Performing academy: feedback and diffusion strategies for queer researchers

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for Queer Researchers

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About fifteen years ago, a couple of self–identified queer scholars/activists got into French academia to queer it: they wanted to be there, out as queer subjects, producing queer knowledges and queering university. It was all about *"épistemopolitique"* (Bourcier, 2001; 2005), as members of the Zoo Collective[1] would put it. Queering the (straight) university meant countering the existing hierarchical knowledge formations, and the politics of *savoir/pouvoir,* aligned with French universalism and republicanism, which since the eighteenth century promote 'equality' as an abstract, exclusive and exceptionalist ideal. French universalism is a self–denying particularism centred on the supposedly unmarked and 'universal subject', which too often translates into hetero, white and male. Within the realm of French republicanism, the only acceptable modalities of citizenship are assimilation and integration. Any (religious, cultural, sexual, racial, class or other) differences must dissolve into the republican ideal of 'neutral universality'; any insistence on group or individual particularity, including recognition of diverse forms of oppression or differences politics are labelled as *communautaire,* and framed as a potential threat to the 'national unity', to a republican *une et indivisible* (First Amendment of the 5th French Constitution, 1958). These ideals permeate also French academia.

Although much work has been done to tackle these exclusionary principles within academic spaces over the last 15 years, queer studies and scholars are still far from victory. The French academic space keeps resisting the development and critical epistemological engagement with its own genealogy. It maintains positivist epistemology as scientific

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[1] Founded in 1996, the Zoo was the first French queer collective, which started with a queer seminar held at the Philosophy department at Sorbonne, and at the independent Gay and Lesbian Center (Bourcier, 1998).

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standards, sustaining multiple forms of epistemic violence that prevent the development of epistemological creativity dedicated to social transformation rather than social objectification.

This paper is co–written by three self–identified 'scholactivists' who work, live and are politically engaged in French academic spaces. Drawing on our auto–ethnographic experiences and previous research projects, our objective is to develop a critique of the normative character of the academy and disciplinary boundaries, and to share tactics for overcoming the modalities of control of academic topics and bodies. In the first part, we provide more insight into the mechanisms of the French academic world. In the second part, we present three cases of epistemological practices, which do not conform to the over–dominant positivist ideals clouding French academic spaces. These examples concern (1) pedagogy and teaching, (2) research and methodologies, and (3) dissemination and embodiment.

French Academic Context

The rise of queer studies and movements in the US in the early 1990s is often said to be a reaction against identity politics (Fuss, 1983, 1990) of the 1960s and 1970s (which subsequently developed, academically, into 'women studies', 'gay and lesbian studies', 'black studies', 'chicano studies' to name a few examples), as well as the specific impact of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. The history in France is different. Needless to say that in the French monocultural republic, any minority has not yet had a chance to become part of the academic system, to voice their perspectives, to offer new and proliferating insights and methodologies that would radically transform the epistemological frame of traditional humanities and social sciences in France. Syllabi made possible in the wake of students, feminist and ethnic movements of the late 70' never made it in the French context even after the mythic events of May 68. Thus it is not by chance that one of the first statement made by the scholactivists

from the queer group, Le Zoo turned upside down the US white queer theory's call for an "aufhebung" regarding identity politics. We urged sexual, racial and ethnic minorities to embrace identities politics as a strategy to fight republicanism and universalism by reclaiming "post-identarian identity politics". Their implementation both in the academic field and the civil society would have made visible the exclusionary mechanisms of knowledge production that are disguised in the supposed neutrality and objectivity of academic republican ideals. Needless to say the rejection of feminist studies in France from the 1980s onwards by academics and by leftist feminist activists themselves (mostly feminist materialists) who stood up against institutionalization or made possible their disguise into "etudes féminines" (Feminine Studies and Antoinette Fouque's "feminology") by differentialists feminists such as Helene Cixous and her daughter Anne Emmanuelle Berger at Paris 8 university played a major part in erasure and non dissemination of feminist knowledges, gender studies and critical epistemological engagements we deem necessary to destabilize French academic structures of *savoir/pouvoir*.

Regarding gender (and sexuality) studies, we are also presented with several problems and issues. One of them is the hegemony of sociology and history as a disciplinary framework. The institutionalization of gender studies as it happens in France starting around 2000, under heavy pressure from gender mainstreaming policies implemented by European Institutions, borrowed massively from a sociology of gender which relies solely on a mono– paradigm that is of 'gender as a norm', heavily imbued in the tradition of French anthropology and social constructivism of the 1960s. On and on, it is reiterated that gender norms matter (as if we did not know), while continuing to measure the 'burden of norms'. To analyse the ways people resist gender norms, how they embody and create new genders, and what forms of empowerment one may draw from various forms of 'gender embodiment' is not on the research map. Little (if any) intellectual space is left either for queer paradigms of

performance and performativity (Butler, 1990; 1993) or for 'gender as technology' (De Lauretis 1987) for example.

When drawing on auto–ethnographic accounts, we find that the positivist toll in academic research includes not only gender studies but geography as well. Students and scholars are compelled to pursue 'observation' as an academic tool, in its most objectifying and non–collaborative way, in order to gain professional credit and acknowledgement and/or recognition by colleagues and the academic community. Although people are allowed to be personally out as gay, lesbian, trans or queer within the academy, it appears that they are not allowed to do gay, lesbian or queer research. If we deliberately choose to include self–reflexivity and positionality in our research methods and findings, they will be immediately disqualified as both 'subjective' (*not* 'objective') and 'militant' (*instead of* 'universal' and 'neutral').

Geography in the French academic system is most often aligned with its sub–discipline of physical geography (Jégou et al. 2012), deterring geography's engagement with gender and sexuality issues, leaving them to other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, or history (Barthe and Hancock, 2005). Marianne Blidon (2009) builds upon Gagnon (1992) (who analysed the institutional marginalization of researchers working on 'disturbing' and 'controversial' issues) and shows that this lack of interest from geographers towards gender and sexuality studies is linked with the evaluation of the research subject's legitimacy: "Beyond the embarrassment sexual questions provoke, one of the explanation factors of the lack of interest of French geographers for these themes is the organization in a hierarchy of research subjects, those which are judged more noble than others" (2009, 57). Having explored the broader French academy, we now discuss our individual queering moves.

Tactic 1. How to Queer Academia With Performance: the Spatial–Performative Turn (Marie-Hélène Bourcier)

Performance and performativity can be used within the realm of queer pedagogy at university and for queering the university. This is the case when a course combines performance studies as such (already a rather interdisciplinary field) and gender, race, class, ethnic, crip, post-porn performances as a teaching subject and assignment for the students. I have been giving such a course for more than ten years at the University of Lille III. Part of the course is given to small groups, dedicated to the analysis of performances done either by self–identified performers or by former students who agreed to show their work in class. It relies on a performative and a rhizomatic style of teaching that allows crucial dislocations of discursive and spatial boundaries inside and outside the classroom.

One of the main discursive boundaries is the supposed division between theory/practice. The language of gender studies can be very sophisticated, as it is the case of Butler's (1990, 1993) theory of gender as performance and performativity. The question is how can we ensure that these theory–heavy ideas are grasped by students who may lack sophisticated philosophical vocabulary. In my course, Butler's theory gets taught, de– theorized and recontextualized, in order to acknowledge its situatedness and connect it to the students' experiences. We read *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990) as a text connected to its many outsides. Queer subcultures are one of such context, and they are used to both highlight the major role they played in Butler's conceptual elaboration, and to alter the purity of her theory. If one of Butler's major achievements was to bring the drag club culture to the forefront of the straight theoretical horizon in a political and celebratory way, in the classroom we pay attention to how this 'theoretical' shift is also related to her soft butch–lesbian identity, her feminist background, and later in the 1990s, to queer subcultures of genderfucking and drag kinging. Gender as performance is then taught as a knowledge formation that is to say a

network of films, gender practices and performances, and does not solely rely on Butler's text. Performance as a paradigm is also reconnected to performance as an artistic and political form and force, coming from the artistic world, which precedes and exceeds Butler's re–appropriation of performance. Challenging both the boundaries between disciplines and those between theory and activism produces new knowledge formations, a pedagogical matrix that could be named 'gender power' rather than 'gender theory'.

Gender empowerment is an approach where gender and performance are understood as process oriented rather than concept oriented. For example, students are encouraged to do performances in public spaces, outside the university so that they have to face the ambivalences of drag, and of the repetition of gender quotes. Gender performative repetition is without guarantees; it is not always dissident, dissonant, disloyal in a subversive or parodist way, as we may know it. After all, who is to decide that it is the case? How to meta–perform gender normativity or gender dissidence in public spaces?

Here spatiality is a key in making understand and feel how doing gender is tied to the binarism of our sex/gender system and how visual landscapes play a major role in gender expression, presentation and doing. Students first move is always to invert gender expressions in their performances, making them repeat and reify sexual difference, unless they find a way to decontextualize and re–signify it. Here are the benefits brought about by the performative and spatial turns in pedagogy, of dislocating the theory/practice boundary, and the separation of academic space from the 'outside world'. With the students, we moved from the drag queen scene–made–theory to the public and urban space. Bodies that matter are those who re–matter, bodies involved by and through performance, the bodies of the students who can get acquainted with many gender experiences and identities and explore their own. Teaching, learning and gender performance are all consequently affected and transformed within this spatial frame. Students get to explore the gendered and performative structures of public and

private spaces (streets, shopping malls, bathrooms, public transportation, university campus or student accommodation halls). Their performance is disseminated back in the university space, in the classrooms, where they show their filmed performances to the rest of group, and in front of examining teachers in charge of grading their work. Not only does the theoretical scene become collective, but acknowledging the presence of straight and queer gender identities in a classroom setting becomes a way of queering French universalist and republican academic space. Since French academia is still heavily imbued with positivist, republican universalism (as we have argued above), a distinctively present voice and gesture of subjective reiteration of genders, as experienced and recreated by students as part of their assignment, becomes a mode of queering the scholarly norms of French academia (Bourcier, 2014). Performative courses that engage students' bodies and affects help to question academic norms of knowledge production, as well as the containment of creativity and politics by/within university boundaries.

Another effect of this spatialization and performatization of pedagogic/classroom practice has to do with the regulation of the traffic that takes place between universities and the 'outside world'. French academic disciplinarity and hierarchies hinder possibilities of reconfiguration and de–hierarchization of knowledges, and consequently the prospects of altering the frontier between university and the 'dirty outside world', to borrow from Stuart Hall (Bourcier, 2005 ; Hall, 1990; 1996). When required and implemented as a side effect of the corporatization of universities which are becoming private entreprises since 2007 in France, the so-called porosity of university and the civil society translates into a management of equality (between man and women) and anti-discrimination policies that lead to direct attacks against academic freedom and different epistemic practices. For the first year, I have been accused by the students to pornify the university for giving a two hours course on

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feminist and post-porn pornography, which was part of the theoretical course on performance. The same year, my course on performance has been "neutralized" by the administration meaning that it would not be graded. Consequently the professor in charge of the workshop part of the course on performance –who is a performer and former student of the university-has been violently delegitimized as a teacher. Most of the students did not show up at his course. He had to go trough a violent homophobic campaign on facebook led by a group of students who portrayed him as doing "masquerade" instead of "course" and as a sex pervert, "ready for anal sex" (he is being portrayed as Spiderman on his all fours, "his ass ready to go") and willing to fuck the students or to give them good grades would they pose naked for him. Neither the dean of the university nor the different persons in charge at my department level or the person in charge of discrimination took action although they had been formally asked to do so although the university came up for the first time with a new motto -"Lille 3 s'engage"-

Tactic 2. Queering Methodologies: Using Scavenger Methodologies in Queer Research (Cha Prieur)

I do not know if I can speak about methodologies, which are properly or essentially queer. I would rather speak of the process of queering, which could involve using 'scavenger methodologies' (Halberstam, 1998) on one hand, and the destabilization of knowledge categories, on the other. 'Scavenger methodologies', in its simplest, is an approach whereby methodology is individually tailored to each research project, to each researcher, each time a new project is conceived. Your positionality, your experiences and your goals guide you towards your own arrangement of methods, the choice of your own methodology (Halberstam, 1998). The latter questions hierarchies of what is, and where is, knowledge, allowing the use of materials which were not considered academic thus far (militant zines,

websites, blogs, etc), not only as sources of information upon which 'knowledge' is build and transferred via e.g. academic texts, but as the actual outlets and repositories of knowledge, equal to scientific publications and other repositories.

Queering methods and methodologies leans on feminist situated knowledges, research positionality and reflexivity of the researcher on their research (England, 1994), a practice which in a given context of the French academia, is a bold approach. For example, when your fieldwork covers the places where you socialize and live, you always act in those places in two roles: private and professional. When in the 'private' role, if an event occurs, one switches into the 'professional' role of the researcher, because your research is intricated with your 'private' person. Sometimes your friends are speaking about their lives and you realize suddenly that their arguments reinforce or destabilize your own academic argumentation in your study. What kind of relations of power and control are produced in this type of exchange? And what can you do to address such a challenge? In my own research I have tried to think activism and research together ('scholactivism'), which builds on Heckert's 'methodological anarchism' (2010) and Liamputtong's 'sensitive researcher' (2007). Heckert favours the blurring of the hierarchies between researcher/researched, accepting and accentuating the co–construction of any research (2010, p. 43). 'Scholactivism' is also a position of a 'sensitive researcher' who draws on '[q]ualitative research methods [that] are flexible and fluid, and therefore, are suited to understanding the meanings, interpretations and subjective experiences of vulnerable groups' (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 7). Liamputtong (2007) argues that researchers can hear and give voice to silenced and marginalized groups. She also insists that processes are more important than facts, and since emotions are part of processes, they cannot be separated from facts and behaviours.

For the scholactivist practice, the enactment and the concept of care are also important. How could I do my fieldwork without putting the people I interviewed in danger?

How can I ensure a fair exchange with people for the qualitative data they provide me with? What is my place as researcher in taking care of my community? The recognition that researchers' emotions are embodied and linked with our own corporeal memory is an important practice here, as 'emotions are a central part of social research' (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009, p. 61). For example, interviewing people about different types of violence (racism, sexism, sexual or physical abuse) is a very sensitive process; so in my research, I work on 'active listening' techniques and I have decided more recently to begin a certification in Neuro–Linguistic Programming: not only am I passively listening to the story, but also engaging with, and acting upon, emotions relived during the interview.

To some readers of this chapter, some of the points raised so far may seem obvious. However, one should remember about the French academic setting, within which I work and to which I address my concerns. So ethnography that takes into account the researcher's positionality, (social, cultural and political) power relations, also actively acts upon certain ethical principles – 'scholactivism' as I call it. This practice is by no means obvious within the walls of the French university. An approach put forward in several chapters of *Queer Methods and Methodologies* (Browne and Nash, 2010) that insists on the rhizomatic aspect of the research (there are no separate phases between before the fieldwork and after, between gathering materials and writing up results) may also be deemed unacceptable to many French researchers. This rhizomatic approach is a doing, a permanent making, whereby sometimes the researcher develops contradictory or paradoxical re–elaborations and analysis, depending on the phases of their fieldwork. Only *a posteriori* can one recognize the construction of their discourse, and the choices and arbitrations they make when the writing phase begins.

Observant participation and maybe more exactly participant observation is another way to do activism while staying in the academy. The principal difficulty is the navigation between these two spheres which are not really kind to each other. In the French academy,

saying that you are a scholactivist/researcher–militant is a militant action which blurs the norms of the academy. Scholactivists fight against the inaccessible French–republican ideals of a 'neutral scientist', devoid of subjectivity and emotions. The risk of a lack of recognition from their peers in French academia directly translates into the material conditions of researchers' lives (for example, through restricted job opportunities).

Tactic 3. Space Contamination: Rachele aka Zarra Bonheur (Rachele Borghi)

In recent years, many calls for papers have introduced and opened up new forms of intervention that differ from more usual presentations, for example: 'Beside classical interventions (communications and posters), all sorts of original formats are welcome: workshops based on research in progress, symposium–type workshops, videos and films, sound bites, displays, etc.'[2]. This coincides with 'the spatial turn' in contemporary art practice and scholarship and its interest in geography: 'Here our main concern is how geographers – as social scientists – are currently addressing the "spatial turn" in contemporary art'[3]. But how can geography learn from art, not just the other way round? Or rather, where does the boundary lie within which the geographer is free to borrow from other disciplines and forms of expression? And what happens if those forms of expression are questioned as 'non–artistic', and not even legitimized by the discourse of art criticism? How much does the university, as a space governed by a set of specific norms, affect and limit different forms of expression? So, how far can a geographer, who does not define themselves as an artist, but who uses performance as a tool for mixing and contaminating different contexts go? What happens if

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        Call for paper from conference "Sharing space" (Rennes, 9th-11th Avril 2014) Available at URL http://espacepartage.sciencesconf.org/ [accessed on: 02/04/2015]

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        Call for paper from conference "Art and Geography" (Lyon, 11th-13th February 2013) Available at URL http://artgeographie.sciencesconf.org/ [accessed on: 02/04/2015]

you bring the performance to sites where it is expected least, and if it is produced by the body of a researcher and not by the body of an artist?

Let me use auto–ethnography as a tool of generating information and examples, and as a reference point for further debates. Since 2011, as part of my research, I have been working on post–porno performance in public spaces as a means of space creation and suspending social norms. I instantly clashed with the normative disciplinary discourses in academia that reacted to the embarrassment caused by my 'dirty' topic, insisting the work was 'non–geographic' and thus de–legitimizing my work as valid research. As a part of this research, I reflected upon the uneasy relationship between academic research and activism, and upon the relationship between fieldwork spaces, university spaces, and the diffusion spaces for research 'out/in/side' of 'scientific' community. I took upon the tool I studied (performance) and the medium (the body) in order to test new (geographical) ways of disseminating research results. In order to do so, I set up the project / character of Zarra Bonheur: 'a perfomer–sexual–queer–feminist–militant–dissident–polytopic–activist–researcher fruit of "do it yourself" contagion and fruit of her friends widespread love'[4]. Zarra Bonheur translates 'scientific' researches into performances. The goal is to break the boundaries between contexts (scientific/activist), productions (high/pop culture), places (university, theatre, room, squat, association), expressions (lecture/performance) and to produce spaces of subversion/transgression of the norms. Let me provide two examples.

The performance *Degen(d)erated euphoria* highlights the materiality of thought. In fact the words allow us to carry forward reflections that deconstruct and rebuild the mind and also transform the body: they become body. The words emerge from the texts. Hovering in the air, they also get rid of their own referents. They lean upon the body and become matter through the bodies. The collective body takes possession of the words, it develops the thought

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Zarra Bonheur (2015). Zarra Bonheur. Available at URL http://www.zarrabonheur.org/performer/ [accessed on: 02/04/2015]

and it creates action. Texts have different origins, such as scientific and philosophical contexts, or militant contexts, breaking up the binarisms that set 'academic' as 'expert, and opposed to 'lay/activist' as 'low' cultures. Words emerge from essays, blogs, collective manifestos and fanzines. They alight on bodies and they give rise to construction and deconstruction processes that open new opportunities and euphoric paths that allow the conception of endless chances and identities.

Zarra Bonheur works inside the interstices to create spaces in–between. This is also the case of *Porno Trash*, a performance I created starting from my research (and from my application to the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), which deals with the relationship between the body and space, and the representation/perception of nudity in public spaces. *Porno Trash* is a two stage performance about the body: its oppression and liberation, about social perceptions of nudity, and about the body as a space of practices and relationships. During the first phase, Zarra Bonheur and friends read texts by various authors (such as philosophers and bloggers), academic articles and fanzines that discuss the process of domesticating the body and its political and social control.

During the second phase, the attention moves on to the re–appropriation of body by sexuality, by desire and by choice. The reading, accompanied by undressing, ends up by inviting the public to undress and dance with others, creating a 'contagion' of the euphoria of nudity and free body. It is in this way that a space of the suspension and subversion of norms is created. The performance plays with childhood symbols and refers to a time when nudity did not yet have a social value ascribed to it. During this performance, the main message is about the role of the body and of nudity in creative processes, the strengthening of relationships between participants, and the transmission/distribution of the 'bravery' to transgress the norms. Each performance is designed to be specific to place and people involved, and it changes all the time because Zarra Bonheur as a character does not want to

represent a person, but rather is a collective project of dissidence, resistance, experimentation and of academic pornoactivism.

Zarra Bonheur's performances allow reflection on the weight of epistemological norms, on the in/visibility of the researcher's body in the (scientific) process of conceiving knowledge, and on the il/licity of non/academic practice. I wanted to experiment with the boundaries, the perception of nudity inside academic environments, and to translate epistemological questions into performance. The goal of each of my pornoactivist research–performances is manifold, and includes reflection upon: (1) the relationship between the researcher and space; (2) the voyeurism of research; (3) the non–return of research findings to the context where they were studied or the subjects involved; (4) the formation of a legitimacy for an academic discourse, which often silences the voices of interviewees; (5) the invisibility of the body of the researcher, which is supposed to be represented by its head; (6) a conference as a spectacle and performance; (7) finally, supposed legitimacy of certain tools (a power point presentation, an academic article), and supposed inadequacy of others (performance, ritual, melorecitation).

However, at times, there are severe consequences of such approach to doing academic/geographic research. During the conference 'Queer days' (7 February 2013) organized at the University of Bordeaux, I was invited to talk about my research on post–porn. I used two sets of tools to deliver my presentation. One was a toolbox of 'academic performance' (power point, microphone, a pen), and learned languages to create a short–circuit between message, referent and code. The other one was my 'theatrical performance' and it involved me undressing while the presentation was developing[5]. Three months later, in May 2013, the video from my presentation–performance created a storm of hatred and accusations. It was directly connected to the fact that around that same time I was offered a

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        Queer Days (2013) Available at URL http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xy53hh_queer-days-rachele-borghi_shortfilms [accessed on: 02/04/2015]

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job contract at University of Sorbonne: some university professors used my performance/video to question and undermine my academic credibility, the legitimacy of my research and appropriateness of my work. They demanded that the University withdrew the job offer (which, in the end, did not happen). Then, many ultra–catholic and other radical right groups' websites spoke about "the queer invasion of French universities" and the moral decay of the institution. Finally, it is a sad fact that, in these circumstances, many colleagues remained indifferent to the attack on my person and on my research practice, dismissing these events as 'not serious' or 'not important'. Although it is not the time yet to assess the effects of Zarra Bonheur's work, I hope that the performances and events described above show that she can potentially raise a discussion about the practices of academic knowledge dissemination, and the hegemonic norms of epistemological legitimacy and knowledge production.

Conclusion

How can queer subjects of knowledge and politics, queer bodies and epistemologies exist within French academic and public national space? This is the question we have to answer after fifteen years of rejection. In this chapter, we have tried to reflect upon the epistemological violence of the French academic system, and the possibilities of pedagogies, and knowledge creation for researchers and teachers working at the crossroads of geographies, genders, and sexualities within that national context. Drawing on auto–ethnographic observations, we have offered examples of alternative ways of conceiving and practicing knowledge, practices that work against the unequal power relations of power between the different subjects involved, practices that benefit the creative explorations of margins, shadows, and demimondes of the academy.

Marie-Hélène/Sam Bourcier work and pedagogy deals with the inevasible relationship between power and knowledge and ways to counter positivist, republican, modernist and universalist narratives and 'espistémé', especially their arguable quest for neutrality and objectivity, as the ruling principles of the academic system in France. Although the "hubris of zero degrees" (Castro-Gomez) which is foundational to the colonial myth of European modernity, objectivity and identity is far from being a French phenomenon, the ongoing promotion of "a universal point of view", be it by "true" knowledge as opposed to "militant"'s ones or by humanistic sciences and academia still prevails in a nation allergic to identity and differences politics or multiculturalism and which has become the new cradle of eurocentrism and civilizationism. He addresses this French monoculturality and the role played by a kind of sociology untouched by the cultural turn and therefore which reinforces disciplinarity.

Cha Prieur insists on the researcher's positionality and reflexivity. Concerning queer methods and methodologies Cha Prieur lends weight to emotions in their researches and in the process of research in accepting and recognizing the impact of emotion work in queer researches.

Rachele Borghi a.k.a Zarra Bonheur, breaks the public/private binary. She promotes the contamination of places and attempts to eradicate the barriers which divide the spaces and spheres of relations. As Michela Baldo (2015: 123) explains "Rachele's performative talk at the University of Bordeaux made her naked body visible as integral part of the content of her class, which revolved around queer space and sexuality, and the boundaries between public and private, using it as site of intervention/resistance against those heteronormative ideas of sexuality and space that she was attacking. However, her body troubled academia".

In the late 70', US students and teachers fought and won for affirmative action policies and the transformation of the canon in order to challenge human sciences, the so-called "sciences de l'homme" and their master narratives, the national one included. In order to cope with our

aspiration to/ and estrangement from institutionalization, we came up with different and maybe less collective answers, strategies and actions in the French context. 'Pornactivism' [6] is one of them and maybe the less expected offspring of the post porn subculture that emerged around 2000 in France[7] in itself a very specific and unpredicted translation of "queer made in France". As it proved to be, 'post porn' is not disconnected from the academia or public spaces. Quite the opposite. Nowadays, 'post-porn' stands as a form of sexual disobedience made visible in urban and academic spaces. Which is maybe the reason why we are experimenting with forms of 'pornoscholactivism'by bringing the body and sexuality within the academy. Where the body is not supposed to be and is not expected. Making bodies present (and visible) highlights and destabilizes the rigid informal expectations for the 'neutrality' of a (body–less, subjectivity–less) researcher, which currently govern French academia. It allows us to work on the contamination among places and context starting from our positionnality inside the academia.

These forms of experimentation bring attention to the relationships between the object and the subject of research, between the observer and the observed and last but not least to the academic voyeuristic dispositif and the colonial dimension of the 'subject-object' dualism and dynamics (Dussel, 1995) that informed modern and Eurocentric thought based on asymmetry, exploitation and the elimination of 'epistemic alterity" or difference. Breaking another powerful dichotomy such as theory/practice requires to elaborate a new language. To keep talking about 'theoretical' and 'practical' means recognizing the existence of this dichotomy and moving within it. We try to elaborate an experimental language by defining these practices as 'theoractical', going beyond the division between 'who does theory' and 'who does practice'.

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    The term has been coined by Rachele Borghi.
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    See chapter 'Post Porn' in *Queer Zones 1*, 2001.

However, in discussing the creative ways of producing and disseminating knowledge about space and bodies, we have also identified dangers lurking in the highly hierarchical French academia. The examples we have discussed show that violence is inherent in the production of (hegemonic) knowledges and that academy is no stranger to the violent erasure and devastation of the body of the researcher. Putting "objectivity in parenthesis" (Maturana, 1985), self-identifying as scholactivists, that is to say both scholars and activists to politicize the presence of queer researchers in the French academy comes with a price and violent 'epistemological expropriations' (Castro-Gomez, 2008). It proved to be a daily fight to be queer, out and proud in the academy and struggle against transphobia, homophobia and heterosexism. This eventually raises the issue of "our will to institutionality" (Ferguson, 2012), our ability and political will to address the relationship between the State, capitalism and academia, our determination to destroy the myth of modernity and the fiction of sexual difference and of what it takes to organize an epistemopolitical community on a collective and transnational level in order to build 'the 'epistemic simultaneity of the world' (Castro-Gomez, 2008).

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