



Universiteit Utrecht

*Anti-terrorism as a Governing Device and Social Control Mechanism: Political
Dissidence and Sexual Politics in a Permanent State of Exception
in the Italian Context*

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the political use of violence and specifically on notions, narratives and discourses that construct and defining “terrorism” in contemporary neoliberal capitalist societies. The author looks at the new dynamics of control and repression that are at stake in the current historical and socio-political context, characterized by the interaction of different forms of power – disciplinary, necropolitical and biopolitical – which act to construct new definitions, representations and countermeasures about concepts such as “threat”, “enemy” and “terrorism”. This concerns securitarian and repressive state technologies in the Italian political framework, situated in the broader European context, in relation to social and political movements. The thesis will explore how securitarian narratives and emergencial rhetoric, connected to an increased militarization of territories, act as devices for the criminalization of social movements and political struggles and how these narratives always build up larger spaces for the legitimation of the exercise of state control and oppression within a growing invisible structural systemic violence – “terror” – acted upon bodies along the lines of class, gender, race and ethnicity. Throughout the case study the author analyses queer and transfeminist movements (Atlantide) and focuses specifically on the ways they have been affected by a hegemonic narrative of securitization and on how queer subjectivities become stigmatized and marginalized.

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Introduction

What allows practices of freedom to surface is not whatever isn't recuperable by domination, but what dearticulates the mechanisms producing our own emotional and psychosomatic disorder. The aim is not to abolish the malaise that pushes us to revolt so as to better adapt us to an obviously toxic system for managing bodies, nor is it to learn how to better struggle within the hindrances of the present contingency in the name of some "strategy" that would lead us to victory. Because victory does not mean readapting the world through struggle, but adapting the world to struggle itself. That's why all logic of differentiation serves a time with no present: the only really urgent thing for us now is to render the disturbance offensive, to become its accomplices, because "better death than the health they offer us".¹

Within a framework of an increasingly militarized Europe that involves a systematic operation of border closing, that in different countries is launching anti-terrorist legislation (specifically after the Paris terrorist attack) and calling for a state of emergency with the consequential suspension of supposedly democratic decision processes, the move toward what Giorgio Agamben defined as the "Security state" is progressively taking shape. Emergencial rhetorics connected to the militarization of territories and ever more explicit processes of criminalization and repression of political struggles are building up increasingly larger spaces of legitimation for the exercise of state control and oppression. This process is developing together with a growing invisible structural systemic violence – "terror" – acted upon bodies along the lines of class, gender, race and ethnicity. This research focuses on the political use of violence and specifically on notions, narratives and discourses that construct and define "terrorism" in contemporary neoliberal capitalist societies. It will look at the new dynamics of control and repression that are at stake in the current historical and socio-political context, characterized by the interaction of different forms of power – disciplinary, necropolitical and biopolitical – which act to construct new definitions, representations and countermeasures about concepts such as "threat", "enemy" and "terrorism". I will focus on securitarian and repressive state technologies in the Italian political framework, situated in the broader European context. In particular, I will investigate which kind of mechanisms, narratives and

1 Tiquun, "Sonogram of a potential", 3. <https://caringlabor.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/sonogram.pdf>.

devices are operating to build up “terrorism” and “terrorists” notions. The second chapter will be concerned with the Italian political context, with its state of emergency measures and narratives; it will explore legal definitions of “terrorism” and how these have been reshaped to include more political subjects since the 1970s.

Chapter 3 will focus on “Atlantide”, a queer transfeminist squat in Bologna, which has recently been the subject of repression, stigmatization in the national media and finally eviction. The decision to write specifically about this place was determined by a personal feeling of closeness with the activists’ discourses and practices, an affinity I recognize politically, and the intensity and subversion that their actions have brought to the city of Bologna. This is a space I have crossed many times but never fully experienced as an activist. Nevertheless, I feel it is important to talk about the collectives that animate the squat’s capacity for producing knowledge through practices and actions which define a queer, transfeminist, transformative approach to the struggle against power structures. Being in Atlantide is an experience and struggle that deserves to be told and recounted, not just to mobilize solidarity but also to build spaces for deconstructing neoliberal narratives in these suffocating times of normalization.

At this particular moment, it is also important to deal with Atlantide because of the collective feelings the case has mobilized around it, a moment in which political repression is strengthening and different forms of resistance and strategies are being enacted. The case is representative of activists’ processes of resistance that in different ways are liberating political anger (an anger arising from oppression and from the political consequences of occupying spaces of dissidence) to construct and to create alternatives.

Sara Ahmed writes that “it is a time to be angry. We cannot separate a feeling from what a feeling *does*. To be angry is to enact your relation to a world: anger is action because anger is reaction”.² What the feminist struggle does is enact this relation, expressing and liberating anger by the process of materializing it in a collective dimension of fight and also in the daily individual strength gained to respond and react to oppression. I found myself relating to her words: “I have been thinking about anger because I have been feeling angry. When we are too angry to write, we must write. We can write from our anger, about our anger, with our anger, through anger”;³ I recognize anger as putting things in motion, as something we need to listen to and to write about because it has the potential to transform. I’d like to see theory as a tool to articulate this anger, to name it, to understand its roots within the structural systemic oppression and to enact individual and collective practices of resistance. Violence in itself needs to be re-conceptualized and taken away

2 Sara Ahmed, “It Is Not Time for a Party”, in *feministkilljoys*, 13 May 2015, <https://feministkilljoys.com/2015/05/13/it-is-not-the-time-for-a-party/>.

3 Ibid.

from the hegemonic neoliberal discourse which signifies it in the reaction (regarding activism and struggles) and never in the structures of the system; state repression on social movements is not just having material effects (in terms of surveillance, police brutality and denial of space) on people's lives but also operates to de-legitimize them discursively in order to perpetrate its oppression. This is what I feel is important to write about and fight; the anger that comes from this awareness should function as a tool to open up material and imaginative spaces for breathing, which are not just important but essential to our lives.

In order to write about it, it is important to explore experiences of struggle and the way in which they become constructed at the level of discourses, to be able consequently to deconstruct culturally hegemonic ideas and to help understand mechanisms of the production of truth in the specific Italian context, in which almost any radical political dissidence is strongly opposed and destroyed thanks to security devices and emergency narratives dominating discourses. This is the reason why I chose to use discourse analysis as a methodological tool in this thesis. Jorgensen and Phillips define discourse as:

a form of social practice which both constitutes the social world and is constituted by social practices. As social practice, discourse is in a dialectical relationship with other social dimensions. It does not just contribute to the shaping and reshaping of social structures but also reflects them.⁴

This aspect of shaping and at the same time reflecting social structures made me interested in discourses, their characteristic of being explicative and at the same time constitutive of social relations in so far as the analysis of them could provide a possible picture of the current socio-political contexts, of the way we construct hegemonic understandings of reality and by which means we make sense of it with current social structures. Moreover, since “[T]he discursive constitution of society does not emanate from a free play of ideas in people’s heads but from a social practice which is firmly rooted in and oriented to real, material social structures”,⁵ discourse analysis offers a reflection of the means of operating of power and material structures of domination as well as of the material oppressive consequences of discourses. This element will be relevant in the research so as to understand discourse as the results of the overlapping of different social practices and narratives that in the eviction of the squat (the case study) will result in issues of gentrification and capital accumulation together with Catholic morality and “security reasons” rotating around exclusionary notions of citizenship.

4 Marianne Jorgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 61.

5 Ibid.

The fact of dealing with repression and institutionalized violence against activists and queer subjects, which is fabricating its own mechanism of legitimization and consensus through the media, from my perspective makes urgent the process of looking at the discursive constructions closely.

In the specific case study I am going to analysing, I argue, that the narratives used have been facilitated by a deeper surrounding of discourse against LGBTQ and queer people, which originated in the still ongoing debate around the so-called “gender ideology”. The debate developed at the moment in which parliamentary discussions were taking place about step child adoption, when the possibility of the introduction of civil union made their appearance and around the introduction of sexual education in schools. As will later be clarified, the far Right and Catholic Church's emergencial discourse on these issue has strongly pushed the violence of normalization and increased marginalization and stigmatization for all queer and LGBTQ subjects, especially the ones taking part in the struggles. The narratives involved are strictly connected to Catholic morality and bigotry even when they are not directly linked to Church representatives or far Right groups, because of a certain hegemonic understanding of notions of respectability, decency and dangerousness which belong to the common sense. The media campaign had played and still is playing a fundamental role in constructing hegemonic understandings and reinforcing oppression; the way in which it developed in this case relies on many issues, above all on the capacity of setting up the terms of the debates that are consequently taking place, defining notions and concepts which are later used to marginalize and materially denying spaces of action.

Chapter 1

Theoretical Framework

We do this because the world we live in
is a house on fire and the people we love
are burning in it.⁶

Bio-necropolitical power and sovereignty as politics of death

In this chapter we are going to explore definitions of biopolitics and terrorism according to different authors' understanding of it, with the purpose of analysing the connections between different systems of power and domination in neoliberal capitalist society. The theoretical framework developed is aimed at underlining the changes in the devices of surveillance, control and repression as connected to accusations of terrorism. Terrorist concepts have indeed been developed according to an apparatus of construction of the norm that in the Italian case concerns and affects political dissidence and resistance. The section below on "Terrorism, bioterrorism and queer" is specifically aimed at offering a theoretical lens through which to read the case study about the transfeminist queer squat Atlantide, in so far as it will underline connections between the concepts of criminality, monstrosity and dissidence that are related to queer subjects. It will concern the discursive space of abjection occupied by queer subjects in relation to their struggle against norms and notions of terrorism, which will later be relevant to an analysis of narratives and devices of repression of queer struggle in the Italian context. The way in which evictions are recounted and made possible, together with other repressive actions, is due to a certain construction of dangerousness and threat presented in the media and in the public sphere: in the case of queer struggle and their subjects, this concerns the operation of "gender terrorism" or "bioterrorism" acted according to heteronormativity and power structures that locates them in the discursive space of "enemy", together with other activist groups belonging to political dissidence. For this reason the connection between terrorism and queer shows the specificity of the repression operated on queer subjects, characterized by the overlapping of different discourses that, as we will further see, has to do with economical, social

⁶Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (: Vintage Contemporaries, 1991), xvii.

and political structures of domination in the urban landscape and at a national level.

In “Society Must Be Defended” Michael Foucault describes the affirmation, in the second half of the eighteenth century, of biopolitics as a “new technology of power”,⁷ which, rather than the disciplinary one focused on the body, is centred on life in general. Biopolitics is concerned with knowledge and power in different ways from the precedent disciplinary regime; disciplinary regimes did indeed operate through a mechanism of individualization, putting the individual in a state of constant visibility and surveillance, where power is decentralized to many different institutions like schools, hospitals, prisons and factories, and processes of normativization take place. Biopolitics on the other hand exercises a form of power that acts on a multiple body, a power concerning processes of birth, death, reproduction and illness that are now faced as political economical problems which are read through their own level of generality and visibilized through statistics and overall measures.⁸

Biopolitics then constitutes a shift from an individual to a multiple body, it “deals with population, with the population as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as a power's problem”.⁹ The mechanisms that are operating are differently characterized: discipline is replaced by regularization, “security mechanisms have to be installed around the random element inherent in a population of living beings so as to optimize a state of life”.¹⁰ This new form of power deals with life and death throughout regularization processes and “consist[s] in making live and letting die”,¹¹ if the sovereign power then consisted in the power of making die and letting live, in a dimension in which giving death was an exercise of power, or better stated a transition from one form of power to another, according to Foucault, it is now outside of power relations, “power literally ignores death”.¹² Foucault then conceptualizes and introduces racism as having a fundamental role to “regulate the distribution of death and to make possible murderous functions of the state”. It is, he says, “the condition for the acceptability of putting to death”.¹³ According to him, the modern state has a murderous function and is based on the exercise of the right to kill, which according to Achille Mbembe defines sovereignty.¹⁴ Mbembe's work explores further the relationship between resistance, sacrifice and terror and enlarges the concept of biopower, for he considers it no longer to be sufficient to describe the complex

⁷Michel Foucault, “Lecture 17 March 1976”, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976*, (New York: Picador, (2003), 242.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 245.

¹⁰Ibid., 246.

¹¹Ibid., 247.

¹²Ibid., 248.

¹³ Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics”, *Public Culture*, 15, no. 1 (2003), 17.

¹⁴ Ibid., 16.

contemporary forms of subjugation. He enlarges Foucaultian analysis through the introduction of the notion of “necropolitic”¹⁵ he relates the concept of biopower to “state of emergency” and “state of siege”¹⁶ in the attempt to demonstrate how politics is inextricably bound to death. Out of classical political philosophy based on the idea of the existence of a rational independent subject constructed as having free will and the possibility of making a choice, who lives under a social contract which found its basis in the “need to avoid death”,¹⁷ in his analysis “sovereignty calls for the risk of death”,¹⁸ politics and state being constructed on actual death and the exercise of violence. With the introduction of the state of exception and the “relation of enmity”¹⁹ the state’s right to kill is reaffirmed and a new conception of security and life conditions comes about: “the perception of the existence of the Other as an attempt on my life, as a mortal threat or an absolute danger whose biophysical elimination would strengthen my potential to life and security”.²⁰ Mbembe deals with the example of a plantation as a state of exception in which an absolute domination took place and with colony as a space in which a “power outside the law” was exercised. Sovereignty became the exercise of a decision about a state of exception, in which the law was also “legitimately” suspended, “violence constituted the original form of the right”.²¹ If Foucault, then, underlines a passage from a system of power which has sovereignty over death to a system of regularization of life,²² Mbembe reveals the fundamental bond between sovereignty and death, politics and death, out of narratives of reason and rights belonging to the modernity discourse within political philosophy: “politics in this case, is not the forward dialectical movement of reason. Politics can only be traced as a spiral transgression, as the difference that disorients the very idea of the limit. More specifically, politics is the difference put into play by the violation of a taboo”.²³ According to him, “power continuously refers and appeals to exception, emergency, and a fictionalized notion of the enemy. It also labours to produce the same exception emergency, and fictionalized enemy”.²⁴ Butler in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* explores further the characteristic of sovereignty in relation to the “war on terrorism” framework, post-9/11, and offers an analysis of it within counter-terrorist measures and narratives. Specifically dealing with the Guantánamo Bay case and “indefinite detention”,²⁵ she explores a new different mode of the operation of power in

15 Ibid., 11–40.

16 Ibid., 16.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 16.

19 Ibid., 16.

20 Ibid., 18.

21 Ibid., 25.

22 Foucault, “Lecture 17” March 1976” Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976, New York, Picador, (2003), 249.

23 Mbembe, “Necropolitics”, 16.

24 Ibid.

25 Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 50.

which sovereignty and governmentality overlap, not just acting simultaneously, but reconfiguring themselves throughout war prisons.

Butler makes visible how “sovereignty is exercised in the act of suspension”²⁶ of the law and how “governmentality denotes an operation of administration power that is extralegal”,²⁷ that it is in emergency situations that sovereign power is revitalized. The war on terror with its policies and narratives of national security and alert has created an ideal condition for the display of an executive power which decides about emergency situations, the Guantánamo Bay case and the detention of prisoners “suspected of being terrorists” being a clear example of this. As Butler writes:

The decision to detain, to continue to detain someone indefinitely is a unilateral judgment made by government officials who simply deem that a given individual or, indeed, a group poses a danger to the state. This act of “deeming” takes place in the context of a declared state of emergency in which the state exercises prerogatory power that involves the suspension of law, including due process for these individuals. The act is warranted by the one who acts, and the “deeming” of someone as dangerous is sufficient to make the person dangerous and to justify his indefinite detention.²⁸

This act of suspension of the law is then related to the dimension of exception. It was the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben who explored this further and read the Guantanamo Bay case as exemplifying what he called a “state of exception”.²⁹ Agamben specifically deals with the “state of exception” as positioned at the “limit between politics and law”,³⁰ and he reconstructs its historical development from the French Constituent Assembly's decree in 1791 which transferred big decisions power from the civil authority to the military command. The development of the state of exception underwent a significant acceleration during the Franco-Prussian War and the insurrection of the Commune, even if it was during World War I that a permanent state of exception was established in most of the countries participating,³¹ “it was during this period that exceptional legislation by executive [governmental] decree ... became a regular practice in the European democracies”.³² The situation of the state of exception continued to function throughout fascism and Nazism. In Italy in 1926 the Fascist regime emanated a law regulating law-decrees and emergencies, which were necessity situations³³ that, due to a complete loss of autonomy of parliament, eclipsed the legislative in favour of the executive.

26 Ibid.,55

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 59.

29 Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

30 Ibid., 1.

31 Ibid., 12.

32 Ibid., 13.

33 Ibid., 17.

In Germany it was through article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, which enabled the president to re-establish order and security in the country by suspending the constitution itself, that made it easier for Hitler to take power completely over a period that could be considered a 12-year state of exception. What Agamben has defined as “a zone of absolute indeterminacy between anomie and law, in which the sphere of creatures and the juridical order are caught up in a single catastrophe”³⁴ defines contemporary neoliberal society as the essence of power and government. According to Agamben a new state configuration, defined as a “security state”,³⁵ is emerging. With anti-terrorist laws inserted in a succession of states of emergency, constantly strengthened by newly fabricated “threats”, this state legitimises wars, border closing operations and the emergence of external and internal enemies. Security measures expand and the language and discursive device of terrorism is widely used as a powerful tool to increase surveillance and reconfigure spaces of control and punishment:

the security we are talking about today is not aimed at preventing terrorist acts (a thing very difficult, if not impossible, because of the fact that security measures are effective exclusively when the attack has already happened and because terrorism for its own definition is an attack without notification), but it's aimed at establishing a new type of relationship among people, based on a generalized and unlimited control: particular attention on the devices that permit a total control of information data and citizens' communications, including the possibility of having access, entirely, to the content of personal computers. *[la sicurezza di cui si parla oggi non mira affatto a prevenire gli atti di terrorismo (cosa peraltro molto difficile, se non impossibile, dato che le misure di sicurezza sono efficaci solo ad attacco avvenuto e dato che il terrorismo è per definizione un attacco senza preavviso), ma mira a stabilire un nuovo tipo di rapporti fra le persone, basato su un controllo generalizzato e illimitato: dal che l'attenzione particolare sui dispositivi che permettono un controllo totale dei dati informatici e delle comunicazioni dei cittadini, compresa la possibilità di accedere integralmente al contenuto dei computer personali.]*³⁶

The process of establishing a new relationship among people based on a securitarian and invasive paradigm of extended surveillance – the process of moving toward a security state, toward a society haunted by the “monster of control”³⁷ as Deleuze defined it – is productive of the neoliberal

34 Agamben, *State of Exception*, 57.

35 Giorgio Agamben, “Zona grigia che preparano dittatura” in comune info, 10 January 2016, translated by Martino Laurenti. original source: “De l’Etat de droit à l’Etat de sécurité”, lemonde.fr., <http://comune-info.net/2016/01/democrazia-dittature/>

36 Ibid.

37 Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, October, 59, (1992) : 3–7.

definition of new subjects of power, notions and practices of government in relation to a temporality of exception:

The temporality of exception is one that seeks to conceal itself; the frenzied mode of emergency is an alibi for the quiet certitude of a slowly normativized working paradigm of liberal democratic government, an alibi necessary to disavow its linkages to totalitarian governments.³⁸

It is indeed an interplay of urgent dynamics which allows for a certain construction of normativity which defines the neoliberal government in opposition, or at least as dissociated from the totalitarian regimes which constitute its main point of origin.

This specific reading of the combination of biopolitics and necropolitics in the dimension of exception which makes visible the essence and ways of operating of power in contemporary Western regimes which will be relevant later when we explore measures of repression and the denial of physical and discursive spaces to social movements in the Italian case. It is through the dimension of emergency and exception that certain structures and narratives of exploitation and oppression take place in ways different to the past, which is really relevant to exploring how narratives and structures of domination have changed within the illusionary frames of “democracy”; it is also relevant to know which mechanisms of violence are hidden from the mainstream and which are then more easily justified in emergency situations; specifically, which one is the place of struggles and resistance within a completely changed political scenario. Feminist and queer struggles are also affected by a state of exception as are all other subjects taking part in socio-political struggle; in the Italian context this occurs by different dynamics of construction of dangerousness which the neoliberal state narratives exploit for their own purpose and interest, as I will try to show later through the case study of a queer and feminist squat in Italy. It will also be important, later, to go deep into the connection between terror, queer and struggles, to have a framework to read concepts of threat and danger, as part of a world in which security and emergency are the governing devices.

Constructions of dangerousness and crime in the time of terrorism

I'd like to explore here the range of connections among permanent states of exception in securitarian state paradigms and constructions of terrorism and dangerousness which redefine notions of violence, enemy and life within neoliberalism. As Ponzanesi writes in *Gender, Globalization and Violence*:

³⁸Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (: Duke University Press, 2007), 9.

The term *terrorism* stems from the French Revolution, when the Jacobin instigated hundreds of civilian deaths. Terrorism is generally understood as any use of violence that also targets civilians and that is motivated by political goals. Yet terrorism is a much instrumentalized and flexible concept and its application and definition depend not only on the nature of the violence and the target themselves, but on the legitimacy attributed to state violation. It has, therefore, in the course of time become an instrument of propaganda and persuasion, very much part of the mediatic exploitation and communication rhetoric of governments and political organization.³⁹

The attempt of attribution of terrorism has been politically used and constructed throughout media campaigns to spread fear and construct “threat”. As Agamben writes, the security state has a systemic relation with terrorism: “if the State needs fear to legitimate itself, then it is necessary to provoke terror, or, in the best of the hypothesis, don't obstruct it”.⁴⁰

This usage of terrorism, of suspected terrorism, has been explored by Butler, who, in her analysis of the construction of acts of terror, underlines how certain specific groups, actions or exercises of violence are labelled as terrorist within a public sphere already organized around exclusionary frames of what can be said and what can be shown. The way in which the public debate itself is framed has to do with hegemonic ideas – of what constitutes a legitimate political position, which subjects and lives are valuable and which deaths count as such – and with the way certain stories are told and the narrative perspective used.⁴¹ A certain “toxic narration”⁴² is being used to construct and reproduce patterns of intelligibility which work to remove complexity and attribute specific faces and images to terrorism and political violence. As an Italian collective of writers, Wu Ming, has shown:

To become a “toxic narration”, a story should be narrated always from the same point of view, in the same way and with the same words, always omitting the same details, always removing the same elements of context and complexity. It's always toxic narration the story that the oppressors tell to the oppressed to justify oppression, that the exploiter tells to the exploited to justify the exploitation, that the rich people tell to the poor people to justify wealth.

[Per diventare “narrazione tossica”, una storia deve essere raccontata sempre dallo stesso

39 Sandra Ponzanesi, 2014. “Introduction: New Frames of Gendered Violence”. In *Gender, Globalization and Violence*. Edited by Sandra Ponzanesi. (New York: Routledge, 2014),. 10.

40 Giorgio Agamben, “Zona grigie che preparano dittatura”. in comune info, 10 January 2016. Translated by Martino Laurenti. Original source: “De l’Etat de droit à l’Etat de sécurité”, lemonde.fr, <http://comune-info.net/2016/01/democrazia-dittature/>

41 Butler, *Precarious Life*.

42 Wu Ming. “Storie #notav. Un anno e mezzo nella vita di Marco Bruno”, 1 July 2013. <http://www.wumingfoundation.com/giap/?p=13512>.

punto di vista, nello stesso modo e con le stesse parole, omettendo sempre gli stessi dettagli, rimuovendo gli stessi elementi di contesto e complessità. E' sempre narrazione tossica la storia che gli oppressori raccontano agli oppressi per giustificare l'oppressione, che gli sfruttatori raccontano agli sfruttati per giustificare lo sfruttamento, che i ricchi raccontano ai poveri per giustificare la ricchezza.]⁴³

The way in which terrorism is narrated has big implications in terms of what we get to consider as dangerous and criminal and also affects social and political dissidence in terms of experiencing repression, stigmatization and systemic structural violence. To give a broader definition of terrorism that removes aspects of complexity means also to rely on a certain notion of dangerousness, as was the case for Guantánamo Bay, that differs from attribution of guilt, to the point that the state of exception operates as if it were limitless as well as what can be inserted into the definition of terrorism:

The infinite paranoia that imagines the war against terrorism as a war without end will be the one that justifies itself endlessly in relation to the spectral infinity of its enemy, regardless of whether or not there are established grounds to suspect the continuing operation of terror cells with violent aims.⁴⁴

The terrorist definition becomes potential, meaning that certain bodies, subjectivities and lives become, in a gendered and racialized framework, enemies. A certain imposition of rationality exploiting the space within the suspension of the law takes place to make some lives completely unlivable. Silvia Federici has described in *Caliban and the Witch* what (if yet in a completely different socio-political and historical setting) happened with the witch-hunting during the advent of early capitalism in Europe. What is interesting in her analysis of the imposition of “disenchantment” to produce domination⁴⁵ is the fact that the issue was not in “the punishment of any specific transgressions than in the elimination of generalized forms of female behaviour which they no longer tolerated”.⁴⁶...this is demonstrated by the fact that “witchcraft was made a _crimen exceptum, that is, a crime to be investigated by any means, torture included and it was punishable even in the absence of any proven damage to persons and things”;⁴⁷; the targets “were not socially recognized crimes, but previously accepted practices and groups of individuals that had to be eradicated from the community, through terror and criminalization”.⁴⁸. Since the advent of early

43Ibid.

44 Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 34.

45 Silvia Federici, “Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation”(Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2004).

46Ibid., 170

47Ibid., 170

48Ibid.

capitalism and the imposition of technical rationality to develop productive systems and hierarchies of exploitation, a certain form of punishments was developed, a punishment that didn't require any proof to be activated, a crime that didn't necessarily have to be verified as such. The *Caliban and the Witch* represents a clear example of the overlapping of capital accumulation needs with a process of systematic oppression and the elimination of women's lives, together with a process of taming of their sexuality within the erasing of forms of lives and behaviours that could not fit anymore into the new economical and political system. The elimination passes first throughout the criminalization and the constructions of new categories of crimes and new figures in the public sphere (in this case witches), identified as enemies within the social setting and as dangerous. This process of criminalization of people's lives and behaviour, throughout stigmatization first and then repression, is a constants which we will come across again later in the case study; if yet with different dynamics and a completely changed political setting, which it shows an historical legacy within the exercise of power, able to decide – previously according to early capitalism before and then neoliberalism after – which subjects need to be eradicated from the community according to always new criteria of constructions of deviance and dangerousness.

The next section is concerned with the relationship between queer and terrorism constructions in the attempt at conceptualizing queer bodies and subjectivities as occupying the position of terrorists within heteronormative patriarchal society and with the purpose of exploring what is queer about terrorism and which paradigms of the potential terrorist are being developed in relation to gender and sexuality. The reading of terrorism and the construction of the enemy just presented is part of a bigger frame of economical, political and social domination that affects hegemonic structures of meaning about the role of power and the role of resistance in our society. In the Italian case it becomes really important in so far as these discursive strategies have material implications in terms of the political spaces of actions in processes of social change and the disruption of power structures, and in terms of punishment and oppression regarding subjects involved in the struggle.

Terrorism, bioterrorism and queer

Exploring the relationship between queer and terrorism represents an important step toward the understanding of power as well as articulating resistance in neoliberal society. It contributes to an understanding of how to challenge narratives of power, starting from an awareness about the position we are occupying or we might occupy, within a more complex network of discourses that overlap each other, as queer and dissident political subjectivities.

Puar in *Terrorist Assemblages* has been reworking biopolitics in a way that underlines the

link between queer and terror, through the creation of a space for complexifying queer narratives as traditionally developed in their relation to actual death and violence. She seeks for the regulatory power of biopolitics in relation to queerness within the post-9/11 framework.

She underlines within the state of exception discourse the process throughout which:

the exception insidiously becomes the rule, and the exceptional is normalized as a regulatory ideal or frame; the exceptional is the excellence that exceeds the parameters of proper subjecthood and, by doing so, redefines these parameters to then normativize and render invisible (yet transparent) its own excellence or singularity.⁴⁹

This process of normalization of the exception for Puar has to do with queerness in so far as the war on terrorism has produced a normalized white queer liberal identity in opposition to the figure of the Muslim terrorist; in general it has opposed fictitious, modern and secular spaces of freedom and LGBT rights to a backward and religious dimension of otherness embedded in notions of ethnicity and race. Puar constructs connections between the assimilation and normativization of queer liberal identities in the US context and the logic of war, the new devices of surveillance and control, and the geopolitical dynamics concerning the neoliberal framework of the war on terror. If queer theory has represented queer subjects as experiencing violence, death and oppression, it is also true that, in this specific historical-social context, biopolitics is producing a regulation of queer life in so far as queer identity can be commodified and can serve a national rhetoric of dominance, policies of war and can mobilize a patriotic feeling of belonging to a supposedly developed and progressive “West”.

This process is made possible by the dimension of the state of exception which is producing the need for a discursive removal of the violence acted on the base of race, ethnicity and religion to glorify state intervention of death and surveillance and to legitimize neoliberal ideas of democracy by the inclusion of new subjectivities in so far as they serve the rhetoric of domination at the expense of the exploitation of others. But the more urgent question that Puar poses regards the investigation of the connection between queer and terrorist:

It is not then, that we must engage in the practice of excavating the queer terrorist or queering the terrorist; rather queerness is always already installed in the project of naming the terrorist; the terrorist does not appear as such without the concurrent entrance of perversity, deviance, deformity.⁵⁰

The emerging academic field of terrorist studies has taken an active part in organizing counter-terrorist practices of surveillance and control of individuals through police forces and military

49 Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 9.

50 Jasbir K. Puar, “Queer Times, Queer Assemblages”, *Social Text*, 23, nos. 3–4, 84–8, (2005), 127

involvement at the service of states and has been focused on the concepts of abnormality and psychopathology; a big effort has been made to describe “the terrorist 'mindset'”⁵¹ and the supposed disturbance of personality, deviance as being the origin of terrorist acts:

today the knowledge and form of power that is mobilized to analyze, taxonomize, psychologize, and defeat terrorism has a genealogical connection to the West's abnormals, and specifically those premodern monsters that Western civilization had seemed to bury and lay to rest long ago.⁵²

If we then recognize the Western construction of the concept of abnormality as always tied to sexual perversion and sexuality in general, terrorism and terrorist narratives completely fall into the regulatory frame of deviance connected to queerness.

As Puar again stresses: “queerness as sexual deviancy is tied to the monstrous figure of the terrorist as a way to otherize and quarantine subjects classified as 'terrorists', but also to normalize and discipline a population through these very monstrous figures”.⁵³ This device of production of deviance and monstrosity is connected with the figure of the delinquent, which is deeply rooted in the construction of knowledge about cultures, races and ideas of nations.⁵⁴ It has a genealogy within Western techno-scientific and medicalized knowledge production on anxieties regarding certain bodies and subjects that escaped normativity: in the moment in which a certain disciplining process started to emerge, the violent operation of “correcting” certain individuals developed together with the process of constructing monstrosity and consequentially normality as in opposition to, or in a relation of tension with, it.

Similarly José Esteban Muñoz throughout the notion of aesthetic terrorism in reference to Vaginal Davis's drag has been claimed the “terrorist” in her performances as the reproduction of the “nation's internal terrors around race, gender and sexuality”.⁵⁵

The whole history of queer movements in the Western countries, as well as the usage of the term and the critical appropriation of it, has become contaminated by an operation of locating within terrorism, a space in which is made visible how the apparatus of the production of the norms is operating.

It was throughout a wider critique of the concept of normality that queer could become an inclusive term defining a set of practices and political projects focusing on the disruption of

51 Jasbir K. Puar and Rai S. Amit, “Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots”, *Social Text* 22, no. 3, 72, (2002), 122.

52 Ibid., 124.

53 Ibid., 126.

54 Ibid., 121.

55 José E. Muñoz, “The White to Be Angry: Vaginal Davis's Terrorist Drag”, *Social Text*, 52/53, 15, nos 3–4, (1997), 91.

structures of power that are not just acting on bodies, but are constructing and defining them throughout exclusion from different hegemonic notions of whiteness, heteronormativity, masculinity and so on. Queer struggles were involved in a creative process of radical opposition and different meaning-building, different epistemologies for reading a reality that is complexifying its narratives and appropriating struggles within the commodification and concession of spaces of legitimacy which requires normalization, assimilation and complicity with patriarchal capitalism. As Michael Warner writes: “the insistence on “queer” – a term initially generated in the context of terror- – has the effect of pointing out a wide field of normalization, rather than simple intolerance, as the site of violence”;⁵⁶ and “queer gets a critical edge by defining itself against the normal”⁵⁷. Moreover, queer theory and politics have been connected to terrorist notions in so far as they have been refused a given place in society or, as again Warner pointed out following Arendt, opposing society itself,⁵⁸ which has made visible “not just the normal behaviour of the social but the *idea* of normal behaviour”.⁵⁹ Queers confronted an entire set of regulations and the cages into which individuals were forced, questioning the devices throughout which marginalization and oppression were built:

Every person who comes to a queer self-understanding knows in one way or another that her stigmatization is connected with gender, the family, notions of individual freedom, the state, public speech, consumption and desire, nature and culture, maturation, reproductive politics, racial and national fantasy, class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence, health care, and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body.⁶⁰

In this sense the connection among terror and queer could be identified in the capacity of calling into question concepts of violence, criminality, the opposition between legality and illegality built upon sanctioning who is allowed to live and who has to die, whose bodies can inhabit the public sphere and in which ways, which practices and attitudes are respected and accepted and which ones are not. A question that arises from here then is how the idea of potential terrorist has been extended to include queer subjects and why the process of calling into question the normal is tied to the notion of terrorism., what has made queer as criminal, and which kind of devices are operating in these specific constructions. Preciado in *Testo Junkie* describes the neoliberal society as a pharmacopornographic regime in which subjectivities are shaped by a complex interplay of

⁵⁶Michael Warner, “Introduction”. In *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxvi.

⁵⁷ Ibid.,xxvi

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., xiii.

substances which worked to blurred any border between what was once considered biological and socially constructed. He explores gender as a technology which is shaped by hormones, chemicals, biotechnologies, global media and other apparatus of representation of truth in general. He shows how sexual and gender identity are biopolitical fictions, how the contemporary regimes of power have been called into question the continuity between femininity and reproduction, and how the transformation of pornography into popular culture and chemical interventions have not just completely reshaped our understanding of sex and gender but have also produced them, revealing the fallacies of a pure notion of femininity and masculinity as it was constructed in previous regimes of power.

From here, the proposal of enacting an operation of “gender bioterrorism”⁶¹, an operation of disruption which passes throughout experimentation and invention as opposed to a mere deconstruction, the idea of identity as a fiction opens up spaces of creation within different epistemological frameworks which connect life and the self to the struggle, that reinvents and disrupts boundaries, which is terrorist in so far as it strikes the regimes of power operating within our bodies. As Preciado writes:

We speak another language. They say representation. We say experimentation. They say identity. We say multitude...in the new Europe, the market is the only reason of government whose only function is now to recreate the fiction of national identity on the basis of securitarian fear⁶².

Gender bioterrorism is then a way to deal with contemporary regimes of power, securitarian devices, surveillance techniques, normalization processes imposed on our bodies and queer assimilation within the hegemonic discourse. What Preciado suggests is an overcoming of identity politics which starts from the experimentation, which focuses on practices, a refusal of the “courage that is required to maintain the norm”.⁶³ This is relevant to consider later the development of the queer feminist struggle within the broader frames of critique of the notion of norm, as critical projects that are connecting and disrupting the hegemonic understanding of culture, nations, borders, ideas and notions of market and capitalism. It is relevant to push the limit of our possibility of inventing and experimenting within dissident projects and to see the fundamental importance of the connection between different struggles.

61 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, trans. Bruce Benderson (: The Feminist Press, 2013), 12.

62 Paul B. Preciado, “We say revolution”. 26 January 2013. Translated by Tiziana Terranova. www.uninomade.org/we-say-revolution/

63 Paul B. Preciado, “The courage of being one’s self”, 3 December 2014;. original source : “Liberation”, 21 November 2014, <http://autonomies.org/en/2014/12/the-courage-of-being-ones-self-beatriz-preciado/>.

Transfeminismos and the processes of infecting normativity

Analysing queerness and what comes to be constructed as terrorist within resistance processes makes necessary the focus on practices as well as the knowledge produced throughout them. To do this is important to look at the way in which in certain countries a big effort has been made to reconfigures the struggles and the ways of naming them in order to face those dynamics belonging to the socio-political context they were occupying, if only in a transnational perspective. It is also important to introduce “Transnfeminismos”⁶⁴ for its capacity of constituting a relevant tool to read the disruption of heteronormativity within an activist perspective and for creating new spaces for thinking and creating within struggles.

In the book *Transfeminismos*⁶⁵ the focus on practices and the shift in the way of constructing politics emerges through a collection of experiences from activists and spaces of struggle; the aim of the usage of the term “transfeminismos”, instead of queer, is an operation of geopolitical dislocation of the term, to make it reflect closer and in a more conscious way the dynamics of power and resistance proper to southern European countries and specifically Spain. As explained in the book there is a clear attempt at operating a denouncing of oppressive conditions which crosses the margins within the awareness of processes of commercialization, institutionalization and the depoliticization of the LGBT world that always overlaps with more oppressive migration laws, the expropriation of workers rights and the stigmatization and marginalization of sex workers.⁶⁶ From here the need to explore networks and connections developed around political projects and not identities is an attempt to reappropriate the neglected desire, to make it central to the politics of sexual dissidence which includes many different struggles and that creates a space of contamination among them. Transfeminism was born at the intersection of different discourses around gender, sexuality and heteronormativity as a political-economical system of domination, but also around artistic and activist experimentations on bodies and politics like pornoterrorism, pornopunk feminism, feminist hacktivism and DIY practices. From different experiences coming together:

in this context, we see as necessary to bring to the public space – the most identitarian (LGBT) and even the supposedly liberated (CSO) – all these concerns about sex, gender and pornography ... We want to function as a grenade that explodes where you least expect it.

[en este contexto, vimos necesario llevar al espacio publico – al mas identitario (LGBT) e

64Miriam Solà and Elena Urko, “*Transfeminismos Epistemes, fricciones y flujos*”. (: Txalaparta, (2013).

65Ibid.

66Ibid.

*incluso al supuestamente liberado (CSO) – todas estas inquietudes respecto al sexo, al género y a la pornografía...Queríamos funcionar como una granada que explota donde menos te lo esperas.]*⁶⁷

The narrative and discourse revolving around an “explosion”, around the idea of a powerful act of disruption that interrupts the linearity of a common sense necessary to reproduce the norm, is stressed throughout the book and is bringing about an interesting perspective for reading knowledge and power differently. The letters “trans” before feminism works as a mechanism of signification that attributes meaning related to the transgender and transsexuals struggle but also indicates a set of practices and an epistemological approach that is in continuous transformation, which is transdisciplinary, transnational (with the awareness of how different cultural contexts invented differently strategies of resistance) and in transition. Transfeminismo raises and locates itself from the margin and resignifies them, acting as an operation of de-centralization of the knowledge from the academy; knowledge became a tool and also circulates and contaminates because it arises from practices.

In this sense the transversality of such an epistemological approach is terrorist, terrorist is the action or the set of actions, the explosion of differences in the gears of power, but also the process of infecting with viruses, the hacking of physical and imaginative spaces. Transfeminism in Spain, as like in Italy is dealing with a state of exception and securitarian devices by acting throughout its own terrorist processes of contamination, with what I suggest, become a terrorist resignification of a rhizomatic disruption. The act of creating knowledge from and throughout bodies and life experiences makes central the processes of transformation but also constructs struggles as a space of experimentation which is bringing pleasure, desire and joy as the main point. The act of deconstructing narratives of struggle is significant in itself in so far as, as Preciado wrote discourses of “courage” are necessary to reproduce the norm

Sex and sexuality are not the essential property of the subject, but rather the product of various social and discursive technologies, of the political practices managing truth and life. It is the product of your courage...Keep this courage then for yourselves. For your marriages and your divorces, your deceptions and your lies, your families, your maternity, your children and grandchildren. Keep the courage that is required to maintain the norm. The cold-blooded loan of your bodies to the incessant process of regulated repetition. Courage, like violence and silence, like force and order, is on your side.⁶⁸

In this sense the definition of terrorism shifts from a socio-political hegemonic understanding of the

⁶⁷Ibid., 195.

⁶⁸Preciado, “The courage of being one’s self”

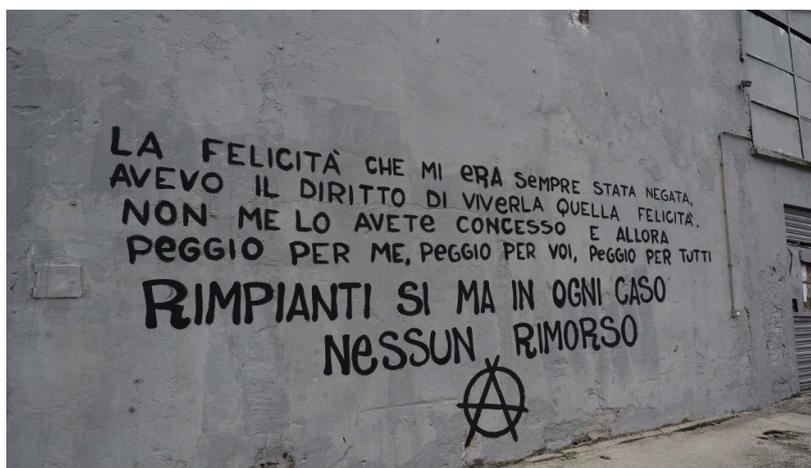
term and the acts as violent to a set of practices or acts that are perceived as violent because they are operating a disruption, a clear opposition to the norm, in this sense potentially terrorist within spaces of struggle is whoever claims the lack of courage necessary to the reproduction of hegemonic discourses, the refusal and the decision of acting with political awareness on this refusal, the denouncing and the consequent creation of viruses that are blocking or subverting the system, if yet with different strategies and methods.

What emerges from this chapter is the existent interconnection in neoliberal capitalist society between different types of domination, the opening up of new spaces of surveillance, control and repression granted by a state of exception and emergencial narratives, and what can be terroristically defined within the security state we are living in. The chapter explored further the connection between terrorism and queer, as they have been analysed by different authors, to underline how terrorist concepts have been thought and constructed in relation to apparatus that construct the norm in which political dissidence occupies a space of opposition.

In the next chapter I will introduce the Italian socio-political context. I aim there to offer a framework and at the same time an overview of the mechanism of surveillance and repression of political subjectivities. I will explore both on the legislative and discursive level the effort that has been made to describe social movements as terrorist and introduce the long legacy of using the term at the expense of individuals and groups involved in social and political transformation.

Chapter 2

“Repression is Civilization”⁶⁹



(Iguana picture, Repubblica Bologna.it, 13 March 2016,
<http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/03/13/foto/blu-135385121/1/#1>)

The happiness that you always denied to me, I had the right to live that happiness. You didn't let me and then worst for me, worst for you, worst for everybody. Regrets yes but anyway no remorse.⁷⁰

Italy as a laboratory of social control and political repression

The indefinite expansion of emergency state and security measures all around Europe has been configured as a powerful tool of repression of socio-political movements and struggles: the dynamics of criminalization of political dissent have become more and more sophisticated thanks to the rearrangement of national and international laws for the purpose of disintegrating physical and

69 Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion, 1970, “Repression is civilization”, 3 April 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIXa3wX-j4M.

70 My translation from a writing by a famous Italian street artist, Blu. It appeared out of a Squat in Bologna and is an extract from Pino Cacucci's book: “*In Any Case No Regret*”, specifically the quotation regards the story of Jules Bonnot, the French anarchist. This writing appeared as a form of protest against the privatization and capitalization of street art in Bologna, together with the artist's effort of deleting all of his work from the walls of the city. (<http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/03/13/foto/blu-135385121/1/#1m>).

discursive spaces of resistance. The Italian context has been a really peculiar political setting for the experimenting with different “emergency circumstances”; as a reaction to the 1968 struggle and more, a lot of institutional effort has been focused on what was constructed as the “defense of the democratic public order” from “political violence” and “terrorism”.⁷¹

Moreover, within a state of emergency we can identify different types. The Italian context has been used in the past and is continuing to use what has been defined as a judiciary state of exception,⁷² which differs from the French case in which the emergency state had been introduced in the constitution, which created a hybrid model in which regular law and special rules co-habited.⁷³ After the Fascist period, there was a decision of not putting a state of emergency in the constitution, though this didn't impede the application of special laws. Starting from the 1970s then, a complex set of legislation has defined political dissidence and subversion of the “democratic order” as the main target of police brutality, carceral measures and control of the population:

From the emergence par excellence which was the so-called fight against terrorism, that produced the special legislation still in force, a succession of emergency took place. In this sense Italy has served as a laboratory, during the process of European integration, of dynamics of repression and social control.

[Dall'emergenza per antonomasia che è stata la cosiddetta lotta al terrorismo, che ha prodotto la legislazione speciale ancora oggi vigente, è stato un susseguirsi di emergenze. In questo senso l'Italia è servita da laboratorio durante il processo di integrazione europea delle dinamiche di repressione e controllo sociale.]⁷⁴

This chapter is going to focus, specifically, on the analysis of special legislation, repressive measures in the Italian context overlapping with international laws, and the media campaigns currently operating to define and construct terrorism as tied to the actions and struggles of social movements with the mobilization of a collective imaginary about concepts of “threat”, “danger” and “violence”. The choice of dealing with legislation and legal frames of terrorism definitions, both on an Italian level and briefly on an international one, comes from the need to offer a broader and deeper understanding of the specificity of the Italian context, a specificity deeply rooted in its recent past and political history. I believe this is important so as to give some idea about how the post-9/11 dynamics, laws, security and repressive measures interacted with a series of states of emergency

71 Italo di Sabato, “Dalla Legge real al pacchetto sicurezza 35 anni di legislazione speciale”, Osservatorio sulla Repressione, December 2009, 2., <https://files.acrobat.com/a/preview/6ae81b45-7024-4fd7-a393-cbc20df0056d>.

72 Paolo Persichetti, “Se nello Stato di Diritto si annida l'eccezione”, *Insorgenze*, 18 September 2006, <http://insorgenze.net/2016/01/14/se-nello-stato-di-diritto-si-annida-leccezione/>.

73 Ibid.

74 Italo di Sabato, Elenora Forenza. “Europa, stato di eccezione permanente”, Osservatorio Repressione, 18 January 2016. original source: il manifesto, 15 January 2016. <http://www.osservatoriorepressione.info/europa-stato-di-eccezione-permanente/>

already operative in Italy, already used because of their being political terrains of silencing, repressing, contrasting and destroying social and political struggles. Italian legal and political-institutional discourse has experienced and constructed terrorism as something tied to struggle and social movements; this happened in a way that, with a continuity from the 1970s, such movements are facing major criminalization in terms of penalties, legal consequences and ways of being depicted and constructed within mainstream discourse.

Italian special legislation and legislation on terrorism

In 1975, the Reale Law represented the beginning of the so-called “special law”, which implied an enforcement of police powers or specifically extended the cases which would have been considered legitimate usage of weapons by the security force and granted a sort of impunity for the police officers. It also made possible personal search without proper authorization and the prohibition of taking part in demonstrations with a covered face.⁷⁵

It was with the decree law of 1979, then converted into what was called “Cossiga Law” in 1980, that the category of terrorism officially enters the criminal law.⁷⁶ The Cossiga⁷⁷ Law, created right after the kidnapping of Aldo Moro, an Italian politician from the Christian Democrat Party⁷⁸ by the Red Brigades, reflects all the state anxieties about the maintenance of an order that is apparently shaking and specifically about the necessity of shutting down or rendering harder to conduct political disobedience in all its forms. The Cossiga Law implied a lot of measures. Article 3, the crime of “association with the aim of terrorism and the destruction of the democratic order”,⁷⁹ made possible the substantial conviction of four to eight years in jail for those taking part in terrorist acts and seven to fifteen years for those organizing them.⁸⁰ Other articles concern preventive detention for individuals suspected of being on the verge of committing a crime, the extension of powers of search for “urgent cases” (which effectively means violation of individual privacy at a

75 Italo di Sabato, “Dalla Legge”, real al pacchetto sicurezza 35 anni di legislazione speciale”, Osservatorio sulla Repressione , December 2009, 2–3..<https://files.acrobat.com/a/preview/6ae81b45-7024-4fd7-a393-cbc20df0056d>

76 “Terrorizzare e Reprimere il terrorismo come strumento repressivo in continua estensione”, Prison Break Project, Osservatorio sulla Repressione, July 2014, 25, http://www.osservatoriorepressione.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PBP_terrorizzare_reprimere.pdf .

77 Cossiga was an Italian politician of the Christian Democrat party. He was the Prime Minister of Italy from 1979 to 1980 and President of Italy from 1985 to 1992 and led one of the most cruel regimes of repression and police violence.

78 The Christian Democrat Party was a political party founded in 1943, a Catholic traditionalist centrist party which comprised both right and left political factions. It was involved in many cases of corruptions.

79 My translation of “Associazione ai fini di terrorismo e distruzione dell'ordine democratico”, “Legge Cossiga ed altre nefandezze” in Nemici dello Stato criminali, “mostri” “e leggi speciali nella società del controllo. Luther Blisset project, http://www.lutherblisset.net/archive/078-03_it.html

80 “Legge Cossiga ed altre nefandezze” in Nemici dello Stato criminali, “mostri” “e leggi speciali nella società del controllo., Luther Blisset project, www.lutherblisset.net/archive/078-03_it.html.

higher level) and the expansion of precautionary imprisonment for cases regarding terrorism. This law has the concrete effect of creating a “total psychological war” through the spectacularization of associative crime,⁸¹ pointing out the public enemy, causing scaremongering and extending social control to whoever refuses the dominant ideology (*guerra psicologica totale attraverso la spettacolarizzazione del reato associativo: si addita il nemico pubblico, si scatena l'allarmismo e si estende il controllo sociale su chiunque rifiuti l'ideologia dominante*).⁸² The Cossiga Law, peculiar in its capacity for redefining punishment on the basis of “terrorist purpose”,⁸³ falls into the category of the political crime and, thanks to the inherited Italian Fascist penal code, is considered (in terms of punishment) worse than so-called “common crime”. What has happened then is a redefinition of the description of terrorism as a purpose and not a conduct:

Giving centrality to purposes to the detriment of acts constitutes the peak of a process of subjectivation of penal judgment and represents a founding element of the “penal law of the enemy”. What activates the infernal circle of emergency penalty is not, indeed the objective seriousness of a concretely actualized behaviour, but its eventual connection with a revolutionary project or anyway with a vision of the world which is incompatible with the status quo.

[Dare centralità alle finalità a discapito degli atti costituisce il culmine del processo di soggettivazione del giudizio penale e rappresenta un elemento fondante del “diritto penale del nemico. Ciò che attiva il “gironc infernale” della penalità emergenziale non è infatti l'oggettiva gravità del comportamento concretamente attuato, ma il suo possibile collegamento con un progetto rivoluzionario o comunque con una visione del mondo incompatibile con lo status quo.]

If the Cossiga Law accelerated the process of facilitating accusations and punishments to activists and social movements, it was in 2001 that a relevant change took place: after 9/11 European countries were called on to take part in the “war against terrorism” which for Italy required a new decree to include international terrorism in previous law concerning associative crime with terrorist purposes and the criminalization of any form of solidarity with presumed terrorists.⁸⁴ Together with this measure, black lists of organizations and individuals accused of

81 My translation of “*reato associativo*”, “Legge Cossiga ed altre nefandezze” in Nemici dello Stato criminali, “mostri” “e leggi speciali nella società del controllo”, Luther Blisset project, http://www.lutherblissett.net/archive/078-03_it.html.

82 “Legge Cossiga ed altre nefandezze” in Nemici dello Stato criminali, “mostri” “e leggi speciali nella società del controllo”, Luther Blisset project, www.lutherblissett.net/archive/078-03_it.html.

83 My translation of “*Finalità di terrorismo*”, “Terrorizzare e Reprimere il terrorismo come strumento repressivo in continua estensione”, Prison Break Project, Osservatorio sulla Repressione, July 2014, 25, www.osservatoriorepressione.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PBP_terrorizzare_reprimere.pdf.

84 “Terrorizzare e Reprimere il terrorismo come strumento repressivo in continua estensione”, Prison Break Project, Osservatorio sulla Repressione, July 2014, 28, www.osservatoriorepressione.info/wp-

terrorism were created at an international level which couldn't be questioned by any judge since it had been recognized by supranational powers⁸⁵. In 2005 after the attacks in the London underground the so-called Pisanu⁸⁶ decree introduced the measure of expulsion of individuals for reasons of national security, and enforced controls on phone communications and the internet and on police power in the cases of suspects.⁸⁷ As comrades from the “Prison break project”⁸⁸ had underlined, the 2005 decree introduced a vague and general definition of terrorism which, only apparently in line with the European one, left aside a more specific identification of intentional acts that could be considered terrorist.⁸⁹ The European definition, indeed contains a different proposition which concerns the endangering of physical safety or the life of a person or groups of persons. However, differently, in the Italian case there is no list of such proposition, so that the “accusation of terrorist purpose accusation” could also be more easily be applied to crime against objects.

At the international level different attempts of facing the issue of terrorism and defining it took place from 1930, the year of the third “Conference for the Unification of the Criminal Law” held in Brussels⁹⁰. In 1937 the “Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism” was elaborated in Geneva and emphasized an interpretation of terrorism as an act against a state, as a crime against a state and never against a population. Later on, in 1977, the “European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism” left completely aside the issue of state terrorism, the exercise of terror and violence operated by states, to focus exclusively on “political terrorism”⁹¹ or any attack to state structures or figures. Many years later, in 1997, with the European Parliament's resolution of 30th the thirty of January, the definition of terrorism included the threat against the population in general or specific individuals or even a country and its institutions::

In the indeterminateness of which concrete acts could be terrorists is the ideological motive that become fundamental. It's not by chance that the list of “terrorist motivations” follows an ascending order of psychologization, from “separatist aspiration”, ideological extremist conceptions”, “zealotry”, irrational and subjective motivations”. State terrorism, signally the European state's one, visibly could never enter the definition.

content/uploads/2014/07/PBP_terrorizzare_reprimere.pdf.

85 Ibid.

86 Pisanu was the Minister of the Interior from 2002 to 2006; he was a long-time member of the Chamber of Deputies for the Christian Democrat party and then Forza Italia.

87 Italo di Sabato “Dalla Legge real al pacchetto sicurezza 35 anni di legislazione speciale”, Osservatorio sulla Repressione, 7 December 2009, [7.https://files.acrobat.com/a/preview/6ae81b45-7024-4fd7-a393-cbc20df0056d](https://files.acrobat.com/a/preview/6ae81b45-7024-4fd7-a393-cbc20df0056d).

88 “Prison Break Project” is a project run by a collective that is currently working on producing and sharing knowledge on repression, criminalization of social movements and social struggles,.

<https://prisonbreakproject.noblogs.org/2014/04/29/prison-break-project-chi-siamo/#more-17>.

89 “Terrorizzare e Reprimere il terrorismo come strumento repressivo in continua estensione”, Prison Break Project, Osservatorio sulla Repressione, July 2014, 30. http://www.osservatoriorepressione.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PBP_terrorizzare_reprimere.pdf.

90 Ibid., 41.

91 Ibid., 18.

*[Nell'indeterminatezza di quali atti concreti siano terroristici è il movente ideologico che diventa fondamentale. Non è un caso che l'elenco delle "motivazioni terroristiche" segua un ordine crescente di psicologizzazione "aspirazioni separatiste", "concezioni ideologiche estremiste", "fanatismo", "moventi irrazionali e soggettivi". Il terrorismo di stato, segnatamente quello degli stati europei, non potrà evidentemente mai rientrare nella definizione.]*⁹².

Moreover, It is important to emphasize the recommendation from September 1999 which suggests to considering "terrorist" as concerning not just acts against people, but also acts against objects; according to this, even sabotage, a widespread practice of resistance historically used by socio-political movements, could easily be classified as such. This reconceptualization of terrorism both on a national and international level, then, became important in so far as it has the power of constructing a larger margin of accusation and criminalization of struggles, all in the name of the "fight against terrorism".

In this specific context "the norms allows the prosecution of any action carried out by any movements which objectively is not only opposing but also influencing governments' policies or puts pressure on an international organization" [*Le norme permettono di perseguire qualunque azione compiuta da un movimento il cui obiettivo non è solo quello di opposizione ma anche quello di influenzare le politiche governative o di fare pressione su un'organizzazione internazionale*]⁹³.

Neoliberalism, austerity and precariousness

After seeing how much the accusations of terrorism in Italy are historically tied to political dissidence and internationally facilitated by the vagueness of definitions, it is important to give a brief overview of the current political situation. Every terrorist attack which took place in European countries in recent years has been used to legitimize new "anti-terrorist packages" or measures in Italy, from the Paris one that dates back to 13 November 2015 to the Brussels attack on 22 March 2016 and the Nice attack on 14 July 2016. France and Belgium had declared states of emergency and increased surveillance and controls. The sociopolitical scenario we nowadays deal with is characterized by an increased privatization of resources, the dismantling of workers' rights and the processes of reshaping forms of labour to make them more precarious and unstable under the name of "flexibility", a succession of public education reforms that has made the access to it always more elitist and no longer granted to everybody, thanks to the disinvestment in it (gradually by different

92 Ibid., 19.

93 Italo di Sabato, "Stato di eccezione permanente", Osservatorio sulla repressione, 18 November 2015, www.osservatoriorepressione.info/stato-deccezione-permanente/.

governments) and by the criminalization of migrants – in such a precarious situation social conflict is growing. The need for housing and gentrification dynamics in many cities has pushed out many collective occupations of buildings, the occupants being evicted more violently and in shorter periods of time, with a callousness expected of financial capitalism which responds to people needs with police brutality and carceral measures.

Social conflict is obviously growing as well due to the inhuman conditions which migrants have been forced to endure in the CPT, then renamed the Centre for Identification and Expulsion, which are places of tortures and violence, instituted through a law that was established in Italy for the crime of “clandestine immigration” which inserts the migrant into penal circuits. Most of the measures have been possible thanks to the construction of a certain “crisis narrative” and emergency discourse, an example of which could be the “technical government” of Mario Monti.⁹⁴ In this case the discursive strategy rotated around the necessity of accepting austerity measures, European Central Bank imposition serving financial capitalism and the spreading of patriotic and nationalist rhetoric of unity, “being united” to overcome the situation. The “emergency” of the economic debt served to facilitate an apparently depoliticized dimension in which choices and decisions were made out of necessity and adjustment was represented as the only logical reaction to the complex mechanism of market functioning, the perfect biopolitical application of technical rationality. Nobody in this framework was really responsible for rendering the lives of working-class people, students and migrants more unliveable and impossible. The austerity measures, to be accepted, needed to be introduced as “necessary measures” within the “market needs” logic; to overcome the crisis “sacrifices” were needed. Constructing the situation in that way made oppressive economic and political choices more acceptable, the state of emergency made possible measures that otherwise would have been seen critically or at least with suspicion. In the same way, all surveillance, controlling and punishment measures were constructed as “necessary” and inevitable following each terrorist attack outside of Italy. In the same way in 2013 the narrative about the increase of violence against women in Italy as an emergency⁹⁵ made real a law against femicide which used women's bodies and the “protection of women” issue not just to increase state control over their lives but also to increase the militarization of territories in areas of the “strategic-

94 He was prime minister of Italy from 2011 to 2013 and led a government of technocrats to “face the economical debt”.

95 This is not to deny that violence against women is a big issue, but to recognize how, in the moment in which it is described as an emergency, the whole analysis about sexism and patriarchy being structural dynamics of oppression is missing. There is not real statistical increasing in the numbers of women experiencing male violence but it is anyways a huge numbers. The all analysis of patriarchal violence as an emergence is completely blind towards the recognition of sexism, misogyny and patriarchy as permeating every aspect of our lives, our cultural norms, our educational patterns, our interactions, it is not an emergency because it structurally exist, rooted in the system of domination women are oppressed by and nourished by institutionalized male privilege.

national interest” (i.e. great flexibility in employing the armed forces in the territories and the attribution of a new function and new power to the troops), a decree in which totally different issues were disciplined at the same time thanks to what has been described as “femicide emergency”, a discourse circulating and occupying media spaces and public debate. This form of decree is more used and abused today because it is supposed to respond to emergency situations and is considered an urgent measure, which means that the process for its approval is shorter and easier compared to other laws; moreover, deciding about what an emergency situation is, when it is happening, is an issue of power that goes all the way up in government.

As a response to all of this, social conflict – growing from the increasing anger of dispossession, precariousness and marginalization, the result of structural systemic inequalities – is rising in a heterogeneous way and is using different strategies and actions for struggle. Almost 17,000 people are on trial today for crimes connected to social struggle⁹⁶, even if, for as regards media representation and legal consequences, anarchists are being standing more at the centre of political repression:

The media plays its role by portraying the “anarcho-insurrectionalists” as terrorists second only to Al Qaeda in terms of the danger they threaten to let loose. The authorities, in fact, play on the “war on terrorism” throughout, both because it permits the use of draconian measures and because it creates the image of the anarchist as a dangerous “other” against which the state defends its good citizens.⁹⁷

The construction of public enemies then, substantiated by the media's coercive images, speeches and articles, is focusing on accusations of terrorism which, as we previously saw, are used politically and with always with fewer obstacles, even when on the legal ground. Terrorist accusations are related to certain specific activist groups, but in a broader perspective the whole construction of otherness and the definitions of the participants of struggles' participants as opposed to the image of “good citizens” regards many political subjectivities and feminist queer activists if yet with a different dynamic of repression.

The No Tav movement and accusations of terrorism

One of the examples of the state's attempt at criminalizing struggle is the case of the No Tav

96 Marco Miggiano, “17,000 persone a processo in Italia per reati legati alle lotte sociali. Urge un' Amnistia Sociale”, Osservatorio sulla repressione, 15 January 2014, www.osservatoriorepressione.info/17-000-persone-a-processo-in-italia-per-reati-legati-alle-lotte-sociali-urge-un-amnistia-sociale/.

97 “State Repression Against Anarchists in Italy”, The Anarchist Library, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/anonymous-state-repression-against-anarchists-in-italy>.

movement. The No Tav⁹⁸ movement is a northern Italian heterogeneous anti-capitalist movement born in the 1990sNineties which unites different political groups and originated in ato struggle against the construction of the Turin–Lyon high speed train Turin-Lyon, meant to unite the two cities. Their struggle is representing in a broader picture a struggle against environmental destruction, a protest against the government’s way of managing public money and a fight against institutional politics, the logic of “major infrastructures” and against an always more wild accumulation of capital which is organized and programmed to pass over people's lives, privatizing, oppressing and impoverishing.

Four activists of the movement, since the 8 December 2013, have been imprisoned in a high surveillance regime for the blaze of a compressor in the TAV building site. They were accused of terrorism. Despite the fact that the accusation, in the final part of the trial, couldn't be defended, what was interesting was the attempt at defining the building site, the site of protest and political demonstrations, as a “place of alert”, hence the attempt at calling the a situation of “emergency” in which the accusation of terrorism could behave been legitimated.

The entire logic behind this accusation is the same securitarian pattern we have already seen, in which social and political conflict is treated as a “public order” issues, in which the definition of terrorism definition is fruitful fort building up an internal enemy that nourishes contemporary political regimes in general.

The act which the four activists were accused of regarded the sabotage of a machine, an act against objects in which no person was physically threatened; this is really explicative of the ambiguity of the concept and of its usage. Thanks to the Pisanu package from 2005 and its definition of terrorism, the accusation took place in reference to the possibility of considering terrorist acts that could strongly damage a country:, the accusation claimed that the “international image of Italy” was damaged⁹⁹ by this act.

Depicting ion the mass media a social movement as terrorist is one of the strategiesy used to increase fears and insecurities; moreover,

in the securitarian paradigm it is necessary to settle with what the police say or with what the media say basing on the police: two sources that have always been considered too weak. From here the wave of incredible and clear contradictions in the official reconstruction of the facts, which wisely eludes every possibility of check or falsification ... This means that the security State has all the interest in the fact that the citizens- – whom it is supposed to

98 TAV is an acronym that stands for “*Treno ad Alta velocità*” (High Speed Train).

99 “Terrorizzare e Reprimere il terrorismo come strumento repressivo in continua estensione”, Prison Break Project, Osservatorio sulla Repressione, July 2014, 33. http://www.osservatoriorepressione.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PBP_terrorizzare_reprimere.pdf.

grant protection- – rest in uncertainties regarding everything that is threatening them, because uncertainties and terror always walk arm in arm.

*[nel paradigma securitario bisogna accontentarsi di quello che dice la polizia o di quello che dicono i media basandosi sulla prima: due fonti che sono sempre state considerate troppo deboli. Da qui l'ondata di incredibili e palesi contraddizioni nelle ricostruzioni ufficiali dei fatti, che eludono sapientemente ogni possibilità di verifica o falsificazione ... Questo vuol dire che lo Stato di sicurezza ha tutto l'interesse che i cittadini – dei quali deve garantire la protezione – restino nell'incertezza riguardo a ciò che li minaccia, perché incertezza e terrore vanno sempre a braccetto.]*¹⁰⁰

The media construction of insecurity is just one of the aspects of the accusations of terrorism accusation directed at to the No Tav movement; indeed out of the construction of a certain discourse around what come to be identified as terrorist, the political attempt was aimed at allowing what was defined as the “crime” to be investigated and treated differently from what, are for the judicial system, are considered “minor crimes” or “common crimes”. The attempt of redefining what is terrorism is, as occurs in contemporary security states, is an attempt at reshaping discursive spaces and emergencial rhetorics in which the usage of violence (legitimate or not) against other people is not longer the issue; the issue becomes the creation of an enemy , of a sense of fear that functional both to repress, – so as to be able to punish with the exercise of a rational legitimized violence by the state – and on the other hand to hide the structural systemic terrorism which takes place as the norm in every European neoliberal society. The defence of a certain economical system and hegemonic discourse needs to happen through the repression or elimination of the enemies in a dimension that has become even more rational, legitimated and systematically violent when a permanent state of exception takes place.

As we have just seen in the previous paragraph then, an act of sabotage can be classified and constructed as terrorist within a broader media campaign aimed at supporting the stigmatization and criminalization of the social movements. What is happening on a bigger picture in Italy is a process of strong opposition and repression, which affects all social and political struggle, thanks also to the apparatus of the production of the truth, which are exploiting different narratives according to the case and constructing dangerousness on different set of issues and subjectivities. Feminist, transfeminist and queer struggles are being occupying the place of stigma and hegemonic condemnation on the base of a different kind of sabotage, one that concerns heteronormativity, patriarchal structures of signification, and neoliberal dynamics of the capitalization of differences.

¹⁰⁰Giorgio Agamben, “zona grigie che preparano dittatura” in comune info, 10 January 2016. Translated by Martino Laurenti. Original source: “De l’Etat de droit à l’Etat de sécurité”, lemonde.fr. <http://comune-info.net/2016/01/democrazia-dittature/>

Notions and definitions of terrorism shift to cover different struggles and subjectivities (next chapter will go into detail of it), and are applied and used in different contexts. Terror and paranoid images about a world deconstructing gender binarism and patriarchy have penetrated the mainstream and the Italian hegemonic discourse, the appeal to terror and fears, about abandoning the exclusivity of heterosexual oppressive marriage institutions circulated around the debate on civil unions, it was happening while queer subjects which distanced themselves from neoliberal, consumerist, respectable subjects asking for state recognition were stigmatized and marginalized.

Preciado's "gender bioterrorism"¹⁰¹ is not then exclusively a way of naming an activist way of deconstructing gender binarism and all oppressive social and cultural norms about gender identity, though in some cases the "gender terrorism" definition was used in Italy as a tool of constructing speeches on inclusion and activists' narratives as spreading terror in the mainstream.

In the next chapter we will analyse the case of a queer transfeminist squat in Italy (Bologna), the "Atlantide", which was evicted in October 2015. We will go into detail on the stigmatization, marginalization and denial of spaces that feminist activism is facing nowadays in Italy. It will try to go deeper into the construction of dangerousness and terror regarding feminism and transfeminist struggle and also repressive measures. The aim will be to show how the definition of dangerousness and terrorism shifts in neoliberal capitalist societies and which different narratives are used by state apparatus according to different struggles with the same aim of repressing, denying physical spaces and opposing any resistance, any alternative to the status quo.

¹⁰¹Paul B. Preciado, "*Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*", trans. Bruce Benderson (: The Feminist Press, Translated by Bruce Benderson, (2013), 12.

Chapter 3

About Contemporary Heteronormative Panic, Accusations of “Gender Terrorism” and the Destruction of the World: Queer Transfeminist Resistance – the Case of Atlantide

The hero was pitiful in his ignorance. We take away from him his monopoly on the struggle, and give up complaining about him and forgiving him. The thousands of years of culture that have driven into men the conviction that they shouldn't be afraid of dying have ended up producing in them a fear of living. The struggle against this fear is the beginning of a partisan war where every form-of-life is also a form of struggle, and which appears in little snippets in the acts that stand behind these lines. What's important at bottom is not what we retain from the strange and contradictory history of ecstatic feminism, but what it demolishes: the little inner collapses that follow the shake-up of familiarities. Does that lead to nothing? No! It does lead to something! It does! It makes room. To live. To laugh. To struggle. “Destruction keeps you young,” wrote Benjamin, and he was right.¹⁰²

Introduction

This chapter will concern “Atlantide”, a queer feminist squat in Bologna that in October 2015 was evicted by the police. In the last chapter I gave an overview of the devices of repression and the criminalization of social and political movements in Italy on a general level; here I will try to go deeper into queer and feminist struggle specifically through the case of the Atlantide eviction. The trajectory I will follow is aimed at offering a possible perspective on the mechanisms that are operated to deny physical and discursive spaces to queer feminist groups in Italy. I would like to

¹⁰²Tiqun, “Sonogram of a potential”, 3, <https://caringlabor.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/sonogram.pdf>.

explore the specificity in the narratives of power and in hegemonic discourse on the concept of dangerousness, threat (when it comes to queer subjectivity) and struggle, and try to see how the “potential terrorist” definition can be reshaped in relation to different dissident subjectivities and necessities in the security state. I will also try to look at how the attribution of “gender terrorism” has worked increasingly to stigmatize and marginalize queers. In the following section, I will provide a brief introduction on the current debate in Italy about gender and sexuality in order to be able to locate the transfeminist queer struggle in a certain discourse and general atmosphere which affects hegemonic ideas about feminism, gender role disruption, queerness and resistance. I will then try to analyse speeches, public statements and newspaper articles on the eviction of the squat to explore the way in which it happened, the role of institutional politics in it and the media's construction of the dynamics around the event.

“Gender ideology” and the construction of apocalyptic scenarios

Facing the debate developed around the issue of gender and sexuality in Italy in the last year is a complex operation; first of all because of the way in which the debate has been framed, the toxic narratives¹⁰³ that have been constructed an oversimplified discursive space in the mainstream, eliminating elements of complexity and setting up conditions in which certain voices are completely denied a space to speak in. As Zappino and Ardilli write:

There has been popping up for some time now, in the Italian public debate, an uncontrollable impulse to minimize, if not to ignore, a known truth that still cannot be assimilated. A collective *acting out* of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defined as the “epistemological privilege of unknowing” – where who has (or pretends to have) the most limited comprehension of the interpretative practice imposes the definition of the terms of the exchange – it seems indeed that it is structuring the field of anti-homophobic struggle and authorizing the speaking.

[Va in scena ormai da qualche tempo, nel dibattito pubblico italiano, un'irrefrenabile pulsione a minimizzare, se non proprio a disconoscere, verità note e tuttavia inassimilabili. Un acting out collettivo di ciò che Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick ha definito il «privilegio epistemologico dell'ignoranza» – dove chi ha (o finge di avere) la comprensione più limitata della pratica interpretativa impone la definizione dei termini dello scambio –, sembra infatti strutturare il campo della lotta antiomofobica e autorizzare la presa di

103 Wu Ming. “Storie #notav. Un anno e mezzo nella vita di Marco Bruno”, 1 July 2013., <http://www.wumingfoundation.com/giap/?p=13512>.

parola.]¹⁰⁴

The limited condition in which the debate had been framed had many consequences in terms of spreading panicking narratives and emergencial scenarios around the danger of the so-called “gender ideology” or “gender theory”. So when a law regarding the education system first introduced sexual education in school and later a law about civil unions started to be discussed and proposed,¹⁰⁵ in which the gay and lesbian rights issue started to emerge on a more mainstream level, the Catholics, with the Right and far Right groups, increased their already always-there presence within the public sphere to construct panic. Catholic fundamentalist people from groups like Standing Sentinels¹⁰⁶ started to occupy even a physical space in many Italian cities with embarrassing silent performances to demonstrate against the draft of the law against homophobia and the already created monster of “gender”.

Lorenzo Bernini sees "gender" as a floating signifier, whose meaning changes not only according to space and time, but also depending on the subjects who deploy it in the same space and at the same time¹⁰⁷; moreover, he argues that “to understand the spreading of the word 'gender' in Italy, we need to understand 'gender' as a political-conceptual device, which produces different meanings of it, different theoretical apparatuses, different strategies and different political subjects”.¹⁰⁸

The strategic usage of “gender ideology” as an expression indicating a monolithic dogmatic theory or thought about society has been functional in the spreading of misconceptions and terror about the possible consequences of the law against homophobia, for civil unions and the introduction of sexual education in schools. “Gender ideology” is a definition that has been created by fundamentalist Catholics, the Vatican with its representatives, and moderate and far Right movements and parties to define and at the same time oversimplify all the critical perspectives and practices regarding gender, sexuality, heteronormativity and LGBTQ rights. As Butler shows (in relation to terrorism and the post-9/11 debate):

A frame for understanding violence emerges in tandem with the experience, and that the frame works both to preclude certain kind of questions, certain kind of historical inquiries, and to function as a moral justification for retaliation. It seems crucial to attend this frame, since it decides, in a forceful way, *what we can hear*, whether a view will be taken as

104 Federico Zappino and Deborah Ardilli, “La volontà di negare. La teoria del gender e il panico eterosessuale”, In Il lavoro culturale, 14 July 2015,. <http://www.lavoroculturale.org/la-volonta-di-negare/>.

105 The decree, with a lot of modification from the initial draft, was finally approved by the Chamber of Deputies on the 11 May 2016,. <http://www.internazionale.it/notizie/2016/05/11/unioni-civili-gay-legge-approvata>.

106 My translation of “Sentinelle in piedi”.

107 Lorenzo Bernini, “The "teoria del gender" in Italy: A partisan talk on a floating signifier”, Academia. Edu, 20 May 2016, 1.

108 Ibid.

explanation or as exoneration, whether we can hear the difference, and abide by it.¹⁰⁹

In the Italian case, the frame which many actors of the debate wanted to attend to regarded the controversy over the polarized issue of the existence or the non-existence of such a thing (the “gender ideology”). Some Italian feminists, the philosopher and parliamentarian Michela Marzano being an example, together with the Italian Society of Women Historians (Società Italiana delle Storiche), the Italian Association of Psychology (Associazione Italiana di Psicologia) and part of the Italian Association of Sociology (Associazione Italiana di Sociologia)¹¹⁰ put a lot of effort into demonstrating that “gender theory” or “ideology” doesn't exist. To oppose the conservative oppressive ideas depicting homosexuality as “against nature” and as a sin, Michela Marzano responded:

wishing for a superficial return to the nature charged by laical normalization: “identity and sexual orientation are not the result of a caprice or of a sin. They cannot be taught and they cannot be chosen. They are. Exactly as the fact of being white, black or yellow”.

*[auspicando un ritorno epidermico alla natura carico però di laica normalizzazione: «l'identità e l'orientamento sessuale non sono frutto del capriccio o del peccato. Non si insegnano e non si scelgono. Sono. Esattamente come il fatto di essere bianchi, neri o gialli».]*¹¹¹

Together with other feminists she positioned herself with a naturalized argument about gender identity and sexual orientation in an attempt to reassure, normalize, ask for inclusion and respect the frame of the discourse with the term by which it had been created. This position and this perspective have already been widely contemplated in the neoliberal governance of differences, in the neoliberal necessity of not just to commodify differences, but also to assimilate them, render them part of its own narrative in so far as they are profitable or can serve other oppressive devices, based on race for instance, or class. Reassurance is a response to the widespread panic, to the anal terror¹¹² as Preciado defined it, but maybe also a necessity for building respectability, of respecting the term, of choosing not to see further. It is an operation of getting rid of a certain stigma and accusation that in this case regarded all queer feminist LGBTQ subjectivities by ignoring the insults, the violence of the speech: it is playing by the norms. The emergencial narrative about the spreading of the gender ideology belongs to the same dimension as terrorist accusations aimed at social movements; the counter-strategy in that case was to claim that “the terrorist is the state” (thus reconceptualizing

109Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 4–5.

110Bernini, “The ‘teoria del gender’ in Italy”, 3.

111 Federico Zappino and Deborah Ardilli, “La volontà di negare. La teoria del gender e il panico eterosessuale”, In Il lavoro culturale, 14 July 2015, <http://www.lavoroculturale.org/la-volonta-di-negare/>.

112Beatriz (Paul) Preciado, “Terrore anale”, translated by ideadestroyingmuros, <https://femminismo-a-sud.noblogs.org/files/2011/03/TERRORE-ANALE-totale.pdf>.

structural violence as reproduced by the state) as much as it is happening, from other queer and feminist groups the act of occupying the space of the shame and abjection to resignify it politically as one tool of struggle. The other position was that of one of the Italian queer transfeminist groups like SomMovimento nazioAnale, Laboratorio Smaschieramenti in Bologna and Favolosa Coalizione that, together with the Movimento Identità Transessuale (Transgender Identity Movement), voiced the necessity of inhabiting the space of “gender ideology” with all the radical claims and political struggle that it involves: “queer movements take the current conflict on gender as a chance to publicly reassert their militant style, aimed at countering both compulsory heterosexuality and neoliberalism through the subversion of traditional familial and gender roles”.¹¹³ When different accusations coming from the Vatican or other far Right groups publicly erupted by conveying the message that queer people and people supporting “gender ideology” were aimed at the destruction of a natural order, of the family and of the entire society, together with the gender roles that are assigned according to sexual difference, the queer group took that position. What is at stake is not the opening up of spaces to be tolerated, with reluctance but eventually to be tolerated, but the demolition of all the material and symbolical structure of domination implicit in the heteronormative order. Zappino and Ardilli argue that, in gender theories, such intentions, about which policemen of the norm are so worried about, which are apocalyptic (for them), inhabit a scenario that actually belongs to what queer and feminist movements want to see realized:

This theory is the tool that various subjectivities, involved in complex forms of oppression, of unintelligibility, of neutralization and social non-existence, had embraced as valid, not for the wish of being accepted without stereotypes, but as a tool of destabilizing the mechanisms of that “power” that produce both the stereotypes and their opposite. That “power” is the symbolical and social heteronormative order, with all its corollary of sexism, racism, classism, ableism (and always more, let's say it: speciesism). Gender theory calls into question its pretences and its structures, and aim at their subversion.

[Questa teoria è lo strumento che varie soggettività, implicate in forme complesse di oppressione, di inintelligibilità, di neutralizzazione e di inesistenza sociale, hanno accolto come valida, non per ambire a essere accolte senza stereotipi, ma come strumento per destabilizzare i meccanismi di quel “potere” che produce tanto gli stereotipi quanto i loro contrari. Quel “potere” è l’ordine simbolico e sociale eteronormativo, con tutto il suo corollario di sessismo, di razzismo, di classismo, di validismo (e, sempre di più, diciamo: di specismo). La teoria del gender mette in discussione le sue pretese e le sue strutture, e

¹¹³Lorenzo Bernini, “The “teoria del gender” in Italy”: A partisan talk on a floating signifier”, *Academia. Edu*, 20 May 2016, 4.

ambisce alla loro sovversione.]]¹¹⁴

It is really important, then, to be aware of how taking this position within the debate implies the condition of inhabiting the space of danger and threat, if built on similar but different assumptions compared to other social and political movements.

This debate, which at the time of writing is still ongoing, is fundamental to clarifying the context and the hegemonic understanding of queer subjectivities and struggle in the Italian context with the awareness that, if political dissidence get repressed, stigmatized and labelled as terrorist, queer transfeminist groups have to face an overlapping of narratives of oppression, which has to do with different issues and dynamics that I will further explore. The following sections will provide an introduction to the squat Atlantide and then analyse the narratives, within the socio-political climate dominated by conservative, Catholic and violent speeches, that have been developed in order to discredit, oppress and defeat queer movements, specifically in the Atlantide case.

Atlantide: the space and the collectives

Atlantide was a squat located in Piazza Porta Santo Stefano in the city of Bologna; the urban spaces of the city from the 1960s and 1970s were deeply affected and shaped by political groups, collectives and struggle, by the circulation and overlapping of counter-cultures, politics, arts and music, something that it is still possible to feel and breath in the atmosphere of the city today.

Atlantide was born in 1998, and the collective was defined, as written in one activist blog, as a place self-managed by feminist, lesbian, gay, trans, queer and punk people;¹¹⁵ it is:

a place of bottom-up political elaboration that combines different subjectivities in the practice of starting from the self and from sexuality, promoting freedom and autonomy for women, political visibility and feminist and lgbtiq self-organization and independent cultural distribution, non-commercial sociality.

[è un luogo di elaborazione politica dal basso che accomuna soggettività diverse nelle pratiche del partire da sé e dalle sessualità, promuovendo libertà e autonomia per le donne, visibilità politica e autorganizzazione femminista e lgbtiq, autoproduzione e distribuzione culturale indipendente, socialità non mercificata.]]¹¹⁶

As they further explain it is not an association, it is refusing hierarchies, and all decision are taken collectively in the assembly. It also doesn't get any public funding because it wants to maintain its

114 Zappino and Ardilli, "La volontà di negare".

115" Cos'è Atlantide" in "Atlantide R-esiste 2.0", <https://atlantideresiste.noblogs.org/cose-atlantide/>.

116Ibid.

own autonomy.¹¹⁷

Atlantide was born “when a group of activists that included the Tute Bianche (“white overalls”, for the signature one-piece suits they wore to demonstrations) occupied the abandoned, publicly owned gate to the city at 6a Piazza Porta Santo Stefano”¹¹⁸ and hosted groups like “Antagonismo Gay”,¹¹⁹ a separatist gay group inspired by Mario Mieli, Italian gay activist from the 1970s and radical theorist, and “Quelle che non ci stanno”,¹²⁰ a feminist and lesbian group. Two collectives were active at the time in which Atlantide was evicted, one of those was “Laboratorio Smaschieramenti”, a space for reflection on masculinity and desire, which “has been working to provide visibility and political meaning to ‘other intimacies’ – relationships of affection, intimacy and care that do not reproduce the couple (be it homosexual or heterosexual) and the nuclear, heterosexist and patriarchal family”¹²¹. Laboratorio Smaschieramenti has recently also “worked at the intersection between gender, sexuality, subjectivity, relationships, insecurity, crisis and austerity policies, towards the construction of grass-root welfare and networks of queer solidarity, facilitating the foundation of the Italian network of transfeminist and queer individuals and collectives”¹²² with the “Consultoria Queer Bologna”, for instance, which focused on sexual health in a queer perspective. One of the other many souls animating Atlantide was “Nulla Osta”,¹²³ a group of punks. Atlantide was a space in which lots of different activities took place: public assemblies, queer and feminist international projects, campaigns to raise awareness on racist violence, initiative of funding for other LGBT and queer events in the city, production of fanzine and magazines, activities of promotion of independent music, co-production of theatrical performance and non commercial party and events.

It has been a space of contamination and reflection, a place of inclusion and activism which had fundamental impact in the city and in the production and circulation of knowledge: political analysis, texts and fanzines. Preciado uses Barthes to define the category of terrorist texts:

Are terrorist, Barthes affirms concerning Sade, Fourier, Loyola's work, those text able to “intervening socially”, not thanks to their popularity or their success, but thanks to the violence that allow the text to exceed the law that a society, an ideology, or a philosophy establish to construct their historical intelligibility.

117 <https://atlantideresiste.noblogs.org/files/2012/12/volantino-basic2.pdf>

118 Darren Patrick, “Bologna's Latest Eviction Threatens to Whitewash the 'Red' City's Political Legacy”, *The Guardian*, 14 October 2015, www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/oct/14/bologna-eviction-atlantide-red-city-political-legacy.

119 “Chi siamo” in Antagonismo Gay, 22 December 2009, http://www.ecn.org/agaybologna/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=1.

120 “Chi siamo, coordinamento contro la violenza maschile” in Quelle che non ci stanno, <https://quelle-che-non-ci-stanno.noblogs.org/chi-siamo/>.

121 “Chi siamo/About us” in smaschieramenti, <https://smaschieramenti.noblogs.org/chi-siamo/>.

122 Ibid.

123 “Atlantide concerti”, <http://atlantide-concerti.blogspot.nl/>.

Sono terroristi, afferma Barthes, riferendosi all'opera Sade, Fourier, Loyola, quei testi capaci di «intervenire socialmente», non grazie alla loro popolarità o al loro successo, bensì grazie alla «violenza che permette che il testo ecceda le leggi che una società, un'ideologia, o una filosofia si danno per costruire la propria intelligibilità storica»¹²⁴.

The terrorism of the texts and knowledge produced by Atlantide is the capacity of assuming a radical perspective which is constantly reinventing itself opening to contaminations and the sharing of experiences, with the creativity of a language which is not asking for permission, not asking for recognition and that is able to bridge and connects different struggles and needs starting from the “personal as political” and the collective as space of invention; this is the exceeding of the law defining historical intelligibility. In the call for the national demonstration they write:

We proclaim the beginning of de-civilization. We refuse the logic which divides cultures into “advanced” and “backward” under the pretext of “rights” for women or for so-called sexual “minorities.” We replace the straight line of progress with oblique lines, squiggly lines, dance-steps, vagabondage.

We converge in continuously expanding common spaces. We contaminate every place with our Fabulosity: Every street, every boulevard, every corner that is useful for re-drawing the geography of our desires and our pleasures. They wanted us vacuuming up dust at home? They'll find us in the street spreading the ashes of gender roles.

We are the glitch in the gears of capital.¹²⁵

The eviction narratives, the reasons of “security” and the media construction of an injustice

In the general repressive atmosphere which affects all the city and the different groups and collectives committed to anti-institutional politics, with evictions inserted within a bigger gentrification process, surveillance imposed on activist's' lives and police brutality being used during demonstrations,, on the 9 of October 2015 police entered Atlantide's building. Rather than focusing on the dynamics of the eviction, I 'd like to analyse the context and the narrative used. The eviction, which received solidarity from many collectives and activist circles in Italy and abroad, was anticipated by a campaign ion local newspapers which constructed a specific oppressive

124Beatriz (Paul) Preciado, “Terrore anale”. Translated by ideadestroyingmuros. 5. <https://femminismo-a-sud.noblogs.org/files/2011/03/TERRORE-ANALE-totale.pdf>

125“Declaration of Independence of the People of Twisted Lands”, in SomMovimentonazioAnale, 5 May 2016, <https://sommovimentonazioanale.noblogs.org/post/2016/05/05/declaration-of-indipendence-of-the-people-of-the-queer-lands/>

understanding of the queer activism and struggles inserted in the “gender ideology” panic moment of panic.

Already in January 2015, one national daily newspaper, which is first for distribution in two different Italian regions, “*Il Resto del Carlino*”, published an article about the squat in which the president of the neighbourhood spreads all her complains about the place, underlining the number of denounces to unknown that the residents of the quarter “had to do” regarding the “obscene acts that happens in the small square” (“*atti osceni che avvengono nella piazzetta*”¹²⁶). The whole article is revolving around the president’s complaints which consist, among others, of accusations of public nuisance: “they continues to create relevant problems connected to public nuisance, to the undignified usage of the real estate maintained in a state of visible degradation” (“*continuano a creare rilevanti problemi legati al disturbo della quiete, all'utilizzo indecoroso dell'immobile mantenuto in uno stato di evidente degrado*”¹²⁷). The activities organized and the parties are defined as “nocturnal red light revelry” (“*baldoria a luci rosse notturna*”¹²⁸), and the woman’s support goes out to all the citizens (white, bourgeois, heterosexual and respectable) that have to witness, astounded, to “complete sexual intercourse” (“*rapporti sessuali completi*”¹²⁹) before which the only “weapon” they are supposed to have is denouncement. The main construction of the accusations regards issues and concepts of “decency”, “respectability” and “decorum”, which completely fitting the neoliberal politics, gentrification included, and operations of moralization and privatization of the public space¹³⁰ are happening, one as function of the other. What is worthy underlining anyway is that constructions of dangerousness, condemnation and public blame that relies on this “lack of decorum” are actually focused on sexuality and the projection of fear associated with non-normative sexuality; the activists from Atlantide in their own response to the article underlines that:

in this case, it seems, we are dealing with projection: on the “scene” (side-walks and small squares) are materialized all the mainstream pornographic imagery and all the stereotypes associated with “transgressive” and non-normative sexuality. Sexphobia has worked like this for ever, projecting onto the “monstrous” Other the excess part of their own normative sexuality. It seems to us, indeed, that the unaware objective of the journalistic association

126 Nicoletta Tempera, “Porta Santo Stefano, la denuncia: 'Sesso nella piazzetta del Cassero’”, *Il resto del Carlino* in quotidiano.net, 20 January 2015, http://www.quotidiano.net/cronaca/porta-santo-stefano-sesso-1.591885?refresh_ce.

127 Ibid. Nicoletta Tempera, “Porta Santo Stefano, la denuncia: 'Sesso nella piazzetta del Cassero’”, *Il resto del Carlino* in quotidiano.net, 20 January 2015, http://www.quotidiano.net/cronaca/porta-santo-stefano-sesso-1.591885?refresh_ce

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid.

130 “La Finestra sulla piazzetta”: “doppia morale neoliberale e frocizzazione dello spazio pubblico”, in *Atlantide Resiste* 2.0, 21 January 2015, <https://atlantideresiste.noblogs.org/post/2015/01/21/la-finestra-sulla-piazzetta-doppia-morale-neoliberale-e-frocizzazione-dello-spazio-pubblico/>.

among “sexual complete intercourse”, “used condoms” and “scat” is in the end anal sex: that unpronounceable anality that disturbs and makes good citizens sleepless because of its being a non-reproductive practice which has the potential for deconstructing masculinity.

*[Perché in questo caso, ci pare, è proprio di proiezione che si tratta: sulla “scena” (marciapiedi e piazzette) si materializzano tutto l’immaginario pornografico mainstream e tutti gli stereotipi associati alle sessualità “trasgressive” e non normative. La sessuofobia funziona così da sempreproiettando sull’Altro “mostruoso” le parti eccedenti della propria sessualità normata. Ci pare, infatti, che l’obiettivo inconsapevole dell’associazione giornalistica tra “rapporto sessuale completo”, “preservativi usati” e “deiezioni umane” sia in realtà il sesso anale (1): quell’innominabile analità che turba e rende insonni i cittadini per bene in quanto pratica non-riproduttiva e che ha il potenziale di decostruire la maschilità.]*¹³¹

Monstrosity, as previously showned in relation to queerness, play a fundamental role in sexuality; constructions of sexual deviancy, queerness and the abnormal are tied to terrorist figures, and delinquency, in a process of criminalization and stigmatization belonging to the Western traditions and anxieties about norms. This is even more visible in this specific event in so far as non-normative sexual practices and politics become connected and intertwined with illegality and illegitimacy¹³² in the oppressive narrative of the eviction. Furthermore in one of the main national newspapers, “*La Repubblica*”, third in distribution in the all the country, there appeared voices of preoccupation concerning the squat, troughs again via the president of the neighbourhood which is “worried about citizens’ health” (“*sono preoccupata per la salute dei cittadini*”¹³³), and so the eviction became an issue of citizens public health. This narrative is inserted into a broader frame in which institutions and political powers to make gentrification processes easier and faster and so are constructing squatters as a problem, specifically as a problem of public health, as something to “cleanse” the society from. This is visible for instance in a Spanish documentary about the 4F case,¹³⁴ in which it is made explicit how the discourse legitimating repression as related to “public order” gets intertwined with “public hygiene”¹³⁵, in an always darker scenario of oppression and

131Ibid.

132“Caso Atlantide, Giorgetti, “Sequestrare il Cassero, è un letamaio”, in Repubblica.it Bologna, 16 October 2015, http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/10/16/news/caso_atlantide_la_presidente_di_quartiere_giorgietti_sequestrare_il_cassero_e_un_letamaio_-125207645/.

133Ibid.

134The 4F case is one of police brutality and corruption, a police, judicial and governmental case experienced in Barcelona, in which two persons were unjustly convicted (one of them later committed suicide) and seven more were accused within the context of a squat eviction inserted in a gentrification processes which happened in 2006 (www.desmontaje4f.org/en/des-montaje-4f/).

135“Barcelona. Ciutat Morta. Dead City. 4F. English Subtitles. Completo”, published by Ana Maria Garcia, 27 January 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyGbIfV0paw>.

surgical elimination of every dissidence and difference. Moreover, when the president talks about citizens, the “general population”¹³⁶ Vito Russo was talking about is recalled, not the disposable one, but a specific subjects is “being disturbed”: the white heterosexual bourgeois with their family. The eviction of Atlantide regards broadly discursive statements about who is legitimated to inhabit the public space and who is not, namely the bodies, practices, and lives of those who are disposable because they are queer or because dissident. The machine of gentrification goes together with processes of spreading and reinforcing heteronormative Catholic morality united with privatizations and capitalist managements of the urban spaces. The white heterosexual nuclear family, which also in the “anti-gender” campaign on a national level was the main figure for spreading panic about the possibilities of queering society, is at the centre of the action.

This also explains the exploitation of children in the debate, as being “at risk”, “being threatened” by queer people; on a far Right website belonging to Forza Nuova,¹³⁷ in an article which among other issues is dealing with the introduction of sexual education in schools, it is possible to read that: “ours is a population no longer listened to and which is attacked by an imminent danger, both concerning gay fairy tales for our children or illegal immigrants which every day put in danger the civil order and, especially, our women” (*“Il nostro è un popolo non più ascoltato che si vede aggredito da un pericolo incalzante, che si tratti di fiabe gay per i nostri figli o di clandestini che ogni giorno mettono in pericolo l’ordine civile e, soprattutto, le nostre donne”*¹³⁸). It is in the name of the same civil order that the eviction happened, as at defence against the danger of dissidence and queerness, and in this specific statement the exclusion is made explicit by the association of gayness as threatening children and migrants as threatening white women; it is the visualization of white masculinity, the same on which anal terror¹³⁹ is acting, at the centre to perpetrate oppression and reinforce privileged position. As Preciado writes: “they defend a naturalistic and religious ideology whose principles are well known. Heterosexual hegemony always rests on the right to oppress sexual and gender minority” (*difendono un’ideologia naturalistica e religiosa di cui sono ben noti i principi. L’egemonia eterosessuale ha sempre poggiato sul diritto a opprimere le minoranze sessuali e di genere*¹⁴⁰). The child that is supposed to

136 “Why We Fight: Speech by Vito Russo”, published by Dr Atmos, 21 July 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4ctXqdoVwk>.

137 Forza Nuova is a far Right, neo-Fascist political party, whose militants had been the protagonists of many episodes of violence, which spreads homophobic, racist and sexist ideas, and is opposed openly to the same-sex marriage and immigration to Italy.

138 Roberto Fiore, “Contro il gender a scuola, l’arma del referendum” in Forza Nuova Radio, 27 July 2015, <http://www.radiofn.eu/gender-immigrazione-italia-attacco-difendersi-necessario/#sthash.EyVBDpXZ.dpbs>.

139 Beatriz (Paul) Preciado, “Terrore anale”. Translated by ideadestroyingmuros. <https://femminismo-a-sud.noblogs.org/files/2011/03/TERRORE-ANALE-totale.pdf>

140 Beatriz (Paul) Preciado, “Chi difende il bambino queer” in Dinamo press, 18 January 2013,

be protected does not exist, is a political figure that is used to perpetrate the norm, and becomes a one more reason for security, policing people's practices and lives, as Preciado goes on to saying about concerning the “anti-gender demonstrations” in France., Ppeople there:

rather defends the power of educating children on the sexual and gender norm, as supposedly heterosexual. They demonstrate for maintaining the right toof discriminate, punish and correct every form of dissidence and deviance, but even to remember to the parent of non-heterosexual children that their duty is to feel ashamed, to refuse them, to correct them.

*[Difendono piuttosto il potere di educare i bambini nella norma sessuale e di genere, come presunti eterosessuali. Sfilano per mantenere il diritto di discriminare, punire e correggere ogni forma di dissidenza o devianza, ma anche per ricordare ai genitori di bambini non-eterosessuali che il loro dovere è di vergognarsene, di rifiutarli, di correggerli.]*¹⁴¹.

This eviction could then be inserted into the broader narrative of anti-gender propaganda, for the activist construction in the local and national mass media as “illegal” rests on the same discourse that is being reproduced when the media reports statements such as the one from a priest from the North of Italy which affirmed that: “gender terrorism” is worse than ISIS terrorism¹⁴² and also that “ISIS kills bodies and that impresses a lot, but “gender” kills society”. The overlapping of narratives of illegality/criminality and queer politics as opening up spaces of dissidence about constructions of masculinity, patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, and the questioning of structural systemic violence as acting on bodies and lives are at stake here. The issue, then, is not to establish whether queer activists are being strictly labelled as terrorist, but rests on the association between illegality and terrorism, the construction of “gender terror” in the anti-gender oppressive discourse, as a disruption of society; if the society that the institutions and power structures are aimed at maintaining and reproducing is the heteronormative white supremacist one then whoever actively opposes and criticize it is liable to become a potential terrorist. The discourse regarding the defence of legality, specifically is visible in the fact that the eviction happened within the application of an article of the civil code that is usually applied for goods confiscated to the Mafia and organized criminality, whose aim is to reassure to the collectivity the leased assets;¹⁴³, but what the legality

www.dinamopress.it/news/chi-difende-il-bambino-queer.

141 Ibid.

142 Davide Cantoni, “Como, bufera del parroco dopo la messa: l'ideologia gender è più pericolosa dell'Isis” in Repubblica.it Milano, 7 March 2015,

http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/03/07/news/como_bufera_sul_parroco_dopo_la_messa_l_ideologia_gender_e_piu_pericolosa_dell_isis_-109014083/.

143 “Atlantide si muove ma resta dov'è” in zic.it quotidiano online autogestito @ bologna, <http://www.zic.it/atlantide-si-muove-ma-resta-dove/>.

argument is hiding is a political will to normalized anomalies, to destroy what cannot be tamed.¹⁴⁴. Moreover, the excuses that had been used regarding wanting to use the the building as an office for the social services, when it was well known, as even the activist writes that the entire eviction was an operation required in the electoral campaign; to raise a consensus with the “citizens”, the same citizens whose health was “at risk” before, namely the far Right and the homophobic left party ruling the city: the electoral campaign was conducted on queer lives. To do this effectively, the speech of giving back the place to collectivity sounded like an appropriate pretext; the conscious discursive blindness relates on to the fact that squats and social spaces are open spaces to allow different discourses and practices to circulates, in which inclusion and non-discrimination are the basis of the interactions happening inside, in which fundamental struggle affecting the all of society takes place. This might also be an over-conscious attitude towards all of this, one that defines the dangerousness of queer and other struggles happening in the city, the struggle for an autonomy and freedom that needs to be eliminated, and the reasons of security and repression are being shaped carefully and in relations to the hegemonic discourses that rather could might mobilize bigotry, hate and the imposition of normalization. After the eviction on the occasion of a national demonstration that collectives from Atlantide organized , the major of the city, belonging to the Democratic Party (supposedly a leftist party), took a clear position aimed not only at banning the demonstration , but also on reassuring people of the banning of future events, in such a way that overcame even the harshness of the right party's opposition to the political initiative. The eviction in the hegemonic discourse reached a consensus even in the city’s administration because the focal point of “acceptability” was even beyond the Italian institutional left and right: the conditions of respectability are based on how much queers and other marginal subjects are willing to normalized themselves and their practices, to accept the terms of the discourse. Despite the legal definition of who can be a terrorist , a definition which, as we saw in Chapter 2, has been enlarged to include always more political subjects , the space of potential terrorism could become to be applied to everybody who inhabiting the margin and choose to fight for their life and their desires; a terrorist is one who is refusethe normalization, who acquires the definition of dangerous because he or she calls into question the privilege of the “general population” privilege, the hegemonic dominant discourses that oppressing minorities, and who is occupying the obscenity and the space of abjection as spaces of dissidence. In the Atlantide's case the “potential terrorist” accusations as implicit in the belonging to political anti-institutionalized dissidence is overlapping with the “gender terrorism” as an operation of the disruption of the role of genders roles and the destruction of the heteronormative order, as a destabilization that infects society as a virus, confronting without

144Ibid.

shortcuts patriarchy and power structures in all their hegemony.

Conclusions

This thesis has aimed at identifying what has come to be defined as “terrorist” within political dissidence, social and political struggles in the Italian context and how the criminalization of movements, surveillance and the denial of spaces of resistance contribute to defining the term. In this thesis I first tried to trace the notion of biopolitics as developed by different authors; I briefly explored the Foucauldian theorization of the passage from disciplinary regime to biopolitical ones, with the political implications, to show how the security mechanism modified their characteristic and their way of acting upon bodies. Later, I moved on to Mbembe's reworking of biopolitical notions through the connection of the “state of emergency” and the “state of siege”¹⁴⁵ within necropolitics. Mbembe's analysis, together with the ones of Butler and Agamben, was fundamental to understanding how neoliberal society reshapes surveillance and security in the dimension of the exception, how power is exercised, and how terrorist accusations are still at work as devices of violence and repression. Specifically I wanted to underline how terrorist concepts and definitions have been used to introduce special measures and emergencial narratives (in many European countries) and how they are strictly connected to what Agamben defined as the “security state”.¹⁴⁶

I subsequently introduced how, in the Italian context, terrorism has been narrated in a specific way that has allowed for the construction of “threat” and “dangerousness” as being related to social and political movements. I have illustrated how the legal category of terrorism in Italy has a long legacy of special legislations and state punishment measures dating back to the 1970s. I wanted to examine terrorist notions and definitions in the Italian context because of their specific political usage by the state to repress struggles. The devices of repression connected to the category of terrorism have constituted a huge attempt by the state to silence, imprison activists and deny discursive and physical spaces to different forms of activism as evidenced by the No Tav example in Chapter 2.

The connection between terrorism and queer as developed by Puar was fundamental for me to connect the figure of the terrorist to deviance and monstrosity and criminality as central features of queer subjectivities in hegemonic discourses. Queer theory has been developed as a space of disruption of the norm and of society itself, calling into question the apparatus of the production of truth in relation to different notions, including violence and illegality.

145 Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics” *Public Culture*, 15, no. 1 (2003), 16.

146 Giorgio Agamben, “zona grigia che preparano dittatura” in *comune info*, 10 January 2016, trans. Martino Laurenti; original source: “De l'Etat de droit à l'Etat de sécurité”, *lemonde.fr.*, <http://comune-info.net/2016/01/democrazia-dittature/>.

The link between queer and terrorism was central in my examination of the case study about the queer transfeminist squat Atlantide because I wanted to trace how narratives of repression and criminalization of social movements affect specifically queer activism.

The analysis of the squat aimed at making visible how stigmatization and criminalization of queer activism happens along a specific construction of dangerousness and how this activism calls into question heteronormative structures and disrupts traditional gender roles and sexual practices. I demonstrated how the narratives of “criminality” and terrorism, proper to other groups as well, in the case study overlap with narratives of perversion, bourgeois ideas of respectability, decorum and exclusionary frames of citizenship that have been reinforced by the ongoing debate on “gender ideology” and the consequential Catholic fundamentalism and far Right campaigns of hate against queer lives. Furthermore in this research I wanted to investigate the different dynamics that are being constructed in relation to different types of struggles; if it's true that ideas of the potential terrorist have been in my perspective extended to include the queer subject, the reasons for the accusations are different and shift according to the narratives that are being created around them. In the case of queer subjects, indeed, as the research has shown, the “terroristic” can also be related to non-normative sexualities and practices, together with lifestyles and different ways of organizing life, relations and interactions out of the consumerist and individualized patterns of neoliberalism.

I have supported my research with different sets of knowledge coming from activist environments in the analysis of the case study and in the definition of the Italian political context on a more general level, willing to offer a contribution on the specificity of the Italian queer struggle in the European securitarian paradigm. I also wanted to show how securitarian and repressive technologies affect resistance through the perceptions and the analysis of the comrades involved in it. The connection of the security state with terrorist accusation and the denial of spaces to squats and other activist projects needs to be visibilized in order to start rethinking the relations that occur between the new techniques of control that the current geopolitical landscapes are developing and the ways in which we can resist them with new tools, strategies and practices.

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