

My dissertation on ethics and subjectivity engages with a specific yet important conceptual shortcoming in Western definitions of ethics. From Plato's *Symposium*, ethics has been defined by a double theoretical gesture. On one hand, an exclusion of the erotic and bodily pleasures as fundamentally egoistic and therefore negating the other, on the other, an affirmation of rational discourse as a mean to encounter and understand the other. From these premises, my dissertation examines how this erasure of the erotic in ethics has been systematically reproduced to the present, and outlines the important and decisive consequences that this strategic oversight has had in contemporary definitions of otherness, community, and queerness. This erasure of the erotic dimension has also informed a long tradition in Western philosophy, one that belittles the sense of touch in relation to knowledge and to the understanding of the other, while privileging sight and/or hearing as higher senses and crucial to the understanding and acceptance of others. In engaging critically with the notion of Caress developed by the French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas and the notion of Flesh as theorized by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, I aim to offer an original and comparative literary analysis of queer texts (*Moby-Dick*, *L'amour en relief*, etc.) in which erotic tactility and its fundamental reversibility is at the core of the relation with others. Offering a paradigm-shifting critique of the sense of touch and its consequences on the theorization of bodies as always in relation, my dissertation places the sense of touch and its erotic universe at the center of a queer theory of embodiment sustaining unconventional identifications and resisting the dictates of normative images and discourses.