect representational components, such as pictures, photographs, and clips; and then cite, juxtapose, and distort them. In other words, I do not start from a clean slate (tabula rasa), but rather try to alter selected material cultural artifacts into new cultural products, assisted primarily by electronic media. Besides, I develop the arrangement of paintings through a set of procedures, layering glazes of paint over others and always leaving open windows to reference the covered layer, in order to disturb ideas of spatial relationships. The images become overloaded with different marks, drippings, edges, borders, frontiers, and margins that are arranged to seduce, surprise and to emphasize painting and its effects. As a result the paintings are extremely flat like copying images, and the materiality of painting in them is barely visualized by its reference. These paintings are an ongoing, open-ended act that only allows brief closing stages when they are exhibited.

Accordingly, my artwork has aimed not to make a simple commentary on, or even a celebration of painting; on the contrary I seek to understand if I can produce meaningful visual representations using references, citations, excerpts, borrowings, and appropriations as the basis for my work. Consider that these appropriations essentially address my trouble with the uncertainty of the image and its tendency to attract new meanings like a blotter, a vampire, a cannibal. So as an anthropophagic artist/research/teacher, I establish my most important methodology on the appropriative manifestations of joining together references to my visual representations and texts, and artists and scholars’ visual representations and written texts. This is the starting point and here I acknowledge this thesis as one of my lived painting practices.

A/rrtography

The point I am trying to make is that deliberately invoking my painting practices is directly related to my aim to open up areas of investigation within the art education field. This thesis looks at the everyday intersections of film
representation of queer gender and sexuality, and art education, particularly focusing on the viewing of the cinematographic work of Pedro Almodóvar and how it informs contemporary art education. Then, I consider how my own artwork, and my practices as an art educator have shaped the possibility to interweave, knit, associate, and above all cut-and-paste notions of identity, representation, pedagogy, queerness, visuality, spectatorship, and cultural borders into this research project. As a result of these previous considerations, I wholeheartedly embrace a/r/tography, an arts-based research method, and adopt queer theory as my major theoretical approach. It should be mentioned that by weaving in and through the identities of (a)rtist, (r)esearcher, and (t)eacher, a/r/tography infers a coming together, a bordering interaction, and an always-floating movement involving image and word (R. L. Irwin, 2004).

Queer theory concerns itself with questions of visibility; it repeatedly takes the visible as a term of political representation and presents varied possibilities of interpretation. By showing us that sexuality, sex, and gender are social constructs, thus mutable and shifting and not always symmetrically aligned, queer theory opens up new approaches for treating sexuality and gender as subjects in order to disrupt concepts of normality. Effectively a/r/tography and queer theory allow me a transdisciplinary flow of spaces and places in which to borrow, contravene, traverse, dialogue, misconduct, and sleep around in shameless relationships involving cultural studies, art education, film studies, and visual culture studies, which in their own practices embrace bricolage as well.

*Intertextualities*

In this respect, I would like to insist that in this project the convergence of seeing, writing and knowing makes my research practice an a/r/tographical one, in which my artistic, pedagogical and scholarly practices ambiguously employ perception, imagination, and intuition, the concrete and
the abstract, through conceptual and controlled ways of knowing, in order to produce anew. As well, by redefining references into other citations and citations into concepts, perhaps my artwork and my research can be called opportunistic, devious, cunning, imitative, or even innovative: I am persuaded they are influential a/r/tographical instruments for making and redefining meanings, and a significant pedagogical experience. Hence it should be mentioned that I am not claiming nor am I interested in any concept of originality in the practice of appropriation and *bricolage*: I am well informed that both are longstanding techniques. Marcel Duchamp’s artistic practices initially informed me about intertextual borrowings for the purpose of textual construction, but it was Tzvetan Todorov (1990), Julia Kristeva (1983, 1994) and Roland Barthes
(1999) who taught me that texts’ referentiality articulates our everyday existence and that nothing is original, because each text is related to other texts. Later I was encouraged and informed by Jacques Derrida’s notion of the bricoleur’s practice: the fitting together of elements that have been left undecided by hegemonic institutions and knowledges to shape new arrangements and concepts (Derrida, 1987). And, as it is for many contemporary scholars and artists, the impact of these theories is still felt in my everyday practices.

In a contiguous argument Kincheloe and Berry (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004) contend that crucial to bricolage is the importance of intertextuality, the concept that all texts obtain meaning not simply from their association to material reality but from their link to other texts. Kincheloe draws attention to bricolage’s emphasis on the connection between a researcher’s reading and the social location of personal narrations. As Kincheloe puts it, the understanding of intertextuality makes bricoleurs always aware that readers and narratives live in points of traverse, or intertextual axes; and consequently they constantly affect one another and any attempt to make meaning of any research act. Kincheloe also shows that the task of the bricoleur is to uncover the invisible artifacts of power and culture, to refuse standardized modes of knowledge production, to acknowledge that he is transgressive, and also admit that human experience is defined by uncertainties. Kincheloe further contends that bricolage, rejecting normativity and in its critical concern for social justice, tries to understand the knowledge and ways of knowing of “non-Western” peoples, and the forces of domination that affect the lives of individuals from race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnic, and religious backgrounds outside prevailing power institutions. Therefore the bricoleur is aware of deep social structures and the complex ways they play out in everyday life.

Everyday Practices

Far too much is contained in this introductory note but in order to facilitate the reading of this thesis let me just make some last comments on the usage of concepts
of “everyday life”. There have been many understandings of everyday life, but here the chosen and most important concepts for this research are derived from Paulo Freire, Michel de Certeau and Judith Butler’s notions of practices of everyday lives.

Freire’s emphasis on being where the people are, understanding their contexts and existences, and increasing awareness (conscientização) of the representations of everyday life, is key for any project of transformation and an essential constituent of his critical pedagogical approaches (Freire, 1985, 1999). Freire adds that the traces of so-called “high culture” carry structures of domination as they surface in confrontation with the culture of daily life; thus, he claims, everyday life (cotidiano) is a space of permanent conflict and contradiction (Freire, 2004a, 2004b). And so should be schools, which are required to address visible or hidden problems present in relationships between students in their everyday experiences (Freire, 1999). Besides, the flow of the everyday life is the material condition in which each person develops her existence through a continuous process of rereading, and these revisited material conditions acquire the form of the social cultural life (Freire, 2003, 2004a). Such a reading of everyday life is of course meaningful for any practice in contemporary art education that seeks a social reconstruction.

If Certeau (1988) moved his attention from objects to actions that people perform with these objects, Butler (1999) offered different forms for imagining our daily performances of identity concerning gender and sexuality norms and the binary of masculinity and femininity. By doing so, Butler translates the everyday life in a significant activity to possible understandings and transformations of social differences. Also, the culture of everyday life is a space that informs the spectacle of gender and sexuality in our culture, and youths make passionate use of bricolage from their everyday life as an attempt to autonomously construct and re-enact their perception of these
issues. Thus, an art education practice that highlights the visual representations of everyday life is a significant pedagogical experience because it provides a myriad of opportunities to embrace a diverse vision of culture which not only resists uncritically receiving visual representations but encourages critical viewing as a practice that develops imagination, social awareness and a sense of justice.

\textit{Wrapping up}

Accordingly, what follows is a scholarly endeavour, a living inquiry understood as painting, a \textit{bricolage}, and an a/r/tographic undertaking. This thesis has been assembled exclusively from the visual artifacts of my everyday lived experiences over the last six years including assemblage, a \textit{métissage} of words, texts, and images, references to my paintings, collages and photographs, photographs of other visual artists’ work, visual imagery from Almodóvar’s films, and copyright free images
available on the internet. Thus, I ask you to welcome my provocations to disturb notions of scholarship and knowledge making in art education, and mingle with the dialogical and pedagogical possibilities that they incite.
OPENING: FIRST TASTE

The everyday practices of contemporary art education from grades K-12 are marked by the neglect of the cultural experience of films and the disregard for issues of gender, principally masculinity, as well as the concealment of issues of sexuality. Although the situation has improved in higher education chiefly in the visual studies area, teacher education programs are still somewhat deficient. So it is in the confluence of visual culture, queer theory, art education and film studies that I posit my inquiry. I explore theoretical frameworks for understanding how we look at conception and reception of queer representations of gender and sexuality in visual culture, and its impact for the teaching and learning of visual culture in higher education and in grades K-12. This thesis looks at connections between film representations of gender and sexuality and art education, particularly focusing on Pedro Almodóvar’s filmography. The conducting questions were: How do Pedro Almodóvar’s film representations of queer sexuality and gender inform contemporary art education theory and practice; and in what ways does the utilization of border epistemologies become relevant for understanding representations of genders and sexualities in Almodóvar’s films, and thus inform art education practices? Also, this study fills a gap in the emerging critical literature in art education because, as a study focusing on queer visual representation and border epistemologies, it will consider intersections among critical pedagogy, art education, film studies, queer studies and postcolonialism, and such studies are rare in the field.
Organization

The structure is a division into ten chapters: Opening: First taste, interminglings, “emplacements, liminalities, derivations, gaze, dressing, unruliness, embodiments, deliverance, in this order.

opening: First taste.

This chapter explores the interconnections among art education, visual culture representations, visual culture education, critical pedagogies, and film studies. I argue that art education is embarking on a radical change towards visual culture education, and developing new practices that provoke displacement of rigid notions of spectatorship, image analysis, ways of seeing, issues of positionality, epistemology, power, identity, subjectivity, agency, and everyday life.

interminglings.

Interminglings provides an overview of the historical relations of art education and visual culture education; looks at the interactions of the visual culture education with issues of gender, sexuality, curriculum, and morality; explores possible connections between visual culture education and film studies, specifically with Almodóvar’s cinematography.

In this chapter it is asserted that issues of visuality, gender and sexual representation and knowledge are central to debates about our everyday life. Given that we live in a multifaceted technological world where images for our information and knowledge are an essential commodity (Debord, 1995) it is vital that students become aware of how and why they are attracted by an imagery of everyday life (Duncum, 2002c). Following Mirzoeff (1998a, 1998b) I add that developing new analytical approaches toward ways of seeing is a key challenge facing most, or perhaps, all scholarly disciplines but is a crucial issue for contemporary art education. Then I describe historically how art education has been embracing visuality in the practice of everyday life, and in what ways it is experiencing a turn towards visual culture, identified as “visual culture education”. In addition, I explore the fact that if the study of visual artifacts has been slightly increasing in art education, this process of attributing meaning in how we see visual culture representations does not seem to be taken into account in most art education curricula (Duncum & Bracey, 2001). Thus, it is necessary to briefly review the roots of art education and current practices, from the privileged art forms in curricula suggestions of fine arts, music and drama, to the neglected forms of expressions such as film (See Barbosa, 1978; Efland, 1990; Stankiewicz, 2001). Art education curricula
at K-12 levels lack film representation and discourse, and these seldom enter the art education curriculum at university and secondary school levels. When they do enter secondary and postsecondary school levels, it is restrained by the disciplinary constraints of visual studies, fine arts, media education, and new technologies.

Moreover, I adopt a stance that is not only concerned with the visual and the techniques of visual inquiry, but of communication: attention is not given just to facts and artifacts, but also to ways and diverse viewing and representing the cultural practices of the past present, young and elderly, dominant and subaltern, and so forth (Shohat & Stam, 1994).

In this chapter I make the point that if visual culture education embraces all art forms of everyday life for inclusion in the curriculum including film, it is essential that we learn more about specificities and implications of these fields for teaching and learning: film is not a mere reproduction of the ways in which painting, drawing, or even video have been taught and learned.

Through this thesis, I consider many points of actual or potential convergence between visual culture education, queer theory, a/r/tography and Almodóvar’s films. Though they converge, they often diverge and enact a politics of difference which I identify as a border epistemology that provokes me/us as artist/teacher/researchers to locate my/our stances.

*emplacements.*

This chapter supplements *intermingleings*, also depicting key definitions that shape this study. It succinctly presents relations between visibility and visual culture by considering intersections of queer theory and visual culture studies as nourishment sites for queer visual representation. Finally, this chapter highlights connections among queer, borders, memory, absence, and emplacements.

In *emplacement* a study of current relations between visibility and visual culture is restricted to film representation. This allows for a focus on particular kinds of film representations in the construction of our everyday culture and popular memory, and the ideological and rhetorical work they do. Also it looks at the social issues presented and represented in films, as well as the oblique reflections they can give rise to, through their production, circulation and reception.

Moreover, in this chapter I examine how queer subjectivities and their modes of visual representation have earned the reputation of being visibly complex, dangerous, or controversial. In order to look at this situation I draw from queer theorists who discuss invisibility or “non-
visibility” as well as visibility, as forms of representation, and who look for traces of meanings “within” or “without” the queer culture. Queer subject invisibility and visibility are always complex, signifying a need for or a lack of specific images and codes, but also a deficiency of interpretive practices. As a result, I discuss how the quasi-absence of cinematic language informs characters/modes of address/cinematography as queer without embodying unconscious stereotypes.

Furthermore I give attention to transgender, or “queer genders”, as sites of visibility, memory, and location. By being “undecidable” creatures, absent and present at the same time, transgenders now have to be imagined as much as to be seen. Thus, I explore the notion that they depart from a different point: queer genders see and live gender and sexuality through a concrete bodily mode as much as a perspective of memory, desire and fantasy. Queer theory has exposed sexuality, sex, and gender as unsteady relations, and sexuality as not easily categorized by the sexes of its practitioners, analyzing sexuality and gender as outcomes of social and individual memory,
and as superb social cultural structures open to great possibilities of arrangements among biological, cultural, philosophical, and psychological definitions and articulations. Consequently, I explore queer gender as a means of altering cultural values, to rethink masculinity, femininity, and sexuality.

_liminalities._

As result, _liminalities_ focuses entirely on border epistemologies concepts, deriving from Latin American post-colonial thinking, and emphasizing transculturalism, post-Occidentalism, anthropophagy, and the state of queer theory in Brazil as movements of decolonization of knowledge. They also serve as spaces from where I can articulate my conversations since I consider myself belonging to that flow of geo-cultural locations. I explore border epistemology as a search for other spaces for the production of knowledge and the possibility of non-hegemonic modes of thinking. To adhere to border epistemology is to move alongside and beyond the categories shaped and imposed by the prevailing Western epistemology. The main concepts of border epistemology are explored as they are presented by Mignolo (See, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2002) who claims there is a possibility of thinking from different spaces, which finally breaks away from Eurocentrism as the exclusive epistemological perspective. Border epistemology, as an activity of decolonization of knowledge situated on the subaltern, encourages the development of an “other thinking”, displacing the binaries self/other and center/periphery, and provoking a displacement of rigid notions of spectatorship, image analysis, ways of seeing, issues of positionality, epistemology, power, identity, subjectivity, agency, and everyday life.

_derivations._

Examining the interconnections of queer theory and a/r/tography as border epistemologies and forms of epistemological inquiry, I explore the influence of métissage in a/r/tography as its organizing principle of subjectivity formation through the reconciliation of identities of artist, researcher and teacher, and the notions of artistry, inquiry and education. I also explore queer theory’s hability to und the effective normative features of identities and genders because it blurs the borders between the different authorities that emphasize and support the organization of normality. I argue that a/r/tography and queer theory are processes of dynamic flow that de-normalize regimes such as gender, sexuality, theory, practice and disciplinarity. Thus, a/r/tography and queer theory function as transdisciplinary interpretive and creative tools implying a dialogue of disciplinary knowledge that creates new hybrids, which are
different from any specific constituent part. In addition, I look at the role of visual representation, the practices of visual creation and viewing, and visual awareness for transdisciplinary practices of a/r/tographical inquiry.

\textit{gaze.}

In the chapter entitled \textit{Gaze}, I introduce, and dig into, Almodóvar’s filmography and his modes of enunciation, explore notions of queer spectatorship, and consider how and to what extent queer representations of gender and sexuality shape or are shaped by spectators. I argue that Almodóvar’s work plays very different roles in constructing and disrupting concepts of sexual and gender identity. I also explore the fluidity with which he blurs boundaries of feminine and masculine representation, posing a critique of identity that affects and dislocates normative representations of gender and sexuality. Almodóvar's movies constitute an intense body of work that negotiates issues of national identity, historical and cultural consciousness, popular culture, social diversity, media and technology, social structures, and representation of class, race, gender and sexuality. His work is often inscribed under the banner of pop/trash/camp/kitsch/slasher culture, and generally described as a mixture of comedy, melodrama, and suspense. Almodóvar has frequently injected his own self-portrait into his films, exploring not only broad issues of identity, but also his own cultural, racial, gendered, classed and sexual identities.

\textit{dressings.}

\textit{Dressing} is substantively and metaphorically a changing room in this thesis. It exhibits the story lines of \textit{Bad Education, Talk to Her, and All About my Mother}; gives meaning to these narratives, offers bandages to protect or succor our offended souls from them, and flavors our understanding of visual representations of gender and sexuality. In this chapter I explore Pedro Almodóvar’s discourses as constructing and disrupting concepts of sexual and gender representations. I argue that his cinematic representations of trans/gender/sexuality dislocate the various ways of seeing them, trouble interaction between viewer and object of vision, and offer a disruptive critique of the naturalness of masculinity and heterosexuality in our contemporary society.
I look at this fluidity with which Almodóvar’s films soften boundaries of feminine and masculine representations, posing a critique of identity that affects and dislocates normative representations of gender and sexuality, challenges spectators to confront the position from which they look, and impels them to a level of consciousness of the act of looking.

unruliness.

In this chapter, I explore pedagogical approaches to Almodóvar’s queer gender discourses as an experiential conduit to a critical pedagogical practice in visual culture education. I describe and explore two pedagogical moments I have experienced using Almodóvar’s queer gender imagery in classrooms. Also I raise the possibility of transcultural approaches to viewing Almodóvar’s films. And I suggest pedagogical approaches to Almodóvar’s queer discourses.

embodiments.

In Embodiments I draw upon queer theory to look at Almodóvar’s films in relation to pedagogical perspectives; I explore Almodóvar’s cultural representation as a site of conflict and negotiation that gives rise to critical pedagogical developments, new pedagogical approaches, and inquiry about the possible uses and conflicts of queer representation in visual culture education. I argue that Almodóvar’s films generate spectacular narratives of visual imagery and that those involved in education are ought to understand the impacts and implications of his filmic representations in our everyday life and in our pedagogical practices. I further assert that it is important to examine films in relation to crucial issues of visual culture education: the social studies of race, class, gender, sexuality and so forth. In addition, I propose possibilities of making this statement practicable and point to future a/r/tographical research on this topic.

deliverance.

In this chapter I provide an overview of the implications that border epistemologies such as transculturalism, a/r/tography and queer theory hold for use in visual culture education; and finally, I suggest further topics and studies concerning the examination of social issues in visual culture education
INTERMINGLINGS
If you hold a stone
Hold it in your hands
If you feel the weight
It will never be too late
to understand

Mas eu não sou daqui, eu não tenho amor, eu sou da Bahia, de São Salvador, de Natal. Eu não vim aqui para ser feliz, cadê meu sol dourado, e cadê as coisas do meu país.

If you Hold a Stone & Marinheiro Só by Caetano Veloso
Sublimity: Border Epistemology

During my lurking around Almodóvar’s representations of queer gender and sexuality, I have been deeply driven by Walter Mignolo’s notions of border epistemology. Mignolo conceives border epistemology as an argument for the geopolitical diversity that arises from a subaltern perspective, and as a form of lived inquiry, a reading that happens from the outside, inside and inside out of limits (2000a, p. 40). Border epistemology points towards a different kind of power, a multiple one which is largely transdisciplinary and significantly open ended, since the aim is to craft new forms of analysis, not only to contribute to already established systems of thought. Mignolo’s notion of border epistemology (his preferred term is border thinking), as he claims, emerges from the local histories of Spanish and Portuguese legacies in the India Occidentalis (current Latin America); it does not surface from a universal abstract genealogy that can be traced back to Plato, to some enlightened philosopher or some prominent contemporary theorist, to global designs. The concept of border epistemology, indebted to Ribeiro’s notion or “barbarian theorizing” (See Ribeiro, 1968, 1971), emerges from the conditions of theorizing from the border and is undoubtedly theory from/of the subaltern, but not only for the subaltern; subaltern theorizing is for the whole planet (Mignolo, 1998a). Hence, the rise of border epistemology assists in raising new sites of thinking in between discourses and disciplines and in between dialogues. Thus, border epistemology as an activity of decolonization of knowledge situated on the subaltern encourages the development of an “other thinking”, displacing the binaries self/other and center/periphery, and provoking a displacement of rigid notions of spectatorship, image analysis, ways of seeing, issues of positionality, epistemology, power, identity, subjectivity, agency, and everyday life.

Accordingly, the reason I initially invoked border epistemology is because I consider the shift from art education to visual culture education to enable a materialization of queer theory and a/r/tography as new ways of knowing that can assist me in understanding Almodóvar’s representations of queer gender and sexuality as forms of border epistemologies. In order to grasp these articulations, I will provide brief descriptions of interactions between art education and visual culture, visual culture and visibility, queer theory and in/visibility, art education and issues of gender, sexuality and morality, visual culture education and film studies.
**Transparency: Art education and visual culture education**

I initiate my description of the relation between art education and visual culture by asserting the importance of seeing aspects of visual culture education’s short-lived trajectory. During the early 90s, the field of art education was beginning to perceive the relevance of visual culture for pedagogical and curriculum matters. Despite initial attempts by art educators to grasp the omnipresent visual culture, it was only in the mid-90s that increased discourse appeared, in the writings of a few scholars (e.g. Bolin, 1992; Duncum, 1987a, 1987b, 1997; Freedman, 1994, 1997). However, Chalmers (2005) claims that the 1960s were significant foundation years for the recent developments of visual culture education in art education. In the same article, Chalmers informs us that the most consistent attempt to introduce visual culture within the art education curriculum happened in the 1960s through the seminal works of Corita Kent, Vincent Lanier, and particularly June King McFee, who provided sustaining ideas that are, more than ever, having an important effect on today’s art education practices. By looking at art as a social study, and concerning herself with understanding the possibilities of teaching, methods and justifications for the study of visual culture, McFee anticipated contemporary art education, argues Chalmers (2005, p. 10). However, he reasons that the art educators at that time did not immediately accomplish an instrumental perspective for the field, and did not develop agency, “because they failed to acknowledge that, despite the ‘youth culture’ of the 1960s, most who were teaching in the schools became teachers in the relatively conservative 1940s and ‘50s” (2005, p. 6). Moreover Chalmers reminds us that the study of visual culture in the 1960s created opportunities to get rid of distinctions between high and low cultural forms that were seminal for the theoretical developments of the “new art history”, and the materialization of visual culture studies.

And it is just now, as recently as the last 5 academic years, that the field has seen the appearance of works that dissect aspects of visual culture and education. This literature examines the intersection of visual culture and art education (e.g. Anderson, 1990; Congdon & N., 2002; Duncum, 2002b, 2005; Emme, 2001; Freedman, 2003; Garoian & Gaudelius, 2004; Heise, 2004; Hicks, 2004; jagodzinski, 1997a, 2003; Keifer-Boyd et al., 2003; Kindler, 2003; Krug, 2002; Noble, 2002; Pauly, 2003; Ryan, 1999; Smith-Shank, 2002; G. Sullivan, 2003a; Tavin, 2003; B. Wilson, 2003).

Visual culture, as an emergent transdisciplinary and cross-methodological field of inquiry that studies the social construction of visual experience, is still extraordinarily fluid and needs to be approached cautiously. Yet, in spite of the contentions around it, there is largely an understanding that visual culture emphasizes the everyday experiences of the visual, and thus moves its attention away from the exclusive notions of high art to embrace
as well the visual representations of everyday existence. In addition, by denying boundaries between elite and popular art forms, visual culture takes as its objects the artifacts, technologies and institutions of visual representation, which is conceived here as “a site where production and circulation of meanings occur and are constitutive of social and historical events, not simply a reflection of them” (S. Hall, 1997, p. 15). Then teaching and learning of visual culture, visual culture education, does not erase high art from curriculum but rather approaches it from an inclusive perspective in which different forms of visual culture production can be understood through non-hierarchical categories. Visual culture education poses unasked questions, and visualizes possibilities for education in general that might never be in focus anywhere else. This occurs because it leads to critical consciousness that engages in social critique as its primary dialogue, which leads to understanding, and then action. The best word to describe this process is “agency”, a critical awareness that leads to informed action to resist processes of domination in our everyday lives. Visual culture education, open to new and diverse forms of knowledge and promotes understanding of hidden means of oppression, rejects the culture of positivism, accepts the idea that facts and values are indivisible, and above all that knowledge is socially constructed and intrinsically related to power. Accordingly, visual culture education encourages passive consumers to become active producers of culture, revealing, and resisting in the process, the homogenizing structures.

The force behind this focus of visual culture on a broader notion of the visual and of visuality seems to be one of the key elements for understanding the hesitation of art educators’ full engagement with it. Historically, at least from the early twentieth century to the early 90s, art curricula were steeped in the elements and principles of design and the ideals of high art, or conversely, in a regime of children’s expressiveness and spontaneity; thus, formalism, which is embedded in the principles of design and a strong constituent of Modernism, became the strongest paradigm of the field (Barbosa, 1991, 2001; Duncum, 1990; Efland, 1990; Hobbs, 1993). I stress that Modernism, by adopting the concept of an independent art object and the objective existence of aesthetic values inherent in the formal properties of the art object, emphasizes that art objects must stand alone and that aesthetic values and experiences should be verifiable. So Modernism separated the viewer (the spectator) and the addressee, author (creator) from this autonomous “object”, the artwork. Thus, high art was valued for its own sake, and all other forms of visual representation which have utilitarian function were diminished. But things change, and according to Thomas Kuhn (1970) paradigms
change in disorderly ways, far from the neat logical dialectical syntheses of the historiographical perspective of modernist theories; paradigms are not monolithic nor homogeneous with respect to time and place -- they experience radical changes.

Because of this conjectural situation, I among many other scholars consider that art education is embarking on a radical change towards visual culture, and developing new practices. Currently, art schools and art education programs are facing the need to challenge these prevailing modernist, formalist notions and begin to explore the experiences of everyday life. Art educators are required to discuss and understand why art education curriculum in general has emphasized the valuing of students’ art making and the viewing of higher culture rather than balance the curriculum with a critical understanding of visual culture representations of everyday life.

During the 90s, and predominantly in North America, there had been efforts to discuss, promote and implement what was described then as the new art education, contemporary art education, or even, postmodern art education - broadly found in Disciplined-based Art Education\(^1\) (DBAE) and multicultural education\(^2\). Undoubtedly, in this period there were some changes in art education programs that were becoming more committed to an exploration within media beyond the traditional painting, sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, drawing and textiles, to include aspects of cultural studies and art criticism. Nevertheless, this recent turn into visual culture was genuinely challenging the art education community. A debate has been generated to ascertain a nomenclature that better embraces the complexities and needs of an art education that promotes visual culture; and among them the most common terms so far have been: visual culture education, visual culture art education, visual culture studies, visual culture pedagogy, material and visual culture education, material culture education, material art education, and visual & signifying texts education (VASTEducation). In this thesis the privileged term is “visual culture education”, meaning the processes of education that promote visual culture, including all forms of visual expressions erasing obsolete concepts of high or low art, kitsch, *bon chic bon genre*, media, publicity, and so forth.

The literature available in visual culture education tells us that the visual culture education undertaking “should” focus on the project of modernity and emergent practices from the sixteenth century to the present, but it seems that most visual culture educators have been focusing largely on mass media as a form of cultural production. Thus, because I find it unfeasible to separate contemporary cultural experiences from past understandings, practices and knowledge, I
include in my concept of visual culture studies all cultural experiences of any subject matter, from any place, space, and time, as long as they are not conceived under a binary thinking of high/low art.

Duncum (2002c) asserts that progressively more art educators are using the term visual culture instead of art; and regardless of their vague concepts of visual culture, they have been recognizing that modernist concepts of high art and popular art have been effaced. He affirms that we are living in a complex visual technological world where images have become the most essential commodity for our information and knowledge; therefore, students need to understand how and why they are seduced by an imagery of everyday life. However, Duncum explains and highlights that visual culture is not only concerned with the visual, but with other sensorial forms of communication, although the visual phenomenon conveys all other forms of interactions; visual culture aims its attention not only at the visual observable facts and artifacts, but also at ways and diverse contexts of viewing and representing, and its mediation. However, it seems that, if awareness concerning the study of visual artifacts has been slowly increasing in art education, it is not noticeable in art education curricula. Some features of visuality address issues of how we gaze at, are gazed at by the world, how we constitute and are constituted by viewing processes that are particularly relevant for the formation of knowledge, and how visuality entices discourses, and reveal a need for further explorations of concepts of cultural representation. Expanding this case further, Freedman (2003) promotes the teaching of visual culture in art education paying special attention to viewing, interpretation, and construction meaning through images. Freedman writes:

The difference between production and viewing contexts is critical and can influence students learning. The arts of traditional cultures are recontextualized when viewed in contemporary contexts. And yet, differences between contexts of making and seeing have not generally been given attention in curriculum. Images are now often seen without the context of their original intent and juxtaposed with previously unrelated imagery that provoke associations created by this new context. The various modes of reproduction that enable viewing on a large scale are productive in the sense that they invoke the creation of a new object each time an object is reproduced. (p. 90)

In Freedman’s proposition lies an important approach which calls attention to viewing and making within art education curricula, critically analyzes visual culture, highlights the cognitive characteristics of contiguous interactions between viewers and the viewed, and explores how we construct images at the same time that
they construct us.

Duncum and Freedman bring to light the need to acknowledge diverse contexts and contiguities of viewing and representing, and in this process art education becomes an instrument of critical pedagogy in which intents, purposes, interpretations, influences and the power of visual representations provoke a critical social reconstructionism. In a pragmatic sense, I only think of and use the term visual culture education to mean a critical pedagogy, which neither suggests nor promotes a specific unified, instructional methodology or particular curricular content. Instead, visual culture education is understood more as an endeavor rather than a method, and as a flexible set of concepts for educators use in acts of liberation and justice. Undeniably, through practices such as intertextuality and intergraphicality (Freedman, 2003, p. 121), visual culture education challenges the categorical understanding of fine art (high art)’s uniqueness, reappropriates it, and elevates high art by integrating it into the visuality of everyday practices. Consequently, perceiving visual culture education occurring as an understanding of cognitive processes between producer and viewer in everyday life, asks us to consider imagery with an array of social issues affecting student notions, concepts, beliefs, values, appreciations, and so on. Thus, the critical study of representation in visual culture is capable of engaging art education with the praxis of social justice.

Nevertheless, more than a few art educators clearly do not see visual culture as presented here, and they argue that shifting their focus of interest of teaching and learning from high art to visual culture will replace the study of art with social studies. Important questions arise in this divergence: Should students be exposed to visual culture? Or should they be exposed only to fine arts? Why? Should traditional masterpieces of fine art be studied as part of the study of visual culture? Some art educators contest the visual culture education’s activities, practices and endeavor, want to “save” art education as a discipline, and fear that visual culture will replace art education’s current aims and purposes (e.g., Heise, 2004; Silvers, 2004; Peter J. Smith, 2003; R. Smith, 1988, 1992a, 1992b; van Camp, 2004). The scholars who confidently state their reservations about visual culture education are Louis Torres and Michelle M. Kamhi, who are the editors of *Aristos: An online Review of the Arts*, (see Kamhi, 1995, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005; Torres, 1991, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Both scholars argue that visual culture studies have no place in art education because they do not clearly articulate an understanding of what art truthfully “is”. Torres and Kamhi further infer that visual culture treats art as if it had no distinctive nature or value at all, and that philosophers and scholars have reduced the concept of art to an overwhelming focus on artifacts. In the articles cited above, it is argued that visual culture studies completely engulf art education because their object of study draws upon the context of
the whole of culture but ignores the essential qualities of the fine arts. Torres and Khami insist that visual culture education disregards essential differences between works of fine arts and other types of cultural artifacts, and emphasizes abstract social and political issues at the expense of more concrete personal experience of fine arts. Furthermore, they eloquently assert that visual culture studies’ approach to understanding, interpretation, and making meaning lays stress on politicized issues that divide society, such as questions of race, class, gender, and ethnicity.

Moreover, many art teachers allege they are not equipped to deal with the complexity of contemporary cultural sites, and interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary practices, because they have not been trained (Cited in Duncum, 2002a). Aguirre (2004) affirms that visual culture education downgrades art making by privileging the analysis and understanding of art, also by challenging the univocality of art and that visual culture education coerces art educators to neglect a viewpoint of study based on aesthetics to relocate itself within the cultural studies field. Some other art educators such as Bauerlein (2004) more radically argue that the movement towards visual culture is an invasion, a contamination that will come and go like a seasonal fashion because it is based in “mischievous”, “promiscuous”, “narrow-minded”, and “arrogant” practices and features such as the extensive use of borrowings, the flexibility of choosing disciplines without plumbing their depth and without expertise, and an over use of visual culture as an aesthetic study.

Even those who support visual culture education acknowledge the need for further inquiries and adjustments. Desai (2005) agrees that it is in the translation of visual culture concepts in arts classrooms that the challenge lies for an implementation of visual culture education. Also, Freedman, a critical advocate of visual culture education, proposes more studies and research to address changes in issues of meaning and interest in visual culture, the didactic characteristics of visual culture, curriculum leadership and institutional change, and connections between new theory and policy. A Past President of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), Stankiewicz (2004) presented her art education strategic plan at the national conference in which the primary goal would be to focus resources on advocating the importance of student learning in the visual arts to a wide variety of constituents. Stankiewicz, working from Eisner’s ideas (2002) affirmed that there are many art educations; there are distinct versions of art education operating at the same time, and art educators should stick to one or more different approaches to art education, such as discipline-based art education, visual culture education, creative problem solving, arts education as preparation for the world of work, the arts and cognitive development, using the arts to promote academic performance and integrated arts. However, it is
important to point out a few concerns. As much as I assent that art educators should implement different practices and choose approaches based on their personal and social contexts, it is important to remember that visual culture education is neither opposed to, nor a strand of, art education. Besides, above and beyond Eisner’s “visions” (1976, 2002), I believe that visual culture constitutes visual culture education not as an adjacent element of any of Eisner’s visions for art education, but as a key element to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct art education. The problem I find with most suppositions and critique that visual culture education lacks rigor, methodology, stability, and strength is the fact that uncritical binary thinking is sustaining this questioning. Thus I argue that neither “art” (whatever it means) is opposed to visual culture nor is social studies. By now, it should be well known, or at least acknowledged, that visual culture education is a shift of paradigm from a modernist art education to a post-modernist art education; and does not involve the dialects of binary opposition.

To establish its values, art education as a discipline always focuses on aims and types of knowledge and uses different means or methods to achieve these aims and knowledge; and by doing so it establishes a paradigm, which is essentially a set of understandings, beliefs, values, experience, methods, knowledge shared by scholars and practitioners of the field, who set forth agreements about how theories and problems of the field should be understood. When older, prevailing models or paradigms can no longer adequately explain all the observed facts, paradigm shifts occur, and are generally punctuated by intellectually radical positions in which another replaces one conceptual worldview. It is pertinent to remember that paradigm shifts do not occur all the time: they are extremely rare and it takes time for such a shift to take place and be recognized (See Kuhn, 1970). Therefore what we have been hearing lately in the art education field is just a buzz of dissenting voices of influential scholars who do not see how art education’s current attitudes, practices, worldviews, and approaches are able to address the contemporary contexts and content of society. Therefore they have been meeting, gathering information, discussing, debating, and dialoguing to promote this radical paradigmatic shift. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to demonstrate how this shift has been occurring but the shift did not start this decade, but a long time ago through the work of influential scholars in North America and elsewhere. If art education has taken more than four centuries, since the birth of modernity in the sixteenth century, to establish its paradigm, visual culture is just beginning to ascertain its values, beliefs, understanding, and practices.
I have identified the issue of cultural morality in art education, understood here as a “virtuous stance” for education practice, as a significant subject that affects art education theorizing and practice. I strongly believe that this claim is a relevant constituent of this inquiry. By analyzing representations of queer gender and sexuality, I put forward that understanding these visual systems has a theoretical and practical impact for visual culture education, and an ethical impact as well. Thus it is important to analyze this assertion in view of the historical shift from art education to visual culture education and as regards their understanding, acknowledgment and inclusiveness of gender and sexuality issues.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century art educators are still creating and delivering art education curricula in our schools predicated largely upon procedures and practices reaching back to the nineteenth century, which still stick to morally accepted views of art, art education and their purposes. Within education, there is an insufficiency of formal discussions around sex, sexual identity and sexuality other than in the context of moral and medical discourses. This is quite astounding given the emphasis on sexuality and self-exploration in the existing contemporary visual culture representations. However, from the foundation of art education in North America, at American universities in the beginning of nineteenth century, and throughout the whole century, the study of art was consistently perceived as a practice to instill morality; and initially, particularly, drawing was perceived as a moral force mainly because of the influence of Romanticism (Efland, 1990, pp 69–73). The self-expression art pedagogy from the beginning of the twentieth century, which still thrives in current art education practice, made art educators lose contact with most of the social issues of everyday life.

However the “reconstructionist stream”, informed by Dewey’s ideas, suggests that art is more than individual experience and knowledge but is also a means for changing individual life and society, producing embryonic possibilities for reconnecting art and society. jagodzinski (1997a) informs us that an American art education sanction of the sense of sight as a privileged space for teaching and learning only began in the late 1920s influenced by the technological and institutional origins of television, the establishment of sound in the movies, and the use of mass-media artifacts. That attempt to bring visuality into art education initially indicated a protracted turning away from the mechanical drawing that had pervaded art education before then; but what seemed to be a critical undertaking of art and everyday life took a different turn because art educators rejected “visual culture” and “turned to the Western canon of art focusing on the tradition of “great works” so that morals might be taught in the schools” (1997a, p. 17). jagodzinski asserts that
Parents, especially on the Moral Right, and pro-censorship liberals [groups] have made violence on television and film a key issue in their claim that the moral fabric of society is deteriorating. Children have to be protected from such “evil” and from “irresponsible” working-class parents who allow such viewing to go on. Despite the unanimous and overwhelming evidence by media researchers over the past quarter of a century that there is no direct causal relationship between the amount of violence watched and subsequent violent behavior these special-interest groups have continued to pressure the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRRTC) to set some regulatory code of standards which ensure that excessive television violence is being curbed. (1997a, p. 40)

More recently, conceptions of multicultural education as a foundation for developing curriculum encouraged us to reevaluate notions of morality, excellence, racism, and histories of social reconstructive pedagogy. There has been an acknowledgment by leading scholars interested in social theory such as Michael J. Emme, Graeme Chalmers, Patricia Stuhr, Ed Check, Dipti Desai, Jan Jagodzinski, Elizabeth Garber, Doug Blandy, Kristin Congdon, Rita L. Irwin, Karen Kiefer-Boyd, Laurie Hicks among others, that social discourses concerning sexuality, gender, race, class, disability, aboriginal cultures, aging are fairly imperceptible in art education because cultural, political, and economic systems elevate some images, concepts and theories above others. In this respect, since the early 90’s a large number of art educators (Cahan & Kocur, 1996; Congdon & N., 2002; Desai, 2000, 2003, 2005; Duncum, 2005; R. L. Irwin, 1995, 1998; R. L. Irwin et al., 1997, 1999; jagodzinski, 1997a, 1997b) have also regarded this inclusion of cultural diversity as extremely relevant for an epistemological shift towards a critical art education, and as laying the fundamentals for the shift toward visual culture education. But for at least the last 20 years, a reconceptualization of art education has been formally advocated to embrace these invisible others and one of the earliest voices to call attention to these issues was Chalmers (1996) who noted that:

The curriculum needs to be reformulated so that it emphasizes the unity within our diversity, showing that all humans make and use art for fairly similar reasons. But, unfortunately, there are issues such as racism and sexism that absolutely require us to implement approaches in which art making and learning become ways to participate in social reconstruction.” (p.45)

This is also well illustrated by the work of Kenneth Honeychurch and Ed Check (Check, 1992; Honeychurch, 1995, 1998) who so far have produced the only two theses in North America articulating art education through queer theory, and gay and lesbian studies.
Honeychurch (1998) highlights that in the mid 90s sexuality was rendered invisible, largely excluded from discussions of difference in art education; there were no in-depth studies which addressed the representation of gays and lesbians in programs of visual art; and furthermore, there was a lack of gay or queer content matter and expertise within art education curriculum, and a strong negative reaction from art educators and educational management against queer experience in programs of visual arts. I consider that since then, nothing seems to have changed, unless we consider exceedingly modest activities and projects scattered over the world. Check (1992) informs us that despite these histories of invisibility becoming increasingly apparent, heterosexuality remains the privileged norm in American culture and is represented as natural and ordinary. Therefore queer subjects become at best tolerated in schooling, but methods to negotiate queer sexualities in art education theory and practice are discarded. As Check explains:

The fields of art and art education both deny and perpetuate the biases of heterosexuality. The idealization of the heterosexual in society and art perpetuates specific values and norms and permits an ideological dominance by groups which actively discriminate against those with less power. For example, art historians, art educators, and art critics have represented themselves as conducting sexually undifferentiated, politically and economically disinterested and objective studies in art. Artists are omitted from discussions, have their work or lives distorted to serve other interests, or are simply ignored. (p. 99)

Moreover, Check affirms that schools legitimate the authority, biases, and prejudices of this dominant heterosexual, white, male-biased culture (p. 99). Thus, the established use of a language masquerading as “good” art education (meaning here: decent, respectable, excellent, first-class, civilized, adequate reasonable, acceptable, straight), by teachers who are mostly uncritical of their social contexts and contents, maintain the universal truths, privilege and posture of patriarchalism and sexism. More important are Check’s remarks that if, as a result of the impact of gender and sexuality on issues of visual representation, art educators in higher education have been increasingly including artists whose work has been trivialized by history, curriculum, and so forth, this does not mean that the scholarship of queer, including issues of identity and voice, positionality, power, control, imitation, masquerading, performativity, spectacle and representation, has been created or at least was able to disrupt art education normativity in academia or elsewhere. In addition, Check adds that there is a lack of information in academia to assess the impact of the inclusion of these queer representations in secondary schools, and in educational guidelines and policies.

However, this implied indifference to queer representations is not peculiar to the
research and teaching practices but is also ubiquitous in the theorization of the field. For example, the *Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education* (*Eisner & Day, 2004*) does not mention the words “sexuality” and “sexual” in its entirety. The closest terms that appear in the *Handbook* are “sexism” and “sexually charged artworks” which are placed in the context of interdiction, censorship, banning sexually dangerous and violent images from museums (Lankford & Scheffer, 2004) and condemning sexism in elementary art school (Mathews, 2004). In a handbook with almost 900 pages, this “lack” is a concrete corroboration of queer sexuality’s invisibility in art education theory. Also Mathews (2004) asserts that before conducting any analyses in art education issues it is imperative to acknowledge that the field of art education is a gendered one in which females as the dominant researchers in the field, fail to see the overall context of art education as an institution “designed by females, run by females, for females” (p. 285). So according to Matthews, the constructed imaginary of a supposed masculine domination in the field does not seem to inhabit a male body; the phallus is with the women.

Nevertheless censorship has a long history in art education. Having in mind a historical perspective I again delve into jagodzinski’s accounts above cited of the introduction of visual studies in American art education as a privileged space for teaching and learning, in the late 1920s (jagodzinski, 1997a, p 117). He argues that the shift did not occur at the beginning of the last century because of morality and censorship. jagodzinski’s account is relevant to my argument that art education institutions conceal gender but principally silence sexuality. Art education is permeated by censorship now and in the near past. The institution of art education excludes representations of troubled genders as well as those who have different sexual preferences.

Emery (2002) draws attention to the “fact” that many contemporary works of art and art practices are “violent, sexually explicit, disgusting and psychologically disturbing” and therefore likely unpleasant to youngsters (p. 5). She consents to the “fact” that art educators including “controversial” work for study run the risk of distressing parents, principals and community. Art educators fear that students will replicate the contentious images they are viewing at home and in the community. But how can art educators ascertain when and why an artwork is obscene, or controversial? How is censorship lived in art education practices? In what ways is it produced and disseminated? How can art educators pretend to have power over what other human beings should see or not? Is the role of art educators to promote this repression?

In the course of these musings I recalled the popular notion that students, as a group, are in need of protection since they are a susceptible audience. However Barker suggests that the focus on children as a needy, vulnerable audience group is a
“canny emotional ploy to win support for increased censorship” (cited in Brooker & Jermyn, 2003, p. 52). This narrow concept of students as passive helpless youngsters, vulnerable to the harmful effects of visual culture does not acknowledge the power of the interaction between viewers and the objects being seen; and does not accept the power of the imagery of our everyday lives to influence students notions of identity, awareness of social issues, and cognitive development. I must acknowledge that more research is needed to deconstruct these prevailing practices in art education. For although art educators seldom ask these questions, when facing difficult artworks they choose to avoid challenging conversation in the art room by leaving contentious artwork out. Based on this “ingenious” suppression art educators often use a limited range of artists drawn from only some localities, and they seldom employ other possible art, artists and localities.

Added elements within this discussion are the circumstances when invisible subjects’ sexualities (students’ and/or educators’) are rendered visible in the educational setting. To explore these issues further I highlight Garber’s (2003) reiteration that gender and sexuality equity remains a problem in schools. Garber reveals that some classroom environments encourage students to talk about some aspects of themselves, but not others; it is more arduous for students to engage race, sexuality, and class particularly when paired with gender (p. 56). And the outing of educators and their relationships with students are not even addressed in the literature available in art education. Following Garber’s arguments, Lampela (2001, 2005) notes that gay and lesbian students often experience harassment, intimidation, and alienation in classroom situations. Constituting the majority, heterosexuals, mostly women, in art education classes are more interested in discussing sexuality in terms of their male/female relationships and relegating other forms of sexual relationships to the margins (Cosier & Sanders, 2005). These individuals often argue that those “touchy” relationships are too difficult to understand. So the conservatism that exists in schools intensifies censorship.

Cosier and Sanders (2003), building upon the work of Garber, Desai, Honeychurch and Check who critically address issues of censorship, have been advocating within the NAEA a critical thinking in which all art educators are encouraged to include racial, and sexual diversity groups, to: articulate their history, existence, and positions; eradicate limitations that separate art from social reality; reconsider what is included in the curriculum; understand queer artists, educators, and gay and lesbian sexualities; include queer concerns within the curriculum; push themselves beyond
their comfort zones; reconceptualize connections between global and local thinking; question representation of race, gender sexuality and class; unpack oppressive practices; dissolve the concealing features that cover queer issues; and increase the amount of partnership and scholarship that support queer studies (p. 16).

Nevertheless, despite the efforts of Lampela, Cosier, and Sanders to prepare a terrain for a more inclusive visual culture education, I consider that too much emphasis is placed on how to incorporate, include, and fit gay and lesbian artists into the curriculum. My critique is based on the information presented that manifests fixed notions of sexual identities and practices. The model here is clear: paradoxically the inclusion of fixed concepts of gender and sexual identities, instead of promoting diversity, assumes notions of normalization. By stressing these fixed identities, art education practices are converted into a ghettoized space/place in which minority sexual groups of art educators use artwork from minority sexual groups mainly for minority sexual groups of students/audience. My position here is as political as cognitive, since I consider that the most crucial and radical point to be included in the curriculum is not the fact *per se* that artists/art are gay, lesbians, transgendered, or bisexual, but the modes of interpretations, reading and analyses of gender and sexual representations originated from a subaltern standpoint. Not that I am against the inclusion of any form of visual representation, but I think that by only focusing on the diversity of gender and sexual identities art educators are often unable to interpret the social relations that produce them. I believe that the production of invisibility in the field is an inherent part of its historical construction: we need to distinguish and consider its origins, experiences, and practices as we critique art education.

I strongly consider that the queer undertaking of constantly disrupting fixed identities is much more inclusive of all genders and sexualities and more suitable for the inclusion of the study of gender and sexuality than the suggestions resultant from gay and lesbian studies. Thus, put another way, a queer theoretical approach to the art education field accepts all sorts of visual representation, but at the same time it shifts the educational practice away from any fixed concepts it may entail such as sexuality, gender, race, class, and so on.

It might be useful at this point to draw briefly on the work of Check, Deniston, and Desai (1997) who insist that sexuality, class, and race are often discussed in abstract terms that do not represent lived experiences. The themes of the last two paragraphs set the stage for discussions of issues of moral visibility and non-visibility in art education presented by Desai. Desai (2003) states that “The multicultural [art education] discourse remains deafeningly silent
about sexual diversity” (p. 151). As Desai puts it, the inclusion of sexuality in art curricula suggests that homosexuality, is the primary difference upon which art educators have been focusing upon. This, she states, ignores the crucial junctures of sexuality with race, ethnicity and gender, among others, that art educators should be focusing. Supporting this argument and taking it further, Desai (See Brooker & Jermyn, 2003; Horne & Lewis, 1996; jagodzinski, 1997b; Purpel et al., 1995) reaffirms the need to place sexuality in the common core of a multicultural art education, since according to her, multicultural art education has so far been failing to properly address issues of sexual diversity.

By drawing on queer theory to discuss the place sexual diversity has within multicultural art education, Desai, (2003) points out that sexual diversity issues are critical for art education in a moment in which discourses on difference are just becoming institutionalized, for example in multicultural art education; and she also encourages a seeking out of concepts of culture more inclusive of the extreme complexities and issues of society. Thus if art education exercises an understanding of culture associated with power, the production, consumption, and appreciation of visual culture artifacts possibly will be understood within historical and social contexts. Art education cannot ignore the significant contributions of queer theory to changing the ways we think about culture, by outing, bordering, dispersing and decentering notions of culture, reconceptualizing sexuality, disassembling gender and sexual categories, and deconstructing heteronormativity. This notion of culture recommends interdisciplinary art education curricula that not only promote several readings but also encourage learning to read the socially produced silences regarding sexual narratives and the effects of those silences on how we come to understand them in our everyday lives. Finally Desai concludes that, if art education is to be taken seriously its handling of issues of sexual diversity need to be examined critically and its own discourse viewed in terms of the usefulness or limitations of its concept of culture.

I agree with Desai that art education needs to study critically its own discourse, adopt concepts of culture that include a constant and contextualized analysis of the relations of power and knowledge, and consider the contribution of queer theory to the field. However, in this thesis I am less interested in concepts of fragmented and restricted multicultural education practices within art education, named “mainstream” and “reconstructionist” multicultural art education; I would rather consider the process as a growing dialogue of alteration spreading from art education to visual culture education. Moreover it is extremely important to contextualize my practice and my standpoint as a Latin American art educator, which is informed primarily by a moral panic of class and gender, in contrast to North American art education censorship and moral panic, related

Resonance: Gender and Sexuality in my Visual Culture Pedagogical Practices

Now, with the intention of situating myself within my own interactions with art education curriculum, visual culture education, and visual representations of gender and sexuality, I recount these following narratives.

In 1993, I was cross appointed as an assistant professor in visual arts and art education at the Visual Arts Department of the Art Institute of the University of Brasília (UnB), Brazil, given that my background bridges these two domains, and my interests had for quite some time been focused in contemporary art, cultural and critical theory, visual studies and art criticism. I immediately became particularly interested in art education as social reconstructionism and worked, as an ad hoc researcher, on aspects of multicultural art education’s policies and notions of curricula development for the University of Brasília. Since I began teaching courses for the teacher education program (art education program) as well as for the program to develop artists (fine arts program), my main concern has been to include the reading of gender and sexuality representations in contemporary fine arts, mass media, material culture, and their implications for a critical pedagogy.

After many efforts within the university community to render visible the need to acknowledge those issues within curriculum and in aspects of research and services to the community, my most important achievement was to develop and deliver some elective courses within the visual studies curriculum component in 2000-2001. Through these courses, we provided each other, the students and I, with a larger scope of ways to look, interpret, and retell gender and sexuality representations, and afterwards transform them in pedagogical multi-possible tools for specific situations in school-based practices. The main objectives were to analyze how contemporary art discourse constructs, organizes and circulates notions of gender and sexual identities and to inquire into how and why the teaching of visual arts and art education programs deemphasizes gender and sexuality topics, and into what ways we can look for approaches in which gender and sexuality prompt a discussion around issues of representation, power and culture in art education. These courses had a great impact on my pedagogical experience and on students’ critical learning processes. Their offerings provoked a change from elective to compulsory course status in the visual arts department curriculum. At that time I was unaware of the urgency these questions had within the Brazilian educational system and in other educational systems elsewhere. To delve into these questions it was necessary to begin a PhD programme.
These questions have been haunting me ever since and I have never stopped thinking about them. But the struggle to negotiate the academic community has taken a long time. It was four years before I successfully introduced objects from everyday life, mass media artifacts and objects made by fine artists, into the teacher education program; I tried similar approaches in courses of cultural theory and aesthetics. To my surprise and frustration, I noticed that there was very little interest in the study of other spaces, places, and cultures; and through different media, only specific forms of knowledge were valorized. Hierarchies were maintained. Moreover, students were not willing to embrace the knowledge of art educators as an epistemological space, as a living productive inquiry into their arts practice as educators. Knowledge has a power structure: it is a remote entity identified as education or/and art norms. Idealistically, I wanted to subvert these institutional arrangements, and in order to do so I would need to identify the structures that favor certain groups and ideas and exclude others, and determine what constitutes the official authorized knowledge. I learned that the first step in overcoming these binary propositions - art/material culture, artist/art educator, art/education - is to contest these dichotomies and their naturalness and acknowledge that they reflect and protect typical power structures in educational settings. Furthermore, if these binaries have been historically, culturally, socially constructed they could also be undone.

Several curriculum theorists have highlighted the relevance of enlarging ways of knowing and incorporating issues of sexuality, gender and queerness in education (Barker, 2003; Brooker & Jermyn, 2003; Freedman, 2003). By following their writings and rereading my practices I realized how some forms of knowledge are subjugated because they implicitly or explicitly threaten hegemonic power and privileges in the educational setting. Hegemonic power is understood here as the process of dominating or controlling groups of people so that they unconsciously assent to and participate in their own domination. I came to see how art educators in the Brazilian context, by being subjugated over a long colonial historical perspective and time, had lost their sense of connection with their own concepts of nation, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and also of other cultures, which are crucial elements of one's identity. They are rendered invisible because they had not been allowed by curriculum.

Therefore art educators, teachers, researchers, learners seen as subalterns in positions of power decision, but lacking critical thinking, are unable to develop agency. The uncritical teaching of arts reproduces the emphasis on the art of high culture by glorifying certain art objects, authorizing what counts as proper aesthetic experience, certifying certain interpretations of art history, and placing them at the top of a resolutely assured hierarchy of aesthetic value which devalues other art objects and art histories.
The dynamics of culture in different contexts are nonexistent in the uncritical art education curriculum; hegemonic cultures are not confronted, and curriculum is not provoked to make visual culture experience, practice and interpretation wide open to other experiences. Instead of being forged from the values, knowledge, skills and care of close communities, an uncritical art education is an experience of reiteration of visual arts curriculum as an affirmation of art, education, and art education canons.

As stated before, art education paradigms are shifting and it is becoming common practice that art educators, together with students create knowledge, as they engage critically with representations of their everyday life. Despite my initial experience of the unwelcoming response to those courses, and thinking through what was “absent” or “without”, I started to strongly believe that visual culture educators could concomitantly teach, research, make art, and think, through visual culture education. However, in order to achieve these goals art educators/students need to engage with critical thinking and pedagogies and look at the power relations within educational practices as pedagogical and political acts. Therefore, a few years later I reintroduced issues of gender and sexuality in two courses of Contemporary Art History, but intertwined with issues of race, class, community, disability, identity, age, and so on. Although the main topics were gender and sexuality the other themes were crucial supplements for the teaching and learning process. Also, I changed my pedagogical procedures by allowing and asking students to continuously articulate critical ideas about the class content. I realized that if we want to change aspects of art education practice and promote broader understanding of and implications for visual culture education as a useful approach, it would be necessary to adopt new frameworks concerning notions of power and knowledge, and critically discuss issues of representation of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, age, etc.

Although a few years ago there was not taxonomy for what we currently call “visual culture education”, I was interested in any art pedagogy that privileged the treatment of social studies over aesthetics. The arts have encouraged social issues in the curriculum but it has been through visual culture education that art educators and students, together, are expected to shed light upon critical issues in society. Additionally, in visual culture education particular emphases are laid on the construction of the contemporary citizen, making cultural diversity become relevant to the teaching and learning of the arts. This expands reflection about art concepts, the role of visual culture, visual representations, and artists in different social contexts. Hence, visual culture education’s roles are to promote respect and acknowledgement of social difference, to encourage transcultural understanding, to acknowledge and understand cultural diversity, to allow pride for cultural heritage, to raise questions on ethnocentrism, cultural stereotypes, prejudices,
discriminations, racism and sexism, to examine dynamics of culture in different contexts in order to develop consciousness, and to question the dominant culture in order to make visual culture experience, practice and interpretation more flexible.

Affinity: Almodóvar’s Queer Film and Visual Culture Education

I focus here on Almodóvar’s queer representations of gender and sexuality in film in relation to visual culture education. Notoriously that films occupy an advantaged position within visual culture, but for moral, ethical, technical, and concealed reasons the art education field has been determinedly neglecting this outstanding pedagogical apparatus. As well, I must stress that a few scholars point out that the process of seeing in film studies, and in general, in which viewers make meaning of imagery is more interactive and dialogical than previously considered. Hence artists, researchers, and teachers as creators engage in intensive interpretive bricolage and so do readers, including students, who are capable of fragmenting and reconstructing visual artifacts, and dialoguing and fighting with the creators for their values, meanings, and implications.

Accordingly, that is why it should be mentioned that I have elected Almodóvar’s films to study, because his particular filmic representations of gender and sexuality provide me with an excellent opportunity to examine the pedagogical potential of the meanings produced by the interaction among the viewer, the object seen, and the producer. In addition, Almodóvar’s films present a complex web of intertextualities conciliating and establishing dialogues among incongruous films, books, plays, paintings, and formal elements of cinema in order to create and deliver an array of representations of gender and sexuality, which make available plenty of space for examining their pedagogical assets. From an open-minded position Almodóvar makes extensive use of bricolage to dismount and reinterpret models, to use quotations, distort references, transpose, intermingle, and endorse a métissage of many historical modes and cinematic genres. Furthermore, one of the most consistent features of Almodóvar’s work is its autoreferentiality, as he insinuates his life history among fragmented representations in his films. Bricolage, intertextuality and autoreferentiality are important concepts for art education practices.

However, especially significant for this study is the fact that queer representations and masquerades of gender and sexuality are openly manifested in most of Almodóvar’s characters and cinematography; thus his creative world describes incredibly intertwined situations which are created by means of a fluidity of aspects of gender’s and sexuality’s playing out in the human experience. The intricacies of Almodóvar’s cinematic representations of gender and sexuality, the various ways of seeing them, and the interaction between viewer and object of vision, trace the definition, establishment and
development of a critical pedagogy. Implicit in this context as a focus on the relationship between the viewer and the object/subject being viewed, spectatorship is an essential component of filmic interpretation because it is put forward as an understanding of ways in which queer representations and viewing add to interpretive practices in visual culture education, and influence the dialogue with critical pedagogies.

As was stated before, despite several cultural expressions intermingling in film as essential players from concept to finished film (employ acting, singing, photography, visual production, graphic design, text production, music, industrial design, interior design, fashion, historical research, editing, dancing, just to name a few), art education curriculum has been neglecting the potential of this space of immense knowledge and cultural exchange. As stated by Jaggodzinski (1997a):

I assume that the one of the crucial aims of visual culture education is to allow an inquire if the idealization of the modernist gaze should be neglected, moreover what we can learn about the new expressions of video, film, television, internet which would help us to better understand the changed conditions of making and viewing culture. Rather than a “gaze aesthetics” we must reorientate our perceptions towards the “glance,” a recognition that our viewing habits in an electronic age are scans, glimpses of images, quick blinks that may brought immense benefits into centering the Great Western Tradition for all those who have. Here the place of the viewer comes into play: How is the viewer's relation to the artwork prescribed? What is hidden from the viewer's own viewing? To understand their cultural productions is necessary to adopt a whole different paradigm for art education. I believe that art educators based on the context of viewing/reading can uncover the preferred and privileged meanings of art texts; text analysis can get at the way a medium organizes the subject positions of perception for its effects. Art educators can become more involved in the responses young people have to the viewing of popular television shows and film as well as to their visual rewriting and recreating. (p. 188)

However, even an art educator committed to the context of “viewing/reading” should be aware of the intricacies involved in the construction of subjectivities. A unified viewing subject that identifies with the camera and the actors on the screen has been the focal aim of Hollywood film narratives. And in this case the univocality of the reading/viewing process needs to be critically addressed. Film is a powerful instrument for understanding cultural representations because it provokes an enticement of discourses, an intense social discussion of its meanings. I must confess that I have always been attracted to the circulation of images created by moviemakers and images visualized by spectators, critics, students, scholars, etc. In this study, I am particularly interested in the meeting point of Almodóvar's discourses and gazes into a world of imagination and the world of spectators
feelings, thoughts and positionings as pedagogical strength, particularly concerning explicitly queer visual representations of gender and sexuality.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to explore the interconnections among art education, visual culture representations, visual culture education, critical pedagogies, and film studies. I bring it to a close insisting that art education is embarking on a radical change towards visual culture education, and developing new practices that provoke displacement of rigid notions of spectatorship, image analysis, ways of seeing, issues of positionality, epistemology, power, identity, subjectivity, agency, and everyday life. It is generally understood that art educators and students make knowledge as they engage critically with representations of their everyday life.

Despite the fact that most art education practices exclude filmic representations of troubled genders and contentious sexual preferences, I believe that visual art education can and must critically study its own discourse, adopt concepts of culture that include a constant and contextualized analysis of the relations of power and knowledge, and consider the contribution of feminist and queer theory to the field. In order to fight the prevailing restrictions and censorship existing within art education institutions, visual culture educators have to accommodate a more transdisciplinary approach to the production and circulation of knowledge in the field, and thus accept and learn more about interconnections of many disciplines, contents and contexts and what they can offer to their practices.

Moreover the principles of visual culture education shift the arrangement from the art object to the context of the viewing audience, thereby provoking a powerful pedagogical potential to show how viewers are framed as subjects, and how artifacts inform and form these subjects at the same time as they are read, reread, produced and reproduced by the viewer. The statement has an interesting echo in film studies that is elicited by new positionalities which challenge established concepts of inscribing the subject position through a narrative with just one point of view, that is, the spectator as a perfect copy. Moreover this shift endorses film as a powerful instrument for understanding cultural representations, because it provokes an enticement of discourses, problematizes the relationship between producer/object/consumer, and incites an intense social discussion of its meanings.
Emplacements
In the short-shelf-life American marketplace of images, maybe the queer moment, if it’s here today, will for that very reason be gone tomorrow. But I mean the essays collected in this book to make, cumulatively, stubbornly, a counterclaim against that obsolescence: a claim that something about queer is inextinguishable. Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive - recurrent, eddying, troubiant. The word “queer” itself means across -- it comes from the Indo-European root - tverkw, which also yields the German quer (transverse), Latin torquere (to twist), English athwart. Titles and subtitles that at various times I’ve attached to the essays in Tendencies tend toward “across” formulations: across genders, across sexualities, across genres, across “perversions.” (The book itself would have had an “across” subtitle, but I just couldn’t choose.) The queer of these essays is transitive -- multiply transitive. The immemorial current that queer represents is antiseparatist as it is antiassimilationist. Keenly, it is relational, and strange.

Eve Kossofsky Sedgwick, Tendencies (foreword, 1993, p. xii)

In interminglings I offered general ideas of past relations between art education and visual culture education; suggested interactions of visual culture education with issues of gender, sexuality, curriculum, and morality; and looked at links between visual culture education and film studies. In Emplacements I assign positions and give a picture of key definitions that shape this thesis. Essentially, I briefly present associations linking visibility, invisibility and visual culture; reflect on intersections of queer visual representation, queer theory and visual culture studies; and finally emphasize connections among queer, borders, memory, absence, and location.

Dwelling: Visual Culture, In/visibility and Representation

visual culture, representation, and in/visibility.

Here I am less interested in discussing issues of visual representation using the terms “vision” or “visibility” since both seem to carry more absolute concepts of the sense of sight, than “visibility” and “invisibility”, my preferred terms, which allude more to contiguous actions of becoming visible/invisible; in other words: to be present by being able to be seen or concealed. There is a considerable body of work that informs us that in present day society discourses on visibility dictate the dynamics of contemporary culture (e.g., Barbosa, 1991; Brea, 1998; Burnett, 1995; Dias, 2005; Duncum, 2001; Dyer, 2002b; Emmne, 2001; Mirzoeff, 1998b).

Adding to this debate, Dyer (2002b, p. 89) states that this saturated world of images is soaked in sexuality. Following these ideas we might say that representations of sexuality are insidiously ‘present’ in our everyday lives. My point is that visibility and
sexuality are connected with unrestricted spaces and emplacements that reach all of us. Free from limitations, boundaries, or restrictions, susceptible and vulnerable, visibility exists as a subject open to questions and interpretations, completely obvious, spread out and unfolded. Visibility is habitually presented as a wide-open weave. Accordingly, visual culture is the means that generates visibility through a ceaseless flow of images and visual representations while the general public continuously makes its experiences visible (Seidje, 2005).

However, there are growing uncertainties about visibility presented in this way. That is in part because images can be effectively employed to appreciate, be aware of, and understand the world, but simultaneously, they can also be used to eschew or disavow our everyday lives. Thus, it is necessary to acknowledge and interpret images’ capability of generating a potentially infinite range of meanings and functions, and additionally inquire about what at the same time is made visible (present), and what is rendered invisible (absent) in one image (Derrida, 1982).

I disclose that my stance toward in/visibility, which has been evidently influenced by Derrida’s (1993) concepts of troubling paradoxes, is one of accepting undecidability, which cannot conform to either polarity of a dichotomy and seems to be neither present nor absent, or alternatively it is both present and absent at the same time. Derrida (1973b, 1981, 1982) describes undecidability as a resource that can no longer be included within binary oppositions; it defies and displaces such oppositions without ever constituting another term. Undecidability points to what can by no means be utterly reconciled or dominated; it is ambivalent because it comprises the element in which opposed extremities are incompatible. Also Derrida (2001) often insists that the condition of a possibility is the same condition as that of its impossibility, thus by analogy both mis/re/presentation and in/visibility are situated in the space of undecidability just like other tropes such as ghosts, zombies, vampires (death/life), cannibals (eat others/being eaten by others), drugs (medicines/poison), and so forth. Therefore, the reading, interpretation, or understanding of the binary present/absent provokes the need to develop new politics of perception that take account of visibility and invisibility at the same time: that is, in/visibility.

My Foucauldian analysis is that we are currently living in a realm of regimented perception. This dominion seems to be sustained by the power necessary to produce and disseminate images and visual representations as in/visibility, and this control imposes how they should be seen, read and understood. It is necessary to point out that here I am referring to visual representations as “presentations” that obey social and cultural codes and conventions, and I trace Dyer’s claim that visual representations
mediate, as a relational process, our social reality and images (Dyer, 1993, p.3). In visual representations images do not mirror their roots but transform them according to visual codes that are to a certain extent separated from and supplementary (extra and auxiliary) to those sources (Derrida, 1973a). Consequently these social processes have an effect on representation’s visual codes but are also influenced and altered by them. Thus representations articulate not only visual codes but also the social practices and forces which cause them, through which we interpret the world.

Note that from the beginning of this thesis I have distanced myself from debates about the ideological authority of ocularcentrism, which privileges vision over the other senses and enforces the idea that seeing is equivalent to knowing reality, the truth of the world. Of all the senses, vision has been generally taken to be the paradigm for perception, but lately, critiques of visibility are making us rethink visuality as constituted primarily by vision. Regarding this issue I follow Shohat and Stam who state that the visual is never pure; “it is always ‘contaminated’ by the work of other senses (hearing, touch, smell), touched by other texts and discourses […]” (1998, p. 45). Despite my interest in the “visual” representations of gender and sexuality I believe fully that in the process of perception, reception and interpretation of the world the visual is just another point of entry into a multidimensional world of intertextual practices. Sight is only one of the several means of experience; thus seeing does not equate to knowing. I mention this because in this thesis I am concerned with visual representations, yet my own interests are to some extent are concerned with dialogical openings among spectator, screen and meanings, an approach to visual culture that establishes conceptual links of in/visibility with texts, sounds, smells, touches, and tastes.

We need new ways to approach visual representations in our everyday lives. For Derrida, a sign, representation, word, can only name another sign, representation, word. A sign stands for something that stands for other things that are traces of other things and there is no steady position, we never arrive at an end, and as there is no base, nothing is to be known with assurance. Sarup (1993) explains:
Derrida argues that when we read a sign, meaning is not immediately clear to us. Signs refer to what is absent, so in a sense meanings are absent too. Meaning is continually moving along on a chain of signifiers, and we cannot be precise about its exact location because it is never tied to one particular sign. Now for Derrida, the structure of the sign is determined by the trace of that other which is forever absent. This other of course is never to be found in its full being. Rather like the answer to a child’s question or a definition in a dictionary, one sign leads to another and so on indefinitely (p. 33).

Such a reading makes me understand and employ “representation” as a concept, to move from an ocularcentric connection with truth to a model of representation that in its limitless possibilities of producing meanings is an operation of power.

Representation has been generally defined as substitution, imitation, a compensation for an absence, and a repetition of presence but it is not an impartial “entity”. Hence there is a need to understand representation in order to translate the relations of power and knowledge, because there is no such thing as a subject that exists aside from “power-knowledge”. This theory has origins in the work of Michel Foucault (1972, 1978) who tells us that power is related to knowledge and visual perception, but power is not attached to knowledge as an intense topography of what is avowed; instead it is a “will to knowledge”, an element of desire for obtaining knowledge. I reason that Foucault is less interested in assigning meaning to visual representation than interpreting what it does, what it performs or what is performed upon it. After all he states that representation is a product of power (Foucault, 1972). I am compelled to think that his ideas serve not only to understand the meanings encoded within and to interpret a work’s implicit content; instead, to consider representation not simply as expression, but as a manifestation of power, as an essential element of social practices of segregation, differentiation, assimilation and regulation.
screening human geographies, in/visibilities through visual culture education.

At every nanosecond, visual culture lets us know that we are watching the surfacing of a new social, cultural, economic, political world order. Moreover, screen and media photographs are images that carry the in/visibility of the encounter among the many others in this mondialization and globalization of culture (R. Ortiz, 1994). A quasi-univocal visual culture makes us believe that we are now in the process of developing, nurturing and controlling a worldwide society and that the concept of “community has come increasingly unglued from geography” (Robins, 1996, p. 7). But I also recognize that geographical and cultural stances do not transform so quickly; and restrictions, borders, liminalities, intermingling, entanglements, will linger as essential issues in the placement of in/visibilities: the visual culture.

I acknowledge that my discussion of in/visibility, gender and sexuality is not merely a matter of extending or opening up the canon/curricula/norm, but rethinking the flow of relationalities of the production and circulation of representations around the world because historical configurations of power and knowledge generate an apparent unevenness within relativization. Thus, independently of discourses on visual culture, subalterns, those living in postcolonial and neocolonial spaces, and minorities all over the world, ubiquitously still find their own self-perceptions strongly shaped from a comprehensive, internalized, dominant point of view, the gaze of the prevailing colonizer’s power.

Disruption: Queer and Representation

The terminology used in this thesis regarding gender and sexuality is represented as such: “homosexuality” stands as a construction of the medical, judicial, religious and educational discourses developed over the project of modernity; “gay”, “lesbian” “bisexual” and “transgender” (GLBT) are positioned as indicating those involved in the cultures and politics of identity during and after the liberatory movements; and “queer” is located as a comprehensive term associated most particularly with lesbian and gay subjects who resist models of stability and any fixed sexual and/or identity category, and propose to disrupt these positions of normativity (Jagose, 1996).

Historically, the image of homosexuality has been marked by in/visibility of homosexuals in visual culture as well as in public policy making; and it continually has been depicted as psychological disarray, deviant, twisted, unreliable, compulsive, and obsessive. GLBT’s political strategy of cultural visibility emerged at a point in history, in the late 1960s when “identity”, as a theoretical framework of reference, was in the process of crumbling due to the politics of differences disseminated by French
poststructuralist thoughts. Yet, in spite of that, GLBT, particularly through visual representations and media coverage, improved the visibility of their concerns in the community and managed to develop a strong and efficient social representation that connotes the emotional, cultural, social and erotic lives of same-sex desire.

And then along came the queer project. According to Creekmur & Doty (1995) the expression “queer” has become an “attractive and oppositional self-label that acknowledges a new cultural context for politics, criticism, reception-consumption, and production” (p. 6). Queer representation can be seen as a political act, a public avowal of agency since it is the preferred term by activists who are oppressed by the heterosexual normalcy, “heteronormativity”, and who reject traditional gender and sexual identities. Approaches for the visibility and embracing of queer gender and sexuality within social institutions trouble the existing foundations of heteronormativity, and raise uncertainties about the landscape of categories, terminologies, nomenclatures, partitions, and vocabularies.

Several authors (e.g., Burnett, 1995; Kleerebezem, 2005; Rogoff, 1998; Seidjel, 2005; Shohat & Stam, 1998; Wienkel, 2005) assert that in/visibility raises a constant tension between entanglement and disentanglement. Drawing from this excitability I have to relate these issues of in/visibility of queer representations to visual culture; and also relate these representations of queer genders and sexualities to a debate that recently has been undertaken concerning the mapping of queer borders through concepts of memory. Hence I suggest that, to consider intersections of queer theory and visual culture studies as sites for nourishment of queer representation’s in/visibility, it is necessary to highlight connections among borders, memory, absence, and locations. In view of these issues, I find myself enmeshed in understanding meanings of in/visibility through the experience of seeing, looking, gazing and watching queer representations of gender and sexuality in wide-ranging cultures and subcultures alongside and within my own lived experiences.

Due to established accounts of discrimination and censorship earned by homosexuality and gayness, queer subjectivities and their modes of visual representation acquired the reputation of being visibly complex, dangerous, or controversial. In my interpretation some queer theorists have been suggesting the consideration of invisibility, or “non-visibility”, as well as visibility and in/visibility as forms of representation, and the search for traces of meanings “within” or “without” the queer culture (See, Dyer, 2002a; D. E. Hall, 2003; See, Hawley, 2001; Llamas, 1998; Morland & Willox, 2005; Muñoz, 1999; N. Sullivan, 2003b; Sáenz, 2004). In addition, I emphasize that the in/visibility of queer subjects is highly structured, indicative
of particular images and codes, and requires explicit interpretive practices, which sometimes are not widely available or simply do not exist.

Much of the argument I am making regarding in/visibility of queer representations revolves around the trans/gender/sexual space, the trans-across-gender-sexual geography, that is, queergenders or genderqueers (I use these terms interchangeably), as the privileged forms of analysis, understood primarily as sites of in/visibility, memory, and location. Here, the transgendered appear as the most crucial symbol of queer sexuality and become the means to challenge the others, since they make visible a queerness that exposes a crisis in gender and sexual identity categories. Thus trans develops into a relentless disruptive movement between sexual and gender identities. Hence trans is the favored category of analysis in this thesis since it troubles and clearly transgresses issues of gender and sexuality, and disorders any social organization that is traced through patriarchal rule. Besides, and extremely important, Almodóvar’s film representations depend unreservedly on queergender bodies for their reality.

Queer visual representation is usually seen as having the capacity to insult public sensibilities and thus promote destabilization of moral standards that support society. Queer representation is argued to be intolerable for mainstream society because it is mainly typified as homoerotic, obscene and pornographic. Historically, the censorship of queer in/visibility is a real issue and it is part of an enduring process of suppression of queer culture (Waugh, 1995). That is the reason for a consistent moral panic that queer visual representations are sufficiently powerful to obliterate the authority of heterosexuality. But according to Stychin (1996):

Proponents of these arguments implicitly accept the social construction of both sexuality and the nation state, in that each is capable of a radical reconstitution through cultural means. Nor is there any attempt made by the critics to question the relationship between the messages intended by the artist and the meaning received by the audience or to acknowledge the possibility of multiple, contradictory or ironic readings of any representation. (p. 154)

Habitually meanings of queer representation relate to subjectively contingent images. It seems that we do not perceive representations in their specificity because we are so used to seeing images and attaching tags to them that we hardly ever look deeper. The marker queer is brought out to fix interpretation, in spite of the fact that queer representations render a mediated reality that is no more than images. After all, the power in the construction of meaning does not lie only in the maker, representations, or audience, but in the interpretive negotiations among them. Any representation is more than merely
a reproduction of that which it represents: it contributes to the construction of reality for what is present and absent of the original thing. A queer representation presents no guarantee of the existence of an accurate depiction and reflection of an absolute, perfect, integral queer.

*inserting myself into queer theory’s representations.*

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore in depth queer theory’s theorization and its heated debate in academia. Here I intend to present some acknowledged main concepts of queer theory and how they will impact on my work. But before I commence I muse on the spaces from which I can speak. It is an intense effort to examine and make in/visible queerness, queer and queer theory within the location of my thesis, and in order to do that it is important to be acquainted with where I come from so as to discern the course of my considerations. My conversation starts from my cultural positions and how those inform the development of my notions regarding this topic. I consider that queer and queer theory are at once meaningless and significant to me. All the relations of significations of the sign “queer” are different to me due to my
geocultural locations as a Latin-Brazilian-American. I want to explain here that I have been informed of queer but not shaped by the queer historical contextualization attached to hateful, offensive, aggressive, derogatory adjectives. I feel partially emotionally detached from its regulation and investments, and I generally use “queer” and queer theory as tokens, as indicators, signs for those who defiantly flaunt their self-identify as queer and those who have no desire to conform to any sexual and gender normalcy and by identifying as queer, critically develop agency.

My own lived experience as a ‘post-occidental/colonial’ subject as an artist, teacher and student (see next chapter) in British and North American educational institutions, which for the colonized are the most valued form of instruction, granted me access to these cultures and the sub-culture and meanings of the queer subject. Poststructuralist thought bound my earlier educational foundation in universities and fine art schools in Brazil and in England. It is from the limitation of this formation and these points of view that I reflect on queer theory as an American response, a local interpretation, and a comprehensive enlargement of French poststructural thought which consistently had been investigating relations among identity, sex, gender and sexuality. Moreover, although queer theory has been drawing from several bodies of French theory, but mainly from Foucault, Lacan and Derrida, its works are barely known in European (with the exception of the English speaking countries), and Latin American academies.

Over the years, these interrelations and the permanent dialogue between cultures have been informing and influencing my critical analyses while feeding my unrelenting feeling of bewilderment, the sensation that my work did not relatively fit within developing theoretical positions. My foreign education disrupts my understanding and interpretations of earlier experiences at “home”. Latin languages do not contain any corresponding term for “queer” or “queer theory”, nor have they corresponding terms for “gay” and “transgender”, only for lesbian and transsexual. In these geo-cultural locations, the preferred term to recognize and translate queer is fluid sexuality (sexualité flottant, sexualidade fluida)¹. I posit that
this is essentially because sexual and gender identities are not universal constructions; they are historically and culturally specific; they diverge to a large extent from what is acknowledged as sexual or gender identity in Anglo-American cultures. Moreover, I follow Khayatt (2002, p. 493), who, speaking from an Arab position, asserts that these geocultural locations “fail” in producing vocabulary and finding categories to embrace the queer difference. Khayatt argues, and I have the same opinion, that it is less about cultural belatedness and more about the fact that the concept of compartmentalization itself is foreign and/or less insidious to Arabs and Latins, for example, than to other cultures. Then, the in/visibility of queer is unveiled when it is not determined; the absence of a name or a category appears to suggest a subject who is white, middle class, Euro-North American. Therefore, I believe that ‘queer’ cannot be translated to other geolocations without a relational conversation. So issues of remembrance, inclusiveness, reflexivity, race, ethnicity, culture, age, weight, history have been aspects of my use of queer theory.

Reinstatement: In/visibility, and Queer Theory

Most of the initial literature on queer theory drew attention to the conceptualization of the term, and shaped it as amorphous, vague, ill defined, slippery, shifty, and inconstant (See Abelove et al., 1993; Cleto, 1999; Foster et al., 1997; L. Gross & Wood, 1999; Jagose, 1996; Klages, 1997; Seidman, 1996; N. Sullivan, 2003b). Queer theory, following several feminist theories and some of the principles of gay/lesbian studies, rejects the idea that sexuality and gender are essential categories determined by and judged according to ethical principles of those who are socially allowed to speak and normalize, for example these in the natural sciences and the sacred institutions of education, police, judiciary, and religion. I make this point because it is necessary to acknowledge that queer theory, at least as a concept, is primarily concerned with any and all forms of sexuality and gender, and it expands the scope of its analysis to all kinds of “behaviors”, and also it claim that all sexual and gender behaviors, all concepts
connecting them to identities, and all kinds of normative and deviant sexuality and gender, are social constructs.

Based in its complex and diverse theoretical positions, queer theory was initially understood as a continuous process because it resists normalization, a fixed visibility, a permanent image, and a homogenous representation. As a strategy queer theory critically engages with normativity to disrupt it; hence it is constantly under scrutiny from within and without, in order to avoid any appearance of normalization. Queer theory’s political commitment is specifically to the unknowability, the non-identifiability, of its own identity in the future. One of the main reasons why queer theory is considered an eternal becoming is that it draws heavily from Foucault who asserts that the creation of norms is the fundamental act of repression, that regulation itself is the problem (Foucault, 1973, 1978, 1995). Following Foucault’s claim, queer theory maintains that any coalescence of the non-normative produces regulation, and then it loses the power to disrupt normativity since it becomes ruled and normalized itself.

More recently there is a delicate turn in queer theory from a queer subject to shared lifestyles. For example, Halberstam considers that queerness is detached from sexual identity and is more a “way of life than … a way of having sex” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 1). Morland & Willox reassert that queer theory is not about identities but about actions and ways of living that surpass the notion of identity; it is about shared lifestyles linking disparate groups with exceedingly disparate lives and sexual practices (Morland & Willox, 2005, p. 3). Thus queer analysis facilitates us to understand the lived realities and day-to-day activities of diverse individuals today, whatever, their sexual identity might be (D. E. Hall, 2003). Consequently queer forms of theorization, such as political and cultural organizations and critical academic production, make provocative links between sexuality and gender and everyday lives; and it is a living inquiry that questions the norms of society in its day-to-day practices.

Nevertheless, queer theory as a dynamic critical theory is under permanent criticism and self-criticism. Furthermore, I am fully aware that for many scholars the category ‘queer’ did not work because it seemed to flatten the very diversity it professed to acknowledge. ‘Queer’ embraced differences while not quite coming to terms with issues of power that are intrinsic to each sexual category included under the rubric ‘queer’ as it intersects with race, gender, class, disability, and so on. For many the inclusive queer theory conceptualization is a fictitious concept that does not accept “all” queer--races, ethnicities, classes--and also erases lesbian, bisexual and transgendered specificities. Furthermore, it is becoming more widely known that despite queer theory’s claim that it embraces all forms of sexualities and gender including heterosexuality, many
transgender and intersex people reject the ‘queer’ label. In spite of the fact that most
of the key literature in queer theory was produced by women, lesbians, and transgender
(in/visible), as I stated earlier there is an implicit (in/visible) characteristic of male,
white, middle class, upper class, rich, urban, fit, that pervades the constructions around
queerness.

Furthermore, despite the increasing number of publications of queer theory it is
still quite difficult to find resources that directly deal both with issues of queer theory
and issues of economy, geo-cultural positioning, education, disability, race and class.
Queer theory renders in/visible these subjects despite recent efforts by several scholars.
Accordingly, given all these factors, it is untenable to think of queer theory as it is at the
moment, unless processing it through an intellectual devouring that produces theoretical
and practical ways of knowledge within queer theory, and is capable of appreciating
those categories and differences.

In spite of all these dissentient statements about queer theory, I adopt it because I
recognize its appeal as a contested category; and it continues to retain, at least in my case
and in this thesis, an ambivalent meaning, one that is inclusive and, at the same time, one
that over and over again arrives at a range of complex social locations. Thus I believe
that the power of the term ‘queer’ is in its implied multiple locations; even if I have only
a limited way into the term.

Mapping Queer Borders: Memory, Absence and Arrangement

In this segment, my main focus is on memory as in/visibility and inferred as
categories of space, maps, geographies, borders, migrations, representations, and
displacements in the context of film and queer representations. The intensity of
discourses on memory that cross boundaries characterizes contemporary culture
worldwide; and specific discourses on memory such tose on as traumatic, haunted,
forgettable and rematerialized memories may be useful to understand hidden spaces such
as queer representations. There are several points I am interested in pursuing and I
begin by illustrating some of my ideas through this fragment of Lopes’ book the man who
loved boys (2002), as he puts it:

I only wanted to write something so simple and direct to make you happy, but
I only can think of texts and images that have already been done. My feelings
are in songs. My desires are in scenes of films. My dreams are literary. I want to
strip off but always find the pose, mannerism, and artifice, the writing. Life does
not suffice, unless as a performance. I lift the dress up a little. Softly I go down
the stairs. Happiness, only happiness. Halfway down the staircase. I continue to
go down the stairs. The right foot is moved up. The right arm rises. The head
proudly elevates. Now it is the moment (2002, pp. 75-76). [My translation]

Paraphrasing Lopes, I would like to assert in a confessional mode that I, like him, have always felt that if I had a soul, it would have to be a trans/gendered one. Trans/gender less as a bodily and rational formation and more as a contextual and relational experience that crosses geographies, maps, desires and emotions, and transverses our gender and sexual loci of enunciation. Lopes’ quote aids me to contextualize trans/gender in the vein of undecidability as presented by Derrida in one of his several deconstructive efforts to expose how dualisms have always been troubled. As I acknowledged earlier, I adopt the idea of trans/genders as undecidable to counterpoint the common notions of transgender as an inability to act, asconfusion, interruption: a pathetic state of indecisiveness, desexualization. I prefer to acknowledge the transgender gender and trans/gender as a suitable provision for and possibility of acting and deciding.

Therefore, trans/gender\(^2\) as a site of in/visibility, by being undecidable now has to be imagined as much as it has to be seen. The reason for invoking in/visibility is that trans/gender subject formation is some way distant from a normative gender or sexuality, since it springs from different perspectives. Trans/gender sees and lives gender and sexuality through a tangential, corporeal, material and forcible angle; it always conveys awareness of personal and social formation, and heightens the perception of memory, desire and fantasy. Consequently trans/gender builds constructs of memory based on the reality that sexuality, sex, and gender are not a steady relation, and that sexualities are not straightforwardly
compartmentalized by the sexes of their subjects. So memory, similarly to sexuality and
gender, as social cultural structure, is wide open to a vast number of organic, cultural,
educational, theoretical, and emotional definitions and articulations. In fact I strongly
consider that queer gender’s undecidable opening spaces depend directly on the role
of memory as a means of altering social cultural values to reinvent and re/present
masculinity, femininity, heterosexuality, homosexuality, and so on.

At this point, to further develop and facilitate the understanding of the subject
trans/gender as undecidability I bring to life fragments of memory of one movie’s
characters that “trans/genderly” impressed me. That memory is also a key constituent
for the interpretation of Almodóvar’s *All About my Mother*: Blanche Dubois, in *A Streetcar
Named Desire*. I draw attention to the fact that few characters have had such an impact
in my understanding of relations of power in representations of gender and sexuality, as
did Blanche. The initial scene in which Blanche arrives at the train station, is helped by a
boyish sailor, and literally takes a streetcar called “Desire” keeps resurfacing again, again
and again. I wonder why this scene often resurfaces and not others. Why does Blanche
haunt me? Is it because she appears ghostly through the smoke of the train? Is it because
when I first saw her in the movie I “felt” and “knew” that she was a trans/gender, or to
some extent undecidable?

One obsession is the fact that Blanche during all her tribulation exhibits overtly
ambiguous reactions of self-importance, dignity, fulfillment, pleasure, pride, rudeness,
impropriety, perturbation, and arrogance in being socially and sexually a stranger. As
one of the best examples of a masquerade of femininity, Blanche’s feat of existing inside
a space or out, or both at the same time, opened up infinite possibilities and enormous
power for my understanding of trans/genders. Blanche is presented as a self-doubting,
disturbed individual, and on the other hand she is the individual who is the symbolic
power and challenge to Stanley Kowalski (Blanche’s brother-in-law) in matters of
authority. Deploying the reading of a heterosexual framework, the symbolic phallus, as
socially naturalized instrument and sign, means male generative powers; and in this case
Kowalski is represented as possessing the phallus (woman/Blanche). By being the phallus,
Blanche cannot have it but according to Butler (1993a, pp. 57-91, 1999, pp. 101-135) a
queer disruption of this normative reading makes Blanche come to stand for the phallus’

One might say that since Blanche’s character is so fractured by conflicting
and contradictory desires and needs, there are no comprehensible binary positions in
her character related directly to gender and sexuality. However, again I see Blanche
occupying a role in which she has conditions and possibilities of acting and deciding;
she repeatedly declares herself as woman, projects masculinity, restates femininity, reiterates heterosexuality, hides her husband’s homosexuality and transgresses all these spaces in constant performances of trans/genders. That is, trans/genders as the suitcases and belongings of a nomadic gendered and sexualized traveler. Whether this assertion is acceptable or not, my interest at this point is to bring luggage as an in/visible trope to further consider Blanche’s trans/gendering, displacement, and fluctuation (flottant). Here I am indulging in Rogoff’s (2000) use of luggage as a trope which aims to reflect on the articulation of the complex daily negotiations of positioning geo-cultural subjects. She asserts that the privilege of luggage as going away, melancholy, and leaving “does not acknowledge the daily processes of movement, memory, of learning new things, of repressing new knowledges, of forbidden nostalgias and of material exchanges and cultural circulation” (Rogoff, 2000, p. 37).

For this reason luggage perceived as a multiple marker of memory, nostalgia and access to other histories, should be detached from its relation with a concrete past, a nostalgic trace. That is, luggage is to embody mobility rather than torpor. Moreover, Rogoff asserts that luggage circulates across cultures but is always lost, it is inaccessible, it is a without. That is, Rogoff uses luggage as an effort to graphically represent a new discernment of geography as a “form of being without which is not a form of negation of existing subjects and methods, nor a form of lack” (Phelan & Rogoff, 2001, p. 34) [Italics added]. For Rogoff, without is a geopolitical of personal displacement, social exile, and autobiographical traces. So the notion of being without is not one of being at a loss, of inhabiting emptiness, of not having anything, but rather an active, daily disassociation in the attempt to clear the ground in order for something else to become apparent.

And it is through thinking and unthinking luggage that Rogoff perceives possibilities to critically analyze visual culture, its hidden structures, the invisible powers, seductions, and numerous transgressions, and processes of marking and making visible those who have been included and those who have been excluded. Sometimes luggage performs as an allusion for the unreachable lost home/gender/sexuality, and acts as a focus of their memories. In many visual representations of trans/gender the luggage contains the most significant assets; and in this luggage, trans/gender do not keep garments and outfits but their personal belongings and effects, their lives. Each bag, closed or open, is cartography of memory, and trans/gender must preserve the right to keep, leave, give, send, or explode their belongings. Some never unpack their suitcases, but some - just like myself - tend to overpack, because I am not always sure I will ever come back, ever.

I brought luggage into this discussion because the narrative of *A Streetcar Named*
*Desire* and its preoccupations with sexuality, gender, madness, alcoholism, and class are themes that Blanche carries literally and metonymically in her luggage. Also because this film is directly linked to the narrative of Almodóvar’s *All About my Mother*, which I will discuss in *Dressing*. In view of this concern I initially return to *A Streetcar Named Desire’s* directorial mode which sets out the film in a way that Blanche’s luggage is always located in the central space of the screen--and especially in the most dramatic scenes. At this juncture, I encourage you to follow me in a brief description of Blanche’s luggage.

When she arrives in New Orleans, Blanche holds her own luggage, a round feminine handbag. Carrying her luggage on the streets she enters her sister’s house. A few days later, the remaining luggage arrives – large trunk, chests that need to be carried by two extremely heavy masculine men. Before Blanche can even open her trunk, Stella and Stanley (Blanche’s sister and brother-in-law) open it. Stanley excavates Blanche’s luggage, invades her privacy to see and only finds signs of femininity and richness. Blanche sees her open trunk and mocks, “it seems that my trunk was exploded”. Stanley quickly answers, “Me and Stella helped you unpack”. “Everything I own is in that trunk”, asserts Blanche. Sometimes, Stanley sits on top of the luggage to articulate his embattled masculinity. Blanche and Stanley carry Frenchness and Polishness as haunted luggage of class, racial and ethnic memory. In the rape scene the trunk is a central device, a source of hyper-femininity from which Blanche tries to seduce Stanley in order to avoid the sexual assault. Blanche packs to go away. But she does not know where she is going. Blanche leaves for a mental hospital without any luggage but her handbag. And then she hears, “the luggage will follow soon”.

In addition we must consider that Blanche’s luggage -- read trans/gender -- is not only what is represented by the film but also how it was constructed by the filmmaker and re/presented by the spectator/audience. For example, the mode in which Stanley’s scenes of continuing pillage of Blanche’s luggage are represented turns them into amusing acts with no sense that they are indicators of cruel violence. Invested in learning further about the role of spectatorship in the construction of the trans/gender Blanche, Gross (2004) has been analyzing the experience of seeing *A Streetcar Named Desire* and exploring spectatorship in film, in video (from the play), and in the theatre. According to Gross, Blanche carries the intense luggage of being amusing to the audience as a result of complicity between
Stanley and the spectators; the audience reads Blanche’s sexual desire and persona as comic characteristics. In contrast, Stanley merges a fetishized body and aggressiveness that promote audience identification with him, males and females; thus the audience identification with Stanley over Blanche is less one of gender identification than identification with the dominant over the disempowered. As Gross (2004) further adds:

There is an ugliness to this tendency to side with Stanley in productions of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in which the arrogance of male heterosexuality is unleashed against a struggling, desperate creature who, as Nicholas Pagan has astutely pointed out, is neither simply a woman nor a homosexual man in drag, but a character who is constructed through references both to femininity in both forms of womanliness and male homosexuality, making it impossible to confine Blanche within a single gender or sexuality. As such, American normative masculinity, asserting the primacy of men over women, and heteronormative families over “perverts”. (pp. 79-80)

Gross’s reading reveals how the play can reflect extremely repressive sexual and gender politics when aggressive heteronormativity forcefully triumphs over and contains queerness.

Nowadays it is evident that *A Streetcar Named Desire* directly confronts binary attitudes toward masculinity and male behavior, and to femininity and female behaviors, seeking to depict the difference and diversity of men/woman and masculinities/femininities. Besides, these days the readings of Blanche as trans/gender dispute what it is that really prevails in that narrative: the stasis represented by the safeguarding of the decayed heterosexual institutions, or the mobility heightened by the trans/gender subject.

Undoubtedly through Blanche’s luggage, the conversation between heterosexual and homosexual, public and private, bourgeois and destitute, discloses Blanche’s furtive roles; her secrecy is forced out of the closet and punished by the mighty institution of masculinity. Thus, memory and forgetting are indissolubly linked to each other in Blanche’s character whose hidden memories, as they haunt her, are at the same time invited to surface and yet kept concealed. By analogy I take the opportunity to call to mind that luggage, memory, and trans/gender are intrinsically related to the movement across places and spaces. For the last decades, key theorists of colonialism
Where is my heart?

Why are you looking at me like that? Do I look awful?

What's wrong?

These fingernails will have to be trimmed.

I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.

I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.

Don't touch me. Don't ever touch me again, bastard!
– pre-post-new (See Bhabah, 1994; Gunew, 1993, 2004; Spivak, 1999) have frequently given emphasis to the haunting of occult histories in their investigation of postcolonial places, spaces, and bodies; and have argued (through Freudian theories of repression and recovered memory) that psychoanalysis plays a key role in understanding this process. But this is another long story that I will not develop in this thesis.

Conclusion

In Emplacements I assign positions and give some key definitions that shape this thesis: In/visibility, re/presentation, trans/gender and luggage. In/visibility is conceived as an operation that alludes to contiguous actions of becoming visible/invisible, to be present by being able to be seen or concealed. Re/presentation is an articulation not only of visual codes and conventions but also the social practices and forces which cause them, with which we interpret the world. Trans/gender is the queer means to challenge others, since it makes perceptible a queerness that exposes a crisis in gender and sexual identity categories. Luggage is perceived as a multiple marker of memory, nostalgia and access to other histories, it carries the concept of mobility and circulates across cultures and subcultures. Also in Emplacements I present associations linking in/visibility, visual culture and sexuality.

I consider that it is necessary to acknowledge and interpret images’ capability of generating a potentially infinite range of meanings and functions, and additionally I inquire about what at the same time is made
visible (present), and what is rendered invisible (absent) in one image. Furthermore I argue that discourses on visibility in contemporary culture inform us that the world is saturated with images of sexuality; and this visibility has been constantly associated with restricted spaces and censorship. Moreover I discuss interaction among queer, and queer theory, and visual representation. I stress that the in/visibility of queer subjects is highly structured, redolent of particular images and codes, and requires explicit interpretive practices, which sometimes are not widely available or simply do not exist. I discuss the fact that if queer theory became visible as political critique of anything that falls into normative and deviant categories of sexuality, gender and identity, and has been under ongoing reassessment, I still find it a temporarily useful implement for my thesis. Finally I emphasize connections among queer, borders, memory, absence, and location through the concept of luggage.

The luggage routes of Almodóvar’s films are my starting points to displace concepts of seen and unseen in the trans/gender space. The blurring of the boundaries between the characters in A Streetcar Named Desire and their exchanges concerning representations of masculinity and femininity have had a huge effect on my own perception and memories of the masquerade of gender and the pretence of sexuality: it foregrounds my own processes of identification and disidentification within the fractures of sexuality and gender in Almodóvar’s visual representations of trans/gender. In this chapter I present general ideas about queer, queer theory and representations. I further develop in Liminalities the situation of queer theory in the Latin-American space. In Derivations I explore concepts of queer theory such as performativity, citationality, reiteration and closeting. In Gaze I explore the relations between Almodóvar’s films, queer theory and spectatorship. In Dressing queer theory will be employed to support the analysis of Almodóvar's films. Finally in Embodiments I relate queer studies with visual culture education.
Liminalities
Routes: Travelling with Local and Non-Local Communities

So complex is the process of imagination and memory that it seems that we can only look at/see/understand/interpret categories such as remembering/disremembering through manichean positions of articulation. I see a strong and likely convergence of the conversation about imagination and memory with Post-colonial theories, subaltern studies, Latin American studies, visual culture education, and queer theories. Thus in this chapter is my look at the locations from where I speak at the same time that I seek to understand and visit spaces in between colonial/post-colonial, being/becoming, remembering/disremembering and seeing/seen. I look at the lyrics of *Black and White/ Americans*: 

75
I took my baby on a Saturday bang
Boy is that girl with you; yes we’re one and the same
Now I believe in miracles, and a miracle has happened tonight
But, if you’re thinkin’ about my baby
It don’t matter if you’re black or white
They print my message in the Saturday Sun, I had to tell them I ain’t second to none
And I told about equality and it’s true either you’re wrong or you’re right
But, if you’re thinkin’ about my baby
It don’t matter if you’re black or white
If you’re thinkin’ of being my brother
It don’t matter if you’re black or white

Poor Americans are in the night of Louisiana
English tourists were mugged in Copacabana
Those juvenile delinquents still think they were Americans
Spanish tourists are detained, by mistake, in the Flamengo Square
Rich Americans no longer walk in Havana
At the Carnival, American faggots bring the AIDS virus to Rio de Janeiro
Organized faggots of San Francisco managed to control the propagation of this wickedness
Only a potential genocidal – wearing a cassock, necktie or apron - can pretend he does not see that
the faggots - being the prime group-victim - are in the situation now to lead the movement to deter
the dissemination of HIV
Americans are very much statisticians
They have obvious gestures and limpid smiles
They have eyes of penetrating brightness which go deep into where they gaze, but not into their
own depth
The Americans represent a large share of the existing happiness in this world
For Americans white is white, black is black, and the mulatta is valueless
Faggot is faggot, male is male, woman is woman, and money is money
In this way they gain, negotiate, lose, grant, and conquer civil rights
While here, down under the equator, the indefininition is the regime
And we dance in such a stunning way whose secret not even I could possibly know.
We are between pleasure and tragedy; between monstrosities and sublimity
Americans are not Americans
They are the old human beings arriving, passing, and crossing
They are typically Americans
The Americans feel that something has been lost; something was broken, it is breaking. [My
translation]

Black and White/Americanos – Caetano Veloso, 1991 on Michael Jackson’s song Black and white
By reading these lyrics, I hear Jackson’s song carefully deconstructed by Veloso’s interpretation, I hear the different notes and silences, I see, imagine, and remember events, concepts, places and people; I can smell the good aroma of *Copacabana’s* beach and the appalling scent of *Flamengo* Square, and can touch the multitude of gay and mulatto bodies in Rio de Janeiro. The whole body is involved in the process of seeing, and we enter into a space of agency in which recollection, remembrance, apprehension, affection, repugnance, melancholy, and pleasure, among others, allow us to give meaning to this lived experience. By delving into some scenes presented by Veloso, I assume positions of identification with some of the memories they have left in me, but at the same time they are reminders of what I have been forgetting, disdaining or omitting.

An analogous trajectory can be effortlessly traced on the focus of the attention and analyses of this research into the visual queer gender representations of the Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar. My own sense is that I bring to my studies the continuously remembered and concurrently forgotten spaces of enunciation of the queer Spanish and Iberian-American visual cultures and the silenced and hidden discourses of sexuality in visual culture education and curriculum. The Iberian Peninsula’s location, as a borderland of civilizations, people, races, faiths and religion, accounts for most of the historical and cultural richness of Spain’s queer sexualities. This site of interest renders, to a certain extent, the benefits of the conversations of the Luso-Hispanic visual culture education of Europe and the Americas. Hence, the need to understand queer studies’ circulation and to be aware of the ways in which visual queer representations and discourses have been transculturally disseminated, understood and attributed. These foci of Almodóvar’s visual culture simultaneously confer visibility on the flows of ideas, concepts and visual representations that affect the cultural construction of queerness, and provoke responsiveness of queer visual culture and education in the Iberian-American location and elsewhere.

Herein lay the principal questions of this research: How do Pedro Almodóvar’s film representations of queer sexuality and gender inform contemporary art education theory and practice? In what ways is the utilization of border epistemologies relevant for understanding representations of genders and sexualities in Almodóvar’s films, and how can they inform art education practices? What kind of agency and queer subjective mediation are those that surface from a critical interpretation of queer visual representations? How do liminal spaces, between text and viewer, queer-gender/non-queer-gender work as interpretive models for a critical and active subjectivity in visual culture education?
I must acknowledge at this point that despite the fact that I will not necessarily be able to “fully” answer these questions, I am not anxious about it, because I see the development of this research as a living inquiry and as an opportunity to create spaces for the articulation of innovative questions about visual culture education. Here, I am not searching for truths, just for contingent realities. What is more, I embrace the fact that these initial research questions have been acquiring new meanings and incorporating other issues and uncertainties at the progress of each research step. Informed by hermeneutical cycles models these initial research questions recur over and over again, impelling themselves forward to provoke new interpretations and understandings. With each return to these questions they derive new interpretations, or possibilities of interpretation. I am receptive to beliefs that there are no foundational pieces of knowledge, just interpretation; and if all is about interpretation, which is about meaning and understanding, “reality” is only accessible to us in terms of how we understand and interpret it. However, before I enter into a direct conversation with these questions, allow me to move to essential acknowledgments.

My lived experiences as an artist, student, researcher and educator in Brazil, Europe, and North America indisputably frame and account for my particular awareness in visual culture education. I am conscientious about the fact that the landscape of my imaginary identity, which is grounded and shaped as that of an urban
whitened middle-class male, endows me with advantages that allow me to pass less problematically through all these spaces and across the discursive boundaries of visual culture, education and queer studies. Nonetheless, these same institutions and discourses that have privileged me have also marked and excluded the ethos of my localized sexual experience, formation and fluid identity. Moreover, embedded in my nomadic experiences there have been coexisting multifaceted and conflicting relationships of social privilege and economic, political and cultural marginality. Therefore, I consider it my responsibility to assess critically the particularities, continuities and discontinuities of cultural studies, critical pedagogy and queer theory, and examine their asymmetrical relations of power and privilege in order to interpret and deconstruct them.

The spirit I am engaging in through my inquiry compels me to say that in every attempt at mapping my locations I find only imaginary itineraries. I have been traveling metaphorically and literally all through my life, and cannot effortlessly grasp in my memory fixed settings of cities, houses, or even a home; but I vividly and fluently recall spaces in movement and objects in transition; and often find myself inhabited by trains, cars, chariots, boats, libraries, theatres and airplanes. My early reminiscences are of crossing rivers, lakes and ponds; films, books; paddling in small wooden boats, riding horses made out of bones; flying dragons; and racing donkeys and Jeeps to reach or leave the arid, barren land that characterizes much of the inner poor Brazilian north-eastern Sertão.
At some point in my early childhood, my family moved permanently from the interior to live in the tourist-oriented city of Natal. Thereafter, while tourists occupied the city on summer and winter holidays, I would go back to the interior and intensely explore various sexualities and pleasures existing in that environment. Early on, I learned that sexual practices that took place locally could be considered quite differently in larger social configurations: every trip back to Natal was a crossing over not only from the rural to the urban space but between different systems of sexual cultures, from silenced to silencing sexualities. Parker informs us that strong interaction of different systems of same-sex relations marks the cultural organization of homosexuality in the Brazilian northeast. Because of these encounters, silencing sexualities tend to be the cosmopolitan contemporary modes of understanding same-sex relations; and the silenced are the long-established structures of experiencing sexual desire and constructing sexual identity stemming from a highly complex cultural mixedness (Parker, 1999).

Furthermore, growing up in a large family differentiated by class and religion, in a family-oriented culture, with relatives spread across small interior farms, cities and the major metropolis, traveling was inescapable; it shaped my itinerant attitude and sponsored my uncountable trips from one home to other homes. Since then home has been placed in this flux, this contiguity among homes. Sephardic Jews, marranos, protestant missionaries, orthodox Catholics and African cultures encounter my family as a place for many homes. When I relate these experiences of the inescapability of traveling to my queer positioning, I situate them as the critical settings in which my written narratives are located as “dwelling” and in the same way as a “diasporic space”, between the global and local, inside and outside (Brah, 1996). Nevertheless, in spite of that, I always relished traveling; and home has been vaguely positioned in this entre lugar; this in-betweenness of places, spaces, classes, races, genders, temporalities and sexualities. Entre lugar, narrowly translated from the Portuguese to English as in-between, was articulated by Santiago (2000) as a space of agency to constitute ways of knowing, to deconstruct Latin American histories of cultural dependency and subalternity. These concepts of home, diaspora and entre lugar are relevant to my work and directly relate to other theories such as transculturation, hybridity, border thinking, subaltern studies, and mestiçagem. But I am less fascinated about how they relate to each other than I am curious to know what we can do with them in visual culture education. I am more involved in the process of developing critical narratives about my recollections, which I believe are closely related to what Anne-Marie Fortier calls “sexuality as movement” and queerness as “movement out of place” in which connections between exile, displacement and migration are found in discussions on queer diaspora and queer
remembrances (Fortier, 2001, p. 406). Fortier (2001) comments on the stationary moments of remembering, as follows:

Re-membering home is lived in motions: the motions of journeying between homes, the motions of hailing ghosts from the past, the motions of leaving or staying put, of ‘moving on’ or ‘going back’, the motions of cutting or adding, the motions of continual reprocessing of what home is/was/may be. But the motions are also ‘stilled’ within the discrete ‘moments’ of memory. In this sense, memories of home combine forces of movement and attachment at once. In a manner akin to ‘stills’ from movies, the images conjured up by remembrances of home are ‘stilled’ but also ‘un-stilled’, animated with moving memories, people, emotions. The act of re-membering places disturbs fixed notions of spatiality and territory, while it allows for considerations of memories as constituted by stationary ‘moments’, or intervals. In other words, the motions of memory challenge commonly held assumptions about the fluidity of time and the stillness of space (Fortier, 2001, p. 420).

Furthermore, while desiring, choosing and enjoying most of these different articulations of spaces and knowledge, I recognize that my nomadic narratives have been reasonably and comfortably shaped by class, race and gender privileges. However, none of these trips has been effortless, untroubled and painless. If this imaginary journey embodies a trajectory of 40 years of a Latin-Brazilian-American cultural history, it is not my intention here of representing or celebrating the homogenizing discourse of a harmonious whitened mestizo traveler in these different societies. There are fissures everywhere, as reflected in numerous incidents during my traveling with other subjects, in which they were constantly marginalized and excluded from mobility, remaining in rigid positions because they did not have resources to travel. According to Clifford these experiences of mobility and stasis are unstable, and a view of human location might be constituted by the relationship between “dwelling/home” and “traveling”, which themselves are categories of mediations (Clifford, 1997). Mignolo highlights that center/periphery relations as well as diaspora or travel invoke an epistemological location from which one can speak, and we can speak from different locations, hence, these diverse locations from which we can enunciate can be understood as diasporic (Mignolo, 1999, p. 239).

Nomads: Syncretism, Sexuality and Language

It can be asserted that there is nothing epic about my routes as they have been limited and contingent upon my personal processes of social identifications, disidentifications, and educational formation. I commenced my university expedition in
dentistry school, albeit soon after I redirected it to the social sciences; but never finished these courses since immediately after a seminar trip to the Republic of China and a holiday in the United States, I edgily displaced myself, and migrated to the mid-western capital of Brazil: Brasília. I moved away allegedly to pursue a BA in art education, which I ultimately finished, adventuring through painting, art history, cinema, education, anthropology, semiotics and linguistics. However, the vital motivation to depart from the northeast was the fear of personal annihilation due to my newly initiated engagements with non-normative sexual practices and identities; besides, I wished to explore and seek protection in the scope of sexual knowledge presented by a larger city. And beyond all opportunities and possibilities that the authoritarian modernist Brasília offered me, I found myself enmeshed within a vibrant display of indigenous cultures, poststructuralist thoughts, and an active “gay” culture. As much as I embraced the gay culture lived in the 1980s, I realized how it was disconnected from the local culture, from issues of race, ethnicity and class. The absence of a strong queer black and mestizo culture in Brasília, as it exists in the northeast, made me resist fully assuming this rigid gay identity. Hence, I advanced my sexual and identity journeys surrounded by what was lacking in this gay culture: I engaged my thoughts and curiosity on sexuality and race, pleasure and desire, class and social layers.

In Brazil the relation between class and race clearly manifests itself: the darker your skin, the higher is the probability of you belonging to a lower class. I felt compelled to learn, make my artwork, and live focusing my interests in the *candomblé*, its visual artifacts and representations, its powerful narratives of African deities, the *orixás*, and their complex sexualities. Although minimalism stresses the idea of reducing a work of art to the minimum of formal features, and does not attempt to represent any experience, my artwork by interconnecting minimalism with these aspects of *candomblé*, conjoined these contradictory terms in a process that I called “expressive minimalism”.

I often heard that the *orixás* were depicted as bisexuals and, when I was younger, my Judaeo-Christian family, aware of my early interest, discouraged me from getting closer to *candomblé*, but it did not prevent me from reading and learning more about how it combines sensuality and expression which allow people of any sexual orientation to have a spiritual practice. However, this concept of the *Orixás*’ bisexuality has always been up in the air. Mônica the *Iakekere da Taba de Oxossi Caçador* affirms that the translation of legends and languages made the *Yorubá* culture often misunderstood; and that that provoked the myth that some *Orixás* are intersexed or trangendered. As Mônica explains: “All *orixás* embrace the feminine and masculine creation; some with more predominance of one or the other; but this does not mean they have two sexes”
(Personal communication). In the Oríxás’ formation sometimes they become visible as the feminine principle, others as the masculine (2005, personal communication). The social construction of gender in Brazil and Africa cannot be directly translated to European and North American experiences, nor elsewhere.

I make this point because during that time, images of beads, red, yellow, blue, white, red, and maroon beads, incenses, perfumes, holy waters, tiny statues, oils, gems, and seashells used in candomblés ceremonies, haunted me. The long established history of bead use in Africa acquired new forms and meanings in Brazil with the influence of native Brazilians and European immigrants. Nowadays Cerqueira (2004), presents an improved understanding of the Afro-Brazilian religions indicating that not all their deities are bisexual; nevertheless these religions:

 [...] reject the taboo of sex from the location of the tradition, myths and legends of orixás. It is perfectly possible to rescue the archetypes and the mythology of orixás within the afro-Brazilian tradition, demonstrating that the sexual barriers and interdictions are very tenuous, even though it is incorrect to affirm that in the terreiros [places of Cult] a free sexuality is lived, without rules”. [Italics added] (p. 1)

In addition, according to Stam (1997), Brazilian candomblé is a site of development of multiple personalities with astonishing aspects related to diverse sexualities, as he states:

In terms of sexual politics, the constitutive bisexuality of the orixás, and the fact that men can be possessed by female deities and vice versa, can be considered a “feminist” advance over Judaism and Islam, with their very patriarchal conceptions of the Deity, and over Christianity, with its masculine triad of Father, Son, and a sexually ambiguous Holy Ghost expressed in phallic symbols like birds and tongues of flame. … Nor is candomblé repressive toward homosexuality. In the 1940s, Ruth Landes noted that although women dominated the traditional terreiros, homosexual men dominated the others. Many male priests wear female dress and hairdos, and priests are referred to as “wives” of the orixás regardless of gender. Analysts speculate that homosexual men saw candomblé as a way of identifying with women, noting that the metaphor of the “divine horsemen” who are “mounted” by the saints easily takes on a sexual resonance of corporeal penetrability. The initiates are called the iao (wives) of the saints as well (p. 210)

Stam’s narrative invites us to delve a bit more into this space. Perhaps, a quick story can simplify the relation of candomblé and syncretism in Brazil.

Historically, the shape of syncretism in Brazil created an amalgam of relations between African, Christian and indigenous religions, which facilitated these multi-possibilities of sexualities and gender locations and representations (Bastide, 1974, 1978; Fry, 1982, 1985, 1995; Hanchard & Reis, 1995; Murray, 1992). Alongside syncretism,
there has been a prevalent and acknowledged miscegenation and hybridity. Initially, the syncretism enforced by the Catholic church on the black population, mainly Yorubá people from the Bay of Benin, and the indigenous people, incited assimilation and development of the *mestiza* Brazilian culture. Additionally, the hegemonic national ideology considers hybridity in general as characteristically Brazilian, contrasting with ideologies of racial and/or cultural purity prevalent in other parts of the world (Velho, 2000).

Stam (1997) approaches this situation by pointing out that African Brazilian religions are oral rather than written, the texts are performative and ludic, involving bodily pleasures; they are polytheistic; engage in literal animal sacrifice; and convey the individual personality in the collective and transpersonal fusions of trance. Because of these characteristics, dominant discourses consistently misrepresent diasporic syncretic religions of African origin (Stam, 1997, pp. 206-207). Thus, I consider that hegemonic discourses from within, outside or inside out of the Brazilian nation silence subaltern epistemologies of knowledge. *Candomblé* has been silenced, but above all a polysemantic discussion of race and sexuality including a variety of disciplines is somewhat absent.

While doing my BA, there were several aspects of art making I was interested in practicing and studying; nonetheless Pierre Verger’s photographic representations were the most significant entry points to *Candomblé* and sexuality. In Verger’s extremely rich and extraordinary photo collection, I have been an acute spectator of his fascination with and gaze into representations of homoerotic desire involving black men’s bodies. Although Pierre Verger never identified himself with any sexual identity, several series of his photographs undoubtedly fix their focus on the representation of corporal and erotic pleasures involving men, thus also connecting his work with concepts of transubstantiation of bodies, genders and sexuality in *candomblé*. In Verger’s photos, at that time, I came to challenge his and my own fractured and unstable disciplinary gazes as white “colonizers” utterly dependent on the “subaltern” for our sexual, social, racial, emotional and genderized survival.

In fact, I have come to see *candomblé*’s visual representation as a turning point in my early encounters with the academy. I finished my BA in Art Education in painting holding a body of artworks that dealt with how lace, crochet, edging, filigree, mesh, net, and threadwork in *candomblé* work to entwine, interlace, ravel, unravel, twist, weave, unveil and veil sexualities. Shortly after, I decided to move away from this Brazilian space, and moved to England to pursue a Master of Arts. During this period, I traveled freely within Europe; and took excursions through painting, deconstruction, hispanisms, gayness and this “new” cool stuff called queerness.
As an added element of all of this, I broadened an agonized dwelling on my relationship of estrangement and longing with the English language; throbbing which unsettlingly persists. Since then, I have realized that it is precisely by listening to the sounds of my diverse accents, whether while speaking Brasília’s or North-eastern Brazil’s Portuguese, of English, Spanish, French, or even when loudly reading in Italian, Valencian, Gallego, or Catalan, that a pervasive queer sentiment of be-longing situates myself. I feel at ease within this strange home, strangerness that recurs along with listening to my located sexual and cultural articulations. Although I am aware that they are all European languages, these colonial languages are constitutively haunted by the forced offerings of their previous and present historical encounters. Having said that and making use of Bhaba’s concept of hybridity (Bhabah, 1992, 1994). I argue that the Brazilian Portuguese in the act of ‘mimicry’, act of reiteration, of the Portuguese language, created this “slippage” in which the colonial subject inescapably brings into being a hybridized translation of the “original”. Likewise, the American English and the peripheral Brazilian Portuguese, derived from the “central” English and from the Portuguese, nowadays occupy an indispensable position for the production, implementation and circulation of knowledge within these languages. I believe that the splintered accents of multilingual individuals or communities, or both, are useful spaces of resistance, pedagogy, and intervention. In these situations, it seems that any idea of local and global are mixed, lost and found in that space. Furthermore, it is exactly within the fractures and interstices of traveling that I have been embryonically ascertaining geographies of comfort and agency.

Sublimity: Post-Occidentalism: Latin American Post-colonialism

Now, traveling as a Latin-Brazilian-American drawing on queer and film studies, I feel compelled to confront my geo-political itineraries in order to situate myself historically, socially and culturally within the relational experience of cultural studies, Latin Americanism, and queer theory. In order to achieve this goal my first difficulty has been to situate myself within Latin Americanism (as a position of enunciation) and among what Moreiras (2001) called ‘non-Latin American Latin Americanists’ – scholars writing on critical theory, Post-colonial and subaltern studies; and predominantly in
English – and ‘Latin American Latin Americanists’ scholars writing mainly in Spanish or Portuguese seeing themselves in tension with predominantly European and North-American theories. I do not feel at ease to fully comply with any of these theoretical positions since I articulate my work from both stances, and once more I am at the fracture. Besides, the ways of representing Latin American politics of knowledge though this confined academic taxonomy, seem to mutually misrepresent all indigenous people of Latin America who do not speak any Latin language and do not share Latin cultural practices (Moreiras, 2001).

Initially I argue that, for the most part, Latin American studies concentrate on Hispanic America, thus overlooking Luso-Brazilian studies. Secondly, in spite of this, I am using some of these locations in this thesis. And thirdly, I have been desiring and struggling to find myself in a third space that goes beyond both the national popular identity formation and discussion of the Latin-Brazilian-American space, which are institutionalized through concepts of transculturation, hybridity, testimonios, and mestizagen, in spite of their usefulness, and the hegemonic European and North American epistemologies.

Along with Coronil (1996), I strongly believe that my task as a scholar is to surpass these institutionalized categories that preserve the Latin American epistemologies as an other, by means of patently and contradictorily adopting/placing some of these same epistemological categories in a border space along with other hegemonic epistemologies. The initiative is not to claim a place for transculturation (anthropophagy, hybridity, syncretism, mestizagen and so forth) and other subaltern epistemologies within the dominant epistemologies, but rather to claim the power of the frontier/border as a generative epistemological space that can at once accept, understand, recognize, value, contradict, and transpose epistemologies configured by different geocultural positions and histories.

It may be necessary now to point out that although Bhaba and Canclini are two of the key contributors to the theorization
of hybridity and the development of ‘border epistemologies’, in this thesis I lay emphasis on the thoughts of these concepts from the point of view of Mignolo. In the interpretation of Mignolo border spaces endorse subaltern epistemologies’ exercise of self-denial at the same time that they allow them the experience of sameness, which has been denied by hegemonic epistemologies (Mignolo, 1998a, p. 39).

Therefore, it is exceedingly complex for me to locate myself in the amorphous map of Latin Americanism in which center and periphery are constantly shifting even if we consider the more unstable ways in which binary oppositions have been recently understood. Concerning this matter, Mignolo (2002) argues that binary oppositions are the conditions under which subjectivities have been formed in the process of colonial accumulation, as follows:

The enduring enchantment of binary oppositions seems to be related to the enduring image of European civilization and of European history told from the perspective of Europe itself. Europe is not only the center (that is the center of space and the point of arrival in time) but also has the epistemic privilege of being the center of enunciation. And in order to maintain the epistemic privilege it is necessary, today, to assimilate to the epistemic perspective of modernity and accuse emerging epistemology of claiming epistemic privileges. […] While capitalism moved from Europe to the United States, then to Japan, and now to China, epistemology apparently remains located in Europe, which is taken, simultaneously, as the non-place (or transparently universal) locus of enunciation (p. 938) [Italics added].

According to Mignolo (2000a, pp. 66-69) in order to deal with this matter, a mere reversal of the binary oppositions’ epistemic privileges is not enough; it is necessary to develop the “border thinking”, border gnosis or border epistemology. Border thinking is understood as a decolonization of knowledge that employs a double critique of different epistemological locations by using a deconstructive criticism situated on the subaltern. In addition border thinking encourages the expansion of an “other thinking”, which is a way to think without an “Other”, displacing the binaries self/other, center/periphery, etc. This implies that the practices of border thinking strengthen the reallocation of notions of spectatorship, image analysis, ways of seeing, and issues of positionality; and intensely challenges methods of interpretation. The propagation of margins produced by and as a direct effect of postmodernism fragmented the notion of center as a consistent hub of control and stimulated a constant slippage towards static binaries. Richard explains that transcultural and multidisciplinary cultural studies and Latin American Studies, join forces to “respond to the new categorical shifts between the dominant and subaltern, the educated and
popular, the central and peripheral, the global and the local: shifts that travel through geopolitical territorialities, identity symbolizations, sexual representations, and social classifications” (Richard, 2004, p. 687) And like Richard, I also believe it is extremely pertinent to reflect carefully the significance of each academic and theoretical location and the condition of experiences that surface from the agency of newly-developing ‘border epistemologies’ while immersed in a particular geocultural location.

The Latin American token of transculturation is understood here in the Ortizian meaning, in which mutual transformations and different effects result from communication and dialogue between communities of different backgrounds; but also as a concept that replaces the general view of culture exchange in terms of a narrow repositioning of “commodities” from a civilized center to a primitive subaltern space. Ortiz, like Andrade’s “anthropophagy” (this trope will be later introduced), drew singular attention to the multifaceted practices by which subaltern groups pick out what to absorb/devour/understand from the dominant culture (F. Ortiz, 1995). I entirely reject the idea of transculturation as a process that mingles components from different spaces/places/times into a merged cohesive culture (national, local or global). Pratt (1992), following Ortiz’s sense of transculturation, named “contact zones” those spaces/openings where various cultures influence each other; but for her, these contact zones are not restricted to peripherical sites, as many transculturalists tend to contend; instead she argues that the effects of colonial cultures happen and affect all sides. As an unlimited process of shared influences, her concept of transculturation has hybrid cultures originating independent of concepts of center and periphery. As much as I am indebted to Canclini’s, Ribeiro’s, and Ortiz’ theorizations (see Canclini, 1995, 1999, 2000; F. Ortiz, 1995; R. Ortiz, 1994; Ribeiro, 1968, 1971, 2000) on the politics of location, in order to achieve my purposes in this thesis, I privilege the terms transculturation and border thinking over notions of hybridity, barbarian theorizing and mondialization.
The preceding discussion sets the frame for a shorter understanding of transculturation as a crucial element for my analysis of fissures/fractures/splits and in-betweeness in the study of gender and sexuality in visual culture representations. Moreover, supplementary to Pratt’s concept of contact zones are Mignolo’s (1995b) ideas; as he puts them:

A new configuration of places (rather than any non-place or non-location) is engendering a new geocultural politics of location in place of national – or territorial - identity politics. In other words, territories and locations are at once fixed and floating, emergent at the crossroads of places, memories, and sensibilities, where people cross borders, change languages, and deal with both the imprints of their early cultural legacies (e.g., school and family) and whatever options arise later. The transnational does not, of course, erase the national, in the sense of the place where one is born and educated (even if that place is a borderland), but it does imply such erasure. Nor is the transnational necessarily the postnational. It is, rather, the coexistence of regional languages, smells, tastes, objects, pictures, and so forth, with international communications, interactions, and the activities of daily life. The politics of geocultural location does not imply, then, a defense of the national, but rather the recognition that one is always from and at (Gilroy, 1973), whether or not those locations happen to be the same place. (pp. 174-175)

As stated, my primary interest here is not to explain the theorizations for interpreting cultural contact in Latin America, but rather to position myself within a flow of all these different discourses on transculturation, in relation to post-colonialism, visual culture education, and queer studies. This grounds my appreciation of Mignolo’s key formulations of “loci of enunciation” and “post-occidentalism”. Analogous to Haraway’s (1991) concept of “situated knowledge”, Mignolo’s notion of “loci of enunciation” can approximately be explained as the epistemological space from where one speaks, including the “self-reflexive recognition of one's own locus of enunciation”(Lund, 2001, p. 61).
I mention the Brazilian location/culture because at this time I feel the need to narrow even more my locus of enunciation. Like many contemporary cultural studies thinkers, I am employing here a broad concept of culture as the practices, actions, performances, representations, languages, and patterns of behavior and customs of any society. Brazilian culture stands in one extraordinarily ambiguous space. Brazilian culture dynamically shifts its locations from the perimeters of a hub to a hub of other perimeters, concomitantly occupying several positions as construed through vectors of power, and yet remaining an invariable subaltern to a larger and widespread cultural production of knowledge that flows predominantly from north to south, and from both sides of the Atlantic. Despite this negative assertion, Dussel (1998) disputes that the arguments that Latin American loci of enunciation are totally marginalized from the construction of Western knowledge fail. Dussell considers that Western knowledge production is more of an effect than a cause of epistemological production developed elsewhere. Therefore he compels us to think less in terms of our own loci of enunciation and to not take for granted the naturalized discourses on western knowledge production.

The preceding discussion sets the stage to look at the Latin-Brazilian-American site of enunciation. It is pertinent to emphasize that during the Spanish and Portuguese colonial period, if Brazilian and Latin American cultures were imaginarily constructed and positioned at the extreme borders of the Occident they were initially imagined not as the foil to Europe but as its enlargement and expansion (Mignolo, 2000a, p. 24). “Occident” here derives from Mignolo’s view of Occidentalism, which was the discursive field that imagined the Occident as a privileged space-temporal construction, with Europe as a hegemonic geocultural location which invented peripheral borders, e.g., Africa and the Americas.
(Mignolo, 1998a). Moreover, if Latin America was invented by nineteenth century French imperialism, the twentieth century social and economic remapping of the world relocated its name, cultures, and Latin languages to beyond the western borders, also othering it as non-West; while simultaneously asserting and privileging the English-speaking cultures (Beasley-Murray, 2002).

Although Post-colonial theory has established itself as one of the most productive alternative critical approaches in Europe, the U. S. and the British Commonwealth countries, several Latin American scholars and critics resist locating the position of Latin America in Post-coloniality. For many Latin American critics such as Eduardo Mendieta, Erna von der Walde, Fernando Coronil, Santiago Castro-Gomez, Alberto Moreiras, Mabel Morana, Nelly Richard, Jorge Klor de Alva, Walter Mignolo and many others, the overlapping of imperial powers in Latin America (Luso-Franco-Hispanic/British-American) occurred less in terms of colonization and more as occidentalization. In spite of their differing points of view, they generally concur that the cultural history of Latin American decolonization is different from that of the former British colonies from whence Post-colonial theory derives (Beasley-Murray, 2002; Teves, 2001). According to Coronil and Mignolo (Coronil, 1996; Mignolo, 1998a, 1998b, 2000b)(Coronil, 1996; Mignolo, 1998b), there is a more accurate terminology to articulate the intellectual decolonizing discourses in Latin America, given that the passages and superposition of imperial powers in Latin America were imagined less as terms of colonization and more as Occidentalization. Therefore, Mignolo argues that Post-colonial theory has been a useful model and an extraordinary opportunity for the development of a Latin American Post-colonial discussion and theorization: Post-occidentalism. Post-occidentalism is proposed as a regional strand of post-colonial critique situated in the particularities of Latin American discourses (Mignolo, 2000b).
Following the previous arguments, I want to emphasize that it is through the lenses of post-occidentalist critique that I recognize a strong strand of the intellectual endeavor to understand cultural discourses in, from and outside Latin America (Na, da e fora da América Latina). Furthermore, I am attentive to the fact that I articulate from a subaltern standpoint, but it does not imply inferiority but rather an arrangement of knowledge of a subaltern position within the globalized production and distribution of epistemological power. In fact it is in the flow of interrelations of Latin Americanism (Post-Occidentalism and anthropophagy), imprecise cultural studies, fractured queer studies, slippery visual culture studies, and controversial critical pedagogy that I locate epistemological space from where I can speak.

*Appetite: Anthropophagy and the Devouring of Post-colonialism*

From now on, I employ the trope of *Anthropophagy,* a devouring term mostly used in the Brazilian context, and throughout this thesis meaning hermeneutics, interpretation, understanding, and analysis of the subaltern and its cultural production. For I would like to take advantage of the historical fact that cultural studies from, in, and of Latin America have been intensely concerned about its position of theoretical articulation, enunciation and consumption. *Cannibalism* has been an enduring colonial trope of Latin American cultural discourse, most explicitly in Brazil. Oswald de Andrade (1928) conceived anthropophagy in his *Anthropophagite Manifesto,* as a strategy for the discussion of culture, knowledge and power. That work proclaimed the need for Brazilians to consume everything that was strange and different in other cultures and within its native cultures, and thereby to generate an original identity of national distinctiveness. Hence, cannibalism, a European trope for the savage and uncivilized, becomes as anthropophagy, a post-colonial trope. Almeida (2002) affirms that Andrade:

[...] proposed the “rehabilitation of the primitive” in the civilized man, giving emphasis to the bad savage who is the devourer of other people’s culture for transforming it into his own, and for deconstructing binary oppositions like colonizer/colonized, civilized/barbaric, nature/technology. When hypothesizing the transforming, social and collective cannibal as subject, Oswald not only produces a rereading of the history of Brazil, but also of the proper construction of the Occidental tradition in America (p. 1) [My translation]

Following a long period of appropriation by all sorts of imaginaries, the essentialist nationalism of the *Anthropophagite Manifesto* has currently succumbed to a revised deterritorialized trope of anthropophagy as a commodity and mechanism of transculturation (Bellei, 1998; Candido, 1977; Castro-Klarén, 2000; Shohat &

Drawing on ethnographic description and interpretation of Tupí12 cannibalism Castro-Klaren (1997), for example, proposes a rereading of anthropophagy as a knowledge that, instead of constructing fixed identities and subjects, is a relentless traveling toward an uncertain alterity; as she claims, for anthropophagic *reason*, everything is flux. In this sense, Castro-Klaren argues that at the heart of anthropophagy as a method of constructing alterity, lies the Tupí-Guaraní system of subject formation, which takes place with extraordinary openness to exteriority and transformation. Since the subject is always in “transition”, its construction follows a process of continuous transformation where I, self, other, life, death, humans and gods, for example, are *just* transposable intertwined positions in a universe always in flux, in which ”One does not eat the other because there is no other as opposition; one could ingest only non-self or self itself” (Castro-Klarén, 1997, p. 313). In this cosmology, *Becoming* precedes *Being*, and even if mutually sustaining entities, *Becoming* is not inferior to *Being*. In this context, the importance migrates from the spatial *Being* (*Ser*) to a temporal *Becoming* (*Devir/devenir/vir a ser*); anthropophagy then as a trope is somewhat a process of becoming, that is, an operation of “alteration” and transmutation. Proceeding from this understanding anthropophagy is an itinerary of dynamic transformations in which identity formation is a flexible and always wide-open way to understand others without discrimination. The concept of anthropophagy is, therefore, inclusive and evaluative of all diversity whether its strategies involve a devouring of that which is desirable or of that which is appalling. Anthropophagy performs a sort of transubstantiation in which the one that is the devourer alters him/herself through the devoured and vice and versa (Ferreira de Almeida, 2002). Thus, Anthropophagy is an effective transculturation: association, combination, conversation, diversification, and transubstantiation.

Besides, one of anthropophagy’s effects that allure me is that of serving as a reminder that transculturation has never been a serene encounter, as historically it has been entrapped in a dialogue of hostile acceptances. This aspect makes me prefer anthropophagy to other Latin American tropes, but also that it is a less neutral, conciliatory and homogeneizing term. Further, anthropophagy advocates agency, alluding to an assertive act, and ultimately it emphasizes the *body* as a place of knowledge, as it is a direct reference to the transitory human performances of becoming and belonging. The anthropophagic process is the transculturation that we perform,
and live, in everyday life; it does not happen to us; it is a socially constructed cultural exchange. Accordingly, I suggest that anthropophagy concentrates on similar elements of investigation to those of post-colonial theorization, cultural studies and the studies of subalternity, as suggested by Teves (2001, p. 8).

Just as anthropophagy dismisses the main perspectives of knowledge imposed and universalized by the colonial order, such as eurocentrism and racism, it denaturalizes the places constructed for those excluded from hegemonic discourses. By opposing itself to fixed identities, anthropophagy also defies the notion of the evolution and progress of ideas in determined and linear time, the pretension of objectivity and the universality of institutionalized forms of knowledge. Anthropophagy seeks for principles of knowledge capable of accounting for the historical agency of the subaltern subjects and collectivities in the colonization process; and in so doing, it searches for a rupture and a geocultural decentring of the loci of enunciation of knowledge. By creating strategies for the discussion of asymmetrical distribution of culture, knowledge and power in the world, anthropophagy examines the intricate associations of the legacy of colonialism, or post-occidentalism as it is considered within the Latin American context.
Curiosity: Locating Queer Theory in Brazil

I consider that if concepts from queer theory have in recent times extended to "beyond" the Anglo-American academic world, it does not mean that their reception has been occurring in the same way, with the same intensity and producing the same effects in all other places. In order to understand this course of development, it is necessary to comprehend changes in global tendencies of queer studies and their circulation and reception in specific contexts. It is clear that one of the main challenges posed to most Latin American spaces initially has been to find approaches and loci of enunciation to discuss the emergence of queer theory as a transdisciplinary field between the fluid thoughts of local and global settings. Further, there has been an enormous enterprise to grasp the specific Anglo-American history of queer theory, given that this new exceedingly fluid and slippery theoretical framework has been a subject of contestation even within Anglo-American academies. Subsequently, it has been essential to inquire into what ways queer theory’s main epistemological claims might impact on and assist Latin America’s cultural strategies. In spite of the recent intensity of this transnational movement of information on queer studies, and more specifically on queer theory, across the globe, in Brazil the discussion of it has been almost exclusively inside academia and mostly by white or whitened male scholars concerned mostly with white male
issues. Thus, at the moment it is very far from including and looking at the diversity of “homosexual” issues (Góis, 2004).

To interpret this late reception of queer studies as mere backwardness and conservatism of the Brazilian academy in comparison to their counterparts in the Anglo-American societies, is an excessively simplistic approach and corroborates prejudiced colonial and neocolonial assumptions of Latin American belatedness and lack of originality. Despite the ostensible moralist and heteronormative character of Brazilian academia, there are substantial historical cultural particularities in Brazilian sexualities, as studies state (Green, 1999; Parker, 1999; Santos & Garcia, 2002; Trevisan, 2000) and also theoretical reservations amongst scholars (Lopes, 2002; Lopes et al., 2004; Lugarinho, 2002; Mott, 2002) about uncritically accepting, reproducing, relocating, and translating queer theory or any other theoretical framework largely shaped in the English-speaking world or elsewhere. In view of that, Lugarinho (2002) suggests a devouring of queer; and since the English-language construct of *queer* has no semantic equivalent in the Portuguese language”, he suggests that we should attempt translating this cultural construct in a Derridian mode, that is, “to reinterpret, re-elaborate and deconstruct“ (2002, p. 281). Denilson Lopes strongly asserts that the lack of linguistic translation of *queer* and queer theory to Portuguese may indicate “a lack of intellectual and scholarly translation” (2002, personal communication). However, if Lopes does not translate it directly into his writings, recently other scholars have been less troubled using the word queer, but constantly contextualize its connotations as is shown in several articles of the proceedings of the 2004 conference of the Brazilian Association of *Homocultural Studies* [Queer culture studies].

Moreover, in spite of the fairly large literature on homosexuality and queer culture in Brazil, most of the published analysis up to now, specifically related to queer theory, placed here as a post-identitarian concept, is modest and mainly concerned with issues of outing, affect and homosociability, the interrelation with race and class, and their pedagogical implications (See Costa, 1992, 1993; See Costa, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1998; Edward, 1990; Fry, 1982, 1985, 1995, 1995/1996; Green, 1999; Góis, 2004; Larvie, 1999; Lopes, 2002; Lopes et al., 2004; Louro, 2004; Lyra & Garcia, 2001; Mott, 1987a, 1998, 1987b, 1995, 2001, 2002; Murray, 1992; Parker, 1991a, 1991b, 1999; Perlongher, 1987; Portinari, 1989; Santiago, 2002; Santos & Garcia, 2002; Trevisan, 1986). I argue that more important than renaming or translating literally *queer* and *queer theory* to Portuguese (*transviado*), Spanish (*torcido*), and French (sexualité flottant), is to begin to locate and translate this development as an emerging theoretical model which functions as a mode of analysis and constitutes a field of theoretical production and
circulation, which is in constant transformation; and then to contextualize its theories historically, culturally and socially. Also, it is relevant to acknowledge that queer theory already holds terminology that, though not directly related to Portuguese, signifies the academic efforts that brought about a transnational conversation on same-sex sexualities in a post-identity context.

The works of Silva (1999, 2001) and Louro (1999), which more explicitly traverse the areas of curriculum studies and sexuality, have been undertaking similar approaches. Louro introduces queer theory as an understanding of sexuality that underscores shifting boundaries, ambivalences, and cultural constructions, such as curriculum, which change depending on historical and cultural context. In this regard, Louro (1999) provides the following statement:

A queer pedagogy and curriculum would be distinct from politically correct multicultural programs, in which gender, sexuality or ethnic differences are tolerated or appreciated as exotic curiosities. A queer pedagogy and curriculum would turn towards the process of production of these differences and would work fundamentally with the instability and precariousness of all identities. By placing under discussion the forms in which the “other” is constituted, they would lead to inquiry into the narrow relations of self and other. Difference no longer would be left outside, on the other side, distant from the subject, and would be understood as indispensable for the existence of the subject: it would be inside, integrating and constituting the self. Difference would be present instead of absent: making meanings, haunting and disestablishing the subject. Regarding the processes that produce difference, the curriculum would start to demand attention to the implied political game. Instead of merely contemplating a plural society, it would be essential to be cognizant, the disputes of negotiations and the constituent conflicts of the positions that the subjects occupy (pp. 48-49). [My translation]

Despite the fact that multicultural education as conceptualized in the Anglophone world does not apply to the Brazilian experience, I cite Louro’s passage because I want to highlight that she stresses the pedagogical possibilities provoked by queer theory. Besides, I want to recognize that queer theory’s ideas enter into the Brazilian academic space with great debt to educators such as William Pinar and Deborah Britzman. Adding to Louro, Rolnik (1996, 1997), drawing from psychoanalysis, overtly establishes the relationship between Brazilian anthropophagy and the contemporary processes of subject formation in a globalizing world. Evidently affected by Butler’s Gender trouble, she proposes a confrontation of the genders (gêneros), or in other words, an alteration to the politics of subjectivities, by exploring the highly polysemous word gênero in Portuguese, which carries different meanings such as gender, genre, type, class, race,
ethnicity, sexuality and style, and embraces several concepts, for example, status, category, class, family entity, sex, and description. Rolnik essentializes in Brazilian culture and history a certain fluency in undoing the effective normative features of identities and genders because *mestiçagem* blurs the borders between different attributes that underpin the constitution of the hybrid Brazilians.

Following related arguments, Santiago¹³ (2002), visibly speaking from the post-occidental position, emphasizes the Brazilian hybridity of race, sexuality, and class in the construction of a “wily homosexuality”, a concept developed with the intention of commenting on the north American politics of identity, and specifically the politics of outing, in which homosexuals aiming to accomplish normalization adopt contractual norms that marginalize them from society. Further, he suggests a debate over whether subtler forms of activism and agency would be more useful to constitute subjectivities than antagonistic ones. Santiago, by analyzing the relation between public/private in the construction of sexual subjectivities, argues that privacy, established in Brazil as a class conceit, placed constraints on the same-sex practices and behaviors of lower class gays and lesbians, who used to be accepted in society through more transparent social relations and practices (Santiago, 2002, p. 16). I consider that this idea of “moment of mediation in dialogue” is one of many possible strategies of border epistemology and one that could have been used to address the issue of subalterns’ reception of knowledge.

Along with Santiago, Lopes (2002) has been troubled by the politics of outing; he urges subtleties and discretions in sexuality. In order to achieve this goal, he proposes *Homoafetividade*. Lopes, like Santiago, in overt dialogue with Eve Sedgwick’s *Between Men*, draws on the division of public and private, and its effects on homosocial desire between men, and desire between men and women. *Homoafetividade*, roughly translated here as *homoaffection*, is a concept that looks for ambiguous and deconstructive forms of the homo/hetero binary and acts as a mode of analysis to think apart the ambiguous masculinities in Brazil. Drawing on psychoanalysis and in favour of homoeroticism, Costa (1994a; Costa, 1994b) has emphasized the social construction of erotic desires established by linguistic realities and the Brazilian cultural arrangements. Costa explains that each culture organizes these desires in moral codes that determine what is accepted and rejected. However, ethically we can rewrite and re-evaluate anew the social moral consequences of sexual preferences that nobody is entirely free to choose, since they are also performed on us. Costa has further explained that he uses the term *homoerotismo*, (homoeroticism) intending to support a change in vocabulary, in order to vary the questions, transform problems and eventually be able to find different answers. But that is difficult to achieve when this discussion is still operating on a homosexual/
heterosexual binary terminology. Lopes’ homofetividade as well looks for dialogue, and not to fix a strong identity of homosexuality. Interestingly, he assesses homofetividade as being not as political and confrontational as queer theory, because it owes more to a post-structural debate about ethics and the aesthetics of existence, and about friendship, than to a transgressive mode of disrupting subjectivities. However, not surprisingly, by shifting its attention to affection beyond sexuality and mediating antagonistic positions, homofetividade has been having a warmer reception in the academy than queer theory.

I assume that there is in these scholars’ texts the explicit presence of the fact that Brazilian cultural history shows the influence of having transculturalism as its organizing principle of subjectivity formation, as well as having community over individuality as a context of constructing same-sex sexualities. Therefore, if the understanding of queer theory in Brazil comes about with marked reservations regarding the use of the word queer and its lack of portability, the fear that it weakens or even totally erases the specificity of gay and lesbian experience, concerns, political strategies, and agency, we are obliged to take into account that analogous contestations have been happening transnationally. Whether anthropophagy and/or hybridity are represented as essentialized assets, or not, of the Latin-Brazilian-American experience, I will not enter into the debate here. Most fundamental, for my purposes, is recognizing that these writers’ productive post-occidental anthropophagic discourses on queer theory effectively function as transdisciplinary interpretive tools. In these discourses, concepts from different disciplines undergo collective transformations and hybridize. Therefore, I argue that hybrid transdisciplinary interpretive practices such as these provide us with a powerful apparatus for a queer subjective mediation and agency in transcultural situations.

But what kind of agency and queer subjective mediation are these that surface from this post-occidental anthropophagical critical interpretation of queer theory in Brazil? Considering the strategies, approaches, and propositions offered, I argue that they contribute to a discussion on the amplitude of social differences, suggest new ways of knowing cultural specificities, and, politically, signal relations of power/knowledge reaching beyond the constricted queer theory notion of an elitist intellectual inquiry to disrupt normative sexualities. These rereadings reach the intensity of political resistance, negotiation and social activism. By critically intervening in the formation and application of these rereadings as transdisciplinary tools, locally, they broaden queer studies to education and share with critical pedagogies the concern for “the construction of the disciplines and their institutionalized pedagogical delivery [not] as politically innocent activities but as situated within specific relations of power” (Spurlin, 2002, p. 10).
Foremost, it is the connection of queer theory’s rereadings with critical pedagogy that is desired, because critical pedagogies employ tools, such as Freire’s conscientização, to create conditions for learning how to perceive the social, political and economic contradictions in order to provoke agency to participate in and transform society. Queer theory has similarly epistemological approaches through which, although not restricted to sexual identity and power/knowledge relations, but informed by them, they deliver through concepts like Butler’ *Performativity* (1999), pivotal possibilities of configuring an irreverent, different and engaged pedagogy: queer pedagogy.

I enter into this crucial space of what queer theory’s practice in the Brazilian context has to offer to this discussion, by bridging queer theory to critical pedagogy. And I consider that most of the tentative conceptual viewpoints earlier described might become extremely useful encouragement to queer pedagogy, but mainly if we further explore them in relation to other experiences. These scholars have been proposing an inclusive and conversational context with a view to not only disrupting the GLBT/queer binary pedagogies, but also above all provoking the intersection of queer theory with race, class, gender, and so forth. Accordingly, I consider that the agency and queer subjective mediation that emerge from these discourses is the organization of hybridity as the main apparatus to understand the characteristics of objective and subjective realities.
Conclusion

In this chapter I examine locations from where I speak at the same time that I seek to understand spaces in between colonial/post-colonial, being/becoming, remembering/disremembering and seeing/seen. Post-colonial theory has been a useful model for my practices and has created extraordinary opportunities for the development of a Latin American post-colonial discussion and theorization, situated in the particularities of Latin American discourses. Post-colonial theories made me aware that I articulate my discourses from a subaltern standpoint through a flow of interrelations of Latin Americanism, cultural studies, queer studies, visual culture studies, and critical pedagogy. I focus my work on Almodóvar’s visual representations in order to confer visibility on the interactions of these disciplines and fields, the flows of ideas, concepts and visual representations that affect the cultural construction of queerness, and to provoke responsiveness of queer visual culture and art education in the Iberian-American location. Latin American Post-colonial tropes of transculturalism and anthropophagy are socially constructed as cultural exchanges. They advocate agency, emphasize the body as a place of knowledge, and are the processes that we act and live in everyday life. By opposing itself to fixed identities anthropophagy denaturalizes places constructed for those excluded from hegemonic discourses such as aboriginal people, blacks, Asians, Latinos, women, homosexuals, gays, lesbians, transgendered, adolescents, elderly people, and so on.

Scholars interested in queer issues in Brazil have been proposing inclusive and conversational contexts with a view to not only disrupting the GLBT/Queer binary pedagogies, but above all, provoking the intersection of queer theory with race, class, gender, and so forth. The agency and queer subjective mediation that emerge from these intertwined discourses are the organization of transculturalism as the prevailing Latin American apparatus to understand the characteristics of objective and subjective realities.
WILL I EVER UNDERSTAND JUDITH BUTLER?
It is past time to correct the repression of queers in the curriculum, especially in history, in literature and the arts. It is past time to think out loud what queer pedagogy and queer curriculum might be.

Queer pedagogy displaces and decenters, queer curriculum is noncanonical, for starters.


As I mentioned earlier, the intertextual characteristics of my own artwork, and my practice as an art educator, shaped the possibility to associate notions of identity, representation, pedagogy, queerness, visuality, and cultural borders indispensable to the study of Almodóvar’s work. As a result of these considerations, I wholeheartedly embraced a/r/tography as a suitable arts-based form of research that theorizes the production of the arts as a mode of scholarly inquiry while integrating methods of representation, and I also acknowledged queer theory as a major approach to achieving my objectives for this thesis.

The importance of queer theory to my research is threefold. Firstly, it assists me in analyzing discursive and cultural practices, shifting from emphasis placed in validating non-normative sexual and gender identities to troubling all of them. Secondly, queer theory provides a better unfolding theoretical configuration for promoting transgressive inquiry, particularly within the visual culture education context, than lesbian and gay studies did for the art education perspective. Thirdly, in Almodóvar’s movies the complex relations among sexual and gender identities, social norms and non-norms, and cultural differences, constitute an arrangement of overlapping, ambiguous, paradoxical, ironic, impossible, and challenging positionalities; and queer theory is one of the means at my disposal to unravel Almodóvar’s filmic representations.

“Derivations” has not only been a starting point of this research, it has also been
a consequence of it. Here, Derivations directly stem from the Latin Deríváre meaning to rechannel, divert, or not fixed. In this project Derivations is my possibility of having a practice of thinking, reading, researching, teaching and making art otherwise, between the lines, and not taking my own experience as the common source of all thoughts. This transdisciplinary research, drawing on a/r/tography, queer theory, and applied to Almodóvar's films, is a “derivative” one; it lacks the notion of a pristine original since there is no original from which to copy, as the poststructuralists taught us. By borrowing from these methodological approaches, my thesis reproduces them through relentless processes of imitation, however it cannot entirely represent the source of its citation. Impersonating other methodologies fulfills me.

I argue that this arrangement of methodologies not only assists my research but also contributes to art educators’ association of visual culture education with transdisciplinary practices. Art education lacks concepts and approaches for understanding contemporary visual culture, for example, when the focus is on conditions surrounding viewing rather than on the aesthetic objects, or when the center of attention is the study of new and integrated medias, film, video, websites, and so forth, instead of the fine arts. Also, my methodological approach values multiple ways of knowing and critical thinking in visual culture education; thus the acceptance of several perspectives, discourses, and understandings about cultural life. I assert that this mélange of theoretical frameworks impacts curriculum development, teaching, researching and learning in visual culture education.

Labor: A/r/tography and Border Epistemology as Forms of Epistemological Inquiry

Here I briefly describe a few key conceptual aspects of a/r/tography, given that many other sources already provide extensive ideas and descriptive examples of a/r/tography (See Darts, 2004; de Cosson, 2002, 2003; R. Irwin, 2003; See R. Irwin & Springgay, In press; Springgay, 2001; Springgay et al., 2005; S. Wilson et al., 2002). I have chosen the theoretical métissage of a/r/tography as one of my approaches to reviewing Almodóvar's visual representations of gender and sexuality because, as a critical pedagogy, it is deeply committed to the development of transdisciplinary ways of knowing and practicing research, art and teaching within visual culture education. Moreover, to permit it to theorize contiguous interactions among the roles of artist, researcher, teacher, and their fluid associations involving image and word, a/r/tography's theoretical structure is steeped in the scholarship of French poststructural philosophy, phenomenology, educational action research, feminist theories, and contemporary art criticism with all of which I fully relate. Following a recently growing movement within the educational system to identify and recognize the possibilities of integrating visual culture and research practices, Rita Irwin,
collaborating with a research group from the University of British Columbia, has been articulating a/r/tography as a methodology. A/r/tography has been conceptualized as a living methodology, practice, and form of action research, in which the broadly conceived identities of Artist, Researcher, and Teacher function in a web of “prac/theore-tical” interrelations. Thus, to make possible these “lived/living” experiences and understandings, a/r/tographers emplacement is within the liminal spaces among artist, researcher, and teacher that in turn provokes a/r/tographers to happen, exist, pertain, retain, dwell, be and become in the in-between spaces of inquiry.

According to Irwin and Springgay (In press) the constructs and conditions of a/r/tographical research are: practice based research, communities of practice, relational aesthetics and the six renderings of engagement: contiguity, living inquiry, metaphor-metonymy, openings, reverberations, and excess. Springgay, Irwin and Wilson Kind (2005) further explain the role and concept of renderings within a/r/tography as follow:

The intent of the term rendering is not to offer a criterion-based model, nor to suggest that these six are descriptions of a/r/tography. Each rendering is not an isolated event but rather formed in relationships with each other. So too, there is a mediation and meditation between these six renderings that leaves open the potential for additional renderings, and the activity that exists in their intersections. Renderings offer possibilities of engagement. To render, to give, to present, to perform, to become—offers for action, the opportunity for living inquiry. Research that breathes. Research that listens. Renderings are not methods. They are not lists of verbs initiated in order to create an arts-based or a/r/tographical study. Renderings are theoretical spaces through which to explore artistic ways of knowing and being research. They may inform the doing of research, the final representation, and/or the ways in which viewers/readers understand and access an a/r/tographical text. For renderings also return and/or give back. (p 899)

Accordingly, these renderings conduct us to multi-possibilities for engagement because renderings do not exist on their own but in intercessions. The renderings present a/r/tographers with the environment for pedagogical agency in which meaning is simultaneously an influence and consequence of continuous interaction between creative artistic and educational inquiry. The renderings are the theoretical basis of a/r/tography, and their task is threefold: to provoke, assist and complicate multifaceted exchanges and interrelation within inquiry, aesthetics and learning, as follow:
Six Renderings of A/r/tography

Six Renderings of A/r/tography (all citations from Springgay et al., 2005, pp. 900-908)
BUT WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? WHAT ARE THE MEANINGS OF A/R/TOGRAPHICAL RENDERINGS?
CONTIGUITY: A/R/TOGRAPHY IS A COMING TOGETHER OF ART AND GRAPHY, OR IMAGE AND WORD. IT IS A DOUBLING OF VISUAL AND TEXTUAL THAT COMPLEMENT, EXTEND, REFUTE AND/OR SUBVERT ONE ANOTHER. CONTIGUITY IS ALSO EMPHASIZED IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLES OF ARTIST/RESEARCHER/TEACHER OR THE PRACTICES OF ART MAKING/RESEARCHING/TEACHING. RATHER THE INTENT OF DRAWING ATTENTION TO THESE ROLES IS TO ALSO SPEAK OF THEIR INTERRELATIONEDNESS, THEIR SHIFTING, TRANSITORY NATURE, AND TO MAKE VISIBLE THE SPACES INBETWEEN THE ROLES, AND THE ACTIVITY INHERENT IN PRACTICING THESE ROLES.
LIVING INQUIRY:
IN A/R/TOGPHRY, VISUAL, WRITTEN, AND PERFORMATIVE PROCESSES ARE ENACTED AS A LIVING PRACTICE OF ART MAKING, RESEARCHING, AND TEACHING. THEY ARE NOT MERELY ACTIVITIES ADDED TO ONE’S LIFE, BUT ARE THE PROCESSES BY WHICH ONE’S LIFE IS LIVED SO THAT “WHO ONE IS BECOMES COMPLETELY CAUGHT UP IN WHAT ONE KNOWS AND DOES” (P. XVII).
ONE CANNOT SEPARATE, THROUGH ABSTRACT MEANS, VISUAL AND TEXTUAL INTERPRETATIONS OF LIVED EXPERIENCES (MESKIMMON, 2003)
METAPHOR AND METONYMY: MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT IS THE MOVEMENT WITHIN DISPLACEMENT THAT PROVIDES METONYMY WITH ITS PULSE OF DIFFERENCE, RECOGNIZING THE EXTENT TO WHICH SIGNIFIERS DISLODGE ‘OTHERS’ WITH PARTIAL, OPAQUE REPRESENTATIONS, NOT ONLY REVEALING MEANINGS, EVENTS, OBJECTS, BUT ALSO OBSCURING THEM IN THIS VERY ACT. THIS PLAY BETWEEN MEANINGS DOES NOT SUGGEST A LIMITLESS POSITIONALITY, WHERE INTERPRETATION IS OPEN TO ANY WHIM OR CHANCE. IT IS THE TENSION PROVOKED BY THIS DOUBLING, BETWEEN LIMIT/LESS THAT MAINTAINS MEANING’S POSSIBILITY.

WHILE METAPHOR IS THE SUBSTITUTION OF SIGNIFIERS, WHERE ONE SIGNIFIER TAKES THE PLACE OF THE OTHER IN THE SIGNIFYING CHAIN, THE TWO SIGNIFIERS ARE NOT EQUAL; ONE DOES NOT ABSORB THE OTHER IN UNIFICATION...
Reverberations within a/r/tography call attention to the movement, the quaking, shaking, measure and rhythm that shifts other meanings to the surface (Aoki, 1996). These vibrations allow art making/researching/teaching to sink deeply, to penetrate, and to resonate with echoes of each other.

Reverberations also excite possible slippages of meaning, where the act of returning is not mirrored, but a performance where each reverberation resists and pushes forward towards new understandings.

Samuel Adu-Poku and Wendy Stephenson
Excess is an ongoing practice concerned not with inserting facts and figures, images and representations into language, but with creating an opening where control and regulation disappears.

Vacillating between conservation and destruction, excess becomes a movement towards anything, everything returning in a dynamic momentum. More traditionally excess has been associated with bodily states: excrement, the anus, blood, sex, orgasms, and abuse.

Such associations carry with them the weight of the monstrous, the other, hierarchical class distinctions whereby the deviant and abhorrent threatens discipline and control. This excess is the excess of waste, the stuff of discipline and re-pair.

Kit Graier and Carl Leggo
**Compulsiveness: The Visual and Textual within A/r/tography**

The dialectic of text and image has long provoked theoretical speculations, contradictory and hybrid relationships, radical conflicts, and conciliatory synthesis, and still promises to be increasingly important today. Historically, the inherent contradictions between scriptural (word) and iconic (image) texts have had a strong impact on defining Western culture. From ancient middle-eastern civilization until now, word and image have been the basis for intense dialogues wherein each has been in search of absolute power over the other. Each has achieved an evident degree of power in distinct historical periods. But neither of these texts has ever absolutely reigned over the other, since words and images are part of the same construct; they owe to each other their own existence. Nevertheless, as we arrived at the turn of the twenty-first century, the situation is such that the visual has tremendous power over our everyday lives. Accordingly, I assume that visual culture educators should be predisposed to understand and act upon this condition.

We, westerners, occidentals, post-occidentals have been socially constructed under the burden of the idea that words are the material base for rationality and that images are substandard ways of knowledge because they are related to magic, creativity, uncertainty, and illusion. Additionally, the ideas of literacy have typically privileged logic and univocality while iconological thoughts have searched for multivocality. Albeit the same characteristics associated with images also “belong” to written words, because they are visuals, they depend on visualization (revelation, apparition, etc) to exist. During the project of modernity with which we lived for at least the last four centuries, the clash seems to have been between the abstract intellectuality of words and the sensorial perceptions of images. Nevertheless in recent years, within the academy, many scholars (e.g. Barone, 2003; Barone & Eisner, 1997; Coulter, 1999; Diamond, 2001; Eisner, 2002; Eisner & Day, 2004; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Epps, 1998; Fox & Geichman, 2001; Pearse, 1992; Phillips, 1995; Piantanida et al., 2003; Saarnivara, 2003; Sava & Nuutinen, 2003; Slattery, 2001, 2003; Slattery & Langerock, 2002; Taylor, 2002; Van Halen-Faber & Diamond, 2002; Wilson Kind, 2002) have been attempting to understand, value and conceive art making as a mode of scholarly inquiry; and this developed into newly acknowledged arts-based forms of research, and arts-based educational research. Art making should be understood here in its historical contexts of production, formal qualities, and sensorial aspects. The key argument for arts-based forms of research is that they disrupt the “standard” methods through which research is shaped, performed, conducted, and understood. Arts-based forms of research intentionally displace
established modes of research and knowledge making, while allowing a polystemic research and its multiple meanings, and emphasizing uncertainty, artistry, imagination, illusion, insight, visualization, and dynamism.

A/r/tography is just one way to theorize and practice arts-based forms of research and arts-based forms of educational research. The main constitutive aspects of a/r/tographical work, the visual (images) and textual (words), are discourses that encounter each other in permanent conversation. It is, among other things, a dialogue of image and word in which the flow of meaning may not obey any hierarchical order; it is a fluid dialogue in which a/r/tographers, engaged in a lived inquiry, provoke themselves and others through visual and textual representations or performances that inform and form each other. Springgay, Irwin & Wilson Kind (2005) argue that a/r/tography is a doubling of visual and textual that complement, extend, refute and/or subvert one another, as follows:

The doubling of art and graphy is important when conceiving of a methodology that includes both visual and written processes and products of a research text. Respectively, the use of the terms “text/ual” make present the implications of “texts” beyond, outside, unknown, and tangential to the visual and the written. Thus, a/r/tography includes an understanding of positionality and intersubjectivity. Through doubling, hegemonic categorizations of knowledge production are troubled, infusing both the art and the graphy with intention and attentiveness. This doubling is not a static rendering of two elements positioned as separate and distinct, but it is the contiguous interaction and the movement between art and graphy that research becomes a lived endeavour. (p. 900)

Springgay, Irwin and Wilson Kind (2005) further explain a/r/tographical research as situated within conversations exploring understandings and experiences: acts of negotiating meaning between texts and images. Furthermore, it is pointed out that in this vibrant dialogue of text and image one does not erase the other: rather, they merge or they might become something else since a/r/tography encourages their differences.

Contamination: From A/r/tographical Practice to Visual Culture; Pedagogical Applications
At this juncture, I depart from a confessional and personal narrative in order to give details of how an a/r/tographical orientation uses visual and textual practices to disturb, influence, connect, inform and form inquiry; and also, more specifically in my research, how the interactive identities within a/r/tography are engaged to inquire into and with queer theory and Almodóvar’s queer visuals. In this segment a number of questions are asked to orient the reader and myself: How do the images in my thesis function in dialogue with the text? What specific insights about Almodóvar’s queer
filmic discourse and queer theory have I gained from my a/r/tographic inquiry? What specifically did I learn, and why is this sort of visual inquiry important for visual culture education? Moreover, what did I learn in the process that would otherwise not have become apparent?

To contextualize these questions it is important to note that I have never studied in a learning setting like the Faculty of Education at UBC; I have only studied in visual arts and design schools and universities. When I commenced the PhD program this new ambiance profoundly disturbed me, because I felt castrated of the openness, directness, bluntness, unpredictability and amorality I had experienced before in art schools. Moreover, I found it difficult to articulate a response to this situation using only oral or written texts. Influenced by an arts-based research course that I took with Rita Irwin and Kit Grauer, I felt the need to “tell visual stories”; that is, to create visual narratives based on the general concept of queer visual representations of gender and sexuality. Amazingly, the sincerity, openness, softness, sonority and impact of these narratives allowed me, initially, to explore my everyday experience of discomfort and strangeness at being in an intimidating situation, then to explore a daily inquiry into queer visual representations, and finally to establish a point of departure for my research, teaching and artistic practice during this project. By developing these visual narratives intertwined with the texts, I now realize how knowing through a creative process disrupts the concept of a coherent, projected, and safe knowledge within a formal educational setting. I also recognize that artists, as well as educators and scholars, use practices that necessitate excitable discourses for effusively conveying private and shared meanings within an educational system. I also believe that the creative ways of knowing found within a/r/tography inherently disrupt knowledge through the sheer juxtapositions, interactions and disjunctures that happen between textual and visual elements within a visual narrative body, while keeping the intrinsic differences between visual and textual elements intact.

Yet I have also learned that a/r/tography needs to explore another constituent to further strengthen its practices. I argue that there is an important element missing in the theorization of a/r/tography: that is, the power of orality as the needle that interlaces textual and visual elements. The mediations in a/r/tography need a third space to happen, but I, posited here as an a/r/tographer, claim that a more complex relationship among written text, visual (senses), and oral articulation must be acknowledged. As a visual arts educator I learned that the act of a/r/tography involves textual, visual and oral ideas and processes through a continuous flow of relations. And this flow of relations opens spaces for the a/r/tographer to visualize the position of the artist/teacher/
researcher subjectivity in the process of reading, making, viewing, and speaking. It is in this flow of relations that a/r/tographical practices are informed through the making of and assigning of meaning to texts, images, and speech employed by a/r/tographers as they create, read, speak, watch, and view. A/r/tographical works and a/r/tographers cannot perform these actions required to develop a flow of relations essential for their existence without the mediation of the discursive practice of speech.

I claim that there are many practical strategies visual culture educators may use to grasp the web of relations and their malleability in order to inquire a/r/tographically. For the next few paragraphs I will briefly present some of these strategies. Firstly, visual culture educators must be open to a passionate exploration of the fractures that lie between self-identity and understanding oral, visual, and textual representations. Thus, a/r/tographers must draw from phenomenology in order to provoke an autobiographical narration of lived experiences, not only drawing from memory but also from the body. Narration for a/r/tography could be understood as a performance, as Ted T. Aoki and Doug Aoki (2005) explain:

The problem is that narration is yet another performance and that autobiography is yet another presumption of the presence of the narrating performer. To put this another way, the problem with the narration of the subject is not the inevitability of its failure, but rather the possibility of its success. The performative caution is not that the narration cannot make the subject present, but rather that narration is the only way to do so. That is, the subject is never present in and of itself. In Lacanian terms, before the subject is positioned in the symbolic order—before it is written into social existence—the subject is only present as lack. It is only produced (as present) through discursive gestures whose archetype is the narration of the self. This is the pertinent lesson of the Derridean, “there is nothing outside the text”: the subject only comes to be the subject which drives its narrative production. That is, it is because the subject is not “there” that its story gets told. For Butler, social identity only persists because it continuously fails. The incessance of failure necessitates the iteration of its recuperation. Hence the characteristically repetitive nature of social life: we need to “perform” the same social gestures again and again, often on a daily basis, to be able to sustain the images of ourselves as female or male, gay or straight, teacher or student. For example, sex may appear to be biologically determined, and it is generally taught as such, but even its factuality demands discursive support. (p. 243)

Thus, through processes of reiterations of accounts of lived experiences, visual culture educators narratively explore the activities of a/r/tography involving the entire body, and hence move from a focus on the conceptual to establish a dialogue with the physical body of knowledge. More importantly, according to post structural thought as
discussed by Ted T. Aoki and Doug Aoki, the creation of these visual narratives becomes the very discursive means of constructing visual culture educators’ subjectivities. Moreover, these a/r/ographical explorations encourage visual culture educators to shamelessly, defiantly and boldly produce representations that embrace their inner desire, and emphasize the role of the body in giving meaning to experience and identity formation. Through a/r/ography visual culture educators are able to analyze the processes by which they come to assume their positions as artists, researchers, teachers, and learners. Rather than assuming that visual art educators’ identities are obvious and fixed, a/r/ography, like queer theory, assists in tracing the processes that construct identity within language and discourse.

My thesis did not set out to define what a/r/ography is or how it must performed or practiced. A/r/ography, after all, is a lived practice in which each a/r/ographer interrogates his/her emergent understanding within her/his basic theoretical framework. A/r/ography is a shifting concept that gradually evolves over the course of creating a/r/ographical pieces and conversing with other a/r/ographers: thus it is a difficult task to define a/r/ography with any certainty. However, the attentive viewer must notice that the form and method of an a/r/ographical work always perform the theory that they represent. In this light, I was drawn to the practice of a/r/ography and in turn, my own art making became a starting point for examining relationships between visual culture theory and practice. A/r/ography contaminated, altered, and diversified my practices. Moreover, the art or the visuals created within this a/r/ographical approach were created through inquiries directly connected to the practices of a/r/t. In my case, for example, defining a research project was more an act of visual inference than conclusions that I arrived at from written texts. When I decided on Almodóvar’s filmic discourses on gender and sexuality as my chosen sites of analysis, I had already seen all his movies, and only then did I come to the decision that it was necessary to establish a conversation among art education, visual culture, and queer theory. I arrived at Almodóvar’s work from my own visual and subjective standpoint.

While conducting literature reviews on texts of visual culture education, queer theory, transculturalism and Almodóvar’s visuals, I collected, on a daily basis, literally thousands of images that helped me to inquire into the projects, concepts, theories, and notions commonly viewed and represented, and into problems that became apparent — and of great interest to me. Furthermore, to frame my research questions I had to read visually and “writerly” (Barthes, 1986) Almodóvar’s visual representations. While collecting and seeing, watching and viewing his stills, clips and movies I recognized the paucity of this work in art education discourse; there is a tendency to focus on one unity of representation, one object, one image, one painting or one sculpture. Although one film, as a unity, is already a multiplicity of images placed one after another, I chose to study not one visual
representation but Almodóvar’s film discourse, using three of his films. The a/r/tographical practice allowed me to foresee the possibilities of different approaches and implications of viewing/reading visual representations. Moreover this a/r/tographical practice pointed out for me other discursive viewings that analyze not only authors but also, themes, genres, and media discourses.

Throughout my PhD program, I created visual narratives within each course; and the end result is the electronic book Border Epistemologies, annexed to this thesis. This e-book is an assemblage made from all visual journals I created through a series of written texts and mixed media, collages, paintings, photographs, and graphic designs. Although I made three Digital Video Recordings, or DVDs, for this thesis they are not included for technological reasons. These journals had an affect and an effect on my practices at UBC as a teacher, researcher, student, and artist because they functioned as key locations of my a/r/tographical processes until the assembling of the final e-book. My view is that these a/r/tographical practices provide visual culture educators with the possibility of thinking about teaching, art making, researching and learning processes in ways that have not previously been explored. In this sense I argue that a/r/tography helps visual culture educators to translate their experience from the visual to a space in between the visual and text. Also, I assert that this space is the means to critically question one’s a/r/t practices through the ongoing practice of living inquiry. For example, through the interference of the visual with the written text, research questions continuously evolve, re-emerge, submerge, and readjust over and over again.

I must highlight that my visual representations through the e-book are not intended to be understood as stunning, artful embellishments to, and illustrations of, the thesis text, but rather a simultaneous and interwoven process of making meaning in conversation with the written texts. Through this experience I have been learning that the a/r/tographical practice is an active one: it disturbs visual culture educators’ comfort zones within their educational and art performances; it revives and intensifies empathy and playfulness while at the same time routinely registering one’s personal development and forming a sense of familiarity with the subject studied. To promote an a/r/tographical process I worked through a group of twenty-nine concepts that covered the scope of my concerns and later became the chapters and subchapters of this thesis:
Compulsiveness  Effort  Loss  Routes
Contamination:  Embodiments  Mapping  Rummage
Curiosity  Emplacement  Noise  Rumor
Contiguity  Fragrance  Nomads  Sublimity
Deliverance  Gain  Opening  Transparency
Derivations  Gaze  Overdub  Unoriginality
Devouring  Hallucination  Overdye  Unpredictability
Discretion  Inconsistency  Overeat  Unruliness

Furthermore, I appropriated an entire body of work from Almodóvar to refer to my personal relationship with the PhD program and how I responded to some presentations, lectures, and so forth. I went through the whole program facing my difficulties with written and spoken English. Therefore I “lurked” in every session, presentation, and email exchange and felt terribly disturbed because I am too shy to speak to large audiences. Thus by visually writing, using my memory of images and texts, and letting my bodily senses and desires work freely, I was able to inquire in a space that emerged through a chain of reenactment, iterations, and imitations which could not have been produced without undergoing an a/r/ tographical process.

The whole e-book comes together as a material object at the same moment that a dialogue between the verbal and the iconic points toward a new and powerful strategy for interpreting everyday life through images and one’s own subjectivity. Following this perspective, I argue that by directly placing autobiographical references in the e-book I exploit intuition, which changes in the process of artistic inquiry to consciousness, and transforms emotion and knowledge into interpretation, which can be repeatedly replaced with new interpretation. Furthermore, I claim that beyond the interpretation of the e-book I am both the location under discussion by the e-book and the constructed subjectivity that is a result of its development.

The central visual signs for the e-book are firstly the Polaroid photos of bubble gum stains on public pavements that I have been taking since 1993 in many parts of the world, which signal my traveling and my search for home, safe space and place; and are metaphors to better address concepts of belonging, displacement and border, including artist/researcher/teacher and student. Secondly, there is a regular use of maps, flags, stamps, envelopes, coins, corsets, and dresses, which I read as instruments of regulation and control. Thirdly there are a great variety of stills from Pedro Almodóvar displaying traces of his visual performances, as images of the borderland: for example, bodies, colors, settings, and so forth. Fourthly, there is a compulsion with representing dot, spot, point, blotch arranged
in symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns. The dots can be read as narratives with some
degree of continuity and discontinuity, and as the repetition of themes when we tell a story.

Ultimately I consider that my most prevalent art making has been viewing, and
I draw attention to the creativity of viewing for visual culture educators, the dialogical
movement through a multiplicity of levels of anxiety and comprehension, the shifting
movement from appreciation and consciousness to understanding, from desire to
knowledge. However, the viewer has to be able to produce the terms of these dialogical
relationships; that is, “to be able to speak from both sides, to incorporate, or not, what is
important, or not, about what has been seen and understood” (Burnett, 1995, p. 43).

Effort: Queer Theory and Research

The key word in my project is transdisciplinarity. Transdisciplinarity as a complex
process draws together discipline-specific theories, concepts, and approaches to address
questions through a shared conceptual framework that is more than juxtaposition and
more than the arrangement of one discipline along side another. Transdisciplinarity
transgresses the ways in which we know the world surrounding us by not worshiping
disciplinary boundaries. Therefore, while I am critical and interested in dialoguing with
many fields of knowledge, this thesis is not intended as a demonstration of the advancement
of transdisciplinary research within art education practice. Given that, I affirm that in this
thesis I am far less interested in interdisciplinary practices, which create a space for meetings
in the boundaries of disciplines, than in transdisciplinarity, as a more comprehensive
framework where the meetings of disciplines and knowledge systems juxtapose and engulf
their borders. So led by Spivak’s assertion, I am at ease with the fact that “I am not erudite
enough to be interdisciplinary, but I can break rules” (1999, p. xiii).

In a/r/tography and queer theory discourses, concepts from anthropology, sociology,
literary criticism, philosophy, visual culture, visual studies, education, and psychoanalysis
undergo collective transformations; they merge and hybridize. Thus, I argue that hybrid
transdisciplinary practices such as these are complementary, providing me with powerful
means for a subjective mediation and agency in the study of visual culture education.

As aforementioned a/r/tography’s theoretical structure has been built upon the work
of post-structural thinking. I argue that it essentially transpires through the philosophical
concepts, elements and strategies developed by four philosophers: Gilles Deleuze, Felix
Gatarri, Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Derrida (see Dow, 1993; Marks, 1998; May, 1997;
McQuillan, 2001; Sheppard, 1997). A/r/tography draws primarily from Deleuze and his
longtime partnership work with Gattari on the concepts of rhizomes, the fold, multiplicity,
becomings, flux, mappings, landscapes, and the aesthetics of sensation. From Jean-Luc
Nancy the concepts of being-with, thinking in community, relationality, and betweenness are widely explored. And finally Derrida’s deconstruction plays an important role in the assembly of a/r/tography; and its strategies, such as derailed communication and undecidability, deliberately or unconsciously deeply affect the development of a/r/tography. The hinges, oppositions, indeterminacy, pharmakon, the supplement, overturning, displacement, the metaphysics of presence, the trace, difference, iterability, citationality, signatures, contamination, and the parergon are approaches or deconstructive acts that are embedded in a/r/tographical methodology.

As earlier declared, queer theory questions the fixed categories of sexual identity and the cognitive paradigms generated by heteronormativity. As does a/r/tography, queer theorists also rely on and often draw on deconstruction to destabilize the “self”, who is heterosexual, white, and middle class, and they constantly question these same overturned and displaced categories. According to queer theory the displaced self is still a subject that needs relentless attention to avoid fixedness. Gender theorists initially viewed the category of “gender” as a human construct enacted by a vast repetition of social performances. Accordingly gender categories do not merely reflect the “social” but rather they are products of culture and also help to create them. Moreover, queer theory draws attention to the construction of identities of all people, bodies, things or entities that refuse gender or/and sexual categorization.

Contained by these assertions, my approach to queer theory in this thesis is restricted mainly to Judith Butler’s work; and I employ her key concept of performativity and her subsequent ideas on performance, repetition, reiteration and parody because they are relevant concepts that directly assist me with my research questions. Also to a lesser extent I draw on the work of Eve Sedgwick, Diana Fuss, and Teresa de Lauretis, who, along with Judith Butler, I select as keystones of queer thinking. Since my inquiry does not attempt to answer the question of what queer theory is, but rather explores it as an interpretive framework, I now turn to the work of these scholars.

In earlier work Sedgwick (1985) reflects on the components of male homosocial relationships pointing to a connection between erotic and friendship bonds between men, and questions the representation of this relationship and the fluidity of gender categories. Sedgwick claims that heteronormativity masks the occurrence of homosocial associations. In later work, Sedgwick (1990) affirms that the secrecy of closeted sexual behavior or orientation has had an irrefutable outcome on culture and history, and ponders the historical creation of a homosexual identity and the gender construction of homosexual people. Sedgwick explains that historically there have been two contradictory aspects of closet formation: one based on an essentializing view that avows that there is an apparent group
of persons who are homosexuals (minoritizing view), and the other which is a more flexible view asserts that sexual desire is unpredictable (universalizing view). Hence “heterosexuals” would, might, could, may possibly express same sex desires as well. However, rather than arguing for the validity of either of these two tendencies, Sedgwick proposes a woven approach to these categories. Along with Sedgwick, Fuss (1989, 1991) renounces binary essentialism/constructionism and argues that, to a great extent, the former is more flexible, and the latter more normative and essentialist than previously theorized. As an alternative she proposes cunning acts of ongoing critical awareness. Consequently Fuss’ impulse is to move from the questioning approach to the performative means by which sexual reinterpretation builds on the idea of multiple identities.

In The Technology of Gender De Lauretis (1987) states that thinking of gender as sexual difference sustains the prevailing ideas of woman as the difference from man. De Lauretis avers that the subject is social, cultural and historical and therefore fluctuating. So in order to move from this model of thinking through differences, de Lauretis proposes displacing the thought of the masculine at the core of humanity, and deconstructing the binary position: man/woman. As Hoofd (1997) explains:

In order to deconstruct this binary of Man (oppressor, subject, at the centre) versus Woman (oppressed, other, marginalized) she uses the theory of representation, or semiotics. Gender, she states, is a representation, and its social construction is this representation of gender. Gender is not (biological) sex, but a system of meanings predicated on the conceptual dichotomy of two biological sexes. Thus gender assigns (constructed and therefore theoretically changeable) identity, status, value and location in family structures to individuals within a certain society. Gender thus has the function of constituting individuals as men and women, she says. She here equates gender with the Althusserian notion of ideology of which he said that it had the function of constituting concrete individuals as subjects. Now, any system of representation or constitutive (like cinema and books, but also for instance everyday family life or feminist theory) that helps carrology of gender. (para. 12)

Consequently, and according to de Lauretis, the notions of gender that follow a constructive model, as presented by de Lauretis herself, Sedgwick and Butler, tend to moderate the power of the “naturalness” of the previous dichotomy and emphasize the performativity of gender. Moreover, de Lauretis (1991) in her studies of spectatorship and narrative in cinema, points out that narrative creates a situation in which the woman spectator is trapped between two things: the gaze and the image. De Lauretis studies disturb the stable and prevailing ideas that the gaze controls the negotiations of the process of viewing films, the gaze-within-film, and images; and are valuable to some understanding of Almodóvar’s works.
To further emphasize the focus in Butler’s work, I briefly present some notions of her concept of performativity. Butler’s work “derives” from a questioning of interrelations of sex, gender and sexuality as systems of difference and from the way that “digressing” gender and sexualities displace these systems. Butler confronts notions of fixed gender identities upon which discourses of sex/gender/sexual difference have been established. In order to assert that gender is produced and established by cultural acts, Butler initially drew from Michel Foucault’s ideas that subjects are produced in discourse and are not intrinsic beings; the subject is an effect of systems of power/knowledge that are culturally and historical specific. Butler informs us that non-normative genders and sexualities direct enormous effort towards the construction of fixed identities: for example gay, lesbian, and transgender; however those actions simply reiterate the social power of heterosexuality. Consequently she presented the notion of the production of identity through a reiteration of performative acts as a form of resistance to cultural control. Butler posits the performative production of gender, in which gender is constructed through a series of recurring and compulsory performances forced by prevailing regimes of gender. Moreover, Butler also puts emphasis on the reiteration of performances that purposely imitate gender or traces in which gender has been determined; as drag queens and kings who destabilize fixed views of sexual or gender difference by employing a parodic performance of gender. The performative nature of both difference and identity is a key component for the dismantling or disruption of sex/gender fixities. Discussion of the problems of gender/sex/sexuality posed by Butler creates the possibility of showing the diverse spaces opened up by suggesting that not only sexual orientation and gender, but also the body, may be open to multiple readings.

Unpredictability: Gathering information

The transdisciplinary attribute of my project allowed it openness but also set restrictions mainly due to power resistance among the many disciplines, fields, and stances with which I have been dialoguing. The efforts that I have committed myself to in this project required engagement with disciplinary specificities, bodies and languages that were at times strenuous and intricate processes. I do not want to emphasize obstacles that graduate students engaged in transdisciplinarity have to confront but rather to stress the multi-possibilities of taking on this kind of research. Actually while working in this transdisciplinary research I discovered one attribute that I never thought I had: being patient to understand other disciplines’ languages, demands, and discourses, while dialoguing with my supervisor and committee as we came to understand the pressures in which my questions are embedded.

I chose to study Almodóvar’s films for several reasons. Firstly, the multiple meanings
and intertextual characteristics of his filmic texts disturb normal representation of sex/gender/sexuality. Secondly, as an out gay film director he approaches film from a border position. Thirdly, Almodóvar’s films offer a variety of analytical possibilities.

I attempted to study most of Almodóvar’s fifteen films but the analysis here is restricted to his narrative films in general and, at the time of writing, to his latest three movies: Bad Education, Talk to Her, and All about My Mother. Although these three films characterize Almodóvar’s discourses slightly differently, I decided to explore them because they are more multifaceted than his earlier movies, and his characters, cinematography, and mise-en-scene are more directly relational to his overall visual representations. Furthermore, these three latest films have become more refined; his earlier defiantly confrontational approach has changed into a cinema teeming with representational references that deal with liminalities, contiguities, reverberations, openings, and lived experiences. Moreover, Talk to Her is considered a follow-up of All about My Mother and Bad Education is the rupture within this sequence. Besides, it was very important to choose these films because All about My Mother is about those who want to become and are women; Talk to Her is about the difficulty of dialogue between men and women, and Bad Education refers to a male who masquerades as a man/woman/transgender and heterosexual/homosexual/bisexual in order to become an actor.

My ways of understanding these films are diversified, that is, I use several interpretive tools from queer theory and a/r/tography as part of my approach for analyzing and discussing the possible meanings of the films. I translate the countless concealed, exposed and overexposed meanings of these films in order to understand if they inform visual culture education theory and practice. Also, by analyzing them I explore in what ways the utilization of the films, as geographies of border epistemologies of queer sexuality and gender are significant to visual culture education practices.

However, these are not comprehensive analyses; the approached employed here is only concerned with thematic analysis (gender and sexuality). But Almodóvar’s films’ particular vocabulary, terminology, and structure, such as self-referentiality, appropriation, and intertextuality, are considered when necessary. The idea is not to investigate only one aspect of film such as cinematography, sound, stills, movements, visual representation, or text, but the wholeness as a dialogue among them. Hence analysis is not focused only on the constituent elements of each film, it is also applied to the three movies as a longer “film”, that is, I analyze Almodóvar’s discourse on representations of gender and sexuality rather than the specifics of his genre, style, etc. As a thesis soaked in cultural studies the analysis primarily operates from a political perspective, departing from the belief that the language of film can expose the way that people are oppressed within current social structures, since
people are formed by language as individuals and as social subjects.

I never visualized this research as drawing on distinct methodologies with clear, standardized procedures. I prefer to use a blurred genre of research and that is the reason I chose and brought into play a/r/topography and queer theory as approaches to my thesis. I stress this because I would like to keep the area of methodology wide open. I will focus my attention in queer theory and a/r/topography but the analysis is primarily informed by the pillars of cultural studies: rejection of elitist notions, questioning of social interconnectedness, interest in everyday cultural life, disrupting borders between disciplines, and above all displacing notions of normality. Therefore, I strive to understand how Almodóvar's discursive film representations of gender and sexuality work, or not, to create power imbalance.

Conduits

Due to the transdisciplinary nature of my work I had to conduct more than one exploratory literature review to help me to continuously pull together my questions. I assembled the literature reviews by adopting important concepts addressed nowadays in relation to art education (the emergence of visual culture education & arts based educational research), queer theory (modes of analysis), postcolonialism (Latin-Americanism) and Pedro Almodóvar’s films (Representations of gender and sexuality).

resources.

• Primary sources: Pedro Almodóvar’s films
• Secondary sources: Documents (books, dissertations, theses, academic journals, periodicals, magazines, conference papers, conference proceedings, website articles, private documents, and email conversations) visual materials (photography, digital media, digital photography, film clips, video clips, and DVD), audio materials (sounds and music).

Essential for this thesis was the utilization of libraries, computerized databases, personal and private archives, and film archives. It was crucial to collect information in loco. Documents and audio visuals were collected, photocopied, and reviewed, in the following:

• Centro de Documentación Pedro Almodóvar at the ICA, Instituto de Estudios Avanzados de la Comunicación Audiovisual da Universidade de Castilla La Mancha, Spain.
• Centro de Documentación Digital Pedro Almodóvar Cuenca ICA-UCLM, Campus Universitario de Cuenca, Spain.
• El Deseo S.A., Madrid.
• Filmoteca Nacional, Madrid.
• *Biblioteca Nacional de España*, Madrid.
• *Filmoteca Española, Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales*, Madrid.

In addition further documents were collected in Castilla La Mancha (Toledo and Madrid), Andalucia (Sevilla, los pueblos blancos, Córdoba, Ronda, and Cádiz) and at the Valencian community (Valencia), Spain.

**Conclusion**

In summary this chapter has attempted to draw attention to a/r/tography and queer theory as the fluctuant methodologies of my thesis.

I have chosen the theoretical métissage of a/r/tography as one of my approaches to examining Almodóvar's visual representations of gender and sexuality because as a critical pedagogy, it is deeply committed to the development of transdisciplinary ways of knowing and practicing research, art and teaching within visual culture education. In a/r/tography and queer theory discourses, concepts from diverse disciplines of knowledge undergo collective transformations. Thus these transdisciplinary practices provide me with powerful means for a subjective mediation and agency in the study of visual culture education.

Queer theory is concerned with normative definitions of sex, gender, and sexuality and questions the fixed categories of sexual identity and the cognitive paradigms generated by heteronormativity. Contained by these assertions, I highlight that my approach to queer theory is restricted mainly to the work of a key queer theorist: Judith Butler. I make use of her concept of performativity and her subsequent ideas on performance, repetition, reiteration and parody because they are relevant concepts that directly assist me with my research questions. Also to a lesser extent I draw on the work of Eve Sedgwick, Diana Fuss, and Teresa de Lauretis.

The importance of queer theory to my research is threefold:
• it assists me analyzing discursive and cultural practices,
• it provides an unfolding theoretical configuration for promoting transgressive inquiry,
• it helps me to unravel the arrangement of overlapping, ambiguous, paradoxical, ironic, impossible, and challenging positionalities of Almodóvar's filmic representations.

I chose Almodóvar's films to study for several reasons. Firstly, the multiple meanings and intertextual characteristics of his filmic texts disturb normal representation of sex/gender/sexuality. Secondly, as an out gay film director he approaches film from a border position. Thirdly, Almodóvar’s films offer a variety of analytical possibilities.
The analysis here is restricted to narrative film in general and to Almodóvar’s latest three movies: Bad Education, Talk to Her, and All about My Mother. The approach employed is mainly concerned with some thematic analysis (gender and sexuality) and some issues that affect Almodóvar’s particular vocabulary, terminology, and structure (self-referentiality, appropriation, intertextuality, etc) within a filmic text. Analyses are not focused only on the constituent elements of each film but are applied to the three movies as a longer “film”, that is, I am interested in analyzing the discourse rather than the genre, style, and specificities of each film.

As a final point I stress that in spite of focusing my attention in queer theory and a/r/tography, my analysis is primarily informed by the objectives of cultural studies: rejection of elitism, interest in everyday cultural life, questioning of social interconnectedness, disruption of borders between disciplines, and above all troubling normality.
symbols signs globalization strategies empowerment postmodern scripture painting reflexive other self foreign multiculturalism intercultural linguistics representation transvision visually image identity female sex gender masculinity sculpture painting films cinema uncertainty nostalgia niche place scrutiny criticism otherness alterity fracture
On the map of your empire, O Great Khan, there must be room both for the big, stone Fedora, and the little Fedoras in glass globes. Not because they are equally real, but because they are only assumptions. The one contains what is accepted as necessary when it is not yet so; the other, what is imagined as possible and, a moment later, is possible no longer.

Italo Calvino, Cities and Desire 4, in invisible cities (1972, p. 28)

In Gaze I introduce features of Almodóvar’s aesthetics, explore his notions of filmic enunciation, and look at how and to what extent Almodóvar’s visual representations relate to spectators. In addition, I discuss Almodóvar’s distinctiveness, authorship, cross-genres, and development of meaning and spectatorship.

Unoriginality: Introducing Almodóvar

Pedro Almodóvar’s filmic corpus plays very different roles in constructing and disrupting concepts of sexual and gender representations. His cinematic representations of trans/gender/sexuality dislocate the various ways of seeing them, and trouble interaction between viewer and object of vision. I am interested in the fluidity with which Almodóvar’s films soften boundaries of feminine and masculine representations, posing a critique of identity that affects and dislocates normative representations of gender and sexuality, challenges spectators to confront the position from which they look, and impels them to a level of consciousness of the act of looking. Here I employ certain historical details and scholarly materials to trace the definition, establishment and development of his film-making activities as border culture and border thought.

photonovellas: Patty Diphusa (Almodóvar, 2002a).

To date, several book-length critical works have been produced around the world reflecting the most diverse aspects of his productions and covering an array of themes and topics such as: film aesthetics, comparative literature, gayness, gay self-representation, film and the Spanish historical context, interviews, masculinity, the politics of representation, postmodernism, film reviews, sociological analysis, and transculturalism and transnationalism. Almodóvar’s work has been receiving a privileged attention from academia, which has been developing a considerable variety of critical interpretations, theoretical treatments and interdisciplinary studies as is revealed by the large number of theses, dissertations, papers and journal articles. I am aware that a large number of PhD theses and Masters dissertations on and around Almodóvar’s work have been developed from the most diverse fields of study in Europe, Brazil, and the United States, but astonishingly none so far in Canada. Within these dissertations, selected areas of his filmic production have been extensively scrutinized through many lenses: Anthropology, Comparative Literature, Drama, Film Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, History, Latin Americanism, Sociology, and Women’s Studies. However, if his work has been receiving full exposure to academics of the most varied stripes, there is no apparent literature contained in this cluster of countries that approaches it from a position of queer theory; likewise there is no attempt whatsoever to interconnect his filmic and cinematic representations with any form of educational practice or critical pedagogy.

Absorption: Almodóvar Expliqué aux Enfants.

Almodóvar’s films are often inscribed under the banner of pop/trash/camp/kitsch/ slasher culture, and generally described as a mixture of comedy, melodrama, and suspense. According to Zurian the so-called “contaminaciones Almodovarianas” are the impossible mixtures of genres, multiplicity of traditions, sensibilities and complexities, which constitute his contaminated eclectic aesthetics (Zurián, 2005, pp. 25-26). In a Derridian sense, these “Almodovarian contaminations” poison previous traditions and current modes of film aesthetics, while creating his particular mode of knowing and representing the world. Almodóvar’s most striking markers are the use of a vibrant color palette, dramatic songs, intertextuality, sharp humor, and complex narratives in which stories are told tearing apart representations of social categories. Through an infused spirit of burlesque his tragicomic works displace subjects by showing difficult and important issues in distorted ways, and putting on screen socially neglected subjects in a respectful manner.

Almodóvars’ works, that is, films, books, screenplays, and so forth, have
been deeply influenced by Anglo-Saxon culture, but they are an intrinsic part of a comprehensive traditional Spanish culture (Gubern, 2005). According to Gurben (2005), La novella Picaresca from the seventeenth century, the sainete and esperpento from the eighteenth century, and the Latin melodrama endowed Almodóvar with a vast array of specific literary, dramatic and visual representations. It is well-known that Almodóvar’s films in their distinctive claim for disruption resist clear-cut classification, but characteristics and features of these abovementioned genres frequently appear in his films and help us to grasp some of his structures and meanings (Almeida, 1996; D’Lugo, 2005; Forgione, 2005; García, 2005; Gubern, 2005; Varderi, 1995). Firstly, La novella Picaresca provides Almodóvar with aesthetic legacies of canniness, ingenuity, impropriety, misconduct, lawlessness, sagacity, promiscuity, vulgarity, corruption, flair, decadence, carnival, mockery, excess, vice, travesty, sarcasm, the existence of antiheros and antiepics, and ultimately the lack of scruples or a code of conduct. Then, the esperpento explorations of realism through the means of tragicomedy, grotesque, and ridicule disrupt conventional language and communication, and additionally assist Almodóvar in his constructions of absurd and fantastic realism. Then, in the sainete is found the tradition of parodic doublings, appropriations, multiple meanings, puns, simulation, trickery, and pastiche. Finally, the Latin melodramas bestow on Almodóvar the features of overemotionalism, nostalgia, burlesque, sentimentality, profuseness, and ambiguity. Within Almodóvar’s representations, melodrama transgressively exacerbates their already-excessiveness in order to challenge the self-contradicting precepts of heteronormativity; and with the support of this genre Almodóvar’s films reveal bodies, genders, and sexualities as acceptable and legitimate positions for political resistance and contestation.

However, the presence of these components in Almodóvar’s films is not superfluous or excessive; they assign meanings to different situations and particular contexts of Spanish history. La novella Picaresca, the sainete, esperpento, and the Latin melodrama share with Almodóvar’s aesthetics the fact that they arose during periods of political and social upheaval and transition. They functioned and still function as creative strategies to access the depth of social practices and beings, and straightforwardly interfere with, reveal, and unravel social conventions, while claiming the existence and continuation of transgressive bodies, and the uncanny in everyday life. It is precisely through these playful and idiosyncratic approaches that Almodóvar’s films attempt to subvert social and political discourses.

The transition to democracy in Spain, from forty years of Francoist dictatorship, was conspicuously marked by a general cultural displacement, social apathy, and political
concealment. The artist’s main concern was how to redeem cultural and artistic national heritage from a fascist discourse that had appropriated it for its own political interest. This state of affairs opened spaces for numerous prolific conversations between film and popular culture, in which new possibilities of artistic creations were invigorated with new aims, constituents, effects, and meanings. Almodóvar films, taken altogether, are an effect of the Spanish political transition as much as he deeply affected the routes of cultural transition. In this sense, He had a huge impact on the transition cultural movements by presenting a body of work that blends pop, camp, kitsch, slash, trash, and traditional Spanish aesthetics, impelling displacements that not only destabilized rigid concepts of the subject’s positions, but also released into Spanish society an array of gender, sexual and social roles that loosened the legacy of the Francoist past.

Almodóvar’s aesthetic decisions signal the importance of this social context, but also the director himself stresses the importance of looking at his loci of enunciation to understand his meticulous mode of representing reality through fictionalized narratives. Almodóvar articulates his speech from, among other spaces, the male, gay, artist, Spanish, European positions, but he does not claim to speak for any of these, nor that he intends to; on the contrary he seems to speak with and through these categories of gender, class, sexualities, religiosity, politics, geography, power, and knowledge. The director does not jump to conclusions, he neither judges his characters nor forces them to speak for anything or anybody (Zurián, 2005). Almodóvar’s principles have been to present filmically the life he sees and feels, but without moral constraints, containments, or control. Representations of queers, drug addicts, transgender, bisexuals, prostitutes, gays, lesbians, sado-masochists, corrupt policemen, crooked nuns, pedophile priests, murderers, nymphomaniacs, housewives, sexual abusers, serial killers, incestuous people, kidnappers, junkies, punks, womanizers, voyeurs, pregnant nuns, AIDS sufferers, comatose patients, prisoners and deceivers, in Almodóvar’s films are to acknowledge and accept them as everyday actors, performers, and pracitionerers of society. By accepting these social types as intrinsic parts of our everyday life, Almodóvar’s films refuse to go along with the prevailing authoritarian classificatory system that judges social practices; and they further question and incite spectators to rethink the terms and basis in which they classify, define, and describe human beings and their practices. In this context, I argue that Almodóvar does not make propaganda for any of these practices, rather he introduces, exposes, and distorts them, aiming to make them visible. At some point in the thirty-two years of Almodóvar’s career, modernists, post-modernists, structuralists, poststructuralists, critical thinkers, feminists, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender activists and scholars, feminists, and positivist thinkers among others, from within and
outside academia, have come into conflict with his ideas, visual representations, meanings, writings, and taken as a whole, his stance. His films upset theorists from the right, center, and left positions; they really disturb society.

In an essay that shows how Almodóvar’s *Talk to Her* makes the most of traditional fairy-tale narratives, Novoa (2005) claims that the Spanish director travels around the fairy-tale structure and thematic as one of his narrative basics, visiting the limits of the difference between the emotional and the rational, between moral and amoral, and ridiculing a society overwhelmed by dehumanization. In this sense, as Byatt explains, these imaginative stories with magical and uncanny characters are narrative forms that exploits entrenched fears and social moral panics, hence constitute a privileged location in which to rationalize and simply “think” about human beings. Thus fairy tales render fluid apprehensions and desires into alternative lucid configurations (as cited in Novoa, 2005). Many critics argue that in making his case the director imposes a misogynist conception of gender, however these assumptions must be analyzed with extreme care, as Novoa (2005) explains:

The notion that a director might evoke audience sympathy for a rapist, even among female viewers, seems rather implausible. To fully appreciate this achievement, we must understand how Almodóvar’s use of narrative devices from fairy tales makes the story work. Were it not for the fact that the story is built on a fairy tale, with its corresponding dividing
line between the real world and the world of fantasy, it would be impossible to swallow without feeling repulsed by its underlying significance [...] I mention this particular exchange because it helps us to understand how complex this movie [Talk to Her] is in terms of gender, how we need to be careful in teasing out its different meanings, and why some critics felt compelled to overlook things they would otherwise reject. (p. 224)

Through these years, Almodóvar’s narratives have explored a large number of themes and story lines. He has created comedies that look into complex subjects; for example, critiquing the Catholic Church through the story of a woman forced to hide out with a group of outrageous nuns, and the tales of sexual-abuse scandals and atrocious practices of Catholic priests. Once again it is important to note that his narratives are stunning sequences of events in which love, sex, and gender identity occupy the central positions. Almodóvar’s narratives are a spectacle of temporal shifting, impeccably moving back and forth among the films’ presents, foreshadowings, flashbacks, and flashbacks-within-flashbacks. Our attention is drawn to these puzzling temporal fragmentations that, as indispensable elements of his films’ construction, have the objective of reaching liminal spaces/times between reality and fiction.

As I explained earlier, Almodóvar’s films’ distinguishing functions are to open up discussion about sexuality and gender identifications, and to interfere with prevailing canons of sexual and gender desire. With those aims, Almodóvar’s stories use cheap and oversexed photonovellas
and advertisements as the basis to create shocking sexual caricatures; and similarly he makes use of overt sexuality to look at female and male sexuality, and desire. The account of housewives struggling to cope with the everyday life and issues of female independence and solidarity was part of his initial psychological dramas. Accounts and characters of ‘mothers’ recurrently appear whether as housewives or atrocious castrators, passive, incestuous, melancholic, fanatical, zealous and bizarre. Likewise family themes are important, such as representations of the innate strength of sisterhood, motherhood, brotherhood, friendship, and the power of family; however father characters are by and large lacking. Also there are stories of a woman falling in love with the man who kidnaps her and holds her captive, incestuous relationships between mother and daughter, and father and son-to-daughter, a pedophilic relationship between a dentist and his child patient, and intimacy between priests and young novices. Lately Almodóvar’s narratives have included the story of a woman’s pursuit of her dead son’s father, a transgender; the story of two comatose women loved by two men, who desperately attempt to communicate with them; and the story of a former molestor priest, married with children, in a relationship with a young male whose brother, a transgender, when young endured sexual abuse from the same priest.

However, as implausible they might be, Almodóvar’s narratives explore and convey emotional intensity; love, loss, suffering, selfishness, affection, devotion, passion, desire, repulsion, loathing, pleasure, tension, cruelty, and generosity are just some of the states he deals with. Until recently, Almodóvar privileged the representation of the feminine space, but in the latest two films, *Talk to Her* and *Bad Education*, there has been a significant change; the masculine and feminine space have become to some extent more defined, establishing an ongoing conversation between them, and also relating the representation of masculine formation, elements of maleness, manliness, manhood, and boyhood, to the previous portrayal of femininity. Not surprisingly in the U.S.A, and to my amazement, in Spain as well, several critics have overtly questioned if this constant emphasis on feminine identification in Almodóvar’s productions contributes to misogyny; while other hostile critics of his films claim that Almodóvar worships women but rejects proximity with their bodily beings, diminishing women to passive and disadvantaged characters (Cavagna, 2004).

Almodóvar’s work is polysemic, and open to multiple interpretations. He has no power to control the perceived meaning of his films, and even if that were a possibility he would not be interested in it, as he has been ceaselessly affirming in many interviews over the last three decades (see Strauss, 1996; Willquot-Maricondi, 2004). Meanings derive from interactions between visual representations and varied audiences and
spectatorships from different social, cultural, subcultural, and political contexts, and
Almodóvar knows that. If for his critics his representations are a “perfect” mirror of
reality, for Almodóvar they are about desire, imagination, fantasy, hope, and vision. As
Novoa (2005) explains:

The split between appearance and reality that pervades the film [Talk to Her]
dermines our ability, as viewers, to make judgments, or to conceive of justice,
in a corrupt, alienated, and false society. Almodóvar wants the viewer to consider
the possibility that Alicia’s violation is a miracle that saves and cures, an event
belonging to the fairy-tale world rather than an actual rape happening in reality.
The complex notion of reality developed in Talk to Her is similar to that in
Basile’s Lo cunto de li cunti. Canepa explains that the latter’s “‘prospective
pluralism’ or attention to the polysemic nature of reality” left in the reader the
impression that the “truths that can be extracted from the narrated material
are often at odds with each other, and with the tale itself” (“Entertainment”
39). In a similar way, Almodóvar confronts the spectator with the multiple and
contradictory truths that result from Benigno’s actions. I must stress that the
director himself, explaining the reasoning behind the silent movie, asserts that he
intended The Shrinking Lover “as a kind of blindfold. In any case, the spectator
will discover what has happened at the same time as the other characters. It’s
a secret which I’d like no one to reveal.” Furthermore, he resists calling this a
manipulation of the spectator, saying, “it is a narrative option, and not exactly
a simple one. That’s why I’m so proud of the result” (“Self-Interview”). But we
should question what it is that he does not want us to see, or what precisely he
wants us to see. (p. 237)

Furthermore, in spite of these criticisms, it is necessary to point out that the role of
women and specifically of the mother in filmic representation has been long established
as a trope implying the ideological, political and philosophical Spanish culture. So
the images of creature, body, and entity in his characters are self-referential spaces in
which Almodóvar radically conceives narratives, poetics and dramas, re-configuring
and experimenting with representations of gender and desire, but always keeping a
nuanced political tone. In his filmic discourses the body is the empowered location in
which a series of polemical conversations about what is prohibited, forbidden, illegal,
unmentionable, offensive, distasteful, and deviant in gender and sexual practices,
takes place. Throughout Almodóvar’s films there is an apparent aim to explore bodily
representations of gender and sexual differences across society by giving voice to
the neglected foci of enunciation/articulation of what I am here deliberately naming
primarily, as queers, women, transgenders, gays, lesbians, and cross-dressers.

Reading Almodóvar’s films throws us into a complex arrangement of textual
relations that require close examination. Thus understanding his films comes to be an
act of negotiation between texts. Therefore, Almodóvar’s films are intertexts because their meanings lie between film and the rest of the network of textual relations it cites (e.g. other films, music, and sounds). In his narratives, Almodóvar makes the spectators move between his film and the enmeshment of the other related texts. The most frequent texts cited are films, theater, and songs, but also advertisements, comics, photonovellas, ballet, and literature (see Aronica, 2005). The directors that explicitly or indirectly influenced Almodóvar’s poetics and have been frequently cited in his films are Alfred Hitchcock, Billy Wilder, Blake Edwards, Douglas Sirk, Frederico Fellini, George Cukor, Howard Hawks, Ingmar Bergman, J. L. Manckiewicz, Jack Arnold, King Vidor, Luis Buñuel, Fernando Fernán-Gómez, Marco Ferreri, Richard Lester, Tennesse Williams, Vincent Minnelli, and William Wyler.

As a bricoleur Almodóvar promotes a mannerist genre in which he brings together historical and stylistic genres to dismantle and reinterpret models of making, and to translate films to the audience through alterations, quotations, distortions, transpositions, and displacement. In addition, he not only cites other texts but his own texts, films, and books, making his filmic corpus another chain of meaning. Likewise he makes use of other forms of intertextualities to stress features of dissimilarity, interference, contiguity and continuity; for example, when he assigns the specific role of a male-to-female transgender to a woman (All about my mother), or when he gives the role of a heterosexual man who pretends to be a homosexual/heterosexual/transgender, to a famous heterosexual actor (Bad Education). Almodóvar’s characters are liminal ones; they dwell at the border and look out for it to open.

Aronica argues that Almodóvar’s perseverance in intertextuality is less a question of style than a recognized desire to dialogue, to bring about conversations with himself, between his characters, audience and traditions (Aronica, 2005, p. 57). By rejecting hierarchies among different forms of texts Almodóvar is unchained to play around with representations from a wide spectrum, hence there is no space for the existence of binaries such as high art/low art, cinema/theater, postmodern/modern, contemporary/traditional, literature/painting, etc. In Almodóvar’s films there is a constant pay of representations within his representations, film-within-film, theater-within-film, and so forth; also he repeatedly employs self-referentiality.

Loss: Almodóvar’s Queer Gender Between Spectator and Object of Vision

Central to my studies is the relationship between films and their viewer. In the field of film studies there has been an increasing interest in understanding the influence that a film has upon its audience, or vice versa. Not only academia is aware of this
location of power. Society through its educational, religious and judicial institutions explores it, trying to assess if visual representations are harmful, innocuous, or useful to members of the community; and in order to protect the general public these institutions possess the authority to sanction, censor, and control them. I mention this in order to stress that my interest in film studies lies in spectatorship rather than audience research; spectatorship understood as the study of how subjects dialogue with and translate film, that is the relationship between the viewer and the object/subject being viewed, and audience research understood as the study of film consumption.

I argue that Almodóvar's aesthetic representation of gender and sexuality reflects a postmodern alteration of the transcultural critique that shifted traditional theoretical models of spectatorship toward a queer spectatorship (see Gilmartin, 1994). Utilizing these terms Zurian further reminds us that Almodóvar's stylistic characteristics should not be understood as reflections of reality, instead as an extremely distorted image of reality since this disruption of the real is the authentic possibility to engage spectators with the film and its meanings (Zurián, 2005, p. 29). I contend that Almodóvar pays special attention to the ways in which his filmic corpus relates to social interpretations concerning the construction of the gaze, subject positioning, and the politics of the cinematic apparatus. Therefore, I further claim that an understanding of those modes of spectatorship that queer subjective formation and position, yields interpretive practices in visual culture education, and influences the dialogue with critical pedagogies.

As Laura Mulvey's theoretical framework developed over the last thirty years has been overwhelmingly used to comment on Almodóvar's films, and on himself as author, artist, creator, and individual, I will go into a few details of how her work has inspired revaluations on several bases of feminist film theory and criticism. Mulvey asserts in her breakthrough article on mainstream Hollywood classic film texts that there is a discrepancy between male and female representations and spectatorship (Mulvey, 1999b). She argues that specifically in classical films women have the conventional role of being displayed and looked at as sexual objects while men project their gaze either at the screen narrative or as the spectator. From Mulvey's point of view, the male visual pleasures are split between an obsessive fixation and aggressive gaze upon the female body and a self-absorbed identification with the male characters. If the spectator is male, it is because women have learned to identify with a male gaze.

However, ironically Mulvey's concepts are frequently charged with naturalizing heterosexuality and reifying the patriarchal system as monolithic and irrefutable (Rieser, 2001). Also, Allen has explained that by restricting a voyeuristic gaze only to males Mulvey did not allow as readily the idea that any spectator might identify with the
camera (R. Allen, 1999). In addition, Allen points out that Mulvey’s analysis works upon the hierarchy seeing/being seen, or only at the level of analysis of film apparatus; the interpretation denies females the control of gaze. Instead, as Janet Bergstrom critically demonstrated in Raymond Bellour’s analysis of Hitchcock (as cited in Allen, 1999), it is feasible to display a structure of visual fictions in which gender hierarchy is created across a series of formal contrasts such as close ups/long shots and stasis/ movement.

In a similar way, Linda Williams suggests that women can be presented as powerful signifiers in non-classical and non-realist films instead of being viewed only as symbols for castration and “lack”, as Mulvey advocates (Williams, 1991, 1996). Drawing strongly on Jacques Lacan, Mulvey argues that film does induct the spectator into realist formalism and its ideology, but Barbara Creed (1999) opposes this statement and affirms that in horror/ slasher films the spectator is invited to look away, turning the pleasure in looking –scopophilia- into displeasure. Another negation of the Mulvey model appears in Carol Clover’s work on slasher films (Clover, 1999), in which she points out that in slasher films male/female does not correspond to masculine/feminine; thus there is a loosening of gender and sexual categories. As a result, Clover asserts that identification in slasher films is no longer divided along the sexual lines Mulvey predicated. Nevertheless after the release of her seminal article for film studies, Mulvey reconsidered some of her initial positions and explored the stance of the female spectator more in terms of positionalities and less in terms of character, an exploration that has since been taken further by many other feminist theorists (see Mulvey, 1999a).

Reflective of this topic through textual analysis is for example, a claim by Davis’ (1999) that Almodóvar by his choices of form and content perpetuates patriarchal stereotypes about women and female sexuality rather than liberating women, in spite of Almodóvar’s claims of being a feminist man and filmmaker. Davis argues that Almodóvar’s representations of female and feminine characteristics and lifestyle are problematic, questions if a man can speak for a woman, and asserts that Almodóvar attempts to portray gay and lesbian lifestyles as normative and palatable for heterosexual audiences (p. 4). For an analysis of a few of Almodóvar’s films3, Davis assembled the following categories: lesbianism and female heterosexuality for the female sexualities; and for the male sexualities, transvestism and disguise, male-to-female transexuality, male homosexuality and male heterosexuality. After examining the films using this frame of reference, Davis concludes that through his work Almodóvar disguises his misogynist tendencies and creates an illusion of female power, which does not exist; and suggests that Almodóvar affirms notions of “male superiority not only through his depictions of male and female homosexuality, but whilst presenting more traditional heterosexual
relationships and lifestyles” (p. 89). For Davis, Almodóvar pretends to provide women with a voice but this is a masquerade; he actually violates, controls, filters and determines their experiences, expressions and behaviors. As a final point Davis maintains that Almodóvar’s postmodern, fluid, hybrid world in which “homosexual male utopia” succeeds and prospers and all women are inferior and perverse, functions well only for men (p. 91).

Davis’ claims provide me with an excellent case of inference and advocacy in which the contexts and assumptions used to support the validity of claims lack both a localized contextual awareness and a dialogical transcultural analysis. I had difficulties with admissibility in several other readings and rereadings of Almodóvar films as well, but I chose Davis’ work as the best indicator of the most common problems in readings of Almodóvar’s work: attempting to understand his corpus via the homosexual/heterosexual and male/female binaries, essentializing characters’ identities, and universalizing sexual and gender experiences. In commencing with Davis’ work, I look at her rationale for studying Almodóvar from one of the many feminist standpoints: the feminist psychoanalytic theory of cinema that states that the perverse pleasure of the cinema functions in the consumption of and at the expense of women.

In this context it is important to note that despite the fact we need a terminology to discuss gender and sexuality, and that choice of terms plays a considerable role in queer studies, the choices of words and concepts one makes in approaching Almodóvar’s films must take into consideration their specificities. It is vital to consider that Almodóvar has never been concerned with representing fixed notions of gay, lesbian or straight identities; he rather prefers to create and explore the representation of sexuality and gender as queergender or trans-beings (Allinson, 2001, pp. 100-108; Paul Julian Smith, 1997, p. 179). His characters remain for the most part unlabelled, hence characters’ identity markers are coming from outside the gathering of spectators and film. Therefore, approaching his work by using a fixed binary heterosexual/homosexual lens makes the reading obsolete and deficient in terms of multi-possibilities. Hence, a number of feminist theorists have been frustratingly attempting to identify and undo Almodóvar’s binary logic in order to reverse the binary and then displace the whole system of binary thinking. The struggle happens simply because they are trying to unravel the inconsistent binary, which in Almodóvar is floating. Davis’ categories of analysis weld together the binary male/female and heterosexual/homosexual while Almodóvar does not place male/female parallel to heterosexual/homosexual nor does he conflate these binaries with masculinity/femininity. By this means Almodóvar breaks with the patriarchal tendency of mainstream cinema to naturalize gender and sexuality as
biologically determined.

However, I argue that if Almodóvar’s objectives are neither to represent fixed identities nor to present the sexual binary heterosexual/homosexual, he openly posits in discussion the gender binary masculinities/femininities, which is performed upon his characters independently of their sex and sexuality. As a result, I claim that in order to deconstruct Almodóvar’s work effectively the binary logic is masculinity/femininity in which the weaker term can be either, depending on context. So by presenting us with a reductive analysis, many critics and scholars imprudently impose their own theoretical frameworks, agendas, and contexts onto Almodóvar’s films. More importantly, in this sense they are not allowing themselves an opportunity to produce and understand “other” methodological possibilities for appreciating his cinematic understanding.

In terms of construction of the gaze, subject positioning and the politics of cinematic apparatus, Yarza (1994) contends that Almodóvar fractures traditional sexual and social boundaries; he rips apart rigid notions of subject conceptualization; and consequently social, sexual and gender representation. His filmic corpus relates directly to the question of social, national, and individual identity. Yarza, like Davis, draws intensely on Mulvey’s concepts of male gaze to explore his model of “monsters and transvestites”. For Yarza, Almodóvar’s narratives privilege the presence of two forms of representation that destabilize traditional sexual categories: the monster and the transvestite, which both threaten the symbolic order, problematize the binary division of sexual categories, and provoke epistemological crises in traditional categories of representation. The monster and the transvestite would interfere with the male gaze and are both charged with the construction of femininity. To reach these conclusions Yarza analyzed principally Matador, in which Almodóvar explicitly flirts with slasher films, classic horror films, film noir and melodrama. Yarza compares the monsters and transvestites to the virgin/wife/mother framework in horror films, which characters are the spectacle and suffer the male gaze.

Analogous claims have been previously challenged on many grounds by Clover, who argues that generally not taken into account is the figure of the “Final Girl”, the female-victim-hero who lives to fight the monster (Clover, 1987, 1999). She provokes us to consider: a) whether the sexes that we see on the screen are what they seem-that screen males represent males and screen females represent females--and b) female spectatorship. Clover argues that slasher films are texts in which the categories of feminine and masculine are collapsed into one body and the same character “an anatomical female, whose point of view the male spectator is invited to share” (1999, p. 246). Moreover Clover affirms that, particularly in slasher films, the combination
masculine-female prevails over feminine-male, thus privileging masculinity in conjunction with femininity.

Almodóvar, by appropriating canonical filmic genres of melodrama, horror, comedy, and *film noir*, establishes an intense conversation among them in ways that subvert the ideological apparatus they carry along with them. Thus, in *Matador*, for example, he not only privileges masculinity in conjunction with femininity, but also mixes the roles of monster and Final Girl and mingles homosexuality-disguised-as-heterosexuality with homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality. Therefore, the Final Girl, Maria, is also the monster, which has both attributes of a masculine female and a feminine masculinity, inviting identification of not only a male gaze but also a female spectator. In this same film, Angel is constructed as a feminine male and Diego has a central role as a masculine male. By describing some aspects of Matador I contend that Yarza’s model of Monster and transvestism, as an interpretive tool for Almodóvar’s work, is insufficient because it is constrained by conceptions of male spectator and by gender boundaries.

In Mark Allinson’s *A Spanish Labyrinth* (2001), I located an improved approach to taking on the relationship between Mulvey and Almodóvar. Allison declares that if feminist psychoanalytic theories drawn from Mulvey unravel the hidden structures in classic Hollywood film, in Almodóvar’s films these same structures are the center of his cinematic experience, and are consciously and explicitly presented as parodic and comic main themes (Allinson, 2001, pp. 72–75). Furthermore, Allison stresses the fact that instead of serving patriarchy, Almodóvar’s films problematize gender binaries in their physical and symbolic display of men, masculinity, women and femininity. Thus, Almodóvar represents a beacon for critical analysis of masculinity, because many of his male/man/masculinity characteristics, differently from Mulvey’s perceptions, are associated filmically and by content with passivity, exhibitionism, masochism and spectacle. I agree with Allinson that in most of the films and particularly in *Matador, Labyrinths of Passion, What Have I Done to Deserve This, Law of Desire, Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown, High Heels, Talk to Her, and Bad Education*, the male characters are exposed and objectified; and in many sequences Mulvey’s typical arrangement of looking (male/gaze-women/object) is reversed, troubled and made unstable. Peter Lehman also critiques the limitations of Mulvey’s initial propositions and suggests that Almodóvar inverts the traditional cinematic gaze and by doing it, poses fundamental questions surrounding the representation of the male body and the unveiling of the social construction of masculinity (Lehman, 1993).

Paul Julian Smith raises important questions regarding the gendering of the
spectatorship and proposes analytic tools for approaching Almodóvar’s films (see Paul
Julian Smith, 1996a; Paul Julian Smith, 1996b, 1996c, 1997, 2000; Paul Julian Smith &
Bergmann, 1995). Smith presents his main arguments as follows:

I suggest, then, that the redefinition of sexualities functions in two ways in
Almodóvar: first, by proposing a displacement of the binaries of gendered
spectatorship; and second, by suggesting that at the formal or technical level
this displacement is effected in the films themselves by a certain dislocation or

In analyzing the first scenes of Matador and Law of Desire, Smith notes that
it is extremely difficult to articulate either how characters correspond to Mulvey’s
gendered division of roles or how they do to other feminist models presented to date.
That is because characters’ viewpoints are as hard to establish as their gender or sexual
identities. Many characters present a multi-possible sexuality and gender, or in other
words impossible sexualities and genders. Smith argues that Almodóvar points to a cross-
gender identification that is open to the spectator as well; and observes that the fluidity
of the narrative scheme is also present in purely cinematic means such as crosscutting
between objective and subjective viewpoints and dislocations of image and sound tracks.

The arguments presented by these selected authors are extremely important in
studying gender, sexuality and spectatorship because they provoke us to look not only
at the positions of males, females, and cross-genders but also at the genres of films.
However, in the case of auteur films such as Almodóvar’s these modes of analysis can
only work as flowing references.

Conclusion

Here I have brought together features of Almodóvar’s aesthetics, looked at his
notions of filmic enunciation, authorship and cross genres, and initiated a conversation
about how Almodóvar’s visual representations relate to spectators and development of
meaning.

Pedro Almodóvar’s filmic corpus plays very different roles in constructing and
disrupting concepts of sexual and gender representations. His cinematic representations
of trans/gender/sexuality dislocate the various ways of seeing them, and trouble
interaction between viewer and object of vision. Besides, the fluidity with which
Almodóvar’s films soften the boundaries of feminine and masculine representations,
posing a critique of identity that affects and dislocates normative representations of
gender and sexuality, challenges spectators to confront the position from which they
look, and impels them to a level of consciousness of the act of looking.
Almodóvar’s films are often inscribed under the banner of pop/trash/camp/kitsch/slasher culture, and generally described as a mixture of comedy, melodrama, and suspense. His most striking trademarks are the use of a vibrant color palette, dramatic songs, intertextuality, sharp humor, and complex narratives in which stories are told tearing apart representations of social categories. His tragicomic works displace subjects by showing difficult and important issues in distorted ways, screening socially neglected subjects in a respectful manner, and assigning meanings to particular contexts of Spanish history. Diverse traditional Spanish aesthetics influence Almodóvar and function as creative strategies to access the depths of social practices and beings, interfere with social conventions and subvert social and political discourses.

Almodóvar’s films acknowledge and accept everything that is considered “non-normal” in everyday actions, performances, and practices of society. And by refusing to go along with the prevailing authoritarian classificatory system that judges social practices, Almodóvar’s films provoke questions and incite spectators to rethink the terms and basis in which they classify, define, and describe human beings and their practices.

Moreover, the Spanish director explores the fairy-tale structure and thematic as one of his narrative basics, visiting the limits of the difference between the emotional and the rational, between moral and amoral, and ridiculing a society overwhelmed by dehumanization. In this sense, his inspired stories with magical and uncanny characters are narrative forms that exploit entrenched fears and social moral panics, hence constitute a privileged location in which to rationalize and simply “think” about human beings; thus fairy tales render fluid apprehensions and desires into alternative lucid configurations. Besides, Almodóvar’ films main distinguishing functions are to open up discussion about sexuality and gender identifications, and interfere with prevailing canons of sexual and gender desire, a laden areas of taboos and uncertainties. With those aims, Almodóvar’s stories use, among other “things”, cheap and oversexed photonovellas and advertisements as the basis to create shocking sexual caricatures; and similarly he makes use of overt sexuality to look at female and male sexuality, and desire.

Almodóvar have covered a large number of themes and story lines creating tragicomedies that look into complex subjects, explore, and convey meanings of emotional intensity. Almodóvar’s work is polysemic, polyvocal, and multivocal, thus open to multiple interpretations, but for him it is about desire, imagination, fantasy, hope, and vision. In his filmic discourses the body is the empowered location in which a series of polemical conversations about what is prohibited, forbidden, illegal, unmentionable, offensive, distasteful, and deviant in gender and sexual practices takes place. Reading Almodóvar films throws us into a complex arrangement of textual relations, and to reveal
their meanings it is necessary to trace those relations. Thus understanding his films happens to be an act of negotiation between texts. Almodóvar’s cinema pays special attention to the ways in which his filmic corpus relates to social interpretations concerning the construction of the gaze, subject positioning, and the politics of the cinematic apparatus. He is not concerned with representing fixed notions of gay, lesbian or straight identities; he rather prefers to create and explore the representation of sexuality and gender as queergender or trans-beings. Almodóvar does not place male/female parallel to heterosexual/homosexual nor does he conflate these binaries with masculinity/femininity; and by this means he breaks with the patriarchal tendency of mainstream cinema to naturalize gender and sexuality as biologically determined. Almodóvar’s films problematize gender binaries in their physical and symbolic display of male, men, masculinity, females, women and femininity. His film’s characters’ viewpoints are as hard to establish as their gender or sexual identity since they present us with a multi-possible sexuality and gender. Almodóvar points to a cross-gender identification that is entirely open to the spectator.
DRESSING
Sometimes masculinity’s got nothing to do with it. Nothing to do, that is, with men. And when something is about masculinity, it isn’t always “about men.”

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in Gob, Boy George, you must be awfully secure in your masculinity!

This chapter departs from the premise that Almodóvar’s filmic discourse is a drag performance; it is “a copy of an origin which is itself the ground for all copies, but which is itself a copy of nothing” (Butler, 1993b, p. 313). Dressing is like a changing room for the previous chapters. It exhibits the story lines of Bad Education, Talk to Her, and All About my Mother; explores meanings within these specific narratives, offers bandages to protect or support our offended souls from their complex and provoking tales, and favors our understandings of Almodóvar’s filmic discourse of gender and sexuality.

Here I analyze Almodóvar’s aesthetics and his ideas on multi-possibilities of bricolage and métissage, and look at a variety of images from which I read signs of notions of gender and sexuality produced through filmic representation and performativity. The material of my analysis is restricted to his latest three films, and I build my interpretation mainly on the “Butlerian approach” developed by Robert Shail (2001), a strategy for the analysis of gender construction in film based around central concerns found in Butler’s (1999) Gender Trouble. Shail proposes this approach as a theoretical and methodological basis for developing a practical form of film analysis, and as a means to problematize the concept of traditional male and female identity and desire. He conceives three essential methodological threads from Butler’s work: the transitory nature of gender identification; the need to place constructions of gender within a specific historical context; and a consideration of the role of fantasy or “masquerade” in disrupting the naturalized categories of identity and desire.

The first analytical strain within Butler’s work is in the area of personal gender identification in which she argues that gender is a social construct that is not tied up with biological sex definitions, pointing to the extraordinary diversity of gender constructs manifested in different cultures at different historical moments. Accepting Butler’s theoretical rupture between sex and gender is crucial to understanding that gender is constructed as a performative act, that is to say that gender is a “clothing” acted out by a subject contained within a certain cultural context. Moreover, Butler asserts that there
ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER
are several elements of agency within the individual construction of a gendered identity; thus identity is internally created by the subject; masculinity is as much a part of the agency of gender construction as femininity and vice versa.

The second strand is the *historical placement of gender*, in which Butler affirms that the construction of gendered identities is contingent upon a process of recognition that occurs within historical discourses, which are themselves subordinated to the continuous change in society. Although this strand could be particularly helpful in relating representations of gender in cinema back to the changing cultural and social contexts in which they were produced, I emphasize in my Butlerian approaches the two other strands.

The third aspect of Butler’s work, which has a particularly crucial significance for my analysis is *the concept of fantasy and masquerade, and performance*. Butler redefines notions of gender performance “that enact and reveal the performativity of gender itself in a way that destabilizes the naturalized categories of identity and desire.” Also she suggests that fantasy, and its public enactment, act as a cultural rescuer by liberating repressed desires, and in so doing allowing them to be accepted by social order and stability without intimidation. As an added element to all this, Butler gives examples involving transgender, cross-dressing and drag artists as means of public expression of fantasies of gender identity, which once articulated become part of the cultural arena and contribute to the discourse of possible available gender definitions. Butler has also pointed out that her theorizing does not include a notion of simplistic voluntary changes of identity; on the contrary, she draws attention to the fact that the construction of gender identity happens within complex power relations and under many kinds of constraints.

Almodóvar’s imagery intentionally offers appealing elements of gender transitoriness and discussions of sexuality in society. I insist that a Butlerian way of thinking that denaturalizes genders, and puts on show how the dominant sexual order is maintained through performative repetition, functions as a direct entry point to his films.

Undertaking a Butlerian approach I analyze character construction, change and transformation in these Almodóvar films. Moreover, I focus on representative transgender characters Agrado (*All About my Mother*), Benigno and Lydia (*Talk to Her*), and Ignacio/Angel/Juan (*Bad Education*), which manifestly locate issues of gender and sexuality and are the connections with the other characters. Although the Butlerian approach developed by Shail is based around central concerns found in Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, I additionally draw from a few of her other texts (Butler, 1993a, 1993b, 1997a,
1997b, 1999, 2004). For analytic purposes I codify All About my Mother as “All”, Talk to Her as “Talk” and Bad Education as “Bad”, and the discourse of them as “All Talk Bad”. The citations in text are structured as follows: (actor), (film title, actor), and when necessary (actor, film title, character). I utilize slashes to highlight a chain of roles played by the same actor.

**Overdub: Introducing Bad Education, Talk to Her, and All About my Mother**

Bad Education, Talk to Her, and All About my Mother show a more reserved, serene, experienced, and refined Almodóvar. Through them, Almodóvar exploits attractive new subjects. All About my Mother still focuses on the representation of women and femininity, one of Almodóvar’s trademarks, but in Bad Education and Talk to Her he shifts towards representations of men and masculinity. Nevertheless with those of his themes still share similarities with his earlier films: they stress the importance of friendship, the fragility of relationships, and the power to disrupt prevailing notions of sex and gender. Also Almodóvar forces the viewer to contemplate the importance of love in our everyday lives, especially when we have to overcome tragedies and misfortunes. The following accounts of the three movies are built upon the work of Holden, Maslin and Mitchell (Holden, 2004; Maslin, 1999; Mitchell, 2002)
All About my Mother.

All About my Mother turns around the teenaged Esteban (Eloy Azorín)'s single mother Manuela (Cecilia Roth), a nurse, who following a series of extraordinary adversities and tragedies, is forced to recollect feelings and events from the past in order to start her life anew. She is a sensible, strong woman surrounded by multi-possible gendered characters, including a pregnant nun with AIDS, a transgender prostitute, a couple of tempestuous lesbian actors, a father losing his memory, a father-stallion-transgender, and a highly regarded but corrupt mother who forges the paintings of Chagall. Esteban is fascinated by literature, and is currently writing a story about his mother. One night Manuela and Esteban are having dinner watching All About Eve (Mankiewicz’ classic film) on television, when Esteban thinks of the title of his story: “All About my Mother”. The next day is his seventeenth birthday and to celebrate this occasion they attend a theatre performance of A Streetcar Named Desire especially to see the work of Huma Rojo (Marisa Paredes), the actress who plays Blanche Dubois. While waiting for Huma Rojo's autograph Manuela confesses to Esteban that she played the part of Stella and his father played Stanley Kowalski with an amateur group. Before this statement Manuela had only told him that his father died before he was born. She promises to tell him everything about his father when they get home. Huma Rojo and Nina Cruz (Candela Peña), hastily leave the theater and call a taxi. The taxi speeds away;
Esteban runs after it, the taxi turns the corner when another car suddenly appears, and kills him.

At home, after reading the last entry in Esteban’s journal, about how he wishes to meet his father for the first time, Manuela decides to return to Barcelona in search of the father. She must tell the father not only that he had a son but the son is dead now. Once in Barcelona, Manuela meets a group of women who will help her to bear her pains. In search of Lola, Esteban’s father, Manuela goes round the buy-and-sell world of sex and drugs. In one of these places, she finds Agrado, an old roommate of hers who used to be a friend of Lola twenty years ago when both of them were without breasts. Agrado takes Manuela home and brings her to the shelter for beaten women where they meet Sister Rosa (Penelope Cruz), a stunning young woman whose father is rapidly losing touch with reality and whose hardhearted mother never nurtured her. Rosa was the last person to see Lola. Manuela finds out that Sister Rosa is pregnant with Lola’s baby.

Manuela again encounters Huma Rojo and Nina Cruz, who are performing A Streetcar named desire in Barcelona. Manuela becomes Huma’s personal assistant, in the manner of Thelma Ritter (All about Eve). She even stands in for Nina Cruz in one performance, but Manuela is the opposite of Eve; she has no ambitions. In fact, the following day she abandons her job with Huma to take care of Sister Rosa, who has discovered she has AIDS. Although Manuela resists at first she ends up adopting her, like a daughter. Sister Rosa dies during the delivery of a boy named Esteban who is born HIV positive. During the burial, Lola appears and Manuela tells him about the Esteban who died and the one that has just been born. Lola begs Manuela to be allowed to see Esteban, and she not only grants him his wish but also gives him a photo of their Esteban. Manuela returns to Madrid with baby Esteban; and after two years she goes back to Barcelona, with the healed Esteban, where she reunites with her family, Agrado and Huma.

Talk to Her.

Talk to Her focuses on the relationship between two men. Marco (Darío Grandinetti) is a journalist left heartbroken after his bullfighter girlfriend (Rosario Flores) is gored by a bull and left in a coma; and Benigno (Javier Cámara) is a nurse caring for a ballerina (Leonor Watling), who is also in a coma as a result of a car accident. The two men meet in the hospital and become friends, united by their inability to speak to the women who mean the most to them. Benigno’s unrelenting optimism and strength is a source of strength for Marco, who has difficulty expressing his feelings.

If All About my Mother ended with a theater curtain opening to reveal a darkened
Talk to Her
stage, _Talk to Her_ begins with the same curtain, also opening. But now instead of actresses, this film concerns men who narrate their lives, who talk or attempt to communicate to those who can hear them and above all, those who cannot. The curtain rises on a piece of filmed theater: A dance performance linking the cinematic and choreographic spectacles. The performance begins with a ballerina dancing in close up and another ballerina standing in the background, as a delayed shadow of the first woman; and both somnambulist women hesitate, stumble blindly across the stage, hitting the walls, and delicately falling down to the floor. One male dancer desperately tries to stay one step ahead of the ballerinas in close up, moving obstacles out of their
path. In the audience a pair of men are sitting side-by-side: Marco and Benigno. Marco deeply absorbed in the dance and moved to tears, and Benigno who ignores the performance and looks intently and fascinatedly at Marco’s emotional intensity.

The two men meet again at the private clinic where Benigno works and establish a friendship. Benigno continually chats to Alicia; slowly and gently he tries to communicate with the object of his longtime voyeuristic obsession, hoping she will come out of coma. Alicia is Benigno’s doll. He bathes her, dresses her, and makes her look pretty. In short, he pretends to be in a relationship without having to deal with the other person’s desires.

Benigno is the heart of the film, literally and spiritually. His obsession for Alicia becomes both a love story and a horror story. Sexually dubious and dormant, he has learned caregiving by tending for his invalid mother. He has transferred his skills and affections but he barely knows Alicia. Benigno has fallen in love with her from a distance and exchanged only a few words with her when she was awake. One night while chatting to Alicia Benigno narrates the story of an erotic silent film, in which a tiny, shrunken man is seen exploring and penetrating the nude female body of the lover who shrank from him. While telling the story, Benigno commits a societal transgression; he has sex with the vulnerable Alicia, and impregnates her. Whilst traveling abroad Marco reads that Lydia has died. He phones the clinic and finds out that Benigno is in trouble, and then goes back to Madrid to help him, but his efforts are in vain. Benigno goes to prison, is denied information about the fate of Alicia and their newborn, and in his attempt to go into a coma and join Alicia he dies. For Alicia, the sexual abuse has left her with a gain: the chance of a new beginning. Her dreadful experience has taken her out of the coma. Marco, who inherits Benigno’s apartment and his love for Alicia, sees from the same window that Benigno used to gaze at Alicia, that she is alive and recovering
from the coma. One day they meet at a theater and feel an immediate connection between them. Another relationship is established.

Bad Education.

Since Bad Education is a film-within a film, and its intricate screenplay interweaves layers of flashbacks, flashbacks-within-flashbacks, and tricky narratives creating a wicked mystery, the dates are very important, serving as key to understanding the story. The film goes back and forth between 1964 and 1980, with a climax set mostly in 1977. The film starts in 1980, with a visit by an actor who announces himself as Ignacio (García Bernal), to a successful young filmmaker called Enrique Goded (Fele Martínez), who is in search of a story to tell. Ignacio introduces himself as his old intimate friend from back at Catholic boarding school, but Enrique does not recognize features, since he has not seen Ignacio for 16 years. Moreover, Ignacio tells him that he has changed his name to Angel, and insists on using only this artistic name. Ignacio/Angel explains that he is now a professional actor seeking work; and drops off a manuscript of a story he has written, The Visit, which he hopes Enrique will adapt into a film.

Enrique agrees to read the script and learns that it alludes to his and Ignacio’s youth in the mid sixties, when they fell in love at a Catholic school. At that time, Father Manolo (Daniel Giménez-Cacho), a literature teacher and principal of the school, obsessed with Ignacio, then an attractive boy soprano, expelled Enrique (Raúl García Forneiro) from the school after catching sight of them hiding in a school washroom. Ignacio’s story, The Visit, creates a fictional gathering in the 70’s of the characters of the 60’s and 80’s, including a suburban family man (Enrique) and a drug-addicted transvestite named Zahara (Ignacio). Zahara poses
as Ignacio’s sister and blackmails the priest who abused Ignacio for the price of a sex change, using a story written by Ignacio also called The Visit. The threat is to expose father Manolo as a pedophile.

Enrique gets involved with the semi-autobiographical aspects of Ignacio/Angel’s stories, memories and imagination, and decides to write a screenplay and shoot the film. However, Ignacio/Angel insists on playing the main character in The Visit, the female impersonator Zahara (Gael Garcia Bernal). Enrique callously sets out to seduce Ignacio/Angel, aiming to push his limits and unveil some of his secrets. But Ignacio/Angel who desperately wishes to play the leading role, does not care what he needs to do to succeed as an actor, even pretending to be gay. Enrique investigates Ignacio/Angel’s past and uncovers mortal sins. Ultimately, Enrique disentangles this network of pretense, impersonations, reiterations and performances when Father Manolo (Lluís Homar)—who has left the church, gotten married and had a kid, and lives under the name of Berenguer—voluntarily tells Enrique what happened.

Enrique finds out that, as in The Visit, Ignacio is a drug-addicted transgender, who has been determined to blackmail Father Manolo to obtain as much as necessary to complete his sexual transformation. This is the real Ignacio, Enrique’s first love, not Ignacio/Angel. Ignacio/Angel turns out to be Ignacio’s younger brother, Juan (Ignacio/Angel/Juan), who has stolen Ignacio’s screenplay and impersonates him. Berenguer tells Enrique that while being blackmailed by Ignacio, he fell in love with Juan and both decided to get rid of Ignacio and keep the ransom for themselves. They gave Ignacio an overdose of heroine and he died while writing a letter to Enrique saying that he had finished The Visit. Then Juan hustles, abandons, and starts blackmailing Berenguer, using The Visit, letters and their private erotic videos. After confessing to Enrique, Berenguer meets Juan who threatens him with death; and some time later, a car driven by Juan runs down Berenguer and he dies. Juan marries, becomes a famous fashion model, and does television work. Enrique carries on making films.

*Overdye, Overbaul, and Overfill: Analyzing All That Bad*

Almodóvar’s films have a look and feel that is very particular; each reminds you of another film by Almodóvar. Citationality in Almodóvar narratives leads to an endless arrangement of reiteration of gender, functioning as a lexicon in which every entry leads the spectator to another entry reaching search of the “initial” meanings; but the original is always altered. Thus what I initially observe is that Almodóvar’s movies, from *Pepi Lucy, Born and Other Girls on the Heap* to *Bad Education*, through this recurrent masquerade of gender and sexuality, cite and alter the previously performed
representations in his earlier movies, which are themselves imitations of previous referents. Therefore I am suggesting that there is no original theme upon and around these citations, because the performances of citations themselves manufacture this foundation. As Butler puts it “gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original; in fact it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself” (Butler, 1993b, p. 313). In this sense, I maintain that Almodóvar’s film representations of gender become coherent to the spectator through the understanding of these foldings, doublings, inventions, and their repetition in the alterations; in short they become clear as a repetition in their recurrent citations.

Concepts of masculinity and femininity, and transgender, are incredibly slippery, with complex definitions that are usually self-contradictory. In recent times, masculinity has been mostly linked to power, reason, ingenuousness, naturalness, integrity, agency, virility, bravery, physicality, and promptness, while femininity has been associated with mimicry, masquerade, affectation, obedience, dependency, limitation, naturalness, nurturing, and attractiveness. These positions have been respectively fixed on men
and women through the power of various gendering discourses, and these discourses have been used to strengthen the naturalized bipolar gender system, to enforce gender conformity, despite their own ambiguity. Butler informs us that the impersonations of gender, such as in drag performance, are able to reveal the instability of these fictitious binary constructions (Butler, 1997b).

As previously mentioned in Gaze, Almodóvar’s film discourse is associated with, and often described as privileging representations of non-normalized notions of femininity and masculinity in a patriarchal society. His women emphasize a staged theatricality dependent on over-the-top constructions of identity employing intricate makeovers in an elaborate masquerade, and incorporating elements of parody. The challenging reproduction of gender emerges throughout Almodóvar’s discourse in these three selected movies.

Ignacio and La Agrado.

The transgenders Agrado’s (All) and Ignacio’s (Bad) goal in life is to have a normal feminine body, thereby objectifying the female. Agrado performs femininity with the intent of passing into the essence of femininity: the perfect body and character. Agrado’s ambitions are to be a real woman and have an “authentic” body. She says, “It costs me a lot to be authentic. And one cannot be stingy with these things because you are more authentic the more you resemble what you have dreamed of being”. The parodic qualities of excess and repetition used throughout Agrado’s performance thereby confuse notions of what it means, “to be real” for her, and for us spectators. Agrado points to her subjective agency and power to become a woman, as she desires, so her reality is performatively constituted through an imitation of its own desire as the origin and ground for her imitation. Butler, talking about heterosexuality as the original for homosexuality (1993b), highlights that heterosexual identity is performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitations; thus heterosexuality is always in the process of imitating and approximating its own specter idealization of itself. In this sense I argue that Almodóvar’s characters are performatively constituted through series of imitations that reflect their sources and effects. Moreover I argue that through employing production of gender as desire marked on the surface of bodies, Almodóvar’s films embody Butler’s ideas that “gender can be neither true nor false” (Butler, 1999, p. 173).

The drag queen characters’ reenactment of the established tropes of femininity also can be addressed as performatively constituted. Especially when we are aware that in Almodóvar’s diegetic practices he often casts actors from the sex that his character
will impersonate; for example, the actress Antonia San Juan plays the MTF transgender Agrado, and in *Law of Desire* the actress Carmen Maura plays the role of Tina a MTF transgender, in love with Ada, played by Bibi Andersen, a famous MTF actress. Agrado, Tina and Ada double cite the actresses Antonia, Carmen and Bibi, and also they form a link from Tina and Ada to Agrado and from Agrado to Ignacio. Anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance circulate in those performances, suggesting “a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance” (Butler, 1999, p. 175). Thus the performance of Almodóvar’s transgenders plays upon the distinction between the sex of the performer and the gender that is being performed, as well as the relationship between sex, gender and performance.

In Almodóvar’s films the body’s transitivity is invariably apparent. There is a preoccupation with revealing how bodies are important in the construction of gender, and the juncture in which this construction is performed on bodies. For example, Ignacio copies Agrado and even cites some of her words such as “Looking pretty costs a lot of money”. While Agrado works hard as a prostitute to enhance her desired gender, but cannot change her sex because she depends on her penis as a working tool to survive, Ignacio, who has only done his breasts, blackmalls his abuser to obtain the means to fix the face and the rest of the body. I fully support Butler’s view that “One surely cites norms that already exist, but these norms can be significantly deterritorialized through the citation. They can also be exposed as non-natural and unnecessary when they take place in a context and through a form of embodying that defies normative expectation” (Butler, 1997b, p. 218).

Zahara (Bad), Ignacio/Angel/Juan’s impersonation as a drag queen of his transgender brother, reiterates the need of repetition to construct his body in order to become a real woman. While learning how to impersonate Zahara, Ignacio/Angel/Juan repeats gestures, body language, and the mannerisms acted out by another drag queen who is an impersonator of Sara Montiel, a famous actress in Spain. Ignacio/Angel/Juan introduces himself to the “unnamed” drag queen as an actor who needs help to prepare a character. The named “unnamed” dragqueen asks him what sort of character Ignacio/Angel/Juan has to develop, and he answers “A tranny who imitates Sara Montiel, among others”. The dragqueen immediately affirms, “That’s me. Why don’t they give me the part?” This is a meeting between two copies in which one claims originality over another. This is a complex meeting in which a double copy, Ignacio/Angel/
Juan, learns how to copy another one, Zahara, who is the imitation already of one of his copies, Ignacio. Almodóvar did not give the dragqueen the role of Zahara because he needed Ignacio/Angel/Juan to perform another chain of reiterations for his filmic discourse. According to Butler (1999) Drag’s parody of gender challenges the stability of identity constructions. She further explains:
In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport
to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the “integrity” of the subject. (p. 173)

However Butler further explains that certain kinds of parodic repetitions effectively disrupt while others become disciplined as instruments of cultural hegemony; thus parody is not necessarily transgressive (Butler, 1999). To further explore this intricacy of production and representation of gender through repetition in Almodóvar’s films I look into Lydia’s role in Talk to Her.

Lydia.

Lydia is represented as a strong, sensuous spectacular woman, materializing herself through a drag body. She shows signs of the “real and natural” aspect of women
bullfighters, having to incorporate and impersonate masculine acts and gestures to become the female-bullfighter-masculinity that is worn only during her performance in the arena. However, Lydia’s female-maleness body collapses offstage when she goes back to her “innate” state of being a woman. Women bullfighters such as Lydia give the impression of being or attempting to be like a man; they are offensively labeled as butch by dominant concepts of gender. These representations of masculine women in film disturb the meanings of patriarchy and heterosexism because their pretense exhibits for spectators the vision of their fabricated bodies. The imitation of masculinity by females strikes at the foundations of each referent of masculinity, and across a chain of other referents, thus undermining the power of the inflexible boundaries between masculinity and femininity to prevail. Women bullfighters parody male bodybuilders; they enact a pastiche that disputes and puts into question the very possibility of an original. In the case of sex/gender identifications, their pastiche reveals that the original is already an unsuccessful attempt by a male bullfighter to copy a specter, a goal that cannot itself possibly be achieved without failure. As Butler (1999) assertively states:

Categories like butch and femme were not copies of a more originary heterosexuality, but they showed how the so-called originals, men and women within the heterosexual frame, are similarly constructed, performatively established. So the ostensible copy is not explained through reference to an origin, but the origin is understood to be as performatve as the copy. (p. 209)

In this sense, the female bodybuilder confuses the oppositionality of notions of masculinity and femininity as fixed binary concepts. Thus the effort to categorize Lydia according to “woman” and “femininity”, is itself dislocated. Lydia’s fluid shape – institutionally constructed by bullfighting discourse- interferes with the male/female binary, disturbing the set categories of masculine and feminine and the representations that they normally evoke. By proliferating possibilities of representations of gender and sexuality, Almodóvar’s films gradually enlarge the possibility of characters’ transformations in endless repetitions that challenge easy categorizations. Butler (1993a) claims that sexed-bodies are an effect of a performance of sex acts that is constituted through discourse that it is performed reiteratively. She further explains that “performativity is thus not a singular ‘act’, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition” (p. 12).

During Lydia’s representations, an important issue arises at this point concerning impersonation in High Heels and Bad Education. In High Heels the Judge
Dominguez (Miguel Bose), masquerades as Letal, a drag artist who impersonates Becky (Marisa Paredes), and Hugo, a drug dealer; and in *Bad Education* Juan masquerades as Ignacio who impersonates Angel who poses as Zahara. In both films, during investigational processes, Dominguez/Letal/Hugo (High Heels) and Juan/Ignacio/Angel/Zahara (Bad) are slowly revealed as personifying numerous conflicting masquerades. Also at the end of both movies we learn that these roles have been taken on as part of their secret missions to conceal (dress) a social transgression (Bad), and to uncover (undress) a murder case (High Heels). Letal, Hugo or the Judge and Juan/Ignacio/Angel/Zahara, like Lydia, touch on themes such as ambiguity and the status of masquerade as a challenge to categories of identity. As Cover (2004) explains:

> Masks share an ability to address ambiguities and to articulate the paradoxes of appearance. They testify to an awareness of the ambiguities of appearance and to a tendency toward paradox characteristic of transitional states. They provide a medium for exploring formal boundaries and a means of investigating the problems that appearances pose in the experience of change. Referring to a cross-dressing type of masquerade it constitutes ‘a challenge to easy notions of binarity, putting into question the categories of “female” and “male” whether they are considered essential or constructed, biological or cultural’. (para. 16)

Therefore we can infer that masquerade in its intentionality troubles categories of essential identity in general, not just gender identity.
Benigno.

In order to unravel some of this complicated mesh of imitations and citations I will take the role of Benigno as my “original” quotation. My argument is that Benigno (The benign), the key character of Talk to Her, openly reiterates All About my Mother’s La Agrado (the Agreeable) and obliquely foregrounds the performance of Paquito (the devotee-Javier Camara) and father José (the servant-Francisco Maestre), both from Bad Education. Also Benigno and Father Manolo are a masquerade of each other in their obsessiveness for love and sexual practices interdicted by moral codes of conduct, as are Benigno and Ignacio in their repetition of overdose. In both cases their desires, for a comatose woman, young boys and drugs, are the prison of their bodies, not the other way around. Butler explains that “the soul is a surface signification that contests and displaces the inner/outer distinction itself, a figure of interior psychic space inscribed on the body as a social signification that perpetually renounces itself as such” (Butler, 1997b, p. 172).

The representations of Benigno and Father Monolo as bodies of interdiction confirm the fracture between their internal desires and their bodies in a conflict in which not only are the interior psychic spaces inscribed on their bodies, but their bodies are carved performatively on their psyches. Butler further explains to us that exclusionary rules generate the corporeal stylization of gender, and the taboos of incest and homosexual practices are the formative and crucial moment of gender identity; in short, they are the interdictions that construct identity through the idealized and compulsory framework of heterosexuality (Butler, 1999, p. 172).

In addition, Benigno as directly related to the initial dance performance, the film-within-film, and as the narrator of these events and stories, has plenty of latitude for digressions, commentaries and alterations in translation. Like the man who serves to protect the woman from her obstacles in the dance, Benigno devotes his life to Alicia. Benigno is that man’s citation. Respectively, the dancer in the foreground and her partner in the background represent Alicia and Lydia. Benigno is performatively instituted as harmless, charming, talkative, outgoing, and a devoted nurse who manicures, nurtures, and cherishes Alicia. He is perceptibly characterized as a male who enacts and repeats gestures and norms of femininity, that is, masculine femaleness, but without explicit reference to his sexuality. The absence of an aggressively masculine sexuality leads to the perception of Benigno as a safe man, incapable of hurting women.

Through the way that we are socially constructed we gain a tendency to desire a unified, logical, integral and recognizable self. Butler informs us that that this tendency of unity covers up the multi possibilities of gender contexts, in which the dimensions of sex, desire, and sexuality and gender do not express or reflect one another. Thus, the
gender complexities within Benigno’s representations and narratives provoke the spectator to question the traditional gender classifications and their meanings. Through Benigno, Almodóvar clearly disrupts our notions of gender.

*the abject.*

Generally, I am guided by Novoa’s (2005) views on Almodóvar and fairy tales when I need to discuss the abject in the representation of gender in Almodóvar. I assert that Benigno, along with Ignacio and Lola (All), are the abject; they represent monstrous characters in these Almodóvar movies. Almodóvar’s monsters comprise an alienated psychopath, a corrupted transgender junkie, and a deceitful transgender womanizer. However they are ambiguous monsters; as in fairytales they are compassionate, sensible, and sensitive beings, conscious of their status as strangers, and belonging to the world of fantasy. Like most monsters they are characterized as abject, but Almodóvar does not represent them as fixed in a binary good/evil; they are instituted as forms of transformative performance that interfere with the notion of the normalized subject. Consequently, Almodóvar’s representations of these abjections destabilize, transform and redefine the gender and sexual identity of their others. The abject is that which upsets subjectivity, reminding us of our construction in the symbolic.
transformation in the encounter with the “other”. These characters are often represented in a way that positions the woman not as only or just a victim, but as a symbiotic double for the monster (Clover, 1987; Creed, 1993; Williams, 1996). I maintain about Almodóvar’s abject characters that their representations function as symbolic explorations of the subject who is forced to recognize the instability of gender and sexual identity. Cover (2004) explains that “the abject, as such disrupts or threatens subjectivity and the need to incorporate such abjection into a performative identity through recognition of identity’s lack of foundation and through the embrace of transformation”. Cover’s assertion resonates in Benigno’s, Lola’s and Ignacio’s alterations if we recognize their volatility of gender and sexuality. From a neutral male feminleness Benigno comes to perform agency and masculinity; Ignacio moves from a male to a female body; and Lola reworks her personality from that of a dehumanized absent father to a caring and nurturing person. The three films end in the same spirit; all is reconciled, and the characters’ decisions, far from having any traumatic consequences, point the way toward a bright future.

*Overeat: dying*

I found remarkable ways of knowing, showing and viewing by studying Almodóvar’s films with reference to gender, masculinity and femininity in the sphere of performativity. Initially I point out that Almodóvar’s representations of gender and sexuality challenge and eventually shape notions of the masculine and feminine, which are presented not in opposition to each other, but instead as independent variables because, among other things, his characters convey agency through their transgression of boundaries, their rejection of authoritarian systems of control, and their exclusion from socially accepted norms. Almodóvar’s visual narratives challenge our notions of gender and sexuality because they continually change concepts of what is or could be the masculine and the feminine. His films represent female and male relentlessly reiterating and performing concepts of man, woman, masculinity, femininity, maleness, femaleness, and so forth.

Moreover, Almodóvar’s imagery suggests gender transitivity and re-negotiation of sexuality in society. Through recurrent masquerades of gender and sexuality his movies refer to the previously performed representations of his earlier movies, whose former referents are themselves imitations. So these representations of gender and sexuality participate in the endless reiteration and construction of gender that affect the way we see the normative and non-normative representations and performances of femininities and masculinities. In Almodóvar’s films the body’s transitivity is invariably apparent revealing how bodies are important in the construction of gender, and the juncture in which this construction is performed upon them. By proliferating possibilities of representations of gender and

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La Agrado

Two of the actresses who triumph daily on this stage...cannot be here tonight. So the show has been cancelled.

For those who have nothing better to do. It's a shame to waste the rare occasion that you make it to the theater. I promise to entertain you with the story of my life.

If I bore you, you can pretend to snore - like this. I'll get the idea and you certainly won't hurt my feelings.

Honestly, they call me la agrado, because I've always tried to make people lives agreeable.
I am very authentic. Look at this body! All made to measure.

Nose:
200,000. A waste of money. Another beating the following year left it like this. It gives me a character but if I’d known...I wouldn’t have touched it.

Lips, forehead, cheeks...hips and ass. A pint costs about 100,000...So you work it out. Because I lost count.

Jaw reduction:
75,000. Complete laser depilation. Because women like men also come from the apes. 60,000 a session. It depends how hairy you are. Usually, two to four sessions. But if you are a flamenco diva you’ll need more.

I’ll continue. Tits: Two because I’m no monster. 70,000 each but I’ve more than earned that back.

Where?

Well, as I was saying...
It costs a lot to be authentic ma’am. And one can’t be stingy about these things.

Because you are more authentic....

The more you resemble what you’ve dreamed of being.
sexuality, Almodóvar’s films gradually enlarge the possibility of characters’ transformations in endless repetitions that challenge easy categorizations. His films operate under the principle that gender can be neither true nor false, and employing production of gender as desire marked on the surface of bodies. Thus the images of transgender presented in his films contribute to constructing a critical cultural space for agency, and also participate in the formation of spectatorship.
Lola, Paguito y Ignacio
UNRULINESS
I dislike good taste. I dislike common sense. I dislike good manners. I dislike all of them. I can even bear austerities. I don’t pity losers. I welcome transgressors and the banished. I respect convenience. I don’t care for compromise. I can stand appearances. I do not like mistreatment. I put up with the modernists and their written manifestos. I can even bear the straights and their perfect truths. I can bear the aesthetes. I do not judge competency. I do not care for etiquette. I applaud rebellion. I am aware of tyrannies. I understand compassion. I do not condemn lies. I do not condemn vanity. I like those who are hungry. Those who die of volition. Those who dry up in desire. Those who burn!

Senbas, Lyrics by Adriana Calcanhoto
In this chapter, I explore pedagogical approaches to Almodóvar’s queer gender discourses as an experiential conduit to a critical pedagogical practice in visual culture education. I describe and explore two pedagogical moments I have experienced using Almodóvar’s queer gender imagery in classrooms. Also I situate the possibility of transcultural approaches to viewing Almodóvar’s films. And I suggest pedagogical approaches to Almodóvar’s queer discourses.

Irony: Almodóvar’s Queer Genders and their Pedagogical Moments in Classrooms.

During my PhD program, two pedagogical events stand out for me as climactic moments of teaching and learning with and through Almodóvar’s queer gender representations. The first moment was a class I planned for an art education course within the Teacher Education programme of the Faculty of Education, UBC; and the second moment happened when I met with a graduate class in art education to introduce my work on Almodóvar’s queer gender filmic discourse as a case of a/r/tographical pedagogical practice. I highlight that these accounts are not polyvocal but are written from my own perspective as a visual culture educator. However as a fragmented self I bring all my fractured voices into a locus of enunciation.

pedagogy in shoes.

The class I planned for the teacher education students was initially based on Sylvia Wilson Kind’s lesson plan, Pedagogy in Shoes. I adapted the plan around the same topic of shoes but added elements of social studies, asking the students to look at and discuss images of shoes from multiple cultures and from racial, ethnic, gender, class, and sexuality perspectives. Prior to the class I asked students to each bring to class at least five images of shoes, saying that I would provide them with stills of shoes from several of Almodóvar’s movies. For technical reasons, I only used photographs to introduce Almodóvar’s representations of gender and sexuality. My main objective was that students would be able to create a three-dimensional object (referred to as a “shoe”) to express a personal journey through their gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality.

I asked the students to gather in six groups of six to look at and discuss the images of the shoes; describe what they see, what kinds of shoes they are, how they are made, what kinds of shapes, materials, and textures they can distinguish, and in what ways these shoes can be described or can express themselves as pertaining to a specific race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or class. I also instructed students to compare shoes from different cultures, and sub-cultures, discuss what they are used for, and look at their sameness and differences. I asked them to imagine who they think made and wore these
shoes, and where they might have walked while wearing these shoes. Additionally I asked them to think of a journey they would like to go on wearing a shoe (not a pair of shoes); where would they go? What would they do? Who would they be? Would they be attached by their own sense of belonging to a specific race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or class? I encouraged students to individually imagine a shoe they would wear on this journey, and then to begin to construct the shoe out of plasticine, to do one or two sketches of the envisaged three-dimensional shoe, to write a story of their journey to go with their sculpted shoe, and finally to display, share and discuss their pedagogical shoes, drawings and narratives.

Despite information in the course syllabus students initially resisted engaging in this activity. They wanted to just see the shoes, copy one, make a drawing, then make a sculpture, and then do the usual show-and-tell. Once past the early resistance they slowly got immersed in viewing the photos but in all six groups the only social issues discussed were related to race and ethnicity. I asked why gender, sexuality and class were not issues to be addressed; were they rendered invisible to them? I was told that as future elementary teachers it would be pointless for them to consider these issues since they will not be able to deliver this “content” in their classrooms. Also most of the students admitted that they do not feel comfortable entering into these zones of controversy inside an educational setting, and they preferred to “play safe”.

Nevertheless after this initial conversation I presented Almodóvar’s images of shoes from High Heels, Talk to Her, All About My Mother, Law of Desire, and Women on the
Verge of a Nervous Breakdown, and provoked them to think about and view those shoes in terms of gender and sexuality. I asked them to avoid thinking about the immediate use of the lesson plan for their upcoming practicum, and to fully embrace this experience of viewing. I asked the students to consider what it would take for them to leave their stable interpretations and accept new information, knowledges and understandings. I explained the context in which these images of shoes were originally positioned, as well as the characters that wore them, and gave three detailed analyses of the scenes in which the shoes were worn; for example, the matador’s shoes in the bullfighting scenes in Talk to Her. I introduced the photographs through a slide show and asked the students to look at each image but also to see the interconnection among them in relation to gender and sexuality in everyday life in society.

Most of the students were aroused by the irreverence in which these shoes were conceptualized and spontaneously broke their silences, entered their private spaces, and engaged in a lively discussion about masculinity, femininity, men, women, transgender, homosexuality and heterosexuality to name just a few topics, themes, and issues. Noticeably most students were surprised and delighted to be able to “see” and discuss these issues in an art class, but also some students were confused, disconcerted and speechless. I addressed these feelings of discomfort and conflict by having individuals discuss in small groups how in our everyday lives we experience a multitude of bodily sensations through the pervasive power of visual representations, discussing how the depiction of visual elements in representation can have an impact on people from different backgrounds, class, gender, religions, races and so forth; additionally how we might position ourselves should a similar situation arise in our classroom.

At the end of the class several students reaffirmed that they still would not use Almodóvar’s images in elementary schools, but said that his imagery had possibly made them aware of linking social issues with art education practices. I argued that in order for visual culture educators to engage critically with representations of everyday life, they must combine content and context, and recognize and value an extensive arrangement of social issues, forms of expression, and pedagogical experiences. I also posited that visual culture education practices ought to explore desire, pleasure, romance, seduction, music, plot, humor, and pathos (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 21). Moreover we engaged in conversation about acceptance, rejection and difficulties viewing images.
Drawing on this initial experience I learned that Almodóvar’s queer discourse, not only his movies or stills from them, could assist visual culture educators to embrace the study of social issues, specifically gender and sexuality, as instruments of critical pedagogy. In addition, I realized that the use of Almodóvar’s discourse in this class, as in any other that I taught during the whole course, worked as a powerful pedagogical instrument to provoke additional discourses, inciting an intense social discussion of its meanings.

Matador.

Now I move to the second pedagogical moment I experienced in a graduate course, which consisted mainly of white women including the instructor(s). Prior to my presentation on the viewing of Almodóvar’s film as an a/r/tographical pedagogical practice I sent a literature review of Almodóvar’s films that I wrote as part of my comprehensive examinations to the course instructors to distribute to their students. In class, I initially spent some time introducing Almodóvar’s context as an ex-punk who in his early films critiqued everything related to gender and sexuality such as masculinity, femininity, homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, and so forth,
managing to irritate all sorts of community associations such as feminist groups, gay and lesbian associations, pro-censorship groups, and groups that support family, state and traditional values. In addition I explained that his films present a mixture of slasher, pop, kitsch, and neobaroque (postmodern) aesthetics. I explained that to further discuss and analyze aspects of his work and its possible implications for visual culture education I would show a clip of *Matador* and a slide show with images from other films. I showed the introductory scenes of *Matador*, his fifth film. Analyzing this film Smith (1994) powerfully describes the first two shots, as follows:

A woman is drowned in her bath. The blood balloons over her face as her throat is cut. The head of another woman is severed by a circular saw. Cut to an extreme close up of a male face [Diego Montes], feverishly agitated. The next shot comes from behind the man’s chair: his legs are placed astride the TV screen on which the earlier images appear and he is furiously masturbating (just out of frame). (p. 65)

The shots which follow focus on former matador Diego (Nacho Martínez), who has had to retire too early from his career after an injury; and in the scene he is teaching the art of killing a bull to a group of promising bullfighters. Angel Giménez (Antonio
Banderas), an effusive apprentice, is among them. And after this shot there is a sudden cut, as Aquarello (2003) describes:

The training lecture then cuts to the image of a beautiful, enigmatic woman sitting on a park bench, María (Assumpta Serna) as she initiates contact with an anonymous man innocuously passing by; follows him back to an apartment, and, at the height of physical intimacy, stabs him with a long ornamental pin behind the nape of the neck - in the region between the shoulder blades defined in bullfighting as the _def of the clods_. The shot then cuts back to the training grounds as Angel, intrigued by (and undoubtedly, attracted to) his instructor, follows Diego back to the house for a drink of water, and soon grows anxious when the conversation exposes his inexperience with women. (P. 1)

As soon as the lights were turned on a strong reverberation was heard throughout the class. These clips created an immediate, loud and at times vociferous response from the students, both to the work and to how the work was shown. Two students abruptly complained about having to watch “pornographic” films; some students cried, others left the room, and another accused me of having “raped” her.

I was taken aback! In my twelve years teaching courses on visual studies and cultural studies in higher education I had never received any complaint from a student in class who was ‘offended’, ‘disturbed’, ‘violated’, or ‘angry’ about a text or visual representation used in class. In my most confident vision of the ability of Almodóvar to disrupt a classroom, I never expected that clips that are detached from the filmic and the discursive context would have the power to disturb so much. Or maybe the imagery disturbed for that very reason--because it did not aggregate the filmic and the discursive context to make it more accessible. Moreover, I was not prepared to deal with the situation. I could hardly speak; I was totally shouted down by the students. One student after another in a relay process complained that I did not warn them that I would be showing “pornographic material”. I tried to explain that concepts of pornography are extremely subjective, varying from one context to another, and that we should learn how to deal with difference; and I tried to explain that the clips I brought to class were from a film exhibited in mainstream cinemas around the world. Many different questions, comments, accusations, and arguments seemed to multiply exponentially as the evening went on. I could hardly react to this frantic wave of charges because I myself was in panic and because I felt extremely disrespected by not being allowed to finish the talk, to present my slide show, and to articulate my thoughts about Almodóvar's visual representations. The viewing of the clips was enough to disrupt the students, interrupt my pedagogical strategies, and leave the instructors perplexed and silenced. All of us
were overcome by the occurrence; all became learners of what was happening.

During this turbulent moment while listening to the cries and criticism I went swiftly through a multitude of doubts about what affected them so much, and what disturbed them more: the scene of a man masturbating and objectifying women as he views slasher movies, or the scene in which a woman objectifies men, cold-bloodedly seduces a man, and, once she has contained his penis, inserts a pin into the back of his neck, and symbolically penetrates him with her phallus. I considered from which position they looked at these images; what concepts of obscenity and pornography they were using; why it was only after the end of the clips that the students articulated that they could not view that kind of material and that they considered it an imposition. I wondered why they did not leave the class immediately after the first image that hurt them so much. Also I remember asking myself: are they looking only at the Spaniard Almodóvar’s queer film or at both the Almodóvar clips and the queer Brazilian presenter Belidson as part of the body of interpretation? Was it my extremely red clown shoes that queered that environment? Why was the students’ anger directed at me, at myself, instead of the director, the movie, and the clips?

Since that class I have been continuously asking more questions, such as: Are students masochists enough to endure any suffering to please their masters, their teachers, or are they just pleasing themselves? What kind of pleasures did these students derive from subjecting themselves to this allegedly unpleasant, embarrassing, and abusive experience? Where are the places inside academia to screen and study visual representations of queer genders, if art education settings are not among them? In what ways are visual culture educators prepared to deal with such issues? How is it possible to prepare visual culture educators to negotiate these spaces of emotion and cognition? How can art educators negotiate these issues cross-culturally and transculturally?

I wish I had had the opportunity to have immediately shared and discussed these questions with the class. The students had the assistance of their professors to further develop this experience. With the intervention of the instructors I was given a few minutes to conclude my presentation; however there was nothing much to be concluded, because we were living the crisis of a disrupted pedagogical moment. There was a commotion in the class and everyone seemed deeply affected by it. Moreover I was astounded by the whole experience, and I felt that in that entangled moment we were all learners, viewers, agents fuelled with emotions, notions, concepts and reactions—all of them frenetically operating at once. The concern of one of the instructors was that what was happening was shutting up not only the educator Belidson but also the queer project of the art education program at UBC. I argued that this was not the most important
Clava las rodillas en la tierra y extiende el capote delante de ella.

Le grita dos veces al torilero:

**LYDIA**

Toro! Toro!

Aparece el toro
Al fondo sólo se ve oscuridad.

El toro galopa directamente hacia ella.

pero ella se distraerá con el capote. Lo ha hecho muchas veces.
point and I would carry on with my work.

Once my time was finished I left the room without knowing exactly what had happened. In the following weeks the instructor(s) engaged in intense conversations with the students; and then I was informed by one of the instructors that the “key” “problem” with my talk was that students were not warned in advance about any strange, dangerous, difficult, and unexpected visual representations. Also I was informed that my article had not been distributed to the students prior to the presentation—and I had imagined that the article and the introduction would suffice as warnings. I was invited for another session with the same group weeks later, but I declined the invitation mainly because the pedagogical moment, the conflict, and the crises had happened within an earlier time frame and it may have been too difficult to bring the earlier session to a sense of closure and a comfort zone for students, the instructors and myself. The instructors are highly qualified art educators with wide knowledge of feminist and queer studies and were themselves able to promote a rich discussion in the service of their pedagogical practices.

I must assert here that although I learned through this experience that it is important to inform students about what they can expect, I found exceedingly complicated the whole idea of making warnings before viewing and discussing particular representations because in my everyday experience the concepts of “unusual” or “unexpected”, “dangerous”, “difficult”, remain extremely fluid. I am fully aware of the role of educational institutions in establishing what is appropriate, admissible, eligible, qualified, relevant, applicable, suitable and so forth, inside the curriculum. Thus, I argue that students should not be “warned” about sexually explicit material, or any other forms of potentially “offensive” content such as sexism or racism. Rather, I argue that students must be informed prior to the beginning of the course about the course objectives and content. Students who have problems with materials presented in class are free to voice their objections, argue their opinions, and learn about difference, contrasts, and acceptance. In particular, I focus on my use of Almodóvar’s filmic discourse as a site of conflict and as a source of exploration with students of the relations between power, knowledge, social context, subjectivity, visual representation, and desire. As Canaan and Epstein (1997) explain:

The contexts in which materials are used in classrooms are key to the meanings that are generated about them. Students cannot know in advance how a text fits into a course by reading a list of materials before the course begins. What seems ‘unusual or unexpected’ to a student before a new course is underway can appear mundane by the time the material is encountered within the context of the course
as a whole. Conversely, a text that seems relatively unproblematic initially can become highly charged by the time the text is used in class. (p. 101)

This experience has been a major point in my pedagogical understanding of the possibilities of using Almodóvar's discourse for discussions of social issues in visual culture education. All the doubts, uncertainties and questions have assisted me to ponder the visual pleasures given to, and arousal of, viewers by filmic representational strategies and modes of address. I learned from this pedagogical experience that Almodóvar’s queer gender representations can:

- give prominence to discursive ambiguity.
- acknowledge unusual modes of producing and consuming meanings.
- unsettle the harmony of heteronormativity.

Also they can incite reconceptualization of entrenched and commonsense notions about visual representation of gender and sexuality by encouraging a pedagogy of confrontation as opposed to one of assimilation and uncritical reproduction. I understand that they can challenge and stimulate visual culture educators and students to reconsider the terms and bases in which they classify, define, and describe human beings, social concepts, norms, and their practices. Moreover these discourses on gender and sexuality can help construct the conditions for learning how to perceive social contradictions in order to provoke interventions, to participate in, and to transform society. And finally I argue that Almodóvar’s queer gender filmic discourses are a privileged location for visual culture educators to rationalize human cultural experiences of desires, sexuality and gender identifications that rely on fixed fears and social moral panics.

**Inconsistency: Sexuality and Visual Culture Education in Context**

For approximately the last ten years the Brazilian federal government has been reconceptualizing the teaching of the arts (visual studies, drama, and music) to include sexuality and gender. Changes initially became visible through the Brazilian National education Guidelines and Framework law (LDB 9694/98) (MEC, 1998), which makes arts education compulsory from kindergarten to grade 12. Presently the arts also form part of entrance requirements for a few Federal Universities. The National Curricular Parameters (PCNs) suggest that the study of sexual orientation in school must be understood as a process of collective pedagogical intervention designed to transmit information and to problematize questions related to sexuality, including positions, beliefs, taboos and values, and to present to students the possibility of exercising their
sexuality in a socially responsible and pleasurable form. The discussion of gender provides for the questioning of fixed roles assigned to men and women in society, and evaluating these roles and their flexibility.

This proposal incited numerous discourses on sexuality in the educational system (See Altmann, 2001; Loponte, 2002; Louro, 2001, 2004, 1999; Maluf, 2002; Ribeiro Costa et al., 2003; Tonatto & Sapiro, 2002; Vianna & Unbenhaum, 2004). However the “teaching” of sexual orientation after the PCNs has assumed a purely biological frame of reference: the body, health care and the fixation of gender. In accordance with the PCNs, it is the role of school, no longer just that of the family, to develop critical, reflective and educative actions to promote the health of children and adolescents.

Since the study of the arts is mandatory and the Brazilian educational system only allows specialists to teach K-12 arts classes, there is a network of almost four hundred teacher education programs in faculties, colleges, and private and public universities. I assume therefore that a conversation about themes of visual culture education and the study of representations of gender and sexuality can be very productive.

The preceding discussion sets the framework for some understanding of transculturation as a crucial element for my analysis of fissures/fractures/splits and in-betweenness in the study of gender and sexuality in visual culture representations. For the teaching of sexuality and gender in visual culture education I propose a transcultural pedagogical approach in which association, combination, conversation, diversification, and transubstantiation ultimately emphasize the body as a place of knowledge, because of its direct implication in the transitory human performances of becoming and belonging. This transcultural pedagogy:

- denaturalizes the places constructed for those genders and sexualities excluded from hegemonic discourses,
- opposes itself to fixed identities,
- defies the pretense of objectivity and the universality of institutionalized forms of knowledge,
- seeks out principles of knowledge capable of accounting for the historical agency of subaltern subjects and collectivities, and finally,
- creates strategies for the discussion of an asymmetrical distribution of culture, knowledge and power.

The transcultural pedagogic offer is to claim the power of the frontier/border as a generative epistemological space which can at once accept, understand, recognize, value, contradict, and transpose epistemologies configured by different geocultural positions and histories. In transcultural pedagogy, border thinking promotes the
reallocation of notions of spectatorship, image analysis, ways of seeing, and issues of positionality; and it intensely challenges methods of interpretation. Moreover it is not restricted to peripheral sites but affects all sides in an unrestricted process of shared influences.

Gain: Imagining Pedagogical Approaches to Almodóvar’s Queer Discourses.

The following is an outline of my pedagogical approaches to Almodóvar’s films. To begin with, it is essential to identify students’ needs and to embrace the diversity of learning contexts such as class, gender, sexualities, race, ethnic origin, language, disability and so forth. Further I attempt to keep the focus on student-based learning to understand how, by encouraging students to actively participate in their own learning and future teaching, education generates locations which make possible emotional and cognitive growth. Of no less importance is a concentration upon the viewer, which can aid us to understand how queer gender representation in film language can be interpreted from different spectator positionings. Intended to be accessible to those who are new to film studies, my pedagogical approaches focus on a concise explanation of key ideas in film, analyzing only narrative, genre, and representation.

I have also assumed a pedagogical framework that negotiates challenging curriculum areas such as controversies surrounding gender and sexuality censorship in film; accordingly I invite students to discuss issues like ideology, morality, and systems of beliefs, among others. I encourage students to consider for what purposes and by what measures specific texts are allowed to be used in the classroom, which persons have been hurt by these texts, and which social institutions promote, have interests in and benefit from interdictions of other texts. It is extremely important that students be aware that “the needs of audiences in specific contexts inform our choices of what texts we produce and use and how we produce and use them”(Canaan & Epstein, 1997, p. 112). I encourage students to explore their pleasures, and to analyze their responses. In the end, I believe, what was so important about the occasion with the graduate students in Education, was not some resolution about the value, danger, or importance of Almodóvar’s work, but that it allowed people to articulate and debate ideas and disagreements that were part of their daily readings in the newspapers and part of their daily conversations.

I expect that at the end of an entire course students from the teacher education program are able:

- to express understandings of their personal and social investment in viewing filmic representations of gender and sexuality,
• to understand social context and cinematic contemporary history, and identify key themes and preoccupations related to men, women, femininity, masculinity, transgender, queer and so forth, and, additionally,
• to associate them with more general issues of class, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, aging, and so forth.
Furthermore students should gain experience in demonstrating specific skills relevant to the analyses of visual representations of gender and sexuality:
• by arguing their opinions compellingly.
• by writing practical film criticism and narratives about their reception, perception, viewing, interpretation and understanding of films.
• by connecting film studies, queer studies, and visual culture education to growing analytical skills relevant to critical pedagogy and cultural studies.

For such a course I would suggest the educator choose two or three films to show in their entirety and at least four to five other films to manifest the web of connections established in a discursive text. Teaching is based around two sessions per week. The first week begins with a short lecture and then we watch an entire movie, which we continue to do during the first session of each week. In the second session we watch and discuss scenes from the film previously viewed. Lectures at the beginning of the second session of each week introduce students to key concepts related to the filmmaker, his social context and personal positions, the film genres explored, spectatorship, and other subjects of film studies, then to queer studies, and then to visual culture education practices. In this sequence, lectures do not introduce the films; films introduce lectures. While lecturing should be kept to a minimum, it remains one of the key ways of conveying information. I start with what the students are familiar with, and then guide them into exploring related issues of interest, which may involve dividing students into groups.

Careful preparation is necessary to implement a pedagogical viewing, analysis and discussion of a given film with gender and sexuality themes. In regard to pedagogical issues of the teaching of troubled filmic discourses Stockdill, Park and Pellow, and Allen (B. J. Allen, 2003, pp. 149-150; Stockdill et al., 2003, pp. 215-216) provide visual culture educators with valuable pedagogical tools to make film viewing more valuable for students. The tools comprise a basic series of steps, as follows:
• Forewarning – inform students about representations of gender and sexuality.
• Selecting - choose an effective film.
• Acquaintance – watch and analyze the films.
• Timing - identify when to show a particular film.
• Narration – provide students with essential historical information.
• Conceptual framework – Provide discussion questions beforehand.
• Information – make available for students a network of resources, referrals and contacts with related organizations and services.
• Analyzing - study the film with students after viewing.
• Discussion - connect student’s conceptual discussion with their emotional reactions.
• Empowering – address frustration, guilt, and other negative emotions unleashed by the film.
• Opening – be innovative in facilitating discussion and experiment with what the filmic language can offer.
• Film language - keep the constraints of the film form in mind.

Also very important for the teaching of film is to provide students with guidelines for their note-taking such as: scene–by-scene observations, plot questions and comments, notes on character representation, notes on narrative structure, topics to raise for thematic discussions, selection of scenes for detailed analysis, lists of cast and crew, notes on motifs, allusions, symbolism, music, costumes, special effects, and other things related to gender and sexuality.

The above framework is fluid, and visual culture educators are invited to add or subtract steps when necessary. We need to provide students with critical visual thinking that can help them recognize negative, genderized, and sexualized stereotypes. Engaging in the practice of critically viewing a film and analyzing a film is something any student, even if misinformed and unaware of the subject matter, can exercise at any moment of the presentation. Understanding film as a social discourse allows consideration of the film viewer, the student, as an immediate agent with the power to move between affection and intelectation.

The critical viewing of films may possibly empower students to change themselves and their surroundings, but in order to do so, visual culture education--the teaching and learning of visual culture--has to approach it from an inclusive perspective in which different forms of social issues can be understood through non-hierarchical categories. Visual culture education poses unasked questions, and visualizes possibilities for education in general that might never come into focus anywhere else. It can achieve these things because its primary dialogue leads to critical consciousness that engages in social critique, which leads to understanding, and then action. As Xing and Hirabayashi (2003) comment:

Film can break through barriers, giving viewers the opportunity to think about and discuss controversial topics that might otherwise be ignored or avoided in a relatively safe environment. Even more important, film can serve as a catalyst illustrating
interaction among cultures on the screens and, at the same time, in the classroom.” (p. 10)

The best word to describe this process is “agency”, a critical awareness that leads to informed action to resist processes of domination in our everyday lives. Open to new and diverse forms of knowledge, visual culture education promotes understanding of hidden means of oppression, rejects the culture of positivism, and above all accepts the idea that facts and values are indivisible, and that knowledge is socially constructed and intrinsically related to power. Ultimately, visual culture education encourages passive consumers to become active producers of culture, revealing, and in the process resisting, the homogenizing structures.

Conclusion

Almodóvar’s queer gender discourses are experiential conduits to a critical pedagogical practice in visual culture education. In this chapter I:

- argue that in order for visual culture educators to engage critically with representations of everyday life, they must combine content and context, and recognize and value an extensive arrangement of social issues, forms of expression, and pedagogical experiences.
- assert that visual culture education practices must discover and explore sexuality and gender as involving desire and pleasure.
- suggest that it is essential to engage in conversation with students about acceptance or rejection of, and difficulties viewing, images.
- affirm that queer filmic discourse, not only Almodóvar’s stills or a movie, are able to assist visual culture educators to embrace the study of social issues, specifically gender and sexuality, as instruments of critical pedagogy.
- assert that Almodóvar’s discourse works as a pedagogical instrument to provoke additional discourses, inciting an intense social discussion of its meanings.
- focus on the study of Almodóvar’s filmic discourse as a site of conflict and as a source of exploration with students of the relations among power, knowledge, social context, subjectivity, visual representation, and desire.
- emphasize that Almodóvar’s queer gender representations endorse discursive ambiguity, acknowledge unusual modes of producing and consuming meanings, and unsettle the harmony of heteronormativity.
- argue that Almodóvar’s queer gender representations incite
reconceptualization of commonsense notions about visual representation of gender and sexuality by encouraging a pedagogy of confrontation as opposed to one of assimilation and uncritical reproduction.

- argue that Almodóvar’s queer gender filmic discourses are a privileged location for visual culture educators to rationalize human cultural experiences of desires, sexuality and gender identifications that rely on fixed fears and social moral panics.

- suggest that in a transcultural pedagogy, border thinking promotes the reallocation of notions of spectatorship, image analysis, ways of seeing, and issues of positionality; and intensely challenges methods of interpretation.

- state my expectation that students from teacher education programs are capable of expressing understandings of their personal and social investment in viewing filmic representations of gender and sexuality, to understand social context and cinematic contemporary history and identify key themes and preoccupations related to men, women, femininity, masculinity, transgender, queer and so forth, and, additionally, to associate them with more general issues of class, race, ethnicity, religiosity, disability, aging, and so forth.
Embodiments
Embodiments is a coming together of critical visual thinking, critical pedagogy, visual representations of gender and sexuality, film, and visual culture education. In it theory and practice fuse in a liminal space that creates agency for learners, artists, researchers and teachers to turn into dynamic subjects able to transform themselves and society. Here, I explore the links between Almodóvar’s filmic discourse on gender and sexuality, and critical pedagogy; and the multi-possibilities of pedagogical approaches connecting queer gender filmic discourses and visual culture education. I also explore Almodóvar’s queer representations as sites of conflict and negotiation that give rise to critical pedagogical developments, new pedagogical approaches, and inquiry about the possible associations and conflicts of queer representation in visual culture education.

Hallucination: Critical Pedagogy and Almodóvar’s Genders and Sexualities

As discussed earlier, art education as a field of study and practice is embarking on a radical change towards visual culture education, and developing new practices that provoke displacement of rigid notions of spectatorship, image analysis, ways of seeing, epistemology, power, identity, subjectivity, agency, and everyday life. As a consequence, visual culture educators and students make knowledge, as they engage critically with representations of their everyday life, combining content and context, and recognizing and valuing an extensive arrangement of social issues, forms of expression, and pedagogical experiences. In fact, the only way I think of and use the term visual culture education is with the implication that it is a critical pedagogy praxis which neither suggests nor promotes a specific unified, instructional methodology or particular curricular content. Visual culture educational practices are creating the basis for a move from the prevailing patriarchal model of culture toward an aesthetics of conversation, social justice and responsibility; their aim is to empower and produce the conditions for interactions of students, teachers, and community in achieving greater equity in representation and loci of articulation.
As a rule, current art education practices have systematically excluded visual, and above all filmic representations of troubled genders and controversial sexual preferences. By embracing the study of visual representation of social issues, including gender and sexuality, visual culture education as an instrument of critical pedagogy could acknowledge different contexts and contiguities of viewing and representing of visual imagery. Effectively visual culture education provokes a critical social reconstructionism and shifts from the previous focus on the art object to the context of the viewing spectator, thereby provoking an eminent pedagogical potential for showing how viewers are framed as subjects, and how artifacts inform and form these subjects at the same time as they are read, reread, produced and reproduced by viewers. Also, this shift endorses film as a powerful instrument for understanding cultural representations; one that provokes an enticement of discourses, problematizes the relationship between producer/object/consumer, and incites an intense social discussion of its meanings. Nevertheless, virtually no practices involving film as a critical tool for visual culture education have been registered in the literature to date. Thus visual culture educators in practice need to study critically the discourse of film, adopt concepts of culture that include a constant and contextualized analysis of the relations of power and knowledge, and consider the contribution of film studies and queer theory to the field in order to fight the prevailing restrictiveness and censorship within art education institutions.

I claim that queer filmic representations, such as Almodóvar’s for example, are able to offer tools and alternatives for students and teachers in classrooms practicing critical pedagogy, and can bring empowering projects into more traditional art education classroom settings. For instance, Almodóvar’s queer discourse, more than simply opening his texts to a multiplicity of interpretations, has emphasized an in-between space of translation where subaltern knowledge can be represented and heard. In his filmic discourse the political defines representations of gender and sexuality essentially as the pedagogical requirement to read texts differently, gives prominence to discursive ambiguity, acknowledges unusual modes of producing and consuming meanings, and unsettles the harmony of heteronormativity. Thus readings of such film representations can develop sites of political resistance to oppressive practices, as Loutzenheiser and MacIntosh (2004) explain:

Relying on readings of schools that complicate, disrupt, and note the erasures inherent within the construction of private (i.e., sexuality) and public (i.e., heteronormative schools’) realms invites educators to focus on what is present and evident, as well as what is hidden or silent. We argue that queer theories and the queering of theory offer curricular and pedagogical studies as sites of
contestation that may, in turn, open up pedagogical and curricular projects and unsettle heteronormativity in schooling. (p. 154)

Almodóvar’s queer discourse often confuses and provokes because it destroys ingrained notions about art, representation, and common sense; that is, integrating several genres and genders his films intentionally and effectively repeat, copy, or imitate an original that is only a referent of a different reference. The particulars of Almodóvar’s filmic discourse on gender and sexuality, the various ways of seeing them, and the interaction between viewer and object of vision, trace the definition, establishment and development of a critical pedagogy. Implicit in this framework is a focus on the relationship between the viewer and the object/subject being viewed, because it is put forward as an understanding of ways in which queer representations and spectatorship add to interpretive practices in visual culture education, and influence the dialogue with critical pedagogies.

As applied to visual culture education, critical pedagogy is a flexible set of propositions aimed at education’s function as a means to liberation and social justice to be implemented by art learners. These propositions and practices provide students with tools to analyze critically how texts are constructed and in turn construct and locate viewers, and to become responsive to the politics of representations of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and other cultural differences. In this sense, Almodóvar’s representations of gender and sexuality, through their transgression of boundaries, their rejection of authoritarian systems of control, and their exclusion from socially accepted norms challenge and eventually shape notions of the masculine and feminine that are presented as independent variables that convey agency. Moreover, Almodóvar’s queer narratives challenge our notions of gender and sexuality because they continually change concepts of what is or could be the masculine and the feminine, by representing female and male relentlessly reiterating and performing concepts of man, woman, masculinity, femininity, maleness, femaleness, and so forth. Queer filmic discourses such as Almodóvar’s can be exceedingly uncomfortable for teachers, researchers, and students, but I argue that these discourses provoke what
Kumashiro (2003) describes as a “pedagogy of crisis”, as he explains:

> Education is not something that involves comfortable repeating of what we already learned or affirming what we already know. Rather it involves learning something that disrupts our commonsense view of the world. The crisis that results from unlearning, then, is a necessary and desirable part of antioppressive education. Desire to learn involves desiring difference and overcoming our resistance to discomfort. Consequently educators need to create a space in their curriculums in which students can work through crisis. (p. 63)

Thus, this pedagogy of crisis aims to enable students, teachers, and researchers to transform themselves through comprehensive readings of “troubled” discourses. Moreover, Almodóvar’s queer discourse provides tools for students, teachers, and researchers to scrutinize the means of cultural domination, empowering and enabling students to become critical producers of meanings and texts, and to be able to resist manipulation and domination. Almodóvar’s queer discourse as a critical tool for pedagogy encourages confrontation, as opposed to assimilation and uncritical reproduction, and above all exposes the queer body as a dialogical and pedagogical location. Loutzenheiser and MacIntosh (2004) argue that the queer body as socially instituted belongs to a private sphere, where it is concealed and sexualized; thus understanding, revealing and accessing the queer body are some of the means to increase agency and social justice. As they explain:

> Queer citizenship is not part of multicultural or anti-racist teaching as it has been popularly constructed. The queer body, in its racialized, class-based, ethnically diverse subjectivities, has few access points in this dialogue. Without access, there can be no discernable voice, no political presence, no “legitimate” civic identity. Consequently one’s identity as citizen proper is greatly compromised. While attempts to infuse curriculums with gender and sexuality have met with reasonable success, the recipe is largely an add-and-stir model in which gay and lesbian issues are treated as pedagogical isolates, focused on just long enough to substantiate a politics of Otherness. (p. 153)

Accordingly, it is common sense that critical pedagogy is about empowerment; that is, the focal points of critical pedagogy are concern for social justice through the empowerment of the subaltern, the relationship between knowledge control and issues of power in the teaching and learning context, and the unequal relationship among different forms of knowledge. By accepting marginal social types as intrinsic parts of our everyday life Almodóvar’s films refuse to associate with the established instituted discourses that judge social practices; and they challenge and stimulate spectators.
to reconsider the terms and basis in which they classify, define, and describe human beings and their practices. Fracturing representations of social categories, displacing subjects, screening socially neglected subjects, and assigning meanings to “dangerous and troubled” social contexts, Almodóvar’s films access the depth of social practices and beings, interfering with social conventions and subverting social and political discourses.

Because he is a bricoleur, Almodóvar’s queer discourse blurs the borders of what have been considered as high and popular cultures, genres, representations of genders and sexuality; and through these performances it acknowledges and accepts everything that is considered a contingency of normal and “non-normal” in everyday actions, performances, and practices of society, thus creating new forms of knowledge through its emphasis on transdisciplinary knowledge, and raising questions about dominant powers.

Social and cultural experiences are at the heart of the critical pedagogical approach to curriculum. Building on this assertion I argue that Almodóvar’s discourse on the gender and sexuality forms of narratives is a privileged location from which to rationalize human cultural experiences of unsettled anxiety, desires, sexuality and gender identifications that rely on fixed fears and social moral panics. The transgendered body is the empowered location, in his filmic discourses, in which a series of conversations about what is prohibited, forbidden, illegal, unmentionable, offensive, distasteful, and deviant in gender and sexual practices takes place.

Critical pedagogy challenges essentialist notions of culture, education and society, enabling learners to reflect on their own experience historically, and awakening expectations of change depending on what issues make the students feel most powerless. Almodóvar’s discourse challenges the tendency of mainstream cinema to essentialize and naturalize gender and sexuality as biologically determined. Through idiosyncratic approaches his discourse subverts conservative social and political discourses because while asserting the existence of transgressive bodies, it functions as a creative strategy to access the depths of social practices’ troubling of social conventions. Thus, Almodóvar’s representations of queer gender contribute to constructing a critical cultural space for agency, which is desirable in education because critical pedagogies need tools to create a more egalitarian and just society—the conditions for learning how to perceive the social, political, and economic contradictions which provoke interventions to participate in and transform society.
Fragrance: Pedagogical Approaches - Queer Film and Visual Culture Education

Setting aside documentaries, experimental film, and independent productions, most narrative films are constituted by a variety of complex processes from film production to exhibition. Films undergo a rigorous preparation in which a screenplay is written and research is done to develop staging, acting, and the mise-en-scene, that is, settings, costumes, makeup, and lighting; then it is necessary to bring it all together in space and time. This part of the film production is the artistic process, in which touch is the privileged sense. The cinematography, the shooting of a film can only be done from planning that presupposes a thorough study of the mise-en-scene. It is the motion photography of images that involves formal aspects such as color, speed, lenses, perspective, framing, and so forth. Shots do not necessarily follow narrative’s time and spaces; therefore it is necessary to relate the shots through editing, which is a complex conversation involving graphic, rhythmic, spatial and temporal relations, in order for the shots to convey meaning. The visual and visualization are privileged in this stage of film production. Separately from the film and controlled independently, music and sounds are researched, experimented with and produced to add to the final edited film. Hearing is the privileged sense at this stage. The extra contents constitutive of a film
include all the frames, spaces and actions not focused on visually in the film’s main narrative. When all these elements are combined together in a movie all senses are aroused; they are brought into a visualized experience.

It seems that the concept of visualized experience is one that is difficult for many art educators to grasp. The presence of the word visual does not help; it may hinder making clear that visual culture education is not addressing the experience of vision as a privileged sense over the others, rather it emphasizes ways of visualizing knowledge through our visual everyday experiences as a hybrid of text, images, and sounds. Visual culture education aims its attention not only at the observable visual facts and artifacts, but also at ways and diverse contexts of viewing and representing, and their mediation. Visual culture education extols a feature of visuality that addresses issues of how we gaze at and are gazed at by the world, and how constituting and being constituted by this viewing process is particularly relevant for the formation of knowledge. There is an obvious interest of visual culture educators in paying special attention to viewing, interpretation, and construction of meaning through images. Thus film, as a visual experience of everyday life, is an advantaged site for visual culture education practices.

The process of seeing films, in general, in which viewers make meaning of imagery, is more interactive and dialogical than previously considered, hence in a visual culture educational practice teachers engage in intensive interpretive bricolage with students, who are capable of fragmenting, reconstructing, dialoguing, and fighting for their values and meanings.

By setting out to analyze Almodóvar’s queer
discourse, I understood that these visual systems have a theoretical and practical impact for visual culture education, because films relate to a broad range of aesthetics, play an important role in forming gender and sexuality representations—as well as ethnic, racial, and so forth—and can likewise facilitate understanding and communications particularly well in these difficult topics. Moreover, film is a space in which voices that could not be heard otherwise, are allowed to speak. As Xing & Hirabayashi (2003) further describe:

Films can encourage viewers not only to develop empathy for others but also to be moved into action—recognizing and confronting stereotypes and sometimes even unlearning them. This is particular true if teachers use supplementary readings, lectures, and thoughtfully designed discussed questions along with the film. (p. 4)

Film has a tremendous potential to motivate students because they have prior practice with it, since films have been widely translated into video and digital images. However, despite all those pedagogical possibilities, film is still a stranger to current visual culture practices.

Struggles over meaning and representation are connected to struggles over power and social agency. Thus queer films as a discursive practice contest institutional gender and sexuality control. Issues of representation and identity offer the opportunity for visual culture educators to explore both the strengths and limits of social issues.

Discourses that focus on issues of gender and sexuality frequently look at the representations of apparently queer gender subjectivities. In this sense, visual culture education through the viewing of filmic discourses may disrupt students’ “normal” understandings of the production and circulation of “queer representations” in visual culture. So, teaching with queer film is intrinsically subversive because it interrogates notions of identity, subjectivity, and desire, and through the intertext they link toward wider investigations in the public sphere: citizenship, race, class, and so forth.

These interrogations of notions of identity, subjectivity, and desire are found at the heart of the visual culture education propositions. However—although it is well known that films occupy an advantaged position within visual culture—for moral, practical, and other, more obscure motives the current art education field has been unremittingly neglecting this outstanding pedagogical apparatus. Within art education, there is an insufficiency of formal discussions around gender and sexuality; and this is quite astounding given the emphasis on representations of sexuality and self-exploration in the existing contemporary visual culture. Xing & Hirabayashi (2003) suggest that:
[...] we must seek to understand films that raise both positive and negative feelings within viewers, asking how emotional reactions a film evokes can be transformed from threats, challenges, or confrontations into opportunities for discussion, self-examination and learning. More specifically, those who use film in the classroom need to overcome students’ conscious and unconscious inhibitions and biases to encourage honest assessment of and dialogue about racial and ethnic [gender, and sexuality] issues. (p. 6)

Based on my experience educating with film at the University of British Columbia, in which a group of students reacted passionately to clips of one film by Almodóvar, I am convinced that visual culture educators ought to be aware of the emotions that may be released as student watch films dealing with unsettling themes, such as gender and sexuality. Students may possibly articulate feelings of acceptance as well as coldness, anger, astonishment, and repulsion. However, film may serve unique functions in exploring gender and sexuality because enabling teachers to encourage students to think more critically, analyzing not only the themes but also the language, context, subject situatedness, issues of voice, and so forth. Studying the impact of one kind of Japanese comic, the Yaoi, which deals with issues of gender and sexual representation, Wilson & Toku (B. Wilson & Toku, 2004) faced with the task of understanding how schools do not embrace viewing experiences that are widely known by youths, clarify:

The problematic, subversive, forbidden, and unsanctioned yaoi will probably not be permitted inside the art classroom. Might it be the case, however, that the less problematic forms of visual culture created by youth might stand in for the unacceptable types? If boys’ love provides the means for females to explore gender roles, then perhaps sanctioned forms of visual culture might provide the vehicle through which students could practice reading signs in the unsanctioned forms of youth culture which exist beyond schools. p. 102)

Visual culture educators draw back from screening “dangerous” imagery to students because I believe they fear to be reinforcing stereotypes. Nevertheless visual culture educators often neglect the students’ ability to view films, skills that they have been learning and reiterating in their entire everyday lives. So I argue that visual culture educators miss the opportunity to prepare them to view those images critically.

Rumor: Implications for Visual Culture Education
Almodóvar’s imagery intentionally offers appealing elements of gender transitoriness and discussions of sexuality in society, denaturalizing genders and
revealing how the dominant sexual order is maintained through performative repetition. Citationality in Almodóvar’s narratives leads to an endless pattern of reiteration of gender, and through this recurrent masquerade occurs modification of the previously performed representations in earlier movies, which are themselves imitations of the previous “original” referents. Therefore I maintain that there is no original theme prior to these citations, because the performances of citations themselves manufacture this foundation. Consequently, perceiving visual culture education to take place as a cognitive and affective process between producer and viewer in everyday life, visual culture educators may consider and reassess imagery such as Almodóvar’s, based on the concept that citations themselves construct their own foundations: visual discourse on an array of social issues that have an effect on student notions, concepts, beliefs, values, appreciations, and so on. In this sense, Almodóvar’s film representations of gender may become articulated to students through the understanding of these foldings, doublings, inventions, and their repetition in the alterations; in short they become clear as a repetition in their recurrent citations. So I further suggest that the critical study of visual representation of gender and sexuality, and its forms of production, are capable of engaging visual culture education with the praxis of social justice.

I make this point because positions of masculinity and femininity have been in that order fixed on males and females through the power of various gendering discourses, and these discourses have been used to enforce gender conformity. Butler informs us that impersonations of gender such as in drag performance are able to reveal the instability of these fictitious binary constructions (Butler, 1997b). Since Almodóvar’s queer film discourse is associated with, and often described, as privileging representations of notions of femininity and masculinity non-normalized in a patriarchal society, and also, through an elaborate masquerade of gender and sexuality, incorporating elements of parody, it challenges the reproduction of the gender binary, and is a powerful tool for visual culture educators to study visual representation of social issues, acknowledging different contexts and contiguities of viewing and representing of visual imagery.

The parodic qualities of excess and repetition used in Almodóvar’s discourse confuse notions of what it means to be “real” for us spectators. I add that Almodóvar’s emphasis on the subjective agency and power, in which reality is performatively constituted through an imitation of its own desire, reveal that heterosexual identity is constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitations; thus heterosexuality is always in the process of imitating and approximating its own specter idealization of itself. In this sense, Almodóvar’s films embody the idea
that gender is ambivalent, exposing how bodies are critical in the construction of gender; and his heavy-bodied drag queen characters’ performances play upon the distinction between the sex of the performer and the gender that is being performed, as well as the relationship between sex, gender and performance. Therefore, by proliferating possibilities of representations of gender and sexuality, Almodóvar’s films increasingly enlarge the possibility of characters’ transformations in endless repetitions that challenge simple categorizations. These visualizations of gender and sexual construction and practices assist students to analyze critically how texts are constructed, to become receptive to the politics of representations of gender and sexuality, and to inform, construct, unlearn, and situate them.

The queer filmic representations of gender and sexuality in Almodóvar reveal the interdictions that construct identity through the hegemonic and enforced framework of heterosexuality. While being socially constructed we inflate an inclination to aspire a cohesive, logical, and essential self but this propensity conceals the various possibilities of gender constructions, in which the dimensions
of sex, desire, and sexuality and gender do not express or reflect one another. Thus, the gender complexities within queer film representations and narratives provoke the student to question the traditional gender classifications and their meanings, clearly disrupting their notions of gender.

Another crucial point here is the filmic representation of queer bodies as the abject. Like most monsters the queer body can be characterized as abject in Almodóvar’s filmic discourse, but he does not represent it fixed in any binary opposition; queer bodies are instituted as forms of transformative performances that interfere with the notion of the normalized subject, destabilizing, transforming and redefining the gender and sexual identity of their others. The abject is that which upsets subjectivity, reminding us of our construction in the symbolic transformation in the encounter with the “other”. Almodóvar's filmic queer bodies function as symbolic explorations of the subject who is forced to recognize the instability of gender and sexual identity. As an everyday site of conversation and pedagogic understanding the films are a critical tool for visual culture education to further promote conflict and resistance, contest easy incorporation and uncritical viewing of gender and sexuality, and give access to the queer discourse within the curriculum.

Conclusion

In *Embodiments* I assign positions and set forth findings from this thesis, relating Almodóvar's film representation of queer gender and sexuality, and visual culture education. In summary, this chapter explores how I recognize visual culture education as a process of critical pedagogy and in what ways visual representations of gender and sexuality, using as a case the films of Almodóvar, can assist in these critical practices.

Here it is important to point out that although Almodóvar’s filmic discourse has a potential as a tool for art education practices I found limitations within queer theory’s approaches to the analysis of film representations of queergender such as lack theorization relating gender and sexuality to race, class, disability, and ageing.

I claim that the importance of Almodóvar’s filmic discourse on gender and sexuality for visual culture education as a critical pedagogy can be listed as follows:

- It can assist visual culture education to embrace the study of visual representation of social issues, specifically gender and sexuality, as an instrument of critical pedagogy.
- As a powerful pedagogical instrument for understanding cultural representations it provokes an enticement of additional discourses, inciting an intense social discussion of its meanings.
• It emphasizes the opening of its texts to a multiplicity of interpretations including spaces where subaltern knowledge can be represented and heard.
• As a political and pedagogical instrument, it defines representations of gender and sexuality essentially as a possibility to read texts differently.
• It gives prominence to discursive ambiguity, acknowledges unusual modes of producing and consuming meanings, and unsettles the harmony of heteronormativity.
• It confuses and provokes entrenched notions about art, representation, and common sense by continually changing concepts of gender and sexuality.
• It suggests the definition, establishment and development of visual culture education practices by promoting various ways of viewing it, and encouraging the interaction between viewer and object of vision.
• It encourages a pedagogy of confrontation as opposed to assimilation
and uncritical reproduction
• It provides tools for visual culture educators to study the means of cultural domination, empowering and enabling students to become critical producers of meanings and texts who are able to resist manipulation and domination.
• It accepts marginal social types as intrinsic parts of our everyday experiences.
• It can challenge and stimulate visual culture educators and students to reconsider the terms and basis in which they classify, define, and describe human beings and their practices.
• It blurs the borders of high and popular cultures, genres, representations of genders and sexuality, acknowledging and tolerating of everything that is considered a contiguity of normal and “non-normal” in everyday life.
• It is a privileged location for visual culture educators to rationalize human cultural experiences of desires, sexuality and gender identifications that rely on fixed fears and social moral panics.
• It is a dynamic instrument of visual culture education’s aspiration to promote fluid methodologies or broad curricular content.
• It contributes to constructing the conditions for learning how to perceive social contradictions in order to provoke interventions to participate in and transform society.

As a final point I stress that the utility of Almodóvar’s queer discourse within the visual culture education curriculum is less a matter that it has to be privileged because it is a queer discourse, and more that as a discursive practice it queers the whole curriculum.
Deliverance
In this chapter I provide an overview of the implications border epistemologies such as transculturalism, a/r/tography and queer theory hold for use in visual culture education; and finally suggest further topics and studies concerning the examination of social issues in visual culture education.

*Noise: Border Epistemologies Informing Visual Culture Education*

This research has made me aware that discourses from a subaltern standpoint, which are socially constructed as cultural exchanges, by their opposition to fixed identities do the following: denaturalize places constructed for them in hegemonic discourses; advocate agency; and emphasize the body as a place of pedagogical knowledge. Such discourses are the processes that we act and live in everyday life. A/r/tography and queer theory as critical pedagogic practices enlarge transdisciplinary ways of knowing, providing visual culture education with the means for a subjective mediation and agency in the practices of research, art, learning, and teaching.

There is a powerful reverberation among a/r/tography, queer theory and transcultural practices as methodological approaches for inquiring into and interpreting visual culture representations. In their hybridity all these theoretical frameworks are involved in promoting critical examination of the complex relationships ingrained in our daily visual experiences. To apprehend these everyday life experiences and understandings through these border practices it is indispensable to situate yourself within the liminal spaces among artist, researcher, teacher, gender and sexuality, among others, that provoke the subject to be and become. The interest in everyday cultural life, questioning of social interconnectedness, disruption of borders between disciplines, and troubling of normalcy that are objectives of cultural studies, and of my research, are important features in a/r/tography, queer theory, and transculturalism.

A/r/tography, queer theory and transculturalism, as approaches to analysis of discursive and cultural practices, provide unfolding theoretical configurations for promoting transgressive inquiries, and assist in unraveling the arrangement of overlapping, ambivalent, and challenging positionalities of visual culture representations. A newly articulated approach to carrying out inquiry, a/r/tography has been essential in this thesis. It has been useful from the initial steps of planning the research, developing research questions following the flow of changes that they undergo, until I found a wide, comfortable zone to circle around, collecting data and analyzing data with the involvement of all the faculties of the artist, researcher and teacher, to the final writing of the thesis.
This thesis, thought of primarily as visual artifact, followed a/r/tographical practices to constantly combine disparate and preexisting elements from images and texts, into new visual representations, creating pictures, photographs, and clips, and then citing, juxtaposing, and distorting them into new cultural artifacts. Through a/r/tographical practices the uncertainty of the image and its tendency to attract new meanings became a permanent feature of my lived pedagogical life. Moreover a/r/tography’s provocations to disturb notions of scholarship and knowledge-making in visual culture education motivated me to deepen the dialogical and pedagogical possibilities that it offers.

Discretion: Last Inferences

I have tried to establish a productive and long-overdue conversation, among film, issues of representations of gender and sexuality, and visual culture education. I now turn to future possibilities. I encourage visual culture educators to further enlarge this conversation, by researching these topics, adding their own thoughts and circulating their ideas. It is necessary to further explore other queer theoretical frameworks in order to analyze social issues. Thus, I invite visual culture educators to consider the abovementioned topics intertwined with issues of class and race. It is necessary to carry out supplementary studies that empirically examine the changes required in instructional methods in order to include these issues in the visual culture education curriculum. I invite visual culture educators to additionally explore viewing as art making. And finally I encourage them to explore a border-queer-a/r/tographical pedagogy as a site of confrontations, encounters and connections among different ways of knowing.
1 Disciplined-based arts education (DBAE) is a conceptual framework that insures comprehensively that all students are involved in rigorous study of the arts as a part of their general education. DBAE means that students study artworks from the following practices: creating or performing, encountering the historical and cultural contexts of artworks, discovering the nature, values and belief of the arts, and making informed judgments about the arts.

2 Multicultural art education aims to promote, through art cultural awareness, equal opportunity for learning, and promotion of self and social identity. Multiculturalists argue that themes relating to diversity in society, culture, and identity are embedded in art practices, thus art should be looked at as a privileged space for the learning of social studies, and to increase knowledge on issues such as ethnocentrism, stereotyping, discrimination, and racism. Therefore, multicultural art education was considered as an enhancement of students’ appreciation of other cultures, an acknowledgement of racial and cultural diversity in art, and an attempt to put forward cross-cultural understandings within and among cultural groups. For more details, see Chalmer’s *Celebrating Pluralism: Multicultural Approaches to Art Learning* (1999).

3 Freedman conceptualizes intergraphicality as “the perceptual cross-fertilization of images and artifacts.”

4 Only in the summer of 2005, *Gender trouble*, by Judith Butler, one of the pillars of queer theory literature was published in France. In Brazil despite a strong influence of poststructural thought in the academic system, only now in this century are we seeing the incipient development of articulated discourses linking Post-structuralism, queer theory, and local systems of same-sex desires, gender, sex, sexuality and so forth. Note that since colonial times French culture has been vital for the development of Brazilian epistemologies.
and culture. From monarchy through the military dictatorship of the 60’s, the universities as well as the basic educational system of Brazil were like a French department of education overseas. Between 1964 and 1979, during the military dictatorship, thousands of professors, intellectuals and academics sought refuge mainly in France where they entered into direct contact with structuralist and Post-structuralist authors and knowledge. The impact of French thought was immediate among those Brazilians living abroad. Furthermore it arrived simultaneously in Brazil and fostered a change of route and a diaspora of important creative disruptions that created catalytic effervescent transformations. I highlight these historical connections to clarify why the advent of Post-structuralism occurred earlier in Brazil than in Anglo-American or English-speaking cultures. Maria da Conceição de Almeida, in *Bem-vinda constelação da desordem: A presença do pensamento francês no Brasil* [Welcome constellation of disorder: The presence of French thought in Brasil], Revista FAMECOS, (Vol. 20, April 2003) asserts that the disruption of institutional order caused by French thought was well received in Brazil, even if it was received differently in distinct educational spaces. According to Conceição, Gaston Bachelard, Felix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Cornelius Castoriadis, Roger Bastide, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Pierre Bourdieu, Gilbert Durand, Jean Paul Sartre, Maurice Godelier, Claude Meillassaux, Pierre Phelip Rey, Simone de Beauvoir, George Balandier, Michel Serres, Marc Augé, Michel Manffeolli, Eugéne Enrico and Edgar Morin encompass a gathering of thought that formerly and currently permeates, in multiple ways, the Brazilian graduate and postgraduate educational system. However, the reception of French ideas in Brazil was marked by a dynamics that oscillated, as still it does today, among a critical approval, an uncritical and unrestricted assimilation, and serious suspicion. The readings and interpretations of French thought in Brazil, differently from the pragmatic readings of Anglo-American societies (one example being queer theory), have not produced recognizable bodies of theory that are capable of recognizing its specificities and of extending, dislocating and defying French thought (See next Chapter: Liminalities).

Note that for the time being trans/sexual has been treated as part of the trans/gender category.

cramped and tawdry French Quarter one-bedroom apartment of her married sister (Stella) and animalistic brother-in-law (Stanley) is at the hands of savage, brutal forces in modern society. In her search for refuge, she finds that her sister lives with drunkenness, violence, lust, and ignorance. The visceral film, considered controversial, decadent, and “morally repugnant”, challenged the regulatory Production Code’s censors (and the Legion of Decency) with its bold adult drama and sexual subjects (insanity, rape, domestic violence, homosexuality, sexual obsession, and female promiscuity or nymphomania). Ultimately, it signaled the weakening of Hollywood censorship (and groups such as the Catholic Legion of Decency), although a number of scenes were excised, and new dialogue was written. And the Production Code insisted that Stanley be punished for the rape by the loss of his wife’s love at the film’s conclusion. In 1993, approximately three to five minutes of the censored scenes (i.e., specific references to Blanche’s homosexual - or bisexual - young husband, her nymphomania, and Stanley’s rape of Blanche) were restored in an original director’s version re-release.


8 I argue that if mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative research were used comprehensively in other regions of Brazil, outside the northeast, privileging not only the industrialized cities but also the interior small rural cities, those same systems of same-sex sexuality would be in lesser or larger degree prevalent. I strongly believe that recently several researchers by overemphasizing the “locality” of the northeast sexualities exoticized them, and neglected comparison to similar systems of sexuality operating elsewhere. Since the northeast, along with the strategically forgotten southeast, is the place where the African-diasporic effects are more evident, I believe that those readings of sexuality and gender in this region are still indebted to wide-ranging critical articulations of race and ethnic concepts, beliefs, historical positionalities and theories.
9 Marranos are Jews who were forced to become Christians. Forced conversions of Jews started in Spain in the late 1300s and climaxed with the Inquisition in the 1490s in both Spain and Portugal. Many of the Jews came to genuinely embrace Christianity. Others outwardly became Christians but secretly continued to practice Judaism. These became known under a variety of names, including secret Jews, crypto-Jews, New Christians, *conversos*, and *Marranos*. Rio Grande do Norte, the remote state of northeastern Brazil, whose capital is Natal, was settled by the Portuguese with a large percentage of Marrano colonizers, starting in the 1720s, at the same time that the most intense inquisitorial activity was occurring in the northeast. It seems likely that the major reason for the Marranos settling in the southwest of this state in the mountains, was that it was too remote and difficult for the Inquisitorial authorities to reach. My grandmother from my father’s side came from one of these Marranos families in this region: The Dias. See Jacques Cukierkorn & Robert H. Lande in Shear Yashuv, A Remnant Returns: Searching for Brazilian Marranos (In Karen Primer, ed., *Jews in places you never thought of*, New York: Ktav Publishers, 100-112,1998).

10 To be (spiritually) the Iakekere da Taba means to be the little mother (Iya-Mãe/Mother; Kekere- Pequena/Little; Iakekere da Taba is the personification of an offering from the *Orixás* and has the second most important executive position in *Candomblé*’s hierarchy, Iyalorixá is the first.

11 Note that these characteristics will be fundamental to the construction of contemporary Brazilian cultural expressions, for example: in music (Bossa nova, Mangue beat and Tropicalism), Visual arts (Neo concretism), Cinema (Cinema Novo, Garbage culture), Theatre (the theatre of the oppressed), Dance (Corpo), etc.

12 Named “the go-between”, Verger was one of the Brazilian Hermes: the messenger between Brazilian and African gods, goddesses and humans. Verger was an outline of someone, a border man, who could not be enclosed by any maps. Verger was a French-Brazilian photographer, historian, and ethnographer and lived in Brazil from 1946 until his death in 1996, at the age of 96.

14 For more details on Post-Occidentalism versus Post-colonialism see Ramon Pajuelo Teves (2001).


16 Interesting to note that not coincidentally, Anthropophagy shares with queer the revalorization, by contradiction (or inversion), of what had previously been seen as harmful and detrimental characteristics.

17 There is an extensive literature on the relationship of the colonial cannibalism trope to Latin America. See, e.g., Carlos Jáuregui & Juan Pablo Dabose, eds., Heterotropías: narrativas de identidad y alteridad latinoamericana (Jáuregui) (Pittsburgh: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 2003); Carlos Jáuregui, Saturno caníbal: Fronteras, reflejos y paradojas en la narrativa sobre el antropófago (Jáuregui, 2000) (Revista de Crítica Literaria y Cultural, 51(2000), 9-39); and also, Sara Castro-Klarén, A genealogy for the “Manifesto antropófago,” or the Struggle between Socrates and the Caraïbe. (Nepantla: Views from South, 1(2), 295-322, 2000).

18 Tupí are Amerindians who have been living for centuries in most areas of Brazil, as well as French Guiana, Argentina, Colombia, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Peru. Tupí-Guaraní is one of the four great linguistic families of tropical and equatorial South America; and the Tupí-Guaraní family is the most extensive in the number of languages and in the geographical distribution of these languages. In O Instituto Socioambiental, Available: http://www.socioambiental.org. Sara Castro-Klarén draws directly on the work of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro concerning a surviving Tupí group, the Araweté, in from the enemy’s point of view: Humanity and divinity in an Amazonian society, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

19 Silviano Santiago draws intensely on Brazilian Naturalism as one of the founding pillars of the homoerotic Latin American literature. A main source is Aluíso Azevedo’s O cortiço (A Brazilian Tenement, 1890), which includes scenes of lesbian seduction, male drag and sexual acts, and depicts the issue of privacy/public interrelated with class, sexuality, and race; O Ateneu (The Ateneu, 1888) where the relation between public/privacy and sexuality

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is further explored, and principally Adolfo Caminha’s *O Bom Crioulo* (The good creole, 1895). *O Bom-Crioulo* is considered the first Latin American novel to treat homosexuality with realistic descriptions in which, in the Navy, a strong black man romantically, erotically and sexually meets a fragile white blonde boy. This novel constitutes the beginning of ever-enduring and interrelated discourses on characteristic Latin American same-sex sexuality, which crosses race, gender and sexuality boundaries; and helps create the mythology of the insertor (masculinity)/insertee (femininity) in Latin America. For more details see Aluísio de Azevedo, *O Cortico* [The Brazilian Tenement], (São Paulo: Ática, 30 ed., 1997); Adolpho Caminha, *O Bom Crioulo* [The good creole], (São Paulo: Ática, 2000), and Raúl Pompéia, *O Ateneu* [*The Ateneu*] (São Paulo: Ática, 16 ed., 1996).

20 Almodóvar’s first long movie in 8 mm film *Folle, Folle, Folle me Tim* [Fuck, Fuck, Fuck me Tim] has never been commercially released. Currently, he is finishing production of his 16th film called *Volver*, which has no English title yet, but could be translated as *Return*.

21 So far, there have been more than 88 theses written in European languages as follows: in Spanish 25, Portuguese 16, French 16, English 16, German 6, Italian 6, and Polish. This current study will be the 89th thesis finished about Almodóvar’s films or directly related to his works. I had the opportunity the read all or excerpts of the following theses and dissertations: D. M. Almeida, *Ramón del Valle-Inclán and the esperpento tradition in the films of Luis Buñuel, Carlos Saura and Pedro Almodóvar* (Unpublished PhD, Tufts University, 1996), J. C. Barbosa *A estética do cineasta espanhol Pedro Almodóvar* [The aesthetics of moviemaker Pedro Almodóvar] (Unpublished Mestrado [MA], Faculdade de Comunicação social Cáper Líbero, São Paulo, 1999), S. Bergson, *Almodóvar de-generado* [A de-gendered perverted Almodóvar] (Universidad Católica del Uruguay, Montevideo, 2002); V. R. Calmes, *El yo y la figura de la madre en la narrativa española del siglo XX* (Unpublished Ph.D., University of California, Irvine, CA, 2002); S. M. Carijó, *Modernismo e pós-modernismo: Influências estéticas do cinema contemporâneo* [Modernism and Post-modernism: Aesthetics effect on contemporary cinema] (Unpublished Mestrado [MA], Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 1999); H. L. Davis, *High-heeled sexualities: Representations of femininity and masculinity in four films by Pedro Almodóvar* (Unpublished MA, Michigan State University, 1999); E. S. Gunn, *The impossible subject: Reiterating lesbianisms in late twentieth-century Spain* (Unpublished Ph.D., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC, 2004); M. G. Hernandez, *Poetics of Spanish modernity and postmodernity: Federico García Lorca and Pedro Almodóvar* (Unpublished Ph.D., Boston University, United States – MA, 2003); L. Lev, *Transgressive desire and textual perversion in twentieth-century Spanish narratives*. Unpublished Ph.D.,

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