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The Carnal Pleasure of Eating and Queer Sexuality:

A Case Study on the Corporeal Sensations of Eating and Queer
Sex within *Blue is the Warmest Color*

Author: Valentina Saba
Supervisor: Hjalmar Carlsen

Abstract

This thesis investigates how the cinematographic techniques implemented during eating and sex scenes in movies involving queer characters affect the feelings of the spectator. In more detail, it proposes to elaborate on the emphasis placed on carnal pleasure and the corporeal sensation of queer characters with a specific focus on the corporeal reaction provoked in the viewer.

The elaboration is built on some theoretical contributions functional to establish the relationship between sexual and gustatory desires as similar forms of sensations. Since the research highlights the interdependence between power structures and emotions, a significant part is also dedicated to scholars such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler who have focused on heteronormative power relations behind the construction of queer sexuality.

The analysis is based on the deep analysis of visual and sound effects implicated in the case study of the movie *Blue is the Warmest Color* (2013) using methodological tools of visual culture such as Gillian Rose and Laura Marks.

The study finds that the sound effects implicated in the scenes concerning eating and sex scenes play a crucial and complementary role to the visual techniques such as close-ups and lights on the actresses' bodies. This results in a multisensory experience involving all five senses. The similarity of the sensations depicted in the frame, transmitted to the viewer, creates a relationship between eating pleasure and sexual pleasure generating parallel reactions. Finally, this study uncovered the heteronormative power relations that shape this process reinforcing the association of queer sexuality to "wildness".

Keywords: *Sensory experiences, cinematic techniques, queer sexuality, eating pleasure, sexual desire, heteronormativity*

Wordcount: 19.000

Popular Science Summary

This study investigates the scenes of eating and sex involving queer characters in order to discover how carnal pleasure is depicted through film techniques. The aim is to explore the correlation between the pleasure of eating and queer sex within movies. In addition, the power relations of this association are studied. Therefore, the corporeal sensations provoked in the viewer consider the position taken by the viewer in the social hierarchy.

These elements are explored in the movie *Blue is the Warmest Color* (2013), where I analyzed the visual and sound effects implemented during all the eating and explicit queer sex. For instance, I explored the close-ups of the actresses' bodies and the sound effects that emphasized the bodily experience. From here, inspired by the theoretical contributions explained in the thesis, I analyzed the similarities in the depiction of these two spheres focusing on the power dynamics.

I found that the insistence of the camera on actions such as chewing food (in eating) and touching bodies (in sex) transmits an intense sensation of pleasure in the spectator. In addition, I noticed that the high volume of the sound effects related to these gestures contributes to creating a corporeal pleasure in the viewer. The similarity of sensations and the consequentiality of the eating and sex scenes underline a similarity between the two forms of pleasure. These elements create a sensory experience defined as multisensory since it involves all five senses: the feelings that are emphasized remind us of sight, smell, taste, hear, and touch experiences that are felt by the observer who is watching the character experiencing the same sensation. The exploration of this association highlights the power relations behind the feelings since queer subjectivities feel penetrated in their intimacy. This is caused by the most common narrative that often depicts queer sexuality as something excessive and perverse.

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1. Introduction

Emotions have always been stigmatized in the academic tradition and in society. In the divergence between the cognitive and emotional spheres, the first one has always been predominant. In other words, the distinction between rational and non-rational thought has resulted in a non-legitimation of emotions. In particular, the passion and anger felt by marginalized groups have been associated with a bad connotation and idea of passivity (Ahmed, 2004). Unsurprisingly, the words ‘passion’ and ‘passivity’ share the same etymological root of the Latin word for ‘sufferance’ (*passio*). This leads to a link between pain and passivity “defined in terms of a tendency to be shaped by others” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 2). In addition, the emotional sphere is related to the proximity to nature and consequently is associated with the primitive state of human beings. This process follows an evolutionistic approach where the subjectivities who are perceived as more emotional are automatically considered inferior and closer to the animal world (Ahmed, 2004). Moreover, positive emotions are elevated as better emotions than negative ones such as anger and pain. In this regard, it is necessary to take into account that bad feelings represent a major threat to maintaining the *status quo*. This is due to the fact that they often belong to marginalized communities that require dismantling power relations. Consequently, it is more convenient for privileged people not to take the bad feelings felt by marginalized subjectivities seriously and stigmatize emotions on a general level. For this reason, I argue that any analysis based on emotions requires a reflection on the social hierarchy.

To conclude, the clarification of the interconnection between the power structure and emotions is functional to establish the power relations in the creation of feelings: the feelings are not pure and neutral, but rather they are based on a social hierarchy. Specifically, the social construction of sexuality will be further explained in the theoretical framework. In addition, the relationship between emotions and power

hierarchies plays a crucial role in the choice of my research topic: I refer to Sandra Harding (1987) who values the researcher's personal background in the formulation of the research topic¹. Concretely, my choice of studying the resulting emotions from the relationship between eating and sex in movies comes from my personal background as a queer subjectivity and passionate about cinema. This primordial thought has led me to academically investigate this theme and give credibility to it.

1.1. Research Problem and Research Questions

In this research, I intend to analyze the depiction of queer sexuality within popular and mainstream cinematography. My aim is not the investigation of the depiction itself, but rather the impact of the portrayal on the spectator, with specific attention on the feelings felt by the queer viewer. This exploration will be conducted starting with the analysis of the emphasis on the sensory experiences of the queer bodies. First of all, I think it is important to clarify that I will use the word *queer* as an umbrella term to include all the subjectivities that are not considered to conform to heteronormative values. According to Browne and Nash:

For many, sexual orientation is taken for granted as a natural truth. Although I suspect that no one's life really fits entirely in these boxes, the lack of open discussion and questioning of this is the effect of the ubiquity of the hetero/homo division.

(Browne and Nash, 2010, p. 45)

The decision of using the umbrella term *queer* is to not make assumptions about the sexual orientation of the characters involved. In fact, Adèle never specifies her sexual orientation and since she dates both women and men, it can be assumed she is

¹ The positioning of the researcher in the knowledge production will be better explained in section 4.1.

bisexual (Lam, 2020). For this reason, I chose not to use the word 'lesbian' although all the analyzed scenes involve sex between Emma and Adèle who identify as women.

In addition, the concept of sensory experience has to be understood as a corporal sensation expressed by the bodily senses; as it will be clear the synergistic energy of the multisensory level. Within cinema, these corporeal sensations are expressed through visual camera techniques and sound effects. The first part of the thesis will be centered on the study of how these artificial techniques are implicated in the shot of the scenes and impact subjective perception. In more detail, the elaboration will be based on the plural interpretation resulting in a deep exploration of the sensory experiences emphasized within the eating scenes and the explicit sex scenes involving queer characters. It is known that the directors have often employed food in their products in order to communicate emotions (Holešová, 2013) and in this sense, the food needs to be understood as a corporal sensation. Starting with this assumption, I will examine which sensations are transmitted by the camera techniques during the eating scenes and how they can be associated with queer sexual desire. The research will build on the examination of the feelings transmitted by cinematic techniques during eating and sex scenes with a specific focus on the emotional impact on queer viewers.

In conclusion, the research will be conducted by elaborating on the emotional affection resulting from the depiction of queer sexuality within the popular cinematographic culture: this elaboration will be operationalized by answering the following questions:

- How do the film techniques emphasize the corporeal pleasure in the eating and sex scenes within queer cinematography?
- How is the gustatory pleasure associated with queer sexual desire through the use of visual and sound effects?

- Which power relations are involved in the emphasis on sensory experience in eating and queer sex scenes?

The combination of these three research questions allows me to reflect on the interdependence between the sensorial level and the power relations behind it. As I mentioned in the introduction, the legitimacy of emotions is determined by the social hierarchy (Ahmed, 2004) that impacts the production of feelings. For this reason, in exploring the impact on the viewer of the depiction of queer sexuality, it is crucial to take into account both spheres.

1.2. Aim of the research

The aim of this research is not to understand the symbolic or semantic meaning of the food inserted in the cinematographic culture, but it is to value the emotional level of the queer viewer. The engagement of this perspective combined with my personal background can represent a contribution to academic production. The research centers on the emotional level resulting from the audio-visual messages in cinema.

In addition, the value of this elaboration is given by the evaluation of sensory sensations with a specific emphasis on the audio experience. In fact, this focus allows me to subvert the Western perspective based on the consideration of the visual experience as the only valid (Marks, 2000). The limitation of this is my positionality since I come from a Western background that shapes my elaborations.

Similarly based on a subversive intention, my research aims to elaborate on the interconnection between corporeal sensations and emotions. Inspired by Laura Marks (2000), I believe that the exploration of perception needs to be interrelated with bodily experience. This does not result in an essentialist perspective of the body, but rather it is based on a social constructivist viewpoint. To wrap up, the aim “is to find culture within the body” (Marks, 2000, p. 145). Following this approach, I see the physical senses as a crucial source of knowledge.

In conclusion, I am here exploring the sensory experience within cinema not to seek a primordial ideal of a natural state, but rather to recognize the emotional sphere of the senses in order to see culture not only based on abstract and philosophical discourses. However, I think that the third research question related to power relations is crucial to keep in mind that feelings are based on a social hierarchy and are affected by it. Therefore, a part of the research needs to be founded on the investigation of the power structures that shape the emotions felt by marginalized communities.

1.3. Outline of the thesis

After I give an explanation of the interconnection between the emotional sphere and the social hierarchy, I will give an overview of the previous studies that have focused on the analysis of the power relations within the depiction of sexuality and gender roles within cinematography. The aim is to emphasize the focus on the emotional level of my research. Furthermore, mainly inspired by Gayle Rubin (2002) and Michel Foucault (1976, 1978), I will give a theoretical framework functional to lay the groundwork for my analysis. In this part, I will focus on some notions about the social construction of eating as a corporeal sensation and how it is related to queer bodies and sexual pleasure (Probyn, 2000). Moreover, referring to Foucault and Butler (1990, 2004) I will explain the social process of categorization imposed on homosexuality focusing on the distinction between “normality” and “abnormality”. This will be helpful to investigate the power relations resulting from the association between eating and queer sexuality and in claiming the lack of neutrality of the construction of queer sexuality as perverse and non-conform with the social standards (Butler, 1990, 2004; Foucault, 1976, 1978; Rubin, 2002). In addition, this elaboration will be crucial to point out the interdependence between feelings felt by the viewer and the pre-existent social hierarchy.

Furthermore, the methodology will have a crucial role to give concrete tools to proceed with the analysis. It will be quite theoretical since I believe in the importance of giving suitable analytical tools to approach research that deals with queer sexuality. Therefore, I will start by giving some knowledge about my positionality as a queer and feminist researcher referring to scholars such as Donna Haraway (1988) and Sandra Harding (1987). After that, I will go into detail about visual culture. To reach this aim I will follow the contribution of Gillian Rose (2016) to study the camera techniques implemented in the movies. Here, some space will be dedicated to the psychoanalytical approach in order to approach the visual elements incorporating the conceptualization around *voyeurism*. On the basis of these theoretical and methodological tools the analysis will be conducted with a deep analysis of the visual and sound effects implicated in the eating and sex scenes present in *Blue is the Warmest Color* considered the most meaningful example².

Finally, I will illustrate the results of the analysis based on the feelings felt by the queer spectator watching these scenes and how these feelings depend on the aforementioned social hierarchy. In general, I will explore the subjective perception of the viewer, but a specific focus is kept on queer perception and how it is determined by heteronormative values. In the end, I will clarify some delimitations and limitations of this research caused by various factors.

2. Literature review

Here I will illustrate some of the contributions of those who have conducted similar research and why I think my research can bring a further contribution to academic production. In the first part, I will clarify why and how this study differs from the literature regarding the discursive meaning of visual culture. In the second part, I will focus on the diversity of academic production related to the analysis of eating and

² The explanation of the reason why I selected it as the case study will be further explained in the methodology section.

intimacy within movies and the different perspectives that can be applied to this theme.

2.1. Evaluation of the sensory experience

Most of the researchers who are interested in the cinematographic representation of marginalized subjectivities paid attention to the power relations behind the visual production of these products. In this regard, Laura Mulvey coined the conceptualization of the *male gaze* to refer to the assumption that women are represented from a male perspective since they are the object of heterosexual male desire (Mulvey, 1989). Multiple scholars have applied this elaboration to specific movies. I decided to take a few examples regarding the case study *Blue is the Warmest Color*. For instance, Krauthaker & Connolly (2017) investigated the representation of ‘femininity’ embodied by the two characters; Johnson (2018) focused on the depiction of bodies and sexuality in the cinematographic form. These studies pay attention to the power expressed by the camera techniques like the close-up imposed on the female body.

Furthermore, some scholars (see Segal, 2021) analyze the camera techniques implicated in the shot of the scenes investigating the resulting power discourses. In other words, they mention the effects on the viewer, but the emphasis is undoubtedly on the roots of power production. In addition, Laura Mulvey keeps a gender-binary approach and clearly identifies the spectator as masculine. Some critiques of this aspect gave rise to other studies that take into consideration the queer perspective (Evans & Gamman 1995; Oliver, 2017). However, these analyses have still their emphasis on the ideological level: the power relations of the discursive and stereotypical production are maintained and the emphasis is on the concept of the *gaze*.

In this regard, my research differs from the aforementioned explained approaches since it is not interested in the power relations at the site of production, or in the gender identification of the spectator/director, but rather it is centered on understanding the emotional level of the viewer.

Since this research is focused on the feelings resulting from visual elements, it follows a semiotic approach. In more detail, as it will be clearer in the theoretical framework, I refer to scholars like Laura Marks and Roland Barthes because they focus on the subjective and emotional perception of the viewer of visual elements (Marks, 2000; Barthes, 1981). Therefore, the focus is not on the ideological level, but on the sensory experience related to watching and hearing and on the evaluations of the resulting emotions. However, in opposition to Roland Barthes, my research analyzes moving images taking into account the sound effects of the products analyzed. In fact, I strongly believe that my research can represent a contribution to the academic tradition of semiotics since most scholars are not interested in how sound effects affect individuals' feelings. Even regarding sound, most of the scholars focused on the power mechanisms on the site of production. For example, they explain how sound editing works and they show this part as functional to emphasize some aspects more than others (Zdenek, 2011, 2015).

As I have illustrated, most scholars are interested in the discursive meaning of the audio-visual elements by applying tools such as discourse analysis. In opposition, this study is not interested in the deep analysis of the symbolic and metaphoric meaning of the images implicated, but it is more centered on the effects of these elements on the viewer; this obviously requires a taken into consideration of the power relations and of the positioning of the spectator because they represent an influencing factor in the perception of the audio-visual element.

2.2. Eating and intimacy within movies

Since my research explores the intimacy between the viewer and the character created by the emphasis on sensations related to eating, I think it is important to illustrate some of the studies that have investigated the conceptualization of intimacy in another way.

First of all, I found it interesting to see that many researchers used the exploration of camera techniques to examine the intimacy among the characters rather than with the spectator. For instance, Segal (2021) analyzes the camera techniques implicated in *Blue is the Warmest Color* to underline the consequent intimacy created among the queer couple. Therefore, it explores the intimacy resulting from frequent close-ups of the protagonists' faces but without referring to the feelings aroused in the spectator. The same consideration can be done specifically on the element of food: the eating dimension is analyzed within the framework of the film's narrative. For instance, eating and cooking together have often been inscribed in the framework of sharing, caring, and community: it "can signify 'home' and belonging" (Lindenmeyer, 2006, p. 470). Specifically regarding the studies of *Blue is the Warmest Color*, the dimension of eating is explored on multiple levels, but most of them focus on the role of eating as a social practice. For instance, various studies analyze the elements of eating practices as an element of class and ethnic distinguishment and social exclusion (O'Donoghue, 2014; Holešová, 2013; Warren, 2021); Holešová (2013) associates eating with the feelings dimension, but, even in this case, only the characters' emotions are considered.

Similarly, Cynthia Baron (2006) correlates the camera techniques of lights and close-ups to the eating scenes in various movies. In a few words, the corporeal pleasure of eating is sometimes considered, but in most cases, the research is limited to the meaning within the film plot. To take an example, the pleasure of eating has been associated with the capitalistic pleasure of food consumption (Angel & Sofia, 1996). Consequently, hunger is correlated with desire but the viewpoint of the

spectator has been left aside. Eating is seen as sensual content only in relation to the plot development. Some researchers have shown interest in the association between food and sex, but they paid attention to the sexualization of food itself, rather than eating practices. For example, it is common to hear talking about the combination of fruits with the female body and oranges to sexual desire (Lindenmeyer, 2006).

To conclude, most of the studies keep an ideological level in the analysis of queer representation and discrimination within the production of visual culture. When they approach the sensory dimension and consider the feelings they focus on the intimacy and feelings belonging to the characters. Food is a subject of interest for many contemporary studies, but they see eating and food as a social practice within the film plot.

My research aims to value the feelings of the spectator resulting from the unintentional actions of the director. This does not mean that the power relations on the site of production are less important, but that the focus of the research is on the site of the audience. Finally, this research purpose is to add a queer perspective to the analysis of sensory experience, especially the auditory one which is still lacking in academic production.

3. Theoretical framework

To elaborate on this research, some theoretical contributions will be crucial to interpreting the results coming from the analysis. First of all, to answer the first two research questions³, it is necessary to clarify the theoretical connection between the sphere of eating and sexual pleasure. This is also functional to grasp my personal motivation for the choice of this theme as a research topic. Here I will go into detail examining how the sexual and the eating spheres have similar dynamics in the construction of discourses (Foucault, 1978; Rubin, 2002). Although the research is

³ *How do the film techniques emphasize the corporeal pleasure in the eating and sex scenes within queer cinematography? How is the gustatory pleasure associated with queer sexual desire through the use of visual and sound effects?*

not focused on the discursive power of the categories I find it important to understand this process since it determines the feelings of the viewer.

Furthermore, I will go into detail about the sensory experience resulting from watching someone who eats and sexual desire: both of them represent an intimate sphere of human beings and the sensation of penetrating gives similar sensations (Probyn, 1999, 2000).

Finally, although my research is not focused on the constructions of discourse but more on the emotional factor, I find it important to point out that the main analytical lens is the social construction of gender and sexuality that impact viewers' feelings. In more detail, the elaborations of Michel Foucault (1976) and Judith Butler (1990) are essential to operationalize the third research question: *Which power relations are involved in the emphasis on sensory experience in eating and queer sex scenes?* As it will be clearer in the analysis, some of the sensations felt by the viewer are determined by the position and positioning held by the spectator on the social hierarchy. Therefore, the feelings felt by the viewer are strongly affected by the pre-existing social hierarchy.

3.1. Sexual pleasure and eating

Food is always measured, the
drunkenness is still capable of truth, and the
love is an object for reasonable discourses
(Foucault, 1978, p. 141)

To elaborate on this research, it is necessary to focus on the assumption that sexual desire and the eating sphere are seen as social constructions and historically interrelated.

As highlighted by the quote at the beginning of the paragraph, food, and love are often placed in the same discursive framework. Therefore, since the discourses are not lacking power relations, it is essential to give an overview of the respective power

dynamics of homosexuality and food within the literature. In addition, I trust in the importance of considering the complex social meanings behind sexual desire and eating acts; it would not be sufficient to analyze the words or the physical dynamics of bodies without taking into account the implicit meaning or sensation.

In this regard, Gayle Rubin (2002), inspired by Michel Foucault, analyzes the social construction of sexual categories and sexual desire focusing on its result as a hierarchy based on power relations. She particularly emphasizes the correlation between the proliferation of the discourses around sex in the 19th century and the stigmatization of sexual practices such as masturbation and homosexuality. Both Foucault and Rubin recognize the interconnection between sexual pleasure and biological mechanisms, but they both strongly insist on the influence of the social context on sexual pleasure (Foucault, 1978; Rubin, 2002). In more detail, Rubin (2002) states that homosexual behavior has always existed among humans, but different societies categorized it as a common practice, as a pathology, as deviance, or as a crime. Sexuality is thus perceived by these scholars as socially determined and as a contingent force.

Following the assumption of the combination between biological mechanisms and social construction, Foucault (1978) explores how the alimentary regime has been influenced by biological needs, but it is not determined by it. In other words, alimentary habits have always been the result of social habits. Food and sexual pleasure apparently seem to be two separate spheres but according to Foucault (1978), the exploration of Roman and Greek history shows that most of the medical studies about sexual pleasure have dedicated much attention to food and eating practices. For instance, a strict alimentary diet based on healthy food was ordinary advice for productive procreation. Eating acts have been associated with the sexual sphere, and current metaphors such as 'appetite' to refer to sexual desire are evidence of the interrelation.

All the suggested dietetics in the Ancient epoch were related to reproductive function and aimed to increase procreation (Ibidem). This process highlights the

classification between heterosexual acts and homosexual ones going to stigmatize sexual desire outside the heteronormative values. To clarify, since the correlation between sex studies and food studies has always been merely functional to procreation, I believe that this focus nourishes the power relations that create the fetishization of the queer bodies who eat and the involvement of food within queer sex.

To clear the hierarchy up, Gayle Rubin (2002) created the visual tool called The Charmed Circle (Figure 1) to illustrate the classifications between who complies with the norm - represented in the internal part of the circle - and who is left outside of it - inserted in the external section. This distinction is related to the categories of ‘good’ - associated with heterosexuality and ‘bad’ - with homosexuality. In addition, in this graph, Rubin inserts the categories of sex with bodies only, and sex with manufactured objects - such as food. The visual representation of this distinguishment makes clear that the category of the involvement of manufactured objects is on the same level of stigmatization as homosexual acts (Rubin, 2002). This denotes that both homosexual acts and food implicated in sex are categorized as ‘bad sex’.

Therefore if we explore the encounter between homosexual acts and the food sphere we obtain an intersectional discrimination and inequality that affect homosexual/queer bodies who eat or who have sex implicating the food. Speaking with Foucaultian terms, neither of the types of sexual pleasure is functional to the reproductive system based on heteronormative values. Regarding this conceptualization, Foucault explains that the preoccupation with sex matches the preoccupation with food only during the widespread of Christian monasticism: in other words, moral thought started to be

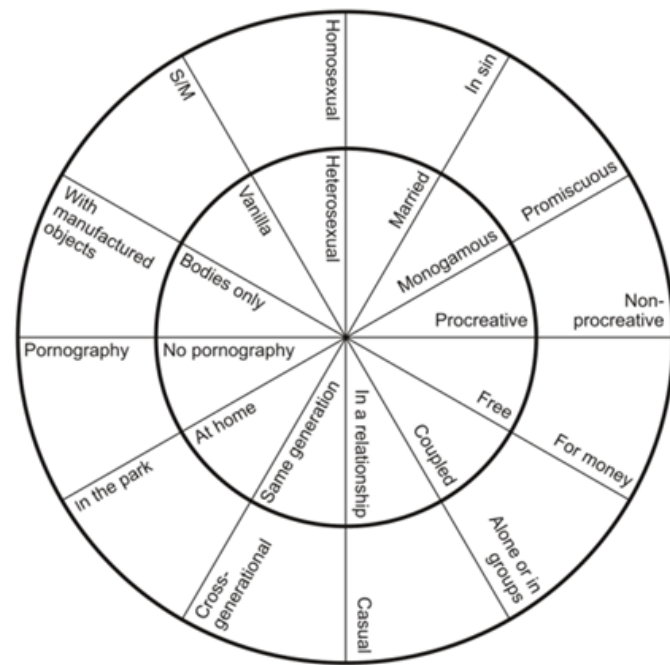


Figure 1

imposed in a similar way to the alimentary regime and sexual pleasure (Foucault, 1978).

Therefore, it is possible to claim that in multiple societies the relationship between food and sex has been in a way fetishized. In this regard, I find it important to recognize the distinguishment between the involvement of food within sexual acts and the fetishization of the eating acts. I am aware of the two different levels, but I believe that the previous elaboration based on Rubin (2002) leads to analyzing them under the same lens: they are the resulting factor of the same discriminatory and fetishizing matrix constituted by the intersectional axis that combines food and homosexual/queer identities. According to Laura Marks (2000), in fact, *fetishism* is not something that exists itself, but it is created by the relationship among human beings, by the encounter between humans and cultures, and between different cultures: it changes at the same time and in different spaces. Therefore, material practices construct the power behind the fetishistic character attributed to objects and subjects. In my research, this conceptualization is particularly helpful due to the focus on the cinema as the main source of data collection: cinema visualizes these meanings and the subjects perceive the meanings in a subjective manner. The audio-visual element reactivates the fetishized object that is made concrete through this process. This dynamic contains knowledge and it is permeated by power relations and the process is activated through individuals' actions (Marks, 2000). Marks' contribution allows me to apply the semiotic approach to moving images. In this regard, I particularly refer to the concept of *punctum* elaborated by Roland Barthes (1981). This conceptualization is used to indicate the emotional effect of the visual image on the viewer. Barthes underlines the difference between the *studium* - defined as the interest generated by a picture - and the *punctum* - described as the resulting emotional transport. In this research, the *punctum* is essential to emphasize the feelings of the spectator; it refers to the elements of the images that "prick" the viewer (Barthes, 1981). He claims the immutability of the images, explicitly claiming the inapplicability of his theory on moving images (Ibidem). However, in my opinion, his

elaboration represents an efficient tool to analyze cinema since it is based on the subjective sensory experience provoked by the personal background and the evaluation of the feelings felt by the viewer. My argumentation is established on the understanding that cinema is a set of moving images combined with sound effects. Therefore, Barthes' contribution needs to be integrated with the consideration of the audio element which constitutes an extra element of analysis that will be further explained in the methodology.

To summarize, the meaning of food itself and the eating acts are closely related to sexual pleasure: on the one hand, food habits are described as a tool of control on bodies, on the other, the fetishization of food inscribed in a framework of sexual pleasure is underlined. Both of them are socially determined and strictly related for their connection to power relations imposed on queer subjectivities and their corporeal dimension. The emphasis has to be on the assumption that the line between 'good' and 'bad' - related both to food and sex - affects people's perceptions and sensory experiences the same way.

3.2. Eating as a corporeal sensation and construction of identity

The boundaries between food and sex are
currently being blurred
(Probyn; 1999, p. 216)

To deepen the connection between the sensations resulting from sexual desire and eating actions, it is crucial to explore the association between these two bodily experiences. Therefore, here I will illustrate a few specific recent conceptualizations of the sensations related to eating. As shown by Elspeth Probyn (1999), the association between food studies and sex studies was becoming a trend already at the end of the 90s: cookbooks and TV programs with the chefs as idols⁴ have played the

⁴ There is a difference between the sexualization of chefs and the food itself (McDonnell, 2016), but the phenomenon can be analyzed through the same lens because of the similarity of the sensations evoked.

same role for women as pornography magazines for males. In other words, since pornography is stigmatized more for women than men, women have substituted sexual pleasure images with culinary ones: thinking through food to sex makes us more susceptible to pleasure (Probyn, 1999). More recently, this tendency has been confirmed by the increase in blogs and Internet pages dedicated to food production and consumption (McDonnell, 2016). The pleasure resulting from focusing on food is understood in a framework of voyeuristic gaze that is associated with the pleasure felt in looking at pornographic content. Consequently, the emphasis on the sensation of pleasure caused by specific *aesthetic* characteristics in food is often associated with the expression of *food porn* (Ibidem). In this explanation, the use of the word *aesthetic* evokes the belief that the root cause of pleasure is the beauty and perfection of the dishes. It recalls the definition of food porn defined as the pleasure felt by the observer who is watching a perfect dish out of reach for themselves (McBride, 2010): “As with sex porn, we enjoy watching what we ourselves presumably cannot do” (McBride, 2010, p. 38). However, I think it is important to criticize the connection between pornography and beauty idealization. In fact, I believe that the sensations resulting from watching something/someone deeply close constitute a form of pleasure that is not related to the ideal of beauty and aestheticism; speaking in terms of Erin McDonnell (2016) the pleasure of food porn underlines the dimension of food as carnal pleasure determined by a specific relationship between the viewer and the object depicted.

The pleasure resulting from watching a close-up of a dish, of someone who is having sex, or who is eating can be understood under the same lens of voyeuristic gaze, which recalls the penetration of an intimate space: watching someone eating represents experimentation with forms of pleasure that are not explicitly sexual (Probyn, 2000). Both sex and eating belong to the domestic and private space and the abolishment of the boundary between the private and public realm gives pleasure to the human being (McBride, 2010). In this sense, food is not a dimension based on the dimension of community and sharing, but on the opposite, it becomes a

hyper-individual factor. However, according to Probyn (2000) eating in public makes people feel connected to each other through a visceral sensation; “eating is of interest because [...] it throws into relief the heartfelt, the painful, the playful or pleasurable articulations of identity” (Probyn, 2000, p. 14). This focus on the identity dimension may lead to the elaboration that sees the interactions as the factors of the construction of identity. In this sense, the act of eating in public spaces creates identity.

In this respect, the Foucaultian perspective can be applied to the scenario of food and eating: power is produced and re-produced by discourses and interactions by people who nourish the process of categorization (Foucault, 1976). These daily actions include eating practices, too, and in this regard, the contribution of Probyn (2000) is particularly helpful to understand the connection. She thus underlines how the sensual nature of eating constitutes a privilege in the construction of identity based on the categories of gender, sex, race, etc. Food and eating are marked by pleasure as they are by power and they represent the ways in which we perform identities and produce realities: identities are confirmed and reformed through the acts of eating. It is crucial to connect this elaboration to gender performativity by Judith Butler (1990) where the body exists and is produced through repetitive and performative acts in constant change. Recognizing this premise allows the recognition of corporeal practices and the power relations behind these (Probyn, 2000). In more detail, the power dynamics based on the privilege of the sensuality of eating can be connected to the distinction between intelligible and non-intelligible subjectivities expressed by Butler (2004).

Beyond the discourses’ production illustrated by Foucault and Butler, it is important to turn back to the elaboration of Probyn (2000) since she underlines how the categorization turns into a sensory experience. Specifically, according to Probyn (2000), as with any complex categorization dynamic, the one correlated with food provokes an antagonism between those considered as conform bodies and those as non-conform. This image reinforces the line between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The creation of the category of us is associated with the group of people who judges non-conform

bodies. To better explain, those who are disgusted by an image feel ashamed and their reaction is to make public statements such as “that’s disgusting” to create a ‘community of disgust and hate’. This process aims to find someone to share the disgust with in order to decrease the sense of shame and guilt felt. In this way, it emerges as a movement of disgust and shame, where disgust is defined as the primordial sensation functional to keep a distance from something that is not considered standard. On the other hand, shame is provoked by the recognition of having been too close to the ‘disgusting’ subject where the emotional proximity and the identification are missing (Probyn, 2000). The consequence of disgust is the creation of a hierarchy, where the people who feel disgusted considered themselves superior to the category of people who are disgusted. In very basic terms, disgust and shame make the representation more complex because disgust is depicted as something forcing pleasure: the “disgusting” body represents the stimulus-evoking since it provokes a corporeal reaction in the viewer’s body. Consequently, it creates a visceral connection among the people causing the abolition of distance. The conceptualization regarding the judgment imposed on non-conform bodies can be embodied in the expression of *body privilege* that indicates the disparity of freedom and judgment imposed on different bodies (Kwan, 2010). Most of the subjectivities who identify themselves as “overweight” report the sensation of discomfort in eating in public spaces, the constant gaze from people next to them, and the implicit judgment on their behavior: eating (Ibidem). In addition, Kwan (2010) underlines the gender difference of this social stigma that results to be more intensely inflicted on women. The Foucaultian exploration suggests that this judgment is a form of control because it leads to auto-discipline that makes people feel as if they should change something in their habits (Kwan, 2010). Here clearly emerges the reciprocal interrelationship between the feeling of disgust and discomfort and the social hierarchy that stigmatizes women and non-conform bodies.

To conclude, in the first paragraph, I explained the connection between eating and sex based on an abstract level since I focused on the historical and ideological

process of their construction. In this section, I focused on the emotional sphere of this relation centering on the sensory experience of these actions. I will now give a philosophical mention to the construction of the categories of ‘normality’ and ‘abnormality’ related to sexuality. I will insist on how this conceptualization is not something merely ‘philosophical’ but is concrete and influences our lives every day. It has the power to determine how subjectivities feel about, for instance, eating in public spaces.

3.3. Homosexuality and sexual pleasure as social constructions

To answer my third research question *Which power relations are involved in the emphasis on sensory experience in eating and queer sex scenes?* It is necessary to turn back to the starting point expressed in the introduction regarding the interrelation between power structures and feelings (Ahmed, 2004). For this reason, before analyzing the feelings felt by the viewers I found it necessary to illustrate theoretical contributions that stated the lack of neutrality around homosexuality. I believe that before approaching any elaboration on a marginalized group of people, it is crucial to be aware of the power relations behind the discourses imposed on it. To reach this aim, I will refer to the theory elaborated by Michel Foucault (1976) regarding the triggering causes of categorization. Even though the focus of my research is on queer identities, I think it is important to claim that the social construction of homosexuality is considered the foundation of any discourse related to sexual categories. For this reason, it is essential to start tracing the historical development of the stigma around ‘homosexuality’.

The Foucaultian concern elaborates on the awareness that the increase of knowledge around a theme contributes to the growth of control imposed on a specific group of subjectivities (Foucault, 1976). In more detail, the strong stigmatization of homosexuality became the real protagonist within society at the end of the 19th century when the medical discourses around sexual pleasure became widespread: for

the first time homosexual people have been classified as “deviants”. Before this date, homosexuality was not perceived as a fixed part of identity, but sexual orientation was inscribed in the framework of sexual practices acted by a few people within society (Ibidem). Therefore, categorization and discrimination are constituted by complex dynamics where the power is described by Foucault (1976) not as an oppressive force, but more as a productive system fed by everybody through language and discourse.

According to Foucault (1976), these historical events highlight the strong interrelationship between knowledge and power: the increase in knowledge and discourses provoke more tools to impose control on bodies and consequently exert more power on them. This process establishes the categorization with a strong accent on the categories of ‘normality’ and ‘abnormality’. In other terms, it makes the distinguishment between people who conform to the social norm and those who do not solid. In this regard, Judith Butler (2004) elaborated more on this system analyzing the naturalization of the creation of these categories following the conceptualization of intelligibility. Some lives are perceived as more *intelligible* - more worth living - and others are not recognized as worthy and consequently expendable. I have to point out that these norms affect humans' feelings, they determine how human beings are self-perceived and how they perceive the ‘other’. Regarding sexual categories, Butler’s elaboration is applied to the category of homosexuality that is associated with the label of “abnormal”, which is placed in juxtaposition with the norm identified with heterosexuality. In common terms, the naturalization of heterosexuality is best known as *heteronormativity* which is described as “the assumption that heterosexuality is the standard for defining normal sexual behavior” (*APA Dictionary of Psychology*, n.d.).

Turning back to my research, I found it necessary to clarify the dynamics behind the power of categorization because I believe that ‘discourse’ is not constituted only by words and dialogue, but also by visual elements that need to be considered as a form of discourse and language (Braudy & Cohen, 2009); discourse affects people, especially those who are already marginalized within society. The

social distinguishment between “normality” and “abnormality” has an emotional impact on the perception of subjectivities who live the public spaces, so the creation of discourses on an ideological level cannot be seen as completely separated from the resulting feelings. The emotions felt by the viewer are determined by their positioning on the social hierarchy created by the process of categorization.

4. Methodology

The analysis of this research is based on the previously explained theoretical framework and on the analysis of visual contents within a selected case study. In particular, to answer my research questions⁵, I engaged with the school of thought of feminist and queer positionality. The aim is to insert my research from a well-defined standpoint, where my positionality is not only clarified but also presented as functional to the research.

Furthermore, I was helped by the specific elements of the visual methodology that gave me the main tools to examine the audio-visual contents from an analytical perspective respecting the subjective perception of the cultural products. This contribution was crucial to pay attention to the camera techniques involved in the movie.

In addition, I implemented a feminist psychoanalytic elaboration on visual culture to take into account the flexibility of sexual categories, and to explore the dimension of pleasure connected to our experience of culture and reality.

Finally, I clarified the methodological decisions focusing on why I believe that *Blue is the Warmest Color* is a meaningful case study for this research.

⁵ *How do the film techniques emphasize the corporeal pleasure in the eating and sex scenes within queer cinematography? How is the gustatory pleasure associated with queer sexual desire through the use of visual and sound effects? Which power relations are involved in the emphasis on sensory experience in eating and queer sex scenes?*

4.1. Queer and feminist methodologies

We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life.

Haraway (1988, p. 580)

I believe in the importance of positioning myself and my research from a well-defined standpoint. To reach this aim I will refer to crucial scholars who underlined the significance of explicitly clarifying a feminist and queer standpoint.

First of all, the knowledge produced by marginalized groups of people - such as women and queer - has been associated with a lack of objectivity. This belief has contributed to preserving the *status quo* based on patriarchal and standardized positions (Esteban, 2001). Only the scientific knowledge produced by male, white, and heterosexual scholars was considered valid: the androcentric and sexist bias has been considered universal, objective, and neutral (Harding, 1987). The methodology of this research is built on the assumption that unmasks this belief underlining how the category of neutrality and universality is the result of power relations.

The alternative produced from the margin is targeted as the 'other', it is considered subjective and less scientific. To subvert the order of things I insist on the importance of taking into consideration the body experience since the researchers are frequently perceived as invisible, but they are concrete individuals with a historical and social contextualization (Ibidem). In this regard, Donna Haraway confirms that "feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (Haraway, 1988, p. 583). Therefore, the lack of neutrality must not have been associated with the failure of the research, but it needs to be understood as a means of situating the research in a determined personal and

academic experience (Harding, 1987). Regarding the personal background, I point out that the connection between life and the research process is extremely important (Esteban, 2001), since “one’s own experience is a knowledge resource” (Esteban, 2001, p. 184). To stay away from my personal feelings and positioning would mean taking part in a power game based on patriarchal and heteronormative values.

Specifically, this academic discrimination has been applied to research made on queer subjects because of the lack of coherence in data collection related to the queer community. According to Browne and Nash (2010), research production on queer subjectivities has always been stigmatized and not considered reliable because of the fluidity of the category *queer*. As I mentioned in the introduction, the term *queer* reflects the fluidity and instability of sexual categories (Browne & Nash, 2010). In this research, the queer approach can be understood as a way of dismantling the inflexibility of the categories; more concretely, in my sample, I am refusing the binary categories between homosexual and heterosexual or gay and lesbian. I was inspired by the conceptualization of *becoming queer* used by Jamie Hackert to understand my “research process as a continuous learning process and accept the uncertainty” (Browne & Nash, 2010, p. 43): I claim the ever-changing nature of queer identity, I accept the partiality and the transformation of the identity of the involved characters, of the implicated feelings and myself as a researcher. Like the feminist standpoint does not affect the legitimacy of the results, the queer identity as an ever-changing identity does not represent a threat to the validity of the research. In this case, the declaration of located knowledge is a clear statement of subversion of power relations and awareness regarding the production of knowledge from the margin⁶. One of the main principles of queer methodology is the overcoming of the clear line between researcher and researched (Browne & Nash, 2010). This can lead to thinking that to apply a queer methodology is necessary to have methods that require engagement with the marginalized community. However, it is crucial to underline the

⁶ The conceptualization of the importance of knowledge production from the ‘margin’ comes from the elaboration of bell hooks in the article *Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness* (1989).

distinguishment between methods and methodologies: there are not some methods that are more feminist than others. I insist on the importance of the methodological approach reflecting on the way in which power relations are questioned during the research process (Browne & Nash, 2010).

Since the object of the research is centered on the feelings transmitted by the cinematographic representation of queer actions, my identification as a queer subjectivity can attribute me to the role of the object of the research in addition to that of a researcher. Therefore, the result of the research is the outcome of my interpretation and it can be condemned as biased. In light of what I have previously explained, I am interested in clarifying that I do not believe that my positioning as a feminist and queer being has affected the research, but rather it has tried to subvert the *status quo* established by an academic production dominated by heterosexual and patriarchal knowledge.

The combination of the feminist and queer methodologies comes from the awareness that the experience of the queer body needs to be understood as contingent and socially located in determined personal and political positions. Laura Marks (2000) in fact, helps to understand the element of the collective memory that is activated in an individual body answering to traces of collective life based on a structural condition. This does not mean making the perception homogeneous, but rather respecting the plurality of experiences and recognizing the common thread running through all the experiences from the margin. Therefore, subjective perception respects bodily sensations, and “the body, the object of biological discourse, becomes a most engaging being” (Haraway, 1988, p. 594).

To conclude, the alternative to universalism is not relativism, but it is a partial and situated knowledge result of the supportive connection within the collectivity: “Relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally. The “equality” of positioning is a denial of responsibility and critical inquiry” (Haraway, 1988, p 584). The feminist and queer standpoints represent a transparent and essential way of taking their own responsibility for the knowledge produced.

4.2. Visual methodology

This research has examined the visual elements of the movies, it is thus crucial to focus on the specific methodological tools regarding visual culture. Inspired by the elaboration of Gillian Rose (2016), I want to insist on the interpretative nature of the analysis of the images. Specifically, I took into account the importance of the social effects of the images, where both the meaning and the emotional effect are considered. Turning back to the contribution of Donna Haraway (1988), the visual dimension helps to avoid the inflexibility of the binary categories. In this part, I reclaim the subjectivity and the importance of the sensory system connected to the body dimension.

First of all, I define the image as one of the elements that constitute culture. In this sense, the meanings behind the production of culture can be explicit or implicit, and conscious or unconscious (Rose, 2016). In the reproduction of visual culture, power relations come into play: on the one hand, visibility reproduces social differences of gender, race, class, and sexuality already existing in society, on the other hand, it contributes to their nourishment. In other words, “it is important to think about how power relations are also at play in what is made visible” (Rose, 2016, p. 14). In addition, when social inequalities are visualized, they have an impact on marginalized groups of people; the visual representation affects the construction of identity and it transmits feelings every time an image is looked at. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on the effects that the same image has on different subjectivities located in different contexts. It matters what the images can do, rather than how the images look. For this reason, it is essential to insist on the eventual interpretation and potential meaning. To wrap up, to adopt a critical approach to visual culture is necessary to take images seriously thinking that images have their own effects; to consider the social consequences of the distribution of the images reflecting on the social inclusions and exclusions of this process (Rose, 2016).

This elaboration leads to the emphasis on the importance of sensory sensations resulting from the experience of images. These subjective feelings are fundamental to understanding and analyzing the meanings behind the images. This premise is functional to emphasize the focus of this research: the accent is not on the conscious intentions of the directors, but it is on the effects of these on the queer community. However, although it is not the direction of this work, it is important to mention that the directors cover a position of power because they have the responsibility to decide which aspects need to be highlighted within the shots (Rose, 2016).

As I have aforementioned, I believe that the ideological meaning behind the images and the sensations are not two completely separated dimensions: perceptions and bodily sensations are socially influenced and culturally situated, and “the meaning cannot be separated from their materiality” (Marks, 2000, p. 92). Specifically, to deal with the methodology based on sensory experiences, it is necessary to keep in mind the concept of *affection-images* considered by Deleuze as the capacity of the images to communicate feelings and be subjectively perceived (Deamer, 2016). Consequently, according to Marks (2000), this perception cannot be objective, but it positions the subject between two poles of subjectivity and objectivity; the perception is based on the personal and social experience of the subject who gets into contact with the visual element. Here, the power of the images of evoking emotions goes beyond the viewing experience: the image is an intimate space and it encourages the multisensory experience. In fact, as will become clearer later, the cinema is a multisensory experience since it is an interplay of the senses: olfactive, auditory, tactile, visual, and gustative senses.

To conclude, an image, specifically a moving image, is not limited to the visual sense, but it includes various information and this is what makes the difference between an objective and subjective reality: the perception is based on the more intense senses of the subject and this differs from an individual to another one (Marks, 2000). However, this does not mean that the visual and “objective” experience of reality has to be the only way considered valid to study reality.

4.2.1. Compositional interpretation

Following the concrete tools given by Gillian Rose (2016), I will illustrate the methods that have been engaged in this research related to the specific interpretation result of the camera techniques employed within movies. To reach this aim, I will refer to the *compositional interpretation*, which particularly insists on the subjective interpretation of images. This analytical tool is focused on the description of the compositional elements of the image because it follows the principle that before going deeper into the interpretation of meaning, the image needs to be understood and analyzed. This approach is also called the “good eye” because it creates a specific way of describing visual elements and “pays most attention (although not exclusive) attention to its *compositional* modality” (Rose, 2016, p. 57). Even if the *compositional interpretation* seems to be merely descriptive of what we see, it is an interpretative technique. It does not focus on the technical part of the shooting of images, but more on the effects that these camera techniques have on the viewer (Rose, 2016). In fact, the elements of the visual production can create a pornographic gaze and contribute to a specific audience's experience, which can express proximity/intimacy or distance from the subject/object (McDonnell, 2016).

In more detail, according to Rose (2016), this methodological technique is based on the principle of taking images seriously, since it is centered on the visual elements of the image. Concretely, it analyzes the *spatial organization* within the moving images where the positioning of the viewer/spectator is particularly taken into account. In specific in cinema, this element is called *mise-en-scène* understood as the result of the choices related to what and how to shoot a scene. Any visual representation took a quite unconscious decision about the perspective given to the viewer, and this builds various power relations. The techniques that will be explained are not innocent, they build power relations between the spectator and the subjects in the scene. However, even in this case, I insist on the emotional effects that these

power relations have on the viewer, more than on the power relations existing at the site of production.

After this premise, one of the components of the spatial organization needs to be considered: the camera's *height*. For instance, if the subject depicted in the picture/shot seems to be higher than the camera placed in a lower position, the subject shot by the camera will feel more powerful; if the camera is positioned higher and it looked down at the subject, it is the viewer to feel more powerful; finally, if they seem to be on the same level, the power relations are balanced between observer and observed (Rose, 2016). This conceptualization within film studies is defined as “the point of view adopted by shots” (Rose, 2016, p. 75). It will be clearer in the analysis that this element does not have an abstract meaning.

In addition, the *shot distance* of the camera is an important factor that creates intimacy between the person pictured and the spectator. Concretely, this intimate connection is expressed by close-ups on the subject (Rose, 2016). The technique of close-up is closely related to food porn imagery since it is often applied to food and, due to its physical characteristic, it gives a sensation similar to pornographic content (McDonnell, 2016). This methodological tool is thus crucial to consider the false intimacy created between the viewer and the subject depicted. In addition, the close-up on the human subject allows the viewer to get into contact with the characters' interior thoughts and it brings into materiality what is not material and visible (Marks, 2000). The most important consequence of frequent close-ups is the capacity to involve all the different senses, it permits noting details such as the textile or the details of the human skin. It allows us to feel the visual image, it makes us touch it and empathize and identify with the subject observed (Ibidem), “the eyes themselves function like organs of touch” (Marks, 2000, p. 162).

All these sensory experiences are emphasized by other techniques such as the *focus* of shots (Rose, 2016), where the shallow focus has the function of underlining the characteristics of a specific character within the movie. In particular, this conceptualization is connected to the *framing* defined as the “deft choice of what

appears in the frame” (McDonnell, 2016, p. 259). The angle of the camera gives the understanding of the context that surrounds the subject or it gives a sense of penetration into the object/subject (McDonnell, 2016). As I examined in the analysis this transmits different sensory experiences and it reaches different aims. Similarly, cinematographic lights can be used to highlight certain elements of the shot. The artful light contributes to creating a specific atmosphere (Rose, 2016), and “it directs our attention and, intimately, pornographically, asks us to focus on nothing else but the object of our affection” (McDonnell, 2016, p. 262). The blurred background reminds us where to focus the gaze (McDonnell, 2016).

Finally, the *sound effects* - or better called Foley sound - have been analyzed in this research as well. In fact, it is crucial to consider this component of movies since this work is focused on physical sensations. The movie's sound includes environmental noise, speech, and music (Rose, 2016), but this research has focused on the environmental part and on the dialogues interpreted as a complementary part of Foley sound. In fact, according to Marks (2000), sound elements contribute to the creation of a multisensory experience that characterizes cinema as a form of communication. As with the visual camera techniques, the sound effects facilitate the identification of the viewer with the characters and it turns the visual experience into a tactile experience; it can be thus defined as *haptic hearing*. The boundary between body and perception becomes more blurred and the sensations of the character are indistinct from the spectator's ones (Marks, 2000). To confirm the similarity between Foley sound and the visual zoom effects, the exaggeration of the sonic effects is defined as an *aural close-up* (Wright, 2014). I am referring to sound effects and Foley sounds as if they were synonyms, but, according to Wright (2014), the creation of the Foley sound is considered a performative art since it is not limited to the reproduction of the realistic sounds heard on the set, but they belong to the phase of postproduction. They are recorded to specifically underline some details or hide other ones, so “there is nothing inherently natural about Foley” (Wright, 2014, p. 217). The human touch is crucial since the decisions are often made by the director based on the

desired narrative, as can be seen through the comment by Wright on adding sound effects to a scene:

Okay, we'll do some footsteps here, some key jangle there, but we're not going to do a glass break, we're not going to do a body fall, we're not going to do some rain effect on a window

(Wright, 2014, p. 212)

To wrap up, the sound is functional to the performing of the feel of an image. The perception of an image is not merely to “see it”, but the cooperation of all these effects that are humanly constructed contribute to a bodily sensation and reaction (Wright, 2014). The camera techniques do not reproduce the actions of the movies, and they do not reproduce abstract power relations, but they evoke emotions in the viewer through zoom, lights, height, and also sound intensity.

To conclude, I want to go back to the importance of the interpretation and the positioning of the viewer who interprets the visual product. In this regard, I consider the conceptualization of *expressive content* (Rose, 2016, p. 79). It should be already clear that the analysis of the visual component of an image is not enough to comprehend the meaning hidden behind the construction of the moving image. Since I am interested in sensory experiences, it is important to remember that the sensations resulting from images depend on the body's engagement with the content. In other words, “‘the’ body is not some generic body, but the specific body of the critic” (Rose, 2016, p. 81). This approach allows us to go beyond the original intentions of the directors, underlining the way in which bodies encounter the images. As I also mentioned declaring my positionality, the body has to be meant as the site of experience interconnected with social meaning and characterized by subjective and objective nature (Esteban, 2001). “The cinema is not an illusion, but an extension of the viewer's embodied existence” (Marks, 2000, p. 149). The camera techniques

nourish the visceral connection between the characters and the audience and also among the spectators. If the characters are playing to eat or make love the viewers will probably start salivating or become aroused (Marks, 2000). This process will not be exactly the same for every person in the audience, and every reaction will be based on the personal and social experience of the individual, on the individual, and collective memory of the subjectivity who is watching (Ibidem). As it will be clarified in the analysis, this collapse of the gap between distance and proximity between the observed and the observer has different effects on the power relations already existing between the two categories.

4.2.2. Psychoanalytical view

I believe in the significance of the integration of a psychoanalytic view with the analysis of the camera tools since it reinforces the subjectivity of the perception, but it also insists on the unconscious nature of human action. This approach traces its roots to the conceptualization of *scopophilia* defined by Freud as the pleasure of looking at other's people bodies (Freud, 1905). This definition has been widely criticized by later authors because of its limited focus on the sexual sphere: *scopophilia* currently refers to visual pleasure in a broader sense and it is defined as "finding pleasure in viewing others, in opposition or contrast to themselves" (Pullen, 2016, p. 17). In addition, Freudian tradition, including Jacques Lacan, interconnects the general pleasure in looking at the other on the stage to the phase of childhood comparing the scopophilic desire to the pleasure felt by the child who watches a perfect mirror image (Smelik, 2007). I will not go deep into this because the classical psychoanalytical tradition keeps a strong gender binary and biological approach that is against the focus of the research. However, I believe that this elaboration gives an interesting and useful perspective in the framework of pleasure and visual culture. The emphasis is not on the individual characteristics of the producer of culture - in this case, the director - but more on the effects of the visual images on the spectators (Rose, 2016). This tradition is coherent with the perspective that underlines the interpretative

essence of the image: the psychoanalytic elaboration is explicitly inscribed in the interpretative framework.

Finally, psychoanalysis is mostly interested in the study of the establishment of sexual categories; so engaging with this methodological tradition is meaningful and functional in research with the queer community as the central subject. Due to this priority, the psychoanalytic approach laid the groundwork for most of the scholars who focus on the feminist critical re-interpretation of visual culture such as Laura Mulvey. As I earlier highlighted, cinematic dynamics are permeated by power relations that especially regard gender and sexual categories. Such creation and engagement with the visual representation of categories are unconsciously reiterated and experienced: we feel emotions such as pleasure and disgust following non-rational impulses. Since the psychoanalytic approach centers its attention on the effects of visual culture, it is closely intertwined with the compositional modality of the images (Ibidem). However, talking about sexual categories I cannot overlook the pathologizing 'eye' of the psychoanalytic tradition regarding queers/homosexuals. Therefore, I think it is important to point out that the methodology of this thesis subverts the fixed sexual and gender categories supported by classical psychoanalytical scholars. Regarding this, I refer to the contribution of Anneke Smelik (2007) who uses the elaboration of psychoanalysis in film studies following a feminist perspective. In fact, she helps to cross the line of the gender binary in the analysis of visual culture stating the identification of the spectator with the characters does not merely depend on the gender of identification, but rather it is a fluid and complex system. This is due to the initial assumption that gender is performativity (Butler, 1990), so it can be *masqueraded* and *unmasked*, constructed and deconstructed (Smelik, 2007). However, I think it is important to conclude by pointing out the subjectivity of desire. In other words, desire is not something resulting from the identification with the characters, but it is something more fluid beyond the assumption of the fixed categories. For this reason, I still believe in the importance of engagement with the psychoanalytical approach for the reasons

previously explained, but it is necessary to consider that homosexuality is not limited to the opposition between femininity and masculinity and it is not determined by biological causes.

4.3. Research design

To examine the research problem, I used the method of audio-visual analysis of the movie's scenes deeply examining the audio-visual techniques implicated in the scenes of *Blue Is The Warmest Color*.

The research design process can be understood as *abductive reasoning* (Hassan, 2022) since the research theme has come up spontaneously by observing data: watching the selected case study. After this step, I proceeded to find patterns in the scenes regarding eating and sex scenes involving queer characters and here I reflected on the voyeuristic factor emerging in the queer representation. The theoretical framework has helped me to grasp the topic of interest and to formulate new assumptions that have been checked by collecting data in a more structured way. Therefore, this is theory-informed research since many assumptions came from the contributions explained in the theoretical framework. However, some themes and categories explored in the analysis came from the collection of data and more spontaneously. This process has led me to draw conclusions based on the combination of my initial personal intuitions as a researcher, the observation of data/movie scenes, and the theoretical framework chosen on the basis of the patterns found.

In order to investigate these elements, I decided to apply the methodological tools of visual culture to a specific case study. Inspired by Bent Flyvbjerg (2006), I built my research on a case study reclaiming the value of the social sciences research based on case studies. I am not aiming to generalize the result of this research in a universal way, but it is my intention to state that the exploration of a single case does not negatively impact the validity of the result (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In addition, the generalization of the research result is overrated and it is mistakenly associated with

the only way to conduct research (Ibidem). Finally, the deep analysis of a single movie allows me an in-depth approach that is more efficient for an analysis focused on the sensory experience more than the construction of meaning behind a sign.

Following the elaboration of Flyvbjerg (2006), the selection of the case study is based on the strategy related to the *paradigmatic case* defined as the case that “transcends any sort of rule-based criteria. No standard exists for the paradigmatic case because it sets the standard.” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 232). In a few terms, the engagement with the paradigmatic case is central to human learning and a few scholars believe that the selection is based on the researcher’s intuition; others consider this explanation insufficient. In my research, I value the importance of the researcher’s intuition since I recognize that the initial phases of the decision-making are based on the researcher’s personal background or inexplicable intuitions. In addition, good analytical development and detailed results will reveal the truth about the validity of the research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This perspective perfectly matches the research process of this study, since, as I explained earlier, the choice of this topic and the design process respect this belief and value the personal experience.

Despite my intuitions, I consider it necessary and helpful to provide the reasons why this movie can be presented as a *paradigmatic case* in this exploration. First of all, I believe that the movie *Blue is the Warmest Color* represents a meaningful example because of how eating and queer sexuality are depicted. Both of the aspects have been underlined and criticized for different aspects⁷. Regarding sexuality, it has been defined as a movie where the actresses enact “the most explosively graphic lesbian sex scenes in recent memory” (Johnson, 2018, p. 2). Therefore it has created a sort of tradition within queer cinematography creating a lot of debate about the high presence and the framing of explicit sex sexuality (Jones, 2013). I consider it a crucial element to analyze the affection of the voyeuristic gaze

⁷ Some of these studies can be read in the section regarding the literature review.

on the spectator since the voyeuristic aspect belonging to the director has already been established by different sources.

However, my analysis is not limited to the exploration of the explicit sex scenes, but it is focused on eating scenes, too because the aim of this analysis is centered on the association of these two aspects. The dimension of eating represents a crucial part of both this movie and my research questions. In *Blue is the Warmest Color*, eating is undoubtedly depicted and is much emphasized in its corporal sensation. As claimed by Ronnie Lam Long Yi (2020), the expression of sexual desire through eating is obvious and intentionally used by the director Abdellatif Kechiche. This aspect helped me to establish the relationship between sex and eating pleasure. As a confirmation of the importance of eating in the movie, it will be explored in the analysis that he chose Adèle Exarchopoulos to interpret the character of Adèle because of the way she ate (Sweedler, 2018).

Finally, A further important factor that made me choose this movie as the *paradigmatic case* is the focus on the queer romantic relationship. In more detail, I intended to study the portrayal of queer sexuality within the framework of 'love' relationships, more than queer sexuality in a general sense to explore the depiction of it through the most unexpected elements such as the sensory experience of eating.

5. Analysis

To answer the research question about *How do the film techniques emphasize the corporeal pleasure in the eating and sex scenes within queer cinematography?* I analyzed the camera techniques implicated in both the eating and sex scenes within *Blue is the Warmest Color*. I especially focused on the sensory experience resulting from the tools belonging to the compositional interpretation (Rose, 2016). This descriptive approach is combined with the contribution of Laura Marks (2000) since I evaluate the multisensory experience - sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell - involved in this process.

Applying the same tools both to the eating scenes and the sex frames allowed me to answer my second research question *How is the gustatory pleasure associated with queer sexual desire through the use of visual and sound effects?* In this part, I tried to examine the similarities in the feelings and camera techniques between the two categories of scenes.

Finally, I investigated the power nature of this relationship answering the third research question *Which power relations are involved in the emphasis on sensory experience in eating and queer sex scenes?*

5.1. Data analysis of the eating scenes

Inspired by Gillian Rose (2016), I investigated the compositional interpretation related to the eating scenes. Concretely, I watched all the scenes where the eating action was inserted in the movie and analyzed if and how the camera techniques emphasize the corporeal sensation of this action. To reach this aim, I first explored the spatial organization of the scene examining, for example, the shot distance between the camera and the characters, the cinematographic lights, the height and the angle of the camera, and the focus of the frame. In this regard, I centered my attention on the sensations resulting from these and the subjective perception of eating. In the second part, I combined this analysis with the exploration of the sound effects added to the visual elements.

5.1.1. Visual camera techniques in the eating scenes

First of all, the attention paid by the camera to the eating sphere is evident from the beginning of the movie. In fact, the first scene that deserves attention starts at 00:06:20. Here the main protagonist of the movie, Adèle, is eating pasta with her parents. The scene opens with a close-up of Adèle's mouth chewing food, and the whole scene is built on frequent close-ups of the characters eating. The shot distance is significant since it allows us to penetrate their mouths and it creates intimacy between the spectator and the character. This intimacy can be defined as false because

it is artificially constructed by the camera techniques based on the director's choices. Therefore, even if the viewer has the opportunity to empathize with Adèle, the viewpoint is still of the camera. This particular perspective transmits to the viewer the voyeuristic sensation of penetrating into her private and domestic space. This conceptualization recalls the elaboration of McDonnell (2016) regarding the correlation between watching someone who eats and pornographic content because the physical sensations are intensified. All these sensations are highlighted by the focus of the shot and the angle of the camera: the surrounding context such as the room is artificially blurred. The context does not matter because the viewer's gaze is clearly directed to the eating sphere. The voyeurism and perversion are accentuated by the fact that Adèle's way of eating is excessive: in most of the close-ups she is eating with her mouth open and she is repeatedly and loudly licking the knife. In this regard, both the director Abdellatif Kechiche and the actress Adèle Exarchopoulos claimed that her way of eating caught his attention during their first meeting. In fact, during an interview, the actress is asked why the director Abdellatif Kechiche chose her for this role and she replies:

Is the mouth. He told me he had chosen me because of my mouth and my way of eating. At first he was sizing me really. He watched me eat, we took drinks together and he spoke to me while watching me ... He was looking for what kind of girl I was and what I could bring to the role

('THE SEX SCENES', 2013⁸)

Similarly, on another occasion the director was asked the same question and he pronounced the following words:

⁸ The number of the pages is not present in this source.

We organized a huge casting session and I chose Adèle the minute I saw her. I had taken her for lunch at a brasserie. She ordered a lemon tart and when I saw the way she ate it I thought: “It’s her! She was very much “within her senses”, her way of moving her mouth, of chewing. Her mouth was a very important element in this film; in fact, both characters’ mouths were decisive and for very human reasons. They provoke all sorts of feelings and sensations. Something in a face touches us: a nose, a mouth, whatever. For me this is the beginning of everything.

(Kechiche, 2014⁹)

The cruciality of these elements regarding Adèle's eating is equally present in all the scenes where Adèle is having dinner with her parents¹⁰. There are a lot of close-ups of the characters’ faces with a specific focus on Adèle’s. For instance, in the scene that starts at 00:33:58, the cinematographic lights and the height of the camera play an essential role. In fact, Adèle’s face is particularly emphasized by light and this allows the viewer to focus on her facial expressions and empathize with her feelings. The height of the camera takes a significant role at the end of the scene (00:35:08), where the camera clearly moves above the protagonist’s face: in this way, the spectator has the power to penetrate Adèle’s feelings and holds power over the subject depicted whose agency loses importance (Rose, 2016).

I think it is important to point out that Adèle’s partner, Emma, eats in the same excessive way as Adèle. In fact, during another dinner with Adèle’s parents (1:31:02), the representation of Emma chewing pasta looks very similar. The camera techniques implicated are functional to emphasize the same sensory experience previously explained. The scene is mainly built on close-ups and lights on Adèle and Emma’s

⁹ The number of pages is not present in this source.

¹⁰ Details can be seen in Appendix 1.

mouths eating. Even the way in which they take *spaghetti* from the plate is significant since they do not twirl them around the fork and they are thus forced to loudly suck them.

The visual camera techniques are particularly significant regarding the expression of feelings in the scene where Adèle is crying in her bed after she had the traumatic experience of having sex with a man. The exploration of the scene gave similar results to the previous one: she takes some snacks from a box under her bed and starts eating while crying. The shot is entirely represented through a close-up of her face, which looks enlightened by cinematographic lights. The background is surrounded by darkness and out of frame. In fact, the camera clearly makes our gaze directed to her visage. As I previously underlined, her mouth is the protagonist of the scene. Even in this case, the eating sphere is emphasized since the camera shows just the chewing mouth. Furthermore, the height of the camera gives power to the viewer since it is placed higher than the subject depicted and this specific perspective allows the viewer to better look inside her mouth. If the frame was shot placing the camera below, the perspective would have been completely different: the chewed food would not have been visible. To wrap up, all these elements of the spatial organization give power to the spectator who has the possibility to penetrate Adèle's bodily experience of crying and eating.

To go into more detail about how the eating sphere is particularly crucial in the relationship between Adèle and Emma, it is important to analyze the camera techniques implicated in the first date between the two protagonists. The two girls meet for the first time at a gay club and after a few scenes, we see them going on their first date at an art exhibition and a picnic in a park. This second part of the appointment is one of the most meaningful scenes regarding the emphasis on the sensory experience through camera techniques. The scene opens up with a close-up of Adèle's hands picking the ham from the packaging and right after another zoom of her mouth open while eating the ham. As in the previous case, Adèle's way of eating can be considered excessive: for the whole scene, she eats while keeping her mouth

open and the viewer's gaze is incentivized to watch what's inside. She transmits sensations of hunger and insatiability, which is confirmed by the dialogue that will be analyzed later. The spectator has access only to her face with a specific accent on her chewing mouth. As I analyzed in the other eating scenes, here the camera's zoom is on the visages. The cinematographic lights focus their attention on Emma who seems to shine because of the sunlight, but, since most of the lights are artificially constructed within the cinema, it is possible to assume that the light is part of the cinematographic lights. Similarly, the camera angle allows the spectator to focus merely on the characters' faces, and in the same way, its focus gives little information on the surrounding context. Therefore, the shot distance, the lights, and the focus underline the gaze on the facial expressions of the protagonists. During this scene, an extreme close-up deserves particular attention. This starts at 1:13:08 and the camera gets close to Emma's skin while Adèle is looking at her. Here the viewer notices details not visible to the human eye such as the texture and the moles. Inspired by Laura Marks (2000), the experience is defined as multisensorial since the sense of sight is not only related to "see" but is interconnected with touching. The sense of sight becomes a tactile sensation, we see details that belong more to the sphere of touching than seeing. The overcoming of the borders between the senses is granted by the extreme close-up implicated in this frame. However, the sensory experience of eating goes beyond the borders and involves the tasting experience. In other words, the camera techniques allow the viewer to sense the taste and smell experiences through the eye. Finally, the analysis of this multisensory process would be incomplete without the exploration of the sound.

5.1.2. Sound effects in the eating scenes

The audio component is what makes the cinema a unique experience since it is the part that distinguishes moving images from pictures. Consequently, exploring the emphasis on sensorial experience without taking into account the hearing factor would be somehow lacking. Especially analyzing the scenes related to the pleasure of

eating and sex, the sound effects play a crucial role in turning a visual experience into a corporeal experience.

In all the analyzed scenes, the sound effects, better defined as Foley sound, are complementary to the several close-ups and lights inserted in the scenes' shots. For example, in the scene where Adèle is desperately crying and eating at the same time (00:27:16), the earlier analyzed visual camera techniques are complemented by the audio effects: the sound underlines her desperate breaths and the Foley sound makes the viewer hear and feel her pain. The crying sound is mixed with the noise of crunching and salivating caused by her eating. All the sensory experiences emphasized by the director are related to the character's bodily experience. In this case, the sound plays the crucial role of making the spectator part of the scene.

Furthermore, in the first scene where Adèle is eating with her parents (00:06:20), the only sound effects are related to the eating sphere: we do not realize that there is something else beyond people eating. A TV in the background is present, but it is not the main sound in the scene. The volume of eating and corporeal actions is very high in this and other scenes. Taking the first scene as an example again, Adèle is eating loudly, and the volume of Adèle's breathing is particularly high while she is licking the knife (00:06:44). In general, the sounds related to salivation and swallowing always prevail over other sounds. This factor is evident during the scene where Adèle goes to have dinner with Emma's parents. Here, the main dish is constituted by the oysters and the sound of Adèle and Emma sucking the oysters is very prevalent combined with several close-ups of their mouths eating the shellfish. In the beginning, Adèle claims to dislike the oysters but when she is convinced to try them (1:24:43), she spills the oyster's juice down her chin. The whole scene continues with this dynamic where the tasting and smelling sensations are the protagonists; the conjunction of the visual camera techniques and the sound effects enhances the tasting and smelling sensory experiences. Especially the noise of eating makes the spectator empathize with the eating experience of the characters. Commonly, the sensations felt by the characters provoke a corporeal reaction in the viewer creating a

visceral connection between the spectator and the actor/actress (Marks, 2000). In this case, it is usual that watching this scene provokes mouthwatering pleasure caused by the tasting sensation and the sexual tension between the two characters.

In this regard, although it is not the focus of this research, I found it necessary to analyze the dialogue inserted in the scene. In fact, the frequent sexual allusions made during this dinner are connected with their first date. On both occasions, sexual tension is created by the association between the oysters and the vulvas. They are not referring to the symbolic meaning of the oyster, but it is an association resulting from the similarity of the texture of the two elements. Once again, the tactile experience is prevailing and is confused with the sense of sight, hearing, smell, and taste: the description of the tactile sensation is related to the pleasure of a dish, and the taste of the shellfish is associated with the sexual taste. The touching becomes tasting. The connection with hearing is made clear by the stress placed on the sound effects inserted both during the date in the park and the dinner. The only sound during their first date is their swallowing food and beer, their breaths, and the friction of their skins combined with their voice. Although the scene is set on a sunny day in a public park, the background noise is completely absent and the corporeal sensations prevail. In addition, the dialogue's content is particularly meaningful since it completely revolves around food. It starts with Adèle criticizing Emma because she throws the ham's skin away. In addition, she gives information about her eating habits claiming for example that she eats "all of the skins" including the skin's scabs. Furthermore, she declares that she eats everything and all day, she is insatiable. As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, both the dialogue and the Foley sound are functional to depict Adèle as an insatiable person. In this conversation, they start making connections and allusions to sex talking about the association between oysters and vulvas. In this regard, Adèle expresses her hate for the shellfish's texture in contrast to Emma who expresses her love for it. She thus refers to its similarity with the female sexual organ. This topic of conversation leads to start talking about their sexual orientation by making the correlation between eating and the sexual sphere quite clear. The

vocabulary used to discuss the theme explicitly reminds us of the eating sphere¹¹. Finally, the frame ends with a kiss between Adèle and Emma where the sound of their lips and tongue is not realistic since it is characterized by a very high volume. These sound effects are not synced¹² sounds because the synchronized recording would not have given the same volume; this factor will be particularly evident in the analysis of the sex scenes.

To wrap up, the emphasis on the eating sphere is confirmed by the dialogues that often revolve around food. The most emphasized sensations are those related to smelling and eating. This is underlined by the high presence of eating scenes and the combination of spatial organization and sound effects (both Foley sound and dialogue) that are functional to emphasize the eating sphere of the characters. The mutual interconnection between visual and audio effects allows the creation of a multisensory experience. It is not only related to the sense of sight, not only to hearing, but it is simultaneous and complementary. We smell the food with the characters, and we feel the taste with them. However, this process is not neutral and it is not merely based on innocent emotions, but rather its relationship with the sexual factor will make clear the power relations that contribute to its shape.

5.2. Data analysis of the sex scenes

Similar to the earlier conducted analysis, in this paragraph I engage with the tools regarding the compositional interpretation and sound effects of the sex scenes that involve the protagonist Adèle. Therefore in the first part, I explore the spatial organization of the frames, and in the second part, I focus on the sound effects implicated to emphasize the corporeal sensations. The aim is to find out if there are similarities in the expression of the sensory experiences related to eating scenes and sex scenes.

¹¹ They refer to the first lesbian experience with the expression “tasted a girl”.

¹² Sound recorded at the same time as the shot scene.

5.2.1. Visual camera techniques in the sex scenes

In this movie, there are several minutes of explicit sex between the two main protagonists. I decided to focus my analysis only on the first scene because they all present similar elements. The high presence of explicit sex scenes has been much criticized because of the male gaze and the workers' conditions on the set (Romney, 2013). However, it is not my interest to focus on the director's intentions, rather I intend to analyze the camera techniques implicated to investigate the resulting feelings.

The first explicit sex scene between Adèle and Emma is inserted right after a scene of a date in a park. Regarding the spatial organization of the camera, the most evident element involved is the shot distance. The whole scene is thus built on frequent close-ups of their bodies which are always enlightened by the cinematographic lights. Especially, the camera pays attention to the girls' sexual organs and their mouths. This makes the scene more pornographic than erotic since the objectification of the subjects is provided by zooming in on the genitals (Barthes, 1981) and on specific parts of the bodies.

Even the framing and the focus are clearly on the bodies; the camera does not provide information about the surrounding context: the blurred bedroom makes the viewer's gaze focused on the naked bodies involved in a sexual act. The scene opens at 1:11:52 with a close-up of their breasts groped by their respective hands. Their faces are plunged into the darkness because the light is on their breasts and bottoms except for when they have oral sex and the pleasure is underlined through the focus on their faces and their mouth. In this part, the film techniques emphasize the element of mouth as they did in the eating scenes.

The representation of their respective bodies does not differ: the sensory experience is emphasized to the same extent in both of the characters. This consideration results from the comparison between the sex scenes that involve Adèle and Emma and the sex scene that sees Adèle and a man as the protagonists. In fact, at

the beginning of the movie (00:21:10), Adèle is still exploring her sexual orientation and she has sexual intercourse with a man. The frame opens up on Adèle's bottom enlightened by cinematographic lights where she slips off her underwear. Only her body and her breast are framed by the camera. The height of the camera is clearly higher than the subjects depicted in the scene and this gives the sensation of omniscience to the viewer because the perspective from above allows us to see the scene with more details. In addition, the female body is more enlightened than the male one: he is surrounded by darkness. During the scene, the sunlight which penetrates from the window reflects only on her body. In the same way, the angle of the camera is placed in a specific way to frame only the female body; for example, it is built in a way that Adèle's body always covers his body.

This comparison is functional to show the difference between the intensity placed on the sensory experience of the girls and of the man. Corporeal pleasure is particularly emphasized in the queer sex scene by actions such as the hands touching the bodies. The close-up of this gesture creates the false intimacy already explained and it includes the tactile experience. Inspired by Marks (2000), the visual experience is tactile since the viewer feels a similar sensation to touching through the eyes. For this reason, this sensory experience is defined as a *haptic* experience. In particular, the image of the hands touching the bodies frames the visual element into a corporeal sensation since "looking at hands would seem to evoke the sense of touch through identification, either with the person whose hands they are or with the hands themselves" (Marks, 2000, p. 171).

5.2.2. Sound effects in the sex scenes

The sound plays a meaningful role in the exaggeration of the sensory experience related to pleasure and touching. The accent is on the heavy breaths of both of the actresses. In this regard, it is necessary to again make a comparison with the scene involving Adèle and the man. In fact, here I find the sound a differentiating element because only the girl's breaths are emphasized: the volume of his breath is so low that

we empathize only with her pleasure; his pleasure is almost non-existent. After the first listening, this process seems to be innocent and positive for the female representation since it creates intimacy with the girl. However I strongly believe that the power relations behind this process cannot be overlooked; in more detail, the voyeuristic penetration into an intimate space is imposed only on the girl. In other words, the viewer is forced to hear and touch the female pleasure that is being violated. Moreover, her role is passive in the scene: she is there not to give pleasure to his partner, but only to feel pleasure in order to make the spectator feel the same pleasure. To reinforce this, it is essential to underline that at the end of the scene, she does not seem to have enjoyed the sexual intercourse and she starts exploring her sexual orientation avoiding the guy¹³. Therefore, the accent on her pleasure can be interpreted as functional to create pleasure in the spectator.

As I mentioned, in the sex scenes involving Adèle and Emma, the sensory experiences of both of them are emphasized: they are built to make the spectator feel pleasure. In this regard, another sound effect particularly underlined is the hands' touching, slapping, and spanking. This factor emerges during the entire scene, but concretely I take as an example the frame where Adèle licks Emma's nipple for fifteen seconds (1:13:30-1:13:42). Here the sensory experience is expressed by an extreme, deep, and time-consuming close-up, and this focus is intensified by the sound effect related to Adèle's tongue and mouth on Emma's nipple. This Foley sound and frame are combined with Emma's breath in the background: their breaths are the only noise present in the scene.

Furthermore, the volume of skin rubbing and kissing is very high and this feeds the previously mentioned haptic sensation since the auditory sense turns into a touching experience: we are not only seeing the scene, but we are feeling sexual pleasure with all the senses through our eyes and ears.

¹³ I care pointing out that I am not canceling the bisexual orientation, I am only referring to the movie's plot where bisexuality is never considered.

5.3. General results

The analysis of the sensory experiences resulting from the camera techniques implicated during the eating and sex scenes gave multiple results. In the first paragraph, I will answer the first two research questions exploring the sensory experience that emerged from the artificial techniques - both visual and auditory-implicated in the eating and sex scenes. In this examination, I will explore the correlation between these two different spheres. In particular, I will illustrate how I perceived the gustatory pleasure in both eating and sex dimensions. After that, I will answer the third research question investigating the power relations of the association between eating and queer sexual pleasure. This elaboration will lead me to reflect on the depiction of queer sexuality from a privileged perspective.

5.3.1. Sensory experience of eating and sex scenes and their correlation

First of all, I intend to find an answer to my first research question *How do the film techniques emphasize the corporeal pleasure in the eating and sex scenes within queer cinematography?* The examination of the visual and audio effects used in *Blue is the Warmest Color* draws attention to the sensory sensations of the characters involved in both the eating and sex scenes. The tactile and tasting experiences are undoubtedly predominant and strongly interrelated. The visual camera techniques focus on the bodies' details allowing the spectator to penetrate into the physical sensation of pleasure: pleasure is not merely observed, but it is felt. The sound emphasizes the corporeal sensation because it creates a connection between the haptic sense and the tasting experience. In more detail, the relationship between touch and taste is caused by the combination of the camera's focus on the mouths/skins and the sound effects of salivation and chewing. This provokes a corporeal sensation in the spectator who feels the pleasure of eating and having sex with the characters.

Regarding the eating experience, I found the artificial constructions of visual and sound effects particularly helpful to turn a common action into a form of carnal

pleasure. To better explain, the sense of sight is absolutely emphasized by the close-ups, angle of the camera, height, lights, and so on: the eye is satisfied. The deep visual penetration gives the sensation of touching the food: the hand is satisfied, too. The tactile sense facilitates the sensations of smell and taste: both the smelling and tasting experiences are fulfilled.

The multisensory experience would not be complete without the sound effects. The visual camera effects contribute to creating a corporeal sensation but something is still missing. Concretely, the Foley sounds of the hands touching, of the breaths that smell the food provoke a complete experience in the viewer who feels the taste, the smell, and the texture of the food eaten by the characters. To the same extent, the multisensory experience is crucial regarding sexual pleasure. In more detail, it is caused by the close-ups of the mouths, the genital organs, and the hands touching the skin. Even in this case, sound effects play a crucial role in the construction of carnal pleasure. We need to 'hear the body' in order to feel pleasure, both gustatory and sexual pleasure. A further concrete example is related to the emphasis on the breathing noises both in the eating and sex scenes. The volume of their breaths is much high and it allows them to underline the pleasure dimension associated with food and sex. This correlation provokes a meaningful reaction in the viewer. The stress on the breaths during these two actions gives a sensation of excitement and arousal in the spectator who might feel mouthwatering watching someone who eats or has sex (Marks, 2000). In addition, the high volume of the actresses' kisses and their skins' touching contribute to further emphasize sexual pleasure.

To wrap up, the similarity between the eating scenes sets the basis for a correlation between the eating scenes and the sex frames. Both the visual camera techniques and the Foley sound emphasize the corporeal sensations of carnal pleasure, insatiability, and hunger related to eating and sexual desire. This premise represents a starting point for the answer to my second research question *How is the gustatory pleasure associated with queer sexual desire through the use of visual and sound effects?*

As I previously showed, both the visual camera techniques and the sound effects are expressed similarly during the eating and sex scenes with a strong focus on the element of mouth and oral dimension. In fact, even during the explicit sex frames, the exploration of the visual effects gave similar sensations to the eating actions: the zoom-in, the lights, the height, and the angle underline the bodily sensations. The emphasis on tasting pleasure is implemented in a similar way both during eating and sex. The corporeal sensation recalls hunger and sexual appetite through the visual and auditory focus on the mouth: chewing, licking, kissing, and licking again.

The visual and sound effects turn the visual experience into tactile and tasting experiences. The film techniques are thus crucial to create the gustatory pleasure that is the protagonist in the eating and sex scenes. The tactile sense is particularly embodied in the combination of the close-ups, the lights, and the Foley sounds: we touch the texture, we hear the skin's friction, and we feel the sensation of the touching bodies and of the cloth against the skin. This factor mainly creates the sensual tension between the two characters: the haptic sensation prevails and it establishes the sexualization of the bodies. The tasting and smell experiences are depicted in the same way as in the meal scenes. In fact, the hands' touching and the focus on tongues' licking give the impression of tasting the character's body. The taste is highlighted by the insistence on the scenes described in the analysis such as Adèle and Emma licking each other nipples. In addition, oral sex is the protagonist of all their sexual acts and this provokes in the viewer a strong sensory experience of gustatory pleasure. This is emphasized by the sound of salivating and naked skin friction. Furthermore, the tasting experience is strongly related to the smell of the other's body; much closeness and physical contact allow the spectator to perfectly imagine and feel the skin's smell.

Turning back to the second research question, gustatory pleasure is associated with queer sex through the focus on the mouth and oral actions. The intensity of the multisensory experiences seems to be aimed at the tasting sense that is predominant: savoring of bodies and savoring of food.

In addition, the correlation is reinforced by the fact that every sex scene is inserted after an eating scene (See Appendix 1): the meals are functional to create the sensual tension between the two characters through corporeal sounds, close-ups, and dialogues. This consequentiality creates a specific expectation in the spectator whose body is already prepared to get aroused while they are watching eating. In a few words, while watching the eating scene, an unconscious part of the viewer already knows that something sexual is going to happen. This expectation is powered by sensual tension intentionally created by the close-ups and the dialogues during the meals; all the eating scenes are not functional in the plot. The director dedicated around half an hour to the eating scene without a precise aim in the development of the story. The only aim seems to be the creation of sexual tension. In addition, the emphasis on the sensory experiences related to eating completely fades when the couple starts fighting and breaks up. Although there are still scenes during dinner and located in a restaurant, the visual tools and the sound effects do not underline the food dimension anymore. The sensual tension disappears; the spectator does not feel the corporeal pleasure. For example, Adèle and Emma see each other for the last time in a restaurant and they do not drink or eat (2:26:30).

Finally, I find it helpful to make a comparison to materialize the interdependence between the multisensory experience and carnal pleasure related to eating. Gustatory pleasure is not limited to absorption of nutrients, it does not regard a basic need that is fully met. Otherwise, eating through a feeding tube or watching someone who is fed in this manner would be associated with pleasure. In this artificial method, the sense of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell are non-existent: the person does not see, touch, smell, or taste the food, and does not hear the sound of chewing. Consequently, the correlation between the presence of the sensorial experience is crucial to provoke pleasure in the observer and to turn a basic need into a bodily sensation.

5.3.2. Power Relations in the correlation of eating and sexual pleasure

Finally, I want to deepen the power relations in the depiction of queer sexuality that emerged from the association of eating pleasure and sexual desire analyzed in the previous paragraph. In more detail, I now try to answer the third research question *Which power relations are involved in the emphasis on sensory experience in eating and queer sex scenes?*

Inspired by the previously illustrated theoretical and methodological contributions, the sensations provoked by the perception of an audio-visual message are not neutral. Both the site of production and the site of the audience are built on power relations. Here, it is my intention to focus on how the lack of neutrality in the cinematographic production affects the site of the audience, especially the queer viewer. In this part, I consider it important to reflect on the positionality of the audience who perceives the cultural element: I especially focus on the effect on the queer viewer.

First of all, it is crucial to reconnect to Michel Foucault regarding the interrelation between knowledge and power. In fact, according to Foucault (1976), an increase in knowledge and discourses about a group of people leads to a growth in the control and power exerted on it. Consequently, this theoretical elaboration can be applied to this study since the visual and sound camera techniques give the spectator a complete knowledge of the character's intimate space: the observer is omniscient because the camera's placement and effects give them the possibility to 'see' and 'know' every detail of the scene. The closeness, the lights, and the position of the camera combined with the emphasis on the sound effects give the viewer access to the corporeal sensations of the subject depicted. This elaboration on power is not merely abstract and ideological, but rather it has an emotional effect on the spectator who really feels the power to control and penetrate the character's pleasure. In other words, it is not limited to a structural marginalization, but, as with every other power structure, has an impact on the self-perception and perception of people. Following

this perspective, since the subject depicted is queer, the power relations are clearly to the disadvantage of marginalized communities and in favor of the dominant group.

As I stated in the introduction, the pre-existing social hierarchy is not unrelated to the emotional level, since the emotional sphere depends on the positionality of the viewer. It is undoubtedly that the penetration and exposure of queer sexuality within *Blue is the Warmest Color* gives a different sensation to subjectivities belonging to the target queer category or to the dominant group. The process of identification of the spectator would lead to assume that a queer person empathizes more easily with the queer subject depicted and consequently feel more pleasure. However, this thought does not respect my perspective on marginalization. In fact, I strongly believe in the importance of claiming and taking into account the feeling of penetration and violation felt by an individual belonging to the queer category. This experience is caused by the awareness that the representation of marginalized communities is often imposed and established by a dominant group of people and designed for their pleasure. Therefore, the depiction is almost never realistic and it respects the dominant standards. In this specific case, the exaggeration of the sensory experience of eating and sex and their association respects and reinforces the heterosexual view that attributes to queer sexuality and the idea of perversion and excess¹⁴. The portrayal of queer sexuality is constructed by a privileged narrative. In this regard, it is impossible not to take into account the explicit voyeurism and power exerted by the director who has been accused by the actresses because of the work conditions. During an interview, Adèle declared the following statement:

¹⁴ As explained in the theoretical framework, this conceptualization is expressed by Gayle Rubin (2002) who elaborates on the sexual hierarchy imposed on homosexual category classified as 'bad sex'.

Of course it was kind of humiliating sometimes, I was feeling like a prostitute. Of course, he uses that sometimes. He was using three cameras, and when you have to fake your orgasm for six hours... I can't say that it was nothing. But for me it is more difficult to show my feelings than my body.

(Aftab, 2013)¹⁵

To wrap up, the feeling of penetration felt by the queer spectator watching these explicit sex scenes is determined by the feeling felt by the viewer located in a dominant position. I am aware of the emancipatory potential of the emphasis on sensory experience and of the importance of destigmatizing the food element within the sexual sphere. However, I strongly believe in the relevance of considering whose viewpoint is respected. It is problematic if the transgression turns into mere voyeurism of a cisgender male heterosexual individual. Similarly to what I expressed in the introduction, it is needed to be questioned that the only feelings respected are those of the dominant group and privileged subjectivities. I reclaim the importance of considering the emotions felt by subjects in the category depicted in the cinema and popular culture in general.

Moreover, a further power relation involved in this representation needs to be considered. I care about pointing out that the sexualization of the bodies that eat is valid only because the actresses are considered conforming bodies. Inspired by Kwan (2010), the privilege of not being judged for the way in which food is consumed has to be considered a privilege. According to Probyn (2000), the disgust associated with watching a non-conform body eating is socially accepted and shared. Consequently, the voyeurism and sexualization of the bodies hide further discrimination based on the characteristics of the body involved in the scenes. Therefore, even in this case, the correlation between social hierarchy and feelings is evident.

¹⁵ The number of the page is not present.

Turning back to the research question regarding power relations involved in the association between eating and queer sex, I believe that the analysis of the camera techniques highlighted the importance of the positionality of the viewer in determining the feelings provoked. Following the elaboration of Sara Ahmed (2004), I consider the viewpoint of the subject depicted as the most important. I value the sensation of violation felt by the queer subject as crucial to keep a critical approach in the exploration of the power structures. The private space of queer subjectivity is penetrated both in the sphere of eating and sex. The insistence on the similarity between sensations of hunger and insatiability underlines the “wildness” and fetishization associated with queer sexuality. The heteronormative values are the protagonists in the power relations of the association between eating and queer sex within cinematography. This has particularly emerged from the difference between the depiction of the straight sexual intercourse between Adèle and the man and all the sex scenes between Adèle and Emma.

Therefore, this elaboration leads to seeing the complex system in which queer sexuality is perceived and portrayed in the popular scenario. The prevalent elements of this depiction are based on ideas of perversion, uncivilization, and especially wildness of queer sexuality based on a hyper-sensorial dimension expressed in the eating and sex scenes.

6. Conclusions

To conclude, I will wrap up the results obtained from the analysis and I will illustrate some of the limitations¹⁶ and delimitations¹⁷ of this research in order to offer clear opportunities to elaborate more on this theme. Although I am aware of the distinction between the two terms I will not clearly distinguish them.

¹⁶ This term refers to all the potential weaknesses resulting from the research design (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018)

¹⁷ *Delimitations* refer to the choices made more consciously by the researcher in order to make the study achievable (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018)

First of all, I recognize that the first critique might regard the definition of queer sexuality. I defined this term as an umbrella and inclusive term but I applied it only to white and cisgender women. Therefore, my analysis does not take into consideration the diversity and heterogeneity of the queer category. For example, I believe that the experiences of black and trans subjectivities should include an exploration of more intersectional power structures in the theoretical framework and the sample. However, I consider that this thesis can represent a starting point and a methodological tool to inspire other scholars to expand on other categories.

This limitation and delimitation are due to my belief regarding feminist positionality previously explained. I believe that the belonging of the researcher to the marginalized category object of the study needs to be considered an added value to knowledge production. Therefore, I would have not found it coherent to conduct research on black and trans subjects since I am white and I identify myself as cisgender. Furthermore, space and time limitations have played a crucial role in my choice. In addition, I recognize the limitation of finding an appropriate case study or a sample regarding explicit sex scenes involving black and trans subjectivities. This consideration may lead to further elaborations about the representations of sexuality in these categories.

The time limit caused another lack in this elaboration: I did not engage in further methods. Consequently, my viewpoint is the only one considered. Although I reclaim my positionality and my belonging to the target category analyzed, I believe in the plurality of experiences. My sensations can be similar to others belonging to the queer category, but the collectivity that constitutes the LGBTQ+ community is diverse and plural. By “plural and diverse” I am referring to subjectivities who identify as non-cisgender, but also to people who identify themselves with my same gender identity but have different personal backgrounds. In other terms, inspired by Laura Marks, I think that the *collective memory* is a crucial component to refer to any individual experience historically and socially situated (Marks, 2000). In this regard, spectatorship is influenced by the belonging category, but the importance of the

individual bodily experience cannot be overlooked. Therefore, any personal experience and any feeling need to be considered unique since the category does not prescribe the personal behavior or feeling even if it has a strong influence on them. Consequently, I strongly hope that other voices will be heard in future steps of this research through the engagement of the methods of interviews or focus groups. I do not consider my research as exhaustive about the feelings felt by the queer community in relation to the depiction of their sexuality. However, this study can be understood as a preliminary exploration: the examination of the scenes themselves is a fundamental first step to start the elaboration.

Furthermore, although I explained in the methodology section the academic credibility of research based on case studies, I think it could be interesting to analyze similar elements in other cinematographic products.

To conclude, this thesis has analyzed the emphasis on the sensory sensations of eating and sex imposed on queer subjectivities. The analysis of the visual and sound camera techniques implicated in *Blue is the Warmest Color* underlines that various power relations are involved in this mechanism. All these power structures are pre-existent within society and they are reproduced through the elements of visual culture. Therefore, the solution is not to blame cinema or producers, but the aim is rather focused on the reflection on the dominant narrative on which power is produced and re-produced.

Turning back to the initial research questions¹⁸, this thesis has highlighted that the sensory experiences of the eating and sex scene have been emphasized through various visual camera techniques such as the close-ups and lights. In addition, it emerged that sound effects played a crucial role in the construction of carnal and corporeal pleasure. In a few words the transmitted sensory experiences are defined as multisensory. Moreover, the relationship between eating pleasure and sexual desire is

¹⁸ *How do the film techniques emphasize the corporeal pleasure in the eating and sex scenes within queer cinematography? How is the gustatory pleasure associated with queer sexual desire through the use of visual and sound effects? Which power relations are involved in the emphasis on sensory experience in eating and queer sex scenes?*

given by the similarity of the effects implemented that provoke similar sensations in the viewer; the spectator's gaze is directed toward the actresses' mouths provoking a form of gustatory pleasure. Finally, the power dynamics of this association are framed in the heteronormative power structure.

However, I care to point out that the promotion of a multisensory approach beyond the visual experience may potentially have subversive potential: it can represent a tool for the re-appropriation of a new form of pleasure. In other words, the main means of communication and perception is usually considered the sense of sight; the involvement of other senses can be interpreted as a way to dismantle the male gaze since the multisensory experience requires the active participation of the spectator (Marks, 2000). Therefore, even if the pre-existent power structures shape the multisensory experience, the evaluation of all the senses can be understood as a valid alternative for the creation of a sensorial space. The emphasis on the sensorial pleasure of eating and sex might represent a new frontier of transgression and queer reappropriation. In this regard, I conclude by reflecting on the possible scenario regarding the deconstruction of the dichotomy of 'bad' and 'good'. Without the stigmatization imposed on the queer category, the concept itself of transgression would not be necessary anymore.

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Appendix 1

In this appendix it is possible to read the first step of the analysis conducted. It is constituted by the description of all the scenes I watched. I decided to exclude some of them because they were too repetitive or meaningless. They follow the order in which they are inserted in the movie since I found it meaningful to show the consequentiality of the frames. For example, as I showed in section 5.3., all the explicit sex scenes are inserted right after an eating scene. To emphasize these characteristics I used the color *blue* to highlight the eating scenes and the color *pink* to highlight the explicit sex scenes.

Furthermore, it helped to count how many minutes the director focused on the eating sphere and sexual one (Around 30 minutes on eating and 15 minutes on explicit sex).

[The playing time refers to the streaming on the platform Now Tv]

(00:06:20-00:07:20) Adèle is having dinner with her parents. Scene 1.

Here, Adèle is eating some pasta with her parents and she allows us to literally enter her mouth since she is chewing with her mouth open. This body sensation is emphasized by the camera techniques that make us pay attention to Adèle's mouth.

First of all, the shot distance can be deeply analyzed: frequent close-ups of the chewing mouths create a particular connection between the spectator and the viewer. The relationship can be defined as intimate since the spectator empathizes with the character's sensation. This connection and intimacy are artificially constructed by the camera techniques such as the previously mentioned camera techniques. In particular, the close-ups of the chewing mouths - especially Adèle's - nourish the sensation of the penetration in her private sphere, in her feelings. This penetration is related to the voyeuristic gaze of watching someone who is doing something in the domestic sphere. In addition, it is used a camera Zoom technique on the noodle dish (00:06:48). As claimed by McDonnell (2016), a decrease in the shot distance of food reminds

sensations similar to pornographic content, since it intensifies the physical sensations. All these elements are highlighted by the focus of the shot. The framing of the surrounding context such as the table is blurred. The camera focuses on the dishes, on the mouth eating and drinking, and on the characters' faces. The object of our attention is directed to the action of eating. In fact, we hear the sound of a TV in the background, but we never see it. At first glance/listen we do not even realize there is something else beyond the food. Finally, a specific detail of this scene is the sound effects. As I said, we hear the sound of the TV in the background but the main sounds are related to eating. The volume of the chewing and their breaths dominate the scene. At some point, Adèle licks the knife (00:06:44), and the sound of this action is particularly emphasized such as any noise related to salivation and swallowing. Another prevailing noise is the cluttry hitting the dishes. Even if this noise is not strictly related to a bodily sensation, another prevalent sound is connected to the eating/food sphere. To conclude, the part of sound related to the dialogue revolves around food since Adèle keeps asking for more food and appreciating the noodles cooked by the parents.

(00:21:10-00:23:23) Sex scene with a man

At the beginning of the story, Adèle did not have the opportunity to explore her sexual orientation, and because of the social pressure related to heteronormativity, she has a sexual act with a man. The frame opens up on Adèle's bottom enlightened by cinematographic lights where she slips off her pants. Only her body and her breast are framed by the camera. The height of the camera is clearly higher than the subjects depicted in the scene. Her body is brighter than the man who is surrounded by darkness. During sexual intercourse, the sunlight which penetrates from the window reflects only on her body. In the same way, the angle of the camera is placed in a specific way to frame only the female body. His face is visible only when he is kissing her body and it is not possible to eliminate him from view. For the whole scene, including when at the end they lie down on the bed, Adèle's body covers his. I

find the sound a particularly helpful analytical tool because only her breaths are emphasized: the volume of his breath is so low that if we do not watch the movie we do not pay attention to the presence of another person beyond Adèle: he does not sound to have pleasure. The sound effects of the kisses are not emphasized at all; the same with other Foley sound that could be more realistic such as skin rubbing. Only at the end, his kisses on Adèle's skin are heard, but she does not emit any sound such as the sensory experience was caused by him and she was the passive actor.

(00:27:16-00:00:27:42) Adèle is eating alone while crying

The exploration of the scene gave similar results to the previous one. Here we see Adèle who is crying in her bed after the traumatic experience of having sex with a man. She takes some snacks from a box under her bed and starts eating while crying. The shot is entirely represented through a close-up of her face. Her face looks enlightened by cinematographic lights and the background is surrounded by darkness. The framing is clearly centered on her visage and especially her mouth which contains the chewed food. Furthermore, the height of the camera clearly gives power to the viewer since it is placed higher than the subject depicted and this specific perspective allows the viewer to better look inside her mouth. In this scene, the spatial organization plays a crucial role in giving power to the spectator who penetrates Adèle's bodily experience of crying and eating. Finally, the Foley sound clearly underlines her upset and desperate breaths. This sound effect becomes mixed with the noise of crunching and salivating caused by eating. In general, all the sounds emphasized are related to the eating sphere or bodily experience. In fact, the first environmental sound is her touching the snacks' paper, where the volume is particularly high.

(00:33:58-00.35:13) Adèle has dinner with her parents. Scene 2.

Here the main protagonist Adèle is eating again with her parents and both the development of the scene and the camera techniques employed are similar to Scene 1. There are a lot of close-ups of the characters' faces which are particularly enlightened

by cinematographic lights. The height of the camera plays an interesting role at the end of the scene (00:35:08) where the viewpoint is of the spectator who is shooting Adèle's face from above. Inspired by Gillian Rose (2016), the spectator has the power to penetrate Adèle's feelings and holds power over the subject depicted whose agency loses importance. Like in the first analyzed scene, the close-ups involve the element of food as well as recalling the pornographic imagery (McDonnell, 2016). Regarding the sound effects, the dialogue is still focused on the meal itself. The conversation revolves around the quality of food, but unlike the previous one where they appreciate the noodles, here they complain about the chicken's cooking; Adèle does not seem to enjoy the food and she claims she is not hungry. She looks thoughtful and this is reinforced by her mom's reflection saying that she looks out of it. To reinforce the dialogue's content the Foley sound does not emphasize the sensory experience: the chewing volume is completely missing. However, some sound effects are still present and related to the eating sphere such as the clutter's noise and the wine poured into the glasses.

(00:44:24-00:49:50) The first meeting between Adèle and Emma

The first meeting between Adèle and Emma does not revolve around food or eating but I still believe that some elements are meaningful and represent the common thread of the analysis conducted. In fact, they meet in a lesbian pub and they are both drinking. The sound of bodily sensations is covered by the loud music of the place, but the camera close-ups and the cinematographic lights on their mouths drinking through a straw remind us that the drinking and eating actions are still predominant in the narrative of this movie. In this case, the dialogue is focused on what the characters are swallowing: one of the first sentences that Emma pronounces with Adèle is about the connection between the type of beer that she is drinking and her sexual

orientation¹⁹. In addition, all the conversation's topics are centered on how well they are drinking.

(1:07:10-1:10:50) Scene of their first date

After their first meeting in the gay pub Adèle and Emma spend time together for the first time because Emma goes to pick Adèle up at school without warning and here Emma made a portrait of Adèle. After this, they go on their first planned date, when they go to see an art exhibition and then they have a picnic in a park. The bodily sensations are particularly emphasized. The scene opens with a close-up of Adèle's hands picking the ham from the packaging and right after another Zoom of her mouth open eating the ham. The framing, the focus, and the shot distance all clearly direct the viewer's gaze to Adèle. The spectator has access only to her face with a specific accent on her chewing mouth. The camera's zoom is on her visage, the background is completely blurred and darker than the protagonist enlightened by cinematographic lights. The entire scene, more than three minutes, is constituted of many close-ups of the characters' faces. The focus is especially on Adèle's mouth and Emma's visage which looks enlightened by the sunlight. At some point (1:13:08), an extremely close shot of Emma's skin reveals all the details of the texture, all the moles.

A further element that directs the viewer's gaze toward the protagonist is the complete absence of background noise. The scene takes place on a sunny day in a park, therefore it is easy to suppose that it was crowded and noisy. However, the spectator does not have access to the context. The only sound is their voice, their swallowing (food and beer), their breaths, and the friction of their skins. In this case, the dialogue's content is particularly meaningful since it starts with Adèle criticizing Emma because she is throwing away the skin of the ham and claiming that she eats "all of the skins". In addition, she gives information about her eating habits such as that when she was a kid she used to eat the skin's scabs; she also declares that she eats

¹⁹ She refers to the type of beer drunk by Adèle since she is drinking a beer called Goudale which reminds us of the French word "goudou" which means lesbian.

everything and all day, she is insatiable. Here, it appears that there is a sudden change in the conversation's topic because they start making allusions to sex; however, as I already showed, the two spheres are closely related. They use the image of oysters as a vulva's metaphor: Adèle expresses her hate for the shellfish's texture, and Emma expresses her love for this dish referring to its similarity with the female sexual organ. This conversation leads to center the conversation on their sexual orientation and on Emma's sexual taste. Here the use of the vocabulary belonging to the food sphere is frequently implicated and much underlined. In fact, they refer to the first lesbian experience with the expression "tasted a girl". Finally, the frame ends with a kiss between Adèle and Emma where the sound of their lips and tongue is not realistic, but it is characterized by a very high volume.

(1:11:52-1.18.26) First sex scene between Adèle and Emma

Right after the scene with the picnic in the park, Emma and Adèle have sex for the first time and the camera techniques clearly focus on the sensory experiences of the characters. Contrary to the sex scene with the man, the camera techniques emphasize both bodies. The close-ups underline the bodies of both of the girls' sexual organs and their mouths. The cinematographic lights highlight Adèle's thighs and breasts. The foreground embodied by the bodies having sex is in focus, while the background of the bedroom is blurred and left outside the shot. Emma's visage is enlightened in the same way as Adèle's; the same parts of her body are highlighted in a sexualized way. There is no difference between the visual representation of the two bodies; the camera is paying as much attention to Adèle's body as to Emma's. When they have sex laying down on the bed, so they are in a horizontal orientation relative to the camera, the center of attention is their vulvas licked by the other and emphasized by the Zoom-in on them alternated from close-ups of their panting faces, especially their mouths. The sound plays a meaningful role in the exaggeration of the sensory experience related to pleasure and touching. The accent is on the heaving breaths of both of the actresses, not only on Adèle's one how it was during the sexual intercourse with the

man. Another sound effect particularly underlined is the hands' touching, slapping, and spanking. This factor emerges during the entire scene. Concrete example: the frame where Adèle licks Emma's nipple for fifteen seconds (1:13:30-1:13:42). Here the sensory experience is expressed by an extreme, deep, and time-consuming close-up, and this focus is intensified by the sound effect related to Adèle's tongue on Emma's nipple. This Foley sound and frame are combined with Emma's breath in the background: their breaths are the only background noise present in the scene. The volume of every skin rubbing and kiss is very high. Finally, the sex scene lasts seven minutes entirely constituted by the emphasis of sensory sensations related to oral pleasure.

(1:22:20-1:26:50) Adèle and Emma eat with Emma's parents

During this scene, Adèle and Emma go to have dinner at Emma's parents' place. They prepared oysters as the main dish and the allusion to sex plays a crucial role in this dialogue. Emma starts smelling the shellfish while the camera moves to a close-up of Adèle who is watching her partner. During the whole dinner, Emma eats noisily the oysters and is stared at by Adèle whose we guess the interior feelings about the conversation about sex that took place in the park. In general, all the dialogues with her parents revolve around the oysters and Adèle's "tastes" in shellfish. At some point, Adèle is convinced to try the oyster (1:24:43) and she spills the oyster's juice down her chin. The whole scene continues with this dynamic, where the main protagonists are the Foley sound of the oysters that are sucked, the Zoom-in, the lights, the angle, and the focus of the camera that underline the characters' facial expressions.

(1:26:50-1:28:10) Second sex scene between Adèle and Emma

The same camera techniques can be found in the other sex scenes such as that one after the dinner with Emma's parents. During the dialogue the sexual tension has been created by the image of the oysters, and right after that another explicit sex scene is

inserted (1:26:50-1:28:10). Insistence on lights, close-ups on mouths and sound effects of breaths. The protagonist is the oral sex.

(1:31:02-1:34:18) Adèle and Emma have dinner with Adèle's parents

The dynamic of this scene is very similar to the first eating scene analyzed. Emma is eating the pasta in the same way as Adèle in the first scene. The camera techniques are mainly close-ups of Adèle and Emma's mouths. Adèle and Emma take the noodles from the fork without twirling them around the fork as Adèle's parents do. In this case, the dialogue is not only around food since they are talking about the girls' careers, but they still comment on the quality of spaghetti. After the last comment by Emma on the pasta the scene twists to them having sex.

(1:34:18-1:36:48) Sex scene between Adèle and Emma

Even in this case, the explicit sex is inserted right after a scene about a meal where the pleasure experience was much emphasized by visual and sound effects. The camera techniques of lights, focus, frame, heights, and shot distance are implemented in the same way as the previous one.

(1:40:40-1:52:50) Dinner with Emma's friends

In this frame, Adèle prepares dinner for Adèle's friends, and many close-ups of her hands touching the food are present. The smelling, touching, and tasting details are very evident since she started cooking. However, when the party started to be crowded and all the friends eat the food served by Adèle the bodily sensations decrease and the music dominates the scene. Even if they seem to appreciate the noodles, we have completely different sensations from the first scene where the noodles are depicted (00:06:20-00:07:20). The conversation is distracted and revolves around the philosophical topic. Some close-ups of people's mouths and tongues licking dirty fingers are inserted, but the sound effect of this action is completely missing because covered by music and dialogue. The dialogue is around sex and orgasm but without sexual tension or arousal, the tone is very abstract and

philosophical. Adèle does not look comfortable in this space and is not emotionally connected with Emma. She pays attention only to the other's opinions, not to the sensation of pleasure related to food itself. The only person who seems very interested in the food is a guy who seems to flirt with Adèle: she comes into connection with him but the sound effects are still lacking.

(2:26:30-2:38:26) They see each other for the last time

Here I didn't use any color because as I showed in the analysis I found this scene meaningful but they do not eat or drink.

The scene tells the last time that Adèle and Emma saw each other and the first time they meet after they broke up. They meet in a restaurant and Adèle asks to drink the wine she ordered but Emma refuses the offer. Therefore, the connection is not established through food, drinks, or eating. Despite the location of the encounter is a restaurant/bar they do not take anything to eat, they ordered a coffee and the food is never in the frame.

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