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****Review Article****

Beyond the Female Love-Male Sex Binary: A Non-representational Approach to Online Dating*

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Abstract

Based on a critical literature review, this paper reveals that online dating studies on heterosexual users' motivations and mate preferences reproduce two gendered as well as heteronormative arguments. First, women use dating technologies for seeking love whereas men prefer them for arranging casual sex activities. Second, men are inclined to prioritize physical appearance while women tend to value status during mate selection or swiping in e-dating language. The article calls these beauty-status and love-sex dichotomies as the female love-male sex binary which has become a persistent myth through a continuous reproduction. This critical literature review problematizes the binary logic embedded in the literature on heterosexual online dating. To move beyond such duality, it suggests an affective turn which attracts the attention to the mostly neglected things in e-dating studies which focus on heterosexual individuals, namely the body, its capacity, and the affectivity of non-human things like atmospheres as well as images. Among various inspiring techniques in non-representational methodologies, it proposes video reenactment, cyberflaneur or technical walkthrough, and sensory writing techniques to study the online dating phenomenon and to understand motivations as well as swiping strategies of heterosexual online daters.

Keywords: Non-representational methodology, affect, online dating, emotion, mate selection.

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****Derleme Makale******Aşk Kadını-Seks Erkeği İkililiğinin Ötesinde:
Çevrimiçi Flörte Temsili Olmayan Bir Yaklaşım*****Gözde Cöbek******Özet**

Eleştirel literatür taramasına dayanan bu çalışma, heteroseksüel bireylerin motivasyonlarına ve eş seçim tercihlerine odaklanan çevrimiçi flört çalışmalarının, iki cinsiyetçi ve heteronormatif argüman ürettiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Söz konusu çalışmaların birinci argümanı, kadın kullanıcıların flört teknolojilerini aşk amaçlı, erkeklerinse seks amaçlı kullandığıdır. İkinci argüman; eş seçimi -e-flört dilinde “kaydırma”- esnasında erkeklerin fiziksel görüntüye önem verme eğilimi gösterirken kadınların statüye dikkat ettiğini öne sürmektedir. Bu makale, güzellik-statü ve aşk-seks ikiliklerine, mütemadiyen tekrar edilerek günümüzde kalıcı bir mite dönüşmüş, aşk kadını-seks erkeği ikiliği adını vermektedir. Bu eleştirel literatür okuması, heteroseksüel çevrimiçi flört literatüründeki gömülü ikili mantığı sorunsallaştırmaktadır. Böylesi bir ikiliği aşmak adına, duygulanımsal bir dönüş önererek heteroseksüel bireylere odaklanan e-flört çalışmalarında genellikle göz ardı edilen şeylere dikkat çekmektedir; bedene, beden kapasitesine ve atmosferler, imajlar gibi beşerî olmayan şeylerin duygulanımsal etkilerine. Temsili olmayan metodolojilerdeki tekniklerden ilham alan bu çalışma; çevrimiçi flört olgusunu çalışmak, heteroseksüel bireylerin motivasyonları ve eş seçim stratejilerini anlamak için video canlandırma, siber flanör ya da teknik yürüyüş ve duygusal yazım tekniklerini önermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Temsili olmayan metodoloji, duygulanım, çevrimiçi flört, duygu, eş seçimi.

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Beyond the Female Love-Male Sex Binary: A Non-representational Approach to Online Dating^{1 2}

Introduction

The online dating business has globally experienced a boom with newcomers and the transformation of the existing dating websites (*Match.com*, *OkCupid*, and *eHarmony.com*) into suitable apps since the inception of *Tinder*, the first dating application designed for heterosexual individuals. Digital dating has become such a lucrative and attractive business that it paved the way for advice blogs, self-help books, dating coaches, matchmakers as well as self-help specialists who teach how to use these technologies in an efficient way – from decorating one’s profile to beating algorithms to find the ideal mate (Bryans, 2018; Ettin, 2014; Webb, 2013). Today many heterosexual individuals use dating technologies to meet new people. Why do they prefer dating technologies? And how do they select their potential dates?

The boom in the digital dating business gave way to another, a surge evident in e-dating studies. Many disciplines and interdisciplinary areas began to concentrate on this popular phenomenon. The literature can be grouped under five themes, mate selection, self-presentation, motivation, digital dating platforms, and negative aspects of online dating which influence users on a more personal level, namely deception, sexual harassment, dating scams, and cyberbullying. In this paper, I am interested in heterosexual users’ motivations and their swiping strategies, and review the literature regarding heterosexual digital dating from various fields. This critical literature review finds

¹ This paper’s previous versions were presented in various online events, respectively British Sociological Association Emotions Study Group 2020 Twitter Symposium: Emotions Across Time & Space, April 27, 2020, Edinburgh; the 16th EASA Biennial Conference EASA2020: New Anthropological Horizons in and beyond Europe, July 21-24, 2020, Lisbon; and the 9th Midterm Conference of the ESA Sociology of Emotions Research Network (RN11), November 23-27, 2020, Barcelona.

² I would like to thank the conference organizers for giving me the opportunity to present my paper, the participants, the reviewers, my advisor Murat Ergin, and my dear friend Selay Sarı for their valuable comments and feedbacks which helped me improve the article.

a binary logic that I call “the female love-male sex binary” within these studies. It demonstrates how such a duality produces a stereotypical, gendered, and heteronormative argument such that women look for a romantic partner with a high socioeconomic status whereas men seek for a casual sex partner who must be physically attractive. Revealing the problems produced by this duality, this paper suggests an affective turn to transcend the binary in heterosexual e-dating studies. It discusses the significance of such a turn, and proposes various non-representational techniques that may generate different perspectives, namely sensory writing, technical walkthrough or cyberflaneur, and video reenactment.

The Female Love-Male Sex Duality

Following Olga Abramova et al. (2016), I conducted a literature review using the scientific databases ScienceDirect, Springer, Wiley Online Library, JSTOR, ACM Digital Library, and IEEE in combination with the keywords online dating, digital dating, internet dating, dating website, dating app, *Tinder*, e-dating, cyber dating, online courtship, online matchmaking, motivation, mate selection, mate preference, and mating. Interested in English language sources that concentrate on heterosexual e-daters, their motivations, and mate preferences, I found and reviewed 63 studies. These are predominantly articles published in various journals (N=50)³, followed by book chapters (N=5); master theses or PhD dissertations (N=4), and books (N=4). 37 studies concentrate on users’ mate preferences. 34 of them use quantitative methods while only 2 of them use qualitative

³ Computers in Human Behavior (3), Information, Communication & Society (2), Psychology and Aging (2), Sociological Science (2), International Journal of Engineering and Technology (1), Computers and Composition (1), American Communication Journal (1), American Sociological Review (1), Social Media + Society (1), Journals of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences (1), Journal of Social Structure (1), Psychological Science in the Public Interest (1), Australian Feminist Studies (1), Cogent Psychology (1), Journal of Women & Aging (1), American Economic Review (1), Quantitative Marketing and Economics (1), Marriage and Family Review (1), Journal of Marriage and Family (1), Frontiers in Communication (1), American Journal of Sociology (1), New Media & Society (1), Ethnic and Racial Studies (1), Journal of Family Issues (1), Journal of Sociology (1), Applied Economics (1), Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization (1), Journal of Psychological Research (1), Sexuality & Culture (1), European Sociological Review (1), Mobile Media & Communication (1), Human Nature (1), Journal of Family Research (1), EPJ Data Science (1), Telematics and Informatics (1), Social Forces (1), Personality and Individual Differences (1), Journal of Social and Personal Relationships (1), The Journal of Politics (1), PLoS ONE (1), Revista Teknokultura (1), Analize – Journal of Gender and Feminist Studies (1), Družboslovne Razprave (1)

techniques, and one study use mixed methods.⁴ There are 12 studies on users' motivations. 10 of them are quantitative studies whereas only 2 studies use qualitative and mixed methods.⁵ 14 studies focus on heterosexual e-daters' self-presentations along with mate preferences. 10 of which use qualitative research techniques while 4 studies are quantitative.⁶ The majority of these studies (52 among 63 studies) focus on the U.S., Canada, European, or Australian contexts while 11 studies focus on other contexts, namely China, India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Turkey. Finally, 9 studies are interested in *Tinder* and its users while 53 studies concentrate on dating sites or other dating apps, and only one study examines several dating apps. Overall, heterosexual online dating literature regarding motivations as well as mate preferences predominantly consist of quantitative and Anglo-American studies.

These studies mainly follow a female love vs. male sex binary logic. In other words, the research regarding heterosexual online daters seem to move between two associated dichotomies: love-sex and beauty-status. The studies on motivations (9 of 12 studies) highlight that even though dating apps are first and foremost for casual sex or hooking up, men are more likely to use dating technologies for short-term relationships like one-night stands than their counterparts who prefer online dating for long-term, romantic relationships. Among the few studies which challenge the man-sex and woman-love associations, Giulia Ranzini and Christoph Lutz (2017) find that in the U.S., women use *Tinder* not to form a romantic relationship but for friendship while male Tindersers seek not

⁴ Not to interrupt the paper with lines of references in parentheses, the studies are shared in footnotes. Studies on mate preferences: Alterowitz and Mendelsohn, 2009; Anderson et al., 2014; Başar, 2010; Birger, 2015; Brand et al., 2012; Bruch and Newman, 2019; Chappetta and Barth, 2016; Curington et al., 2015; Dwivedi, 2015; Felmler and Kreager, 2017; He et al., 2013; Hitsch et al., 2010a and 2010b; Huber and Malhotra, 2017; Jakobsson and Lindholm, 2014; Johnson, 2017; Kreager et al., 2014; Lange et al., 2019; Lin and Lundquist, 2013; McGloin and Denes, 2018; McGrath et al., 2016; Menkin et al., 2015; Ong, 2016; Ong and Wang, 2015; Oyer, 2014; Peters and Salzsieder, 2018; Phua and Moody, 2019; Potarca and Mills, 2015; Rudder, 2014; Schwarz and Hassebruck, 2012; Skopek et al., 2011; Sritharan et al., 2010; Su and Hu, 2019; Thomas, 2019; Tommasi, 2004; Tsunokai et al., 2014; Zakej et al., 2015.

⁵ Alam et al., 2018; Bryant and Sheldon, 2017; Clemens et al., 2015; Gatter and Hodkinson, 2016; Lange et al., 2015; Ranzini and Lutz, 2017; Newett et al., 2017; Pozsar et al., 2018; Seta and Zhang, 2015; Snitko, 2016; Sumter et al., 2017; Timmermans and Caluwé, 2017.

⁶ Almjeld, 2014; Casimiro, 2014 and 2015; David and Cambre, 2016; Davis and Fingerman, 2016; Duguay, 2017; Fu, 2015; Finkel et al., 2012; Frohlick and Migliardi, 2011; Gewirtz-Meydan and Ayalon, 2018; Lindsay, 2015; Illouz, 2007; McWilliams and Barrett, 2014; Ward, 2016.

only hookup but also long-term partners. Gabriele de Seta and Ge Zhang's study (2017) on the users of *Momo*, known as *Chinese Tinder*, draws the attention to boredom. It argues that because *Momo* is primarily used to alleviate boredom, it is a pastime flirting app rather than a dating one. Similarly, Elisabeth Timmermans and Elien de Caluwé (2017) find that in Belgium, emerging adults who are more extraverted and open to new experiences use *Tinder* to pass the time. Other 51 studies on online dating (the research on mate preferences and self-presentation) regard dating sites and/or apps only as platforms for seeking romantic partners, hence they tend to neglect other motivations such as friendship and entertainment.

In terms of the gendered beauty-status dichotomy, 22 of 37 studies on mate preferences make a similar argument. That is, although physical attractiveness is the most important criterion for both parties, men value physical attraction over anything else whereas women tend to prioritize status (potential partners' education level, job as well as income) in their quest for a romantic partner.⁷ These predominantly quantitative studies generally explain such gendered difference through evolutionary or social stratification theories. According to the evolutionary theory (Buss, 1989; Buss and Schmitt, 1993), women seek love more than men because they biologically have a more limited period of fertility than men, hence they tend to value socioeconomic status of a man, his potential as a husband and a father of the future child. In contrast, men may have evolved to prioritize physical appearance, sexually attractive and young women because men's fertility decreases relatively slowly than their counterparts. Basically, men can and do enjoy this "privilege" by engaging in short-term relationships which require "less time to elapse before seeking sexual intercourse and desiring a large number of sexual partners" (Buss and Schmitt, 1993: 226). The social structure or stratification theory, in contrast, (Arum et al., 2008; Blossfeld, 2009) underlines the unequal distribution of social roles and positions among genders. It argues that women are forced to think of their future

⁷ Alterowitz and Mendelsohn, 2009; Başar, 2006; Birger, 2015; Brand et al., 2012; Chappetta and Barth, 2016; Dwivedi, 2015; Hitsch et al., 2010a and 2010b; Johnson, 2017; Kreager et al., 2014; McGloin and Denes, 2018; Menkin et al., 2015; Ong, 2016; Ong and Wang, 2015; Oyer, 2014; Peters and Salzsieder, 2018; Schwarz and Hassebrauck, 2012; Sritharan et al., 2010; Skopek et al., 2011; Su and Hu, 2019; Tommasi, 2004; Zakelj et al., 2015.

husband's earning potential because they are made economically dependent on their partners. Despite differences, both theories view women as economically more dependent on their partners, thus, as forced to think of their future and status.

This binary is also evident in self-presentation. Women generally upload selfies taken in front of a mirror to show their bodies and physical attractiveness. Men, on the other hand, write their cultural capitals (university name and occupation) and upload pictures of themselves with their luxury items like cars and watches. Qualitative studies on self-presentation have more diverse explanations than the above-mentioned quantitative studies. The female love-male sex binary logic is stable because these socially constructed heteronormative gender codes are very much internalized by individuals (Casimiro 2014 and 2015; Davis and Fingerman, 2016; Gewirtz-Meydan and Ayalon, 2018; McWilliams and Barrett, 2014). Or because dating platforms with their design templates reinforce these codes (Almjeld, 2014; David and Cambre, 2016; Duguay, 2017; Frohlick and Migliardi, 2011; Illouz, 2007; Lindsay, 2015). In terms of the love-woman association, studying online daters in China, Rense Lange et al. (2015) find that Chinese women are more likely to seek romantic partners because they feel more social pressure toward marriage than men.

On the other hand, 10 studies draw the attention to race as well as homophily. They find that white individuals, especially white men, are the most preferred group in mate selection, and e-daters mostly seek partners who share similar socioeconomic and ideological backgrounds. Only five studies challenge the beauty-status duality in this literature. Qiao Qiao He et al. (2013), for instance, argue that in China, not merely men but also women use their income to attract potential partners. Benjamin P. Lange et al. (2019) who look at the German context and Tao Fu (2015) who analyze the profiles of *shengny*, meaning leftover women, in China find similar results. According to these studies from different cultural settings, women prefer sensitive, emotional, kind as well as intelligent men. The findings from Singapore (Phua and Moody, 2019) demonstrate how women's increasing access to education and job market have changed their mate preferences. A data set collected in 2009 and 2017 in the U.S. (Thomas, 2019) show that

couples are becoming more heterogeneous, that is, more individuals today prefer mates who do not simply share similar backgrounds but come from diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, race, taste, etc. Despite those challenges, love and beauty overwhelmingly, in Sara Ahmed's terms (2014), "stick" to women while sex and status to men. This socially constructed heteronormative binary logic which seems transcultural continue to be reproduced as a persistent myth because it is also profitable. Many dating coaches or experts, for which the dating industry paved the way, advise women to look beautiful and men to look rich (Bryans, 2018; Ettin, 2014). Interestingly, this reproduction of the female love-male sex binary comes not only from the online dating industry, but also from the literature regarding heterosexual dating, matching, and relationships.

What lies beneath these studies which reduce the online dating phenomenon to such binary logic is the problem of oversimplification. Why heterosexual individuals prefer dating technologies and why they are moved by certain profiles but not others are mostly reduced to love-sex and beauty-status dichotomies. The above-mentioned studies generally regard digital dating in terms of intimacy and love. This results in less scholarly attention to other factors that influences individuals' preferences for dating technologies. Boredom, for instance, is a dominant factor,⁸ though, the most neglected one. In other words, studies show how individuals significantly use dating technologies to alleviate boredom but do not pay attention to why boredom is a dominant factor. Only Seta and Zhang's study on *Momo* users finds that the dating app is "hardly 'a dating app'" because users are not interested in seeking a partner but an enjoyable talk (2015: 178). *Momo* users are fighting "the boring spells of everyday life" (179) while avoiding the pressures of a more demanding relationship. Therefore, they suggest viewing *Momo* as no more than "a pastime flirting platform" (178). Their ethnographic study demonstrates how boredom is a crucial phenomenon that might help us understand today's dating landscape, its culture as well as practices within it.

⁸ Alam, et al., 2018; Bryant and Sheldon, 2017; Frohlich and Migliardi, 2011; Pozsar et al., 2018; Seta and Zhang, 2015; Timmermans and Caluwé, 2017; Ward, 2016.

In predominantly quantitative research, mate preferences are also explained through beauty and status categories which function as an “element of social reproduction” (Highmore, 2016a: 160). Swiping becomes here determined, pre-established, a static disposition, “a preference as *already* positioned within a hierarchy” (Highmore, 2016b: 557, emphasis original). But what is dismissed here is that swiping is a bodily activity. Recognizing it as such does not refute that it sometimes becomes mechanic, but draws the attention to how it is also about “letting oneself carried away, overflowing with the surprises that arise through contact with” (Hennion, 2007: 109) persons or their profiles. To put it another way, there are “different orienting forces” (Highmore, 2016b: 553) which influence individuals’ preferences, thus it cannot be simply claimed that women value status while men prioritize beauty. But attention should be paid to how these categories and their affectivities change in different contexts. Research design, in this regard, is crucial. The studies on mate selection discussed above use predominantly quantitative methods which causes the reproduction of the female love-male sex binary. Swiping as a bodily activity is neglected because the researchers interested in heterosexual individuals in digital environments are mostly inclined to forget the existence of bodies. Being body blind, they consider online worlds as first and foremost as a disembodied space as if the body would magically disappear when it comes to digital. The scholars who study heterosexual individuals’ e-dating practices recognize the bodily movements when using dating apps, i.e., how users choose their potential partners “with a quick thumb movement” (David and Cambre, 2016: 4). Yet, the same scholars criticize that with the emergence of dating technologies, being attracted to someone, a possible date, has become disembodied (Badiou with Truong, 2012; Bauman, 2003; Finkel et al., 2012; Hardey, 2002; Illouz, 2007; Roscoe and Chillias, 2014; Sprecher et al., 2008). To put it differently, on the one hand, when it comes to using dating technologies, the body is recognized since people use their hands, fingers, eyes, etc. during swiping. On the other hand, when it comes to choosing a partner, which requires a bodily attraction, the body is surprisingly neglected, as if the people who use dating technologies make decisions without feeling an attraction. It is important to keep in mind that swiping can become a very mechanic practice. “Swiping storm” can lead individuals to like or dislike profiles

without even looking at them. Yet, this does not mean that it is a disembodied practice. It is also crucial to note that queer studies as well as critical media studies which focus on non-heterosexual digital dating environments have already challenged the body blindness (e.g., Atuk, 2020 and forthcoming). Thus, the fact that the female love-male sex binary logic continues to be reproduced demonstrates another blindness, a blindness to those challenges as well.

Reducing the online dating phenomenon to the female love-male sex binary also ignores that “platforms intervene” (Gillespie, 2015), the significant role of algorithms, templates along with interfaces in e-daters’ actions and decisions. In other words, the architecture of an app has a specific “style of allure” (Thrift, 2010) which move individuals toward as well as away from the app. Bumble, for instance, presents itself as a “feminist” dating app by allowing only women to start the conversation after a match is made (Bivens and Hoque, 2018). Through its technological design which aims to ensure security, control, and safety, the app allures heterosexual cisgender women. Differently than Bumble, *OkCupid* uses the answers that e-daters give to questions regarding interests, religion, political view, sexual desires, etc., and gives its users percentages of agree (same answers) as well as disagree (different answers) to demonstrate how perfect they are for each other. By drawing the attention to the answers rather than users’ images, *OkCupid* promotes itself as a contrast to *Tinder*: “On *OkCupid*, you are more than just a photo. You have stories to tell, passions to share...” (okcupid.com, 2019). As such, *OkCupid* is seen as more than a hookup app, a place for people interested in more serious intimacies (Ekşi Sözlük, 2020).

There is nothing new under the sun. We have already heard of the story of women seeking love while men looking for sex, from Buss & Schmitt (1993) to bell hooks (2004). These arguments reproduce socially constructed sticky relationships between love, beauty, and woman, between sex, status, and man as if love is a female act while sex is a “right of men.” This repetition that has become a persistent myth mainly derives from methodology. Below, I suggest turning to affect to transcend this female love-male sex binary.

The Affective Turn

Many scholars (Ahmed, 2014; Hemmings, 2005; Leys, 2011; Martin, 2013) use the terms emotion and affect interchangeably and insist on such use. On the other hand, affect scholars (Berlant, 2011a; Massumi, 1995; Stewart, 2017; Thrift, 2008) underline that the two have different meanings and that the difference matters. Following affect theories, I argue that the difference is crucial because it might help transcend the binary logic.

Emotions, first of all, are not simply a psychological state, natural, and precultural, but they are in fact cultural as well as social practices of feelings (Myers, 1988; Rosaldo, 1983). In her classical work *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild (1983) draws the attention to cultural “feeling rules” or emotional vocabularies that indicate which feelings are and are not “feel-able” where, when, and how one should display, practice, perform a feeling, and who are (not) allowed to display. This attempt to unnaturalize emotions is a structural intervention to the Western understanding of them as “beneath” the faculties of thought as well as reason (Ahmed, 2014; Lutz, 1988). They are in fact embodied in narratives. Being a part of power relations, they “bound up with the securing of social hierarchy” since we do not have the same relationship to emotions (Ahmed, 2014: 4).

Emotions are “sticky” (Ahmed, 2014). Shame, for instance, arises “out of the monitoring of one’s own actions by viewing one’s self from the standpoint of others” (Scheff, 1988: 398). It sticks to those who act outside the norms, rules, and laws. In this regard, women or LGBTQ+ individuals are first and foremost those who “brings shame on the family,” or the society (Ahmed, 2014: 107). However, shaming which had remained a masculine act for a very long time is used today as a political activism by feminist groups to expose toxic masculine performances (Hess and Flores, 2016; Shaw, 2016). Love also sticks to women. As we have been repeatedly told and taught, women, but not men, love. As if women are born to love, and not to be loved. As if love sticks to the female body “by nature.” Love and care continue to be socially constructed as a female act, as a “duty” of women, i.e., the future wives as well as mothers (Duncombe and Marsden, 1998; Green,

2018; Uioorean, 2018).⁹ And the female love-male sex binary reproduces this sticky relationship.

Affect is rather different. Inspired by Spinoza (1994) but mostly Deleuze and Guattari (1983 and 1987), the affective turn is a poststructural intervention. It begins with critiquing the Cartesian mind-body duality in which there is always a primacy of the mind over the body. Following Spinoza (1994), affect scholars claim that the body's power of movement influences as well as is influenced by the mind. They agree that emotions are social and cultural practices, but the concept of affect is more than emotions. It refers to the body's capacity to affect, move, and act upon as well as to be affected, moved, and acted upon. The first fundamental view in affect theory is that "cognition follows the affects" (Berlant, 2011b: 145; Damasio, 2003[1999]).¹⁰ Nonetheless, this does not mean that affect is entirely bodily and "mindless," but underlines the body's influence. Because sensation occurs before cognition, affect is viewed as resistant to narrative and cognitive capture (White, 2011: 15). Therefore, it is non-representational, and this is the second fundamental view. However, non-representation can by no means be understood as anti-representation. Affect theories apprehend what pass for representations as "performative presentations, not reflections of some a priori order waiting to be unveiled, decoded, or revealed" (Anderson and Harrison, 2010: 19). In other words, non-representational means that representations are not planned codes and symbols closed upon themselves, but they are open to making, unmaking, and remaking. They can be de-presented and re-presented (Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000). Affect scholars, in this regard, are interested in atmospheres (Anderson, 2009; Stewart, 2011) because, and this is the third fundamental principal of affect theory, "bodies are continuously busy judging their environments and responding to [affective] atmospheres in which they find themselves" (Berlant, 2011b: 15).

⁹ In *The Will to Change*, bell hooks (2004) argues that to end patriarchy, to change the patriarchal relations, men must be taught love, to love. Men do not know the art of love. They can change only if they learn how to love. The masculinity crisis can only end when men know how to love.

¹⁰ As some critics (Leys, 2011; Martin, 2013) have done, the view that cognition follows affect can be, very easily, oversimplified by associating the notion of affect with a research area in neuroscience. This would be unfair to affect studies since they endeavor to draw our attention to bodies, subjects, or modes of being, movements, and atmospheres.

Unlike emotion, the concept of affect draws the attention to escape (Biehl, 2005). It does not reject emotions as social and cultural practices, feeling rules, power dynamics, and unequal relations to emotions. In Berlant's terms, affect theory "encourage more than a focus on orthodoxies of institutions and practices" since life is a porous zone that consists of lots of incoherence and contradiction, lots of ways that people make through it: "Laws, norms, and events shape imaginaries, but ... people make up modes of being and responding to the world that altogether constitute what gets called 'visceral response' and intuitive intelligence" (2011b: 53). The focus on modes of being and responses to the world is what makes the affect-emotion distinction valuable.

Encouraging a different focus, an affective turn to digital dating may help to transcend the female love-male sex binary in several ways. First, the conceptual difference between emotion and affect might help concentrate on what is/are neglected. The concept of affect might extend the scope of the literature on heterosexual e-dating which is very much limited to love, sex, and intimacy. Boredom might gain attention, for instance. Why is boredom a dominant affect that moves individuals toward dating apps? It might also help not to jump into conclusion that sex is first and foremost a male practice whereas love is predominantly a female one, but question why heterosexual women attach to love while men to sex as Berlant (2011a, 2011b) puts an emphasis on attachments. Second, emphasizing affective environments or atmospheres (Anderson, 2009; Stewart, 2011), affect, or non-representational, theories might encourage to look at the dating platforms, their algorithmic designs, and their aesthetics as affective atmospheres (e.g., Ash, 2010b). What kind of environments that influence individuals' actions as well as preferences exist within these platforms? Along with affective atmospheres, the emphasis on thought-in-action and movement in non-representational theories might help understand the affectivity of profiles, that is, how, although it can become mechanic, swiping is not already constituted, but a bodily activity because what one sees on the screen mostly does something to the body (Ash, 2009). However, the aim is not to refute the female love-male sex binary, but to move beyond the sticky

representations based on this binary logic. How can non-representational methodologies pave the way for transcending the binary?

Non-representational Methodologies

Affect theories do not introduce “a set of regulated steps to be taken towards the realization of some predetermined end” (Ingold, 2015: vii), but encourage researchers to be experimental. Hence, there is no *a* non-representational methodology, but non-representational methodologies (Anderson and Harrison, 2010; Vannini, 2015). However, they share some similar techniques that I find crucial for moving beyond the female love-male sex binary. What is primarily common in non-representational methodologies is the living language (Ash, 2010a; Stewart, 2007), a writing technique which moves as well as focuses on senses, tactile or haptic knowledges, a way of writing that describes the affective atmospheres (e.g., Paterson, 2009; Stewart, 2007). It is a “sensuous scholarship” (Stoller, 2004) or “sensory ethnography” (Pink, 2009), in that sense, which aims to turn the cold, passive language of academia into a living one. Non-representational methodologies encourage sensuous descriptions, detailed descriptions of the atmosphere, the things, the event, the environment, the smells, the noise, etc. Such descriptions are important to understand how bodies are not only influenced by, but also judge and respond to their affective environments.

Other than writing, non-representational methodologies suggest both offline and online walking as a technique to capture everyday flows, to understand affective environments. Technical walkthrough or cyberflaneur technique (Condie et al., 2018; Light et al., 2018) is crucial to observe and understand the affective atmospheres of online worlds, of dating technologies in this case, their aesthetics and styles of allure which have an impact on e-daters’ actions, preferences, and decisions. Such technique involves basically “the researcher engaging with the app’s interface, working through screens, tapping buttons, and exploring menus”; it requires an analytical eye to user interface management, functions and features, textual content and tone, and the look as well as feel of the app (Light et al., 2018: 891-892). Reenactment is a common technique used in non-representational methodologies as well. It aims to understand how a practice is

actually practiced. In terms of online dating, not simply reenactment but video reenactment is an important method for understanding how swiping is a bodily, affective activity. The method combines video recording and participant reflection. In other words, during video recording, the research participant shows the researcher how the practice is performed. Video is crucial because it offers the opportunity to study the movement, the non-representational dimensions of a practice, the bodily interactions between humans and non-humans, and it provides multiple layers of data about practices, their sensory registers, and affective atmospheres (Ash, 2010a; Bates, 2014; Harris, 2016; Laurier and Philo, 2006). Video reenactment allows the researcher “to understand more closely the sensory and affective dimensions” (Pink, 2012: 43) of the practice of swiping. It offers routes to knowing about e-dating platforms as affective atmospheres, swiping behaviors, and the affectivity of profiles.

Conclusion

This review article reveals the female love-male sex binary logic embedded in the literature regarding heterosexual digital dating. Studies predominantly argue that women look for a romantic partner with a high socioeconomic status whereas men seek for a casual sex partner who must be physically attractive. Such a gendered and heteronormative argument is not new. For a very long time, it has been reproduced by the literature on mate selection in general as well as by various products of the culture industry like television series, movies, books, and by specialists of the e-dating business such as dating coaches and matchmakers. Although this binary logic has been equally challenged by the studies on non-heterosexual digital dating for a long time, it continues to be reproduced. This paper claims that the reproduction derives from three things. First, individuals mostly internalize this socially constructed relationship between love, beauty, and women, between sex, status, and men. Internalizing the gender roles assigned by this social and cultural construction, many heterosexual women search for love while their counterparts seem to practice their “right to hookup.” Second, the binary continues to exist in the literature despite various challenges because the literature regarding heterosexual digital dating seems blind to the studies that transcend the female love-male sex binary.

Third and related with the former, the continuous reproduction of the duality stems from methodology. The studies which cause reproduction predominantly use quantitative techniques and measure mate preferences through physical attractiveness and status categories, and motivations through love and sex. As such, they disregard other motivations like boredom, the role of the body on mate selection, and the impact of technological design on motivations as well as swiping decisions.

To move beyond the female love vs. male sex binary, this paper suggests an affective turn to heterosexual digital dating. Without refusing laws, institutions, events that shape imaginaries and actions, affect theories draw the attention to the body and underline its capacity to judge their environments and respond to affective atmospheres. Hence, they encourage a focus on performances, practices, atmospheres, different ways that people make through, and modes of being that people make up. Such a focus might pave the way for questioning the sticky relationships, for considering other relations beyond the female love-male sex association as well as the role of non-human things on those relationships. Technical walkthrough, for instance, as a method of engaging with the interface, features, content, tone, look, and feel of an app, is crucial to observe and understand how the aesthetics of a dating app affects e-daters' motivations, preferences, and strategies. Video reenactment which combines video recording and participant reflection is also important for understanding how swiping is practiced by online daters and how the body plays a role in swiping. Last but not least, sensory writing might help the researcher to understand the affective atmospheres created by and within dating technologies, the affectivity of profiles. These non-representational techniques might lead the researcher to question, to move beyond, and to understand the female love-male sex dualism rather than jumping into conclusion that women seek love and demand status while men seek sex and demand beauty. They also might help the researcher question the blindness produced by this binary as well as the researcher's own blindness to what is beyond the binary. However, this paper does not claim that non-representational methodologies will eventually demolish the binary logic. Therefore, the researcher should

always keep in mind that these methodologies might produce a different binary logic along with a different blindness.

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