



Masculinity, Sex and Popular Culture

HIPSTER PORN

QUEER MASCULINITIES AND AFFECTIVE
SEXUALITIES IN THE FANZINE *BUTT*

Peter Rehberg



Hipster Porn

Hipster Porn examines models of gay hipster masculinity through the lens of the gay fanzine *Butt*. The book reconstructs an important chapter of recent gay and queer history in order to make sense of the cultural shifts of the last 20 years in the contemporary gay world.

Butt exemplifies the changing nature of gay contemporary masculinity as it marked the beginning of a new era of queer fanzines such as *They Shoot Homos Don't They?*, *Kink*, *Kaiserin*, and *Meat* reflecting a specific cosmopolitan gay lifestyle in the West of the 2000s. The new forms of masculinity and sexuality demanded new ways of thinking about gender and desire. *Hipster Porn* takes the aesthetics of *Butt* to find a way of critiquing and rearticulating key concepts from gender, queer and affect theory, and delivers new accounts of subjectivity and sociality as they apply to queer media culture.

This book is suitable for researchers in gender studies, queer and masculinity studies, cultural studies, media studies, and sociology.

Peter Rehberg is a writer, critic, and curator. He holds a PhD in German Literature from New York University and has taught and researched at several universities and institutes in the United States and Germany including Cornell, Northwestern, Brown, University of Bonn, The University of Texas at Austin, and The University of Illinois, Chicago. He has published two novels and a collection of short stories in German. He also writes regularly for German media. In his academic work, he focuses on queer theory, queer visual culture, and popular culture. Among his recent publications are the German version of *Hipster Porn* and “Energie ohne Macht: Christian Maurels Theorie des Anus im Kontext von Guy Hocquenghem und der Geschichte von Queer Theory” (2019), the afterword to Maurel’s Essay *Für den Arsch*, which under the English title *The Screwball Asses* was formerly attributed to French theorist Guy Hocquenghem. In 2018, Rehberg was appointed head of collections and archives at Schwules Museum, Berlin.

Masculinity, Sex and Popular Culture

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Queer Masculinities and Affective
Sexualities in the Fanzine *Butt*

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To all the beautiful men in my life



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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
Introduction	1
1 Reading <i>Butt</i>	19
2 Homo Hipster	40
3 Beyond Butch	63
4 Affective Sexualities	91
5 Fag Limbo	122
Conclusion: Pink Poverty	159
<i>Index</i>	176

Figures

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1.1 | Ben photographed by Slava Mogutin. Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). <i>Butt</i> . No. 5. Autumn 2002, Cover. | 23 |
| 2.1 | Angel photographed by Luis Venegas. Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). <i>Butt</i> . No. 13. Summer 2005, 46. | 43 |
| 3.1 | “You Are So Hairy” photographed by Robert Greene. Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). <i>Butt</i> . No. 18. Winter 2006–07, 33–39, 33. | 80 |
| 5.1 | Julian photographed by Wolfgang Tillmans. Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). <i>Butt</i> . No. 16. Summer 2006, 7–12, 10–11. | 133 |
| 5.2 | “The Ball” photographed by Eduard Xandri. Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). <i>Butt</i> . No. 15. Spring 2006, 53–57, 56–57. | 135 |
| C.1 | Untitled photographed by Michalis Intziegianni. Source: <i>Butt 2014: Daily Calendar from Butt Magazine</i> . Saturday, 22 February 2014. | 166 |
| C.2 | Untitled, photographer unknown. Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). <i>Butt</i> . No. 20. Summer 2007, Cover. | 172 |

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The English version of *Hipster Porn* is the result of several transitions and translations. First, I brought parts of a US-American debate to Germany. My German socialization, my mother tongue, and not least my training as a German Studies scholar, which until now still defined my academic affiliation, in turn, shaped my grip on a US-influenced queer theory. For this publication, this work has been revised and translated by myself into English. My work moves back and forth between English and German. My writing position is in North America and Europe, both in Austin and in Berlin – the two cities in which this book and its translation were written.

Writing the German version of *Hipster Porn* coincides with my time as a DAAD Associate Professor in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, where I taught and researched from 2011 to 2016. It was completed after returning to Berlin, while I was affiliated with the ICI Berlin – Institute for Cultural Inquiry with a DAAD return fellowship. For their support during this time, I would like to thank the DAAD and the ICI Berlin, as well as my colleagues in Austin, especially Ann Cvetkovich, John Hoberman, and Pascale Bos. After a short stay at the University of Illinois at Chicago, I accepted a job as head of collections and archives at Schwules Museum, Berlin. It is in this cultural and political context that I continue my research on queer masculinities.

During these years, I often had the opportunity to discuss my ideas with my students, for example, in the courses “Queer Visual Culture,” “A History of Queer Pleasure,” and “Body and Biopolitics” at UT Austin, or during a workshop of the DFG Research Training Group “The Documentary: Excess and Deprivation” at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. I would like to thank Michael Bucher, Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, Dirck Linck, Volker Oldenburg, Paula-Irene Villa, and Brigitte Weingart for their comments on individual chapters of the German version. They helped me situate my queer research in the field of media studies and gender studies.

Parts of some chapters have been presented and discussed at conferences: “‘It’s Like the Seventies, just without Hope’: Post-Pornographic Aesthetics in the Queer Fanzine *Butt*.” After “Homosexual”: The Legacies of Gay

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Earlier versions and excerpts of the chapters have also appeared in anthologies and journals: “Hipstersex — postpornografische Erzählungen im schwulen Fanzine *Butt*,” in Martina Schuegraf and Angela Tillmann (Eds.). *Pornografisierung von Gesellschaft*. Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2012: 213–21; “Pornographic and Post-Pornographic Utopia.” In: Enrico Biasin, Giovanna Maina, and Federico Zecca (Eds.). *Porn after Porn: Contemporary Alternative Pornographies*. Milan and Udine: Mimeses International, 2014: 257–74; with Bradley Boovy, “Schwule Medien nach 45.” In: Jennifer Evans, Rüdiger Lautmann, Florian Mildenerger and Jakob Pastötter (Eds.). *Homosexualität im Spiegel der Wissenschaften*. Hamburg: Männerschwarm, 2014: 529–56; “‘Männer wie Du & Ich’: Gay Magazines from the National to the Transnational.” *German History*. 34/3, 2016: 468–85; “Ist der Schwulenporno queer? Von der Obszönität der Pornographie zur Affektivität von Postpornographie.” In: Dagmar Brunow and Simon Dickel (Eds.). *Queer Cinema*. Mainz: Ventil Verlag, 2017: 261–81; “Male Becomings: Queer Bodies as Aesthetic Forms in the Post-Pornographic Fanzine *Butt*.” In: David Fancy and Hans Skott-Myhre (Eds.). *Art as Revolt: Thinking Politics through Immanent Aesthetics*.

Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019: 167–82; “Grunts & Monsters’: Gay Men’s Online Media Practices.” In: Ulrike Bergermann, Erhard Schüttpelz, Monika Dommann, Jeremy Stolow and Nadine Taha (Eds.). *Connect and Divide: The Practice Turn in Media Studies*. Zurich, Berlin: The University of Chicago Press, 2021: 155–72.

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Introduction

No statement should be pronounced if it aims at hiding the specific constellation of the speaker's daily life. The customs of writing, however, lead to the separation of theory and confession, criticism and avowal, political criticism and personal discernment, as if mixing genres were preposterous.

(Hocquenghem 2010, 70)¹

Writing

Throughout history, gay sexuality and gay masculinity have been subject to discrimination, pathologization, and persecution. Every project invested in gay and queer lifeworlds, therefore, must maintain a certain skepticism toward institutions, their canons, and their forms of knowledge production. While gay and lesbian studies and queer studies, at least in the English-speaking world, have existed for thirty to forty years, queer criticism still remains fragmentary, a history of discontinuities. At the same time, knowledge, experiences, and affects have been stored in other places: unofficial archives without which cultural analysis would be impoverished and false in appearance. Not only artistic objects, texts, images, and films, but also memories of incidents, traces of everyday encounters, glances, fleeting remarks, and gossip are among the forms of communication and social interaction whose epistemological and ontological status often remain ephemeral and uncertain.

If one is part of a social group and its culture whose place can be so described, the question of the subject position gains importance. One's own perspective enables access to networks and settings, picking up on moods, ways of speaking, and new ideas that are part of a general knowledge within a subculture, without ever having arrived in the public sphere of mainstream society, its discourses, and its institutions. The project of *Hipster Porn* grew out of this double perspective. Through its discursive framework, I put up for discussion crucial positions of queer theory from the last 30 years. This part of the project is primarily indebted to a discussion emerging out of the US universities where I spent most of my academic life. Between 1995 and 2004, as a graduate student in New York and

2 Introduction

later on as an assistant professor on the East Coast. From 2011 to 2016, I was a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Associate Professor in Austin, Texas, before returning to Germany, my home country. In addition to its anchoring in a primarily US-American debate, *Hipster Porn* is also an autoethnographic project, a kind of insider ethnography (Race 2015, 258). This perspective is closely related to my professional career. I could not have written this book without my work as an editor at the queer Berlin city magazine *Siegessäule* (2005–06) and as editor-in-chief of the German gay monthly *Männer* (2006–11). For me, these editorial offices were places from which the changes in the gay culture of the 2000s – the success of dating portals, the pornification of gay culture accelerated by the internet, and the emergence of new images of masculinity – were best observed.

So, I am both reporting and writing as a gay man about gay issues and the place of gay culture: about men's bodies, men's sex, and men's friendships (Hebdige 1979, 139). This dual perspective, anchored, for example, through norms of journalism and academia, cannot always be understood as complementary; reconciliation is not guaranteed, and it indeed risks alienation, from both a predominantly academic and non-academic readership. Which non-queer person wants to hear what the theoretical, cultural, or political value of gay male sex practices can be? Conversely, which gay man wants to be told what his way of having sex and loving men might mean, or what the strategic value or risk of liking a certain type of male body might be? Tim Dean writes, "Intellectual work on sexuality is distinguished by the fact that, when it comes to sexuality, everyone is an expert, and no one is" (Dean 2009, XI). Queer studies can embrace this conflicted place, looking at both the ideological constitution of gay male subjectivity and sexuality and their potential alternatives, trying to understand the constraints and freedoms attached to them, yet always at risk of coming across as frivolous or as a know-it-all in the thematization and problematization of sexuality.

One assumption of my writing is that gay forms of life are about experiences that emanate from sex, and, at the same time, are more than sex. As American writer Dale Peck makes clear, "[I]t's gay sex that made gay culture" (Peck 2015, 111). *Hipster Porn* takes this sentence seriously, forming an important anchor for my work because the social world is structured by the heteronormative, neoliberal prescription to treat sex as a private matter – particularly gay and queer sexuality – in a world in which heterosexuality as a way of life is ubiquitous. The ways in which gay sexuality is distinct but also intertwined with more common forms of sexuality also leads to a double perspective. On the one hand, the study of minor sexualities and masculinities always includes insights into the more general social constitution and construction of gender and sexuality.² The gain of queer research reaches far beyond queer culture. At the same time, the assumption of a common culture for straight and queer people must also be questioned. The study of gay culture cannot just have the purpose,

for example, of becoming an instrument to subvert hegemonic forms of power.³ The possibilities of gay affirmation, as a culture of its own, must also be acknowledged.

Butt Magazine

The focus of this study is the gay fanzine *Butt*, a transnational project published in print from Amsterdam and then New York between 2001 and 2011. It is now available only online (buttmagazine.com). From a queer theoretical perspective, the zine, which contains photos and interviews, deserves attention because, in the context of the post-pornographic culture of the 2000s and new media, *Butt* indicates a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of gender, sex, and desire. The task of *Hipster Porn* is to capture this shift.

As a part of a gay sub- and youth culture, the photographs of mostly naked men in *Butt* do not articulate transhistorical ideals. *Butt* became aesthetically possible at a certain point within gay history and the technological development of digital media. Its body politics and documentation of gay desire can thus be understood as a question of style, as Dick Hebdige describes it in his analysis of subcultures: “[S]tyle does have its moment, its brief outrageous spectacle, and in our study of style in subculture we should focus on that moment” (Hebdige 1979, 130). As a style, *Butt* belongs to a post-pornographic movement whose cultural moment has already faded.⁴ With *Hipster Porn*, the *Butt* moment, which lasted for a decade, is theorized retrospectively. Meanwhile, the aesthetics of *Butt* and its style of masculinity resonated more broadly, for example, with gay porn websites like cockyboys.com and deviantotter.com, and remains very prominent in other places.

Beyond gay porn culture, the style of *Butt* – casual, often hairy, young male bodies less standardized than the ones familiar from gay visual culture and pornography of the 1980s and 1990s – has long since entered mainstream youth culture and fashion, especially through the category of hipster. Under this label, the *Butt* style has become an exploitable object for the cultural industry (Hebdige 1979, 95–96). This inevitable fate of sub- and pop-cultural styles should not, however, lead us to declare them meaningless from the outset.⁵ While the capitalist appropriation of minority styles always works toward turning pop- and youth-cultural styles into commodities, the reverse is also true: As hubs of style scouts, subcultural scenes determine the direction of mainstream culture (Linck 2016, 81).

The contradiction between protest and conformity, typical of pop culture in general, is inscribed in the category “hipster.” By now, the label is often used in a denunciatory way to describe a youth culture whose stylistic otherness has degenerated into a meaningless or conformist attitude. This possibility also surrounds *Butt*’s visual material. The *Butt* boys remain ambivalent both in terms of gender politics (see [Chapters 1 and 2](#)) and in

4 Introduction

the ways in which they are performing sexuality (Chapter 4). Placing *Butt* at the center of *Hipster Porn*, however, also means remembering the alternative that the hipster represented around 1960. After all, the hipster was once a queer counterfigure (Linck 2016, 193–219). The queer trajectory of the hipster has not been acknowledged in the hipster discourse of the 2000s (Greif 2010). What is at stake with *Hipster Porn*, then, is to understand *Butt* as a form of resistance in the tradition of the queer hipster against its popularity in the mainstream. My attempt is to work out the cultural significance of this moment – the reemergence of the queer hipster – in the first decade of the 21st century.

HIV

From Michel Foucault, we have learned to understand sexuality in terms of history and biopolitics. For my examination of gay sexuality and maleness and their representations within a visual culture at the beginning of the 21st century, this means that it cannot take place in any other context than that of HIV and AIDS. This is even more true for the representation of gay sex in pornography and post-pornography examined here, in which HIV and AIDS have been specters since the early 1980s.

HIV and AIDS as medical conditions do not exist independently of the practices that conceptualize and represent them. HIV and AIDS – and the medical, cultural, and political responses to them – have shaped gay men’s sexuality, the way gay men live with each other, and how they see themselves. 1984 was the year of my coming out, the year before HIV was identified. My adult life and sexuality, therefore, were never without HIV and the practice of safer sex. Looking back from today, I can say that I belong to a generation of “in-betweeners.”⁶ I was born in 1966. While most infected gay men 10 or 15 years older than me died of AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s, antiretroviral therapy (ART) that can keep the virus at bay arrived in 1996, just in time for many men of my generation. For those infected later, medical care for HIV infection in the Western world is now very good. Some of us still carry those old images of AIDS in our heads, but we escaped, if only just, with our lives.

Nevertheless, we do not share the lightheartedness of the current Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, or PrEP, generation. If you are HIV-negative, you can now protect yourself against infection by regularly taking the drug Truvada or a generic equivalent. PrEP became available in the United States in 2012 and a few years later also in the United Kingdom and in continental Europe. Equally as important as the introduction of PrEP, ART is now so efficient that, if taken regularly, the viral load of HIV-positive individuals becomes undetectable, rendering them noninfectious. Over the 2010s, Treatment as Prevention (TasP) and PrEP established a new culture of safer sex beyond the condom. What seemed impossible only a decade ago

has now become a reality: A world in which no one must fear HIV. These changed medical circumstances are by no means just a private matter, even if they are often discussed as such and receive relatively little academic, social, and political attention in the present. HIV and AIDS are not only about the question of individual health or the risk of different sexual practices. With the epidemic, a gay culture with its specific social forms had perished in the 1980s,⁷ as Peck explains:

It's tempting to say that AIDS hijacked the Foucauldian inquiry into these "as yet unforeseen kinds of relationships," not least because the disease claimed Foucault's life in 1984, but also because the epidemic consumed almost the entirety of gay political and cultural activity for a decade and a half [...].

(Peck 2015, 112–13)

The history of HIV and AIDS shows us that public sex should not only be understood as a service to ensure quick access to as much sex as possible, but also as an ongoing sexual and social experiment that is central to the creativity and vibrancy of gay culture. This world had been largely destroyed by HIV and AIDS. With TasP and PrEP, the 2010s witnessed the renaissance of a public sex culture, which due to differing health policies, however, had never been extinguished to the same extent in Europe as in the United States.

The transatlantic gay fanzine *Butt* must be understood in the context of this history. The culture I describe and analyze in *Hipster Porn* is marked by these moments in medical history: the introduction of combination therapy in 1996; the 2009 paper by the Swiss Federal Commission for AIDS-related Issues (FCAI [EKAF]; now CFIST) announcing the non-infectiousness of HIV-positive individuals below detectable limits; and finally the 2012 approval of PrEP by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The images in *Butt*, first published in 2001, thus document a "post-AIDS" moment: the success of ART had given rise to a new sexual culture and a different body image. Admittedly, it is not yet a world without HIV and AIDS, but it is a world in which gay sexuality no longer needs to be understood as a matter of life and death. As a document of survival, HIV and AIDS appear dedramatized in *Butt* – and rightly so.

With *Hipster Porn*, I am interested in the potential of this post-dramatic culture to rethink masculinity, sexuality, and the communion of gay men. *Butt's* post-pornographic imagery presents both a sexual and an aesthetic universe – pornography can become art – and in this way also establishes a connection to a time before AIDS in which homosexual experiences were often articulated through artistic forms; as Foucault programmatically stated, "Not only do we have to defend ourselves, not only affirm ourselves as an identity but as a creative force" (Foucault 1989, 383).

Gay Mainstream

The world of *Butt* I address here is not the gay world present in most media, including some gay media. The increasing visibility of lesbians and gay men in the mainstream has brought with it a new invisibility. The sexual dimension of our existence (as well as the aesthetic), which is often perceived as a challenge or a threat and thus easily triggers homophobic reactions, was lost in the realpolitik of the 1990s.⁸ To be sure, the gay desire to conform is not new, as Leo Bersani notes: “Male homosexuality has always manifested itself socially as a highly specific blend of conformism and transgression” (Bersani 1995, 119). But this desire to conform has taken on a new form during the 1990s. Even more soberly than Bersani, Jane Ward writes 20 years later, “There is no doubt that many, and perhaps most, gay and lesbian people also want to be ‘normal’” (Ward 2015, 36). Since the 1990s, lesbians and gays have been increasingly represented as a variation of the heterosexual couple whose sexuality is relegated to the private sphere. The sexuality of our homosexuality should remain as inconspicuous as possible in public. The recognition of lesbians and gays as a social group comes at the price of making the very thing that distinguishes us – our sexuality – disappear.

Such assimilation is the precondition of the legal recognition of lesbians and gay men, which for that reason alone cannot be written unambiguously as a story of progress.⁹ We are supposed to prove that we function as partners in a relationship, parents, or soldiers in the same way as heterosexuals. However, the fact that gay sex and sexuality have physical, affective, psychological, and social consequences that differ from heterosexual ways of life disappears in such a conception of homosexuality. In the dominant form of homosexuality, the politicization of shame and revolt no longer play a role.¹⁰ A desire for change has been replaced with a desire for participation.

This situation also recalls the complicated relationship between “gay” and “queer.” Within the Western world, it is now truer than ever that being gay does not necessarily mean being queer. Mike Laufenberg writes, “The neoliberal dispositive of sexuality, it seems, has split its perverts into happy gays and unhappy queers” (Laufenberg 2015, 66, translation P.R.). In the 21st century, queer is an experience and a position that gay people, under certain conditions, can escape. With the option of a gay position, however, a queer one has not automatically been left behind, even if many homosexual men and women have increasing access to social privileges. Nonetheless, in societies that have a long history of patriarchy, misogyny, and homophobia, a stable difference between gay and queer, non-stigmatized and stigmatized, is by no means guaranteed. Gay is still haunted by the specter of queer.

Ethically to me, this situation results in the imperative to understand oneself as queer precisely at the moment when it is no longer necessary

to assume a connection between gay and queer. The defensive, non-queer stance that lesbians and gays have often taken in this conflict and which also led to a new culture of homonormativity can be understood in the case of gay men as a reaction to HIV and AIDS. The individual and social trauma of AIDS was met, a bit unexpectedly, with the political recognition of gays and lesbians as a social group. It was a kind of horse trade: In exchange for giving up experimental sexuality and the social forms that can go with it, lesbians and gays were offered mainstream civil rights. Politically, this strategy was effective, as the introduction of gay marriage in Western countries demonstrates. At the same time, the project of gay and lesbian assimilation remains risky, not just politically but also culturally, socially, and psychologically.

If the difference between a desire for assimilation and the merely strategic use of easily recognizable images is still to play a role here at all, it can be argued that the very idea of a strategy only exists as long as one can still refer to a realm beyond the representational politics of recognition. To achieve this, a notable difference must be inscribed within the strategic operation itself, as Matthias Haase explains:

It cannot [...] be a matter of abandoning the politics of representation, but rather of developing an appropriately reflexive or “strategic” relationship to the identities presented. Such a reflexive stance, however, only becomes possible against the background of a self-understanding that allows queer life to be thought of as something whose reality is not absorbed in those strategically deployed names of identity politics.
(Haase 2005, 10, translation P.R.)

With Foucault, the strategy of identity politics can also be conceived of in temporal terms, as a form of tentativeness: “We should consider the battle for gay rights as an episode that cannot be the final stage” (Foucault cited in Eribon 2004, 322). *Hipster Porn* follows this perspective and suggests that a gay narrative cannot be limited to one of liberation through assimilation. How, then, can the strategical dimension of representational politics be marked? What does gay life look like beyond strategic maneuvers – not only in the sense of a safe space but also as a space of experimentation and risk? At this point, sexuality continues to play a central role.

The gay politics of representation of the last twenty years often show a shameful and hypocritical attitude toward sexuality that is well known from history, “[a] self-representation that refrains from the factual—[...] the insistence on not living as promiscuously as the majority actually does” (Linck 2016, 17, translation P.R.). Gay men themselves succumb to the temptation to push the sexual into the background. This specifically gay double standard, however, is characterized in the present by a particular irony. Although gay and lesbian politics of recognition have

8 Introduction

largely banned sexuality from public representation, this policy far from adequately depicts the contemporary gay world. Although gay sexual subcultures, especially in the United States, have disappeared since the 1980s because of HIV, at the same time, the possibilities for sexual contact have rapidly increased through the interactive digital media of the 2000s. As Kane Race states:

At a time when marriage and monogamy increasingly monopolize the public discourse of gay desire, the capacity to maintain a loose web of fuckbuddies is perhaps more available, more accessible, and more widely accessed than ever before. But these sociomaterial arrangements and the specific forms of relation they enable are rarely acknowledged or given due consideration.

(Race 2015, 271)

What consequences should we draw from the discrepancy between the lesbian and gay politics of representation with its focus on marriage and adoption rights on the one hand, and a culture of sexual networking in times when HIV infection has lost its dramatic meaning on the other?

I believe that one can take advantage of the current situation. To bring sexuality and art back into the center of queer politics seems quasi-old-fashioned, a return of the gay gaze to past cultural and political forms (Love 2007, 10). In times of homonormativity, but also in times of an increasingly desexualized queer studies, I understand such a project as an ethical, cultural, and political necessity, to prevent the merely strategic value of representational politics from being forgotten and to affirm gay life as a world beyond the politics of legal recognition. What is at stake here is a queer culture that 20 years ago was described by Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner as “not just a safe zone for queer sex, but the changed possibilities of identity, intelligibility, publics, culture, and sex that appear when the heterosexual couple is no longer the referent or privileged example of sexual culture” (Berlant and Warner 2002, 187). Affirming and analyzing *Butt*'s significance is a return to the queerness of sexuality as the center of gay culture. *Butt* offers the occasion to make sexual and affective experimentation the starting point of gay thought again, to develop a queer ethics out of it. This potential within post-pornography is initially indeed best observed through online culture, as Ken Hillis writes:

For gay/queer men online, the neither public nor private yet both at once character of the networked settings they may seek to virtually inhabit permits marginalized aspects of gay/queer cultural realities to attain something like a “return to center”—to achieve fuller visibility and “presence.”

(Hillis 2009, 211)

Sexual Subculture and Sexual Marketplace

Hipster Porn tells us what an alternative to the narrative of assimilation and homonormativity looks like, what subjective and social potentials are to be found in a sexual culture when it is not limited to a private activity or as a compensatory fantasy for a heteronormative social reality (Cvetkovich 2003, 82); if, in other words, the sexuality of homosexuality is not repressed, but this experience – whose destabilizing power should not be underestimated, as for example, Lynne Huffer (2010) shows in her discussion of sexuality and madness in Foucault – is granted the value of reshaping our world aesthetically and socially. Queer is the name here for a productive sexual disorientation. With this repoliticization of sexuality, the very precondition of a politics of assimilation is subjected to critique, as much as a gay subject that in homonormative times tends to be both desexualized and masculinized. *Hipster Porn* is not only about the construction of new subject designs, though; but it is also about the integrity of the subject itself and its social forms.

The premise of such a perspective is the assumption that sexuality – “the most meaning-intensive of human activities” (Sedgwick 1990, 5) – still provides a potential that can have psychological, social, ethical, and political consequences. This significance of sexuality, which belongs to the classical narrative of the sexual revolution in Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, but has never been appropriately considered within the social sciences following them, e.g., in Jürgen Habermas, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, or Pierre Bourdieu (Warner 1993, IX), has been fundamentally questioned in the new millennium. To understand contemporary forms of domination and violence, the question of sexuality is no longer crucial in this perspective. In Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s influential *Empire*, for example, the biopolitical administration of sexuality, which according to Foucault had been central to modernity, plays only a subordinate role. In this perspective, post-Fordist societies no longer function through the suppression of sexuality, which accordingly no longer need to be liberated. The law of the father, of which psychoanalysis spoke so powerfully, is said to have lost its validity here.

Such an assessment, however, ignores the difference between disciplinary societies and societies of control that Gilles Deleuze, following Foucault’s analysis of power, had highlighted. An authoritarian, say patriarchal regulation of sexuality is no longer necessary when subjects themselves have taken over this job, for example, in the sense of a self-optimization that conforms to market principles, i.e., when discipline is replaced by self-control. In *Neosexualities*, Volkmar Sigusch (2005) describes what a sexual culture within a society of control looks like. The instance of the father as a guiding figure has been replaced as a regulating principle by capitalism; a Lacanian universe has become a Deleuzian one.¹¹ The logic of capital does not necessarily demand heteronormativity and the forms of sexual

repression that accompany it. In a diversified and commodified sexual market, as represented by new media, perversions have lost the reputation of being transgressive and are welcomed instead as instruments to increase pleasure (and profit). Successful sexuality is measured by the criteria of fitness and intensity of the experience. For the neoliberal subject, sexuality is thus an arena of narcissistic self-affirmation. Here, it is precisely the creativity and flexibility of the category queer that does not seem to be protected against offering itself to the market law of novelty: as a variation of sexual styles, queer permanently provides an expanding market with new resources. In view of the dominance of this context of exploitation, it seems difficult to still assign critical potentials to a queer sexuality.

However, queer readings of psychoanalysis, especially by Bersani and Dean, have pointed out that the sexual entails a dimension that cannot be absorbed in strategies of subjective optimization. A lot depends on considering this possibility of the sexual as strangeness. “Becoming a stranger in your own sexuality is about leaving behind the functional structures ascribed to the body and sexuality” (Beckman 2013, 118). In these readings, the sexual remains a realm of indeterminacy, a different place beyond the grip of economic and social constraints.¹² The answer to a historical analysis of sexuality in capitalism here is an ontology of the sexual, such as it can already be found in Freud’s drive theory, for example. In contrast to the narcissistic readiness for action within a pornified society, a sexuality as *jouissance* leads to a loss of self. With its self-destructive function, another use of the sexual becomes conceivable – subjectively and socially, which also points beyond the concerns of a gay community. “Homosexuality is the historic occasion to reopen affective and relational virtualities” (Roach 2012, 65).

Queer Still Means Sex

In this respect, my analysis is committed to understanding queer as a form of critique that takes the sexual as its point of departure, while it also proceeds intersectionally and includes forms of power such as race, class, and nation.¹³ In this sense, *Hipster Porn* is about a “minor sexuality,” which Frida Beckman speaks of in reference to Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s “minor literature.” But is this dimension of the sexual, which has a long theoretical history, to be found in contemporary queer post-pornography? Does an ahistorical conception of sexuality help us to understand the gay fanzine *Butt* and the post-pornography of the 2000s? Does *Butt* offer a new way for politicizing sexuality?

Even if we no longer believe in the digital utopias of the turn of the millennium – quite to the contrary – new configurations of gender and sexuality can still be found on the internet. *Hipster Porn* suggests that queer post-pornographic online and fanzine culture is different from mainstream porn pop; that in this subcultural site, a different notion of sexuality and

a different image of men is at play; that we witnessed a historical moment in which symbolic structures and visual regimes are losing stability and therefore we also need to find new ways of thinking about the visually represented, mediated male body. New media technologies also offer different structures for the articulation of subject positions, for the representation of bodies and consequently also for new social forms: not only a new ubiquity of the naked male body, but also the increasing visualization of nonstandardized bodies. These potentials are culturally effective and can be used politically. With Foucault, one can say that this is where the difference between a sexuality that operates biopolitically as a form of discipline and the ethical work of asceticism, understood as an aesthetic transformation of being, can be located. To understand the possibilities of these new pornographies, queer theory is helpful as a toolkit. However, contemporary queer post-pornographic culture, as evidenced by interactive online pornography and the gay fanzine *Butt*, also necessitates a rearticulation of some of the basic assumptions of queer theory.

Queer Theory Revisited

In its thirty-year history, queer theory has undergone a number of revisions. In particular, within the last 15 years, several paradigmatic shifts have been proposed.¹⁴ *Hipster Porn* suggests a return to the beginnings of queer theory around 1990. It takes the categories of gender, sex, and desire as fundamental to the project of queer theory and subjects them to revision. My thesis is that both the relationship between gender and sex as defined by Judith Butler and the constitution of desire as understood according to a psychoanalytic tradition need to be revised in order to do justice to the manifestations of a new queer sexual culture of the 21st century. Not to demonstrate the inappropriateness of the category “queer,” rather to update the meaning of queer for our present. Here I echo Sedgwick’s optimism from almost 30 years ago: “something about queer is inextinguishable” (Sedgwick 1993, XII). While my critique of Butler draws primarily on Bersani and Deleuze and the category of the aesthetic as distinct from gender and sex, my critique of psychoanalysis draws on affect theory, as developed by Lauren Berlant, thwarting the traditional antagonism of desire and love. I consider the proponents of the antisocial turn on the one hand and affect theory on the other to be less antagonistic than perceived within queer theory (Koivunen 2010, 42).

To show how *Butt* marks a historical moment within queer cultural history that also necessitates a reworking of queer theory, *Hipster Porn* follows a double perspective. The book is divided into more descriptive parts (Chapters 1, 2, and 5) and theoretical discussions (Chapters 3 and 4). In this respect, *Hipster Porn* is both a contribution to queer studies in the sense of a sexual and social-cultural history of post-pornography in the 2000s and the fanzine *Butt* in particular, and to queer theory as a theoretical project.

Individual Chapters

The first chapter, “Reading *Butt*,” begins with a description of the gay fanzine *Butt* and situates it in the context of post-pornographic culture. The subcultural appropriation of new media technologies and the reworking of pornography’s representational conventions work against the commodification and ideological regulation of naked bodies and sexualities. The question is, however, whether the fan perspective of celebrating male bodies in *Butt* can still be understood as queer in a political sense. Although with its post-phallic imagery *Butt* articulates a critique of hegemonic images of masculinity, at the same time, these visual politics are framed by an insistence on “naturalness.” This somewhat surprising, or even contradictory, politics of representation is first to be read in the context of HIV and AIDS. While the trauma of AIDS was countered with a strategy of fit masculinity as seen in 1980s and 1990s porn, *Butt*’s less striking masculinity manifests a historical distance from HIV and AIDS. *Butt*’s aesthetic, however, is not just a return to 1970s indie porn – the time before AIDS – but is also in dialogue with media changes around 2000. The aesthetics of DIY porn and cam chat provide the other source for staging *Butt* boys in mostly private spaces. *Butt* provides a visual chronic of the first decade of the 21st century, in which digital visual media began to define the representation of gay masculinity.

From a historical perspective, the nonconformist masculinity of *Butt* boys also owes much to an archive of subcultural masculinities within post-1945 pop-cultural history, as the second chapter, “Homo Hipster,” shows. *Butt*’s post-phallic focus can be traced back to the figure of the hipster in the US culture around 1960. This form of masculinity, in which the categories of race, class, and nationality are initially decisive, can be considered hybrid in several ways. In his appropriation of black sexuality, the hipster, in a difficult and contradictory fashion, represents a nonhegemonic form of whiteness, also evident in his proximity to “white trash.” At the same time, the hipster expresses an intellectual and artistic sensibility that is not only socially but also territorially distinct from “white trash.” The hipster is a transatlantic figure and belongs to the European culture of “porno chic” as well. Whether the hipster style remains ineffective as a fashionable gesture or manages to destabilize normative masculinity ultimately depends on the question of sexuality. Unlike the hetero-hipster, the homo-hipster in *Butt* can once again realize the queer potential of the figure.

The third chapter, “Beyond Butch,” demonstrates how *Butt*’s insistence on the “naturalness” of the male body points to the fact that the category of sex, as opposed to gender, must be discussed. *Butt* proves to be part of a pornographic tradition in that it initially anchors the pictorial representation of naked male bodies in a stable relationship between gender and sex. From a gay perspective, the value of masculinity and maleness can, obviously, not simply be ignored if gays and their desires are to remain part of a queer project. A

gay sexual subculture precisely consists of reworking these ideological prescriptions without sacrificing the erotic value of masculinity and maleness. In the wake of psychoanalysis and its queer readings, two strategies have been deployed to negotiate this conflict: Either by identifying the representation of masculinity as mask-like, analogous to the staging of femininity, or by repeatedly exposing (dominant) masculinity's claim to authenticity to its own destruction. With *Butt's* nonchalant, affectionate men, however, a different picture emerges that can be decoded neither via the conspicuous performativity of gender, nor via a dramatic dialectic between the corrosion of the male ego and its recurring self-assertion. In order to develop a third perspective, contrary to Butler, a difference between masculinity as gender and maleness as sex must be maintained. The aim is not to give validity to maleness as a realm of the natural beyond cultural articulations, but rather to understand maleness beyond pornographic conventionality as a zone of aesthetic design that is not completely regulated by orders of signification together with their hierarchies and exclusions. In *Butt*, the materiality of maleness becomes the site of the transgression of masculinity: *male becoming*.

The fourth chapter, "Affective Sexualities," shows how, beyond pornographic conventions, the fanzine stages a different style of desire that does not reduce sexuality to the mere fulfillment of fantasies, but offers, beyond a psychoanalytical understanding of sexual encounters, new forms of contact. One way to understand this stylistic shift within post-pornography would be to say that in *Butt*, sexuality is transcended by affects. This is reflective of a broader shift in cultural studies, where a shift in paradigms from sexuality to affects can be observed with representational analyses being replaced by an attention to affects as zones of material and cultural indeterminacy. The stakes have shifted from the analysis of power within symbolic systems to the inclusion of an ontological dimension understood as the potentiality of the new. In my analysis, through a critical engagement with theories of affect, I work out a concept of *affective sexualities* as a mixed phenomenon. For a strict distinction between sexuality and affects is not easily tenable. With Deleuze, affects can be understood as intensities beyond the economy of castration; what is at work here is the productivity of a desire that does not follow a lack. However, in order to counteract the desexualization of a queer analysis in the field of affect theory, the discussion about the critical potential of affects, if we want to apply it to the example of *Butt*, must be tied back to the topic of sexuality. To this end we can read moments of affect in Foucault, which are addressed through the barely elaborated concept of *pleasure*, and which, in turn, maintain a proximity to Deleuze's concept of desire. Foucault's perspective can furthermore be specified here through a discussion of his concept of power. In the context of *Butt*, however, what is at stake is not the processing and shifting of institutionalized forms of power as in the case of Foucault's example of S/M, but rather a different conception of love, as Lauren Berlant suggests, that can no longer be categorically distinguished from desire.

A number of examples in which love and desire are no longer negotiated as antagonisms can be found within both *Butt* and post-pornographic culture as a whole, as the fifth chapter, “Fag Limbo,” discusses. In these examples, such as in the films of New Wave Queer Cinema, some of which were made in cooperation with *Butt*, the encounter of pornographic and non-pornographic narratives illustrates the manner, in which the cinematic event is not monopolized by the pornographic mission which seeks simply to arouse the viewer? Beyond sexual urgency, *Butt* documents the moment before or after sex, offering a different contextualization of the event: The hobbies or seemingly arbitrary characteristics of *Butt* boys are treated on a par with sexual anecdotes. Beyond the realm of porn glamour, the *Butt* boys are neither presented as sexual case studies, nor introduced as psychological individuals, but rather shown as affective-sexual schizo-subjects who appear in the environment of every day, creative affects, in an open environment of new object relations. *Butt*’s humor, however, is indicative of the fact that the trivialization of sexuality in the context of affects only partially succeeds. Even though *Butt*, unlike “white trash” porn, does not present castration humor, the power of sexuality as existential drama is not yet banished from its stories. Rather, and more precisely, the jokes in *Butt* negotiate the relationship between the sexual and the affective. Despite the sustained power of sexuality, of which the necessity of the joke is a reminder, *Butt* opens up a world of diffuse interest and contingent love. The ephemeral nature of these bonds is also reflected in the episodic nature of the fanzine’s portraits. *Butt* presents the openness of these unreliable stories as a form of optimism.

To answer the question as to whether *Butt*, with its visual variations of masculinity/maleness and a shift from sexuality to affect, also produces new forms of community, in the last chapter and conclusion “Pink Poverty” the fanzine must finally be considered once again in the context of a digital pornographic culture. The use of online dating platforms and apps can initially be characterized through strategies of neoliberal self-promotion. In the online world, self-pornification appears as a form of “communicative capitalism” in which *homo economicus* also shows himself to be sexually efficient. With some canonical texts from the anti-social turn as an instrument of analysis, however, another picture emerges, not only for offline but also for online sexual communities. Behind the narcissistic spectacle of pornographic propaganda a different form of connectedness takes place, in which self-assertion through sexual norms as a form of subjection is replaced by a more radical option of desubjection. Against this background, *Butt* must be understood as a specific form of media practice. Pornographic fatuousness is transformed into sexual friendliness, shown by male bodies that no longer need to mask everything that does not serve to increase sexual arousal. From desubjection a new form of subjectification emerges. With its pink-tinged photographs, *Butt* articulates

its promise of a different masculinity, a different sexuality, and a different form of community.

Notes

1. This text, published in English under the title *The Screwball Asses* (Hocquenghem 2010), was until recently attributed to Guy Hocquenghem. Newer research by Antoine Idier, however, has shown that its real author is Christian Maurel (Idier 2017, III). A German publication of the text, for which I wrote the editorial note and an afterword, has already acknowledged this fact (Maurel 2019). As the text is still only available in English with Hocquenghem as the author, it is therefore cited as such here.
2. Calvin Thomas, for example, remarked over 25 years ago: “The fact that what has been said most recently by men about male bodies comes predominantly from gay male theorists indicates not only the increasing vitality of queer theory but also the extent to which the idealizing repression of bodily masculinity in male discourse is a function of what Jane Gallop refers to as a heterosexist ideology” (Thomas 1996, 37).
3. Here I share Matthias Haase’s positional definition of queer studies: “To grasp queer life exclusively in its subversive dimension is therefore to have no eye for its own reality and thus to run the risk of repeating underhand the hegemonic rejection of minoritarian sexualities” (Haase 2005, 11, translation P.R.). According to Sedgwick, it is about liberating the production of knowledge of homosexuality from its framing by paranoia (Sedgwick 2003, 126, 146).
4. A more extended German version of *Hipster Porn* was published in 2018 by b_books: Peter Rehberg, *Hipster Porn: Queere Männlichkeiten und affektive Sexualitäten im Fanzine Butt*.
5. Queer theorists have repeatedly pointed out these intersections of gay culture and popular culture. David Halperin writes, “Obviously, not all gay technologies of the self are necessarily revolutionary, transformative, or self-transcending. But it is also important not to underestimate the transformative potential of popular subcultural practices” (Halperin 1995, 115).
6. In his autobiographical essay *Visions and Revisions*, Peck comes to a similar assessment: “The sexual revolution, after all, belonged to my parents’ generation, and the first great wave of AIDS deaths affected a similarly aged population. I lost an opportunity, a context, but I didn’t lose the hundreds of thousands of friends that people a decade or two older than me lost” (Peck 2015, 132–33).
7. Ann Cvetkovich, in her history of lesbian women and AIDS activism, writes: “I was unwilling, for example, to accept a desexualized or sanitized version of queer culture as the price of inclusion in the national public sphere; I wanted the sexual cultures that AIDS threatened to be recognized as both an achievement and a potential loss” (Cvetkovich 2003, 5).
8. I share Bruce LaBruce’s assessment here, which leads to a defense of pornography and camp: “One could easily argue that the contemporary abandonment of the aesthetic dimension in favor of realpolitik and mundane, conventional social issues is disastrous for the gay experience and its formerly highly developed camp sensibility” (LaBruce 2016, 11).
9. The question of temporality and historiography has received much attention within queer theory, for example, in Elizabeth Freeman’s work, which is concerned with “ways of refusing the progressive logic by which becoming ever more visible was correlated with achieving ever more freedom” (Freeman 2010, 8).

16 Introduction

10. Cvetkovich also situates her work in the context of this historical and political problematic: “My investigation of the affective lives of lesbian cultures is particularly motivated by my dissatisfaction with responses to homophobia that take the form of demands for equal rights, gay marriage, domestic partnership, and even hate crime laws; such political agendas assume a gay citizen whose affective fulfillment lies in assimilation, inclusion, and normalcy” (Cvetkovich 2003, 10).
11. This shift of paradigm has been discussed in many places, e.g., by Winnubst: “psychologizing interiority fades as an operative mode of conceptualizing the self [...] and social authority erodes in a Lacanian sense as the symbolic function diminishes” (Winnubst 2012, 87).
12. Within a psychoanalytic register, this alternative conception of pleasure always refers to the concept of *jouissance*: “The characterization of *jouissance* as a pleasure so intense as to be indistinguishable from pain may well represent a substantially different experience that resists the flattened, hyper-stimulated, endlessly streaming acts of consumption that neoliberalism (quite successfully) sells as ‘pleasure’” (Winnubst 2012, 95).
13. The most influential renewal of queer theory in the 21st century came through the *Queer of Color Critique* (Halberstam et al. 2005). While I am acknowledging issues brought up in its aftermath (see [Chapter 1](#)), I find the juxtaposition between queer studies as sexuality studies and queer studies as intersectional studies with a focus on race not particularly interesting to the extent that it limits the analysis to questions of power. I also think that sexuality as a topic of critical research cannot be as easily left behind as Jack Halberstam and others have argued, while I am certainly aiming at taking the question of race into account.
14. For an inventory of queer theory, its currency, and its relevance, see, for example, the anthology *After Sex: On Writing Since Queer Theory* (Halley and Parker 2011).

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1 Reading *Butt*

Magazine and Brand

There is a homosexual project that (as he [Foucault] has said in several interviews) should no longer be understood as a defensive reaction to the construction of the concept of homosexuality, the construction of the homosexual typology.

(De Ceccatty 2004, 218, translation P.R.)

The magazine didn't just have readers, it had fans.

(Jop van Bennekom in Gregor 2012, 62)

Butt is a gay fanzine with photos and interviews, published from 2001 onwards in Amsterdam and later in New York. Since 2011, *Butt* has only been published online, including a digital archive and a social network (buttmagazine.com). As a brand, *Butt* continues to circulate in other ways: Gert Jonkers and Jop van Bennekom, the two Dutch creators of *Butt*, organized parties in Berlin, London, and New York and sold fan articles such as calendars, T-shirts, and towels with *Butt* logos or motifs, which could be purchased not only in art bookshops or gay bookstores but were also available in the branches of the California label American Apparel.¹ In 2006, a *Butt* book with a best of selection of interviews and photos from the first five years was published by Taschen (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006), and in December 2014, an expanded new edition of the *Butt* book was published under the title *Forever Butt*.

Even beyond the magazine and its spin-offs, in the 2000s, *Butt* inspired a new gay indie aesthetic that has become a global phenomenon, focusing on an aesthetic, sexual lifestyle that brings together pornography and art. In the wake of *Butt*, a range of queer fanzines with local references to urban gay scenes (Barcelona, Paris, Berlin, and Melbourne) or with a focus on particular fetishes (hairy, piss)² have emerged: *Kink*, *Kaiserin*, *Basso*, *They Shoot Homos Don't They?* “We may have had an influence on gay culture,” van Bennekom, *Butt*'s co-editor and graphic designer, comments

laconically on the queer fanzine boom triggered by *Butt* (Van Bennekom in Gregor 2012, 62), and A.A. Bronson and Philip Aarons, who in two volumes documented the fanzine movement of the 2000s, add: “the fact that there are [...] fifteen current zines from around the world has to be interesting. We might need another ten years to understand exactly why it is happening now” (Aarons in Bronson and Aarons 2008, 12). With *Unicorn*, *Little Joe*, and *Hello Mr.*, a second generation of queer fanzines of the post-2000s has emerged. With their young, bearded, imperfect men, they are visually close to *Butt & Co.*, but in contrast to the first generation of magazines influenced by *Butt*, they rely more on text, present different journalistic genres, and have different thematic foci as opposed to *Butt*’s comparatively puritanical approach of only printing interviews and portraits of mostly naked young men.

Post-Porn

Butt’s photos, printed in documentary style and on pale pink paper, can be situated in the context of the post-porn movement (Stüttgen 2010). Post-porn involves a renegotiation of the genre of pornography, something which became noticeable for *Butt* also on the level of distribution, as co-editor Jonkers observes: “We weren’t pornographic enough for porn distribution, but we were too pornographic for regular magazine distribution” (Jonkers in Gregor 2012, 62). Like the much-discussed film *Shortbus* by John Cameron Mitchell (Mitchell 2006), which portrays a sexual subculture in post-9/11 New York City, *Butt* works with pornographic references without simply being porn. In this way, *Butt* opens up the pornographic image to new aesthetic and narrative possibilities and proposes other conceptions of gender and sexuality.

Both commercial and subcultural media have played a crucial role in constituting gay identities (McGlotten 2013, 5), also in contrast to the relative silence about homosexuality in the realm of high culture. In this respect, the media format of the zine itself can be understood as queer (Klein 2014; Wilde 2014). In terms of its psychological and social function, the pornographic zine is of particular importance. In the gay context, the question of pornography should be seen as significant insofar as it realizes the desire for an alternative, non-homophobic world: Beyond its pornographic function, sexual representation can depict a gay utopia. “Gay porn asserts homosexual desire [...]. It thus defends the universal human practice of same sex physical contact [...]; it has made life bearable for countless millions of gay men” (Dyer 1992a, 123).

Post-porn, in contrast to mainstream gay pornography, emphasizes a shift in pornographic representation. As a form of alternative pornography, it represents a critique of the commodification of pornified male bodies. From a perspective of queer history, it can also be said that post-porn not only fights the taboo of pornography as prevalent in earlier feminist

critiques but also reminds a contemporary queer movement focused on social recognition that queer lifestyles – as lifestyles organized around alternative forms of desire and gender – do not only demand legal equality, but should be understood as a renegotiation of questions of sexuality and aesthetics, of subjectivity and sociality. Sexuality creates a culture. As a queer appropriation of the genre, the post-porn movement thus wants to affirm pornography in order to mobilize its cultural, psychological, social, and political potential. Furthermore, a post-pornographic take on gay images also represents a shift in queer visual culture, from lesbian, gay, and trans feature films as they emerged in the 1990s in the context of New Queer Cinema (Hanson 1999; Kuzniar 2000; Rich 2013), to a culture of queer pornography, which previously played only a minor role in film studies and studies of popular culture (Dyer 1992a). This development represents an extension of the queer perspective, culturally and intellectually, and also a queer contribution to the broader discussion of porno-pop since the 2000s (Büsser 2008).

A queer critique of lesbian and gay identity politics has shaped the project of post-porn, as this critique has been developed mainly in North America politically and academically since the AIDS crisis in the 1980s as an anti-essentialist perspective on gender and sexuality, for which Foucault's historiography of sexuality and Butler's thinking on gender performativity (Foucault 1978; Butler 1990) were initially decisive. Socially, queer politics was about alliances of sexual minorities between and beyond the categories of lesbian and gay – a strategy that also largely applies to post-porn, as for example, at the porn film festivals in Berlin, Vienna, or Toronto with their presentation of trans porn,³ and as Tim Stüttgen stated at the 2006 post-porn conference at Berlin's Volksbühne theater: "It seems to be the case today that post-porn is, for the most part, reactualized through the strategies of drag and prosthetics, genderfucking, and transgender experience" (Stüttgen 2010, 16).

Queer Men

The critique of a mainstream representation of gay sexuality, which at first glance could be applied to *Butt* with its rough yet affectionate depictions of men, in this case, however, does not lead to an integration of other subject positions such as non-binary or trans as is typical for queer post-pornographic approaches.⁴ The diversification of sexuality characteristic of queer (Jacobs et al. 2007, 64) does not take place as a process of opening up gay male identity toward other forms of sexual identification. The spectrum in *Butt* remains limited. In this way, *Butt*'s strategy is faithful to the genre of the fanzine (Treleven 2014, 240): by homos for homos, *Butt* does not include lesbians or trans people. *Butt* claims the particularity of an interest in gay cis-men yet practices a mixture of styles within the spectrum of gay sexualities and masculinities. Not unlimited in its scope, the fanzine

is nevertheless generous. In contrast to mainstream gay pornography, it focuses on alternative male bodies that do not have to conform to the pornographic ideals of body shape or dick size. It is an aesthetics of imperfection, as Steven Gregor mentions in an interview with *Butt*'s editors: "*Butt* was a celebration of being queer, of sex and the body [...] without resorting to the body fascism so common in gay culture" (Gregor 2012, 56).

With its non-normativity, *Butt* documents a proximity to post-porn and queer; however, *Butt*'s perspective is distinguished here by a kind of "sexual realism." *Butt* takes the desires of its gay, cis-men fans seriously and creates a new form of sexiness that is committed to the empiricism of private and social life. With its documentary perspective on reality, it hardly follows any concern for anti-essentialist gestures of queer theory. *Butt* shows what its readers are into. The models in the magazine look like *Butt*'s readers and are sometimes identical to them. With these modes of production and reception, *Butt* proves to be part of a culture of convergence media (Jenkins) in which the boundaries between producers and consumers are blurred. In this sense, *Butt* also presents an aesthetic of amateur pornography that Susanna Paasonen describes in the context of Netporn more generally: "amateurs assumedly do what they do for the love of it (as the Latin root of the word, *amare*, 'to love,' suggests)" (Paasonen 2011, Loc 1062/3979). With its fan-friendly celebration of gay sexuality, *Butt* is thus relatively far removed from a feminist-inspired post-porn movement that takes pornography as an occasion and a stage to expose gender and sex in their theatricality. The "performative excessiveness" (Stüttgen 2010, 10), otherwise typical of post-porn, which has often been decisive for the subcultural status of sexuality (Hebdige 1979, 191–92; Meyer 1993, 371), is rare in *Butt*. Does *Butt* still belong to the genre of post-porn in a political sense, or does it, with the propagation of a new aesthetic of masculinity, pursue a reterritorialization of desire contrary to the strategies of post-porn?⁵ In what way might *Butt*'s investment in masculinity and maleness be understood less as an ideological participation in hegemonic forms of gender and more as queer?

Faggot

There is friction between an academically elaborated concept of queer and the visual representation of *Butt*'s new masculinity, as well as between queer and the fanzine's language policy. *Butt* has changed its subtitle several times over the course of its history. In the beginning, it was called "Faggot Magazine," then "Fagazine," "International Faggot Magazine for Interesting Homosexuals and the Men Who Love Them" (LaBruce 2006, 13), and finally "Magazine for Homosexuals." This repertoire repeats the strategy of queer to redeploy historically demeaning or pathologizing terms to designate the specificity and the force of a subculture. In difference to queer, though, with this retro strategy, *Butt* clearly limits its target group

to gay men (and hints that queer and porn cannot always easily be reconciled). The use of “faggot” or “homo,” moreover, is also directed against a potentially commodified and sometimes also desexualized use of queer.⁶

A desexualization of queer can also be found in parts of post-porn culture itself. Here, sexuality often becomes the occasion for gender stagings whose theatricality allegorizes rather than documents sexuality. As a consequence, the value of the obscene is lost in pornography (Cramer 2007). Can *Butt*, in comparison, still be a provocation with its “realistic” reference to sexuality? Bruce LaBruce evinces optimism when evaluating the references to porn on the pages



Figure 1.1 Ben photographed by Slava Mogutin.

Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). *Butt*. No. 5. Autumn 2002, Cover.

in *Butt*: “In some ways it seems like porn is one of the last fields to make radical statements in the gay world, or about homosexuality in the straight world” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 216).

The political clout of queer proves to be extremely dependent on the context. Benevolently, one could suggest that, with the clearly sexual reference of “Magazine for Homosexuals,” *Butt*’s language policy wants to strengthen the potential for resistance that is at risk of disappearing with queer, especially in cultural contexts in which English is not the primary language. *Butt* aims to avoid being lost in the slickness of queer, which has long since been implemented both in terms of consumer strategy and desexualized identity politics. Not calling oneself queer can become a queer gesture. The success of this strategy depends on whether insisting on pornography can function as a politically productive disruption, particularly when faced with homonormativity’s promise of assimilation. *Butt* is working through to what extent, via the post-pornographic representation of gay sexuality, masculinity can be understood as queer in a politically productive way. With its aesthetics, *Butt* not only proposes a different image of gender, but it raises the question of what gay sexuality means at the beginning of the 21st century.

Gay History

Sepuya’s subjects are not hunks. Distance from pulchritude constitutes their profundity. Sepuya’s stylized, minimalist portraits—emotive yet even-tempered—participate in a new, anti-hunk genre of homoerotic photography, most often found in zines. *Butt* magazine didn’t begin this trend, but it is a stellar locale for this type of guy—whose look suggests several eras. Pre-clone? Post-clone? Post-post-clone? Never forget how historically specific the nude always is.

(Koestenbaum 2013, 22)

If we ask the question to which tradition the aesthetics of *Butt* belong, several references to the history of photography emerge.⁷ At first glance, the anti-glamour of Wolfgang Tillmans’ 1990s documentation of youth culture comes to mind, specifically his scenes in nightclubs or at rave parties. Tillmans was also the “signature photographer” (LaBruce) for *Butt* and played an important role in shaping the visual style of the fanzine. He, in turn, owes a lot to Nan Goldin’s portrayal of queer subcultures since the early 1980s. Thus, a history of influences can be written consisting of individual photo artists who have contributed to *Butt*’s style: a genealogy of queer photographic aesthetics, as documented, for example, in the exhibition *The Eighth Square: Gender, Life, and Desire in the Arts since 1960* (Wagner et al. 2006).

In order to specify the significance of *Butt*’s aesthetics in terms of body politics and sexual history, however, another, more sexually explicit

perspective seems to be as relevant. For the portraits in the magazine not only refer to a history of photographic art but also to a visual pornographic culture, as it emerged in the 1970s after the first cinematic gay porn film was produced in 1971: *Boys in the Sand* by Wakefield Poole; the films of Peter de Rome that created a narrative context for porn action and in the early 1980s the often poetic films of Jean-Daniel Cadinot especially show some similarities with the aesthetics of *Butt* – a distinct combination of artistic and documentary value.⁸ Such an approach to sexuality also manifested itself with the queer fanzine culture of the 1970s (Bronson and Aarons 2008, 10–13), to which *Butt*, with its DIN A5 print format and indie aesthetic, can be seen as a sequel. In two volumes (Bronson and Aarons 2008, 2014), Bronson and Aarons have documented this history of queer fanzines. In particular, Boyd McDonald’s gay fanzine *Straight to Hell: The Manhattan Review of Unnatural Acts*, which had been published in New York since 1973 and also served as an inspiration for *Butt*’s layout (Bronson and Aarons 2008, 211), can be considered a precursor here (straight-to-hell.com).

Butt celebrates a pornographic subculture that predates the time of the commercial dissemination of gay pornography via videotape in the 1980s. Shaka McGlotten reminds us of this history:

Gay porn has been essential to the interpellation of gay identities at least since the 1970s. [...] But by mid-1980s most of the pornography produced for and distributed to gay men moved away from the independently produced and often cinematically compelling work epitomized by Wakefield Poole, Jean Daniel Cadinot, and others toward a corporate or industrial porn model.

(McGlotten 2013, 106)

In the course of its commercial distribution, gay pornography followed an ideal of fitness characteristic for postmodern societies (Baumann 1998, 23–24). Behind the gay participation in this ideal of a fit masculinity, however, lurks a specific motivation. In the 1980s, the porn fantasy of the flawless cis-male body was not only powerfully promoted for commercial reasons but also gained importance as a strategy in the context of HIV and AIDS. The crisis AIDS caused in the 1980s – medically, psychologically, socially, and politically – was also a crisis in the representation of the body, gender, and sexuality (Watney 1987, 9). Within the history of gay self-representation, HIV and AIDS caused a caesura. In the late 1970s, the clone look had just emerged in urban gay subcultures as a strategy to counter social stigmatization through gender conformity, as Michael Levine documents in *The Gay Macho*. Just a few years later, in the wake of AIDS and the repathologization of gay subjectivity that accompanied it, this compensatory and popular strategy came to a halt. “For gay men, on or about 1984, the world changed – and the world they had struggled to build, a

world in which they could demonstrate and prove that gay men were real men, after all, came tumbling down around them” (Levine 1998, 6). Levine describes the AIDS crisis for gay men as a loss of masculinity that they had just appropriated. In the course of media representation, AIDS produced a new visual regime: the presentation of the injured male body as a spectacular exhibition of suffering.⁹ Yet this scandalized exposure of the gay male body as damaged and sick was responded to again quickly within gay media and culture. As a reaction to HIV and AIDS, once again, and more dramatically, a body politics of fitness was promoted. An ideal of healthy masculinity emerged within gay culture as a new edition of the clone look, which became all the more powerful when the threat of AIDS loomed. Fitness pornography spanning the 1980s and into the 1990s not only replaced the 1970s amateur aesthetic of *Straight to Hell* and gay auteur porn movies in the course of an increasingly commercialized gay sexual culture, but with its ideal image of a fit and healthy masculinity, gay pornography became the counter design of the gay man as a victim of AIDS, as Perry Halkitis summarizes:

AIDS fostered a renewed health consciousness. The desire to achieve the masculine ideal, which was a psychological and social reaction for decades for gay men before AIDS, became an essential need to strengthen one’s body potentially ravaged by AIDS. [...] In my view [...] the pandemic was the force that primarily moved this definition of masculinity to another level.

(Halkitis 1999, 133)¹⁰

Nowhere is AIDS culturally (and phantasmatically) more present than in the representation of gay anal sex. It is also for this reason that gay pornography became the stage for representing a kind of healthy sports sex in which all bodies involved are expected to successfully perform their exercises. In the mutual celebration and visible proof of fitness, gay pornography turns into the triumph of a successful team performance. This manifests itself less in the propagation of safe sex, which is usually declared an irrelevant fact and visually repressed, and more in the stability of the embodiment of masculinity. The culture of masculinity, as seen in the porn films of the 1980s and 1990s, shows little flexibility: bodies are used in an athletic performance show whose penetrating masculinity is supposed to make them unassailable against any phallic mortification.

In the context of this historiography of gay sexuality and masculinity of the last few decades, *Butt*, for its part, appears as a reaction to the representational politics in the aftermath of AIDS. Its return to a 1970s indie aesthetic is a direct response to the post-AIDS gay body politics of the 1980s and 1990s. At the moment when *Butt* first appeared in 2001, a body politics that gives almost intrusive visual evidence to the fitness of the gay male body was no longer necessary. Mainstream gay porn of the 1980s

and 1990s repressed the trauma of AIDS. After all, the years from the early 1980s until the introduction of combination therapy in 1996 were the period in which AIDS claimed the most lives in the Western world. By reacting to the visual reaction to AIDS in gay porn, in 2001, *Butt* was not so much repressing the trauma of AIDS but bypassing it with nonchalance. Accordingly, LaBruce comments on the images of carefree boys on the pages of *Butt*: “You may have noticed that *Butt* is very post-AIDS” (LaBruce 2006, 13). *Butt* embodies a culture of survival. The zine is making neither AIDS the focus of its depiction nor the effort to mask it at all costs. The result is a certain lightheartedness of the *Butt* boys: “Maybe this is all too serious for *Butt*?” Bronson asks when talking about the effects of AIDS on his private life (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 379). The new culture of *Butt* became possible through a historical distance to AIDS, even if only a few years, which in the 1990s and early 2000s made all the difference.

The vulnerability of men’s bodies in *Butt* is only indirectly a reflection on HIV and AIDS. *Butt*’s aesthetics are removed from the opposition of the gay male body weakened by HIV on the one hand, or assertively strong in defense of a crisis on the other. The issue is not so much the HIV status of the boys in *Butt*. HIV is no longer a predominant category of body politics in the zine. The *Butt* aesthetic of imperfect bodies is thus also a return to the beginnings of the gay movement and its “infantile” sexual culture – in the sense of polymorphous perversion as well as in the sense of an “innocence” before AIDS. “[I]t’s that very pre-AIDS history, gay interrupted, that *Butt* sought to continue, an objective that includes taking some of the fear out of sex and trying to make it fun again” (LaBruce 2006, 13).

The hip nonchalance that this new sexual culture presents is not an invention of the *Butt* boys.¹¹ *Butt*’s post-AIDS moment collapses aesthetically with a pre-AIDS moment. The hedonistic 1970s, which play such a prominent role in 20th-century gay historiography and mythology, gained their significance retrospectively with the advent of HIV and AIDS: aesthetically, *Butt* boys seek to reconnect with the mythical 1970s and its sexual culture.

If we read the aesthetics of the imperfect in the images of *Butt* as a counter design to the health ideology of perfect porn bodies, the question arises from which position this critique could be articulated in the 2000s. In the post-pornographic film *Shortbus* (2006), drag queen Justin Bond, a host of queer sex parties in Brooklyn, comments: “It’s like the seventies, just without hope.” Is *Butt*’s return to a vintage-porn aesthetic an equally nostalgic gesture toward a sexual past? Or can *Butt*, aesthetically and politically, be understood as a renewal of the promises of the gay movement of the 1970s?

In its rearticulation of pornographic precepts, *Butt* does belong to the post-pornographic culture of the 2000s. *Butt*’s renegotiations of body images, masculinity, and sexuality must not only be considered in their connection to a gay past before AIDS but also – I suggest here – in the

media context of the 2000s. While a queer visual tradition of the 1970s is decisive for *Butt*'s aesthetics, the magazine emerges in the context of interactive internet culture and its amateur aesthetics starting to spread around 2000. The webcam was invented in 1991, interactive live video via PCs became popular in the early 2000s, the fanzine *Butt* was published for the first time in 2001. In this context of media culture, the photographs in *Butt* show themselves as a form of remediation, through which aesthetic forms of online pornography are being (re-)translated into the medium of print: "Without Netporn there would be no post-porn" (Stüttgen 2010, 15). *Butt*'s cultural significance, its style-defining popularity in the 2000s that made it a brand beyond the magazine itself and produced a new type of masculinity in urban gay scenes over the last twenty years, is primarily based on two references: it represents the aesthetic confluence of visual strategies from the 1970s and the effects of a media shift around 2000. In this way, *Butt* proves to be retrospective and media-advanced at the same time.

Via its awareness of the current media environment, *Butt* does not show itself to be simply nostalgic like Justin Bond in *Shortbus*. *Butt*'s realism is a strategy articulated as a demand upon the present. In this sense, *Butt*'s aesthetic represents a popular style as Dick Hebdige understands it: "And if a style is really to catch on, if it is to become genuinely popular, it must say the right things in the right way at the right time. It must anticipate or encapsulate a mood, a moment" (Hebdige 1979, 122). Or as Bronson and Aarons write about the new generation of queer fanzines of the 2000s: "These zines are not cultural or archival artifacts of another time but are vital and vibrant parts of today's queer consciousness" (Bronson and Aarons 2014, 4).

Real Porn

We had this plan to do this "reality" gay magazine ...
(Van Bennekom in Needham 2006, 39)

Each [of our magazines] is about honesty and grounded in reality.
(Jonkers in Gregor 2012, 59)

The fanzine owes its identity to a marginal position vis-à-vis mainstream publication. In contrast to commercial publications, it claims undisguised access to a subcultural reality that is not adequately represented otherwise. With its more direct line to the milieu, the experiences, desires, and visions of a particular group can be expressed in a way that does not have to consider market interests or normative aesthetics. The fanzine is supposed to represent a "subcultural verisimilitude" (Meyer 1993, 371) that is already guaranteed by the medium itself. It is committed to an alternative way of life, and in the case of gay and queer fanzines, alternative sexualities and body politics.

If one follows the statements of its editors, *Butt* and the dialogue of pornography and art in the medium of photography that it offers are indeed about an aesthetic realism in keeping with the format of the fanzine, as the two quotes preceding this section show. The way *Butt* follows this mandate, however, is not exclusively committed to the tradition of the fanzine but needs to be further elaborated on with regard to questions of mediality, genre, and gender. I will discuss *Butt*'s realism on three levels: as a question of media technology, as a problem of pornographic forms, and finally in relation to the representation of masculinity. In the following section, I will discuss the ways in which a historically specific media situation, a critique of pornographic aesthetics, and a reworking of the image of masculinity work toward the realism claimed by *Butt*. I am particularly interested in the ways in which the first two points create the conditions for *Butt*'s representation of gender and sexuality. At stake are the following questions: Doesn't the very strategy of realism prove to be precarious, insofar as *Butt* repeatedly reinforces normative forms of masculinity? Or can the demand for realism also lead to an alternative realism, a realism that no longer has to be understood within the framework of a normative ideology, but rather as a critique of hegemonic forms of representation? Can realism, of all genres, be understood as a queer strategy?

To answer these questions, I will outline the problem of realism by exploring it for the genre of online pornography. Under new media conditions, pornographic realism is based less on the idea of authenticity, instead shifting more to a notion of immediacy. These questions can be spelled out using the example of gay online culture, which in my analysis forms the background for *Butt*'s aesthetic designs. I suggest reading the post-pornographic culture as it appears around *Butt* with the categories of immediacy and remediation proposed by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin in their volume *Remediation* (Bolter and Grusin 1999). My claim is that the realism of *Butt*'s images developed at a specific moment in media history, the period around 2000, as it is described by Grusin (Grusin 2010, 1). This moment has led to a renegotiation of the genre of pornography and by consequence also to new forms of gay/queer masculinities and sexualities.

Immediacy of Porn 2.0

[P]ornography has been one (tempting) test of immediacy.

(Bolter and Grusin 1999, 100)

The attraction of online porn owes much to the sense of immediacy that it facilitates. Amateur porn videos and webcams streams are both associated with a perceptual "absence of mediation or representation"—the illusion that the technologies of mediation have disappeared and that the user is allowed direct and somehow authentic access to the objects depicted ...

(Paasonen 2011, Loc 934/3979)

Within newly emerging amateur cultures in front of the computer, the imperfect image of the naked body is perceived as a sign of sexual reality. With the interactive situation of Porn 2.0 in front of the computer screen (Paasonen 2011, Loc 834/3979), not only a promised authenticity of the recorded scene is at stake, but, moreover, the temporal coincidence of the production and reception of pornography. Through this simultaneity, the illusion of being in the same (chat) room is created. “Beyond its immediacy, the key offer of the Internet for pornography would seem to be a sense of interactivity, which brings with it a sense of shared space and a collapse or disavowal of distance” (Patterson 2004, 110). Immediacy in platform and particularly webcam chats as spatiotemporal participation becomes the new promise of pornographic authenticity in interactive contexts and thus turns into the real value of pornography in the era of Porn 2.0: Interactive digital media renew the promise of giving their users direct access to what is happening – to the bodies and pleasure of people in front of the camera (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 33; Patterson 2004, 117). Immediacy appears desirable precisely within (hyper-)mediated situations and thus – paradoxically – circulates as their actual currency.

These reflections on producing effects of immediacy in the genre of interactive pornography become particularly interesting when we relate them to social issues and questions of representational politics. At a given point in time, media technology can offer certain forms of immediacy and facilitate their cultural meaning:

Immediacy is our name for a family of beliefs and practices that express themselves differently at various times among various groups [...]. The common feature for all these forms is the belief in some necessary contact point between the medium and what it represents.

(Bolter and Grusin 1999, 30)

In other words: “What seems immediate to one group is highly mediated to another” (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 71). In the era of Porn 2.0, media possibilities and their cultural value are intertwined with symbolic constructions of gender and sexuality. New media offer opportunities to articulate new symbolic positions (Paasonen 2014, 25). We will have to ask, then, in what way gay sexual subcultures make use of these new possibilities of media to articulate alternative sexualities and masculinities and what place the post-pornographic fanzine *Butt* occupies in this context.

Picture Gallery and Livestream

Butt is influenced by the aesthetic of Realcore, Netporn, and Porn 2.0 as it has manifested itself specifically within gay sexual subculture, its presentation of subjectivity, and its new social forms. Digital recording and playback devices, webcam, and livestream provide the media-technological

conditions for the production and reception of the images in *Butt* and work toward their cultural currency as an aesthetic of the 2000s.¹² Before returning to *Butt*, I will take a brief look at gay online culture of the last twenty years, which provides the background for the meaning of the *Butt* boys.

Self-presentation through media is particularly important for sexual minorities whose participation in public space is limited (Köppert 2013; McGlotten 2013; Rehberg and Boovy 2014). Pornography, in particular, has offered gay men models for how to perform sexual identities (McGlotten 2013, 106). This is no less true within a culture of Web 2.0 (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 232). In an obvious way, self-designs are shaped through profiles on dating sites. The US Internet portal *Manhunt* was launched in 2001, the German Internet portal *GayRomeo* (now *PlanetRomeo*) went online in 2002, *Adam4Adam* in 2003. Over the past twenty years, gay men have worked on presenting their bodies, self-images, and desires on the Net – a form of “curated self-exposure” (McGlotten). In this pictorial and textual construction, several requirements have to be aligned, as McGlotten described:

At the outset, creating a profile arouses an attitude that is both reflective and forward-looking. Creating a profile forces one to attend to one’s own desirability and to one’s own desire, neither of which is self-evident, and both of which demand articulations in virtual spaces as much (perhaps even more) than in real ones.

(McGlotten 2013, 67–68)

The catalog of images in the profiles on platforms online is manifold and cannot be reduced to one tradition. One aspect in particular, however, stands out and deserves attention. The visual presentation on platforms like *Manhunt*, *GayRoyal*, or *PlanetRomeo* is oriented toward stills from pornographic films; these, in turn, go back to older traditions of nude photography (Waugh 1996). Users on gay dating platforms trust in the powerful effect of these familiar pornographic conventions. The rigid formal structure of these images and the theatricality of the sexual scenes shown are applied in an instrumental way, as opposed to being made a subject in themselves, as could be said, for example, for Mapplethorpe’s photographs (Meyer 1993).

In an extension of Marshall McLuhan’s media concept that the medium is the message, the return of an old medium (such as photography) within a new medium (such as the Internet), without which the latter could not generate meaning, is called “remediation” by Bolter and Grusin (1999, 45). Media history is a history of remediation in the sense that past media forms and their cultural attributions – such as authenticity or immediacy – are constantly recontextualized by newly emerging media. While the new medium can establish itself as culturally relevant through its reference back to an old medium, the familiar production of meaning is simultaneously

challenged by new technical possibilities. One strategy in dealing with this conflict is to compensate the uncertainty caused by new technical possibilities by resorting to existing aesthetic patterns from older media: “At one extreme, an older medium is highlighted and presented in digital form without apparent irony or critique” (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 45).

This strategy can be found in gay online culture. The picture albums of users on *Manhunt*, for example, often offer statuesque stagings of heroic masculinity. Photo studios such as *Manopoly* in Berlin, for example, provide gay clients with reliable images that they can use as PR in the service of their sexual ego (manopoly.com). Following Volkmar Sigusch, these forms of presenting sexual subjectivity can be understood as neosexualities, forms of sexual self-promotions in a flexible online marketplace (Sigusch 2005).

Bodies and spaces correspond in the staging of the pornographic image online. With regard to its spatial environment, the conventional pornographic image has at least two possibilities: either it is staged as timeless against the backdrop of a neutral photo studio, thus repeating principles of universal beauty from classical art (Waugh 1996); or it is staged in stereotypically eroticized settings of male-male encounters that, like fetishes – whose function is to ward off fear – can be subject to a historical change of cultural, social, or political power: cowboys on the farm, guards and inmates in prison, mechanic and customer in the garage, business partners in the office, or more recently bankers (menatplay.com) and Arab youths (citebeur.com). While the erotic fascination with social roles is dependent on existing power relations, at the same time it is based on the suppression of real social spaces. Porn mostly stylizes social reality as a fantasy backdrop. At times, the use of new media formats shows itself to be particularly backward-looking in this regard. New media, then, would merely be optimized forms of disseminating old ideologies and their fetishistic economies. “Self-pornification [...] is also a form of mainstreaming in the new cultural discourse” (Seeßlen 2008, 17, translation P.R.).

Regarding the production of images in scenarios of interactive sex online, a fundamental distinction can be made between two different forms of representation. While dating portals with their catalogs of pictures tend to reimplement the representational conventions of existing mainstream pornography and thus repeat its normative standards, technologies such as webcam and livestream enable a less fixed imagery in the sense of alternative Netporn. Compared to staged stills, such an aesthetic can appear as both richness (promise of immediacy) and poverty (lack of perfection). Because webcam and livestream provide less room for intentional staging – from varying camera angles to professionally set lighting and post-production like Adobe Photoshop – the visual livestream of platforms like cam4.com also tends to show more alternative bodies than the curated selection of images presented in user profiles on dating platforms. To be sure, there are mechanisms that lead to a preselection also in livestreams; for example, on cam4.com the profiles appear in the order of their popularity with

viewers, and this ranking is by no means beyond conventional criteria of sexual desirability. Gay ideals of beauty are not suspended, a sexual market value based on age and body measurements confirmed: The rooms on cam4.com are divided according to established categories and criteria such as “Bear,” “Daddy/Son,” or “Big Cocks.” And yet, in the *Manhunt* livestream a practice is at work that cannot be grasped alone with the conventions of visual online eroticism prevalent on dating platforms. Due to the medium of the livestream, there remains an element of unpredictability: anyone with a mobile phone can position themselves in front of the camera and everyone can watch here. In this situation of media participation, the mechanics of a pornographic consumption begin to stutter, i.e., the dynamics of a propagation of an ideal self-image on the one hand and an identifying or objectifying reference to it on the other (McGlotten 2013, 108).

The Chat-Room Self

The guys in front of the webcams jerk off alone or sometimes in company before they go to work or to bed. Fucking is less frequent. In the wake of neo-sexual culture, masturbation has become accepted as a sexual practice, if not the most common form of sexuality (Laqueur 2004; Sigusch 2005). Like the spectators on the other end, they sit at home, in their kitchen, at their desk in the office or they lie on a sofa or bed. The background of the images in the livestream is often a private setting, and what appears in the picture is rather random.¹³ Sometimes personal objects protrude into the picture: clothes, photographs, an unmade bed. Paasonen calls such environments “textures of domesticity” (Paasonen 2011, Loc 1218/3979). About heterosexual online pornography, she writes:

In fact, the domestic spaces where women and couples pose and perform are rife with detail—curtains, wallpapers, lamps, vases, dolls, fabrics, carpets, paintings, books, souvenirs, clothes, dishes, bottles, family photos, sofas, chairs, tables, TV screens, candles, knickknacks, bibles, exercise equipment, and more. The visual landscape is a mundane and usually cluttered one.

(Paasonen 2011, Loc 1218/3979)

In contrast to the porn gods in ideal timeless spaces, emulated by visual stagings in profiles on online platforms, in the amateur recordings of the Realcore of Porn 2.0 we see the flip side of the classic porn glamour: not the embodiment of an unattainable fantasy, but the “boy next door.” In the correlation between body and space, it is not only youth that is eroticized but above all this neighborly accessibility, symbolized by the domestic environment. Looking into someone else’s bedroom, office, or bathroom cubicle can be a reflection of one’s own environment. The “privacy” of the rooms being viewed corresponds with the “privacy” on the viewer’s

side. The livestream aesthetic shows the body of the other in a spatial environment that technically merges with the viewer's environment and thus becomes the setting for the experience of immediacy.

Back to Print

Compared to a digitalized, interactive world of images, *Butt's* photographs appear at first glance to be an aesthetic anachronism. Instead of interactively generated effects of immediacy, we are dealing with rather cheaply printed photos in the medium of the fanzine, which as a medium is characteristic of the time before the Internet and has become superfluous, so to speak, in digital times (Bronson and Aarons 2008, 5, 8). At a time of massive media change, *Butt* proposes a return to an older medium, the printed zine. In this way, however, *Butt* can be understood precisely as a retranslation of aesthetic moments that we know from digital images circulating online into the medium of print, and thus as a response to them.

The aesthetic strategies of Realcore and Porn 2.0 – like a spontaneous snapshot aesthetic – that are tied to media-technological innovations and promise immediate access to the non-perfect body, which is sexualized through its accessibility and can be found in “private” spaces, are brought back into the medium of print. In technical terms, the pictures in *Butt* could thus be seen as stills of a live chat situation. The stills can be understood either as a moment of a technologically earlier form of webcam transmission, when it consisted of a sequence of individual pictures (Hillis 2009, 239), or as a screenshot recording of a stream in progress (Patterson 2004, 113). *Butt's* aesthetics appear like a visual freezing of the moving images of online pornography.

Butt's strategy is a form of remediation, which, however, is not about the return of an old medium like television in the context of a new medium like the computer, but conversely about the return of aesthetic conventions tied to a current medium to those of an earlier medium, printed photography. In contrast to the picture galleries described on dating platforms such as *PlanetRomeo*, where an old photographic tradition is used in a new medium, it is precisely new aesthetic features that signify the specificity of Realcore and Porn 2.0 that can be found again in the photographs in *Butt*.

Butt claims participation in an aesthetic of cinematic Realcore and livestream. However, the freezing of the images, a recontextualization in the medium of print, obviously succeeds precisely at the expense of their (equally erotically loaded) presentation on Internet pages, which would be viewed in front of the computer, tablet, or cell phone screen. Thus, the effect of immediacy of Porn 2.0 is cashed in. *Butt* cites this aesthetic of Netporn without being involved in its situation of production and reception. The images in *Butt* are no longer part of the immanence of a culture of Porn 2.0. In this reiteration of aesthetic conventions of another medium, the photographs produce a form of distancing: the images in *Butt* do not rely on the value of immediacy like Realcore porn does. In the course of this

remediation, the images in *Butt* thus distance themselves from the genre of pornography. In the process, *Butt* risks losing its pornographic value. The fanzine thus demonstrates that pornography can only tolerate a limited amount of remediation.

The remediation that removes the images from their pornographic use value is a form of aestheticizing. In contrast to its historical predecessors such as *Straight to Hell*, *Butt* can be read beyond its function as a fanzine as a commentary on media and, through forms of moderate alienation, moves closer to the art porn of the 1960s.¹⁴ In doing so, *Butt* succeeds in using the process of remediation to bring into view what distinguishes the new digital images from pornographic productions in other media: the body politics, the relationship between bodies and their environments, and the visual organization of pleasure. Beyond its instrumental use, the fanzine makes the representational conditions of the Porn 2.0 image accessible to aesthetic experience. In the following chapters, the specificity of these image designs will be elaborated.

Notes

1. One characterization of American Apparel (which filed for bankruptcy for the second time in autumn 2016) in the context of the hipster debate: “the socially conscious jersey-knit-pajamas-as-clothing, basement-pornographic boutique chain that [...] started in 1999” (Greif, Ross, and Tortorici 2010, 9).
2. “Hairy” and “piss” stand here as examples of fetishes beyond gay mainstream sex. The fetish “hairy” is, for example, served by *Pin Ups* (pinupsmag.com), a magazine published in New York for young bears, hairy, and non-slim men, while the fetish “piss” is served by *Pisszine* (pisszine.org) published in Milan.
3. The Berlin International Porn Film Festival (pornfilmfestivalberlin.de/pff/) has taken place since 2006. It is well known for its discussions about politics and aesthetics that audiences at mainstream gay and lesbian film festivals are now less interested in.
4. From 2001 to 2003, three issues of *Kutt*, the lesbian counterpart to *Butt* in the same design, were published (Gysel et al. 2001–2003).
5. Vincent Simon, for example, is pessimistic about *Butt*’s body politics: “Over the years, gay fanzines inspired by Butt have multiplied, producing an impression of uniformity, of a lack of inventiveness” (Simon 2014, 254).
6. For example, in the lifestyle magazine *Winq*, which was also Dutch. Although the publication was called “Magazine for Global Queer Culture” in its subtitle, the label “queer” functioned here precisely such that it offered the possibility to call oneself homosexual in a non-sexual way.
7. On the history of gay images and their pornographic references, see especially Richard Dyer (1992a, 1992b, 1993, 2002) and Thomas Waugh (1996). For a summary of the history of research on gay pornography, see also John Mercer (2017, esp. 1–21; 51–57).
8. The aesthetic and political value of Cadinot’s work is secured by his assessment as a pornographic “auteur.” However, this construction also has the tendency to obscure the discourses of a film that are specific to class and race. For a critique of Cadinot see, for example, Maxime Cervulle (2010, 187). Two other pornographic traditions before the triumph of commercial pornography since the 1970s (and gay pornography since the 1980s) are particularly worth mentioning: stag films, as well as art porn of the 1960s, for example, by Jack Smith and Andy Warhol. On this, see Ara Osterweil (2004, 441).

9. A crucial moment here was the disclosure of Rock Hudson's HIV infection and his death from AIDS in 1985, which were flaunted with sensationalism in the heterosexual press.
10. As David Halperin noted, this was also in a very concrete sense about stimulating the immune system through exercise, conscious nutrition, and an overall healthy lifestyle in response to an HIV infection (Halperin 1995, 116). Muscle-building dietary supplements and hormone therapies were also part of this culture (Halkitis 1999, 135).
11. Thus, Dennis Altman describes the gay body politics of the 1970s as follows: "the total body involves [...] an acceptance of the 'funkiness' of the body, a rejection of the plastic odorless, hairless, and blemishless creations of *Playboy* and its homosexual equivalents" (Altman 1993, 108).
12. Following Grusin, *Butt* participates in a media-historical moment: "remediation characterized what was 'new' about new media at the end of the 20th century as its insistent remediation of prior media forms and practices" (Grusin 2010, 4). That this media change has a significant impact on pornography culture is also widely assumed in the field of porn studies, for example by Mercer (2017, 10–11).
13. The gay website *Nightcharm* uses these settings as an occasion for commentary and discussion in order to bring to light the comedy that results from the aesthetic collision of pornography and everyday life. See Mercer (2017, 183).
14. Testing the potentials and effects of visual media while focusing on the male body is central to Warhol's artistic project, especially his films of the 1960s. An example of this is *Blow Job*. For 35 minutes, there is nothing to be seen except a close-up of a man's face. The representation of male pleasure here is based on the model of the representation of female pleasure, namely showing sexual excitement in the face as opposed to genitalia. Such a strategy also leaves open that neither a sexual act nor sexual pleasure has been documented at all. Osterweil writes, "*Blow Job* succeeds in making the representation of the sexual act strange" (Osterweil 2004, 448).

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2 Homo Hipster

Natural Porn Killers

We may have had an influence on gay culture, but it's certainly not the magazine's legacy that every gay man wears a beard.

(Van Bennekom in Gregor 2012, 62)

So far, I have treated *Butt*'s realism as a historical question of media and pornography: *Butt* is inspired by a new digital media situation. Through the photographs of the fanzine new forms of a pornographic culture are remediated. In the following, the question will be how this framework can be used for a different staging of masculinity and maleness. If it is true, as Bolter and Grusin suggest, that new media possibilities and their spatial arrangements also produce other subject positions (Bolter and Grusin 1999), what consequences does this have for the category of gender? To what extent does *Butt* map alternative masculinities – for example, post-phallic ones – and what role do *Butt*'s claims of realism play in this? In what ways, then, might the notion of a “real masculinity” brought into play here possibly serve as a critique?

Paasonen has explained how the pornographic image cannot only be unanimously celebrated but is also experienced as alienation: “mainstream online porn seems as if made for someone else, and hence possible sexual arousal is haunted by a sense of distance” (Paasonen 2011, Loc 2057/3979). Pornographic images can become a sign of normative power to such an extent that they can no longer be erotically enjoyed. The tendency of the mainstream pornographic image to leave the spectator out is particularly significant for sexual minorities. For them, there is a lot at stake not only sexually but also psychologically, culturally, and politically. “Gay porn is a film made by fans for fans [...]. One could therefore call them ‘fanporn’ in reference to fanzines. Gay porn is a natural part of the community” (Voswinckel quoted in Büsser 2008, 81, translation P.R.). For gay people, pornography is always about claiming it for themselves beyond market interests. *Butt* had been developed as a countermovement to gay commercial pornography, which had established aesthetic conventions since the

1980s. The power of mainstream pornography lay in staging a porn fantasy that instrumentalizes the normative conventions of representation: sex clones with pumped-up muscular bodies inhabit these utopian places (Rehberg 2014).

A critique of commercial pornography manifests itself with the personnel of *Butt*. By no means does the zine shy away from photos and stories of professional porn stars such as François Sagat or Arpad Miklos, for example. On the contrary, they are part of the magazine's standard repertoire and thus also remind us of *Butt*'s pornographic aspirations. The porn professionals, however, are shown in a row with unknown models, who are treated like the well-known stars, both in terms of visual attention and the scope of the interviews. But the (porn) star and unknown model meet in the remediated Realcore, which generally favors amateur aesthetics. In this respect, stars become amateurs rather than vice versa.

In this remodeling of the pornographic program through amateur aesthetics, the male body does not have to conform to training or grooming standards. The style of *Butt* also represents an alternative to the figure of the metrosexual man (Simpson 1999, 207–10; Hall 2015). The “real” masculinity of the amateur is neither visualized through pornographic phallicism, nor through a conspicuous stylization of bodily signs such as muscles (through training and depilation) or stereotypical accessories (cigars, etc.) and clothing (jockstraps, uniforms, etc.). It is precisely the renunciation of this repertoire of a well-rehearsed pornographic style of masculinity that makes *Butt* attractive. In contrast to the performative artificiality of the commodified sporty porn pop of the 1990s, the bodies in *Butt* position themselves with a deliberate post-phallic carelessness that apparently does not need such efforts. For the amateurish stars in *Butt*, the claim of authenticity materializes as the “naturalness” of the male body. In *Butt*, the form of the male body “itself” becomes a marker of realness. This is guaranteed in a particular way: In addition to a less normative physicality – skinny, fat, or muscular bodies can be seen side by side – it is above all body hair, and particularly facial hair, that is typical of models in *Butt*. This trend has long since found its way into the global gay scenes and beyond as a new beard culture.¹

With the popularity of beards and hairiness in *Butt*, it already becomes clear that *Butt*'s post-phallic gestures – its rejection of a phallically staged masculinity – are by no means aimed at abolishing a paradigm of masculinity or maleness altogether. At first sight, it rather seems that the masculinity of seemingly non-constructed amateur bodies is in turn secured by hairiness. How exactly this economy of signs that mark the body in *Butt* as “male” is to be understood in terms of a theory of gender, that is, to what extent cis-maleness can be thought of as queer here, will be clarified in the next chapter. First, however, I want to go beyond the gay historical context – *Butt*'s amateur aesthetic of imperfect bodies as a counterreaction to a pornography of health – and understand the masculinity of *Butt* in

the context of biopolitical discourses and their appropriations in Western subcultures after 1945. What is at stake here is the symbolic marking of the male body along the lines of race, class, and nationality. These are the forces through which *Butt*'s construction of naturalness is staged. They produce, in other words, a specific style.

Race, Class, Transnationality

[M]ale masculinity as an identity seems to demand authentication: Am I real? Is my masculinity real?

(Halberstam 2002, 353)

Bodies are to be read as signs of social identity.² Beyond the ideologies of a binary gender system and heterosexuality (which are present in *Butt* as a gay fanzine indirectly), this question arises at the intersection of gender, race, class, and nationality. Some symbolic and social positions promise a greater proximity to the “naturalness” of gender than others. Thus, the question of “natural” masculinity, a masculinity that seems to categorically pass the test of authentication so important to its cultural intelligibility, has historically been taken up as a question of ethnic identity, both in hetero and homo contexts (Levine 1998, 60; Ward 2015). Different ascriptions of identity that taken together produce a powerful symbolic position do not, however, simply add up. Intersectionally, one category can be saturated and represented by others, as David Savran explains: “a racialized category is not simply to be added to gender. For gender is always articulated through race, through possibilities opened up by particular racial identities” (Savran 1998, 8).³

In what way, then, would the ethnicity of *Butt* boys work toward the “naturalness” of their gender? What is striking about *Butt*, apart from the exclusion of other queer subject positions such as trans, is that the models are mainly white: Looking back over the ten years of the magazine's publication in print, non-white bodies rarely appear. There are a few exceptions, for example, when the singer of the pop group Bloc Party, Kele Okereke, appears on the cover, or when Afro-German artist Marc Brandenburg is featured in the magazine.⁴ Overall, however, not only *Butt*, but post-pornography, in general, proves to be ethnically quite homogeneous, as Stüttgen also confirms:⁵ “Some people have criticized post-porn for being a white and Western genre and that might be true” (Stüttgen 2010, 14).⁶

And yet, the imperfect bodies in *Butt* do not indicate the dominant form of whiteness that José Muñoz has identified as the formula for mainstream gay porn of the 1990s (Muñoz 1999, 88). They are also far from the whiteness of fraternity- or surfer-masculinities, to which Jane Ward assigns a crucial role in what she diagnoses as the “heterosexualization of homosexual acts” (Ward 2015). In order to understand the staging of the naturalness

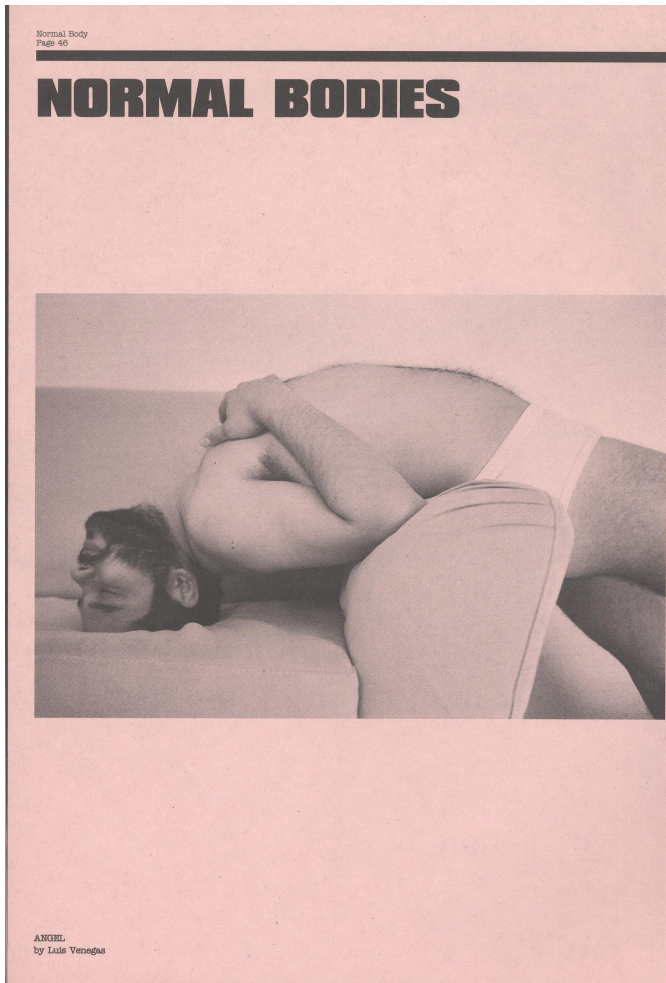


Figure 2.1 Angel photographed by Luis Venegas.

Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). *Butt*. No. 13. Summer 2005, 46.

of gender in *Butt*, it is therefore not enough to take ethnicity into account. The post-pornographic images of men must also be considered from the perspective of class. I would suggest that the imperfect physicality of the images in *Butt* in their ethnosocial identity also relates to the culture of North American “white trash” (Di Blasi 2013, 52), that is, to the white US-American lower class, as a whole series of portraits in *Butt* suggest (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 69, 98, 250, 378).

In addition to this reference, the aesthetics of the white men in *Butt* is also modeled on a queer bohemian masculinity, as the interviews with

Gus van Sant, Mike Albo, Rufus Wainwright, John Waters, Michael Stipe, and Marc Jacobs, for example, show. Even if this lineage is often represented by North American artists, as in this list, it merges with a tradition of European pop culture and avant-garde, not least through Van Bennekom and Jonkers, the two Dutch editors of *Butt*, and German photographer Tillmans. All three of them also appear as interviewees in the *Butt* book, i.e., in the position of both model and curator (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006).

As the spectrum of *Butt* boys shows, in addition to issues of ethnicity and class, the reference to nationality plays a role in determining the construction of masculinity. In this respect, the aesthetic in *Butt* is to be understood as the result of a cultural transfer between the United States and European pop culture and thus as transnational, as is also generally known from the history of queer fanzines (Lafreniere 2014), and as Bronson and Aarons observed: “There was a magazine called Queer Zine Explosion. We’re not inventing the fact that something happened—it happened, and it happened all over North America and in Europe as well” (Bronson and Aarons 2008, 13). Through the questions of race, class, and transnationality, the aesthetics of *Butt*’s “natural” male bodies can be historicized and their biopolitical references determined.

White Trash

Nevertheless, everything that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in immediate connection with an outside.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 19)

Race and class come together in the image of white trash. However, they do not simply intertwine in the image of white poverty. The category of class does not leave the category of race untouched. Rather, the economic situation of the American underclass also requires an ethnic modification. Poverty and race not only meet empirically but are also part of an imaginary order: white trash denotes those whites who are as poor as otherwise only Blacks are. The stigmatization of Black people is transferred to a group of whites. The representatives of white trash are threatened with losing the status of whiteness.

While whiteness as a “universal” skin color has historically enjoyed the privilege of not being marked separately – the dominance of whiteness manifests itself in its cultural “invisibility” analogous to the hegemonic position of heterosexuality – white trash denotes the exception of a visible whiteness that breaks the taboo of white privilege by being economically and socially on the same level as, in the context of the US society, a majority of the Black population.⁷ From a hegemonic white perspective,

white trash appears even lower as Blacks, because they are not using the potential privilege of whiteness, as Constance Penley recounts from an autobiographical perspective: “A Southern white child is required to learn that white trash folks are the lowest of the low because socially and economically they have sunk so far that they might as well be Black” (Penley 2004, 310).

The whiteness of white trash – as a whiteness that is no longer invisible – no longer qualifies as whiteness. It has become a “dirty” whiteness that has lost the aura of “purity” and “superiority” (Cunningham 2007, 170). According to this cultural logic, the whiteness of white trash, which as a “dirty” one is no longer whiteness, exists in contrast to the “universality” of a whiteness privileged through “invisibility.” This form of whiteness no longer unmarked poses a problem for the idea of whiteness as universal. By marking a socially non-privileged form of whiteness as trash, the universalization of whiteness as invisibility can no longer be maintained. Through the violation of a taboo that white trash signifies, a racist safeguarding of class differences is destabilized. “In a sense, the nothingness of whiteness cannot exist if forced into a relation with white trash” (Cunningham 2007, 170). White trash relativizes the untouched “supremacy” of whiteness. In this sense, white trash can be understood as a queering of whiteness, if we understand queer not only as a designation of sexual minorities, but also intersectionally as a critique of hegemonic power formations as a whole. In this respect, *Butt*’s use of a white trash aesthetic would also be a critique of hegemonic forms of white masculinity vis-à-vis the “white normativity of the pornotopic field” (Muñoz 1999, 88).

Porn Whiteness

At first glance, the cultural logic that establishes an unmarked form of whiteness as universalism seems to repeat itself in the field of pornography, as Muñoz has observed:

California-based companies such as Catalina, Falcon, and Vivid Video have contributed to a somewhat standardized image of the porn performer. It is paradoxical that the promise of pornotopia, the promise of lust unlimited, desire without restriction, is performed by a model who generally conforms to a certain rigid set of physical and racial characteristics. This standardized porn model is a paler shade of white, hairless, and he is usually young and muscled. He is the blueprint that is later visualized infinitely at gay male identity hubs such as gyms and dance clubs. The mainstream porn image, throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, continued to evolve into an all-too-familiar clean-shaven Anglo twenty-something clone.

(Muñoz 1999, 87)

The fantasy of sexual availability here is not to be limited by recognizable social differences. The ethnic homogeneity of pornotopia articulates the fantasy of a classless society. Richard Dyer writes:

The extremely successful Catalina company has created an image of the California golden boy, with no existence other than working and making out. This is an image that seems to offer itself as stripped of social specificity, a sort of pornographic utopia uncontaminated by class, gender, or race, although it is of course highly specifically white, young.

(Dyer 2002, 195)

Paradoxically, then, the “white normative sex clone” becomes the hero of a pornographic narrative that claims to offer unlimited possibilities of pleasure. Consumption enables participation in this utopian “counter-public” (Warner 2005, 168–69). Imitation and training turn social reality in Western gay centers into a copy of this pornographic fantasy (Cante and Restivo 2004, 144). *Butt*’s white trash aesthetics of the imperfect white male body are a way of challenging the hegemony of whiteness in the social imaginary of gay pornography. Through the symbolic claiming of the social position of white trash, *Butt* articulates a critique of 1990s pornography of health and perfection.⁸

Regarding the symbolic position of white trash, however, there is a crucial difference between a pornographic and a non-pornographic space. The social position of the marked white body is by no means analogous to its pornographic market value. As Paasonen writes: “In porn, education, money, and upper-class status are of little help, and elitism surfaces only to be mocked” (Paasonen 2011, Loc 2072/3979). In the context of pornography, it is precisely the social stigma of white trash that can gain value in contrast to the polished porn of the mainstream. In its imperfect nonchalance, the white trash body claims to possess a more direct access to sexuality and can thus become pornographic capital.

This logic follows a sexual fetishization of the working class that has a long history, especially in gay culture. Volker Woltersdorff writes about the clone culture of the 1970s: “The unrestricted reference point of clone iconography is working-class masculinity. Its erotic idealization has a rich tradition, for example as rough trade” (Woltersdorff 2007, 111, translation P.R.). The social outsider status of white trash gains additional pornographic value with its real and imaginary proximity to the social status of being Black: as a projection of a socially less regulated sexuality that also circulates as a fetishization of Black people: “Arguments about excessive masculinity tend to focus on Black bodies (male and female), Latino/a bodies, or working-class bodies” (Halberstam 2002, 356); or as Muñoz writes: “The tendency in erotic representation is to figure nonwhite men as exotic kink” (Muñoz 1999, 87).

Butt's appropriation of a white trash aesthetic is ambivalent in several respects: it obviously functions to the exclusion of ethnic diversity. At the same time, it does not conform to the white homogeneity of mainstream porn but occupies an alternative site of whiteness. The zine challenges the hegemonic site of whiteness, while it risks exoticizing white trash as the other. In order to decide whether *Butt*'s reference to white trash can function as a decentering of white hegemony (Di Blasi 2013, 8), the question must be asked whether the imperfect bodies presented here appear as socially identifiable at all. In contrast to the coarse directness of white trash that Penley observed in heterosexual porn films and parts of the US pop culture ("Roseanne," Madonna), or as it appears in the European version as British chav porn (Attwood 2013), forms of representation, in other words, that transport social identity not only through body images but also through pornographic narration, the white trash reference of the *Butt* boys remains largely aesthetic.

But even if we make a connection between the white imperfect male bodies in *Butt* (especially in contrast to the luxurious care of health-hest-pornographic bodies of the 1990s) and the category of "white trash," or, moreover between *Butt*'s body politics and more recent forms of economic precarity in neoliberal times, *Butt* does not provide metadata on the images of these attractive and interesting young men. *Butt* popularizes the body type of white trash or social and economic precarity in a way that visually alludes to its social origins or economic situation but at the same time conceals it. *Butt* claims the aesthetics of the white trash body without a social context. This is also true for the interviews accompanying the pictures. As elsewhere in gay imagery, the aesthetic use of socially specific signs of masculinities is not necessarily accompanied by a social or political reference to the working class (Woltersdorff 2007, 111) or the neoliberal precariat.

Butt's gesture of citing white working-class masculinity or precarity as a pornographic style thus functions in a similar way as it does outside of pornography in the construction of the figure of the hipster. As in the case of the hipster, which I will discuss in a moment, *Butt*'s body image is an eclectic, hybrid, and contradictory phenomenon that is not only about gender, race, and class, but also about national identity. This proves to be complex insofar as *Butt*'s specifically sexualized and decontextualized aesthetic of a white trash precariat is to be understood as a transnational aesthetic, expressing not only a North American but also a European perspective, which in its class affiliation differs from the archive of the white US working-class masculinity.

Un-American Activities

As [Nan] Goldin says in the film *I'll Be Your Mirror*: "It was as if we'd all escaped from America."

(Townsend 2003, 106)

The imperative of sexual health that Muñoz describes for the gay porn industry in the United States does not directly rely on attributes of national belonging, whereas it is conspicuous, for example, in British gay pornography, which does not shy away from the use of national symbols like the Union Jack in filmic settings and applies the category of nationality in the name of porn labels (UK Naked, British Lads). To speak of pornography as transnational does make sense more generally (Evans 2013, 460), as Nick Davis also understands it for the analysis of popular culture as a whole: “[It] denaturalizes the terms of social, cultural, and political organization implied by the nation-state” (Davis 2013, 2). On the one hand, mainstream American porn sells itself as a global phenomenon, an “international style” (Mercer 2017, 149). In fact, the industry is open to the integration of non-American porn stars. Like Hollywood for non-pornographic stardom, for the longest time, the US porn industry has also been the benchmark for international careers. Foreign stars are subordinated to the characters and to the scenery of American porn mythology: cowboys, truckers, circuit parties. In this way, US porn asserts itself as the natural habitat and true origin of pumped-up, muscular bodies. The background to this symbolic dominance is not only the economic power of the US porn industry but also the hegemony of the US culture more generally: unlike Europe, post-1945 North America can function symbolically as a space of unbroken masculinity (Levine 1998, Woltersdorff 2007, 110–13).

The dominance of the American body image in pornography has the consequence that a deviation from it is either perceived as white trash or as “un-American.” As long as we operate within the framework of a Western-dominated porn industry that focuses on whiteness as erotic capital, alternative pornography is also categorized as “European.”⁹ Not only with the advent of post-pornography, but already in the field of gay mainstream porn, the category “European” functions as a marker of alternative body politics in contrast to the universalized American image of masculinity which does not need to explicitly name itself because of its hegemonic position. The popularity of *Butt*, as part of a post-pornographic culture of the 2000s, can historically be understood as a sign of the end of the US porn dominance. This happened when Netporn led to an increasing differentiation of pornographic productions (Zoo 2007, 103). Within pornography, a development can be observed that Arjun Appadurai identified for the production of cultural images as a whole: “The crucial point, however, is that the United States is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes” (Appadurai 1996, 31).

European Art Porn

Do you think there’s something specifically Dutch about *Butt*? I don’t know [...]. It’s very blunt and up front. That could be the Dutch touch. It’s quite direct and honest. Is that Dutch? It’s certainly not French.

(Van Bennekom in Needham 2006, 39)

In what way would *Butt* be “Un-American” or “European”? As the reactions of its readers show, *Butt*’s place of origin cannot easily be identified:

People never know exactly where *Butt* comes from. In England they think it comes somewhere from “Europe.” And I was talking to some kids in San Francisco who were into *Butt* and they think it’s from New York, and in New York they think [...] Well, they think it simply comes out of the ground or something.

(Van Bennekom in Needham 2006, 39)

Butt always comes from elsewhere. This placelessness has to do with the composition of its cultural archive. On the one hand, *Butt*’s alternative masculinity can be read as American white trash; on the other hand, it is an expression of a non-American, European body image. *Butt*’s aesthetic is the effect of this exchange of visual signs, “cultures [...] from different locations influence and shape each other” (Davis 2013, 2), or as Jennifer Evans writes about queer photography:

All images are mobile, but queer erotic photographs are particularly frenetic, trafficked from place to place, circulating in tourist and fine art networks, on the boundary between high and low, and on both sides of the Atlantic as well as along twilight subcultural pathways.

(Evans 2013, 460)

In distinction to the culture of white trash, however, the European genealogy of the imperfect white male body is less a representation of a direct access to a “natural” sexuality than an aesthetic appropriation and intellectual contextualization of masculinity. In the post-pornographic style of *Butt*, this European aesthetic – “the fashion forward European sensibility of *Butt*” (LaBruce 2006, 11) – converges with a US white trash aesthetic. The hybrid result – the hipster – represents an alternative to a globalized American mainstream style.

The consideration of pornography as art or as the product of intellectual work is in many ways a European project. Examples of this include the Dutch magazine *Suck* or the images of the Swiss photographer Walter Pfeiffer (Bronson and Aarons 2008, 6–7). Beyond fanzines and photographs, the juxtaposition of a globalized US style with a European art sensibility can also be found in other media and genres since the pop avant-garde after 1945. During the last 25 years, the phenomenon of a critique of pornography can be observed, for example, in the paintings of German artist Thomas Ruff (Mey 2007) or in the novels of French writer Michel Houellebecq and British author Irving Welsh. *Butt*’s editor Jonkers is also aware of this non-gay tradition of an alternative pornographic culture when he talks about *Butt*’s post-pornographic sensibility: “It’s like Houellebecq’s writing: he can switch in a split second from this philosophical theorizing

to seeing somebody walk by and wanting to have sex with her” (Benderson 2006, 32).

Let us dwell for a moment on the example Jonkers offers us here to see what is at stake with this European culture of art porn. While these writers are not necessarily leaving a heterosexual paradigm behind, their stories are no longer told from a position of phallic self-assertion. Rather, they take note of the instability of the heterosexual regime, which leads to different consequences for their sexual heroes. Both Houellebecq and Welsh suggest that a pornographic universe can no longer be imagined as a sexual utopia. This is how pornography was still described, for example, by Steven Marcus in the 1960s, as the “lingua franca of sex” and as such also declared a substantial component of postmodern pop literature by Leslie Fiedler (Marcus 1966; Fiedler 1971). Houellebecq and Welsh are to be seen in this tradition, yet after the 1960s, an affirmation of pornography as an affirmative pop gesture also becomes difficult. To be sure, the texts by Houellebecq and Welsh can still be understood under the auspices of Fiedler’s program insofar as the prominent role of pornography undoubtedly contributes to the hipness of their literature – authors who write about sex embrace the “benefit of the speaker” identified by Foucault – but in Houellebecq and Welsh this engagement with pornography leads to dystopian pornographic visions as the flip side of a neosexual culture, as a scene from Houellebecq’s novel *Platform* attests:

Very occasionally, I would take a private room at five hundred francs; that was if my dick wasn’t feeling too good, when it seemed to me to resemble a useless, demanding, little appendage that smelled like cheese. Then I needed a girl to take it in her hands, to go into raptures, however faked, over its vigour, the richness of its semen. Be that as it may, I was always home before seven-thirty.

(Houellebecq 2002, 19)

Houellebecq can thus be read as part of the French art-porn movement around 2000 that has become known as “porno chic” or “nouvelle pornographie” (Ritte 2001). “Porno chic” is an appropriation of porn in non-pornographic genres, other genres flirt with pornography to benefit from its promise of subversion (McNair 2002, 70; Paasonen 2011, Loc 3070 of 3979). They want to be pornography and a commentary on pornography at the same time. The representation of sexuality is aimed less at emancipatory liberation or a transgression of boundaries, but functions as a historical sign. References to pornography emerge as signs of a melancholic sexuality (Houellebecq) or a (self-)destructive sexuality (Welsh). It is precisely in this by no means utopian sense that the allusion to pornography proves to be a strategy through which texts, films, and images assure themselves of their timeliness. They reveal themselves as a historical consciousness about the legacy of the sexual revolution, whose manifestation

is the imperfect, precarious US white trash/European male body. In this sense, the descriptions in Houellebecq and Welsh, though rather cynical in tone in contrast to the affectionate fragility of the images in *Butt*, are as queer as the celebrated lack of perfection of male bodies in *Butt*.

So far, the analysis can be summarized as follows: The allusion to white trash and precarity is a gay strategy that claims to oppose a culture of pornographic alienation by authorizing a white “natural” masculinity. This, however, is not explicated by *Butt* in terms of social affiliation, as the signs that refer to a specific social and economic reality are at once alluded to and veiled. It is precisely this strategy that allows for a fusion of different archives of whiteness: in *Butt*’s project, white trash masculinity is coupled with European bohemian masculinity. While these two positions share a distance from pornographic norms, they differ in terms of class and nationality. The body image in *Butt* is thus not to be deciphered solely as a staging of working-class masculinity; it transcends this position. On the one hand, the authenticity of working-class sexuality is claimed; on the other hand, a pornographic image is staged that is also always already a commentary on pornography. In contrast to canonized pornographic mythologies, the national and geographical origin of *Butt*’s masculinity is also ambiguous. *Butt*’s project of a “real” masculinity is not only shown to be anchored in the cultural imaginary of the United States, but rather as an effect of a cultural exchange between North America and Europe. In this way, the symbolic location of *Butt*’s “real” masculinity turns out to be hybrid. This strategy corresponds with the historical moment in which *Butt* emerged as a remediation of Netporn. If *Butt* comes from nowhere (or everywhere), one could also say: *Butt* comes from the Internet.

Hipster

Each new subculture establishes new trends, generates new looks and sounds which feed back into the appropriate industries.

(Hebdige 1979, 95)

The post-pornographic queer fanzine *Butt* appears at a time just when the figure of the hipster had been reestablished in pop culture in the late 1990s (Greif et al. 2010). The hipster presents himself as a global North American/European figure, a young man with a trucker cap, fuzz on his face, conspicuous forearm tattoos, retro T-shirt, and skinny jeans; a form of alternative masculinity at the intersection of white trash and Europeanness and precisely the look for which American Apparel, *Butt*’s cooperation partner in distribution – and *Butt* itself – was known. So, should *Butt* be read as a homosexual version of the hipster? After all, the hipster’s description as a “lower class dandy” (Goldman 1974, quoted in Hebdige 1979, 48) fits exactly the hybrid construction of *Butt*’s

subjectivity. I will pursue this question by following the main points of the hipster debate of the 2000s. While this allows me to point out some of the risks and problems of the *Butt* aesthetic, it can also explain how *Butt*'s project differs from general hipster culture and how the zine succeeds in resignifying the concept of the hipster. Beyond the nostalgic, ironic characteristics of the hipster, *Butt* formulates a project of utopian politics of gender and sexuality via a reactivation of its original meaning from around 1960.

The reference to white trash characteristic of *Butt* can also be found in the figure of the hipster. This genealogy, which, in another move, also implies the hipster's relation to Blackness, has been commented on frequently since Norman Mailer's essay *The White Negro* (Mailer 1957). For Mark Greif, who played a significant role in shaping the hipster debate of the 2000s, this reference is one of the origins of the hipster. Above all, Greif sees this gesture as the appropriation of a Black position by whites. For him, the hipster is "a white subcultural figure of the 1950s, explicitly defined by the desire of a white avant-garde to disaffiliate from 'white men' and achieve the 'cool' knowledge and exoticized energy, and lust, and violence, of Black Americans" (Greif 2010b, 7).

This appropriation of a black habitus by whites can be found, for example, with the writers of the Beat Generation. Jack Kerouac writes:

At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27th and Elton in the Denver colored section wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world has offered me was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night.

(Kerouac 1958, quoted in Hebdige 1979, 46)

The hipster of the 2000s does not refer directly to Black people, like the "white Negro" did. He foregrounds class identity and already starts with reference to the "white Negro." In doing so, he reiterates the "white Negro's" appropriation of Black masculinity only indirectly: "As the white 'Negro' had once fetishized Blackness, the white hipster fetishized the violence, instinctiveness, and rebelliousness of lower-middle-class suburbans or country whites" (Greif 2010b, 10). Within this genealogy of class-related and racial cross-identifications, attributes of "authentic" masculinity are filtered and rearranged. The hipster has gone through several stages of cultural resignification. Whatever countercultural meaning one might want to ascribe to the "white Negro" of the 1950s – and Greif, in contrast to Savran (1998) and Penley (2004), is rather skeptical here – according to Greif et al., it would no longer be possible to maintain it for the time around 2000 (Greif et al. 2010). In moving through several pop-cultural rounds of recycling, the hipster has gambled away every conceivable countercultural capital. Performative cross-identification is no longer

a guarantee for a hybrid subject position in a critical sense, rather simply fashionable. The loss of sociocultural references (which is also typical of *Butt*) turns the hipster into a disengaged pop sign that is handed over to the process of appropriation.

Using the example of pop music, Simon Reynolds described this capitalist exploitation of subcultural codes (Reynolds 2011). The “retromania” of the 2000s documents how pop-cultural signs have become part of a defined and limited repertoire. Feeding on this pop-cultural archive, meaning is gained in reshuffling already existing codes. From now on, pop music can only continue to exist through reference to earlier styles. In this pop-cultural context of exploitation, difference is no longer an expression of social conflict or of a political position but collapses with the market law of novelty. The hipster in Greif’s dystopian interpretation personifies this retromaniac pop program. In this perspective, the hipster would hardly be described as a counterfigure, for example, vis-à-vis globalized capitalism, but rather as one of its agents. For the time being, it can be said that my previous analysis of *Butt* overlaps with this finding.

The debates about the hipster reveal that the glamorization of this white trash/art persona documents a subcultural hopelessness rather than a stylistic and political project: with him, the idea of pop as an invocation of novelty which could gain meaning beyond the economic necessity of product innovation and new markets to be conquered runs into the void. Although this fate affects subcultures as a whole (Hebdige 1979, 96), the exploitation cycle of countercultural styles that are appropriated by capitalism has overtaken the hipster of the 2000s from the beginning. His retro-style no longer stands a chance as a gesture of protest against the speed with which a consumer society appropriates new styles. Against the totality of a commodified pop archive, the hipster’s irony proves to be a weak weapon. The suffering from the historically predetermined insanely short shelf life of styles he self-confidently appropriates can just barely be concealed. Behind his good-humored pop mentality hides a desperate cynicism: the admission that pop culture has had its day as a counterculture. Sociologically, this means that the hipster style no longer allows conclusions to be drawn about cultural or political ideals, but functions more like leisurewear: Either it exhibits the privilege of having time beyond working hours at one’s disposal, or it documents the neoliberal paradigm that no longer allows a distinction between leisure and work. In the figure of the hipster, a cultural pop hegemony and the values of a new middle class collapse.

The hipster represents what can happen to middle-class whites, particularly, and to all elites, generally, when they focus on the struggles for their own pleasures and luxuries—seeing these as daring and confrontational—rather than asking what makes their sort of people entitled to them, who else suffers for their pleasures, and where their

“rebellion” adjoins social struggles that should oblige anybody who hates authority.

(Greif 2010a, XVI–XVII)

The hipster is understood here as an apolitical figure of consumption who affords himself the self-absorbed luxury of debates about aesthetics and style, in a way that has said goodbye to any idea of social analysis or sexual-political opposition. Hipster culture would then be the subcultural masquerade of a white middle class that does not yet want to give up its alternative fantasies and preserves them on the level of style. It operates through the schizophrenia of simultaneously belonging to dominant and subcultural sign systems; a split, however, that can ultimately always be reconciled – through irony – in favor of an adapted position in capitalism.

Homo Hipster

It’s also super straightforward. Honest. No one’s acting or pretending to be someone else. It’s relaxed.

(Van Bennekom in Gregor 2012, 59)

In the 1990s discourse on metrosexuality, gay men still had the role of life-style vanguard vis-à-vis the stylistically backward straight man. That is different in the hipster discourse of the 2000s. Are gay men now imitating straight men? In the figure of the 2000s hipster, hetero and homo are at first stylistically indistinguishable. Unlike in the case of the metrosexual, however, straight and gay do not necessarily meet at the site of a masculinity that stages itself through a hyper-cultivated style of fashion and grooming – thus flaunting its own performative nature of gender. Their styling as hipsters rather appears as stylish “non-styling.” What both homo- and hetero hipsters seek is the “authentic” masculinity of the lower-class man paired with the artistic sensibility of the European art guy/gay, resulting in the hybrid figure of the “lower class dandy.” Women do not play a significant role in the current hipster discourse (Savran 1998, 77; Greif 2010a, XIII). The hipster in its homo and hetero versions displays a nonchalance that, unlike the metrosexual or the 1970s clone, is relatively unimpressed by cosmetic offerings or fashion products. He cultivates an eclectic but non-fussy style of dress. Above all, he relies on forms of “natural” masculinity, the most obvious sign of which is the beard. Twenty years after the publication of the first issue of *Butt* magazine, a proliferation of the hipster style can be observed, one of the most popular variants of which lately has been the lumbersexual.¹⁰

How is *Butt*’s gay hipsterness to be read in this context? Do the *Butt* boys share the fate of the hipster, as Greif understands it? Or can the homo-hipster on the pages of *Butt*, despite at first sight being nearly indistinguishable from the hetero-hipster, still play a different role? How would he mobilize the legacy of the hipster in his own way?

Hipster Porn

Is *Butt* just another commodity fetish item promoting privileged gay icons in the guise of a modest and unprepossessing, albeit pink, package?
(LaBruce 2006, 9)

Earlier in this chapter, I explained how the style of *Butt* goes beyond the recycling of vintage pornography and the resumption of a queer fanzine tradition, in that the zine is to be understood as a reaction to the media situation of Realcore, Netporn, and Porn 2.0. In the last sections, I have read *Butt*'s image of masculinity beyond its media-historical, pornographic, and gay references into its pop-historical dimension: *Butt*'s strategies of quoting and reworking social identities. The connection to the hipster debate led to foregrounding the pop-historical dimension of *Butt*. Just as the hipster recycles past decades of subculture and fashion, so does the post-pornographic *Butt* boy when he undresses and looks into the camera. To read *Butt* in the context of hipster culture is then to understand the style of *Butt* masculinity as a reappropriation of vintage porn. But do pornography and fashion function according to the same cultural laws? Or does the difference in genre – the naked versus the clothed body – also entail a different politics of signs? While the fashionable gestures of the hipster assert an indifference to the hetero/homo difference, the question arises: What difference do the obvious pornographic reference in *Butt* make? The rapprochement between homo and hetero in the 2000s hipster functions as a celebration of a fashionable masculinity that both share as style. Homo and hetero men are getting serious about their indistinctiveness, already invoked in the culture of metrosexuality, but now returning in an inverted way by affirming the ungroomed man as stylish. As long as there are no direct references to sexuality, the hipster represents a new hegemonic form of hetero-masculinity. For gay men, this would be a form of passing as straight.

Is *Butt* simply a new version of an old strategy to reinforce masculinity? Especially after the body-builder image of the 1990s has worn out and word has spread that convincing masculinity can no longer be achieved in this overly obvious way? Are gay men now copying the nonchalance of straight boys who can afford to assert their gender through understatement? After all, it was traditionally the privilege of the heterosexual man, unlike the woman, not to have to prove his gender as conspicuous production. Must the hipster aesthetic in its post-pornographic version be understood as a heterosexualization of the homo, insofar as gays appropriate a form of “natural masculinity” in an unironic way? Is this all the more powerful, the less ostentatiously it is displayed, because this is the way precisely to preserve the appearance of naturalness?¹¹ Must we conclude, then, that *Butt* forms an alliance with forms of “authentic” masculinity and their access to power?

One problem with Greif's genealogy of the hipster is that he glosses over its queer dimension. In the hipster debate of the 2000s, questions of class and race dominate. This is all the more surprising because the hipster of the 1950s and 1960s does not only engage in social and ethnic cross-dressing. His entanglement of different subject positions also concerns gender and sexuality, as Savran explains:

Unlike the normative middle-class working man/husband/father, the hipster is a hybridized subject, a product of cultural misrecognition, a crossdresser, neither completely white nor Black, masculine nor feminine, heterosexual nor homosexual, working class nor bourgeois. Rather [...] his oscillation between these different positionalities produces him as a schizophrenic, self-defeating—and masochistic—subject. Embracing Blackness, femininity, homosexuality, and poverty to declare himself white, masculine, heterosexual, and a man of independent means, he is unable, however, to stabilize any of these positions.

(Savran 1998, 52)

Savran sees the cross-identifications of the hipster of the 1950s and 1960s less as an instrumentalizing appropriation at the expense of the social positions of Blacks, gays, or women, but rather as a serious shattering of the hegemonic position of white heterosexual masculinity. Through these ambivalences, the hipster becomes a utopian figure (Savran 1998, 51).

While class and race contribute to the production of a “natural” *Butt* masculinity, it is not enough to speak of race, class, and nation in order to account for the *Butt* boys' proper meaning as hipsters. Savran reminds us of the crucial position of gender and sexuality in the genealogy of the hipster. For the US scene of the 1950s and 1960s, Savran's emphatic, queer interpretation of the hipster, also shared by Dirck Linck (2016), can be well attested. The original hipster of the 1950s in the context of the Beat Generation displays a sexual ambiguity:¹² Jack Kerouac's and Neal Cassidy's bisexuality, Alan Ginsberg's and William S. Burroughs' homosexuality (Savran 1998, 50–51). “Hipsterism is represented above all by gay writers” (Linck 2016, 202, translation P.R.). This involves biographical details and an anti-bourgeois lifestyle, as well as aesthetic designs and forms of literary work. Especially for the texts of William S. Burroughs, pornographic discourse plays a significant role (Savran 1998, 88). This pop-cultural genealogy of pornography continues in the queer subculture of the 1960s in the films of Jack Smith and Andy Warhol and the texts of Irving Rosenthal (Linck 2016) and is reflected in the history of queer fanzines since the 1970s (Bronson and Aarons 2008, 6).

The enthusiasm for the hipster as a schizoid, masochistic figure, i.e., as a figure whose alternative sexuality affects the coherence of its gender, is also taken seriously by Penley in her pro-porn position. The Beatniks appear

as one version of the hedonistic figures of male sexual rebellion against a bourgeois and heteronormative lifestyle:

The grey flannel rebels, the playboys, the beats, the hippies—they all tried to conceive of less restrictive versions of masculinity, ones not subject to the alienation of the corporate world, alimony-hungry wives, dependent children, monogamy, or mortgages [...]. What's in the hearts of men according to porn? A utopian desire for a world where women are not socially required to say and believe that they do not like sex as much as men do.

(Penley 2004, 325)

Accordingly, Linck also states: “The hipster moves beyond the world of purpose, on the trail of his desires” (Linck 2016, 198, translation P.R.). With the hipster of the 1950s, the blurring of the boundaries between homosexual and homosocial became sexually explicit (Savran 1998, 70). With the hipster as a fashion figure of the 2000s, as described by Greif, the perspective of rebellious sexual politics no longer plays a role.

The post-pornographic images in *Butt* can only be understood as an extension of the hipster ideology in a hegemonic sense, as long as the staging of gender is considered here without taking sexuality into account. I propose that sexuality, according to the queer tradition of the hipster, still offers potential for critique. In the Hollywood production *Humpday* (Shelton 2009), the idea that gay sex ensures the transgressive quality of the hipster is turned into material for comedy. The somewhat clumsy and not particularly original plot goes like this: Two heterosexual friends who know each other from college want to prove their hipness by performing gay sex together – a project that, in this case, fails. Ward comments: “*Humpday* explores the ways that white hipster masculinity pushes back against heteronormativity without ultimately being able to untether from it” (Ward 2015, 119). *Butt* can be understood as a countermodel to *Humpday*. The zine shows how the naturalized hipster body is being transformed under the gay gaze. Playful kinkiness saves *Butt* from merely engaging in naturalization of normative (hetero-)masculinity, as LaBruce also observes when he states that *Butt* remains “dirty” (LaBruce 2006, 9). The question about sexuality must be asked in order to assess whether the post-pornographic hipster in his nakedness can still be a rebel. Queering the hipster can only succeed, I am suggesting here, if he is also understood as a sexual figure, and that is also to say if the question is taken seriously of how his sexuality affects his gender. To discuss the post-pornographic *Butt* boys in the context of the hipster, then, is to queer the 2000s hipster in the sense of the US subculture of the 1950s and 1960s described by Savran and Linck. The *Butt* boys are faithful to the history of the hipster as a history of sexual deviance that has been largely lost in its pop-cultural adaptation since 2000. If, following Linck, Penley, and Savran, one understands the desire

for unrestricted sexuality as the secret meaning of the hybrid hipster style, this allusion is spelled out in the context of the queer fanzine. In the 2000s, the sexual significance of the hipster is realized, first and foremost, in its homo-version. *Butt* demonstrates that gay men occupy a special place in the hipster discourse.

Butt's strategy works in two directions: While the fanzine sets itself apart from the straight hipster through a gay sexualization, through its hipster masculinity, it remains distinct from the gay porn mainstream. So far, I have pursued the question of the queerness of *Butt*'s masculinity by positioning its social markers of race, class, and nationality in comparison with the pop phenomenon of the hipster. A difference to the hegemonic hipster figure can only be claimed if *Butt* is considered not only just a pop-cultural project but also a gay project. For the project of queering masculinity, the gay body plays a privileged role, as Elizabeth Grosz also suggests:

I do not want to suggest that this is impossible for heterosexual men, but it must involve a radical transformation in the kinds of sexual practices they engage in and an even more difficult transformation in the structure of desire whereby they are not weakened as men, do not see themselves as "feminized," in their willingness of taking on passive positions, to explore the rest of their bodies (as well as women's), taking on pleasure of a different order, but are able to reclaim, reuse, reintensify body parts, zones, and functions that have been phallically disincested.

(Grosz 1994, 201)

How does the materiality of the male body appear in *Butt*? What resignification does the gay male body undergo? Does this take place in the course of a "feminization" that Grosz addresses here, or are there other strategies of queering masculinity? The image of the gay post-phallic body that I have described and read for its social signs will be examined in the following chapter in the context of theories of gender in order to grasp the originality of *Butt*'s project not only in its queering of masculinity but also of maleness.

Notes

1. Within the nomenclature of gay male bodies, *Butt* boys can be referred to as "cubs" (as "young Bears") or as "Otters" (as hairy, slim men). Warbear situates Bear masculinity in the larger context of gay history: "Historically and geographically speaking, the spread of the Bear community started in the US in the early eighties. [...] After the Stonewall riot and the beginning of the gay movement as a political, cultural, and social force, the heterosexual interpretation of homosexual relations was deconstructed in favor of a hippy androgynous imaginary mixing up crossdressers, transsexuals, butch dykes, and homosexuals. The Bear identity emerges from an exasperation with this

- model and the historicification of a masculine representation from the B/D and S/M leather scene” (Warbear aka Palmieri 2007, 254–65). For a discussion of the Bear aesthetic, see also Mercer (2017, 128–34).
2. For an interpretation of specifically gay pornography as a reflection of social history, see also Mercer (2017).
 3. Ward adds, “[T]his and other studies indicate that racial categories are always already sexualized and that sexuality categories are always already raced” (Ward 2008, 429).
 4. *Butt* Nos. 21 and 28 (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2007, 2010) feature Black cover models, in the second case Bloc Party singer Kele Okereke. Marc Brandenburg is interviewed in *Butt* No. 26 (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2009).
 5. *The Tenth* (thetenthzine.com), a gay fanzine with a focus on Black men, has been published since 2015.
 6. Something similar could be said about New Queer Cinema, one of the important points of reference for *Butt* and post-pornography, as I argue in [Chapter 4](#). This was, in the words of B. Ruby Rich, about “white boys versus everyone else” (Rich cited in Davis 2013, 11).
 7. In his “anti-manifesto,” Luca Di Blasi has recently explained how this “universal” position, for which he proposes the term “transparticularity,” is in a sense without an alternative for white, heterosexual cis-men (Di Blasi 2013, 9, 81).
 8. A precursor for *Butt*’s strategy of pornography critique is Bruce La Bruce’s (1996) film *Hustler White*. La Bruce can also be considered one of the pioneers and initiators of the post-porn movement of the 2000s.
 9. For example, the popularity of Eastern European pornography is another form of “impure” whiteness alongside white trash. Another variation on the symbolic site of alternative whiteness is the Berlin-based porn label *Cazzo*, which specializes in a gay skinhead aesthetic. For the history of *Cazzo*, see Schock (2000).
 10. See, for example, Willa Brown, “Lumbersexuality and Its Discontents,” *The Atlantic*, December 10, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/12/lumbersexuality-and-its-discontents/383563/>; Marcie Bianco, “What the ‘Lumbersexual’ Trend Actually Says About Men in Society Today,” *Mic*, January 6, 2015, <http://mic.com/articles/107794/what-the-lumbersexual-trend-really-says-about-men-in-society-today>. This trend has also reached gay porn film production on websites like deviantotter.com.
 11. For example, also in the chillness of a culture of “dude sex,” as Ward describes it (2008).
 12. In the 1960s, the hipster enacts his masculinity also in a dramatic way: “The white hipster, in other words, plays the part of a husband who scandalously desires to be like his wife, who longs to dress in her clothes and co-opt her experience” (Savran 1998, 51). This critique of heterosexist conformity has not only been celebrated by critics. In a misogynistic and homophobic way, Leslie Fiedler warned against the hipster feminized by sexual excess: “He desires to be penetrated by drugs, femininity, Blackness, or a penis,” as Savran paraphrases and critically comments on Fiedler (66). On the relationship between the hipster and the Beat Generation, see also Dick Hebdige (1979, 48). In contrast to the figure of the hipster, the hippie of the 1960s must be understood as a figure who, despite their demonstrative androgyny, differs not only aesthetically but also sexually and politically from the hipster through rather undisguised homophobia (Savran 1998, 114, 132).

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62 *Homo Hipster*

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3 Beyond Butch

Butt's Butch Turn

[...] it would be a mistake to think that homosexuality is best explained through the performativity that is drag.

(Butler 1993, 235)

Of course, these practices of creative self-making and the profligate circulation of these performative embodiments that come with the possibilities of Web 2.0 don't operate outside boundaries or constraints.

(McGlotten 2013, 104)

Jop: *Butt* was about gay men identifying more with men than with women. That was something seriously lacking in gay media [...] even in the porn that was around at the time. And that's completely changed. I'm pleased that things have changed in gay culture. The focus has shifted to masculinity.

(Gregor 2012, 56)

In the previous chapter, I defined *Butt's* approach as a realism that operates on three levels: new media formats, pornographic conventions, and as a representation of an alternative masculinity that emerges under these changing conditions. Yet, even if the images in *Butt* thus show themselves as expressing a new style of gay subjectivity, this does not mean that the powerful biopolitical regimes that frame photographic representation are invalidated. The third level of *Butt's* realism, a "realistic" and "natural" masculinity, is problematic from the outset. After all, strategies of authenticating and naturalizing gender are precisely those mechanisms to which the construction of masculinity owes its authority. Does the claim to "real" masculinity represent the limit of *Butt's* queer potential? While I want to give full weight to this question, at the same time, another question should be asked: Has a queer critique neglected the critical potential not of masculinity, but rather, and particularly, of maleness?¹ Could a form of realism that relies on a notion of maleness that is distinct from masculinity become effective as a queer strategy?

The previous chapter was concerned with discussing the history behind the realism of *Butt*'s masculinity, i.e., the social affiliations of its semiotic codes. It is precisely the “natural masculinity” invoked here whose tradition can be spelled out in relation to the categories of race, class, and nation. With its allusion to “white trash,” whiteness in *Butt* is relegated from its hegemonic position. While “white trash” culture has its social origin within the US society, in the zine, it converges with a European form of whiteness. Together these cultural archives form a transnational alternative to the globalized ideal of the US whiteness as it is represented in gay mainstream porn. In this, the *Butt* boys converge with the figure of the hipster.

My argument so far has been about the possibilities of deconstructing white, phallic images of men. In this discussion, the dimension of masculinity as gender was addressed. Having identified the social, cultural, and historical coordinates of enacting masculinity, the models in *Butt* must now be further analyzed in their relation to maleness as sex. As a question regarding the relationship between gender and sex, this can be articulated as follows: If the transnational hipster in *Butt* represents a – contradictory – way of critiquing hegemonic masculinity, how does the realism of men's bodies also point toward maleness?

In contrast to gender, the category of sex has received less attention within queer studies. With her privileging of the drag queen as a paradigmatic case for gender performativity, Judith Butler, for example, neglected meaning-making at the level of sex (Preciado 2018, 75–77). As Eve Sedgwick noted early on, a number of problems arise for the field of queer studies when cross-dressing – as a way of experimenting with gender – is understood as emblematic of a constructivist project (Sedgwick 1993, 226). This would not only produce new exclusions but also ignore potentials for critique at the level of sex. How far can, and must, we deviate from Butler, then? While I follow her analysis and conceptual apparatus to an extent, I will also insist, beyond Butler, on a difference between gender and sex in order to grasp the originality of the pictures in *Butt*. Can sex be conceptualized beyond gender without falling back into a form of gender essentialism?

Attention to the materiality of sex, as opposed to the theatricality of gender, has been developed as a critique of Butler in the field of trans studies.² Paul Beatriz Preciado writes:

What transsexual, transgender, intersex, and disability activists have put on the table are not so much cross-gender theatrical or stage performances as they are physical, sexual, social, and political transformations that take place off-stage, or, put another way, they put precise transincorporation technologies on the table.

(Preciado 2018, 76)

Muscles, hairiness, beard, and voice are among the “technologies of sex” used in the transformation of the male transgender body and these

attributes of maleness can be developed and displayed without necessarily leading to a cohesive image of masculinity. The perspective of a transgender critique guided by these notions will prove to be helpful in my analysis of *Butt* given that in this view, rearranged elements, not only of masculinity, but especially of maleness, can articulate a critique of gender/sex norms.

In my view, *Butt*'s project cannot be reduced to a somewhat post-phallic masculinity that ultimately secures itself again through an invocation of natural maleness. "Naturalness" in *Butt* takes place in a post-pornographic, artistic context. The photographers in *Butt* are experimenting with a variety of bodily forms. As in Andy Warhol's cinema, the aim here is to "know" more about the (male) body.³ In *Butt*, naked male bodies have to offer more than what is commonly found within the genre of pornography, *Butt* does not trust in standardized pornographic capital but instead documents an excitement and wonderment about naked men. The zine does not put grotesque male bodies on display, but, instead, offers an aesthetic transformation of male forms. *Butt*'s gay project does not follow the possibility of critiquing masculinity in the name of femininity, but aims at saving maleness from masculinity, so to speak. As much as *Butt* can be seen in the pornographic tradition of guaranteeing the sexual attractiveness of the male body through its "naturalness," it offers moments in which "naturalness" is not given the last word. *Butt* is interested in what the male body is capable of, what positions it can assume, what perspectives can be unfolded. That also means that *Butt* wants to know what the male body looks like beyond sexual scenarios. In this sense, the "post" of post-pornography is to be taken quite literally, *Butt* shows male bodies after sex.

Without a doubt, the male body is at the center of *Butt*'s fan culture. It is celebrated; yet this celebration of the body is linked to a documentation of its possible forms, an interest in its surface and in details of which it is not always possible to say how they confirm the register of the "natural." The sight of the "natural" – in terms of primary or secondary sexual characteristics, for example – does not necessarily reproduce the concept of the natural as the ground of knowledge about gender and sex. With *Butt*'s images, a position is represented that Elizabeth Freeman described regarding experimental pornography, "[...] a commitment to bodily potentiality that neither capitalism nor heterosexuality can fully contain" (Freeman 2010, 19). Or as Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth write in their introduction to the *Affect Theory Reader*: "No one will ever finally exclaim: 'So, there it is: now, we know all that a body can do! Let's call it a day'" (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, Loc 80/5490). Thus the vulnerable masculinity of the post-phallic *Butt* boys opens up a space for the permanent reshaping of maleness. In this respect, *Butt* functions as a reminder of the non-normative force of homosexuality.

If our starting point is the entanglement of gender and sex as I have presented it so far, this perspective is not easy to grasp theoretically. The

trans critique of Butler can, however, pave the way for this perspective. Furthermore, Lee Edelman's reading of bareback porn represents an important reference (Edelman 2010) and a number of texts from masculinity studies provide an orientation, especially the studies by Calvin Thomas (1996) and Murat Aydemir (2007), which focus on male materiality. And finally, it is Leo Bersani who points in a direction that enables us to think masculinity/maleness beyond the representational (Bersani 2010). My interest with *Hipster Porn* at this point is to grasp bodily materiality as a libidinous, affective, and aesthetic investment in material signs of maleness, which does not necessarily end in the completion of a "natural image" of men, but rather in the appreciation, celebration, and love of forms of maleness that do not fit into familiar patterns of masculinity without residues, or which may even generate new patterns. But is "maleness" still the right category here? What would a maleness (sex) be beyond masculinity (gender)? – this is a question that we must ask with both Butler and Bersani. To what extent can maleness be thought independently of gender? Would it still be definable as "maleness"?⁴

Historically, I understand *Butt* as a reaction to the gay aesthetics of the 1980s and 1990s. Its proposal of a post-phallic masculinity and its creative mobilization of the materiality of the male body, however, points beyond the critique of health pornography and negotiates more fundamental questions of representing masculinity and maleness; a "maleness" that may no longer be thought of in terms of representation – a "maleness beyond maleness"?

Destabilizing Masculinity and Masculinity with Psychoanalysis

Following Stephen Frosh, psychoanalysis, which has been instrumental for the theoretical models of queer studies, offers two basic modalities for destabilizing the regime of masculinity and maleness: Either through a form of masquerade, or through that experience of pleasure/unpleasure beyond the phallic that Lacan called *jouissance* (Frosh 1994, 88). Before considering *Butt*'s proposal, which necessitates thinking about masculinity and maleness beyond psychoanalysis, I will briefly outline these two possibilities that pave the way.

Subcultural production of meaning "[...] begins with a crime against the natural order" (Hebdige 1979, 3) where the exhibition of the artificiality of gender and sexuality is considered a subcultural achievement (Hebdige 1979, 191–92). Thus, within queer studies, the question of masculinity and maleness has often been answered with reference to the "male masquerade" wherein Butler's discourse of performativity is applied to the construction of masculinity as gender, an example being found in D.A. Miller's and David Halperin's analysis of the gay gym body as a performance intended not to maintain power but to gain pleasure (Miller 1992, 30–32; Halperin

1995, 115–19), or in Martin Levine’s analysis of the clone as “masculine drag” (Levine 1998).

Leo Bersani, however, rightly emphasized that it is precisely the parodic dimension of gender that is irrelevant in gay sexual scenarios: “Parody is an erotic turn-off, and all gay men know this” (Bersani 2010, 14). If we take the cultural efficacy of pornography (and also of post-pornography) seriously, which is largely based on the claim regarding the authenticity of the depicted bodies, they cannot be understood as articulations through which the performative dimension of gender emerges as masquerade. *Butt’s* boys are not parodically staged. In order to be effective as pleasure, the performative dimension of gender must not emerge.

According to Bersani, however, a destabilization of masculinity/male-ness can also occur beyond performativity. If we follow pornography’s imperative for a “serious” masculinity, from a psychoanalytical point of view, only the second possibility for destabilizing masculinity and male-ness remains: *jouissance* as a form of destructive ecstasy.⁵ For Bersani, the gay position of desire is characterized by the internalization of a hegemonic masculinity, “[...] the object of that desire necessarily includes a socially determined and socially pervasive definition of what it means to be a man” (Bersani 2010, 15). To what extent gay subjectivity can exist beyond this arrangement is not certain. In his analysis of gay sex scenes as dramatic spectacle (e.g., in Jean Genet’s *Funeral Rites*), he argued that the enthusiasm for masculinity in gay sex implies not only its heroic celebration but also, with the fantasy of the penetrable male body, its repeated destruction.⁶ The enactment and destruction of masculinity become the site of the obscene spectacle of gay pornography. It is, as Tom Roach says, an “empowering ego destruction” (Roach 2012, 120). Far from formulating his queer critique as an avoidance of masculinity, Bersani proposes to work through it, sexually. Seriousness in the genre of gay pornography is unavoidable. That does not mean that male homosexual practice in its fetishization of masculinity has to be understood as unconditional submission to the regime of heteronormative gender politics. For in the gay scenario, the idealization of masculinity corresponds to the enjoyment of its destruction. “There is, however, perhaps a way to explode this ideological body” (Bersani 2010, 15). Or, as Roach writes about gay anal intercourse: “[...] it is a material practice that invites a fantasmatic destruction of normative masculine ego-ideals [...]” (Roach 2012, 121). It is not the camp-like ridicule of masculine poses, but rather their sexual acting out combined with the desire to destroy them – “an anti-identitarian self-shattering” (Roach 2012, 123) – that forms the precondition for a critique of heteronormative gender and sexuality politics in Bersani and Roach. “If, as Weeks puts it, gay men ‘gnaw at the roots of a male heterosexual identity,’ it is because, from within their nearly mad identification with it, they never cease to feel the appeal of its being violated” (Bersani 2010, 15).

Bersani's text "Is the Rectum a Grave?" initially published in 1987 and *Homos* (from 1995) – his two most important contributions to queer theory – do not use the language proposed by Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990), which is based on a deconstructable relationship between gender and sex. Rather, Bersani's examples document the power of a fixed relationship between masculinity and maleness. For him, it does not seem particularly worthwhile to elaborate on the potential mobility of gender vis-à-vis sex, or to emphasize sex's lack of essence. In Bersani's readings of gay subcultures, the parodic dimension of gender is not a suitable instrument for counteracting its essentializing effects. While for Foucault, transformative effects could be found, for example, in S/M scenarios, for Bersani, masochism in particular shatters the integrity of the gay male subject (Bersani 1986, 29–50).

With his reference to masquerade and jouissance, Stephen Frosh names the two crucial categories and lines of thought in psychoanalysis for a critique of masculinity. In the context of queer theory, these two traditions can be presented as a juxtaposition of Judith Butler's and Leo Bersani's work, which, in different ways, have provided important perspectives on the critique of masculinity. Yet, the queer project also remains limited in this respect, and *Butt's* endeavor points toward this limit. For neither Butler's parodic deconstruction of masculine gender hegemony nor Bersani's radical decentering of the ego in gay sex practices – if we limit his project for an instant to this gesture – meet the style of *Butt's* post-pornographic masculinity and maleness. Indeed, the models in *Butt* are not staging a masquerade of masculinity and they are not involved in a sexuality as existential drama either. Beyond psychoanalysis, *Butt's* material findings in the context of pornographic culture thus challenge us to rethink sex as biological gender. In order to understand the casual, friendly, non-commodified form of masculinity and maleness of the *Butt* boys, the scope must be extended.

***Butt's* Masculinity**

Nor is masculinity, as is immediately obvious especially with regard to the marginalization of homosexual men, simply to be confused with hegemony.

(Beljan 2014, 56, translation P.R.)

When considering the images of men in *Butt*, we are dealing with positions in the field of gender, sex, and sexuality whose possible discontinuities and shifts are less obvious than those of transgender, butch lesbian, or drag queen. The investigation of *Butt's* queer potential seems nonetheless worthwhile precisely insofar as the work of deconstructing the conflation of gender and sex has never been pursued with the same seriousness in relation

to masculinity (gender) and maleness (sex) as has been the case regarding femininity and femaleness.⁷ Elizabeth Grosz writes:

Perhaps the great mystery, the great unknown, of the body comes not from the peculiarities and enigmas of female sexuality, from the cyclically regulated flows that emanate from women's bodies, but from the unspoken and generally unrepresented particularities of the male body. I have claimed in earlier chapters that the specificities of the masculine have always been hidden under the generality of the universal, the human. Men have functioned as if they represented masculinity only incidentally or only in moments of passion and sexual encounter, while the rest of the time they are representatives of the human, the generic 'person'. Thus what remains unanalyzed, what men can have no distance on, is the mystery, the enigma, the unspoken of the male body.

(Grosz 1994, 198)

This neglect of the critical study of masculinity and particularly of maleness is, according to Grosz, an effect of thinking of masculinity/maleness as a universal position, as opposed to a femininity/femaleness that, as has often been argued, has been culturally and historically assigned the task of representing "gender itself" (e.g., Butler 1990, 7–13; Thomas 1996, 2; Parisi 2004, 2, 9). "This feminism [...] overlooked the constructed character of the male body and gender identity [and] was unable to imagine dissident use of technology and queering of techniques as a possible political strategy by which to resist domination" (Preciado 2018, 123–24). The question of masculinity and maleness cannot be overlooked, however, if gay male studies are still to play a role in sexual politics. Queer studies cannot risk ignoring the figure of gay male masculinity/maleness and *Hipster Porn* aims to remove this blindness to male materiality, not least as part of a feminist project (Thomas 1996, esp. 2–9).

Beyond the staging of alternative styles of masculinity, how does the cultural position of the gay man also allow for a reorganization of maleness? Does this cultural position open up forms of maleness that are perhaps no longer part of a "psychic design" (Bersani 2015, 12), where the grip of the imaginary on the morphology of the body loosens?

Masculinity and Maleness

[...] it should be a man with a dick, because the question is not to cut it off, but to invent a new way of using it.

(Hocquenghem 2010, 67)

The truth about sex is not disclosure; it is sexdesign.

(Preciado 2013, 35)

While I introduced Butler and Bersani in this chapter to present two different trajectories of how to destabilize masculinity/maleness, the question at this point is how to conceptualize a realm beyond the system of masculinity. This will be a conversation about psychoanalysis and its critiques. Or, to put it in another way: How can we think of the male body – “the entire game of skin and muscle” (Hocquenghem 2010, 63) – beyond representation without entering the realm of hysteria or psychosis?⁸

One tradition follows Lacanian psychoanalysis and posits the real as negativity, impossible to reach and registered only through its effects within the symbolic. A Deleuzian critique, on the other hand, reconfigures the real as a site of creative productivity; not as the realm of the psychotic, cut off from the symbolic by the logic of phallus and castration, but as offering an immanent field of expressions and connections that transcend the purely linguistic.⁹ Naming, after Lacan, the conceptualization of matter beyond representation as an impossibility, was also one of the starting points for Butler’s project (Butler 1990), and in a different manner – formed through a de Manian lens – it is reflected in the texts by Lee Edelman (Edelman 2004). Deleuze’s critique of psychoanalysis, on the other hand, found an early advocate in the French writer, theorist, and activist Guy Hocquenghem (1978), and emerged much later on with a return to Nietzsche and Bergson in the work of Elizabeth Grosz (1994).

Some queer scholars such as Anna Hickey-Moody and Mary Lou Rasmussen (2009) – have also suggested that the tensions between a Lacanian/Butlerian model on the one hand, and a Deleuzian on the other might not be as irreconcilable as is usually assumed. While obviously belonging to different trajectories, it might be worth looking at points of connection and intersections between queer psychoanalytic and post-psychoanalytic accounts of the relationship between representation and materiality. If we want to understand the originality of the post-phallic male bodies in *Butt*, it seems necessary, I argue, to critique a Lacanian account of how bodies become culturally intelligible, while also connecting a Deleuzian narrative of desire and becoming more closely to notions of gender and sex.

Psychoanalysis and its critiques negotiate the boundaries of the realm of representation in opposing ways. The gay fanzine *Butt*, however, calls for a dialogue between these different approaches, as they have been developed after Lacan and Deleuze in Butler, Edelman, and Bersani. Without merely celebrating the experimental freedom of queerness beyond gender, *Butt* insists on the materiality of the male body, yet this does not lead to a performative spectacle or to an existential drama. We could call this the superficial everyday friendliness of the bodies and sexualities in *Butt*, which at the same time constitutes their historical specificity. If we understand post-pornography as a cultural form that, in contrast to the paradigm of mainstream porn – straight or gay – takes the media-technological changes and the new genres that follow from

it, such as Netporn, DIY Porn, and Porn 2.0, as an occasion to create new symbolic spaces and positions, it achieves two things at once. While *Butt* relies – as does pornography – on circulating images of naked bodies (a project that is not beyond power), it simultaneously invents new possibilities for what those bodies can be or do. While gay online pornography negotiates the locus and agency of masculinity, and in doing so might also reinforce its ideological weight, the excessive display of naked male bodies can open up a space for a different perspective on maleness. What is at stake here, then, is a transcendence of masculinity through maleness.

In the context of new media technology, a sexual subculture has emerged that does not merely submit to the normalizing imperatives of traditional forms of gay pornotopia, but instead produces new forms of bodies and sexualities (Stüttgen 2010; Biasin et al. 2014). I am interested in the question regarding what extent this context can lead to a detachment of maleness from the regime of masculinity. In what ways do we get to see bodies that can be considered male but not phallic? Is there something that escapes the schematization of the gender system and that we can still call “body”? (Butler 1993, 101). How can we talk about this dimension of reality that Paul Smith, for example, calls “a somatic real”? (Smith 1991, 1021). Before the next chapter, which addresses Deleuze directly, I will develop this perspective by first elaborating on the Deleuzian moments in the texts of queer theorists Lee Edelman and Leo Bersani.

Queer Events

The consequence of such a queer event, whenever it will have taken place, might be glimpsed, proleptically, in what I call here pornographic posthumanism.

(Edelman 2010, 197)

Even though my example of the fanzine *Butt* is quite different from his, and, in some regards, can even be considered to represent the opposite, I will start this discussion by taking a look at Lee Edelman’s reading of bareback pornography (Edelman 2010). Edelman, of course, is not a Deleuzian. By holding on to a powerful model of symbolic representation, queerness, in his view, remains the constitutive outside of rhetorical operations. He conceives of the relationship between the symbolic and its outside as one of necessary repression. Due to this economy of signs, the symbolic that relies on the queer outside as its other will also be haunted by it in so far as the figure of the queer allegorizes that precise moment within a heterosexual symbolic order. It thus comes as a surprise that in his analysis of bareback porn, Edelman takes into consideration what he calls a “queer event,” which allows him to imagine a “pornographic post-posthumanism” (Edelman 2010, 199).

For Edelman, the achievement of pornography lies in its celebration of forms of life beyond cultural intelligibility or humanism.¹⁰ “[...] pornography humbles intelligence [...] Like queerness pornography, of whatever stripe, denies the subject’s intellectual, political, or sentimental self-totalization” (Edelman 2010, 198). Given porn’s fragmentary character,¹¹ Edelman ascribes this disruptive force to all pornography. For him, porn always includes forms of material excess.¹² His examples, the films produced for Paul Morris’s *Treasure Island* label, which specializes in bareback porn, presents this materiality primarily in the form of *cum*. In Paul Morris’s bareback porn, the *cum shot* does not represent the climax of a sexual storytelling, which would demonstrate the symbolic and sexual victory of the conquering phallic hero. Instead, it indicates a different representational structure for the pornographic world: “His porn tapes replace the value of the dick encased in its phallic armor with the value of pure expenditure, with the quantification of cum [...]” (Edelman 2010, 206). What we find here is a materiality of the body of overspending that is not anymore organized by the fantasy of masculinity but can still be called “male.”¹³ In this way, bareback porn enacts the risk of maleness as cultural unintelligibility, a risk that, as Paul Beatriz Preciado points out, feminism has never taken (Preciado 2018, 125).

In contrast to bareback porn’s obscenities (which can be considered to be unethical or also ethical, fascinating, arousing, comical, boring, or disgusting),¹⁴ the fanzine *Butt* comes across as rather tame, although it does demonstrate a fetishistic fascination with some erotic and sexual details.¹⁵ Its storytelling, however, is also framed – quite differently from bareback porn – by the portrayal of individuals. About the generation of fanzines of the 2000s, to which *Butt* belongs, in contrast to earlier generations, Aarons says: “They have a refinement which is interesting but not as exciting” (Bronson and Aarons 2008, 12).

In the context of *Hipster Porn*, this is specifically about the question of how masculinity/maleness can be queered within this view of materiality. I will discuss the possibility of a non-masculine maleness in *Butt* using three examples: The representation of – mostly limp – dicks, the different shapes of bodies, and finally the body hair of the models, including beards. My argument is that in *Butt*’s depiction of men’s bodies, a queer event can be recognized, in a comparable way to Edelman’s analysis of bareback pornography. As a queer event, these moments escape the regulative processes of the gender system, offering forms of sex that are not determined by gender.¹⁶

A Penis That Is Not a Phallus

Penises have two tendencies. They rise. And they fall.

(Koestenbaum 2011, 92)

Instead of insisting on phallic power, *Butt* is more fascinated with the different shapes that dicks can take (<http://www.buttmagazine.com/magazine/pictures/family-and-friends/> <http://www.buttmagazine.com/magazine/pictures/limp-dick-photobooth/>). The archive of different male bodies and their organs on the pages of *Butt* is organized less on the principle of turgidity – each cock contains the promise of a big one – but rather in terms of a display of a variation of forms.¹⁷ Bersani’s “love of the cock” (and Bersani is talking about the *hard* cock) does not form the center of *Butt*’s sexual world.¹⁸ *Butt*’s pornographic catalog of images beyond guaranteed phallicity can accordingly be understood as a remediation of an internet phenomenon, a changed view of the male body. Regarding online porn, from which *Butt* also takes its inspiration, Shaka McGlotten states: “The site therefore makes space for the underrepresented dick, the shy, curved, or humble member” (McGlotten 2013, 108).¹⁹

In order to focus on the meaning of the flaccid cock in *Butt* and its relation to representation, the concept of the phallus and its relation to the penis within Lacanian psychoanalysis is helpful. As Gallop, Halberstam, and Bersani have noted, there is a powerful connection between penis and phallus (Gallop 1988; Halberstam 2002; Bersani 2010, 70). But as Butler and others have also explained, the signification of the body does not always proceed mimetically. The systems of gender and sex are not congruent in every case but develop a series of paradoxes and “multiple instabilities” in their relationship of correspondence (Dyer 1992, 116). This problem is most striking in the relationship between phallus and penis. Butler writes:

The phallus *symbolizes* the penis; and insofar as it symbolizes the penis, retains the penis as that which it symbolizes; it *is* not the penis. To be the object of symbolization is precisely not to be that which symbolizes. To the extent that the phallus symbolizes the penis, it is not that which it symbolizes. The more symbolization occurs, the less ontological connection there is between the symbol and symbolized.

(Butler 1993, 83–84)

Behind the phallic representation, the penis threatens to disappear, as Butler also makes clear elsewhere: “And insofar as it operates at the site of anatomy, the phallus (re)produces the spectre of the penis only to enact its vanishing, to reiterate and exploit its perpetual vanishing as the very occasion of the phallus” (Butler 1993, 89). As the occasion for the erection of the phallus, the penis recedes into the background; in accordance with this logic of symbolization as substitution, phallic representation leads to the destabilization of the fundamental fantasy of an ontological connection between penis and phallus, i.e., the naturalizing effect of gender. A phallic representation qua representation always draws attention to the extent to which the penis cannot be identical to the phallus. “Insofar as the male genitalia become the site of a textual vacillation, they enact the impossibility of

collapsing the distinction between penis and phallus” (Butler 1993, 61). In accordance with this paradox, the uncovered penis cannot save the phallic system. Butler says: “Indeed, if men are said to ‘have’ the phallus symbolically, their anatomy is also a site marked by having lost it; the anatomical part is never commensurable with the phallus itself” (Butler 1993, 85). The unveiling of the penis demonstrates that as an organ, it can never fulfill the expectation of the phallus, as shown, for example, by the images of dicks online or on the pages of *Butt*.

The phallic economy is thus threatened from two sides. Not only phallic representation but also the display of male nudity beyond the phallic can become an attack on phallicity, “[...] the pleasurable visibility of the male body as such” (Miller 1992, 29). This logic can be used to explain the fundamental risk of the pornographic representation of male bodies, as Wolfgang Tillmans also claims for *Butt*: “In a world where being objectified is still the hardest thing for a man to bear, the nudity in *Butt* magazine always serves a purpose” (Tillmans 2014, 9). Or, as Barbara DeGenevieve writes: “It’s a dick thing. Even in the second decade of the twenty-first century, that pesky, protruding, uncontrollable organ is still not ready for general public viewing” (DeGenevieve 2014, 147).

At this point, my question is not about the instability of the performative conditions of phallic representation, which can lead, for example, to hysterical hyper-masculinity (Dyer 1992, 116), but, conversely, about the “place of the penis,” of “biological sex,” of “sex.” Under these conditions, what does the image of the penis mean insofar as it is not a phallus?²⁰

If gay post-pornography is a representation of sexuality and gender that no longer fetishizes the penis as phallus, then an attention to the male body that is not phallically structured from the outset leads to a nakedness that refers to the role of *jouissance*; a nakedness that cannot be claimed to authorize phallic economy, but on the contrary, by showing the penis as a non-phallus, irritates rather than stabilizes phallic representation. Male nudity would thus not be a visual hold of patriarchal ideology, but the insistence on a non-phallic nudity brings into view a body with a dick that lies in contrast to phallic representation. Maleness can be understood as a site where the threat of cultural unintelligibility, against which the phallic system otherwise knows how to demarcate itself, can now be glimpsed. In this way, in post-pornography, the phallic order is permanently haunted by its ruin. “The phallus we might say haunts the penis. Paradoxically, at the same time the penis—capable of being soft as well as hard, helpless as well as proud, emotionally needy as well as masterful sexual performer—also haunts phallic authority, threatening its undoing” (Bordo 1999, 95).

While Butler’s project is to find the phallus elsewhere (Butler 1993, 57–67) – thereby de-essentializing it – reifying it as a form of female masculinity,²¹ I am interested in thinking about the zones of the male body that no longer appear under its sign. In other words, “the material dissolution of the phallus” that Edelman speaks of with regard to bareback pornography

(Edelman 2010, 207), a phallic negativity, which is also found in the depiction of *Butt*'s limp dicks.

In the context of the discussion of the phallus so far, this site could only be described with Lacan via *jouissance* – as a name for the Other of the phallic economy of desire – as a threatening material excess in which the phallic system itself is at stake. *Jouissance*, however, might not be the best way to describe the aesthetic materiality of *Butt*'s masculinities, that is to say that the negativity of *jouissance* – whose critical potential vis-à-vis regimes of power is recognized as a value – can still undergo other forms of reworking.

A Body That Is Not a Phallus

I now turn to my second example, the bodily forms and positions in *Butt*. The conflicts that arise for phallic representation from the tense relationship between penis and phallus can also be applied to the male body as a whole. Bourdieu writes: “The schemes which structure the perception of the sex organs and, even more, of sexual activity are also applied to the male or female body itself [...]” (Bourdieu 2001, 15). The phallus proves to be excessive in relation to its corporeal referent, and the same can be said in reverse about the penis. If we now broaden our perspective to the whole male body, we can see that in its relation to masculinity as gender, maleness as sex – like the penis as distinct from the phallus – is always excessive (Nigianni and Storr 2009, 5).

The catalog of dick images online is photographically remediated and, in keeping with a post-pornographic strategy that attacks mainstream pornography's monopoly on the representation of genitalia, finds its echo in the diversity of the body types in *Butt*. Overall, *Butt* seems more interested in the non-genital zones of the male body and in this respect, it positions itself in opposition to hard-core pornography: “Hard-core delivers the genital event as the norm of sexuality, within a time frame that avoids unnecessarily lingering over ‘irrelevant’ spaces of the body” (Osterweil 2004, 442).

Analogous to the diversity of limp dicks, in *Butt*, there is a diversity of male, pornographically “irrelevant” body forms. It is by no means the muscular body in the phallic pose that is otherwise typical of the pornographic male pin-up model, “[t]he clenched fists, the bulging muscles, the hardened jaws, the proliferation of phallic symbols [...]” (Dyer 1992, 116), that is to be found here. Rather, in *Butt*, a more relaxed masculinity comes into play. The men in *Butt* come in all shapes and sizes, as Wayne Koestenbaum writes of Warhol's work: “[...] each body needs to be documented, for every man possesses an individuating detail – a pattern of hairs on the arm, a slope of the nose, a sufficiency of the lips” (Koestenbaum 2015, 42). While these forms are male – in *Butt*, they are not so defamiliarized or isolated as to be unattributable to the male body – they are not necessarily phallic. Far from naturalizing maleness as sex by insisting here – in what seems to

be a gesture against Butler – on its difference from masculinity, I want to promote the idea of a materiality of sex that should not be a priori understood as phallic.

In psychoanalytic discourse, there is only a limited space for thinking about forms of the male body which include the penis as non-phallic. For Lacan (as for Butler), this is, of course, the site of lack and absence, not of production. But part of the project of post-porn is to explore these non-phallic zones of the male body, to think of maleness as a de-territorialization or de-activation of masculinity as gender. In order to get closer to a way of thinking of the materiality of maleness, I want to briefly return to Edelman's example, which is not the limp dick, but rather the excessive display of cum.

Negativity and Positivity

While in a Lacanian tradition, Edelman conceptualizes the material realm of collecting cum – which is what is going on in Paul Morris's films – as negativity, beyond the representational regime, and, as such, as a queer event, he also ascribes to it the value of life: "The hunger for cum throughout Morris's work is the hunger for such aliveness, for such radically materialized essence" (Edelman 2010, 208). In Edelman, the obsession with cum, its collection, reuse, etc. as a fascination, matter beyond sexual representation, and cannot only be thought of as a site of negativity and death, gaining a paradoxical status instead: "Life and death are held in suspension" (Edelman 2010, 208).²² Finally, in a quite Deleuzian move, he speaks of cum as "positivizing negativity."

For Edelman, we have reached a paradoxical limit here. While: "Bareback sex in Morris's work attempts to approach the Real [...]," and its presentation is a form of "positivizing negativity" through the materiality of cum, this instance heads toward the limit of representation. Exhibiting the materiality of cum in porn films represents a way of showing this limit. Here, "negativity is positivized." "[...] the sperm, when discharged, presents subjects with a visible and material effect or remainder of the event, which cannot be easily absorbed in the formation or maintenance of identity" (Aydemir 2007, XIX). According to Edelman, however, this fringe area cannot be occupied. Barely named, this moment is immediately described as an "impossibility" (Edelman 2010, 208). The border between representation and the real shifts again. As soon as we assign meaning to the presentation of cum in bareback porn, we already lose sight of it as a queer event: "No sooner, does cum start to signify the Real that's inherently excluded from meaning than it starts to allegorize the Real instead, effectively turning, like culture itself, a profit of meaning on waste" (Edelman 2010, 208).

Therefore, the queer event toward which porn – and bareback porn in particular – points, though approachable, remains forever impossible. "Queerness, therefore, is never a matter of being or becoming but, rather,

of embodying the remainder of the Real internal to the Symbolic order” (Edelman 2004, 25). Edelman’s analysis of porn assumes an inescapable, totalizing power of the symbolic production of meaning. In the process of reading, everything turns disappointingly into culture, even bareback porn, and that’s why, for Edelman, we can never achieve dehumanization.

Deleuze’s approach, as opposed to Edelman’s Lacanian and de Manian account, relies on a shift in perspectives regarding Edelman’s evasive queer event. While Edelman’s gesture of a Nietzschean reversal – the positivization of negativity – is so ephemeral it can hardly be registered, for some queer scholars, this is the moment in which a Deleuzian paradigm helps us to broaden the scope of queer theory. Hickey-Moody and Rasmussen write:

Lack produces as much as it is a response to a given state of affairs. Lack is part of a million different desiring machines that produce new material forms. With this in mind, we argue for a positive engagement with the possibilities afforded by lack and a re-assessment of approaches to theorizing lack. Contemporary queer theory needs to think about what ‘lack’ does, to trace the trajectories in thought that lack effects and to affirmatively claim the usefulness of lack as a concept.

(Hickey-Moody and Rasmussen 2009, 41)

Hickey-Moody and Rasmussen urge us to understand lack in the psychoanalytic sense, not as an end, but as a starting point of queer thought, giving validity to its multiplicity of occurrences, its contingency, and its productivity.²³ One of the ways this approach can be made productive for a reading of *Butt* is through the notion of aesthetics. To put it briefly, what Lacan, Butler and Edelman share is a denial of aesthetic autonomy. Butler shows no great interest in aesthetic discourses and their potential.²⁴ Her understanding of the image is taken from psychoanalysis, where it is conceptualized through its formative function in processes of identification, and, as such, as a powerful means of ideology: the structuring force of fantasy. Similarly, Edelman takes his skepticism toward the image from de Man for whom the aesthetic, as opposed to the rhetorical, constitutes a form of totality (de Man 1996).

This is the point where Leo Bersani once again enters the game. Bersani’s reading of Freud is obviously also a critique and an extension of psychoanalysis. In making a queer use of a concept like “jouissance,” and emphasizing the de-pathologizing gestures of psychoanalysis, he is pointing out the limits of psychoanalytic discourse. Specifically, he is interested in an evolution from the psychoanalytic to the aesthetic subject. In Bersani – and this is one of the affinities between Bersani and Deleuze – the aesthetic is the realm of ontology. It presents matter and form in a way that is not a priori regulated by the web of the symbolic or reducible to the imaginary in the psychoanalytical sense – a “nonfantasmatic imaginary” (Bersani 2010, 81) – as Hocquenghem also suggests: “If I say that the phantasmatic

produces a large part of our reality, I cannot believe that it occupies it completely [...]” (Hocquenghem 2010, 44).

The aesthetic differs from Lacan’s *jouissance*, because it does not materially appear as a mere negative of representation. With the aesthetic, a new formalization of the drive – as could be said within a psychoanalytical register – becomes possible. The capacity of the aesthetic, then, is not simply to repeat the scripts of normative forces, but instead to express a different reality in the material.²⁵

At this point, I am concerned with the capacity of an aesthetic recoding of the male body, which is otherwise either assigned symbolic and imaginary meaning, or, beyond that, discarded as a psychotic impossibility. To speak of a maleness that appears through the aesthetic and not through the gender system, is to separate sex and gender – against Butler. This is, however, not in order to claim a natural authority for sex, but on the contrary, in order to understand the male body as a site of aesthetic reinvention. Here the aesthetic is not a normative formal canon with a moral mandate as in German idealism, but a witnessing of the creative potential of being. With the aesthetic, we can register the process of becoming. For Deleuze and Bersani, the aesthetic therefore represents a locus of transformation. In this sense, my reading of *Butt* follows Calvin Thomas’ project when he writes: “Thus I consider the theoretical project of making the production(s) of masculinity and of the male body visible to be an at least potentially transformative political intervention into the social reproduction of gender” (Thomas 1996, 16).

Hairy Male

Mansur has [...] a body that’s perfectly imperfect and lots of hair that’s in all the right places.

(Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2011)

In addressing Edelman’s interpretation of bareback pornography, some of the examples of maleness beyond masculinity in *Butt* that need to be read beyond the phallic order have been discussed – images of cocks, body shapes, and postures. *Butt* documents a moment after the sex act, beyond its theatricality or its potential (ego)-shattering. From Bersani’s perspective, the drama of gay sex opens up the representation of the body to aesthetic ends. This involves a move away from a psychoanalytical notion of representation which is formative for gender studies and queer theory, to a Deleuzian understanding of aesthetics, without losing sight of the categories of gender and sex.

Cum is not the only form of material excess in porn. There are other forms of “male bodily productions” (Thomas 1996, 3). *Butt* shows how different zones of the body can function as non-phallic male materiality: forms of dicks, shapes of asses – *butts* –, hairy backs, or smooth chests.

With its catalog of various body parts and types, *Butt* works on a transition from a body, which is codified as masculine, to a male body and its parts beyond a rigid sense of masculinity. The difference between masculinity and maleness at this point means that maleness cannot be reduced to the phallic principle; that contrary to Butler's assumptions, sex is not exclusively due to gender's system of meaning; that in relation to the male body, we are not just dealing with a "relentless attempt at semiotic self-containment" (Thomas 1996, 16). Beyond the male body that follows gender norms, this is about resuming a project that Hocquenghem already envisaged in the 1970s: "[...] the welcoming of a male body that is forgetting its gender" (Hocquenghem 2010, 68). To describe a forgetting of gender that is not only negative but also productive, I have proposed the category of aesthetics as the name for a zone in which bodily matter is not managed by the limitations of conceptual language and its history, but can instead become perceptible through new forms.

Although it would be fascinating to think more about Edelman's bare-back sperm in terms of aesthetic productivity,²⁶ I would like to conclude by returning to *Butt*'s repertoire of images that represent the male body. Apart from their attention to floppy cocks and various body parts, the most striking feature of *Butt*'s boys is their body hair, especially their beards: *Butt*'s ungroomed men emerge in contrast to the often clean-shaven stars of health pornography from the 1980s and 1990s. How can this feature, so characteristic of *Butt* – and by now of gay and straight culture as a whole – be discussed with the argument developed so far? Does *Butt* allow us to also understand beard and hairiness as forms of sex that transcend the gender system? Is maleness staged here through beards and body hair in an aesthetic, as opposed to a gendered, manner?

First, the examples of beard and hair remind us once again that it can be more difficult to develop a transformation at the level of sex than to mobilize the moments of performative misquotation at the level of gender. It remains a challenge to get the level of sex into view beyond forms of subjections and truth effects, that is, to separate sex and gender. In comparison with the signification process, which is organized around the complex of penis/phallus, which not only erects but also repeatedly destabilizes the power of their identity formations, the signs of beard and hairiness work differently. Initially, beard and hairiness appear male and masculine in a less dramatic but also less ambivalent way. Beyond the spectacle of phallic valorization and devaluation, hairiness and beard have a relatively stable ideological weight that can make them unquestioned signs of "archaic" masculinity.

At first sight, it seems that beard and hairiness cannot exhibit the same form of negativity as, for example, the penis as non-phallus. *Butt*'s beard culture is not necessarily about the mobility and variations of forms. The naturalizing effect with which gender is to be authorized through sex depends, not least, on the physical characteristic of beard and body hair,



Figure 3.1 “You Are So Hairy” photographed by Robert Greene.

Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). *Butt*. No. 18. Winter 2006–07, 33–39, 33.

which as signs of maleness/masculinity appear to be hardly negotiable. For a masculine “naturalness,” beard and body hair are the most effective forms of authorization, hence their conspicuous popularity with the hipster and the lumbersexual. They are meant to appear as evidence of an essential masculinity that, thanks to its simple factuality, does not need to stage itself in a phallic way.²⁷

Even groomed, hairiness and beard are usually seen less as being the effect of a cultural technique than, for example, modifications of the body’s shape. They do not have to be acquired through training during leisure time

or paid for through food supplements and hormone intake.²⁸ It is precisely their lack of phallic theatricality that makes them seemingly unassailable signs of masculinity and maleness. With its images, *Butt* takes advantage of the naturalizing effects of gender that are offered by the male body through the potential of growing hair. The isolation of maleness from masculinity, a conceptual separation established in this chapter so far, at first seems limited or even reversed with the examples of beard and hairiness. Beard and hairiness as secondary characteristics of sex are reliably tied to a concept of masculinity through which the anatomical gender difference becomes intelligible. As a position within a binary system of meaning, maleness would be indistinguishable from masculinity.

A description by the ethnologist Terence S. Turner seems helpful to understand the specific effects of beard and hair (also including head hair) as evidence of “naturalness”:

Hair, like skin, is a ‘natural’ part of the surface of the body, but unlike skin it continually grows outwards, erupting from the body into the social space beyond it. Inside the body, beneath the skin, it is alive and growing; outside, beyond the skin, it is dead and without sensation, although its growth manifests the unsocialized biological forces within. The hair of the head thus focuses the dynamic and unstable quality of the frontier between the ‘natural,’ bio-libidinous forces of the inner body and the external sphere of social relations. In this context hair offers itself as a symbol of libidinal energies of the self and of the never-ending struggle to constrain within acceptable forms their eruption into social space.

(Turner 2012, 488)

Hair, according to Turner, is located on the border between the inside and outside, life and death, biology, and social life. It is this existence on the border, which is a limit of the body – that is, of the skin – with which a cultural world is seemingly transcended in a material way, and the secondary sexual characteristic of hairiness settles itself as an expression of gender metaphysics that seems to elude any further deconstruction. Sex in the sense of hairiness refers to the “inside” of the body, its hormonal forces, which then become materially visible outside and assert their social meaning here. Hair owes its mythical potential to this location as an inner force that becomes visible in social space. Hence its authority as a sign of masculinity/maleness.

Yet beyond the spectacle of the penis/phallus and its repetition through the modification of the body and its size, hair has its own excess to offer: It grows. And while its “expression of an inner force” suggests a non-negotiable naturalness of body hair, an uncontested confirmation of the masculinity/maleness of an otherwise vulnerable male body, the dynamic of hair that simply grows (and dies), undermines such an assumed stability.

Turner calls it “dead without sensation.” Defining to what extent hairiness and beard confirm or undermine masculinity is not a simple task, it also comes down to historically changing fashions of grooming: How long is the beard, what shape does it have, when does it look “natural,” when does it seem artificial? Body and facial hair as bodily productions, almost like cum, express maleness without a doubt. Yet this male product in its excess of growth does not confirm an idea of masculinity at all costs.

With the characters of the hipster and the lumbersexual, hairiness does not necessarily guarantee a natural butchness. Submitting to the dynamics of a body – letting the beard grow out – can also become a sign of procrastination. The very marker of maleness as masculinity, beard, and hairiness, can turn into markers of passivity. It is in this move that *Butt*’s hipsters get closer to the hippie. The subject hands itself over to its bodily processes and doesn’t use them as instruments to assert its position within a gender system. *Butt*’s aesthetics certainly serves both functions: a celebration of maleness that is not willing to fully sacrifice its erotic capital of masculinity and maleness as an excess of the bodily matter: growing hair. It would be wrong to attest that logic to bodily hair in an unconditional way. But in its continual growth, hair can unfold a logic of excess. With Deleuze, this givenness of the material body can be understood as a form of life that moves beyond cultural logics and holds potentials whose manifestation we can conceive of as aesthetic in contrast to the Lacanian registers of the imaginary or symbolic. The materiality of the body is granted a permanent movement beyond representation, with the potential for reshaping the body.

The images in *Butt* are different from the portraits of naked trans men, which run counter to the logic of dimorphism. In the case of the *Butt* images and their cis-models, unlike what can be seen in images of trans men, there is no incoherence between secondary and primary sexual characteristics (Hoenes 2007, 144). What we are dealing with instead is an excess of bodily matter. Maleness becomes a place where the cultural unintelligibility, against which the phallic system otherwise knows how to demarcate itself, evolves. Maleness – expressed through limp dicks, the original shapes of bodies, and growing hair – becomes perceptible beyond masculinity.

In one of his readings of Genet, Bersani speaks of “[...] a maleness beyond male gestures [...]” (Bersani 2015, 17). The gay scenario thus leads to an experimentation with maleness in which the intelligibility of masculinity is at stake. In *Homos*, Bersani has taken comparable moments in Gide, Proust, and Genet, in which homosexuality threatens to become unintelligible, as an occasion to develop new possibilities of the (homosexual) self (Bersani 1995). For Bersani, this is no minor issue but the very achievement of homosexuality. “According to this argument, homosexuality finds its specificity when it is dissolved as an identity” (Bersani 2010, 70).

Analogous to Bersani’s specificity of homosexuality, or Hocquenghem’s “homosexual homosexuality” (Hocquenghem 2010, 47), *Butt* is concerned

with a homosexual maleness beyond masculinity: a form of aesthetic embodiment that could no longer be described as gender, an un-nameable maleness that is different from an essentializing understanding of sex. In his reading of Genet, Bersani comes to a similar conclusion: “Maleness may exist, surprisingly, before it is willfully essentialized” (Bersani 2015, 17). What takes place in the pictures of *Butt* is an experimentation with male forms, an aesthetic training in which rigid forms of masculinity are left behind. A forgetting of gender that leads to reinvention.

If in *Butt* maleness – as an assertion of masculinity – has now become a question, it is nevertheless not simply overcome. Hairiness and beard are not reliable signs of moving beyond gender. Rather, they are signs that can always tie the possible distance between masculinity and maleness, which I have developed here in the last few pages, back to a stabilizing idea of masculinity. Beard and hair are an occasion with which the analytical separation of masculinity and maleness, is also repeatedly undone. This contradiction defines the possibilities and limits of *Butt*’s aesthetic realm and is a strategy that results in a peculiar fluctuation of meaning: a “natural” sign of masculinity emerges authoritatively and at the same time is drawn into a process of an aesthetic delegitimization of the body’s maleness/masculinity. Aesthetization here means alienation in the sense of distancing from the gender/sex regime. Maleness as masculinity is not verified by exhibiting the factual. In the context of the materiality of the gay male body, it temporarily turns into something unknown.²⁹

In *Butt*’s visual staging of hairy male bodies, then, we are dealing with an undecidedness about the meaning of maleness. This time, however, not at the border of gender and sex, as Butler described it, but at the border of sex and a beyond sex, which I call aesthetics. I understand aesthetics here as a potential and procedure for giving the body new forms beyond the formations of historical discourse, as a transformation of codes (Hebdige 1979, 129). “Sexual expression is artistic because, apart from being temporary, it is also essentially excessive” (Beckman 2013, 10).

Maleness, whose ideological meaning in the sense of masculinity might be repeatedly recalled by beard and hair, is also given over to a rhythm of instability between recognition and alienation. In this way, maleness is held in abeyance: It is in the process of becoming and can also mean something else. *Butt* tests this possibility. I am still talking about maleness here because, despite the homosexual context, I don’t think we can easily detach beard and hairiness from a binary system of sex. With *Butt*’s realism regarding hairy male bodies, the feedback effects that reach into the regime of gender/sex are not forever suspended, rather the meaning of sex and gender can be temporarily de-activated. Maleness/masculinity are forgotten to find new aesthetic forms. Maleness becomes a form. In this respect, the aestheticization of men’s bodies in *Butt* is about *male becoming*. The materiality of maleness turns out to be the starting point of a becoming, in the process of which the idea of maleness as masculinity is deterritorialized.

Gender difference loses its regulating power and is replaced by the variability of forms. These possibilities beyond the law are to be understood as moments of gay happiness.³⁰

Notes

1. I use the terms masculinity and maleness in the sense of Jack Halberstam's distinction between masculinity and maleness, following Judith Butler's distinction between gender (masculinity) and sex (maleness), which will also serve as a starting point for the discussions here (Halberstam 2002).
2. Trans studies have been important at least since Butler's time (Hirschauer 1992; Lindemann 1993). For a more current discussion of trans, see Rogers Brubaker (Brubaker 2016). Due to their direct reference to Butler, however, Preciado's contributions are the focus of this chapter (Preciado 2013; Preciado 2018).
3. For Linda Williams, this is the task of cinema in general (Williams 1989, 36).
4. Calvin Thomas writes: "In speaking the body or speaking about it, there seems to be a danger that one might lapse into ahistorical formulations, naive empiricism, or worst of all, biological determinism" (Thomas 1996, 38–39).
5. For a more detailed reading of *jouissance* in the context of Freud's death drive, see Bersani (Bersani and Phillips 2008, 60–61; Bersani 2010, 63–65).
6. On the cultural location and epistemology of the penetrable male body, see also Kemp (2013).
7. A detailed study that explores the materiality of masculinity in the context of philosophical and literary texts of the 20th century – in Joyce, Bataille, and Heidegger, among others – under the keyword "anxiety" from a deconstructivist perspective is offered by Calvin Thomas' *Male Matters*. Thomas writes: "[...] one of the most productive ways of rendering phallic idealization impossible would be to insist on bodily masculinity, to insist on a male body that is too disorderly to rule [...]" (Thomas 1996, 36). This approach is also crucial for Murat Aydemir's deconstructivist analysis of semen (Aydemir 2007, XXIII). These readings go back, amongst others, to Luce Irigaray and Alice Jardine (Thomas 1996, 38, 47–48).
8. Within psychoanalysis, this would amount to taking a closer look at the preoedipal, as Paul Smith reminds us: "[...] the notion of a somatic real which is directly tied to a preoedipal imaginary" (Smith 1991, 1021). Smith speaks of the presence of non-symbolizable preoedipality as a form of hysterization (Smith 1991, 1025). See also Jonathan Kemp's reading of the Schreber case (Kemp 2013).
9. In one of his most recent publications, Leo Bersani discovers a similar problem in Genet: "The very negation of a nonperformative real impoverishes the real by framing it within the semantic confines of a name. There is no unaccountable contingency that might break into the frame, no supplemental reality that might insinuate itself into the margins of essentialized being, no event that might disrupt or exceed the named event. It therefore becomes all the more interesting to note those instances when the demiurgic drive fails" (Bersani 2015, 16).
10. Here we can of course, already, detect an affinity to a Deleuzian paradigm, which is also evident in Hocquenghem's analysis of gay sex as a "refusal of anthropomorphic sexuality" (Hocquenghem 2010, 24).
11. Paul Smith confirms this: "Pornographic images produce precisely an instability of identificatory positioning in the male spectator" (Smith 1991, 1025). See also the anthology by Biasin, Maina, and Zecca, in particular the essay

- by Susanna Paasonen (2014). Ara Osterweil follows Linda Williams' analysis when she writes: "Hard-core porn is interested in resolving the often contradictory parts of sexual spectacle into a unified whole" (Osterweil 2004, 443). And Calvin Thomas also names this Janus-facedness of pornography: "[...] the distinction between phallogocentrism and abjection on which porn is predicated [...]" (Thomas 1996, 25).
12. Luce Irigaray has pointed out the importance of the distinction between solid and liquid for an analysis of phallogocentric culture. Cf. Calvin Thomas' discussion of Irigaray (Thomas 1996, 51–53). Following Irigaray, this difference is also crucial for Murat Aydemir, who takes the materiality and image of semen as the occasion for deconstructing phallic masculinity (Aydemir 2007, XIV, XVI).
 13. Paul Smith takes the experience of orgasm as a form of expenditure as an opportunity to speculate on forms of male sexuality that are not reducible to phallicity (Smith 1991). I also follow Luciana Parisi's perspective here when she writes: "Sex is a mode—a modification or intensive extension of matter—that is analogous neither with sexual reproduction nor with sexual organs" (Parisi 2004, 11).
 14. Bareback culture has received substantial critical attention not only from Lee Edelman, but also from Bersani (Bersani and Phillips 2008) and especially from Tim Dean (2009). The destabilization of ideologically secured masculinities, however, comes – to put it succinctly – in this case at the price of an enormous health risk. The psychic self-destruction of self-shattering literalizes itself in barebacking subcultures as the desire to be infected with HIV. At this point, Bersani's distinction between suicidal and non-suicidal ego-dissolution would be significant (Bersani 2010, 173–74). From my perspective, the bareback discussion would have been more interesting if the question of non-destructive ways of dealing with jouissance had received more attention. But barebacking might not be the right example for that. For a concise summary of the discussion of Dean's theses in the context of Pauls Morris's *Treasure Island Media*, see also John Mercer (Mercer 2017, 139–44).
 15. Here are a few keywords that Bruce LaBruce collected while browsing through *Butt*: "[...] autofellatio, horsehung, gerontophilia, poppers, [...]" (LaBruce 2006, 10).
 16. As Luciana Parisi suggests in a similar vein: "Far from determining identity, sex is an envelope that folds and unfolds the most indifferent elements, substances, forms and functions of connection and transmission. In this sense, sex—biological sex—is not the physical mark of gender" (Parisi 2004, 11).
 17. This question could also be traced back to queer visual history, for example, in Warhol (Osterweil 2004, 433; Koestenbaum 2015, Loc 443). Susan Bordo writes: "There's the mythic phallus, the cultural symbol of masculinity. And then there are penises of flesh and blood—clearly creatures of variety, not unity" (Bordo 1999, 43). Richard Dyer also writes: "One of the striking characteristics about penis symbols is the discrepancy between the symbols and what penises are actually like. Male genitals are fragile, squashy, delicate things; even when erect, the penis is spongy, seldom straight, and rounded at the tip, while the testicles are imperfect spheres, always vulnerable, never still. There are very exceptional cases where something of the exquisiteness and softness of the male genitals is symbolized. [...] Jean Genet, in his writings and his film, *Un Chant d'Amour*, also uses flowers to symbolize the penis, [...]" (Dyer 1993, 112).
 18. As Bersani writes of Almodóvar's *All About My Mother*: "The male organ, we have suggested, is naturalized. It is by no means excluded as an erotic object, but it has become an erotic object dephallicized and depsychologized,

- thereby at least raising the possibility of a gay (and straight) desire for the male body that would no longer be burdened by fantasy-illusions of power and castration” (Bersani 2010, 81).
19. Forty years ago, Germaine Greer was not ready to think about phallic power as comedy, as Dennis Altman quotes her as saying: “[...] women must humanize the penis, take the steel out of it and make it flesh again” (Altman 1993, 235). Jeanne Rosenthal also reads the images of online tales in the context of familiar power formations such as capitalism, the police gaze and patriarchy: <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2015/feb/25/towards-theory-dick-pic/>.
 20. Savran explains, commenting on Lacan: “As male subjectivity becomes increasingly predicated on the symbolization of the phallus, the penis becomes ever more subtilized and ever more the mark of the absence of the phallus, of that which has been lost. Even when all the veils are lifted, even when fully revealed (and perhaps especially when fully revealed), the penis can never signify the phallus, ‘Thus the erectile organ’, Lacan explains, ‘comes to symbolize the place of jouissance, not in itself, or even in the form of the image, but as part lacking in the desired image...’” (Savran 1998, 227). The paradox to be found in Lacan at this point can also be read the other way round, as the difficulty of thinking phallus and penis separately from each other, as not only Halberstam warns, but also as Jane Gallop, for example, has noted when she writes about the confusion of phallus and penis: “I believe it to be a symptom of the impossibility, at this moment in our history, to think a masculine that is not phallic [...]” (Gallop 1988, 127). For a discussion of Gallop’s theses, see also Calvin Thomas (Thomas 1996, 35–37). What follows depends on the assumption that under certain conditions, as displayed in the fanzine *Butt*, this separation has become historically possible after all.
 21. Butler’s, Halberstam’s, and to an extent, Preciado’s project is to seek out the phallus in other places, to understand it – and thus ultimately the penis – as a dildo (Preciado 2018, 62–63). “All is dildo. Even the penis” (Preciado 2018, 66). In my reading of *Butt*, however, I am interested in looking at those zones of the male body that no longer appear under the phallic sign. “The dildo says, ‘The penis is a fake phallus’” (Preciado 2018, 70).
 22. Murat Aydemir assigns sperm a similar double function: as a liquid, it threatens the integrity of the male body, but at the same time, it cannot be conceived merely as negativity, because “[...] the liquid remains too present in its material characteristics to be rendered as castration” (Aydemir 2007, XVII).
 23. Jonathan Kemp reaches a similar point when he discusses the case of Daniel Paul Schreber with Lacan, Deleuze, and Foucault: “Lacan’s concept of lack is identifying something which Foucault, in his turn, has termed excess. How can Lacan’s lack be equated with Foucault’s excess?” (Kemp 2013, 66). Similarly, Tom Roach asks in his discussion of Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze: “What then comes after this moment of destruction? How does being move from negation to affirmation?” (Roach 2012, 70). Deleuze helps us to think further about this excess as a form of material production. In the Lacanian tradition, the real is the site of negativity insofar as the symbolic – and with it desire – is constituted in distinction to it in the first place. According to this founding gesture, the real remains inevitably inaccessible from the symbolic. But if we mistrust Lacan’s concept of the symbolic and its gesture of inauguration, another concept of the sign becomes possible, one that does not create meaning out of Saussurian arbitrariness in a relational network, but rather as a consequence of the drives (in contrast to desire, which is always already symbolically anchored). Calvin Thomas also adopts such a perspective in his analysis of object masculinities: “By collapsing linguistic, representational, and corporeal processes of externalization under this generalized rubric of

production, I examine the restricted economy of sexual, textual, and political representation that hails men as masculine subjects in history” (Thomas 1996, 34). Thus Suzanne Bernard writes: “[...] while desire is born of and sustained by a constitutive lack, drive emerges in relation to a constitutive surplus” (Suzanne Bernard, quoted in Edelman 2004, 10). A famous example of a non-symbolic mode of representation, beyond a structuralist conception of language, is the case of Schreber, whose psychotic cosmos indicates a form of aesthetic productivity of the real rather than a silence beyond the symbolic. At least he manages to counter the script of a phallic economy of meaning with a poetics of anality: “Judge Schreber has sunbeams in his ass. A *solar anus*. And rest assured that it works: Judge Schreber feels something, produces something, and is capable of explaining the process theoretically” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 2). Deleuze’s post-psychoanalytic perspective depathologizes this position. Recently, this perspective has been made strong in the wake of New Materialism: “Most strands of the new materialist critique insist, from different disciplinary perspectives, on an ontology of the material that centers on the positivity and productivity of the event” (Boscagli 2014, 18).

24. See, for example, Butler’s reading of Kristeva. According to Butler, the semiotic – associated by Kristeva with poetic language, among other things – proves powerless in the face of the symbolic order (Butler 1990, 79–93). The gender critique of Calvin Thomas and others, on the other hand, begins precisely with reference to Kristeva. For example, when Thomas writes: “[...] semiotic or psychosomatic energies disrupt symbolic formations, ensuring that no subject position is ever finally fixed” (Thomas 1996, 32).
25. Julia Kristeva discusses the difference between the symbolic and the aesthetic through the concepts of the semiotic, the thetic, and the symbolic. The thetic, which Kristeva also identifies with aesthetic practice, has the function to formalize the semiotic, which places it on the border between the semiotic and the symbolic (Oliver 2010, 43–45).
26. On this point, I would like to once again refer to Murat Aydemir’s impressive study *Images of Bliss* (Aydemir 2007).
27. In her analysis of texts from trans and drag king culture, Uta Schirmer writes: “[...] the beard [seems] to refer to an inner desire not only for masculinity, but for manhood” (Schirmer 2007, 183).
28. However, beard growth and hairiness can be pharmacologically regulated, just like muscle growth and in this respect, they also belong to the performative register, as detailed by Preciado (Preciado 2013).
29. Luciana Parisi also talks about the materiality of the body as a “mutant body” (Parisi 2004, 12). She continues: “The mutations of a body are not predetermined by a given ideal or an infrastructure defining the realm of biological possibilities of a body. On the contrary, these mutations designate the abstract or virtual operations of matter” (Parisi 2004, 14).
30. Murat Aydemir calls his study on the deconstructive function of semen, following Roland Barthes’ distinction between lust and voluptuousness, “Images of Bliss” (Aydemir 2007, XXV). Even though the status of the images in *Butt*’s documentations of male bodily forms differs from the cultural location of semen, it can be compared precisely to the destabilization of masculine representational regimes.

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4 Affective Sexualities

Indeed, erotics is, among other things very much about presence: dwelling in the other's nearness; feelings of unity and being together; glimmering eyes; sharing a bottle of wine; walking along the Elbe; [...] sentimentality is part of it, and so is heart-throbbing.

(Bech 1997, 69)

Once the sexual is staged as the losing sight of self rather than its assertion or consolidation or indeed triumph, the obsession with sex becomes an obsession with a certain kind of love.

(Phillips in Bersani and Phillips 2008, 96–97)

Post-Phallic Masculinity

The attention to the male body, its surfaces, zones, and details do not work unrestrictedly toward an idea of masculinity. The gay gaze registers a becoming of the body's forms that aims to leave the category of gender behind. In *Butt*, gender is aesthetically transcended: instead of a Butlerian gender performance that destabilizes masculinity through parody, or a celebration of the destruction of the masculine ego-ideal, which Bersani foregrounds, we find a non-essentialist transformation of the materiality of the male body. With Deleuze, we can say that the photographs in *Butt* document a *male becoming*. It is not the male body confirmed in its coded masculinity that is at the center of *Butt's* post-pornographic interest, but a maleness that oscillates back and forth between denaturalization and re-naturalization and in this rhythmic movement shifts the concepts of maleness and masculinity: *Butt* does not present a phallically organized scheme of masculinity/maleness, but a male body that reorganizes itself in the exhibition of different zones of the body.

In the context of the aesthetics of every day, a conception of the body is offered that moves away from the optimized porn image. The body parts which are presented do not fit into a fetish catalog or a checklist of sexual preferences which can be matched to specific erotic interests. In *Butt*, the reworking of the meaning of the male body takes place under the condition

of a gay gaze and desire that cannot, however, unhesitatingly be considered sexual. *Butt* not only proposes an alternative body politics, rather it also brings a different conception of desire into play, one that leaves pornographic instrumentality behind. The mutability of the male body corresponds to a form of sexuality that is not only to be understood as a purely libidinous program.

Its pornographic content is hardly authoritarian in the sense of confirming the laws of genre. Rather, *Butt* creates alliances that renegotiate the representation of sex. In this way, an alternative idea of male sexuality is sketched out, as Paul Smith, for example, has also envisaged: “[...] perhaps it would be useful to see what might happen if some more substantialist notion of male sexuality were pulled—heuristically and provisionally—away from the phallus” (Smith 1991, 1022).¹ In order to conceptualize the post-phallic understanding not only of maleness and masculinity, but of sexuality and sex, in this chapter, I open a discussion between theories of sexuality on the one hand and affect theory on the other.

While affect theory owes its categories and epistemologies to psychology, psychoanalysis, and Deleuzian philosophy, in order to develop connections between an affective and a sexual paradigm, I am focusing here on Michel Foucault’s remarks concerning “bodies and pleasures” (in contrast to the dispositive of sexuality and truth), and on Laurent Berlant’s concept of a “queer love.” A conceptual pairing that is traditionally conceived of as dialectic if not antagonistic – the difference between pleasure/desire on the one hand and love on the other – must be deconstructed, I will argue, in order to establish a theoretical language that matches what’s at stake with the representation of sexuality in *Butt*. To get there, I will start by outlining the importance of affect for the genre of pornography, before I excavate a specific queer line of thought that helps to grasp the meaning of *Butt*’s post-pornographic photos that owe their beauty as much to affect as to sex. I will conceive of *Butt*’s visual culture as a documentation of *affective sexualities*, that is to say as a mixed phenomenon in which the sexual and the affective dimensions of the ways in which gay men connect to each other continuously return in new constellations.

Porn and Affect

No discipline is more sentimental than the one that represses sentiments.
(Hocquenghem 2010, 38)

DIY-porn challenges familiar patterns of commercial pornography, such as the elimination of anything that does not serve to increase sexual arousal. In this respect, it would, for example, be wrong to judge online pornography as a quasi-paralyzing form of sexual representation, within which the conventionality of pornographic imagery is always confirmed again. Instead, pornography should also be seen as a creative practice

(McGlotten 2013, 14). Indeed, porn can be queer insofar as it presents “unresolved visions of desiring” (Davis 2013, 7). In [Chapter 1](#), I illustrated the manner in which the media-technical conditions and the amateur aesthetics of Netporn and Porn 2.0 function as a framework to which *Butt*’s post-pornographic aesthetics owe their existence. What I am now suggesting is that one way to distinguish between pornography and post-pornography is to understand the contextualization that post-pornography undertakes, using an everyday aesthetic as a means to open the genre toward emotions and affects.²

As Steven Marcus categorically noted 50 years ago, affects or emotions usually have no place in pornography: “Pornography is not interested in persons but in organs. Emotions are an embarrassment to it, and motives are distractions. [...] Sex in pornography is sex without the emotions” (Marcus 2003, 394). In the pornographic representation of sex, emotions and affects are not part of the concept of sexuality. Sexuality is reduced to sex as an act. Marcus’ observations here refer to a personalized and codified form of affects in the sense of emotions. To the extent that pornography does not focus on individuals but on sexual types, subjective expressions of emotion are left out. Starting from this antagonism, which is crucial for pornographic narratives, the question arises as to what it would mean to shift the rules of pornography as a genre, and to see emotionality – especially if we understand it not only as the inner richness of individual personalities, but in a non-psychological context of affect – in the representation of naked bodies.

In her analysis of digital pornography, Susanna Paasonen reminds us of the importance of affect in the presentation of sexual acts: “Affect is an important analytical tool in studies of online pornography due to the visceral nature of both the imageries and the reactions they give rise to” (Paasonen 2011, Loc 676/3979). Affect here refers to a dimension beyond pornographic representation, as Zabet Patterson also explains:

The pornographic image can be a particularly dense semantic site, but it is one which functions only in and through a direct visceral appeal of the body. The appeal of the pornographic image is importantly corporeal, and images become effective as porn to the extent that they elicit certain bodily sensations, almost involuntarily.

(Patterson 2004, 106)

So, what if we do not limit the “visceral nature” of both the pornographic act and its reception to an understanding of sexuality as desire and the fantasies that guide it but rather consider the bodies, body parts, objects, and environments that interact here beyond the paradigms of sexuality in terms of affect as a material and non-psychological dimension of connecting?

Affect has two main functions in this context: first, to name a realm of bodily experience beyond historically familiar forms of desire and sexuality.

This critical perspective has a tradition: Gilad Padva, for example, confirms what Richard Dyer contends in his argument (which is in turn indebted to Foucault) that what is at stake in critical studies on sexuality is not a liberation *of* sexuality, but rather a liberation *from* sexuality (Dyer 1992; Padva 2002, 284).³ Second, by turning to affect, it is assumed that this post-sexual realm is not fully translatable into identifiable forms. Affective dynamics do not follow a habit and they do not take place within a secure and demarcated territory. In an interview with Gregg and Seigworth, Lawrence Grossberg says about affect: “[...] basically, it’s become everything that is non-representational or non-semantic—that’s what we now call affect” (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, Loc. 4271/5490).

In this chapter, I am interested in affect in relation to sex and sexuality as part of the post-pornographic culture. The point is to find a theoretical language that can do justice to the occurrence of desire and sexuality, as presented in *Butt*. Can affect be understood as a way of transgressing normative representations of sexuality in pornography? Can *affect* be furthermore understood as a transgression of forms of existing sexual “transgressions” that are all too well-rehearsed and have thus already lost their transgressive force? What remains of a critical perspective that takes sexuality as its starting point, if we use affect theory as a critique of the paradigm of sex and sexuality? Does affect replace sexuality?⁴

If we go on to understand affect theory as part of a feminist perspective, this brings us back to a familiar debate regarding the place of sex and sexuality within a queer project that aims, among other things, to bring together feminist and gay perspectives that are not always reconcilable.⁵ Eve Sedgwick, on whose later texts many basic assumptions about affect in the context of queer theory can be traced, already admitted nearly 20 years ago that: “The sexual interest of the essays, as I’ve mentioned, seems to decrease [...]” (Sedgwick 2003, 21). In a review of Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman’s *Sex, Or the Unbearable*, Tim Dean recently responded to this problem again, raising a polemic concerning the manner in which he primarily understands the affective turn to be a desexualization of queer studies, a movement which can similarly be seen in the history of the institutionalization of queer studies in the United States (Dean 2015). In the same issue of *American Literary History*, Berlant and Edelman counter that Dean’s concept of sexuality – in its restriction to sex as a sexual act – is too limited (Berlant and Edelman 2015). Is it possible to talk about sexuality in a different way through the use of affect theory, or do we, in turning to affect, depart from the realm of the sexual altogether?

The much-discussed post-pornographic film *Shortbus*,⁶ for example, succeeds in offering a counter-program to the commodification of mainstream sexuality through emotions, but in so doing, the film reverts to narrative patterns of selfhood and identity, as German critic Diedrich Diederichsen elaborates:⁷

These images, however, also have in common with the rest of indie porn the idea that they, like a film like *Shortbus*, always want to read sexual experiences and pornographic experiences only as extensions and conquests of a self-actualizing self whose goal is closure and identity. The irreducibly fetishistic structure of desire must thus always be translated into tolerable morals, ethics or self-images, with the success that then [...] porn becomes stuffy and reactionary [...].

(Diederichsen 2008, 271, translation P.R.)

Do the *Butt* boys with their images and stories chart another path that lies between a sentimentally tamed desire on the one hand and sexual rigor on the other?⁸ The premise of this investigation is centered on the notion that the sexuality in *Butt* differs from the representation of sex in mainstream porn. The aesthetic of the imperfect and mutating male body corresponds to an idea of sexuality that, in contrast to the aggressive sexual narcissism of mainstream porn, contains an “aesthetics of sexual awkwardness,” as Lauren Berlant puts it.⁹ Post-pornography would thus be understood as a sexual-affective field that does not propose a sexual representation reducible to fantasies, and which thus has a less ideological politics of attachment to offer, without slipping into the sentimentality of canonized emotions. *Butt*’s post-pornographic aesthetic is about renewing a promise that Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman have formulated as follows: “Sex [...] holds out the prospect of discovering new ways of being and of being in the world” (Berlant and Edelman 2013, VII). At issue is the status of these sexual-affective representations; at stake, after the loss of conventional pornographic fantasies, are new and creative ways of living in a sexual/affective space that is not yet controlled by biopolitics.

Within a psychoanalytic framework, *jouissance* as a decentering experience is seen to be the primary force by which ideological formations are interrupted. While authors such as Foucault primarily strive to define these sexual potentials as being beyond genital sexuality, Bersani understands gay anal intercourse as being a scene of *jouissance*. The dissolution of the subject, as Annamarie Jagose describes it, occurs at the moment of orgasm (Jagose 2013, 11–15). In this regard, David Halperin writes:

Only something so very bad for the integrated person that the normalized modern individual has become can perform the crucial work of rupture, of social and psychological disintegration, that may be necessary in order to permit new forms of life to come into being.

(Halperin 1995, 107)

Lauren Berlant’s version of affect theory, which becomes the focus of attention toward the end of this chapter, is about finding the unbinding power of *jouissance* in affect beyond sex. The project of “living with negativity” – an experimental way of living that is not anchored in

conventional fantasies – is thus not meant to be limited to sexual experience in general, and gay sexual experience in particular (Berlant and Edelman 2013, 63–118). Such a perspective represents a critique of the narrowness of the concept of sexuality insofar as this concept has nevertheless been formative for queer theory, as Tom Roach explains: “The primary subcategories through which we understand sexuality—principally homo- and heterosexuality—have provided an all too efficient framework for classifying and evaluating human affection” (Roach 2012, 12). By shifting the concept of sexuality from coded sexual acts and positions toward affect, the juxtaposition of sexual identity, on the one hand, and *jouissance*, on the other, is destabilized.

I am suggesting that *Butt*’s aesthetics offers a path that leads away from sexuality as a coded system toward an “aesthetics of existence” (Halperin 1995, 72–79; Roach 2012, 77–78). The engagement with *Butt* is less about finding alternatives to sexuality – as it is often the case in affect theory – and more about looking at alternative sexualities beyond trauma or fantasy;¹⁰ a movement that Tom Roach in his readings of David Wojnarowicz’s texts has termed “deterritorializing sexual affect” (Roach 2012, 21).

With *Butt*, it is not a matter of overcoming sex and sexuality, but of opening them up and reorienting them by making room for affect. This results in a double movement: on the one hand, the concept of affect serves to relativize Foucauldian notions of sexuality and sex and to emphasize their ontological dimension; on the other hand, turning to Foucault, is a movement that is directed against the tendency toward desexualization within affect theory. What would it mean to think of the sexual as affect? Berlant’s notion of “queer love,” which undermines the psychoanalytical demarcation of desire and love, will further help to define the repertoire of styles, attachments, and situations in the sexual-affective world of the *Butt* boys. The rearrangements of sex, sexuality, and affect touch upon fundamental questions in queer theory, as Halley and Parker point out in their introduction to the anthology *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory*, when they ask: “Does the very distinction between the sexual and the nonsexual matter to queer thinking, and if so, when, where, and how?” (Halley and Parker 2011, 2).¹¹

Affect as Pleasure, Pleasure as Affect: Foucault

The ultimate horizons of the ethical project of the self are not so much its original trauma (as Freud would have it) and its inevitable death (as Heidegger urged) as its aesthetic becoming and cultural generativity. But, for Foucault, this was not an aestheticist becoming, or at least it was not only an aestheticist becoming, in a cultivated development of the self [...]. It is also situated in (and in theory it might be thought and lived as) a series of unmotivated, even unformed, deflections

and devolutions in the social relations of sensuous erogenous human being—in effect a counterbecoming or what might best be called an unbecoming.

(Davis 2010, 251)

One of the founding gestures of affect theory is its differentiation from psychoanalysis. Consequently, Deleuze and his critique of psychoanalysis has become one of the most important references for affect theory. However, in deploying Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a productive desire that is not based on lack, affect theory raises the question as to whether sexuality itself can still exist within affect (Angerer 2014). From the perspective of an anti-oedipal desire, Deleuze and Guattari write: "Sexuality is no longer regarded as a specific energy [...]" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 183). As Nick Davis goes on to say: "Deleuze and Guattari do no longer isolate sexuality as an intrapsychic mechanism like Freud's drives or differentiate it from other forces operating in the world. Admittedly, relations between 'desire' and 'sexuality' remain hard to parse" (Davis 2013, 14). Referring to the molecular and molar perspectives of the desiring-machine, Deleuze and Guattari write, "[...] what they have to do with a properly sexual energy is not immediately clear" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 291). This skepticism toward the meaning of sexuality in Deleuze's texts is also noted by Frida Beckman (Beckman 2013).¹² Indeed we might ask if the sexual still has a place in the realm of affect, and if so, how might we consider sexuality from the perspective of affect? Is sexual arousal an affect? And can sexuality even be thought in terms of affect theory?

In order to further detail these questions, not only aesthetically (as I will do in the next chapter), but first, theoretically, I want to complement the perspective on sexuality and sketch the boundaries of a critique of the psychoanalytical concept of sexuality and its monopoly (as expressed in a number of texts by Foucault). Reading Foucault with affect theory helps me to further develop the relationship between sexuality and affect. To this end, a dialogue between Foucault and Deleuze regarding the distinction between pleasure and desire is helpful: Foucault's contribution to the question of affect can moreover be clarified in relation to Deleuze. A Foucauldian and a Deleuzian project meet in their respective critique of psychoanalysis.

History of Sexuality or Bodies and Pleasures?

In the context of affect theory, Foucault has yet to be treated as an important author. This is not surprising to the extent that within queer theory, he has been primarily read as an author of the history of sexuality. First and foremost, Foucault addresses sexuality within the space of discursive formations and thus as a question of institutions and power.¹³ This perspective has, above all, been popularized by Judith Butler's texts, when she,

for example, writes in relation to the possibilities and limits of alternative formations of sexuality and gender:

Here it seems wise to reinvolve Foucault who, in claiming that sexuality and power are always coextensive, implicitly refutes the postulation of a subversive or emancipatory sexuality which could be free of the law.
(Butler 1990, 29)

Without question, this reading of Foucault is more than legitimate. Above all, Foucault's critique of the "repression hypothesis" is a contribution that focuses on sexuality as a question of discourse. However, Foucault also makes some proposals that seek to think through sexuality beyond the paradigm of power and knowledge. At the end of *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, there is the much-cited allusion to a world of "bodies and pleasures" (Foucault 1978, 159), which seems to escape the paradigm of sexuality as *scientia sexualis*, which Foucault still sees at work in psychoanalysis.¹⁴ In later texts, such as the preface to the writings of Herculine Barbine, or in his meditations on friendship, or occasionally in interviews, Foucault repeated and commented on this formulation (Jagose 2013, 185–89). Here, as Lynne Huffer writes "this other Foucault" appears (Huffer 2013, 82). These alternative ideas of a sexuality beyond sexuality, however, are hardly elaborated from a theoretical perspective. Bersani comments, for example, that Foucault's "[...] move from desire to pleasure remains schematic, unexplained" (Bersani 2010, 182).¹⁵ According to Sedgwick, Foucault failed in the project of developing an alternative conceptual apparatus for the analysis of a sexuality that exists beyond dominant power formations.¹⁶ Indeed, her own project of a queer theory of affect can, in contrast to her early work, be understood as a continuation of this project.¹⁷ In doing so, however, Sedgwick shifts the emphasis from the Foucault of sexuality to the realm of non-sexual affects. On the other hand, for Bersani, the unresolved status of "bodies and pleasures" is an opportunity to read Foucault against Foucault and to place him in proximity to a psychoanalytical ontology of the drives:

The ambition of performing sex as only power is a salvational project, one designed to preserve us from a nightmare of ontological obscenity, from the prospect of a breakdown of the human itself in sexual intensities, from a kind of selfless communication with 'lower' orders of being.

(Bersani 2010, 29)

Bersani's project is one in which the overall aim is to think Freud and Foucault together, i.e., to put an ontology of sex alongside the discursive understanding of sexuality.¹⁸ In these moments, "beyond discourse" in

Foucault, Butler recognizes the point in which the sexual, in its ontological dimension, appears as a regression of Foucault's otherwise systematic critique of power. Bersani is not alone in his interest in further developing the potentials of the beyond of sexuality that appears in Foucault's texts, both Tom Roach and Elizabeth Grosz emphatically share this somewhat vague project. Last but not least, it is precisely this inarticulateness that – somewhat surprisingly – brings Foucault closer to psychoanalysis, where, as Elizabeth Grosz shows, these questions are just as poorly articulated. “The reorganization of this libidinal structure—which Foucault nowhere discusses—is precisely what I believe that psychoanalysis has not been able to adequately address [...]” (Grosz 2013, 202).

An understanding of affect theory that does not marginalize sex and sexuality but includes them in the discussion of the dynamics of affect, thus has the potential to become the common denominator between Freud and Foucault, even if this remains essentially unarticulated in both Freud or Foucault. It is through the reference to affect theory that this territory can be revealed, and a bridge to affect theory can certainly be built via Foucault's remarks on pleasure (Roach 2012, 21, 129; Beckman 2013, 38).

Beyond the discussion of affect, the question of an extended understanding of sexuality has been pursued through the use of the keyword “erotic” (Baumann 1998, 20–21, Freeman 2010, 13) or within queer theory as a question of “sensuality.” An example of this can be found in Bersani, who understands “sensuality” as a non-psychological category beyond sexuality: “[...] sensuality, de-psychologized, is prevented from mutating into the sexual” (Bersani 2015, 12). A similar idea can be found in Roach's definition of “sensuality” as a surface phenomenon (Roach 2012, 5). If affect is the name for the non-identificatory, deconstructive and productive potentials of a sexuality beyond its psychoanalytic understanding as a drive, it shares this zone of indeterminacy, which is not yet conditioned by historical and institutionalized forms of power, with Foucault's “bodies and pleasures,” and with “sensuality” as articulated by Bersani and Roach. What I am proposing here is to understand affect in relation to Foucault's “bodies and pleasures,” thus emphasizing the vicinity of affect, sex, and sexuality. In order to develop this strain of thought in Foucault, it is necessary to explain both his concept of power and the question regarding the proximity (or distance) between Foucault and Deleuze.¹⁹

Beyond Sex

[...] desire is mechanically recited rather than invented. It is because this desire functions exclusively around sex, and not on the totality of the body.

(Hocquenghem 2010, 23)

Foucault's skepticism toward a concept of sex as an organization of pleasures that monopolizes the meaning of sexuality, making sexuality culturally intelligible as a historical manifestation of sex (including the possibility of forms of sex as pathology), is the precondition for his critique of the repression hypothesis and of sexual liberation as a counter-movement. "For thousands of years, we have been made to believe that the law of all pleasure is, secretly at least, sex [...] Sex then became the 'code' of pleasure" (Foucault 1989a, 212). Accordingly, this coding of sex as pleasure understands sexuality as a consequence, expression, and negotiation of sex, mainstream pornography thus claims to offer an unproblematic answer to the question of what pleasure is, how it can be experienced and satisfied, thereby installing the regime of identity, knowledge, and desire criticized by Foucault.

Following the idea of sexuality as a more or less hidden truth concerning the self, pornography's power to move, touch, and arouse bodies would translate as pornography's speaking the truth of these bodies and their desires.

(Paasonen 2011, Loc 368/3979)

With Foucault's remarks about "bodies and pleasures," however, a limit is set to what is understood as a familiar and meaningful use of the drives.²⁰ Following Foucault, this limit of power must be understood as either absolute or at least contradictory.²¹ There is Butler's Foucault, for whom sexualities are produced via powerful regimes of discourse, without the body being granted a life of its own. As Elizabeth Grosz has noted, this mode of analysis distinguishes Foucault from Nietzsche (and also from Deleuze and Sedgwick): "Where for Foucault the body is the field on which the play of powers, knowledges, and resistances is worked out, for Nietzsche the body is the agent and active cause of knowledge" (Grosz 1994, 146).

But even if the body in its cultural intelligibility follows the path demarcated by power and knowledge, and is produced by them, in Foucault this system also proves to be dynamic and open, as Grossberg describes: "[...] power is never able to totalize itself. There are always fissures and fault lines that may become active sites of struggle and transformation" (Grossberg 2010, 29). According to these authors, in Foucault, power reserves a space for forms of resistance: "In short, Foucault takes the body as a resistant yet fundamentally passive inertia [...] yet its materiality also entails a resilience and thus also (potential) modes of resistance to power's capillary alignments" (Grosz 1994, 146). Bersani furthermore suggests that the dynamic tensions in Foucault's concept of power, which already provides its own resistance, should be thought of as a question of rhythm (Bersani 1995a, 103).

At this limit of power, the body simultaneously, and paradoxically, has the function of being the result as well as the site of resistance to power. Power is everywhere, but it cannot be reduced to a model of dominance.

Resistance does not assert itself in a place beyond power, rather it is an instance wherein power is processed and rechanneled, and wherein not only the dominant forms of power are reproduced. If we transfer this flexibility to the history of sexualities and bodies, pleasure would be the site in which the dominant model of power does not settle without further ado; it is the site where a counter-activity is made possible.²² Elizabeth Grosz has identified these tensions within the concept of power and the sites it occupies, in the following way:

The first question regards what might be called Foucault's corporeal ontology. If both sex and sexuality are effects of the deployment of sexuality, is there a more basic, possibly even foundational, commitment to a primordial materiality evident in his writings? [...] Foucault, like Nietzsche, seems to require the meeting of (at least) two antagonistic forces in order for his 'analytics of power' to function: on the one hand, the particular procedures and techniques of social institutions [...]; on the other hand, the resisting and resistant bodies and pleasures of individuals.

(Grosz 1994, 155)

While the focus of most readings of Foucault lies on forms of power that emerge via the categories of history, institutions, and knowledge – i.e., discursive formations and dispositifs, Grosz points toward a more paradoxical position of the body as both object and agent. Grosz has suggested that we should here work with the Deleuzian concept of force, and thus distinguish between force and power (Massumi 1987, XIII; Grosz 1994, 147).²³ In contrast to the power operations of a regime of knowledge and sexuality, force in Deleuze would be a form of Foucauldian power without established historical and institutional safeguards. Deleuze elaborated on this differentiation between force and power in his book on Foucault:

Crossing the line of force, going beyond power, involves as it were bending force, making it impinge on itself rather than on other forces: a 'fold,' in Foucault's terms. Force playing on itself. Is a question of 'doubling' the play of forces? Of a self-relation that allows us to resist, to elude power, to turn to life or death against power. This, according to Foucault, is something the Greeks invented. It's no longer a matter of determinate forms, as with knowledge, or of constraining rules, as with power: it's a matter of optional rules that make existence a work of art, rules at once ethical and aesthetic that constitute ways of existing, or styles of life (including even suicide). It's what Nietzsche discovered as the will to power operating artistically, inventing new 'possibilities of life.'

(Deleuze quoted in Surin 2011, 147)

If Deleuze helps us to clarify Foucault's concept of power by introducing a distinction between power and force, the question arises to what extent Deleuze is also helpful in clarifying Foucault's understanding of pleasure. Several times, Deleuze himself has suggested a proximity between some of his concepts and those of Foucault. In a prominent way, this debate took place, above all, with regard to the signification of bodies and pleasures. Deleuze asks: "Could I think of equivalences of this type: what for me is the body without organs corresponds to what for Michel is 'body-pleasures'?" (Deleuze 1998, 190). In the context of my argument, this question is important insofar as Deleuze's critique of psychoanalysis is one of the anchoring points of affect theory.

But at first, it seems as if the discourse on desire and pleasure is precisely where Foucault and Deleuze part ways. As David Halperin makes clear: "It is not desire but pleasure that, for Foucault, holds out the promise [...] [of a] disaggregating experience" (Halperin 1995, 95). While for Foucault, pleasure is the non-subjective site where dominant power formations can be reworked and destabilized, Deleuze emphasizes the importance of desire over stabilized power formations (Deleuze 1998, 183–89). Diametrically opposed to Foucault's use of the term, for Deleuze, pleasure is the site of an individualized desire that must be overcome by its depersonalized form: "Desire is detracted from individual pleasure and climactic purposes to become part of a machine in production: an endosymbiotic multiplicity" (Parisi 2004, 38). Despite the different registers to which their concepts belong and the manner in which the legacy of psychoanalysis resonates in different ways here, Foucault and Deleuze were aware of the proximity of their ideas, as this passage illustrates:

The last time we saw each other, Michel told me, with much kindness and affection, something like I cannot bear the word *desire*, even if you use it differently, I cannot keep myself from thinking or living that desire = lack, or that desire is repressed. Michel added, whereas myself, what I call pleasure is perhaps what you call desire; [...] Obviously, once again, this is more than a question of words. Because, for my part I can scarcely tolerate the word *pleasure*. [...] For me, desire implies no lack; neither is it a natural given. It is an agencement of heterogeneous elements that function; it is process as opposed to structure or genesis; it is affect as opposed to sentiment; [...] it is an event, as opposed to thing or person.

(Deleuze 1998, 189)

For Deleuze, pleasure is precisely the moment when the desiring subject is tied back to its history and to stable forms of representation,²⁴ while desire as an undirected, permanent movement transcends these attachments. The precondition for this assessment is the assumption of a non-Lacanian desire that precedes the symbolic order. Foucault, on the other hand, showed an

aversion to a politics of desire, because of the prominence of the concept in psychoanalysis, whose rituals of confession resulted in the production of a subject endowed with a knowledge of its sexuality and thus in the grip of power. For Foucault, through its hermeneutic decipherability and cultural intelligibility, desire remains attached to concepts of identity and truth and, in this way, always already takes place in the realm of institutionalized power. Foucault contrasts this to pleasure, of which he says: “I am advancing this term [pleasure], because it seems to me that it escapes the medical and naturalistic connotations inherent in the notion of desire” (Foucault quoted in Halperin 1995, 93).²⁵ Pleasure becomes a starting point that allows Foucault to think sexuality beyond psychoanalysis or other historical formations of sexuality (Davidson 2001, 45).

Yet, the difference between Foucault’s pleasure and Deleuze’s desire seems strategic rather than substantive, “both philosophers were seeking a vocabulary to describe those forces that militate against the lures of identity [...]” (Dean 2012, 486). Deleuze himself has repeatedly emphasized that there is an intersection of terminologies here. There is, therefore, good reason to assume a kinship between Deleuze’s desire and Foucault’s pleasure. Yet despite this kinship, I side with Foucault, because in the affective-sexual field, the term pleasure can be used to mark the sexual, a designation that is lost in Deleuze’s use of the term desire (Grace 2009, 60; Beckman 2013).²⁶

The phenomenon of pleasure appears interesting to Foucault insofar as it takes place on the surface of the body without being understood as the response to an already encoded desire, a lack or the fulfillment of a fantasy. That is to say that pleasure occurs without any prior knowledge of its possibility: pleasure is not the object of knowledge. José Muñoz highlighted the importance of this moment for the project of queer theory: “[...] it also seems important to dwell upon modes of being in the world that might be less knowable than sex” (Muñoz 2011, 142). Pleasures take place at the border of a registerable desire and of coherent sexual identities. They are not in the possession of the subject:

It is an event ‘outside the subject’, or at the limit of the subject, taking place in that something which is neither of the body nor of the soul, which is neither inside nor outside—in short, a notion neither assigned nor assignable.

(Foucault quoted in Halperin 1995, 94)

Non-codified pleasures can be considered to be a queer event.²⁷ The sexual is never completely regulated by the regime of sexuality and sex thus remains bound to the unknowable. Even if the place that Foucault reserves for pleasures remains relatively limited compared to the status of desire in Deleuze and Guattari,²⁸ they are nevertheless seen as having the self-same transformative potential that Deleuze and Guattari assign to desire as a whole. When affects make themselves felt by drawing subjects into

processes of becoming, the reference to the proximity of Deleuze's desire and Foucault's pleasure functions as a reminder that affect theory cannot distance itself from the sexual, as pleasure, in Foucault. In the register of affect, Foucault's pleasure would be a way of naming the site of a non-historical, non-psychoanalytic sexuality.²⁹

The question arises as to the manner in which the destabilizing modality of an affective sexuality can make itself felt, and as to how it is realized. While a psychoanalytically understood sexuality as *jouissance* is said to have the quality of a momentary interruption that is supposed to gain transformative value for the process of subjection, e.g., as ego-shattering, and which can be allegorized by the orgasm but does not have to be limited to it, affects are about processual transformations over a longer period of time. What place could affective sexuality take here, and what rhythm would it follow? While for Foucault S/M held the promise of a reorganization of pleasure, Lauren Berlant's project is to question the difference between desire and love. In following these trajectories, we approach the images and histories of *Butt's* affective and sexual intimacies evoking *Butt's* aesthetic program that we should understand as a new rhythm of pleasures and affects.

S/M

[...] such a program may necessarily involve some radical, perhaps even dangerous, experimentation with modes of what used to be called making love.

(Bersani 1995, 81)

Like affect in Sedgwick, Massumi, and Deleuze, pleasure in Foucault gains the function of making porous the boundaries of sexual subjectivities. Bodily encounters take place in a situation that remains open to the occurrence of new pleasures. They become the occasion for a continuous process of self-transformation. "The relationship I think we need to have with ourselves when we have sex is an ethics of pleasure, of intensification of pleasure" (Foucault 1989c, 377).³⁰ Pleasures are tied to an ethical project (Roach 2012, 33), and therefore cannot simply mean "orgasm" as the endpoint of a rehearsed sexual script (Jagose 2013, 3). One of Foucault's best-known examples for reorganizing pleasures is S/M.³¹ S/M should be understood as an experimental context in which the exploration of pleasure leads to a redefinition of sexuality (Bersani 1995, 81–83). In this, Foucault follows Freud, who in the *Three Essays* had already pointed out the difficulties of making sexual experiences accessible via a binary logic of pleasure and pain, or fore-pleasure and end-pleasure. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud pursued this problem with the introduction of the death drive. After Foucault, such an interpretation of sexual experiences which lie beyond the subject has found expression, above all, in the investigations of Bersani, Dean, and Edelman. Here, sexual experiences are always

a matter of transgressing concepts of identity and desire, which are habitually regulated by biopolitics, through a dissolution of bodily boundaries.

For the aforementioned authors, these forms of dissolution are always located in the space of sexual subcultures, their practices and rites. Foucault's sexuality is transgressed by an excessiveness of sexual stimuli. Even if this experience itself can no longer necessarily be understood as sexuality in the narrower, genital, sense, access to it in the archives of Bersani, Dean, or Edelman is given exclusively through gay sexual encounters: S/M, fisting or barebacking. This brings us back to the problem that in queer studies, transgression is thought of exclusively as an option for (gay, male) sexuality. Accordingly, Annamarie Jagose characterizes Halperin's and Bersani's projects as follows: "[...] for both critics the erotic practices associated with male-male sexual subcultures continue to offer the most recognizable models for political engagement through sexual practices" (Jagose 2013, 202). While Sedgwick's approach to affect theory, for example, risks leaving sexuality behind altogether, a reconnection to sexuality via Foucault's notion of pleasure entails the return of this problem. To this end, Lynne Huffer asks: "Can women, like men, forge a queer praxis and a new way of life? Which body parts are required to get the job done? Can women do it too?" (Huffer 2013, 78).

Butt offers a different archive of gay sexualities than Foucault's S/M subculture. The question is therefore not only whether women can do it too, but also whether men can do it differently. I would like to end this chapter by following Lauren Berlant's suggestion that sexuality and affect, or in her terminology, desire and love, can conceptually be brought together. While the critique of authors such as Heather Love and Judith Halberstam sets itself up in opposition to the material choices of Foucault, Bersani, Dean, and Edelman, Berlant's project is to question the boundaries between sexual experiences on the one hand, and affective experiences on the other, as opposed to merely affirming the notion of affect against sexuality. Indeed, Berlant's perspective coincides with the one developed here: to understand the intimate scenes in *Butt* as both affective and sexual. Or, as Guy Hocquenghem wrote: "The gays in my dream, my lovers, my friends, my enemies and myself, we can no longer distinguish desire from what is called love" (Hocquenghem 2010, 42–43).

Love and Desire

Love is a bourgeois construct.

(Pet Shop Boys 2013)

Love is only dead in certain minds. This is not because it is bourgeois, but because its contamination, by the bourgeoisie, by property, by security, has rendered it inane.

(Hocquenghem 2010, 40)

So far, affect has been understood in relation to concepts of sexuality, such as desire or pleasure. In contrast to the category of emotions, affect is to be understood as a process that makes the boundaries of sexuality, in its historical understanding, porous. The strategy of determining the location of *affective sexualities* as lying somewhere between theories of sexuality and theories of affect means looking at theories of sexuality that also have something to say about affect as well as at theories of affect that have not left sexuality behind.

If we understand affect as a possible means to restore the zone of indeterminacy in a Freudian or Foucauldian notion of sexuality, this path of deconstruction can also be taken from the other side, that is, not via the historical formations through which sexuality is organized, but via affects or emotions that are initially tied to persons and that claim a certain stability. So, we could talk about feelings. With such a suggestion, it immediately becomes apparent that feelings are not initially thought to have the same transgressive power as sex. Insofar as we have learnt to understand sex as queer in its potentially identity-destroying force, could we say the same about feelings?³² Do they function in a similar fashion to sexuality as ego-shattering or to pleasure, as, for example, Hocquenghem claims when he writes, “[...] love and death hate the self [...]” (Hocquenghem 2010, 40)? In an essay followed ten years later by a manifesto of sorts, Lauren Berlant explores these questions using the example of love as distinct from desire.

Whereas the drive to attachment and to death engenders revolution, resistance, and refunctioning, the drive to love is either deemed the same as that of desire or else the opposite, the normalizing of something far more sublime. What if we take love seriously as an analytic concept and a project for elaboration?

(Berlant 2000, 437)

What would it mean to make “love,” of all things, the crucial concept of a queer critique?³³ Switching registers from desire, sex, and sexuality to love is a challenge insofar as love does not necessarily have a good reputation, especially within psychoanalytically influenced queer theory. “Queer theory has talked much about sexuality and desire, but when it comes to love, all sorts of havoc doesn’t break out” (Berlant 2000, 437). Within a historical perspective, love becomes an integral part of the bourgeois-capitalist ideology and its relations of exploitation, to the extent that in love intimacy is regulated in the form of possession: “[...] love bears the weight of much ideological management” (Berlant 2000, 440).

Whether we understand desire in the Lacanian or Deleuzian sense or, or if we prefer to work with the notion of pleasure following Foucault, desire and pleasure are understood as experiences of mobility or openness vis-à-vis symbolic systems, they will not allow for ideological closure. Following a psychoanalytic tradition, on the other hand,³⁴ love functions mainly as

a concept that ensures that the interrupting energy of desire is sealed off by the demand for presence in order to form a, as Berlant puts it, “secure psychotic enclave” (Berlant 2012, 75).

Indeed, “[...] love [...] has been cast off, as if it were nothing but a superstructure built as a *trompe l’oeil* in the structure of desire” (Hocquenghem 2010, 42–43). Love is denounced as a delusion that avoids the vitality of the present and the openness of the future as Bersani and Phillips write, in accordance with a psychoanalytic tradition: “What we call love is our hatred of the future” (Bersani and Phillips 2008, 103). The phantasmatic temporality of love becomes a symptom of an emotional sadism that, in a paranoid attempt to control desire, gives way to the paralyzing effects of fascination (Bersani 2010, 52). In this perspective, love emerges as a potentially bad fantasy, or in Berlant’s words, a form of “cruel optimism” in which virtually everything must be sacrificed to keep the optimism itself going.

A critical theory of love must oppose this ideological agency and inevitably leads to the demystification of love (Bersani and Phillips 2008, 74). But how can we destabilize the concept of love and its legacy? One possible way seems to be to rethink the relationship between love and its other, desire. Queer readings of psychoanalysis seem, at first, to reaffirm the distance between love and desire, and their division in labor, rather than to offer a way for these terms to converge: “We flirt or befriend people [...], but never both at once” (Hocquenghem 2010, 27). This dichotomy was also clearly expressed by Freud himself: “Where they love they do not desire and where they desire they do not love” (Freud cited in Phillips and Taylor 2009, 87). According to this psychological order, love and sexuality are mutually exclusive. The lack of love makes desire possible in the first place and vice versa: “It is our unkindness—our lack of affection and regard—that makes our desire possible” (Phillips and Taylor 2009, 88).

Within the psychoanalytical tale of love and desire, love can be seen as the continuation of an episodic desire, transforming it into permanence, and in doing so ennobles desire, as Adam Phillips writes: “[...] love as the great legitimator, as the great stylist of desire” (Bersani and Phillips 2008, 90). The problem with this “valorization” of love (which, for example, brings social recognition) is that in such a process, desire itself is in danger of falling by the wayside and being simply replaced by love. Love, then, does not expand desire but ends it through a logic of reconciliation. It becomes the musealization of desire.³⁵ David Halperin has spelled out what this situation means for the gay subculture:

The love-object has to be able to accommodate the fantasy of butch desirability that the would-be-lover projects onto it. Familiarity—and gay recognition, in particular—may spoil that accommodating blankness. They breed erotic disillusionment, even as they also enable friendliness, affection, congeniality, complicity, and solidarity.

(Halperin 2012, 206)

Love, or some of its minor forms, can block desire. Conversely, the loss of love in favor of all-encompassing desire cannot be unreservedly celebrated either.³⁶ In his pessimistic and neoconservative polemic, Mark Greif, for example, laments that, as a result of the sexual revolution in our contemporary culture, the intimate management of sexuality through love has lost reliability: “The trivialization of sex and the denigration of childhood can still be put on the agenda of a humane civilization” (Greif 2007, 121–22). Without love as an instrument to regulate sexual experience and through which to build a connection, we would be exposed to the force of a sexualized world of entitlement, which Greif, as so often in the criticism of pornography, can only understand as the naked display of capitalism.

Meanwhile the more traditional way of trivializing sex, by subordinating it to overwhelming romantic love, has diminished as an option as the focus on self-discovery has increasingly devitalized full romantic love.

(Greif 2007, 121)

The attack on the concept of love, which for Greif seems to be simply a benign form of togetherness, a conflict-free form of belonging,³⁷ takes place here, however, not through the force of a depersonalized desire or pleasure that corrodes the ego,³⁸ but rather as a self-absorbed appropriation of one’s own sexuality. A postmodern “neosexuality” (Sigusch 2005), which would act in the service of the ego, is capable of endangering the powerful institution of love only because of its own claim to power. In this scenario, the stability of the loving couple and its social, as well as psychological, benefits are replaced by the stability of the self-serving staging of sexuality as a constant readiness for action. To Greif, I would reply that love, in the genre of the romantic love story, for example, always risks becoming an ideological formation, not too different, by means of its hegemonic forcefulness, than mainstream pornography, in its effort to assert a cultural monopoly in the organization of pleasures.³⁹ As Hocquenghem writes, “the desiring machine produces crepuscular orgies or couples that close in under the light, and then shut off the electricity” (Hocquenghem 2010, 9).

So where do we end up, if, on the one hand, we want to queer the concept of love beyond reconciliation and, on the other, do not want to pave the way for an all-too-efficient use of bodies within a culture of sexual fitness? To this end, echoing to Hocquenghem, Foucault stated: “We must escape and help others escape the two ready-made formulas of the pure sexual encounter and the lover’s fusion of identity” (Foucault 1989b, 310).⁴⁰

A New Love

As for us, we must rid it [love] of that sentimental glue that socialist as well as capitalist culture has enjoined to smother raw emotion, anesthetize the sensory [...].

(Hocquenghem 2010, 40)

[...] A Lover's Discourse is an attempt to get rid of 'love'—its roles, its attitudes—in order to find the luster that remains when the stereotypes have been sent packing.

(Koestenbaum 2013, 52)

A queer gaze that would question the psychic separation of love and desire, as well as the social forms that follow from it, is hard to be found in psychoanalysis (Phillips and Taylor 2009, 90). What might a critique of sexuality in the name of love that is not – in distinction to Greif – nostalgically installing a romantic program as a defense against a sexuality supposedly permeated by the logic of capitalism, look like? How might the relationship between love and desire be rethought, beyond the duality of love as possession and selfish desire as its counterpoint: "What do we need to know and do in order not to repeat the usual denunciations and utopianisms?" (Berlant 2000, 437). In the past 20 years, this question has played a crucial role in the history of queer sexual politics,⁴¹ and has more recently, been discussed under the label of "polyamory."⁴²

Berlant argues for an instability of love which is comparable to the instability that desire brings (Berlant 2000, 433). Like Marcuse and his concept of Eros, she is structurally interested in a dissolution of the difference between love and sexuality, but without Marcuse's conciliatory utopianism, "[...] sentimentality, say, might be a much bigger threat to someone's defenses than any sexual event is" (Berlant 2011a, Loc. 1989/4461). The risk of being together,⁴³ from her point of view, is a form of self-expansion as boundary violation, a movement which Berlant calls queer insofar as it does not necessarily have to be enshrined in the form of the couple.⁴⁴

The ways of describing self-extension—the desire to become more than oneself, to become exchangeable, to become oriented towards a publicness that corresponds to an expanding interiority suggests the appropriateness of naming love a queer affect.

(Berlant 2000, 443)

Love as affective expansion would have the potential to put barriers between inside and outside, ego and environment, private and public at risk and, as such, to operate similarly as regards sexuality, sex, or desire. Thus, Berlant writes: "[...] Foucauldian categories of pathogenic sexuality could then be seen as the detritus of normal love's failures to organize the subject" (Berlant 2000, 440). Analogous to Foucault's pleasures, affects would be experiences that have not yet been codified, that have not yet found their form, that are without a defined place within the constitution of subjects and relations. A symbolic definition has not yet taken place: "Every love is an exercise in depersonalization on a body without organs yet to be formed [...]" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 35).

If we pursue such a design of affective mobility as an alternative to the psychoanalytic program of love, a crucial question at this point is whether we can think love beyond the category of “personhood.” In a conversation with filmmaker Werner Schröter, Foucault describes this problem by distinguishing between love and passion:

It’s a distinction between two kinds of individuation: one, love, through persons, and the other through intensity, as though passion dissolved persons not into something undifferentiated but into a field of various persisting and mutually interdependent intensities [...]. Love’s a state of, and a relation between, persons, subjects. But passion is a subpersonal event that may last as long as a lifetime [...], a field of intensities that individuates independently of any subject.

(Surin 2011, 149)

In contrast, Berlant’s reformulation of a queer love is no longer about the interiority of persons, but about a non-psychological affective expansion beyond individuals (Koivunen 2010, 55). This possibility of love beyond the psychological or psychoanalytic subject is also considered by Bersani and Phillips:

Love is perhaps always—as both Plato and Freud suggest—a phenomenon of memory (Surin 2011, 162), but what is remembered in the expansive narcissism of an impersonal intimacy is not some truth about the self, but rather, as Phillips says, ‘a process of becoming’, or, in other terms, evolving affinities of being.

(Bersani and Phillips 2008, 124)

Incoherent Love

The desired result is a systematic openness: an open system.

(Massumi 2002, 18)

[...] indiscernibility, imperceptibility, and impersonality remain the end points of becoming.

(Grosz 1994, 179)

A love that does not find its form is a love that does not fit into the world of domesticity, monogamy, privacy, and permanence. It is a love that does not take emotion or affect as reconciliation in the face of desire’s restlessness. It is a love that cannot keep its promise, that does not conform to the script of the happy ending but is more likely to lead to betrayal.⁴⁵ For Berlant, love is interesting as a phenomenon insofar as it must fail: “love as an exercise in failure” (Berlant 2012, 21).

Beyond its fantasy as a protective zone in which subjects are assured a comfortable home, love would be a risky form of self-expression, “[...] in love, the human subject is exceptionally open to otherness” (Bersani and Phillips 2008, 74). Love is uneconomic insofar as it exposes the subject to the danger of not being able to carry the prize home again as a calculable gain. As “wrong” or “disappointed,” love cannot be thought of as a profitable investment in life planning. Love that can be described in such a way – as an endless form of uncertainty – is not culturally admitted or expressed. Rather, love is either captured by the “marriage plot,” or is accepted only as a dramatic delay on the way to a given goal. Stylized in the genre of the *amour fou* and dressed as an intensity of experience, uncertain love is granted an unruly life of its own that is permitted, if not required, within the eventfulness of youth.

Berlant’s dissecting gaze, however, aims to allow love to stand beyond these cultural classifications as a capacity for unpredictable and unreliable experiences and attachments. Without its conventional, narrative framework, love as an affective self-expression, becomes an experience in which the subject neatly cannot settle into the context of reliable genres. Such a love risks cultural unintelligibility that cannot be sublimated in the gesture of “love as blindness” or “love as stupidity” and to this end, Berlant speaks of “love’s sheer incoherence” (Berlant 2000, 441). Here the critical interest of affect theory is to subvert the binding forces of conventional emotions and the genres in which they have been historically organized, given that Berlant’s project relies on revealing love’s incoherence as an existential condition:

To my mind, love is queered not when we discover it to be resistant to or more than all its known forms, but when we see that there is no world that admits how it actually works as a principle of living. This designation refracts as negativity the state of affect I have been calling incoherence.

(Berlant 2000, 443)

Incoherence occurs as an impulse to question and abandon existing genres: Historically generated organizing structures of social life that can be exposed as forms of institutionalized power. Without its ideology cast as a fantasy of fusion, the idea of love no longer conjures a violent defense against its own destabilizing moments. In Berlant’s work, however, this movement does not occur in the name of better, future-oriented genres (or “better stories” as Grossberg writes). Following Foucault, for Berlant, the project of affect theory cannot be about a program, but is rather about a practice of affective distraction (and aesthetic training as the next chapter makes clear). Unlike Love (Love 2007, 4), Berlant is concerned with making room for incoherence as a condition by which our existence is ontologically defined. Here again, there is a structural similarity to Bersani’s

self-shattering sexuality. Both Bersani and Berlant understand negativity as an ontological condition of subjectivity where Berlant's contribution is to contest sex and sexuality's monopoly on the subject of negativity, not thematically via negative affect or emotions like shame, but through the unstable structure of affect itself.

What, in the archive of queer theory, is primarily related to the experience of gay sex, Berlant claims to be able to say about the experience of love as a queer feeling. Love, not only as experimental sexuality but also as an expenditure unbound by any genre, becomes a practice of becoming/unbecoming, in which incalculable affective constellations undo subjective and social stabilities (Davis 2010). With the disclosure of the affective incoherence of love, the juxtaposition of a sexuality that leads to unknown pleasures on the one hand, and love as a fantasy of fusion on the other, becomes unstable. Both love and sexuality (or desire, pleasure) appear here as experiences of negativity. What distinguishes them if no familiar genres organize their division of labor anymore? How does a sexuality as pleasure articulate itself if not through identity, and how does a love that does not bind itself to persons show itself? If we assume, following Berlant, a structural similarity between love and desire, by what criterion can they be distinguished? To what extent does it still make sense here to speak of sexuality *or* love? Is there a temporal or spatial difference, is there a rhythm that carries us from one scene to the next, or do the two ways of connecting with the world, affectively or sexually, collapse in a space they now share? In contrast to the notion of the erotic or to sensuality, which aims to summarize these two libidinous/affective modalities, I here suggest the notion of *affective sexualities*, which reminds us that we are speaking of a mixed phenomenon when we place the disintegrating power of sexuality in relation to that of love, even if our aim is to envisage a field beyond the rehearsed oppositions of love and desire.

What differences come into play when sexuality and love are located in the same space, and, one might say, constantly remixed? In the next chapter, I will pursue these questions by returning to *Butt*. A legitimate question at this point is whether Berlant's project of a queer love beyond personhood still deserves the name "love" or whether it has become so unrecognizable that we would be better off with a different term. Phillips and Taylor translated the unconventionality of a love that offers no identification as a form of kindness, "Love never works as magic, but it can work as kindness" (Phillips and Taylor 2009, 63). Analogous to the history of sexuality and its deconstruction, they understand kindness first as a form of conventionally regulated affect whose rehearsed forms, like those of love in Berlant, can be set in motion, "the forms kindness can take, like the forms sexuality can take, are partly learned from the societies in which we grew up, and so can be unlearned, or badly taught, or resisted" (Phillips and Taylor 2009, 9). Through kindness, there can be a diminution and multiplication of a monumental love.

Like Berlant in relation to love, Phillips and Taylor propose an affective training that works to reorganize rehearsed forms of kindness in order to activate its promiscuous potential: “By involving us with strangers (even with ‘foreigners’ thousands of miles away), as well as with intimates, it is potentially far more promiscuous than sexuality” (Phillips and Taylor 2009, 12). Would kindness thus be an appropriate name for a queer love beyond ideological bonds? Historically, there are at least two good reasons to choose kindness and to believe in its transgressive value because: “Kindness [...] not sexuality, not violence, not money—has become our forbidden pleasure” (Phillips and Taylor 2009, 3). In neoliberalism, kindness is a forbidden pleasure that does not serve to invoke heroic masculinity, but rather provides the affective disposition of post-phallic masculinity: “Most people, as they grow up now, secretly believe that kindness is a virtue for losers” (Phillips and Taylor 2009, 7). Thus we return to the queer hipster of *Butt*.⁴⁶ For unlike the hero of gay mainstream porn, in the tradition of the 60s hipster it can be said of him that: “He dramatizes his inferiority instead” (Linck 2016, 203, translation P.R.). Indeed, this anti-masculinist strategy has been described by Wayne Koestenbaum as a form of gay aesthetics and existence which he terms “fag limbo”:

Fag limbo allows the artist, and the speculator, to pursue other neighbourhoods than career, that overvisited cemetery. To embrace limbo (you can't pin me down) and to embrace fagginess (my worldview is flitty) permit outsidership without the doldrums and loneliness of actually being an outsider artist.

(Koestenbaum 2013, 195)

Notes

1. The fact that a non-phallic sexuality is not only euphorically celebrated on the queer side, but is also filled with fear has been described by Jonathan Kemp in his reading of Schreber: “Between the disciplinary command to have a body and the actual sensations of the body lies a space which, for men at least, is the cause of great anxiety” (Kemp 2013, 31).
2. The terminology in the context of affect theory is often ambiguous and contradictory. Depending on the theoretical genealogy and methodology, there is talk of affects, affections, emotions, or feelings. Moreover, the multifaceted use of the English term “affect,” and the question of how best to translate it, often confuses this situation. While my position, which I will elaborate in this and the following chapter, takes up Sedgwick’s impulse to use affects to critique the paradigm of sexuality, in doing so, I do not follow Sedgwick’s Tomkins reception, which understands affects as discrete, legible units of subjectivation. Rather, I understand affects first of all in terms of Massumi’s Deleuze reception, where affects are understood as a prelinguistic, precognitive, trans-subjective force. While this notion of affects is helpful in the context of a critique of sexuality, it also proves problematic in the light of Deleuze’s texts on affects. For on the one hand, Deleuze reserves the con-

- cept of affects for aesthetic processes; in relation to non-aesthetic processes, on the other hand, he speaks of affections. Even though Deleuze's aesthetically understood concept of affect will only come into play in the next chapter, I am already following the direction of his terminology here and therefore propose, for what is usually called "affect" in affect theory, either the more open concept of the affective, or, if it concerns concrete processes, that of affection. Without discussing these terms in detail, Claudia Breger also suggests translating the English "affect" with the affective and not with "affect" (Breger 2014, 16).
3. Or, to put it another way, the problem of sex is not only, or not necessarily, to be solved by having more or better sex, but rather by what that sex encompasses. Cf. Nick Davis's discussion of Linda Williams (Davis 2013, 99).
 4. According to Marie-Luise Angerer's diagnosis, the affective dispositif has meanwhile replaced the sexual one (Angerer 2014). See also Claudia Breger (2014).
 5. Bersani is skeptical here and speaks of a "puritanical feminism" (Bersani 1995, 55). In summary, for him, this means: "The relation of gay men to feminism is bound to be more problematic than anyone wants to admit" (Bersani 1995, 63). Twenty-five years after Bersani's "Is the Rectum a Grave?" Lynne Huffer's outline of queer ethics *Are The Lips a Grave? A Queer Feminist on the Ethics of Sex* and a recourse to Luce Irigaray, seeks to reactivate a tradition of queer feminism (Huffer 2013). In *Orgasmology*, Annamarie Jagose also thwarts this threatening opposition between queer and feminist in a clear way (Jagose 2013).
 6. Nick Davis recalls the exuberant reception *Shortbus* received. The film was credited with correcting the direction queer cinema had taken 15 years after the proclamation of "New Queer Cinema" (Davis 2013, 96–105).
 7. For a fuller discussion of *Shortbus*, see Annamarie Jagose (2013, 93–105) and Nick Davis (2013, 96–105).
 8. Hocquenghem writes, regarding this perspective on gay subculture early on in the 1970s: "[...] homosexual desire is mechanically recited rather than invented. It is because this desire functions exclusively around sex, and not on the totality of the body" (Hocquenghem 2010, 23).
 9. Lauren Berlant (2012b, 8).
 10. On the heterosexual variant of thinking sexuality from its traumatic origin, see Gertrud Koch's interpretation of the castration scenario and its significance for pornography (Koch 1989, 24).
 11. On the importance of this anthology for the discussion of affect, see Claudia Breger (2014).
 12. Nick Davis points out that sexuality is left out of Deleuze's two books on cinema, the first of which was an important point of reference for the discussion within Affect Theory given its remarks on the affect image (Davis 2013, 5). In Deleuze's conception of desire, sexuality plays a subordinate role. How the relationship between sexual energy and other forces should be understood remains unclear, according to Deleuze. Cf. Nick Davis (2013, 14).
 13. This perspective is also noticeable in Foucault's engagement with Freud. Foucault treats psychoanalysis primarily as a question of social institutions and hardly engages with the concepts of psychoanalysis.
 14. For an overview of the most important reactions from Jagose, Halperin, Warner et al. to this passage in Foucault, see Lynne Huffer (2013, 73–74).
 15. See Bersani's remarks on forms of eroticism as desexualized pleasure in Foucault (Bersani 1995, 80).
 16. Halley and Parker summarize: "Sedgwick argues that Foucault himself failed to elaborate any of his utopian hunches, and that queer theory—which she sees almost completely dedicated to reproducing this failure—entrenches and

- solidifies (better said perhaps symptomatizes) the repressive hypothesis in every purported denunciation of it” (Halley and Parker 2011, 10).
17. This point is also made by Claudia Breger when she writes: “To my knowledge, no one has yet traced in detail how the conceptualizations of affect that occasionally appear in these later works of Foucault in the context of the techniques of the self anticipate motifs of contemporary studies of affect [...]” (Breger 2014, 18, translation P.R.).
 18. This is also possible insofar as Foucault ignores rather than engages with psychoanalysis.
 19. While I am mainly interested here in pointing out the similarities between Deleuze and Foucault in order to elaborate on my notion of “affective sexualities,” other authors have reminded us of the difference between the two. Wendy Grace argues that Deleuze’s and Foucault’s critiques of psychoanalysis are markedly different. Deleuze criticized Freud’s metaphor of the theatre as the structuring principle of the psyche and replaced it with that of the factory. At the same time, however, Deleuze and Guattari held on to the idea of a repressive force or power vis-à-vis sexuality, while Foucault’s originality consisted in treating power as a problem of truth beyond a Marxian logic of oppression, which still came into play in Deleuze’s work, and in thinking through sexuality in this context as well (Grace 2009, 62–64). This juxtaposition, however, does not take into account the Foucault of “pleasure” – in contrast to the Foucault of sexuality – which forms the starting point of my reflections here.
 20. Winnubst discusses this problem in the context of neoliberal societies that have discovered “pleasure” as a market value and contrasts a calculable pleasure with one that cannot be calculated (Winnubst 2012). On this point, cf. the last chapter of this book.
 21. Elizabeth Grosz summarizes this hopelessness: “Foucault’s antihumanism dismisses consciousness as a mode of active resistance to power’s alignments, but at the same time he seems to strip corporeality itself of its multiplicity of forces” (Grosz, 1994, 147).
 22. The relationship between pleasure and power in Foucault could also be further developed with a discussion of Roland Barthes, who differentiated pleasure as a place beyond power in a clearer way than Foucault (Culler 1983, 76–86).
 23. Another strategy here would be to speak of two different concepts of power. Cf. Tom Roach (2012, 75–76, 79).
 24. Deleuze writes: “Pleasure seems to me to be the only means for a person or a subject to ‘find itself again’ in a process that surpasses it. It is a reterritorialization” (Deleuze 1998, 190). Beckman comments, “Deleuze and Guattari write about pleasure as being an affection of a subject and therefore a way for persons to ‘find themselves in the process of desire that exceeds them’” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 173; Beckman 2011, 12). For a comparison of Foucault’s “pleasure” and Deleuze’s “desire,” see Annamarie Jagose (2013, 2–6). For Luciana Parisi, “pleasure” is the name of a masculine desire, imagined as freedom from material realities, whereas “desire” is on the side of femininity (Parisi 2004, 8).
 25. If we choose Freudian discourse as the starting point for this debate between Foucault and Deleuze, it is worth once again recalling that even in Freud, the concept of “desire,” e.g., with its distinction between pre- and final desire, and with the impossibility of making it intelligible within an economic model, is contradictory in itself, as has already been discussed at the beginning of this chapter and has also been frequently commented on (Bersani 1986; de Lauretis 2008).

26. However, Nick Davis also reminds us of this crucial point from *Anti-Oedipus*: “[...] just because desire does not equal sexuality, entailing many other facts and forms of expression, this ‘does not at all mean that desire is something other than sexuality’” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 116; Davis 2013, 171).
27. The difficulty of naming a “queer event” has been pointed out by Lee Edelman, among others (Edelman 2010). Cf. [Chapter 3](#).
28. Sedgwick also comments: “[...] Foucault seems to me to be far more persuasive in analyzing this massive intellectual blockage than in finding ways to obviate it” (Sedgwick 2011, 293). This difference in mentalities did not go unnoticed by Deleuze, as Beckman reports: “In an interview published in 1986, Deleuze articulates a major difference between himself and Foucault suggesting that whereas Foucault was surprised to find a sustainable resistance in the face of the powers of society, his own surprise is the opposite—that society manages to block all the flows and lines of flight of society” (Beckman 2011, 26).
29. Frida Beckmann comes to a similar conclusion when she writes: “I would argue that as those multiple surfaces rub against each other, a pleasure must be possible that is not about culmination, or ‘e-rectilinear’ pleasure, as Marjorie Worthington would have it (Worthington 2004, 393), but about sexual and deeply pleasurable resonances” (Beckman 2011, 13).
30. For an account of Foucault’s ethical project vis-à-vis institutionalized forms of sexual morality, see, for example, Jeffrey Weeks’ *Invented Moralities: Sexual Values in an Age of Uncertainty* (Weeks 1995).
31. Or fisting. For a reading of fisting, see, for example, Lynne Huffer (2013, 73–90).
32. Lauren Berlant writes, “Perhaps there is no emotional habitus for being queer” (Berlant 2011b, 79). However, this is less about assigning an emotion to the queer archive and more about locating the potential queerness in the structures of emotions.
33. For a queer theory of love, see also Teresa de Lauretis (1994) and Michael Snediker’s discussion of Kaja Silverman’s adherence to the idealization that love engages in (Snediker 2008, 173–75, 180–81).
34. The psychoanalytic perspective on love is obviously not optimistic. In contrast, Bersani uses the concept of narcissism to discuss alternative models of love: “[...] the myth of love can become its truth if we reinvent the relational possibilities of narcissism itself” (Bersani and Phillips 2008, 76).
35. In his commentary on the feminist positions of Dworkin and MacKinnon within the 1980s porno debate, Bersani is very clear in his characterization of a sexuality for which love must appear as an ideological delusion that obscures the relations of violence: “Their indictment of sex—their refusal to prettify it, romanticize it, to maintain that fucking has anything to do with community or love—has had the immensely desirable effect of publicizing, of luckily laying out for us, the inestimable value of sex as—at least certain of its ineradicable aspects—anticommunal, antiegalitarian, antinurturing, anti-loving” (Bersani 2010, 22).
36. This perspective can also be understood historically as an “end” of love (Bauermann 1998, 26).
37. Greif does not waste any thought on the problem of the couple or the institution of the family. Following the tradition of queer theory, Lauren Berlant has evoked the conventionality of such a gesture: “But whatever else it is, love is the paradigmatic form of optimism, the hope for a secured relation of cause to effect a normative way to pursue mastery over the vicissitudes of desire” (Berlant 2000, 443).

38. As Lauren Berlant notes, “It is as though desire were a law of disturbance unto itself to which the subject must submit to become a subject of her own unbecoming” (Berlant 2012a, 26).
39. Berlant thus states: “It has been suggested that women use romantic fantasy to experience the rush of these extremes the way men tend to use pornography, and that fantasizing about intensified feeling can be a way of imagining the thrill of sexual or political control or its loss, or, conversely, a way of overwhelming one’s sexual ambivalence or insecurity with a frenzy of representation” (Berlant 2012a, 97).
40. This raises the question of the value of gay marriage. Unlike Bourdieu (Bourdieu 2001), who clearly opposes gay marriage as an assimilation phenomenon at the end of *Masculine Domination*, Foucault’s position here would presumably be more flexible, as indicated by his remark from the interview on friendship – a quasi-mirror image of the one quoted here – that it is not gay sex but the sight of the happy male couple the morning after that is troubling (Foucault 1989b, 309).
41. Cf. Mike Laufenberg’s *An Army of Lovers Cannot Lose* (Laufenberg 2015, 61–72) where he states that, among other things: “The escape from the molar categories of the sexuality dispositif that we now associate with queer was in fact driven by a desire and a lust to be different with each other: to feel differently, to love differently, to desire differently” (Laufenberg 2015, 69).
42. In the advice book genre, Dossie Easton and Janet W. Hardy have addressed the issue of polyamorousness (Easton and Hardy 1997). Overall, however, their successful book is more of an account of sexual promiscuity, which they also address under the name of “love,” and in this respect offers little guidance for the question of the promiscuity of affects. Some critical questions posed in Hipster Porn, such as the sovereignty of the subject or the negativity of sex, have no place in this practical guide. In this respect, it is a sex-positive, sexual reconciliation project, as one might say with regards to Bersani. For a critical discussion of the polyamorous subculture in neoliberalism, see Volker Woltersdorff (Woltersdorff 2007, 178).
43. Mike Laufenberg also formulates the goal of a reorganization of love: “In order to grant affection through love a constituting capacity, it is necessary to overcome the appropriation of love through sentimentality, romanticization or identity politics. The two predominant corrupted forms of love, the identitarian love between equals (for example, familialism, nationalism, racism) and the fusing love (love as an ideology of becoming one in couple relationships or as a religious love of God; cf. Hardt and Negri 2000, 192ff.), should be opposed by alternatives that do not personalize or essentialize love” (Laufenberg 2015, 70).
44. In addition to self-emptying as part of the structure of the feeling love, its instability, according to Berlant, is also conditioned by a series of contradictions such as conventionality/uniqueness, knowledge/non-knowledge, form/mysteriousness (Berlant 2000).
45. Compare, for example, Bersani’s reading of betrayal in Genet as a gay mode of anti-relationality (Bersani 1995a).
46. A related affective structure is also exposed by other queer theorists and described in terms of its political significance, as Mike Laufenberg summarizes: “Concepts such as that of backwardness (Love 2007), failure (Halberstam 2011) or the unbearable (Berlant and Edelman 2013) are directed against appeals of ‘forward’ and ‘positive’ thinking, against homonormativity, queer pride and arriving in mainstream society. Instead, they insist on experiences of violation and vulnerability and reflect on the extent to which such situations are or could be the starting point for queer political prac-

tices and networks that lead out of individualization” (Laufenberg 2015, 11). While *Butt*’s affective economy shares the instability of these positions, it proceeds affectively differently, as a question of contingency and optimism, as will be further explained in the next chapter.

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Music

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5 Fag Limbo

Anti-masculinist strategies (feyness, embroidery, craft, dithering, laziness, industriousness, sleeping in, hibernation, softness, sibilance, reflection, fandom, shyness, brazenness, star-fucking) characterize Fag Limbo.

(Koestenbaum 2013, 194)

What Does Affective-Sexual Desire Look Like?

Even though the settings in which the *Butt* boys find themselves are bound by the contours of a sexual context, they are not sufficiently explained when viewed through the rehearsed paradigms by which sex and sexuality usually become culturally intelligible. Psychoanalytic theory is only able to make sense of this alternative, post-dramatic, and trivialized representation of sexuality as a form of “non-sexuality”: either *Butt* has nothing to do with sexuality – or sexuality is suppressed in these images of young, hip homos. The other possibility would be to claim that *Butt* affirms a new mode of sexuality that can no longer be grasped through the psychoanalytic paradigm of desire as lack. Even the anti-Lacanian psychoanalytic reception of Bersani, despite its focus on a pre-Oedipal masochism, does not escape scenarios of phallic self-assertion, provoked by ego-shattering.¹ With psychoanalysis, sexuality cannot be conceptualized beyond power, violence, and death.² In post-pornography, however, sex and sexuality present themselves as neither charged with historically specific forms of power that would endow them with a sense of urgency (and also theatricality), nor do they appear tied to psychic processes in which a dissolution of the subject is experienced as an existential drama. To understand this version of a sexual culture that presents itself with *Butt*, I proposed the notion of *affective sexualities*, through which the categorical difference between the sexual and the affective is deconstructed: sex and affects would be situated on the same plane.

I think that the conflation of sex and affect, which *Butt* practices with its images, is better conceived of through the notion of pleasure as sexual

sensation beyond historical configurations of sexuality – a sexuality beyond sexuality – and with a notion of queer, incoherent love as distinct from its psychoanalytic conception as developed in the previous chapter. Foucault and Berlant prove to be decisive for a new understanding of the relationship between sexuality and affect, insofar as their conceptual reworkings manage, from different directions, to dethrone the mythologies that underlie psychoanalysis.

With his allusion to “bodies and pleasures” at the end of *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, Foucault announced a post-psychoanalytic project, without allowing the sexual to recede into the background as we find in Deleuze and Guattari. In the context of *Hipster Porn*, I understand Foucault’s pleasures as a sexual specification of an affectively conceived Deleuzian desire. With Foucault, affect can be re-sexualized without falling back into the historical anchors of a dispositive of sexuality, of which we are reminded by Foucault’s famous words in the interview “An Ethics of Pleasure”: “I would say that one must use sexuality to discover or invent new relations. To be gay is to be in a state of becoming” (Foucault 1989, 370). With Berlant, Phillips, and Taylor, I subsequently charted that field from the opposite direction, where, in contrast to an affective contextualization of the sexual in the dialogue between Foucault and Deleuze, the focus was placed on a sexual contextualization of affect. This path essentially followed the work of Lauren Berlant insofar as in the texts by Berlant, love can finally be seen to become a “queer feeling.” Within the constellation of these texts, the Foucauldian concept of sexuality is further developed through pleasure as contextualized in terms of affect theory, and following Berlant, the distinction between love and desire, is undermined. Accordingly, Phillips and Taylor ask:

Are we, Freud’s followers wondered, committed to our desires and their gratifications, or to other people? And what, if anything, could such a distinction mean? Do we crave (sensuous) satisfaction as so-called drive theorists say, or do we crave intimacy and relationships? Do we want good company or good sex, if we have to choose? If kindness, in its anti-sentimental sense, is at the heart of human desiring, then these become merely false choices, the wrong way of talking about what goes on between people.

(Phillips and Taylor 2009, 60)

This chapter is about the question of what goes on between the *Butt* boys. How does the scattering and mixing of affect and sexuality make itself noticeable? What can an affective-sexual desire that bypasses the antagonism of love and desire look like? And what would be the shape of a love that no longer positions itself in opposition to desire, but – following Phillips and Taylor – transforms itself into a form of kindness that is not necessarily focused on the category of the person? How is an affective-sexual

field structured if it no longer reaches back to a myth of origin and does not necessarily produce hierarchical oppositions? What, then, distinguishes “sexuality” from “love”?

So far, my explanations have taken the photographs in *Butt* as a starting point. Primarily, they have been discussed in relation to new media and to the history of gay pornography. In this chapter, the frame of reference is different: on the one hand, the photographs are discussed in the context of the magazine itself, i.e., I include the interviews and the headlines that summarize various photo series and interviews. Before going there, however, I will first approach the question of the representational style employed by the zine by looking at films from *New Wave Queer Cinema* as it emerged around 2010, toward the end of the publication of *Butt*'s print version. As a post-pornographic genre, *New Wave Queer Cinema* belongs to the cultural context of the fanzine. In both cases, what is at stake is a different form of desire as compared to gay mainstream pornography. What stories can be told in this way and what images can be shown? How are these “new queer assemblages” (Davis 2013, 21) to be understood?

Sex beyond Porn

Through the images it disseminates, pornography asserts the phantasmatic membership of its models to a homogeneous social group without portraying a social reality. Professional occupation and everyday life, for example, play a role in gay porn only insofar as they can be fetishized to authenticate masculinity and phallic power: The trucker, the cowboy, the construction worker (or the teacher, medical doctor, or banker). In contrast, the documentary realness reflected in the body image of the *Butt* boys, a dethronement of the white porn subject, opens up a different spatial and social framework for the sexual-affective event that is not pornographically coded from the outset.

With filmic post-pornography productions such as the documentary series *In Their Room* (Mathews 2009–12) and the feature film *I Want Your Love* (Mathews 2013) by Travis Mathews, who collaborated with *Butt* on these projects, sex is not portrayed as a “holiday from life” as in commercial porn, but as part of everyday life instead. Along with *Weekend* (Andrew Haigh 2011) and *Keep The Lights On* (Ira Sachs 2012), Mathews' films have been hailed as part of the “New Wave Queer Cinema” movement in reference to the New Queer Cinema of the early 1990s (Walters 2012).³ Its aesthetic is opposed, not only to commercial pornography but also to mainstream gay feature films of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, such as, for example, the US-version of the TV series *Queer as Folk* (2000–05).⁴

The interest in narrative experimentation which is typical of New Wave Queer Cinema is also noticeable in the attempt to reinvent the relationship between sexual and non-sexual representation. Sex and non-sex are shown

together: In the San-Francisco-part of *In Their Room*, we see young men in front of a webcam, jerking off. They are lying on their beds, sleeping, cuddling – in couples or alone. They talk about their favorite music and their sexual preferences. Some of them are not necessarily into fucking. “There is nothing better than being with a guy who is also a good person,” says Dino, who is portrayed in the film.

Distinct rules determine the representation of sexuality in cinema (Paasonen 2011, Loc 1748/3979); the focus and explicitness of sex scenes are calculated within the narrative context of porn. The mixing of sexual and non-sexual scenes as represented in New Wave Queer Cinema is an exception. This is true as much for the documentary style of *In Their Room* as for the feature films of that period. Yet, explicit sex scenes are not necessarily smoothly integrated into non-sexual narratives. The manner in which the negotiation between the sexual and the non-sexual might lead to an incoherence with regards to the film as a whole has been discussed regarding the French feature film *Théo & Hugo* (Ducastel and Martineau 2016). The movie begins with a 20-minute depiction of group sex in a Parisian sex club before it leads to a non-pornographic plot – the love story between two men, that the title announces. In the reviews of the film, this filmic experiment was either lamented as a violation of genre – after the preponderance of sex scenes, there could no longer be a credible love story – or celebrated as an expansion of cinematic viewing habits. Why are these collisions of porn and non-pornographic representations seen as so problematic?⁵

What interests me about this conflict between the depiction of pornographic and non-pornographic film action is not so much the question of what kind of narrative logic becomes possible within post-pornographic films that mix genres, but, conversely, what alternative understanding of sexuality can be generated with these almost casual depictions of sex. From a theoretical perspective, the following is at stake: does post-pornography succeed in depicting a different reality of desire, or is post-pornography no longer about desire at all? This question, which I want to address with the notion of *affective sexualities* in contrast to psychoanalytical or Foucauldian conceptions of sexuality, is grounded in this chapter in the specific material of *Butt*. The first approach to an alternative representation of the sexual has already been presented in the first chapter through the reference to the Realcore aesthetics of amateur porn as described by Susanna Paasonen: “They do not always desire, perform, or enjoy according to generic scripts and choreographies. These ‘failures’ increase the sense of authenticity [...] the flow of action is disrupted as people start laughing, pause, and rearrange themselves” (Paasonen 2011, Loc 1408/3979). In the context of post-pornography, this deviation from pornographic scripts, made possible and popularized by new media technology, forms the prerequisite for redesigning the relationship between pornography and non-pornography beyond the rules of pornographic vs. non-pornographic representation. What are other dynamics of sexuality and desire brought

into play when “authenticity” and “immediacy” replace the exuberant fantasy of perfect bodies as pornographic capital?

In the three parts of *In Their Room* by Travis Mathews, there are detailed sex scenes, including erections, penetrations, and orgasms. In terms of sexual explicitness, Mathews’s documentaries concerning the lives of young gay men in San Francisco, London, and Berlin are pornographic. Yet even though the sexual always occupies a prominent place, these pornographic sequences are nevertheless part of a broader documentation of everyday life. The dramaturgical function of sex in the context of the respective scenes varies substantially each time, but sex is never glamourized via an isolated representation as it is in mainstream porn – in a parallel to a musical number – and it is not flaunted in its formulaic nature. Sex is also not necessarily presented as the realization of a romantic climax or, conversely, as a counterprogram to the emotional weight of love. Rather, sex is shown as an everyday activity that the camera captures when accompanying the boys over the course of one or more days. In this context, *In Their Room* also documents a casual media lifestyle: FaceTime, Skype, or the camera function of a dating platform are practically always running in the background. The understated nature of a sexualized media sociality sets the mood in this space of diffuse intimacy: a low-affect lifestyle sways all activities.

In contrast to the Netporn aesthetic, with which it shares an interest in every day, the queer post-pornographic strategy as pursued in the films of New Wave Queer Cinema, is however not limited to documenting imperfect bodies, but rather ties them into a field of narrative strategies beyond strictly pornographic modes of narration. In the episodes of *In Their Room*, various details are brought to the fore and the cinematic excitement is not monopolized by the intention to arouse viewers. The young men portrayed do not only appear as sexual subjects or objects. Rather, placed in a diffuse affective environment, they reveal a transition from a sexual to an aesthetic subject. Beyond its application in the films of New Wave Queer Cinema, this strategy is also developed in a particular way in the pages of *Butt*. I would thus like to take *Butt*’s contribution to post-pornography seriously as a proposal to construct and present sexuality differently – as *affective sexualities*. As explained in [Chapter 3](#), this is a counterprogram to the commodification of the male body in gay porn; representing not only a critique of the representation of the body alone but also of sexuality itself.

Post Sex in *Butt*

I began this section by discussing films directly inspired by *Butt* or made in the context of post-porn culture. Looking beyond the cinematographic, it is important to note that the principle of a non-pornographic narrative framing of pornographic moments can be extended to the interviews and their headlines in *Butt*. Indeed, *Butt* has a specific strategy to offer here. It provides the genre of pornography, to which it refers with its title (albeit

in a non-phallic, belittling, and ironic way: “butt” as opposed to the more sexual “ass”) and its photographs of male nudes, with a narrative context that does not focus on standardized criteria of sexual performance – such as bodily characteristics, or sexual activity. Sex in *Butt* is not celebrated as excess or visual intoxication. The zine only sometimes shows explicit sexual acts; occasionally, erections or cum are visible in the photo spreads. Yet even in those instances, the visual signs of sexual arousal and activity do not belong to a pornographic setting that would claim to provide evidence of increasing arousal and final satisfaction. *Butt* does not stage sexuality according to the sequence of foreplay/action/cum-shot that we find in mainstream pornography – in both moving images but also in stills – instead, the zine follows a gaze that fragments the sexual scene rather than holding it together chronologically.

In terms of individual photographs, this means that the *Butt* boys are not classical pin-ups, captured at the height of sexual ecstasy, condensed into a moment of obscenity; offering a sexual fantasy while displaying their body parts; or otherwise photographed in a pose that signals a readiness for sex. The pictures in *Butt* do not necessarily function as jerk-off templates.⁶ A situation is captured that refers to sex – the models are usually seen in private rooms in a state of partial or complete nudity – without directly showing or demanding it, marking a difference with regards to New Wave Queer Cinema whose films typically contain complete sex scenes. Sexual experiences are often reported in the interviews that accompany the images in the zine, but are narrated in terms that move beyond the intensity of “sperm stories” (Aydemir 2007, XIX). The nonchalance of the boys as they are represented through both image and text has also to do with the fact that the sex may already have happened – or that perhaps they are still waiting for it. Placed in the midst of a sexualized world, they are just taking a break.

Within this temporal context, the images in *Butt* resemble the making-of material of mainstream porn, which shows the stars relaxed between takes and is either added as bonus material on DVDs, or sometimes also marketed, offering the value of Realcore, as a genre of its own. Not infrequently, these breaks from hardcore action are caused by “accidents” during filming, moments when the porn actors can no longer sustain the smooth mechanics of the pornographic action demanded by their mission to produce continuous arousal, and start laughing, for example, when a movement or gesture misses its target.

Sex forms the frame for the portraits of the *Butt* boys rather than being the centerpiece of the images portrayed in the zine. The models are depicted in a diffuse, sexualized environment, but sex has no urgency here. The *Butt* boys are chronicled from the perspective of a relaxed friendliness, that, as per Phillips and Taylor, could also be termed *kindness* (cf. Chapter 4). The nonchalance of the pictures in *Butt* is reminiscent of the mood at the end of a sex party, when people chat over a beer at the bar (gay men talk *after* sex and not before). This post-pornographic, intimate atmosphere is

characteristic of the conversations and images in *Butt*. In its renunciation of stereotypical sexual action, the zine is hardly porn, and can be contrasted to 1970s fanzines such as *Straight to Hell*, which display sexually explicit images accompanied by stories in which the narrators proudly share their sexual adventures.⁷

Narrative Framing

The post-phallic aesthetic that is presented with the bodies in *Butt* as a lack of perfection, can be seen, for example, in the story “Normal Bodies” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2005, 46), and is more generally echoed in the pages of *Butt* through the post-sexual mood of its images and texts. The bodies are furthermore depicted in a non-pornographic way to the extent that they are placed alongside objects that do not belong to a sexual archive and which, distracting the gaze, detract from the sexual content of the image. As concerns the photos in *Butt*, this contextualization first takes place through the decisions about what else is visible within the frame of the picture: the models are usually photographed alone, often in their private rooms. They do not inhabit the impersonal fantasy space of gay mainstream porn; the shots follow an interest in documenting everyday life. Sex, in the sense of Foucault’s historical analysis as a pleasure that becomes intelligible primarily via genital organization, does not gain dominance here over the visual representation. Sometimes objects indicating preferences or hobbies can be seen. In the interviews and their headings, these seemingly superfluous details are mentioned in the same breath as more explicitly sexual topics: “Fashion Homo From Germany Grew Up Naked And Makes Clothes In Paris” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 285), “Tommy Deluca Young and Hung Porn Actor From Long Island Just Turned Twenty And Stuff” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 375). This specificity of post-pornographic narration, including sexual and non-sexual aspects, as exemplified by the aesthetic of *Butt* is initially best understood through the question of subjectivity.

Subjective Pluralism

Homosexual desire is related in particular to the pre-personal state of desire.

(Hocquenghem 1978, 106)

In the second chapter, in analyzing post-phallic hipster masculinity, I concluded that the images of masculinity in *Butt* can only be understood as queer to an extent: While non-mainstream bodies are presented here, they also follow an attempt at authenticating masculinity through the construction of naturalness. Furthermore, as I illustrated in [Chapter 3](#), *Butt* reorganizes and denaturalizes bodies in the process of *male becoming*. The

question, at this point, is to what extent the narrative framing of male bodies through image and text now allows us to confirm these claims regarding the originality of *Butt*'s project. This question concerning the manifestation of *Butt*'s alternative affective-sexual universe arises as much for the content of the image as for the interviews and, especially, their headings.

The combination of a non-mainstream sexiness with a broader interest – a habit or a hobby – is one of the prerequisites that need to be fulfilled in order to be featured on the pages of *Butt*.⁸ Over and above sexual anecdotes, the focus of the stories is on everyday occurrences or bizarre habits: “Thomas Engel Hart Is A Non-Vegetarian American Menswear Fashion Designer Living In Paris Who Loves To Be Beaten Up Every Now And Then And Is Married To A Lesbian” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 347). As a rule, the headlines combine a sexual with a non-sexual element. This technique is also applied to the pictures. For example, manual skills or the playing of an instrument are juxtaposed with sexuality, as in the photo spread of Andy Butler of the pop group Hercules and Love Affair in *Butt* No. 23 (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2008a). In the opening picture, Butler is seen in his underwear on a bed while holding a clarinet.

Butt celebrates sexuality on par with other interests, pursuits, or individual characteristics. The sexual is not sequestered from everyday life through rituals. About Xavier Simonneau, who is a floriculturist by profession and works as an escort at night, we learn: “French Horticulturist Makes up to 1500 Euros per Night” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2007, 25). Editor Jop van Bennekom comments on *Butt*'s narrative principle and the manner in which it is further reflected through the headlines accompanying the images and texts: “We always try to make a connection between sexuality and for instance doing dishes and psychotherapy” (Van Bennekom in Needham 2006, 42). With these portraits, everyday life and sexuality are positioned on the same plane. The combination of disparate moments, which always include sexuality, and are connected by the use of the conjunction “and,” can be identified as a stand-out feature in the presentation of the *Butt* boys. In *Butt*'s world, all kinds of things, including sex, seem to be of equal value: “There is no hierarchy of being” (Grosz 1994, 167).

Along similar lines, Wolfgang Tillmans – *Butt*'s “signature photographer” (LaBruce 2006) – has this to say about his practice of exhibiting, which includes photographic reproduction in small- and large-formats, images of details, and panoramic shots: “If one thing matters, everything matters” (cited in Holert 2017, 110). Or, as Mark Godfrey comments, “Tillmans also assigns equal importance to iconic and more ordinary images” (Godfrey 2017, 34). Against this background, I would suggest, that one can understand the post-sexual situations in which the *Butt* boys find themselves as assemblages, following Elizabeth Grosz's reading of Deleuze: “[...] significantly, an assemblage follows no central or hierarchical order, organization, or distribution; rather, it is, like the contraption or gadget, a conjunction of different elements on the same level” (Grosz 1994,

167). That is to say that Deleuze and Guattari understand the logic of conjunction that creates assemblages as a structural principle of a non-Oedipal desire without lack (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 5; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 25). As such, the idea of assemblages has also arisen in Guy Hocquenghem's analysis of non-heteronormative subjectivities:

[...] desire is at first a universally distributed set of diverse and non-exclusive drives, of erotisms based on the plugging in of organs according to the 'and/and', rather than the 'either/or' mode.

(Hocquenghem 1978, 117)

Within this Deleuzian tradition, affective-sexual subjectivity is not understood as an isolated, demarcated site. For the authors of *Anti-Oedipus*, subjectivity is always partial, in the sense that it connects to details of objects and bodies. To the extent that these attachments are non-exclusive and dynamic, they are also plural: "A partial subjectivity—pre-personal, polyphonic, collective and machinic" (Guattari 2012, 21). With Guattari, these "heterogeneous modes of subjectivation" (Guattari 2012, 15) can thus be understood as "subjective pluralism" (Bertelsen and Murphie 2010, Loc. 1950/5490). The affective-sexual subject is a schizo-subject engaged in various concatenations, a desiring-machine whose function is to keep recombining states, interests, and attachments to persons and objects in the course of desire, without installing a regulative principle such as, for example, the pornographic subject.

Multiple Personalities

Queer zines have moved from the community-building, messy mash-up to the more singular expression of individual identity.

(Bronson and Aarons 2014, 5)

The *Butt* boys are never merely porn figures organized around a concept of sex. The journalistic and aesthetic approach of *Butt* insists on this violation of genre. The models emerge in the environment of original, creative concatenations. To this end, in Guattari we can read the juxtaposition of two different concepts of subjectivity: "[...] either we objectify, reify, 'scientitize' subjectivity, or, on the contrary, we try to grasp it in the dimension of processual creativity" (Guattari 2012, 13). Through narrative framing, *Butt* designs its protagonists as schizo-subjects attached to individual objects or declaring certain preferences that are concatenated and combined through the use of the conjunction "and." The events mentioned in *Butt* serve to superficially characterize its heroes; their descriptions avoid any form of interiority. The *Butt* boys show no symptoms that would invite a hermeneutic reading of their desire. In the interviews, they present forms of gossip or chatter. The stories and portraits do not open up any interpretive space

for a study of deep psychological structures. They do not say much more than what has already been announced in the headlines.

The original and witty combination of themes in the headings that are the hallmark of *Butt* together with the pictorial compositions and their variety of objects invite the reader to consider them in terms of Deleuze's notions of subject and desire. Yet, the *Butt* boys are only positioned in an experimental context to a certain extent. While they violate boundaries of pornography as a genre with their fusion of the everyday and the sexual, the alternative connections through which they are presented nevertheless stem from a recognizable repertoire of incidents, routines, hobbies, occupations, or professions that they pursue. For all their originality, the individual portraits are designed within a familiar framework.

The reporting in *Butt* does not rely on the surprising combinatorics of deterritorializing forces alone. If the contingent everyday world of *Butt* has a destabilizing effect vis-à-vis the genre of pornography, it simultaneously introduces new conventions. What forces are at work here? This is not an easy question to answer. For this is not – following a Deleuzian, Freudian, or Foucauldian model – about a reterritorialization of subjects via the creation of biographical meaning or biopolitical positioning. The *Butt* boys do not become case studies – they become original people. Their individuality is expressed through the formulaic nature of a slogan: the headline of the interview. In the context of the gay fanzine, they are to be read as drafts of alternative typifications of masculinity and maleness, as discussed in the second and third chapters. How are we then to understand this newly articulated form from a theoretical perspective?

At this point, Michael Snediker's concept of personhood as distinct from the structuralist and post-structuralist notion of the subject is helpful.⁹ Snediker criticizes queer theory for its reductive and schematic notion of the subject. In a queer studies-context the individual person or personality is always placed under suspicion – a position that, for Snediker, now seems suspect itself: “[...] queer theory's suspicious relation to persons has itself become suspiciously routinized, if not taken for granted in its own right” (Snediker 2008, 4). The tendency to understand the subject in a deterministic manner as the result of symbolic, social, biopolitical, or economic forces is understood by Massumi to be a central characteristic of post-structuralism as a whole: “It was all about the subject without subjectivism: a subject ‘constructed’ by external mechanisms” (Massumi 2002, 2). Snediker proposes an alternative concept of the subject, in which the subject is no longer to be understood as an effect of symbolic power structures alone. For his queer analysis of poems, he programmatically declares that: “[...] queer optimism insists on thinking about personhood—as opposed to subjectivity—in terms of a durability neither immediately nor proleptically subject to structuralist or poststructuralist scrutiny” (Snediker 2008, 3).

That is to say that the reading of poetry does not only operate within the bounds of the notion of a structuralist subject. While the structuralist and

the post-structuralist subject is inevitably conditioned by historical forces and symbolic structures, personhood, in contrast, names – optimistically – the (poetic) possibility that the subject might be affected by events. Events cannot simply be attributed to an ideological conditioning of the subject, insofar as they emerge out of the contingency of an everyday world; a world that is not fully determined by ideology but could rather be understood as a temporary solidification of different forces (Davis 2013, 51). *Butt* finds these moments of surprise in incidents that, at first, seem hardly worth mentioning: “What started out as a more fashion fag-based magazine has branched out to include all sorts of sordid sissies: a macho cow farmer who loves udders and deals with fireworks on the side, a random boring fag” (LaBruce 2006, 11).

In order not to play into the reterritorializing categories of “person” or “personality,” it is crucial that personhood is not conceived here as psychological interiority, but primarily in temporal terms. Personhood is no more than the summary of a series of events registered or experienced. In this, duration thus becomes the framing point for subjectivity. Lauren Berlant describes the temporal dimension of an affective subject prior to a structural understanding of the subject:

People develop worlds for their new intuitions, habits of ordinariness, and genres of affect management in recognition of the unfinished business of the historical moment they are living on in, where they live the rhythm of the habit called personality that can never quite settle into a shape.

(Berlant 2011, Loc. 1276/4461)

If we read Snediker together with Berlant, personhood (or “personality” in Berlant’s words) appears as a string of affective moments, occupations, and various forms of interest that can be repeated and thus form habits. They are differentiated among themselves by different rhythms. In effect, there are two different forces at work here, deterritorialization through affective dispersion on the one hand and the formation of personhood on the other. Through habit and rhythm, a schizo-subject achieves form. The *Butt* boy has not yet become a subject in a historical or structural sense. He inhabits a space of everyday creativity in which we already live, as Wayne Koestenbaum reminds us: “Art is not a difficult achievement. It is where we already live, and it is how we identify, indeed, that we live” (Koestenbaum 2013, 200). In their habits, the interviewees in *Butt* are not autonomous masculine subjects,¹⁰ but are closer to a notion of provisional and vulnerable masculinity/maleness, as Tom Roach also described in the context of HIV and AIDS (Roach 2012, 53), and as was popularized prior to *Butt* in the 1990s through the photographs of Wolfgang Tillmans (Godfrey 2017, 20). These subjects of provisional and vulnerable masculinity/maleness inhabit what Wayne Koestenbaum describes as the aesthetic space of *Fag Limbo* (Koestenbaum 2013, 194).

The temporary, somewhat experimental, personhood of the *Butt* boys echoes the mobile forms of mutating male bodies and affective-sexual attachments discussed in [Chapters 2](#) and [3](#). They extend into their environments, through a preference for objects or for contingent activities; they are on a territory that is undominated by forms of control and knowledge. They are always good for a surprise.

Fetishism

It is not entirely clear whether the models in *Butt* are simply self-confident about their sexiness, or whether they have perhaps become indifferent to the question of attractiveness altogether. In any case, on the pages of *Butt*, being attractive does not have to be permanently proven, as is common in pornography that relies on the phallic order of representation, following the underlying principle wherein: “Your phallus is constantly threatened: you are in constant fear of losing a phallus which was difficult to win in the first place” (Hocquenghem 1978, 102–103). The initially asserted authenticity of a post-phallic masculinity – the imperfect neo-bear whose body and its details (hair, bodily fluids) are documented rather than pornographically staged – is challenged in its naturalness at the same time. The photographic



Figure 5.1 Julian photographed by Wolfgang Tillmans.

Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). *Butt*. No. 16. Summer 2006, 7–12, 10–11.

focus is on individual body zones and postures, through this *Butt* is testing and documenting what the male body is capable of, what it can do.

A series of pictures like the one photographed by Wolfgang Tillmans for the story of “Julian Ganio: The Gerontophile Poster Boy of the London Scene” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 92–102), focuses on non-sexual poses where the naked body is depicted in an everyday environment: Julian lying in bed, dressed in underwear, photographed from behind; or Julian, again from behind, squatting naked in front of a cooker in the kitchen. In both cases, the curves of the male body come to the fore: the round shoulders, the back, the hips, the buttocks. *Butt*’s point of view is not only a statement against the strict body politics of a commercialized gay culture, in which every body must be slim or muscular, it also follows possible variations of alternative bodies and the poses they can take, as seen in the photo series “The Ball” by Eduard Xandri from the same year (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 140–43). The model, who in this case remains unnamed, demonstrates various positions regarding the use of a large gym ball: the equally heavy and hairy man, bearded and half bald, is lying on his back, holding the ball between his legs; or he puts his legs on the floor, supporting himself with his back on the ball, eyes toward the ceiling; and finally we see him lying on top of the ball on his stomach, legs bent, and supported by his hands which are stretched out in front of him. Certainly, the photo series can be seen as a documentation of gymnastics or of yoga exercises. Nevertheless, at the same time, it plays out various positions that can be taken by the gay bottom during sex. The title too, of course, has a sexual meaning: “The Ball,” in the plural form, is vernacular for testicles. In addition to the alternative body politics and the pornographic humor at display here, these pictures are remarkable in the manner in which they present the male body in its softness, flexibility, and stretchability. Here maleness is not defined in terms of hardness and stiffness, but through the practice of taking different positions and presenting the sometimes surprising (or funny) forms which emerge as a result.

This technique puts the astonishing variability of the male body on display, moreover the narrative references in *Butt*, together with the connections that are made between sex and non-sex, complement this procedure. The mobility of sex/gender construction, which vacillates between claiming a new naturalness for gay masculinity and a mutability of the male body, is posited within an open field of every day in which original object attachments can be developed.

However, should one not want to discard psychoanalysis all too easily, it might nevertheless be useful to briefly discuss a psychoanalytical concept that may allow us to talk about affective attachments, a concept that names sexual dynamics and at the same time reaches beyond sexuality in a genital sense: fetishism. Through the concept of fetishism, with its creative productivity, its redefined use of body parts and objects, the Oedipal scenario opens up toward a universal “perversion” (Dean 2000). Fetishism

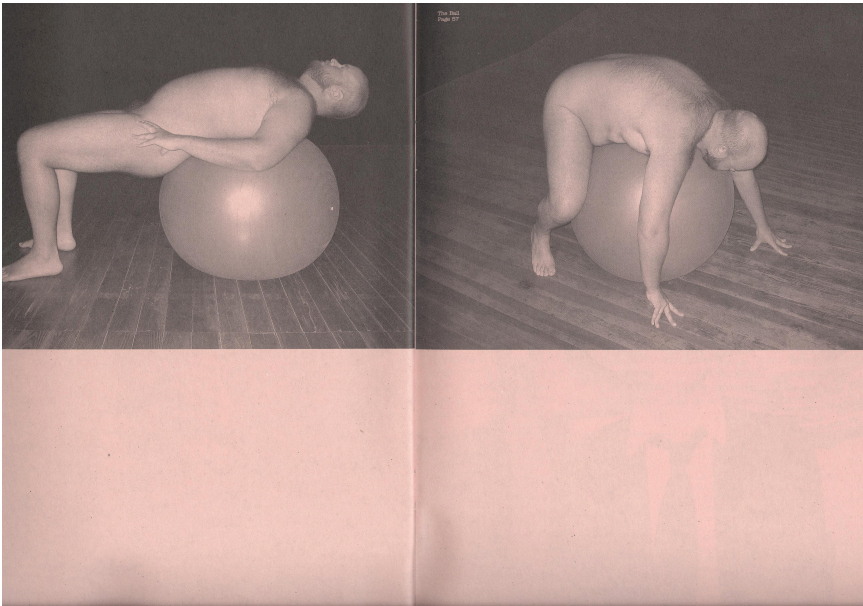


Figure 5.2 “The Ball” photographed by Eduard Xandri.

Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). *Butt*. No. 15. Spring 2006, 53–57, 56–57.

would be an example of the way in which the sexual object is not necessarily determined from the start, and where the sexual goal is not necessarily defined as end pleasure, a description that could well be applied to some of the idiosyncrasies which are evident in *Butt*'s scenarios.

Despite fetishism's denaturalization of the drive, fetishism is however only deserving of its name if it follows the prescription of sexual urgency. Fetishism emerges as a defense against fear, and responds to it with a story, a scene, or an image. In this way, fetishism can always be traced back to the powerful narrative of the phallus (Hocquenghem 1978, 95–96). In the world of different sexual preferences, interests, and hobbies as depicted in *Butt*, however, no coherent system becomes apparent in which object attachments could be explained through an underlying sexual disposition. They are not staged as symptoms. *Butt* tells us that the Paris-based German fashion designer Thomas Engel Hart is not a vegetarian, likes to be beaten from time to time, and is married to a lesbian, but the zine is not interested in what these things might have to do with each other (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 347). The joke – which will be discussed in the next section – consists precisely in advertising this disparate constellation of ideas without offering a proper reading of the signification.

In the sexual-affective scenes of *Butt*, no psychological profile shaped by sexuality dominates the discourse. There are a variety of sexual-affective

interests, but they cannot be deciphered as fetishistic. This possibility of post-psychoanalytical object-relations is also discussed within affect theory, given that “[...] not all invested-in objects are fetishes. It is possible to have a focalizing object that does not induce disavowal or whose structural function is not to enable it” (Berlant and Edelman 2013, 79). To understand the sexual and non-sexual interest of the *Butt* boys as a form of fetishism, therefore, seems like an interpretative exaggeration. In comparison, affect theory has the advantage of making room for the delay in the formation of meaning that is also characteristic of *Butt*. Following Sedgwick, Berlant describes this anti-interpretative quality of affect theory in contrast to Freudian-Marxist analysis, as a reparative rather than a paranoid form of reading: “[...] social attachments are evidenced in practice, including the practices of the senses that are always working in the now and are active and responsive without being expressive, necessarily, of ideologies, or truths, or anything” (Berlant 2011, Loc. 2668/4461).

The interpretative openness of affect theory has the advantage of explaining the narratives in *Butt* in a manner that moves beyond the mere terms of a libidinous cathexis derived from a sexuality that lies at the subject’s center. Otherwise, the stories in *Butt* would merely be psychosexual case studies and its non-sexual incidents could be thus decoded as symptoms. Or are we to assume – referring to the example above – that the homo from Germany is now making clothes in Paris because he grew up naked as a child? (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 285). *Butt* flirts with the psychoanalytic paradigm of interpretation, no doubt, but is far from applying it in all seriousness.

The question behind this debate regarding the applicability of the concept of fetishism is whether the power of sexuality and sex disappears through their trivialization within a network of manifold non-sexual attachments. In other words, can we already understand sexuality in *Butt* in terms of Foucault’s pleasures and thus as affects that no longer enjoy a privilege of meaning but which can be assigned to a combinatorial network of non-hierarchical “and-and” relationships? Does *Butt* already show schizo-sex as just another occasion or habit in the rhythm of a nascent personhood, presenting sexual and non-sexual elements on an equal footing? Is the affective contextualization within *Butt*’s post-pornographic narratives effective in such a way that it overcomes the monopoly of Foucauldian sex as the ground and secret of subjectivity of these young men?

Without a doubt, *Butt* is aiming for a trivialization of sex. This relativization of the authority of sex in the context of affect can be identified as a comical technique, as demonstrated in the combination of sexual and non-sexual elements in the interview headings. Sometimes this results in a corny joke: “Tom the Carpenter is Good with Wood and Likes Men Who Work with Their Hands” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2011). “Wood” is of course also American vernacular for erection. Thus, to answer the question as to whether a reevaluation of the sexual, a banalization of sexuality that

leaves the hierarchy between sex and non-sex behind, is reached, the question concerning *Butt*'s humor must be asked. What is the meaning of *Butt*'s ploy, which turns sex into a joke? In answering this question, it quickly becomes apparent that psychoanalysis has not yet completely lost its claim to the validity within a post-pornographic culture, and while the relevance of a psychoanalytic approach to fetishistic economies is debatable, the psychoanalytic approach to the significance of jokes remains important for an understanding of *Butt*'s project.

Sex and Jokes

When I was already making *Butt*, I realized that there isn't another porn company or magazine that combines sex with a sense of humor.

(Van Bennekom in Needham 2006, 42)

In contrast to the post-pornographic documentary *In Their Room*, *Butt* is not exclusively about vanilla sex. Echoing the models in the gay fanzine *Kink*, the guys in *Butt* always make sure one notices precisely how kinky they are – even if they are not necessarily the pioneers of a sexual avant-garde, as compared, for example, to the bareback subculture that Tim Dean has focused his research upon (Dean 2009, 39). The proclamation of *Butt* boys' kinkiness is evident in the buzzwords Bruce LaBruce collected while browsing through the magazines: “[...] autofellatio, horsehung, gerontophilia, poppers, [...]” (LaBruce 2006, 10). What the subcultural stars in *Butt* share is a celebration of a deviant sexual culture, as expressed in this list of sexual preferences.

The very phenomena that might point to the sublime obscenity of the sexual are part of everyday life. Sexual themes appear prominently, yet they are not given a privileged place in comparison to other activities. Through this contextualization, it seems as if the potentially transgressive nature of sexuality is robbed of its power. But to what extent does the trivialization of sexual kink actually work, we must ask, because trivializing sex and sexuality, following Foucault and Bersani, is no easy task. Is *Butt* staging sexual deviance as uncomplicated friendliness, and thus rejecting the antagonism between desire and kindness discussed in the previous chapter? To decide this, the question of humor proves to be significant.

In the headlines of *Butt*'s stories, sexuality becomes part of a joke. The asserted equivalence of everyday occurrences and occupations on the one hand and sexual preferences and actions on the other can be identified as a humorous technique: “The macho farmer loves udders and deals in fireworks on the side,” “The flower grower works as an escort at night” (LaBruce 2006, 11; Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2007, 25). The joke in the headings is indicative of the fact that a hierarchical system of meaning-making has not yet been replaced by the Deleuzian “and-and” principle when talking about the sexual – at least not completely. For in the combination of

sexual and non-sexual elements, the punchline of the joke in *Butt* still owes itself to the special value of the sexual. What meaning does the joke depend on here, or what meaning is violated through it, in laughter?

To understand this conflict, it is worth taking a brief look at Freud's *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious* and its significance for the mechanics of pornography. Within a phallic system of meaning based on a binary gender system, Freud related the display of female genitalia to the joke (Kofman 1985; Freud 2014, 127–45). According to feminist film theory, the heterosexual male gaze oscillates between the valorization and devaluation of the female body, which is either fetishized or forced to “confess” the act of “deception” and the state of “castration.” The classical dirty joke, which chooses the woman as its object, is always sadistic and functions via an apparently surprising exposure of the woman's body as “castrated.” The same logic of castration, in reverse, is followed by the humor that Constance Penley identified in white-trash porn (Penley 2004). In the alternative history of heterosexual pornography that Penley shares, the mockery of men is staged as a phallic failure (Penley 2004, 317). What is “funny” in both cases is the play on the loss of the phallus, in the case of either the woman's or the man's body. Last but not least, it is humor itself that points here to the fact that phallicity is temporarily suspended, but not replaced. In the feminist joke, an interruption of phallic power can be enjoyed through reassessment, even if this does not necessarily herald the end of the phallic order.

How can the witty – half sexual, half mundane – headlines in *Butt* be related to this economy of castration? Does the humor of *Butt* also follow a mechanism of phallic valorization and devaluation as offered in heterosexual pornography? Do the obscene references of the headlines invoke the power of the sexual in a phallic way – the macho farmer, the escort – before they are stripped of their authority in their juxtaposition to everyday events? Are *Butt*'s jokes staging a kind of “castration humor,” with which the position of the gay man is first phallically valorized, only to be devalued again in ridicule? Even if the interviews, with their contingent dramaturgy, can be seen as the documentation of a diversity of preferences, they generally aim at sexual punchlines: “Marc Jacobs: Friendly Homosexual Fashion Designer Likes Dogs But Finds Fashionable Men Terribly Unsexy” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 364). *Butt*'s off-kilter view is not at the expense of sex, it always includes it. In this trivialization of sex, one is repeatedly reminded of its value: “Tommy Deluca Young and Hung Porn Actor From Long Island Just Turned Twenty And Stuff” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 375). The question, whether phallicity is being ridiculed or asserted in *Butt* is not easy to answer. In any case, the construction of the headings as jokes confirms that even gay sexuality does not necessarily operate beyond phallic power. The “and” of the headings in *Butt* as a non-hierarchical conjunction and expression of an affective desire does not yet comprehend the equal status of sexual and non-sexual elements.

Gay sex humor functions here in such a way that the sex topic, about which one can say, at least, that phallic glamour is not fully absent from (“hung,” “macho”), is both integrated *and* devalued within the list of seemingly arbitrary concatenations. Because of this, *Butt* is still involved in a drama of phallic valorization and devaluation.¹¹ The *Butt* boys cannot really, or at least not permanently, reach a zone of post-phallicity, understood as a network of affects within which pleasures no longer play an extraordinary role (a possibility they so conspicuously flirt with).¹² In its witty play with devaluation and banalization, *Butt* does not yet say goodbye to the signifying power of the sexual that owes itself to the drama of the phallus. Affect theory is a model that can be used to describe attachments that are not localized within institutions and symbolic structures, but whose multiplicity is given as a “hybrid present” (Freeman 2010, 14). Despite its integration in everyday life, in the confrontation of obscenities and banalities, and in its humor, sexuality in *Butt* is not always negotiated beyond the questions that psychoanalysis has attached to the sexual. In the indeterminacy of affect, there would be no joke at all, instead there would be, at most, serenity and cheerfulness – or perhaps even boredom.¹³

If the critical impulse of affect theory is to reveal a structure of potential bonds whose meaning is not yet secured,¹⁴ *Butt*’s cultural work shows how sexuality as a regime of power still co-determines the space of this openness. *Butt*’s humor indicates that sexuality has not yet been fully translated into pleasures. Conversely, the following can also be said: with its post-pornographic affects *Butt* risks becoming post-sexual, yet with the obscene jokes of the headlines, the zine assures itself of its sexual mission. It is in this tension – similar to the oscillation between regimes of masculinity and mutations of maleness I described in [Chapter 3](#) – that the splitting of the subject is situated, lying on the border between *Butt*’s sexuality and its affect.

The significance of obscene, phallic moments has not yet vanished in *Butt*. And yet I hesitate to understand *Butt*’s humor as a variation of the Freudian dirty joke. For *Butt*’s humor does not owe itself solely to the schadenfreude of castration humor, which triumphs over phallic loss of power. *Butt*’s humor and laughter cannot be exclusively explained by the competitive condition based on a binary model in which one either has the phallus or loses it. Could it be that the same-sex nature of *Butt*’s post-pornographic context leads to forms of wit and laughter that no longer seek self-assertion or degradation – or perhaps initiate another form of degradation?

General Castration

In this context, the relationship between sexuality, community, and humor is instructive as it has been discussed within queer studies. Leo Bersani is critical of those readings that see gay sex cultures as a realization of non-violent, utopian social forms, and which would thus stylize sexuality

as a story of reconciliation (Bersani 2010, 22). Without question, Bersani argues, many gay sexual fantasies revolve around the affirmation of phallic power (Bersani 2010, 12–15). Against this queer dystopian vision, Michael Warner has suggested that the positions of power negotiated in gay contexts need not necessarily be understood as affirmations of phallic authority but can also be realized deviantly. In addition to the phallic parade, according to Warner, there is also sexual serenity and humor in gay sex cultures. Far from being a display of competitiveness, sex is conversely understood as an experience of devaluation that gay men have in common, manifested, for example, in shame, “abjection is understood to be a shared condition” (Warner 1999, 35). Ultimately, as Warner reads this form of sexual conspiracy, the experience of sexuality cannot permanently turn into a stage of triumph for anyone. It is precisely this psychological and social quality that is celebrated by queer sex cultures where “castration” is recognized as a general condition of sexuality. Halperin follows Warner in describing how the “ineradicable indignity of sex” within a culture of sexual promiscuity does not necessarily have to be avoided (Halperin 2012, 191). That is to say that an inevitable sexual disreputability can also lead to new forms of community.

The idea of encounters beyond phallic demonstrations of power, that is, the possibility of new social forms discussed by Bersani and Warner, can be related to the question of the joke. By its very structure, the joke is designed as a social model; it must be confirmed by the laughter of the other(s). The joke functions dialogically, without a laugh in response, it will not have been a joke. In this, jokes always show themselves to be political. According to Freud, there are two variations of the joke, which he names “Roman” and “Jewish” because of their different psychic economies (Kofman 1985; Freud 2014, 145–67). In its mockery of the other, the Roman joke establishes a hierarchical opposition, it is based on the juxtaposition of phallus and castration, as is the dirty joke or its inversion as feminist castration humor. In contrast, the self-deprecating Jewish joke offers the narrator and listener a common experience of humiliation. Insofar as it does not stabilize one position at the expense of the other but, as a classic minority joke, invites both to be dragged down together (Halperin 2012, 190–92), the Jewish joke can be understood as a model of a non-hierarchical community.

Are we to understand the gay sex joke, then, analogously to the Jewish one, as a minority joke in which, unlike in castration humor, the phallus does not simply switch sides, for example, from a male to a female position, but rather offers the experience of castration to everybody? Guy Hocquenghem called such a form of gay collectivity, in contrast to a social structure based on phallic competition and sublimated homosexuality, “the anal group” (Hocquenghem 1978, 112). In this light, does *Butt* offer a humor that not only temporarily suspends the phallic, allowing an enjoyment beyond power for the moment of laughter, but brings down the phallic principle itself? To further pursue this question, it is worth having a closer look at the title of the fanzine.

“Butt”

Homosexual desire challenges anality-sublimation because it restores the desiring use of the anus.

(Hocquenghem 1978, 98)

The libidinous cathexis of the anus, which for Hocquenghem is constitutive of the construction of homosexuality as a whole (Hocquenghem 1978, 103), calls into question the universality of the phallic norm. Bersani and Edelman describe sexual anality in its psychic and social meaning as a site of negativity,¹⁵ and thus as potentially outside of the phallic system. Castration, in contrast, nevertheless continues to conjure up the phallus via its absence. The antagonism between phallicity and anality plays itself out on various psychological, social, and economic levels: Identity/loss of identity, public/private, sublimated/desublimated (Hocquenghem 1978, 96). Insofar as from a psychoanalytic perspective, anality becomes the primal scene of privatization and property, for Hocquenghem, a critique of capitalism can also be derived from the resignification of the anus (Hocquenghem 2010). According to Hocquenghem, however, these theoretical possibilities were not realized by the homosexuals of the early 1970s. Especially in gay sex culture, the potential of anality is repeatedly overshadowed by the phallic principle: “The fact that one is also an anus does not defeat the menace weighing on the phallic existence of the queer” (Hocquenghem 2010, 24–25). This situation also makes itself felt, for example, in the limit of pornographic representation as determined by Hocquenghem: “There is no anal pornography” (Hocquenghem 1978, 97).¹⁶ In his analysis of gay pornography Richard Dyer agrees with this apodictic judgment: “Particularly significant here is the fact that although the pleasure of anal sex (that is, of being anally fucked) is represented, the narrative is never organized around the desire to be fucked, but around the desire to ejaculate [...]” (Dyer 1992, 128). Accordingly, there is no drama surrounding an obscene exhibition of the anus in *Butt*’s post-pornography. Here, the anus becomes neither the radical alternative to a phallic economy nor the occasion for a heterosexualization of homosexuality as a repression of the anus’s force. After all, “Butt” as a name does not refer to the obscene dimension of the ass as a zone of sexual pleasure, but functions as a term of endearment. The tone for *Butt* is not set by the aggressive or destructive ass, the one that Hocquenghem speaks of, but rather by the “sweet ass.” *Butt*’s butt receives affective rather than sexual value.

Lee Edelman and Lauren Berlant pointed to such an aesthetic of belittlement precisely in the representation of the anus. Belittlement would be a strategy to take account of the object’s (i.e., the anus’s) negativity. The anus as a belittled object would thus exceed the framework of a phallic economy, without having taken the risk of allowing its environment to be further affected by its negativity. Belittlement would be a diminution of

the potentially threatening object, a kind of erotic regulation: “Perhaps, though, the very disturbance that the negativity of sex can induce makes it logical that sex without optimism would seek the shelter of adorability, invoking the familiarity, the recognizability of its aesthetic” (Berlant and Edelman 2013, 15). As an aesthetic technique, cuteness – as in naming the zine “Butt” – can filter the negativity of anal sexuality without making it disappear, as Sianne Ngai also elaborates, “[...] cuteness is a way of sexualizing beings and simultaneously rendering them unthreatening” (Ngai 2012, 72). For Ngai, “cute,” along with “interesting” and “zany,” are the significant aesthetic categories of the present (Ngai 2012, 1–2), within a culture shaped by digital representation and its reception.¹⁷

The title “Butt” indicates the moment in which an affective attachment to objects has afflicted the sexual. “Butt” denotes the transformation of a sexual into an aesthetic object through the mode of belittlement. *Butt* programmatically negotiates the question of its sexual innocuousness. Despite witty allusions to more explicit sexual scenarios in which amorality and subversion still play a role, sexuality in *Butt* repeatedly sets out to become harmless and “cuteness,” writes Sianne Ngai, is precisely that which aestheticizes a position of powerlessness (Ngai 2012, 64): “These images of indifference, insignificance, and ineffectuality all point to a deficit of power [...]” (Ngai 2012, 18). Hocquenghem furthermore states: “The fact remains that homosexuality can only escape heterosexuality by becoming a relation of weaknesses, of non-rivalry, or non-property, that is, by inverting male paranoia into schizophrenia” (Hocquenghem 2010, 50). Sex in *Butt*’s world of Fag Limbo thus becomes a kind of “loser sex.” It is not the extraordinariness of pleasures that push the sexual subject to its limit, as in the case of fist-fucking or S/M, but conversely their minimization and trivialization, a way of being almost uninvolved, up to the point of indifference, over which the subject of sexuality in *Butt* stumbles.

Interim Result

To summarize the argument thus far: *Butt* plays a double and even triple game in relation to sex and sexuality. In a first step, sex and sexuality are trivialized. The leveling of sexual power through its subsumption in everydayness leads to a more general trivialization of sex and sexuality, “Fashion Homo From Germany Grew Up Naked [...]” (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2006, 285). Sex and sexuality are stripped of their obscene power, the phallic is temporarily suspended. It is precisely in the necessity of this gesture, however, that the historical hegemony of sexuality is still documented. To the extent that *Butt*’s humor revolves around the question of the sexual, the principle of phallic sexuality is recalled again. Yet *Butt*’s humor cannot be reduced to the aggressiveness of castration humor. In the gay context, it offers a more general castration that moves toward the cheerfulness of the “anal grouping desire.” This radical negativity as an

alternative to the phallic principle is far from being realized as transgressive obscenity, but aesthetically presented in the form of belittlement, of all things. A process of aesthetization has already been seen to determine *Butt*'s representation of masculinity as male becoming. Gender and sex detach themselves from a dispositive of sexuality and are turned into aesthetic forms. This movement continues on the level of content, through the images, the interviews, and headlines in the zine, which offer a more diffuse, post-sexual interest in the environment. The headlines not only comment on the photos or follow the function of summarizing the themes of the interviews, but performatively display *Butt*'s aesthetic technique of combining sexual and non-sexual elements.

The gaze in *Butt* wanders back and forth between sexual and aesthetic interest. While the affective-aesthetic gaze moves away from the sexualized body and turns to all kinds of objects and situations, it also returns to it, though not necessarily with a sexual interest. The images in *Butt* document a sexually inspired scene at the moment when sexuality has lost its urgency, post porn. They take place in the less determined space opened up by the wittiness of the headlines. As a result of *Butt*'s humor, a general cheerfulness spreads.¹⁸ The *Butt* boys want and need nothing. For the time being, they have left their involvement in sexual scenes behind, hence the seductive ordinariness of *Butt*'s images. They promise an aesthetic way of life in which sex, as a series of affects, as pleasures, can move in any direction. Almost as if sex had become boring,¹⁹ and the producers of *Butt* are themselves not afraid to deploy the headline "Boring Interview" (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2005, 54).

Special Interest

Beyond a dramatic sexuality, *Butt*'s humor opens up an aesthetic space in which new affects or pleasures are constantly actualized "as an ontology always coming to formation" (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, Loc. 180/5490). The schizo-subject, achieving the status of personhood, no longer reacts to its environment with a libidinous desire, but rather with interest, affectively, sexually. At this point, interest is to be understood as a translation of Deleuzian post-psychoanalytical desire, as a desire that is not exclusively sexual. Interest would be a term that can encompass pleasures and also queer love, and in its vagueness tends to treat different things in the same manner. Without a core or intention of the subject to determine its direction, this kind of interest would be more a form of disposition.

The category of "interest" received much attention within affect theory, contemporary aesthetic theory, and media theory (Ngai 2012; McGlotten 2013, 74). Interest is described in the context of new economies of attention within a digital culture, as a possible attitude that remains when the subject is confronted with an abundance of information whose emergence it can still register yet not meet with any further engagement. From a media-skeptical

perspective, interest can be seen as the decay of a critical consciousness. More generously, though, it can be understood as a non-normative, potentially different, access to the world.

In the discussion of media technologies, the vague category of “interest” plays a more specific role, insofar as media follow the mandate of documenting reality. Susan Sontag, for example, saw a connection between the emergence of an aesthetics of the interesting and the history of photography: “[...] the practice of photography is now identified with the idea that everything in the world could be made interesting through the camera” (Sontag quoted in Ngai 2012, 5). There are two main issues here. In a mediated world, technically available forms of registering and documenting achieved by various recording apparatuses have become a value in themselves: the world is recorded. With the popularity of new technologies, the possibilities of documented objects and events have also been increased. Whenever a recording device is available, everything can be registered and thus become “interesting.” In this environment, the position of the subject changes. It no longer insists on a hermeneutic decipherment vis-à-vis the world, the scene of reading a book no longer serves as a metaphor for accessing the world. The subject now understands itself as a perceptual apparatus in accordance with visual media. “Interest” is the relationship between a subject as a perceptual apparatus and a world available for documentation. If the aesthetic, psychological, and social potentials of this situation are not to be harnessed from the outset, the subject as the camera cannot merely be understood as the decay of a critical consciousness.

In my reading of the images and texts of the gay fanzine *Butt*, this meaning of “interest” specific to media technologies coincides with its meaning in sexual cultures. In the world of *Butt*, there are several things that are “interesting.” In this environment, men are also not just sexy, but interesting, as the subheading of the magazine, which has been changed several times in the course of *Butt*’s history, promised at the beginning: a “fag mag” for “interesting homosexuals and the men who love them” (Gregor 2012, 55). Indeed, in relation to *Butt* it seems appropriate to emphasize the productivity of a surprisingly undefined interest that may involve other men, objects, preferences, or activities. Sianne Ngai writes: “[...] the interesting marks a tension between the unknown and the already known and is generally bound up with a desire to know and document reality” (Ngai 2012, 5). The vague category of interest, which also appears prominently in the genre of small talk as found in online chat rooms, initially leaves open the particular nature of the interest, as well as what or if something is at stake given this interest. It seems as if the *Butt* boys are not looking for anything in particular. They are not desirous. Without doing anything, things surprisingly happen in their environment that they register with interest.

Through interest alone subjects would not be powerfully interpellated into systems of gender, sexuality, and race. Rather, they dwell within mediated, affective and sexual situations whose potentials can perhaps be tested

and actualized. The *Butt* boys show themselves to be almost indifferent to the possibilities of their surroundings. Regarding the notion of the interesting, Sianne Ngai writes: [...] always just a step away from the ‘merely’ interesting and thus from being boring” (Ngai 2012, 25). The *Butt* boys pursue their interests in a similar way to the young men in *In Their Room*: listening to music, doing creative work, having sex. Here, interest does not designate a long-lasting preoccupation with an object or a comprehensive activity, but rather a distraction that binds the *Butt* boys to a space and a present. Interest results in a pastime that, in its ephemeral, superficial character, cannot even be understood as a hobby.

Such an affirmative gesture for the superficial is familiar to the aesthetics of pop. A queer precursor to this aesthetic and sensibility is Andy Warhol, to whose magazine, *Interview*, *Butt* owes its style of conversation. As Jonathan Flatley and José Muñoz have pointed out, Warhol’s project is about a “liking of things,” a “wow,” and “gee” (Flatley 1996; Muñoz 2009, 5). Warhol’s aesthetic world is one in which everyone and everything becomes “likable.” Here, “liking” is the most basic, simplest form of an affirmative reference to the world, but one that differs from pure consumption. In Warhol’s work, it was precisely the attachment of bodies to consumer goods that became the scene of their ideological emptying. In its superficial lack of criticism, liking makes room for the non-normative. In terms of sexual politics, Warhol’s liking is a form of affective promiscuity. José Muñoz has also linked the superficiality of Warhol’s “liking of things” to the possibility of queer utopias (Muñoz 2009, 5).

Love Is All Around Us

All we have to do is watch our desire conquer and refuse to occupy a supposedly mine-ridden terrain to see that we are still false nomads, hypocritical henchmen of sedentary sexuality and nothing more than apprentice lovers.

(Hocquenghem 2010, 38)

At stake in this chapter is a reading of the narrative and pictorial material in *Butt* together with Foucault, Berlant, and Deleuze, as a question of *affective sexualities*. The narrative context of pornography, the idea of personhood as plural, object relations beyond fetishism, the ambivalent sexual joke, general castration, and trivialized anality should all be understood as new aesthetic and symbolic forms that are connected through a net of reduced desire/pleasure – interest – and thus as the specific context in which the images and stories of *Butt* emerge.

If we understand Deleuzian desire as both sexual and affective, one can approach these dynamics not only through the concept of “desire” but also through the concept of “love.” On the one hand, I have proposed to understand a sexuality as pleasure and as such as part of the affective field.

On the other hand, following on from the previous chapter, the question regarding the whereabouts of love arises. For Hocquenghem and Foucault, a critique of the ideology of love seems as important as a critique of the ideology of sexuality. Attempts at destabilizing the antagonism of love and desire can furthermore be found in Berlant and also in Phillips and Taylor (Phillips and Taylor 2009; Berlant 2012a). As shown in the previous chapter, pleasures emerge from a deconstruction of desire, while kindness becomes possible after a deconstruction of love. Kindness would be a love that does not position itself as a regulating narrative vis-à-vis desire which seeks to bring desire to a monumental halt, but rather accompanies it affectively in a similarly promiscuous way as to desire itself. In what ways, then, can kindness be found in *Butt*'s portraits and stories?

In the films of the New Wave Queer Cinema, post-pornographic representation takes place in the context of romantic love stories.²⁰ The question of a connection beyond the codified gay sexual encounter in *In Their Room*, *Weekend*, and *Keep the Lights On* is posed as a question of love between two people.²¹ In contrast, *Butt* mostly portrays individuals alone in their room, insofar as the fanzine initially seems to have little to say about love in the sense of coupledness or social bonds in general. An exception is *Butt* No. 26, which features “a happy gay family” on the cover, as promised by the subheading to the photo (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2009). This addition, as well as the fact that the male couple and their two children are pictured in a field of bright yellow flowers, enable us to read this picture in the context of a camp tradition (rather than a post-pornographic Realcore aesthetic): As an over-the-top representation of happiness. In the magazine, the story is entitled: “Proud Parents Rick & Daren Are Living the Suburban Dream in Dallas.” The subhead for it states:

Rick O'Connor and Daren Merchant own a five-bedroom house with a pool in a tony neighbourhood outside of Dallas, Texas. They both have well-paying corporate jobs with a big marketing agency. And they love each other so much that they can barely stand being apart for longer than a day. The two self-proclaimed ‘bears’ met in 1991 and have been together ever since. Daren loves cars and interior design; Rick loves animals and pick-up trucks. They both love to barbeque, and of course they love their two adorable children, one boy and one girl, whom they’ve raised together for the past 18 years.

(Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2009, 65)

In *Butt*'s coverage, the love story between Rick and Daren, who have been a couple for almost twenty years, extends to their two adopted children, thus realizing the homosexual version of the heterosexual family concept. Yet *Butt*, of course, does not leave it at that. Beyond the two partners and their children (named in the sequence at the end, after the BBQ), love is also what connects Rick and Darren to cars (especially pick-up trucks),

interior design, and animals. It encompasses not only the couple and the nuclear family itself but also status symbols of the American middle-class and a range of hobbies. As the camp aesthetic of the cover suggests, in this case, the plea for gay marriage and adoption rights goes hand in hand with a realignment of the concept of love. How are we to understand this contextualization? An ironic glance at love? Its trivialization?

That love threatens to become banal through its inflationary use is also shown (over and above the play with traditional ideas about the couple and the family) in another prominent place in *Butt*. Considering the men in *Butt* and the target group of the fanzine, the subheading of the magazine states: “[...] interesting homosexuals and the men who love them” (Gregor 2012, 55). The fan relationship between model and reader, whose places in *Butt* are interchangeable in accordance with a culture of media convergence, is also presented as a relationship defined by love which is without a question in the sense of a “superficial,” “American” and in this sense “unreliable” love. Love loses the weight of personal disclosure and confidentiality that can be contractually verified (as in marriage or adoption), as has been discussed in Chapter 4. *Butt* suggests that love is succinct, non-exclusive in various ways: through the story about the bears from Dallas or in addressing its readers – *Butt* allows love to be understood in terms of affect theory: As an openness of the schizo-subject, which does not necessarily contribute to a new realism in the sense of establishing a social reality (as it does in the case of Rick and Daren, even if it is ironized again), but always leads to contingency. As briefly mentioned in the subline – a magazine for “interesting homosexuals and the men who love them” – it is no longer clear how this love differs from promiscuous desire. *Butt*’s alternative Realcore aesthetics with their imperfect, post-phallic bodies by no means usher in a new form of social reliability.²² Their form of “genuineness” and “authenticity” does not produce deep love as intrinsic value.

When we talk here about the perspective of the *Butt* boy, who can also be a reader, we are talking about a momentary enthusiasm that does not result in the permanent adoration of an individual. Attachments remain fleeting. *Butt*’s culture is about momentary infatuation. This is not a celebration of an ideal fantasy, rather the reader becomes a fan of the diversity and contingency of the images. The fan’s love, as an ephemeral affective attachment, is always already plural and promiscuous. Even more, than in the magazine itself, this logic of infatuation is revealed in the tear-off calendars published by *Butt*. They offer a picture of a *Butt* boy for every day or week of the year, recalling the pin-up genre.²³ Here, love does not last longer than 24 hours, or seven days.

The logic of an ephemeral enthusiasm also provides the framework for the stories in *Butt*. The love of the bears Rick and Daren for each other and for their cars, interior design, barbecue, and finally also for their two adopted children can be merged in the context of *Butt* with the infatuation for the post-pornographic pin-up boys. No other ideology stabilizes the

image of the family. Its ideological weight is irritated in a camp-like fashion, and linguistically its inflationary love moves toward the lightness of a general desire.

In the previous chapter, I suggested that pleasures and kindness are names for a less antagonistic relationship between desire and love in post-pornography. In the world of *Butt*, this de-dramatization returns with a sexuality as interest on the one hand and the superficiality of a love on the other. While love is thus sometimes no more than an interest, conversely, interest is perhaps already a form of love. In a sense suggested by Berlant – love as a productive, affective program that aims at contingency – love would also be a name for the attitude with which the *Butt* boys enter the world. There are hardly any great feelings or passions. In the small talk of the interviews, they, in a post-dramatic equanimity, report what they do and what has happened to them. This transgression of sexuality through banal everyday stories – and not sexuality as transgression – not only has the consequence that the stories in *Butt* become undramatic and comical (and sometimes boring), but that they also become episodic.

Queer Episodes

[...] but any consumption system that strives for freedom from habit is pushed towards an aesthetic of the ephemeral.

(Appadurai 1996, 68)

[...] lovers peel away from teleology-flavored plots, discarding romantic resolution without discarding their need for encounter.

(Berlant and Edelman 2013, 101)

In contrast to a formulaic, excessive representation of sex as visual intoxication in mainstream porn, post-pornography works with narrative elements that depict sexuality in a different relation to everyday reality. I described this situation as one of affective sexualities that can be specified through different positions, attitudes, and genres. Unlike psychoanalytic desire and its temporality, an affective sexuality does not necessarily lead to a narrative that develops over time, thus revealing, step by step, the secrets of the subject or the truth of the story.²⁴ Andrew Haigh's film *Weekend* (2011), which like Mathew Travis' films, also follows *Butt*'s post-pornographic aesthetic, stops just short of a happy ending, leaving open whether the weekend the two men spent together was an episode or the beginning of a love story. Neither does the episodic necessarily have to be the opposite of the love story, as its failure, for example. The episodic can remain valid as the openness of form, such as in the film *Théo & Hugo* (Ducastel and Martineau 2016), which also follows this pattern. The episode, which has not yet become a full story, contains the promise of new genres that do not

necessarily conform to given formations. The episode holds open the possibility of experimentation and the promise of a different future.

Butt's series of interviews – there is no other journalistic form in the zine – also takes the form of episodes. The aim here is not to fulfill the standards of an existing genre, such as a biographical portrait, rather in the interviews, the stories begin and end almost randomly. They are excerpts, like a chat dialogue but without its often-instrumental function. The temporality of post-pornographic culture is one of finitude. It owes itself to the contingency of encounters and affective ties in accordance with the “and-and” structure. Committed to the tradition of New Journalism, the texts in *Butt* present themselves as “unedited” in the sense that they do not follow a predetermined dramaturgy or thematic focus, but rather, in a similar manner to the headlines, allow seemingly important and unimportant things to stand side by side. In this lack of direction, the recording process follows an openness that Berlant developed in her discussion of desire/love. The conversational form of the interviews themselves becomes promiscuous: the chat can be about anything, but never for too long.

Episodicity has a tradition in gay culture beyond post-pornography and its various material manifestations and genres. The episodic nature of gay sex culture has been celebrated by Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Leo Bersani, among others, as a queer potential for the invention of new social forms (Foucault 1989; Barthes 1992; Bersani 1995), as exemplified, for example, in the novels *In my Room* by Guillaume Dustan and in *Tricks* by Renaud Camus (Camus 1981; Dustan 1998). Here, gay sex culture is characterized by repetition and seriality. Parallel to Berlant's project of destabilizing sexuality through affects, *Butt* transfers the episodic nature of a promiscuous gay sexuality to other areas of life, individual preferences and everyday occurrences.

Contingency and Optimism

There is no fantasy behind happiness.

(Foucault quoted in Bersani 1995, 79)

[...] is optimism a disavowal of what's unbearable in negativity?

(Berlant and Edelman 2013, IX)

The interest of the *Butt* boys always attaches itself to other objects or enters into new situations without following the direction of a defined desire. Instead of obeying the vicissitudes of instinct, love/desire opens up the space of real contingency. Contingency is the structural principle of a reality not yet symbolized. Insofar as no genres or normative forms emerge, it leads to the incoherence of the subject, as an incompleteness of temporary attachments. Interest is directed toward intensities and situations that are not regulated by knowledge.²⁵ It allows for forms of vulnerability, as I

described at the end of the previous chapter such as the “loser sex” of the *Butt* hipster, whose sexuality does not trump phallic certainty but enters unexpected sexual-affective milieus. This vulnerability is, at the same time, a form of openness. Affective openness and indeterminacy need not be experienced as lack or failure of psychological or social stability. That is to say that the unbecoming is at once a becoming. In *Butt*, the subjective pluralism of personhood is affirmed as a form of freedom. The *Butt* boys surrender to an experimental, sexual-affective lifestyle.

For the sexual form of personhood, many things within the affective milieu are interesting or can temporarily become the object of love. Love itself becomes experimental as kindness. Like the post-psychoanalytic desire of the schizo-subject in Deleuze, the interest of the sexual-affective subject knows only affirmation and shows itself as a subject of becoming, following the rhythm of encounters and attachments. Insofar as sexual-affective bonds are not understood as the consequence of a desire based on lack, they are also neither compensatory nor reconciliatory. Laurent Berlant describes this possibility as a form of happiness: “[...] a new kind of happiness based not on property values and their absorption of the world into bionarrative but on intimate scenarios of awkward variation where sex gave its subjects permission to experiment” (Berlant 2012b, 31). The mood of the sexual schizo-subject with its connection to the affective world is one of happiness and optimism. This is not the optimism of conventional genres, characterized by the certainty of the object’s permanence.²⁶ Conversely, it is precisely the unpredictability and the break with habits that lead to optimism or happiness: “Happiness remains about the contingency of what happens” (Ahmed 2010, Loc. 407/5490).²⁷ This form of happiness, in its openness and attachment to new events, would not be the reassurance that normality promises, or the affirmation that can come from inhabiting an ideological space,²⁸ but an open-ended experimentation that can enjoy the freedom of contingency.²⁹

The happiness-inducing contingency of affects, their optimism, can also be understood as a different form of futurism. It represents a third way in contrast to the seemingly inescapable alternative of heteronormative “reproductive futurism” on the one hand and a queer “no future” on the other that Lee Edelman developed. In my reading of *Butt*, I am also following a queer critique of Edelman’s project. Snediker writes: “I’m here insisting that there are ways of resisting a pernicious logic of ‘reproductive futurism’ besides embodying the death drive” (Snediker 2008, 23). Similarly, José Muñoz speaks of queer hope:

[...] after Bloch and in a certain tradition of both idealist and materialist thought, I am making a distinction between a mode of hope that simply keeps one in place within an emotional situation predicated on control, and, instead, a certain practice of hope that helps escape from a script in which human existence is reduced.

(Duggan and Muñoz 2009, 278)

Futurity does not take effect here as a program, plan, or fantasy of an expected future or one that has already been visionarily brought under control. It is about uncertainty, “[...] lines of escape lead less often to ‘liberated’ futures than toward usefully uncertain ones” (Davis 2013, 23). The becoming of a subjective pluralism in the encounter with contingent objects to which one becomes affectively and sexually attached is, for the young men in *Butt*, realized as a form of aesthetic work, a media practice. Mark Godfrey has also identified such a form of openness as crucial to the work of Wolfgang Tillmans: “Opening oneself up to the world, trying to connect to people, and enabling photographs to share space with other photographs and with other people [...]” (Godfrey 2017, 20).

Notes

1. In an interview with Leo Bersani, Hal Foster asks: “Might your very insistence on shattered and/or supine figures make the symbolic order appear more intact than it is?” (Bersani 2010, 173).
2. On the legacy of psychoanalytic theory in the context of materialist theories influenced by Spinoza, see the anthology *Conatus und Lebensnot: Schlüsselbegriffe der Medienanthropologie* (Deuber-Mankowsky and Tuschling 2017).
3. For a characterization of New Queer Cinema, following B. Ruby Rich’s neologism in the *Village Voice* in 1992, see her anthology *New Queer Cinema* (Rich 2013) and Nick Davis’s reference to it (Davis 2013, 10–13).
4. While *Queer as Folk* certainly represents everyday gay life, the narrative here is regulated by reconciliatory notions of love, relationships, and family. In contrast, New Wave Queer Cinema is more experimental in terms of narration, aesthetics, and politics.
5. Slavoj Žižek characterized the narrative logic of pornography in a way that helps to understand this conflict. From a Lacanian perspective, the cinematic representation of sex and sexuality is precarious in that the fundamental impossibility of depicting desire is responded to with excessive formulaicity (Žižek 1998, 26). Linda Williams has compiled this catalog of perspectives that lead to hypervisibility in pornography: close-ups of the genitals, illumination of hidden body zones, and so on (Williams 1989). Following this line of thought, the “unrepresentability” of desire – if we accept the psychoanalytical interpretation of desire as lack here – is translated into an excessive documentation of the sexual event. Hypervisual pornographic scenes come into conflict with non-pornographic ones, which are brought into view in a less obsessive way.
6. *Butt* No. 24, for example, shows sex scenes and many hard-ons, and is specifically (and exceptionally) conceived as a wank template, as the editorial announces (Van Bennekom and Jonkers 2008b, 7), thus confirming my finding that this is not usually the case for *Butt*. The photographer Jack Pierson, who also publishes a fanzine himself, also addressed this question in relation to his own images in an interview with *Butt*: <http://www.buttmagazine.com/magazine/interviews/jack-pierson/>.
7. This is in contrast to the porn clips inspired by *Butt*’s hipster aesthetic on websites such as cockyboys.com and deviantotter.com, which emulate *Butt*’s image of men but remain conventional in their pornographic narrative. For a good description of cockyboys.com that also reveals its kinship with *Butt*, see John Mercer’s categorization of the website (Mercer 2017, 87–89, 98).

8. For its social network “Club *Butt*” (formerly “*Butt Heads*”), *Butt* translated this principle by asking each new member an individual question. <http://www.buttmagazine.com/buttheads/>.
9. The *Butt*-inspired site cockyboys.com also focuses on the value of individual personalities. On this, see John Mercer’s analysis (Mercer 2017, 87–89).
10. D.A. Miller makes the observation that Roland Barthes also refuses the idea of an autonomous body for the male subject in his texts (Miller 1992, 33).
11. A similar problem, which he describes as the ambivalence of sexuality and sensuality, is observed by Leo Bersani in Caravaggio’s paintings (Bersani and Dutoit 1998, 85–99).
12. On the lightness of a humorous, post-phallic narrative, see also Bersani’s reading of Pedro Almodóvar’s *All About My Mother* (Bersani 2010, 63–82).
13. Sianne Ngai observes this affective reduction in relation to the aesthetic categories of cute and interesting, which she determines as essential, and which are also relevant to my reading of *Butt*. Ngai writes: “By calling forth specific capacities for feeling and thinking as well as specific limitations on these capacities—a noticeably weaker or cooler version of curiosity in the case of the interesting; an unusually intense and yet strangely ambivalent kind of empathy, in the case of the cute—they also play and help complete the formation of a distinctive kind of aesthetic subject, gesturing also to the modes of intersubjectivity that this aesthetic subjectivity implies” (Ngai 2012, 3–4). Elsewhere, Ngai also interprets this reduced affective spectrum as a reformulation of Freudian categories. Thus, the interesting refers to obsession, the cute to phobia, and the crazy to hysteria (Ngai 2012, 27).
14. On this Berlant writes: “Any writer’s task, in this view, would be to track desire’s itinerary, not on behalf of confirming its hidden or suppressed truths or harms but to elaborate its variety of attachments as sexuality, as lived life, and, most importantly, as an unfinished history that confounds the hurts and the pleasures” (Berlant 2011, Loc. 1647/4461).
15. It is not the exhibition of the sexual that becomes a question of shame, but the loss of phallicity. Thus, the drama of shame and shamelessness in the heterosexual setting is treated by Freud mainly as a question concerning the position of women. Insofar as universalized phallicity has historically become the precondition of a sexual subject, it is also true that “Shame is the sign of the approaching death of oneself as a recognizable person” (Bersani and Phillips 2008, 116). In the gay context, this question is tied to that of anality. Shamefulness or shamelessness refers to the anus as a sexual body part; with it comes the threat of loss of identity (Hocquenghem 1978, 97–103).
16. Whether this statement can be maintained way would be a matter for further discussion. For example, in fisting videos, can fascination with anality be subordinated to attention to penetration? Anality also plays a crucial role in bareback porn (Dean 2009; Edelman 2010).
17. All three illustrate different moments of capitalist economy, “cute” marking the realm of consumption, “interesting” that of commodity circulation, and “zany” that of production. They prove to be crucial when considering the culture of the internet: “[...] Web 2.0 culture [...] with its zany blogs, cute tweets, and interesting wikis” (Ngai 2012, 14). While on the one hand, Ngai claims their importance in relation to the loss of meaning concerning the beautiful and the sublime as traditional aesthetic categories, her analysis steers toward the question of how far “cute” and “interesting” can still mark a difference from the fetishism of the commodity. “[...] how exactly might aesthetic judgments inform criticism with extra-aesthetic goals? What role, if any, might judgments of aesthetic value play in a self-consciously ‘engaged’ work of cultural criti-

cism, in particular?” (Ngai 2012, 48). Far from being able to be trusted beyond capitalist contexts of utilization, something about the nature of the object as a commodity and our relationship to it becomes exposed and legible in the place of “cute” and “interesting” (Ngai 2012, 62). Even though they are not critical categories in the strict sense, they are not only part of commodity fetishism, they also represent a commentary on it (Ngai 2012, 1–52, 53–110). To look at *Butt* from this perspective is also to raise the question of the zine’s complicity with a logic driven by markets. In this respect, the relationship between “cute” and the sexual is especially important. Their relation to each other is also addressed in Ngai, but is, above all, elaborated in its contradictoriness in Berlant and Edelman (Ngai 2012, 60–64; Berlant and Edelman 2013). If *Butt*’s sexuality were nothing more than “cute” in a trivializing sense, it could be placed within a capitalist system of exploitation without contradiction. Even though *Butt* partly moves toward this possibility, my interest in *Hipster Porn* is to show to what extent *Butt* also resists such a classification.

18. Roland Barthes, in his interpretation of Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographs, also speaks of erotic cheerfulness: “The erotic photograph, on the contrary (and this is its very condition), does not make the sexual organs into a central object; it may very well not show them at all; it takes the spectator outside its frame, and it is there that I animate this photograph and that it animates me. The *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond* – as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see: not only toward the ‘rest’ of nakedness, not only toward the fantasy of a *praxis*, but toward the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together. This boy [Mapplethorpe, P.R.] with his arm outstretched, his radiant smile, though his beauty is in no way classical or academic, [...] incarnates a kind of blissful eroticism; the photograph leads me to distinguish the ‘heavy’ desire of pornography from the ‘light’ (good) desire of eroticism” (Barthes 1981, 59).
19. Similar to Melanie Klein’s depressive position, boredom can also be understood as a space free of fantasy and in this respect not only as a crisis of the subject, but also as a potential of affective openness and aesthetic possibilities. Andy Warhol dealt with boredom as an aesthetic phenomenon above all in his films e.g., in *Sleep* (Warhol 1963). On the aesthetics of boredom in Warhol’s work, see Jennifer Doyle (Doyle 1996).
20. Richard Dyer sees one way of reconciling this conflict in a variant of 1980s gay porn in which the sexual happy ending is equated with the romantic: “[Porn gives us] a [utopian] model of gay sexual lifestyle that combines a basic romanticism with an easy acceptance of promiscuity. Thus, the underlying narrative is often romantic, the ultimate goal is to make love with the man; but along the way a free-ranging, easy-going promiscuity is possible” (Dyer 1992, 130).
21. In the context of queer theory, affective renegotiations beyond “love” or “relationships” have also been treated, following Foucault, primarily as a question of friendship. See, for example, Tom Roach’s *Friendship as a Way of Life: Foucault, AIDS, and the Politics of Shared Estrangement* (Roach 2012), and Heather Love’s *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Love 2007, 72–99).
22. On the history of love as a political concept and its currency within queer activism, see Mike Laufenberg (Laufenberg 2015, 61–72, especially 68–71).
23. Like the two *Butt* books, the mini-*Butt* magazines, T-shirts and towels, the calendars are among the spin-off products of *Butt* (<http://buttusa.tictail.com>) which, after the end of the print version in 2011, continue to keep the *Butt* brand in circulation.

24. As Lauren Berlant puts it: “I do this on behalf of making you desire to think about incoherence as a condition of affect. By incoherence, I do not mean to denote what the decentered, melancholic, or ambivalent subject performs, notions advanced by Leo Bersani and Judith Butler [...] Nor do I raise the specter of the subject who does not know what she wants. Rather, I am pointing to something smaller: a virtually rhythmic difference between the encounter with affect and the process of achieving clarity in it” (Berlant 2000, 433).
25. Snediker characterizes the relationship between knowledge and optimism as follows: “Not unrelated to its futural (promissory, parousiac) stakes is utopic optimism’s allergic relation to knowledge. For Leibniz, optimism’s fealty nature renders knowledge superfluous; in current critical thought, optimism’s very sanguinity implies epistemological deficit. This antagonism between optimism and knowledge has had the perhaps unsurprising effect of taking optimism out of critical circulation” (Snediker 2008, 2).
26. This variant of optimism is also addressed by Berlant: “An optimistic attachment is invested in one’s own or the world’s continuity” (Berlant 2011, Loc 191/4461). And Ahmed states: “[...] in other words, the proximity between an affect and object is preserved through habit” (Ahmed 2010, Loc. 556/5490).
27. The promise of affect theory lies in maintaining this possibility, as Gregg and Seigworth note: “Who doesn’t want to believe that we live in a world ceaselessly recomposing itself in the unforeseen passages through the best of all possible impasses” (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, Loc. 216/5490). For a broader discussion of happiness in the context of feminism, queer studies, and post-colonialism, see Sara Ahmed’s *The Promise of Happiness* (Ahmed 2010a).
28. The happy homosexuals wandering the streets hand in hand the morning after a night spent together, described by Foucault, have provoked similar speculation about the possibility of happiness beyond fantasies (Bersani 1995, Snediker 2008, 66–67).
29. Sedgwick names surprise as a structural moment of reparative knowledge (a surprise that forms of paranoid knowledge seek to eliminate), and understands it in the context of normative scripts: “The dogged, defensive narrative stiffness of a paranoid temporality, after all, in which yesterday can’t be allowed to have differed from today and tomorrow must be even more so, takes its shape from a generational narrative that’s characterized by a distinctly oedipal regularity and repetitiveness: it happened to my father’s father, it happened to my father, it is happening to me, it will happen to my son, and it will happen to my son’s son. But isn’t it a feature of queer possibility—only a contingent feature, but a real one, and one that in turn strengthens the force of contingency itself—that our generational relations don’t always proceed in this lockstep?” (Sedgwick 2003, 147).

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Conclusion

Pink Poverty

Queer Media Practices

Historically, queer media practices have entailed the production of fanzines, independent filmmaking, or the organization of film festivals. These subcultural activities seem uncontested in their social function, and in their communal and political value of creating queer counterpublics, as Shaka McGlotten reminds us:

Historian Martin Meeker explicitly links modern gay identity formation to these media, arguing that the consolidation of gay and lesbian communities depended on the ways people could connect to knowledge about homosexuality.

(McGlotten 2013, 5)

As my positioning of *Butt* in the context of 1970s fanzines and visual culture in [Chapter 1](#) has already suggested, the production of the zine can be identified as a familiar strategy aiming at creating a queer counterpublic. Both its format and its alternative aesthetics demonstrate this ambition. But if we read *Butt* and its notions of gender, sex, and desire as a response to the interactive digital culture of Porn 2.0, we must also look at it from the perspective of new media. How does its offer to connect people – as fans – work compared to the social forms that are characteristic of online porn and social media?

While the internet has also been celebrated for its potential of bringing queer people together,¹ the media practices of the past twenty years that I will initially discuss here – visiting websites and using apps for gay men to hook up – appear much more ambiguous than pre-digital forms of connecting in terms of their social value. How do they encourage queer forms of subjectivity? Do they provide a sense of community? The paradigmatic shift that digitalization has brought about has been acknowledged by scholars from cultural studies and social sciences who have remarked upon the ubiquity of pornographic images in the 21st century and the social and political possibilities that have come with it. As *Hipster Porn* has argued so

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far, *post-pornography* has engaged in a critical and creative reworking of existing pornographic formulas. Yet, a widespread suspicion regarding new digital forms of interaction that concerns both genre and medium persists.²

Can Pornography Bring Us Together?

Already removed from the utopian hopes and fantasies initially attached to it, in the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, we are witnessing a specific historical moment in the history of the web.³ Indicative of this changing assessment of the opportunities that web culture has to offer, is the increasingly negative reputation of gay online hooking up and dating both of which seem as notorious as the sites (*PlanetRomeo* and *Manhunt*, or apps like *Grindr*, *Scruff*, and *Growlr*) dedicated to these services seem popular. Common sense holds that these occasions to connect with men who want to have sex with men represent an impoverished version of real-life encounters: “Virtual intimacies were failures before the fact. If you had to get online to get it, it couldn’t be the real thing” (McGlotten 2013, 2). It is not a secret that online sex functions as an extension and intensification of a commodified sex culture. Every critical reading of it that does not want to risk being merely utopian must take the fabric of this social reality as its point of departure. Tom Roach spells out this situation for us:

Everything you may have heard about online dating and hooking up is true: It is steeped in a consumerist logic. [...] It instrumentalizes intimacy and mechanizes the wily ways of desire. [...] It exacerbates the same barbaric impulses—hyper-individualism, cutthroat competition, solipsism, self-aggrandizement—so integral to and rewarded in the marketplace. Indeed, it is difficult to argue that social media at large do little else *but* construct and fortify what Michel Foucault designates *homo economicus*—that calculating spawn of neoliberalism who perceives himself and others foremost as human capital.

(Roach 2015, 55)

Consumption, enterprise, brand creation, self-optimization, efficiency, aggressive speculation, the maximization of individualized pleasure – these are the key terms that characterize *homo economicus* not just in his professional but also in his sexual endeavors. From this perspective, hook-up sites and apps become the breeding ground for neoliberal subjectivity, communication, and relational forms dominated by fantasies of availability and control: A culture of self-sex with no account of otherness. Through them, sexual subjects turn into businessmen or -women, using the available opportunities for sexual self-promotion. The compatibility of preferences can be checked through online lists and the visual display of bodies allows us to make consumer choices, driven by an egotistical sexual interest (Woltersdorff 2011, 169), thus partaking in what Jodi Dean called “Communicative Capitalism” (Dean 1993).

Relational Forms

How could we alternatively assess a culture that displays its alienating and commodifying effects so unambiguously? The notion of a public sex culture as an achievement of cultural and political value has never been a widespread view, neither in Europe nor the US, and is even less so now than during the 1970s, the decade between the sexual revolution and the arrival of HIV. In his seminal “How to Have sex in an Epidemic?” Douglas Crimp commented on the political difficulties, or, nearly, impossibilities, of defending the achievements of a gay sex culture against moral charges after HIV and Aids (Crimp 2001). Ten years later, by the end of the 1990s, Michael Warner stated: “There is very little sense in this country that a public culture of sex might be something to value, something whose accessibility is to be protected” (Warner 1999, 171).

Since the 1970s, gay scholars, starting with Guy Hocquenghem, however, have continually reminded us of the specificity of gay men’s public sex culture, where participation materializes less through discourse, but rather through embodiment and practice.⁴ There is a rich body of work within queer theory that explores the alternative and utopian possibilities of gay male sex cultures. Leo Bersani, for example, finds in gay men’s cruising for sex a connectedness to a “whatever belonging” that lies beyond biopolitical imperatives and their forms of domination. Michael Warner also stresses the value of depersonalized encounters in gay sex cultures:

Contrary to the myth, what one relishes in loving strangers is not mere anonymity, nor meaningless release. It is the pleasure of belonging to a sexual world, in which one’s sexuality finds an answering resonance not just in one another, but in a world of others.

(Warner 1999, 179)

What Bersani and Warner suggest here is not an alternative model of sociality that would give voice and room for expression to those oppressed in the mainstream public sphere. This is not a program that asks to be represented. Rather, we should think of it as a form of training, an exercise, or what Foucault in his reading of Greek antiquity also called *ascesis*; not understood as a repression of the drives,⁵ but as a physical and spiritual exercise that consists of exposing oneself to the unknown – a form of desubjection – in order to transform the self.

Subjection and Desubjection

Gay sex cultures are not always successful in achieving intersubjective forms of solidarity, mutual recognition, or acceptance of diversity. Yet a particular value lies precisely in the lack of reliable forms of communication which – according to Bersani, Warner, and Roach – can make room

for a different form of connectedness. To further understand this possibility, the Foucauldian terms of subjection, desubjection, and subjectivation are helpful. Following Foucault, Tom Roach takes on this conceptual distinction (Roach 2012, 27). Forms of subjection are normative implementations of biopolitical regimes, a manifestation of normative forces within formations of institutional power or classificatory psychological systems, for instance. Either through discipline or control, they suture the subject to established forms of power. In this postmodern perspective, consequently, a critique of, and a freedom from biopolitical regimes cannot simply trust in notions of subjectivity that emerged out of this very subjection, such as “homosexuality,” for example. It is from here, then, that the emphasis on the crisis of subjectivity and identity, as we can experience and witness them in anonymous sexual encounters, appear to be socially and politically interesting.

Anonymity and nonidentity thus offer the opportunity for desubjection and subjectivation—in other words, the undoing of socially, historically determined selves and the creation of new ones.

(Roach 2012, 34)

According to this model, the normative force of subjection is undone by desubjection; subsequently, desubjection can make room for new forms of subjectivity – subjectivation as opposed to subjection. Let’s take a moment to discuss what is at stake in the transition from subjection to desubjection before applying the notion of subjectivation to the cultural context of Porn 2.0 and *Butt* magazine.

One of the occasions beyond the gay sex world that offers us the enjoyment of the superficiality of social encounters and which leads to desubjection would be (and this is also the text that inspired Bersani and Roach) the chatter at cocktail parties, as described by sociologist Georg Simmel in “On Individuality and Social Norms” (1971). What becomes enjoyable in such settings, according to Simmel, is the rhythm of sociality as such, beyond content or communicative interest. Analogously, the practice of cruising for sex can be understood as a form of bodily chatter (Bersani 2010). That gay men’s public sex culture is a scene in which such alternative potentials of coming together socially are practiced, staged, acted out, and experienced, was already enthusiastically declared 40 years ago by Foucault: “[...] one can meet people who are to you what one is to them: nothing else but bodies with which combinations, fabrications of pleasure will be possible” (Foucault quoted in Roach 2012, 34–35). Here, public sex turns into a practical occasion for escaping one’s social and psychological determinations, subjection is given over to desubjection.

Subjects involved in the bodily chatter of cruising are selves without faculties that could be shared. They don’t possess individual characteristics, which would bring them together or drive them apart. This “community”

has nothing and everything in common. In this sense, we can relate to the world by seeking sameness, not by – violently – negotiating differences. Beyond a psychological landscape, encounters here can be understood as the interplay of aesthetic forms and the rhythm in which they appear: “[...] aestheticized selves circulating among repetitive others in impersonal cadences” (Roach 2015, 67).

Media Practices

How does the bodily chatter of cruising and its alternative mode of connecting reappear in sexual settings online? While online media practices of self-pornification and sex chat evidently reinforce neosexual paradigms and an egotistical subject of self-interests, they also present these very practices as being in crisis. Every participant in online chat is drawn into a logic of exchange that, through its standardization and predictability, mocks the possibility of self-assertion and a sexual desire as individual fulfillment. The conventionality of pornographic self-promotion creates a general exchangeability of images behind which the self threatens to disappear. In these moments of fungibility prevalent in the sexual marketplace online, fissions in the workings of the neosexual subject and its self-pornification reveal themselves.

The crisis that can be experienced by the subject as a form of alienation creates a space of de-individualized connections not unlike the ones which take place in anonymous offline settings. Bersani’s “whatever belonging” in cruising scenarios turns into a virtual community of standardized pornographic subjects. The competitiveness of a normative sexual market simultaneously creates a visual equality: the subject becomes part of a pornified gay universe populated with endless repetitions of standardized images.⁶ I am arguing here that the spaces of “whatever belonging” that Bersani saw in backroom or outdoor cruising, can reoccur in online settings.

Yet does online connectivity end with this membership to a de-individualized, virtual, phantasmatic gay sex world? If we look at online platforms through the lens of the anti-social turn and its categories, the first step involves the transition of the subject, encompassing the passage from subjection to desubjection. Dating platforms start with the application of sexual scripts as a prerequisite for a pornographic ego boost, before bringing about their dissolution, i.e., paving the way for the evidence that in terms of a sexual market, this strategy of self-assertion means submission to the law of fungibility: everybody aims to be a pornographic hero and the subject therefore becomes unrecognizable amidst an abundance of desirable images. Yet, through its mechanical, repetitive, and de-individualizing character, it points toward the limits of the sexual subject’s effectiveness, its dissolution into a random world of pictures. Does this failure in self-representation that marks membership to a virtual community (read as a transition from

subjection to desubjection) somehow also open the door for forms of subjectivation that are distinct from subjection and desubjection? Or, does the work of media practices (self-presentation on dating platforms) end here with the break-down of subjectivity and its dissolution into a potentially exhilarating, yet merely virtual, form of mediated togetherness?

As vague and as unreliable (or perhaps also frightening, or even terrorizing) as this participation in an online world of enticing images may be, it also indicates a moment that John Paul Ricco, in another context, referred to as “pornographic force” (Ricco 2002). William Haver, in his foreword to Ricco’s *The Logic of the Lure*, which discusses the use of the term “pornographic” in queer art beyond its merely representational function, states that “what is specifically pornographic in porn is precisely what in the act of presentation exceeds representation” (Haver in Ricco 2002, XII). Pornography, in this sense, can create “a relation to the Outside, as a force of experimentation” (Ricco 2002, 5). For Haver, as for Ricco, this dimension beyond sexual representation, an event that is as vague as it is common, turns into a source of inspiration. “Honor thereby the ontological stammering upon which art’s work opens” (Haver in Ricco 2002, XII). Similarly to Bersani, the authors believe in an ontological dimension of the sexual which, as I am also following Roach here, can occur through media practices on dating platforms, and which furthermore maintains a relationship to the production of art.

I argue that the crisis for the sexual subject online – the fungibility of self-representation through images and porn talk – can lead to a moment of creation. It allows for the emergence of new media practices that take this instance of representational crisis as their point of departure. The queer fanzine *Butt*, with its post-pornographic hipster masculinity, represents a response to this moment in which gay self-representation crumbles online that makes room for the ontology of a “pornographic force.” *Butt* uses this moment as a point of departure to substitute pornographic efficiency, predictability, and dumbness with a new model of personhood; it depicts male bodies which do not mask everything unrelated to the optimization of sexual pleasure. In distinction to subjection and desubjection, the media practice of producing a fanzine against the background of the online experience of “pornographic force” leads, I want to argue, to new forms of subjectivation. Subjectivation would be a form of subjectivity no longer submitted under the same old forms of normative dominance or their undoing through fungibility but a new aesthetic project: The fanzine *Butt*.

***Butt* and Porn 2.0**

The repertoire of forms of masculinity that *Butt* has to offer proves to be a response to the limits of sexual representation on online platforms. In conclusion, I would like now to specify, what it means to understand the

alternative images in *Butt* as expressions of a creative pornographic force that opens up an aesthetic world beyond the forms of a paranoid sadism (Ricco 2002; Bersani 2015, 12). *Butt*'s becoming emerges from the unbecoming online. With Foucault and his commentators, a relationship can be established between the potential of the force of pornography on the one hand, and forms of work on the other. He writes, "[...] extensive work by the self on the self is required for this practice of freedom to take shape in an ethos that is good, beautiful, honorable, estimable, memorable, and exemplary" (1989c, 436). So, in order for the experience of desubjection as it can occur online, to lead to new forms of becoming a subject, a certain kind of work is necessary.⁷ Just as we have to work on becoming homosexual, gay, or queer, as David Halperin reminds us in his book on Foucault: "[...] the imaginative and intelligent pursuit of pleasure requires a certain amount of work (in the sense of transformation)" (1995, 107). If we read *Butt* in this context, Foucault's claim that ascesis always involves work is here taken quite literally. As a strategy of remediation, *Butt* presupposes an experience, understanding and knowledge of situations and representations beyond online representation, as well as an idea of what can be gained when these aesthetics reappear as photographic stills in the fanzine. This is *Butt*'s project. In documenting non-perfect masculinities and forms of maleness, the fanzine represents a form of cultural work; not in the form of curating as in the reblogging function of *Tumblr*, but as a form of media production: the creation of a fanzine.

While the format of the fanzine and its reception are less embedded in a culture of pornographic consumption, they nevertheless maintain a relation to the circulation of online images. In the process of remediation, however, the images in *Butt* risk losing their use value as pornography. With its distancing from pornographic use, the act of remediation also raises the question of the relationship between mass culture and art. If pornography is seen as the "lowest of the low" of popular culture, does the (subcultural) remediation of *Butt* transform it into "high culture"? This question must also be asked the other way round: to understand art within a humanistic frame as a canon of forms that, for example, intends to negotiate its relationship to reason, is not the only possibility. With Deleuze, art can be seen as a presentation and training of the senses and the faculty of feeling. How, then, does *Butt* relate to the circulation of pleasures and affects that are otherwise characteristic of online pornography? The question would not only be how *Butt* transforms pornography into art, but also how *Butt* can remain faithful to the affective quality of pornography, remaining faithful to pornographic force.⁸ Deleuze and Guattari write: "Art preserves, and it is the only thing in the world that is preserved. [...] What is preserved – the thing or the work of art – is a *bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*" (1994, 163–64). I understand *Butt* as a work of art, insofar as a post-pornographic block of sensation is here created through remediation, which opens up the affections of the pornographic event to a

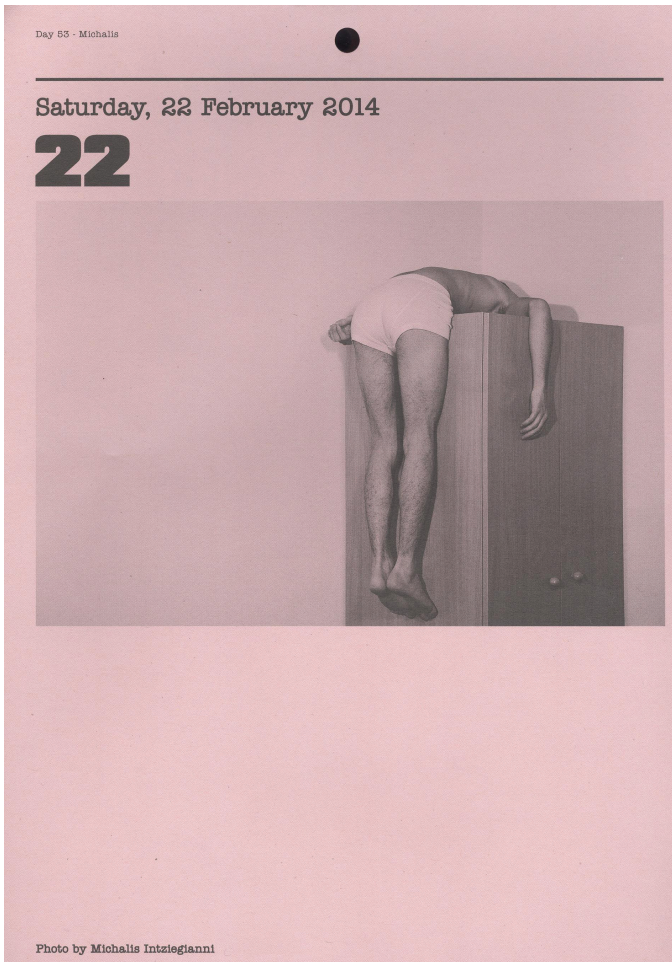


Figure C.1 Untitled photographed by Michalis Intziegianni.

Source: *Butt 2014: Daily Calendar from Butt Magazine*. Saturday, 22 February 2014.

future and offers us the potential of gay sex culture in the images of isolated boys as an aesthetic experience.

Temporality of Remediation

[...] the obsession with analogue photography among hipsters.
(Sundén 2015, 135)

The portraits in *Butt* are comparable to the static shots of 1990s web-cams.⁹ By printing them in the magazine, the isolation of these “web

images” also plays to a fetishization of the analog. In this way, *Butt* stages an “analog nostalgia” from the perspective of the digital, as can also be observed in steampunk culture, for example (Sundén 2015, 135). This regression to earlier, less technically advanced forms of media – the photo-still, which is related to the static settings of earlier webcams – can be understood as a gesture of a deliberate slowing down. The images in the fanzine are presented not only in a different spatial but also in a different temporal frame which is distinct from online images. They do not move, they do not disappear, they remain; one can easily return to them. The fanzines can be collected, sorted on the shelf, and archived in this way.¹⁰

With these coordinates of its production and reception, *Butt* proves to be an answer to the accusations against an online sex culture as a stunted form of communication, as ‘Bifo’ Berardi describes it: “Sex is not speaking anymore. It is rather babbling, and faltering, and it is also suffering for it. Too few words, too little time to talk. Too little time to feel” (2007, 197). What is called “feeling” here, the resonance of affects that require a certain amount of time to become meaningful, is lost in online encounters, according to Bifo. He goes on to say: “The main point is that emotional elaboration is afflicted by a reduction of time: pornography is by and large one of the causes of this saturation, and one of the effects, or better, one of the symptoms of it” (2007, 197).

Bifo is not willing to acknowledge the new potential of media environments, in which affects can circulate with increasing speed. Instead, he laments the decay of a sexual-affective culture through the digitally induced pornification of communicative and emotional relations. While *Butt* does represent a form of criticism vis-à-vis online pornographic culture, it is not to be simply understood as a movement of reterritorialization. *Butt* does not fight against a corrosive affective universe of online pornography and its risks of commodification and interchangeability in order to restore a subject of inner feelings and its alternative temporality. There is an important difference here between a nostalgia for more stable forms of subjectivity before the internet, and new forms that emerge precisely from this experience and work with its possibilities. In conclusion, it is important to reiterate the ways in which *Butt* succeeds in cultivating new forms rather than merely enacting a nostalgic return to past forms of subjectification.

Ethics and Personhood in *Butt*

I am not giving up on the possible reservoir of intervention into neoliberalism in the experience and concept of *jouissance*. To engage it as a way to intervene in the rationality of fungibility, however, one must insistently and vigilantly engage in its historical forms.

(Winnubst 2012, 96)

In contrast to conventional representations of masculinity online, *Butt* introduces the idea of personhood, as I argued in [Chapter 4](#). Personhood is not identical to the subject of interiority; it can be characterized, for example, by a particular rhythm of affects that indicates an incommensurability with schematic reproductions of masculinity. In the context of media practices, personhood (or person) refers to an existence beyond appearance on online platforms. Hillis explains this difference:

[...] distinguishing between persons and bodies remains crucial, for persons are subject to different forms of aesthetization than are bodies. After all, bodies—such as, for example, those of gay/queer men standing in such fantasy environments as the leather or western bar—may project an image but they do not transmit this image through wires as personae may; yet the perceptual ‘realness’ of a telepresent persona blurs the experiential distinction between bodies and personae, and the spatial distinction between actually being here and virtually being there. This online leakiness has implications for the politics of personhood [...]. (2009, 232)

While Foucault, in a gesture borrowed from Nietzsche, had taken a first step in seeing the body as the starting point for a reflection on the aesthetics of existence, a body that no longer appears as an object of discipline and control, but can be transformed through practices of ascesis, in our analysis of digital media cultures we should also think about the self of ascesis beyond the body. That ascesis demands an instance beyond the body, was also pointed out by Foucault: “Freedom is the ontological condition for ethics. But ethics is the form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection” (1989c, 435).

Following Nietzsche, Foucault distinguishes between ethics and morality, a distinction that has not always been made in the history of philosophy (Huffer 2010, 245). While morality denotes a catalog of prescriptive values, ethics is meant to name the individual work of the self on the self.¹¹ In this sense, becoming a subject, as an ethical work based on desubjection, always remains continual and is never guaranteed. Within this Foucauldian tradition, which Lynne Huffer also follows, what keeps the aestheticization of the self as an ethical project going is reflection: “The ethics of the self as a practice of freedom is, above all, the practice of a critical reflection that will allow us to practice a different living through the art of ethical self-transformation” (2010, 264). Ethical work depends on the project of aestheticizing the self, but it also relies on the capacity of reflection. In her reading of Foucault, Huffer points out that reflection should in no way be confused with the activity of a Cartesian ego; rather, it can be seen as a form of “erotic spirituality” that involves a sustained interest in transformation (Huffer 2010, 260). The aesthetic subject has the capacity to act independently of normative protocols of morality and can develop its own

ethics through practice.¹² In this sense, the boys in *Butt* would correspond to forms of becoming a form of subjectivity that I have termed personhood.

Butt Heads

If we understand the young men shown in *Butt* as achieving forms of subjectivation beyond subjection and desubjection through their ascetic work on themselves, to what extent can this aesthetic-ethical process of transformation also be related to the question of the social? Foucault points out that ascetic work does not equal a form of solitude or narcissistic self-optimization: “[...] work of oneself on oneself [...] constitutes, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice” (quoted in Huffer 2013, 86). Ascesis as training in non-normativity is based on the experience of strangeness, or a contact with the outside, for example, through non-personal intimacy as in public sex, or as a loss of individual characteristics when browsing an online world of images governed by the principle of interchangeability. At the same time, ascesis involves reflective work that processes the aestheticization of both body and personhood. These practices of aestheticization are social practices, they include, for example, the circulation of knowledge and images in friendship networks.¹³ Within a culture of convergence, to which the fanzine *Butt* belongs, producers and consumers constantly change sides. This is where the mutual work on oneself and the other takes place. The cultural space that *Butt* opened up, in its remediation of post-pornographic online aesthetics, is a social space. What emerges, starting from a sexual-affective position, are forms of pleasure, not forms of shame or violation, an aesthetic-ethical project of the self and the social.

Butt's project, in the context of post-pornography and Porn 2.0, does not end with the interruption of capitalist-affective flows through the remediation of online pictures in print. In a gesture of a double remediation, from online to print and back online again, *Butt* makes its images and interviews accessible as an online archive and for further circulation. Moreover, *Buttmagazine.com* has taken over tasks of the fanzine given that the print version of the magazine was discontinued in 2011 (with usually shorter stories and without longer photo spreads). In addition, with *Butt Heads* appearing on the *Club Butt* social network, the website has translated the fanzine's principle of showcasing young gay men into the online format, also acting as an alternative platform to sites like *Planet Romeo* and apps like *Scruff* (www.buttmagazine.com/club/).

Pink Poverty

In the course of this double remediation, an aesthetic that owes itself to Porn 2.0 manifests itself in the photography of the fanzine and then returns to the net, *Butt*'s images share in an economy of “poor image” as artist and theorist Hito Steyerl has described it (Steyerl 2012, 31–45). “Poor images”

are images that owe their existence to the circulation and reproduction processes of the internet. These conditions do not remain external to them but rather make themselves felt in their status, and in their quality, according to Steyerl: “The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and re-edited” (2012, 32).

While *Butt*’s gesture of remediation initially isolates the photos as affective blocks from a context of digital pornographic use online, their origin as “poor images” is not obscured in the process. It is true that the photos in *Butt* are not reprints of images that already exist online – not a form of reblogging as on *Tumblr* – but new photographic images guided by online aesthetics. Their reprint in the fanzine documents a distance with regards to the online exchange of images as well as their proximity to it. For the photos in *Butt* can be considered “poor pictures” in their own way: Printed on cheap paper, they not only assert the difference that the materiality of print makes in digital times, but with the resulting coarseness and blurriness of the photos, they in turn participate in an economy of poor images. Steyerl’s definition of the “poor image” thus applies to the photos in *Butt* in the context of internet culture: “It mocks the promise of digital technology” (2012, 32).

Poor images are characterized by an ambivalence.¹⁴ On the one hand, they document the economic, technological, and political power-relations of neoliberalism, as Steyerl explains: “They testify to the violent dislocation, transferrals, and displacements of images – their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audiovisual capitalism” (2012, 32–33). Their placelessness and the speed with which they circulate indicate that they circulate as part of capitalist data flows and, in this way, they can be caught in channels of normative forces such as surveillance and discipline. At the same time, however, their aesthetic poverty points to an alternative political tradition of images since the 1960s. For the aesthetically “inferior” image has always been understood as a counter-design to the commodification of images in a society of spectacle, for example, in Juan García Espinosa’s “For an Imperfect Cinema.” Aesthetically, socially and politically, the poor image became an expression of resistance to hegemonic forms of power. Steyerl writes: “The circulation of poor images feeds into both capitalist media assembly lines and alternative audiovisual economies” (2012, 43). I have also argued this ambivalence for *Butt*’s aesthetics in relation to the internet and the power of pornographic norms.

At this point, however, there is one more aspect of *Butt*’s photographs that is significant – and is indeed probably the most salient aspect – that has not yet received attention. For the stand-out feature of the photographs, which also participates in the double remediation and maintains *Butt*’s identity at every circulation, is the pink coloring of the magazine: from the cover, throughout the pages, the interviews and black-and-white photos, and the reappearance of the zine on *Butt*’s webpage, the primary color of *Butt* is a pale (or poor) pink. If the point of *Butt*’s poor images, in the

tradition described by Steyerl, is to create a gay counter-world against the backdrop of the internet's circulation of images, this is virtually vouched for in every shot by the pink coloring of the medium. Pink – established within a gender binary as a “girl's color” – has historically become a marker of gay identity in its application to men. This is most dramatically evident in the categorization of homosexuals under the Nazi regime: gay prisoners were forced to wear a visible pink triangle on their clothing in the camps. Later, and in the wake of AIDS activism, the pink badge made a prominent return in the logo of the 1980s Act Up campaign “Silence equals Death.” Like the words “homo” or “queer” themselves, the pink triangle underwent a form of reassessment through appropriation and thus became an expression of gay pride and the fight against discrimination and violence.

Whatever the individually depicted motif on the pages of *Butt*, over and above the depiction of male sexuality, or even beyond the depiction of male bodies, with its pink pages *Butt* always documents the existence of a gay universe. *Butt* views the world through the filter of its pink-colored glasses. In the five chapters of *Hipster Porn*, I have explained what this “queering” is all about. In the pink of the fanzine's pages, the various aspects of its cultural, social, and ethical work are condensed: a naming that, with its changing subtitles, always insists on the sexual of homosexuality; an access to the hipster archive to reactivate its queer tradition; an interplay of media-aesthetic avant-garde and gay historiography that builds a bridge to the 1970s. Above all, however, an enthusiasm for male bodies that, under the gay gaze, move out of the framework of rigid masculinity; and which, for all their demonstrative maleness, always become queer. The question of what the possibilities of gay maleness are and in what forms they manifest themselves never cease to be asked in *Butt*'s pink world.

This also applies to the representation of sexuality: even when *Butt* becomes hardcore, which is rarely the case, the pink medium transforms every image, no matter how hefty, and recasts it in a mood of affective sexualities. It is not the blue of the pornographic “blue movie,” as Warhol made literal in his *Blue Movie* (Warhol 1969), named after the genre and brought to life through the use of bluish light in the film, or the red of the “red light milieu,” as it is used in the pornographic opening sequence of *Théo & Hugo* (Ducastel and Martineau 2016), the scene in the sex club where the two protagonists meet. By deploying pink, the post-pornographic images in *Butt* are categorically placed in a context of intimacy, a gay intimacy, which, since the discovery of HIV, has phobically been rejected. Pink is not the color of sex. But pink is not the color of love either. Pink is the color of Fag Limbo. The potentiality of an affective-sexual world in which attachments to men and objects are always aesthetically reconfigured. Pink is also the color of gay friendship. As isolated as the boys in each picture may be, *Butt*'s pink connects them to a gay history and an archive of gay images. It is from this point that *Butt* has begun its work of designing alternative forms of a gay future.



Figure C.2 Untitled, photographer unknown.

Source: Van Bennekom, Jop and Gert Jonkers (Eds.). *Butt*. No. 20. Summer 2007, Cover.

Notes

1. “The internet, with its ability to link people across geography and under the cloak of anonymity, has historically afforded queer people the chance to express themselves in a way that may be awkward, uncomfortable, or unsafe in public” (Egan, 2000; Alexander 2002a, 2002b; Gross 2003, 2004; Campbell, 2004; Hillis 2009; Cho 2015, 44).
2. Within the history of visual media, technological advancement has often been closely tied to the genre of pornography, a liaison that triggers moral panic about the representation of sexualized bodies as well as about technology.
3. At the beginning of the 2000s, Burnett and Marshall described the situation in this light: “With this long history or presenting technology in utopian terms, it seems natural and inevitable that the web was presented as offering

- a future paradise for users as it emerged as a generally available platform in the 1990s” (Burnett and Marshall 2003, 8).
4. Henning Bech writes: “There is a long and rich history of cruising practices in gay urban centers, to be sure” (Bech 1997). See Kane Race (2015, 255).
 5. Foucault says: “Asceticism as the renunciation of pleasure has had bad connotations. But the askesis is something else: it’s the work that one performs on oneself in order to transform oneself or make the self appear that happily one never attains” (Foucault 1989a, 309).
 6. Cf. Roach (2015, 2021).
 7. Thus, Halperin notes of Foucault: “And he accepted as an approximation to his outlook the Nietzschean dictum that one creates one’s life by giving it style through long practice and daily labor [...]” (1995, 108). The different ways of working “gay” in the context of camp and capitalism are analyzed by Matthew Tinkom in *Working like a Homosexual* (2002).
 8. In the queer context, pornography has often been understood as a significant source of artistic production, as writer Dennis Cooper also explained in an interview (Brandt 2008). On the relationship between pornography, aesthetics, and ontology, see John Paul Ricco (2002).
 9. *Butt*’s project of remediating aesthetics available online can be understood in relation to media history also in another way: *Butt*’s gesture of remediation makes use, as it were, of the forms of earlier stages in the history of the webcam, when digital technology did not yet allow for a flow of moving images. Hillis recalls this perceptual situation: “The slow refresh rates of webcam technology in the late 1990s allowed viewers to see the image as a series of static shots—photograph-like poses that also moved as they updated” (2009, 239).
 10. On the specific forms of archiving pornography in digital times, see also Dean, Ruszczycky and Squires (2014).
 11. David Halperin writes: “The possibility of distinguishing ethical work from discipline in the modern sense—the possibility, that is, of defining a notion of asceticism distinct from modern technologies for extracting docility from the body and normalizing human subjects—was in part what attracted Foucault to the study of ancient ethical thought in the first place” (1995, 109).
 12. On this, Halperin again: “The importance Foucault ascribes to the possibility of constructing norms without producing normalizing effects” (1995, 109). Foucault himself comments: “If by ethics you mean a code that tells us how to behave. Then of course The History of Sexuality is not ethics. But if by ethics you mean the relation one has to oneself when one acts, then I would say that it intends to be an ethics, or at least to show what an ethics of sexual behavior might be” (1989b, 380).
 13. In queer culture, friendship is not defined by a recognizable contract in the manner of family relationships or legalized partnerships. In Foucault’s description of friendship, there is a sense of openness and uncertainty about its forms. About the encounter between younger and older gay men, Foucault writes: “They have to invent, from A to Z, a relationship that is still formless, which is friendship: that is to say, the sum of everything through which they give each other pleasure” (Foucault 1989a, 309). This very lack of knowledge allows for the creation of new relations, which for Foucault and Roach lead to modern ethics unconcerned by identity and beyond biopolitical restrictions. Tom Roach writes: “Friendship, as I understand it and as I argue throughout, bespeaks the anarchical contingency of all relationality. In its very nature it is anti-institutional, indeed, it cannot congeal into an epistemological object known as society” (Roach 2012, 13). For a further discussion of friendship within Queer Studies, see Heather Love (2007, 72–99).

14. Steyerl writes: “The history of conceptual art describes this dematerialization of the art object initially as a resistant movement against the fetish value of visibility. But then the dematerialized art object turns out to be perfectly adapted to the semiotization of capital and thus to the conceptual turn of capitalism” (2012, 42–43).

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Index

- Aarons, Philip 20, 25, 28, 34, 44, 49, 56, 72, 130
Adam4Adam (website) 31
affect theory 11, 13, 65, 92, 94–97, 99, 102, 104, 105, 111, 113, 114, 123, 136, 139, 143, 147, 154
affective sexualities, affective sexuality 13, 91, 92, 104, 106, 112, 115, 122, 125, 126, 145, 148, 171; *see also* sensuality
affirmation 3, 10, 50, 86, 140, 150
Ahmed, Sara 150, 154
AIDS 4, 5, 7, 12, 15, 21, 25–27, 36, 132, 153, 161, 171; *see also* HIV
Albo, Mike 44
Alexander, Jonathan 172
Altman, Dennis 36, 86
Almodóvar, Pedro 85, 152
Amateur, amateurs 22, 26, 28–30, 33, 41, 93, 125; amateurish 41
American 2, 19, 35, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49, 51, 129, 136, 147; Americans 52; un-American 48, 49; non-American 49; *see also* white trash
anal 26, 67, 95, 140–142; anality 87, 141, 145, 152; anal group, anal grouping 140, 142; anus 87, 141, 152; *see also* ass
Angerer, Marie-Luise 97, 114
Appadurai, Arjun 48, 148,
apps 14, 159, 160, 169; *see also* dating platforms; website, websites
archive 1, 12, 19, 47, 49, 51, 53, 59, 64, 73, 105, 112, 116, 128, 167, 169, 171
art porn 35, 48, 50
ascesis, askesis 161, 165, 168, 169, 173; asceticism 11, 173
ass, asses 15, 78, 87, 127, 141; *see also* anal
assemblage, assemblages 124, 129, 130
assimilation 6, 7, 9, 16, 24, 117
Attwood, Feona 47
authenticity 13, 29–31, 41, 51, 67, 125, 126, 133, 147; authentic 29, 52, 54, 55
Aydemir, Murat 66, 76, 84–87, 127
Barbine, Herculine 98
bareback 66, 71, 72, 74, 76–79, 85, 137, 152; barebacking 85, 105
Barthes, Roland 87, 115, 149, 152, 153
Basso (zine) 19
Bataille, Georges 84
Baumann, Zygmunt 25, 99, 116
Bear, bears 33, 35, 58, 59, 74, 133, 146, 147
beard, beards 40, 41, 54, 64, 72, 79–83, 87; bearded 20, 134
Bech, Henning 91, 173
Beckman, Frida 10, 83, 97, 99, 103, 115, 116
becoming, becomings 10, 70, 76, 78, 83, 91, 96, 104, 108, 110, 112, 117, 123, 139, 142, 150, 151, 165, 168, 169; unbecoming, counterbecoming 97, 112, 117, 150, 165
Beljan, Magdalena 68
Benderson, Bruce 50
Bergson, Henri 70
Berlant, Lauren 8, 11, 13, 92, 94–96, 104–107, 109–114, 116, 117, 123, 132, 136, 141, 142, 145, 146, 148–150, 152–154
Bernard, Suzanne 87

- Bersani, Leo 6, 10, 11, 66–71, 73, 77, 78, 82–86, 88, 91, 95, 98–100, 104, 105, 107, 110–112, 114–117, 122, 137, 139–41, 149, 151, 152, 154, 161–165
- Bertelsen, Lone 130
- Bianco, Marcie 59
- Biasin, Enrico 71, 84
- ‘Bifo’ Berardi, Franco 167,
- biopolitics 4, 95, 105; biopolitical 9, 42, 44, 63, 131, 161, 162, 173
- Black 12, 44–46, 52, 56, 59, 170; Blacks 44, 45, 56; Blackness 52, 56, 59
- Bloc Party 42, 59; *see also* Okereke, Kele
- Blow Job (film) 36
- bodies and pleasures 92, 97–102, 123; body-pleasures 102; *see also* Foucault, Michel; history of sexuality, sexualities; pleasure, pleasures
- body hair 41, 72, 79–81; *see also* hairy
- body image, body images 5, 27, 47–49, 51, 124
- body politics 3, 24, 26–28, 35, 36, 47, 48, 92, 134
- Bolter, Jay David 29–32, 40
- Bond, Justin 27, 28; *see also* Shortbus
- Boovy, Bradley 31
- Bordo, Susan 74, 85
- boring 72, 132, 143, 145, 148; boredom 139, 153
- Boscagli, Maurizia 87
- Bourdieu, Pierre 9, 75, 117
- Brandenburg, Marc 42, 59
- Brandt, Wilfred 173
- Breger, Claudia 114, 115
- Bronson, A.A. 20, 25, 27, 28, 34, 44, 49, 56, 72, 130
- Brown, Willa 59
- Brubaker, Rogers 84
- Büsser, Martin 21, 40
- Burnett, Robert 172, 173
- Burroughs, William S. 56
- butch 63, 68, 107; butchness 82; beyond butch 12, 63
- Butler, Andy 129
- Butler, Judith 11, 13, 21, 63, 64, 66, 68–71, 73, 74, 76–79, 83, 84, 87, 97–100, 129, 154; Butlerian 70, 91
- Cadinot, Jean-Daniel 25, 35
- Cam4.com 32, 33
- Camp 15, 67, 146–148, 173
- Campbell, John E. 172
- Camus, Renaud 149
- Cante, Rich 46
- capital, capitalist, capitalism 3, 9, 10, 46, 52–54, 65, 106, 108, 109, 152, 153, 169, 170, 173, 174; communicative capitalism 14; erotic capitalism 48, 82; human capitalism 160; pornographic capitalism 126
- Caravaggio 152
- Cassidy, Neal 56
- castration 13, 70, 86, 114, 138–142, 145; castration humor 14, 138–140, 142
- Catalina (label) 45, 46
- Cazzo (label) 59
- Cervulle, Maxime 35
- chat, chats 12, 30, 33, 34, 144, 149, 163
- chatter 130, 162, 163
- Cho, Alexander 172
- cis 21, 22, 25, 41, 59, 82
- citebeur.com 32
- class 10, 12, 35, 42–47, 51–54, 56, 58, 64, 147; *see also* white trash; working class
- clone, clones 24–26, 41, 45, 46, 54, 67
- cock, cocks 33, 73, 78, 79; *see also* dick; penis; phallus
- cockyboys.com 3, 151, 152
- commodity, commodities 3, 55, 152, 153
- commodification 12, 20, 94, 126, 167, 170
- community 10, 14, 15, 40, 58, 116, 130, 139, 140, 159, 162, 163
- contingency 77, 84, 118, 132, 147–150, 154, 173; contingent 14, 131, 133, 138, 151, 154
- control 9, 107, 117, 133, 150, 151, 162, 168
- Cooper, Dennis 173
- couple, couples 6, 8, 33, 108, 109, 116, 117, 125, 146, 147
- Cramer, Florian 23
- Crimp, Douglas 161
- cruising 161–163, 173
- Culler, Jonathan 115
- cum 72, 76, 78, 82, 127; *see also* semen
- Cunningham, Daniel Mudie 45
- cute, cuteness 142, 152, 153
- Cvetkovich, Ann 9, 15, 16

- dating platforms 14, 31–34, 163, 164;
 dating portals 2, 32; *see also* apps;
 website, websites
 Davidson, Arnold 103
 Davis, Nick 48, 49, 59, 93, 97, 114,
 116, 124, 132, 151
 Davis, Whitney 97, 112
 Dean, Jodi 160
 Dean, Tim 2, 10, 85, 94, 103–105,
 134, 137, 152, 173
 De Ceccatty, Rene 19
 DeGenevieve, Barbara 74
 De Lauretis, Teresa 115, 116
 Deleuze, Gilles 9–11, 13, 44, 70, 71,
 77, 78, 82, 86, 87, 91, 97, 99–104,
 109, 113–116, 123, 129–131, 145,
 150, 165; Deleuzian 9, 70, 71,
 76–78, 84, 92, 97, 101, 106, 123,
 130, 131, 137, 143, 145
 De Luca, Tommy 128, 138
 De Man, Paul 70, 77
 De Rome, Peter 25
 desexualized 8, 9, 15, 23, 24, 114;
 desexualization 13, 23, 94, 96
 desubjection 14, 161–165, 168, 169; *see*
 also subjection; subjectivation
 Deuber-Mankowsky, Astrid 151
 deviantotter.com 3, 59, 151
 Di Blasi, Luca 43, 47, 59
 dick 22, 50, 69, 72–76, 86; *see also*
 cock; penis; phallus
 Diederichsen, Diedrich 94, 95
 dirty 45, 57; dirty jokes 138–140
 discipline 9, 11, 92, 162, 168,
 170, 173
 documentary 20, 22, 25, 124, 125, 137
 Don't They? (zine) 19
 Doyle, Jennifer 153
 drag 21, 27, 63, 64, 67, 68, 87
 drive, drives 10, 78, 84, 86, 87,
 97–100, 104, 106, 117, 123, 130,
 135, 150, 153, 160–162
 Ducastel, Olivier 125, 148, 171
 Dustan, Guillaume 149
 Dutch 19, 35, 44, 48, 49
 Dutoit, Ulysse 152
 Dworkin, Andrea 116
 Dyer, Richard 20, 21, 35, 46, 73–75,
 85, 94, 141, 153

 Easton, Dossie 117
 Edelman, Lee 66, 70–72, 74–79, 85,
 87, 94–96, 104, 105, 116, 117, 136
 141, 142, 148–150, 152, 153

 Egan, Jennifer 172
 emotion, emotions 93–95, 106, 108,
 110–113, 116; emotional 107, 126,
 150, 167; *see also* feeling, feelings
 Engel Hart, Thomas 129, 135
 ephemeral 1, 14, 77, 145, 147, 148
 episodic 14, 107, 148, 149; episode,
 episodes 126, 148, 149;
 episodicity 149
 ethics 8, 95, 104, 114, 123, 167–169,
 173; ethical, ethically 6, 8, 9, 11, 72,
 96, 101, 104, 116, 168, 169, 171,
 173; ethos 165
 European 12, 44, 47–51, 54, 59, 64;
 Europe 4, 5, 7, 48, 49, 51, 161
 Evans, Jennifer 48, 49
 event, events 14, 71, 72, 75–77, 84, 87,
 102, 103, 109, 110, 116, 124, 130,
 132, 138, 144, 150, 151, 164, 165
 exploitation 10, 53, 106, 153

 Faggot 22, 23
 Falcon (label) 45
 fan, fans 12, 19, 22, 40, 65, 147, 159
 fanzine 3, 5, 10–12, 14, 15, 19–22, 24,
 25, 28–30, 34, 35, 40, 42, 44, 49 51,
 55, 56, 58, 59, 70–72, 86, 124, 128,
 131, 137, 140, 144, 146, 147, 151,
 159, 164, 165, 167, 169–171; *see also*
 zine
 fashion 3, 12, 49, 54, 55, 57, 106,
 128, 129, 132, 135, 138, 142, 148;
 fashionable 12, 53, 55, 138
 feeling, feelings 50, 52, 91, 106, 112,
 113, 117, 123, 148, 152, 165, 167;
 see also emotion, emotions
 femininity 13, 56, 59, 65, 69, 115;
 feminine 56
 feminist 20, 22, 69, 94, 114, 116, 138,
 140; feminism 69, 72, 114, 154
 fetish, fetishes 19, 32, 35, 55, 91,
 136, 174; fetishism 133–136, 145,
 152, 153; fetishization 46, 67, 167;
 fetishistic 32, 72, 95, 136, 137;
 fetishize 74; fetishized 52, 124, 138
 Fiedler, Leslie 50, 59
 fisting 105, 116, 152
 fitness 10, 25, 26, 108; fit 12, 25, 26
 Flatley, Jonathan 145
 force 5, 22, 26, 58, 65, 72, 77, 81, 94,
 95, 101, 102, 106, 108, 113, 115,
 141, 154, 162, 164, 165; *see also*
 pornographic force
 Foster, Hal 151

- Foucault, Michel 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 19, 21, 50, 68, 86, 92, 94–106, 109–118, 123, 128, 136, 137, 145, 146, 149, 153, 154, 160–162, 165, 168, 169, 173; Foucauldian 5, 96, 97, 101, 106, 109, 123, 125, 131, 136, 162, 168; *see also* bodies and pleasures; history of sexuality, sexualities
- Freeman, Elizabeth 15, 65, 99, 139
- Freud, Sigmund 10, 77, 84, 96–99, 104, 107, 110, 114, 115, 123, 138, 140, 152; Freudian 106, 115, 131, 136, 139, 152
- friendliness 14, 70, 107, 127, 137; friendly 22, 68, 138
- friendship 98, 117, 153, 169, 171, 173
- Frosh, Stephen 66, 68
- fungibility 163, 164, 167
- Gallop, Jane 15, 73, 86
- Ganio, Julian 133, 134
- gay culture 2, 5, 8, 15, 19, 22, 26, 40, 46, 63, 134, 149
- gay marriage 7, 16, 117, 147
- gay masculinity 1, 12, 134
- gay porn, pornography 17, 20, 22, 25–27, 35, 40, 42, 46, 48, 58, 59, 67, 71, 124, 126, 141, 153
- GayRomeo, PlanetRomeo 31, 34, 160
- GayRoyal 31
- gay sexuality 1, 2, 4, 5, 21, 22, 24, 26, 138, 149
- Genet, Jean 67, 82–85, 117
- genre, genres 1, 20–22, 24, 29, 30, 35, 42, 49, 50, 55, 65, 67, 70, 92, 93, 108, 111, 112, 117, 124–127, 130–132, 144, 147–150, 160, 171, 172
- Gide, André 82
- Ginsberg, Alan 56
- Godfrey, Mark 129, 132, 151
- Goldin, Nan 24, 47
- Goldman, Albert 51
- Grace, Wendy 103, 115
- Greene, Robert 80
- Greer, Germaine 85
- Gregg, Melissa 65, 94, 143, 154
- Gregor, Steven 19, 20, 22, 28, 40, 54, 63, 144, 147
- Greif, Mark 4, 35, 51–54, 57, 108, 109, 116
- Grindr (app) 160
- Gross, Larry 172
- Grossberg, Lawrence 94, 100, 111
- Grosz, Elizabeth 58, 69, 70, 99–101, 110, 115, 129
- Growlr (app) 160
- Grusin, Richard 29–32, 36, 40
- Guattari, Félix 10, 44, 87, 97, 103, 109, 115, 116, 119, 120, 123, 130, 165
- Gysel, Jessica 35
- Haase, Matthias 7, 15
- Habermas, Jürgen 9
- Haigh, Andrew 124; *see also* Weekend hairy 3, 19, 35, 58, 78, 80, 83, 134; hairiness 41, 64, 79–83, 87; *see also* body hair
- Halberstam, Jack Judith 16, 42, 46, 73, 84, 86, 105, 117
- Halkitis, Perry 26, 36
- Hall, Matthew 41,
- Halley, Janet 16, 96, 114, 115
- Halperin, David 15, 36, 66, 95, 96, 102, 103, 105, 107, 114, 140, 165, 173
- Hanson, Ellis 21
- happiness 84, 146, 149, 150, 154
- Hardt, Michael 9, 117
- Hardy, Janet W. 117
- Haver, William 164
- headline, headlines 124, 126, 129, 131, 137–139, 143, 149
- Hebdige, Dick 2, 3, 22, 28, 51–53, 59, 66, 83
- Heidegger, Martin 84, 96
- heteronormative 2, 9, 57, 67, 130, 150; heteronormativity 9, 57
- Hickey-Moody, Anna 70, 77
- Hillis, Ken 8, 34, 168, 172, 173
- Hirschauer, Stefan 84
- history of sexuality, sexualities 97, 98, 101, 112, 123, 173; *see also* bodies and pleasures; Foucault, Michel
- HIV 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, 25–27, 36, 85, 132, 161, 171; *see also* AIDS
- Hobby, hobbies 14, 128, 129, 131, 135, 145, 147
- Hocquenghem, Guy 1, 15, 69, 70, 77–79, 82, 84, 92, 99, 105–108, 114, 128, 130, 133, 135, 140–142, 145, 146, 152, 161; *see also* Maurel, Christian
- Hoenes, Josch 82
- Holert, Tom 129
- homonormativity 7–9, 24, 117; homonormative 9

- Houellebecq, Michel 49–51
 Hudson, Rock 36
 Huffer, Lynne 9, 98, 105, 114, 116, 168, 169
 humor 14, 134, 137–140, 142, 143; humorous 137, 152; *see also* joke, jokes
 Humpday (film) 57
 Hustler White (film) 59
- identity politics 7, 21, 24, 117
 Idier, Antoine 15
 immediacy 29–32, 34, 126; immediate 30, 34; *see also* livestream, livestreams
 imperfect 20, 27, 30, 41–43, 46, 47, 49, 51, 78, 85, 95, 128, 133, 147, 170; imperfection 22; non-perfect 34, 165
 incoherence 111, 112, 149, 154; incoherent 110, 123
 indie 12, 19, 25, 26, 95
 intensity, intensities 10, 13, 98, 110, 111, 127, 149
 interactive 8, 11, 28, 30, 32, 34, 159; *see also* Porn 2.0
 interesting 20, 22, 47, 72, 142, 144, 145, 147, 150, 152, 153; interest 14, 65, 91, 126, 128, 129, 132, 136, 143–145, 148–150, 160, 162
 internet 2, 10, 28, 30, 31, 34, 51, 73, 152, 159, 167, 170–172
 interview, interviews 3, 19, 20, 22, 41, 43, 47, 124, 126–131, 136, 138, 143, 145, 148, 149, 151, 169, 170; interviewees 132; interviewed 59
 In Their Room (film) 124–126, 137, 145, 146; *see also* Mathews, Travis
 intimacy, intimacies 104, 106, 110, 123, 126, 160, 169, 171; intimate, intimates 105, 108, 113, 127, 150
 Intziagianni, Michalis 166
 Irigaray, Luce 84, 85, 114
- Jacobs, Katrien 21
 Jacobs, Marc 44, 138
 Jagose, Annamarie 95, 98, 104, 105, 114, 115
 Jardine, Alice 84
 Jenkins, Henry 22
 joke, jokes 14, 135–140, 145; *see also* humor, humorous
 Jonkers, Gert 19, 20, 24, 27, 28, 43, 44, 49, 50, 59, 78, 128, 129, 134–138, 142, 143, 146, 151
- jouissance 10, 16, 66–68, 74, 75, 77, 78, 84–86, 95, 96, 104, 167
 Joyce, James 84
- Kaiserin (zine) 19
 Keep The Lights On (film) 124, 146; *see also* Sachs, Ira
 Kemp, Jonathan 84, 86, 113
 Kerouac, Jack 52, 56
 Kindness 102, 112, 113, 123, 127, 137, 146, 148, 150; unkindness 107; *see also* love
 kink, kinky 46, 137; kinkiness 57, 137
 Kink (zine) 19, 137
 Klein, Darin 20
 Klein, Melanie 153
 Koch, Gertrud 114
 Köppert, Katrin 31
 Koestenbaum, Wayne 24, 72, 75, 85, 109, 113, 122, 132
 Kofman, Sarah 138, 140
 Koivunen, Anu 11, 110
 Kristeva, Julia 87
 Kutt (zine) 35
 Kuzniar, Alice 21
- LaBruce, Bruce 15, 22–24, 27, 49, 55, 57, 85, 129, 132, 137
 Lacan, Jacques 9, 70, 75–78, 86; Lacanian 9, 16, 70, 73, 76, 77, 82, 86, 102, 106, 122, 151
 lack 13, 32, 35, 51, 52, 68, 76, 77, 81, 86, 87, 97, 102, 103, 107, 122, 128, 130, 145, 149–151, 161, 170, 173; lacking 63, 86
 Laclau, Ernesto 9, 110
 Lafreniere, Steve 44
 Laqueur, Thomas 33
 Laufenberg, Mike 6, 117, 118, 153
 Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 154
 lesbian, lesbians 1, 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 21, 35, 68, 129, 135, 159
 Levine, Martin 25, 26, 42, 48, 67
 lifestyle, lifestyles 19, 21, 35, 36, 56, 57, 150, 153; *see also* style, styles
 Linck, Dirck 3, 4, 7, 56, 57, 113
 Lindemann, Gesa 84
 livestream, livestreams 30, 32–34; *see also* immediacy
 love 11, 13, 14, 22, 66, 73, 91, 92, 96, 104–113, 116, 117, 123–126, 129, 143–151, 171; *see also* kindness
 Love, Heather 8, 105, 111, 153, 173
 lumbersexual 54, 59, 80, 82

- Madonna 47
 Mailer, Norman 52
 Maina, Giovanna 84
 male becoming 13, 83, 91, 128, 143;
see also becoming, becomings
 male body, male bodies 2, 11, 12, 14,
 15, 17, 20, 22, 25–27, 36, 41, 42,
 44, 46, 47, 49, 51, 58, 65–67, 69–71,
 73–76, 78, 79, 81, 83, 84, 86, 91,
 92, 95, 126, 129, 133, 134, 138,
 164, 171
 Manhunt (website) 31–33, 160
 Manopoly (website) 32
 Mapplethorpe, Robert 31, 153
 Marcus, Steven 50, 93
 Marcuse, Herbert 9, 109
 Marshall, P. David 172, 173,
 Martineau, Jacques 125, 148, 171
 masochism 68, 122; masochistic 56
 Massumi, Brian 101, 104, 110, 131
 materiality 13, 58, 64, 66, 69, 70, 72,
 75, 76, 78, 82–85, 87, 91, 100, 101,
 170; material 13, 66–68, 72, 74–78,
 81, 82, 86, 87, 93, 115, 149
 Mathews, Travis 124, 126; *see also In
 Their Room*
 Maurel, Christian 15; *see also
 Hocquenghem, Guy*
 McDonald, Boyd 25; *see also Straight
 to Hell*
 McGlotten, Shaka 20, 25, 31, 33, 63,
 73, 93, 143, 159, 160
 McKinnon, Catharine 116
 McLuhan, Marshall 31
 McNair, Brian 50
 media practice, practices 14, 151, 159,
 163, 164, 168
 Meeker, Martin 159
 menatplay.com 32
 Mercer, John 35, 36, 48, 59, 85, 151,
 152
 metrosexual 41, 54; metrosexuality 54,
 55; *see also Simpson, Mark*
 Mey, Kerstin 49
 Meyer, Richard 22, 28, 31
 Miklos, Arpad 41
 Miller, D.A. 66, 74, 152
 Mitchell, John Cameron 20; *see also
 Bond, Justin; Shortbus*
 Mogutin, Slava 23
 Morris, Paul 72, 76, 85
 Mouffe, Chantal 9
 Muñoz, José 42, 45, 46, 48, 103,
 145, 150
 Murphie, Andrew 130
 mutations 87, 139; mutability 92, 134;
 mutating 95, 99, 133
 nation, nationality 10, 12, 15,
 42, 44, 47, 48, 51, 56, 58, 59,
 64; national 15, 47, 48, 51, 59;
 nationalism 117
 naturalness 12, 41, 42, 55, 65, 80,
 81, 128, 133, 134; natural 13, 40,
 42, 44, 48, 51, 54–56, 63–66, 78,
 81–83, 102, 172
 Needham, Alex 28, 48, 49,
 129, 137
 negativity 70, 75–77, 79, 86, 95, 111,
 112, 117, 141, 142, 149
 Negri, Antonio 9, 117
 neoliberal 2, 6, 10, 14, 47, 53, 115,
 160; neoliberalism 16, 113, 117,
 160, 167, 170
 neosexual 50, 163; neosexuality,
 neosexualities 9, 32, 108; *see also
 Sigusch, Volkmar*
 netporn 22, 28, 30, 32, 34, 48, 51,
 55, 71, 93, 126; *see also realcore*
 network 1, 86, 136, 139, 152, 169;
 networked 8
 new media 3, 10–12, 29, 30, 32, 36,
 40, 63, 71, 124, 125, 159, 164
 New Queer Cinema 21, 59, 114,
 124, 151
 New Wave Queer Cinema 14,
 124–127, 146, 151
 Ngai, Sianne 142–145, 152, 153
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 70, 86, 100, 101,
 168; Nietzschean 77, 173
 Nigianni, Chrysanthi 75
 non-phallic 74, 76, 78, 113, 127; *see
 also phallic; post-phallic*
 obscene 23, 67, 138, 139, 141, 142;
 obscenity 98, 127, 137, 143
 Oedipal 84, 134, 154; anti-Oedipal 97;
 non-Oedipal 130; pre-Oedipal 84,
 122
 Okereke, Kele 42, 59; *see also Bloc
 Party*
 Oliver, Kelly 87
 online porn, pornography 11, 28, 29,
 33, 34, 40, 71, 73, 92, 93, 159, 165,
 167
 ontology 10, 77, 87, 98, 101, 143, 164,
 173; ontological, ontologically 1, 13,
 73, 96, 98, 99, 111, 112, 164, 168

- optimism 11, 14, 23, 107, 116, 118, 131, 142, 149, 150, 154; optimistic, optimistically 116, 132, 154; *see also* Snediker, Michael
 orgasm, orgasms 85, 95, 104, 126; orgasmology 114
 Osterweil, Ara 35, 36, 75, 85

 Paasonen, Susanna 22, 29, 30, 33, 40, 46, 50, 85, 93, 100, 125
 Padva, Gilad 94
 paranoid 107, 136, 154, 165; paranoia 15, 142
 Parisi, Luciana 69, 85, 87, 102, 115, 125
 Parker, Andrew 16, 96, 114, 115
 Patterson, Zabet 30, 93
 Peck, Dale 2, 5, 15
 penis 59, 72–76, 79, 81, 85, 86; *see also* cock; dick; phallus
 Penley, Constance 45, 47, 52, 56, 57, 138
 performative 22, 41, 52, 54, 63, 67, 70, 74, 79, 87; performativity 13, 21, 63, 64, 66, 67; *see also* theatricality
 personhood 110, 112, 131–133, 136, 143, 145, 150, 164, 167–169; person, personality 69, 102, 115, 123, 125, 131, 132, 152, 168; persona, personae 53, 168
 perversion 10, 27, 134
 Pet Shop Boys 105
 Pfeiffer, Walter 49
 phallic, phallically 26, 41, 50, 58, 64–66, 71–76, 78–82, 84–87, 91, 113, 122, 124, 127, 133, 138–143, 150; phallicity 73, 74, 138–142, 152; phallicism 41; *see also* non-phallic; post-phallic
 phallus 70, 72–75, 79, 81, 85, 86, 92, 133, 135, 138–141; *see also* cock; dick; penis
 Phillips, Adam 84, 85, 91, 107, 109–113, 123, 146
 Pierson, Jack 151
 pink 14, 20, 55, 159, 169–171
 pin-up, pin-ups 75, 127, 147
 Pin Ups (zine) 35
 Pisszine (zine) 35
 Plato 110
 pleasure, pleasures 10, 13, 16, 30, 35, 36, 46, 53, 58, 66, 67, 92, 96–106, 108, 109, 112–116, 122, 123, 128, 135, 136, 139, 141–143, 145, 146, 148, 152, 160–162, 164, 165, 169, 173; pleasurable 74, 116; *see also* bodies and pleasures
 Poole, Wakefield 25
 poor image, images 169, 170; *see also* Steyerl, Hito
 pop culture 3, 44, 47, 51, 53; pop cultural 3, 52, 53, 56–58
 Porn 2.0 29, 30, 33–35, 93, 162, 164, 169; *see also* interactive
 pornification 2; pornified 10, 20, 163; *see also* self-pornification
 porno chic 12, 50
 pornographic force 164, 165; *see also* force
 pornotopia 45, 46, 71; *see also* utopian
 post-AIDS 5, 26, 27
 post-phallic 12, 40, 41, 58, 65, 66, 70, 91, 92, 113, 128, 133, 139, 147, 152; post-phallicity 139; *see also* non-phallic; phallic
 post-pornography 4, 8, 10, 11, 13, 42, 48, 59, 65, 67, 70, 74, 93, 95, 122, 124–126, 141, 148, 149, 160, 169; post-porn 20–23, 28, 42, 59, 76, 126;
 post-pornographic 3, 5, 10–12, 14, 21, 24, 27, 29, 30, 43, 48, 49, 51, 55, 57, 65, 68, 75, 91–95, 124–128, 136, 137, 139, 146–149, 164, 165, 169, 171
 post-psychoanalytic 70, 87, 123, 150; post-psychoanalytical 136, 143; *see also* psychoanalysis
 post-sexual 94, 128, 129, 139, 143
 Preciado, Paul Beatriz 64, 69, 72, 84, 86, 87
 print 3, 25, 28, 34, 42, 124, 153, 169, 170; printed 20, 34, 170; printing 20, 166; reprint 170
 private 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 22, 27, 33, 34, 50, 109, 127, 128, 141; privacy 33, 110
 promiscuous, promiscuously 7, 113, 146, 147, 149; promiscuity 117, 140, 145, 153
 Proust, Marcel 82
 psychoanalysis 9, 10, 11, 13, 66, 68, 70, 73, 77, 84, 92, 97–99, 102, 103, 107, 109, 114, 115, 122, 123, 134, 137, 139; psychoanalytic, psychoanalytical, psychoanalytically 11, 13, 16, 67, 70, 76–78, 87, 95–99, 104, 106, 107, 110, 116,

- 122, 123, 125, 134, 136, 137,
141, 143, 148, 150, 151; *see also*
post-psychoanalytic
- Queer theory 1, 11, 15, 16, 22, 68, 77,
78, 94, 96–99, 103, 106, 112, 114,
116, 131, 153, 161
- race 10, 12, 16, 35, 42, 44, 46, 47, 56,
58, 64, 144; racialized 42
- Race, Kane 2, 8, 173
- Rasmussen, Mary Lou 70, 77
- realcore 30, 33, 34, 41, 55, 125, 127,
146, 147; *see also* netporn
- realism 22, 28, 29, 40, 63, 64, 83, 147;
realistic 23, 63
- recognition 6, 7, 8, 21, 107, 161
- Rehberg, Peter 15, 31, 41
- Reich, Wilhelm 9
- remediation 28, 29, 31, 34–36, 51, 73,
165, 166, 169, 170, 173
- Restivo, Angelo 46
- reterritorialization 22, 115,
131, 167
- Reynolds, Simon 53
- Ricco, John Paul 164, 165, 173
- Rich, B. Ruby 21, 59
- Ritte, Jürgen 50
- Roach, Tom 10, 67, 86, 96, 99, 104,
115, 132, 153, 160–164, 173
- Rosenthal, Irving 56
- Rosenthal, Jeanne 59, 86
- Ross, Kathleen 35
- Ruff, Thomas 49
- Ruszczycky, Steven 173
- Sachs, Ira 124; *see also* *Keep The
Lights On*
- Sagat, François 41
- Savran, David 42, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59,
86
- Schirmer, Uta 87
- Schizo-subject, -subjects 14, 130, 132,
143, 147, 150
- Schock, Axel 59
- Schreber, Daniel Paul 84, 86, 87, 113
- Schröter, Werner 110
- Scruff (app) 160, 169
- Sedgwick, Eve 9, 11, 15, 64, 94, 98,
100, 104, 105, 113, 114, 116, 136,
154
- Seeßlen, Georg 32
- Seigworth, Gregory J. 65, 94, 143, 154
- self-assertion 13, 14, 50, 122, 139, 163
- self-pornification 14, 32, 163; *see also*
pornification
- self-promotion 14, 32, 160, 163
- semen 84, 85, 87, 50; *see also* cum
- sensuality 99, 112, 152; *see also*
affective sexualities, affective
sexuality
- Sepuya, Paul Mpagi 24
- sexual revolution 9, 15, 50,
108, 161
- shame 6, 112, 140, 152, 169; shameful
7; shamefulness 152;
shamelessness 152
- shattering 56; ego-shattering 78, 104,
106, 122; self-shattering 67, 85, 112
- Shortbus 20, 27, 28, 94, 95, 114; *see
also* Bond, Justin; Mitchell, John
Cameron
- Sigusch, Volkmar 9, 32, 33, 108; *see
also* neosexual
- Silverman, Kaja 116
- Simmel, Georg 162
- Simon, Vincent 35
- Simonneau, Xavier 129
- Simpson, Mark 41; *see also*
metrosexual
- skin 44, 70, 81
- S/M 13, 59, 68, 104, 105, 142
- Smith, Jack 35, 56
- Smith, Paul 71, 84, 85, 92
- Snediker, Michael 116, 131, 132, 150,
154; *see also* optimism
- sociality 21, 126, 161, 162
- Sontag, Susan 144
- spectacle 3, 14, 67, 70, 79, 81, 85, 170;
spectacular 26
- Spinoza, Baruch de 151
- Squires, David 173
- star, stars 41, 48, 79, 122, 127, 137
- Steyerl, Hito 169–171, 174; *see also*
poor image, images
- Stipe, Michael 44
- Storr, Merl 75
- Straight to Hell* (zine) 25, 26, 35, 128;
see also McDonald, Boyd
- Stüttgen, Tim 20–22, 28, 42, 71
- style, styles 3, 10, 12, 13, 20, 21, 24,
28, 41, 42, 47–49, 53–55, 58, 63,
68, 69, 96, 101, 124–126, 145, 173;
see also lifestyle, lifestyles
- subculture 1, 3, 9, 13, 20, 22, 25, 30,
51, 55–57, 71, 105, 114, 117, 137;
- subcultural 3, 10, 12, 15, 20, 22, 28,
49, 52–54, 66, 137, 159, 165

- subjection 14, 104, 161–164, 169; *see also* desubjection; subjectivation
 subjectivation 113, 130, 162, 164, 169; *see also* desubjection; subjection
 Suck (zine) 49
 Sundén, Jenny 166, 167
 Surin, Kenneth 101, 110
- Taylor, Barbara 107, 109, 112, 113, 123, 127, 146
 temporality 15, 107, 148, 149, 154, 166, 167
 theatricality 22, 23, 31, 64, 78, 81, 122; *see also* performative
 Théo & Hugo (film) 125, 148, 171
 The Tenth (zine) 59
 They Shoot Homos
 Thomas, Calvin 15, 66, 69, 78, 79, 84–87
 Tillmans, Wolfgang 24, 44, 74, 129, 132–134, 151
 Tinkom, Matthew 173
 Tomkins, Silvan 113
 Tortorici, Dana 35
 Townsend, Chris 47
 trans 21, 42, 64, 66, 82, 84, 87
 transgender 21, 64, 65, 68
 transnational 3, 47, 48, 64; transnationality 42, 44
 trauma, traumatic 7, 12, 27, 96, 114
 Treleven, Scott 21
 trivialization 14, 108, 136–138, 142, 147; trivializing 108, 137, 153; trivialized 142, 145
 Tumblr 165, 170
 Turner, Terence S. 81, 82
 Tuschling, Anna 151
- UK Naked (label) 48
 utopian 41, 46, 50, 52, 56, 57, 114, 139, 153, 160, 161, 172; utopia, utopias, utopianism 10, 20, 46, 50, 109, 145; utopic 154; *see also* pornotopia
- Van Bennekom, Jop 19, 20, 24, 27, 28, 40, 43, 44, 48, 49, 54, 59, 78, 128, 129, 134–138, 142, 143, 146, 151
 Van Sant, Gus 44
 Venegas, Luis 43
- Vivid Video (label) 45
 Voswinckel, Anna 40
 vulnerable 65, 81, 85, 132; vulnerability 27, 117, 149, 150
- Wagner, Frank 24
 Wainwright, Rufus 44
 Walters, Ben 124
 Ward, Jane 6, 42, 57, 59
 Warhol, Andy 35, 36, 56, 65, 75, 85, 145, 153, 171
 Warner, Michael 8, 9, 46, 114, 140, 161
 Waters, John 44
 Watney, Simon 25
 Waugh, Thomas 31, 32, 35
 webcam, webcams 28, 29, 30, 32–34, 125, 166, 167, 173
 website, websites 3, 36, 59, 151, 159, 169; *see also* apps; dating platforms
 Weekend (film) 124, 146, 148; *see also* Haigh, Andrew
 Weeks, Jeffrey 67, 116
 Welsh, Irving 49–51
 White 42–47, 49, 51, 52, 54, 57, 59, 64, 124; whiteness 12, 42, 44–48, 51, 59, 64
 white trash 12, 14, 43–49, 51–53, 59, 64, 138; *see also* American; class; working class
 Wilde, Chris 20
 Williams, Linda 84, 85, 114, 151
 Winnubst, Shannon 16, 115, 167
 Winq (magazine) 35
 Wojnarowicz, David 96
 Woltersdorff, Volker 46–48, 117, 160
 working class 46, 47, 51, 56; *see also* class; white trash
 Worthington, Marjorie 116
- Xandri, Eduard 134, 135
- Zecca, Federico 84
 Zine 3, 20, 27, 34, 41, 44, 47, 52, 55, 57, 64, 65, 124, 127, 128, 135, 139, 142, 143, 149, 159, 170; *see also* fanzine
 Žižek, Slavoj 151
 Zoo, Matthew 48