How Can I Deny This Body is Mine: Performativity, Embodiment, Normative Violence

by

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore, problematize and critique the violence of norms—normative violence, especially gender norms and heteronormativity-- in contemporary political life. It focuses on the interaction and engagement between norms and the body, and demonstrates that normative violence manifests itself in a twofold way: norms not only regulate, normalize and manage bodies that are already intelligible into reified forms, but also through their exclusionary logic produce unintelligible bodies that are unlivable.

Situated within contemporary feminist and queer movements, this thesis bridges between aporias and problems emergent from them and critical readings of Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This thesis identifies and indicates normative violence and erasures inherited in the popular rhetoric of the movements and diverse theoretical accounts of the body. Finally, the argument is made that feminist and queer readings of Foucault and Merleau-Ponty provide possibilities for undoing normative violence by resignifying norms temporally and performatively via collective action.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, with whom I had the honor and luck to spend seventeen years.

I miss you, every single day, and will for the rest of my life in the deepest regret and guilt for not having one day, understood your struggle, hardship, frustration, loneliness, stress, not even your love.

I love you. And I know you are always with me. Time becomes fragmented and non-linear when I think of you. It is because the possibility of remembering that I still believe in Socratic reflection.

You are always there.

Introduction

What is the Political?

The background scene of this thesis is contemporary feminist and queer movements and theorizing.

I hear young hearts crying. Enclosed windows. Fences everywhere. There were pools of blood and roses. Children disowned. Lovers died alone. Their lives destroyed. Because they want to love, and love makes them want to live. And when they cannot love, life itself becomes meaningless.

And some survived. Survived the gigantic trauma, loneliness, misunderstanding, isolation, those sleepless nights tortured by the aspiration to change the world. Survivors try to forget the pain so that they can live. Denial. Forgetting. Melancholia. They all pay the price to just be normal.

How can you blame them, knowing how tiring is it to always be a spectacle, to always be called into question, to always have to justify oneself?

So they try to escape. To close their eyes and forgot. But how can you escape?

It has been a long time since Sojourner Truth uttered “Ain’t I a Woman” in Akron, Ohio, since the suffrage movement, since the pool of blood outside of the Stonewall inn, since Spivak asked “Can the subaltern speak”, since Judith Butler published *Gender Trouble*, and quite literally changed the entire scene of queer writing, at least on this side of the Atlantic.

But in this contemporary milieu wherein supposedly every identity is celebrated, every form of existence is protected, every shackle is removed, we hear young women say, “I am not a feminist”, distancing themselves as if feminism is some kind of malaise; we hear 18-year-old young university students sitting in lecture halls scold, “feminists are just whining babies, you can do whatever you want now”; we hear African American women say,

"I believe women of every skin color should be recognized as beautiful. I am not talking about race. I am just talking about beauty". Young queer people hesitant: I don't want to be political; I just want to live my life.

But we forget that the reason why you can live your life today (while many others still could not), is precisely because people before us were "political", because people came together and brought things from the shields and shadows to the streets, to governmental buildings, to public attention, to make life possible for those who were so vulnerable that they could not risk putting themselves out there.

We just want to live, that is why we turn away from politics, hoping that politics can leave us alone. We dismiss politics. But politics haunts us. When your very existence disrupts the accepted rules of the world, your very existence is political.

Rosa Parks was just tired of giving up that late afternoon, on her way home from a long day of work. She was just tired of the everyday practice of racist violence that she was already fighting for. Then she changed the world.

To live means to be political.

Who Am I?

> We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge—and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves—how could it happen that we should ever find ourselves?...So we are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not comprehend ourselves, we have to misunderstand ourselves, for us the law "Each is furthest from himself" applies to all eternity—we are not "men of knowledge" with respect to ourselves.
>
> --Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

The dismissal of politics often takes place through a leveling the ground by equalizing every choice. The most common rhetoric is, be who you really are, choose yourself, do what you really want.

To be able to do that, I must have already known who I am and what I really want.

It is probably precisely because western liberal democracy has formally granted each individual the right to be "who you really are", the burden of being "who you really are" lies on the shoulders of each individual. No one is stopping you from doing anything right? Women can do whatever they want, be whoever they want. And if you are gay or lesbian, you can just choose to come out. The burden is on you, and every act fulfills a choice of the self. Everything is reduced to a disposition, a fixed attitude that helps one to act according to one's true desire.

People cheer those who *choose* to come out and reveal who they really are—all the ambiguities are gone, and they finally have the courage to face who they really are. It is as though the "closet" is the only thing that stops a queer person from being who he/she/sie really is. The closet is also conceived as an imaginary barrier that can be easily overcome through a single sovereign act, a courageous and truthful act. Sexuality is seen as a stable trait that defines a person. While you are always assumed to be heterosexual, you can always choose to come out, as whoever you are.

To some extent, this is also the rhetoric that contemporary LGBT (in contrast to the queer movement, which does not reduce sexuality to stable identity categories) champions. Sexuality becomes an individual possession, an essence of the self that persists through time and grounds one's existence. The logic is, if I say who I really am, I can thus *be,* or at least I would be able to ground my claims and struggles upon that stable identity.

Leave binary gender intact. Leave femininity and masculinity intact. Leave the heterosexual/homosexual binary intact. Leave the structure of family and kinship intact. Leave the structure of the closet intact.

Be who you really are, as long as the terms through which you define yourself are already determined for you beforehand.

Be who you really are, even though that might lead to vulnerability, attack, homelessness, unemployment, and even death.

Be who you really are, even though you might feel lost, conflicted, unequivocal—you are interpellated, enjoined, to be yourself.

What about norms? Structures? Power relations? Context? History?

What about when the existing norms do not capture my conflicting and ambiguous ways of becoming?

What about when who I am inflicts pain, violence, and deprivation of other peoples' ways of exiting?

What about when I cannot piece together fragmented and vague memories of the past into a coherent self?

Could it be, perhaps, like what Nietzsche suggests, that "we are unknown to ourselves?"

Who am I, without the norms that make me intelligible? Who am I, without you, through which I can see and understand myself?

From the Politics of the Self to the Politics of Norms

> We come into the world on the condition that the social world is already there, laying the groundwork for us. This implies that I cannot persist without norms of recognition that support my persistence: the sense of possibility pertaining to me must first be imagined from somewhere else before I can begin to imagine myself. My reflectivity is not only socially mediated, but socially constituted. I cannot be who I am without drawing upon the sociality of norms that precede that exceed me.
>
> --Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*

The rhetoric of the self truly levels the grounds and shows a utopian picture of the world. According to this rhetoric, *choosing* to be a rich housewife is just the same as choosing to be a female academic in an environment that is hostile to women; *choosing* to make beauty videos on Youtube for a living must be the same for a white middle class

attractive girl as for a Latino man; choosing to "come out" is the same for a white middle class lawyer as for a black transgendered man, or an indigenous person living in severe poverty.

Maybe instead of asking who you really are, we need to step back and ask, what norms ground your existence, make you intelligible, and thus make it possible for you to be? Maybe we need to ask, how do you come to know yourself in relation to others and the broader social world that you are inevitably situated in? What kinds of lives are foreclosed, and how can we make them *be*?

This thesis is an attempt at interrogating our relations to norms. It neither focuses solely on the receiving end of norms, namely the subjects, nor seeks to only give an account of the ways in which norms function. Rather, it is an inquiry of their relation—how they engage with each other, influence each other, and change each other. I focus specifically on the influence of norms on the body, as I concur with Foucault and Butler that modern power has become increasingly corporeal, to the extent that norms constitute the body and violently manage, intersect and normalize the body. The violence of norms is naturalized, invisible and internal to our being-in-the-world. The overall project of my thesis, therefore, is to expose normative violence, critique it, and propose ways to undo them by resignifying norms.

In chapter one I explore normative violence inherited in identity categories by examining the ways in which the category of women is constructed. I provide a thorough reading of *The Second Sex*, one of the most influential feminist texts of the 20th century, and demonstrate that although de Beauvoir intends to critique patriarchal power by giving an account of the women, she nonetheless reifies the category thus produces abjections and exclusions. Engaging with Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, I show that identity categories are violently exclusionary. In chapter two I follow this line of critique and give a comprehensive reading of Foucault's account of the relation between power and the

body, showing the ways in which power constitutes the body and the subject by discursively constructing the notion of "sex".

Engaging feminist critique of Foucault's account of pleasure, which Foucault contends to be the resistance force of power, I argue that Foucault's account of pleasure problematically posits pleasure as a prediscursive force that can be taken up by the subject to care for itself and disrupt power. I argue that such a romanticized account of pleasure misses the point that some kinds of pleasure are constituted and enacted within relations of domination, and as a result produce violent consequences at the expenses of some bodies. The authentic self that is supposed to use pleasure to care for itself thus contains within its formation normative violence that has to be exposed and addressed. To do so requires us to recognize the fundamentally relational and situational character of the self and the subject.

In chapter three I bring Foucault and Merleau-Ponty into conversation, and I argue that pleasure and sexuality in general have to be situated not only within relations of power, but also within the intersubjective world. I engage with feminist and queer interpretations of Merleau-Ponty to argue that gender and sexuality are temporally constituted within particular historical and cultural contexts. In other words, norms that govern gender and sexuality are embodied through time and intrinsic to bodies-in-the-world, as well as embedded in the anonymous collectivity within which we are inevitably situated. The violence of norms normalizes and manages bodies, and at the same time punishes some bodies by rendering them unintelligible and unlivable. The body pathologized and unintelligible is unable to challenge the background violence by itself, because it is the norms that govern the intelligibility of the body, rendering it unlivable in the first place. The norms themselves have to be challenged, critiqued and resignified so that more bodies can be made intelligible. Such resistance is an intersubjective endeavor, a collective creation of meaning, and a politics of livability.

Theorizing Normative Violence

> As theory interprets the world, it fabricates that world; as it names desire, it gives reason and voice to desire and thus fashions a new order of desire; as it codifies meaning, it composes meaning. Theory's most important political offering is this opening of a breathing space between the world of common meanings and the world of alternative ones, a space of potential renewal for thought, desire, and action. And it is this that we sacrifice in capitulating to the demand that theory reveal truth, deliver applications, or solve each of the problems it defines.
>
> --Wendy Brown, "At the Edge"

> Theory, as the Greek *theoria* powerfully expresses, is a way of seeing: it is a way of grasping the world, of configuring it, of remaking it. Theory is not something that one would oppose to 'practice', since theory is precisely something that one practices. Theory is therefore always a way of doing. One of things that theory does is to clarify concepts, to provide a different language through which one finds meaning in the world around us.
>
> —Samuel Chambers, *The Queer Politics of Television*

Try to have a political argument on the Internet. It almost always ends in, if you are not happy with X, why don't you just go and do something about it?

What is implied is that talking, or theorizing, or discussing the problem, is useless. Theory and practice are often conceived as separate entities. Theory has to be applied in practice, or else theory is just useless.

My understanding of theory rests upon the belief that this binary has to be disrupted. Theory is itself a way of practice, and vice-versa. As Brown and Chambers acutely put, theory enables us to see things that we were unable to see before, helps us to question things that we took for granted before, and questions closures, norms, and categories that upon which grand narratives are built, based on which policies are issued, and according to which politics is operating.

I asked more questions that I answered in this thesis—this might suggest an intellectual failure, but I suppose that it is more important to problematize the common and the usual, and probe possibilities that are incalculable and thus beyond our imagination. It is my way of reflecting on the contemporary political scene, particularly focusing on the ways

in which “the subalterns”—specifically women and queer people—search for themselves and speak for themselves.

Although in chapter three I attempt to spell out a provisional theory of resistance, bringing insights from phenomenology and post-structuralism, I believe that it is impossible to articulate a full-fledged theory of resistance. Resistance always produces incalculable and unpredictable effects (and we have certainly witnessed the violence consequences of setting strict agendas and rules of resistance); but more importantly, because I see theorizing itself as a way of resistance. A theory of normative violence is thus an act of resisting normative violence. When we start to see how normative violence operates, we can start to live it differently. I do not apply Foucault, Derrida, Butler and Merleau-Ponty’s theory to address normative violence; rather, I contend that their theories help us to see normative violence in illuminating ways. Also, a theory of violence elicit us to always step back and see what we have done, to examine whether our effort to undo normative violence has generated new forms of violence and closure.

And that, I allege, is the immensely important and necessary task that a theory of resistance is able to undertake.

Chapter One:

Deconstruct the Female Body and the Category of Women

> But here is where Butler's focus on the symbolic, her proud neglect of the material side of life, becomes a fatal blindness. For women who are hungry, illiterate, disenfranchised, beaten, raped, it is not sexy or liberating to reenact, however parodically, the conditions of hunger, illiteracy, disenfranchisement, beating, and rape. Such women prefer food, schools, votes, and the integrity of their bodies. I see no reason to believe that they long sadomasochistically for a return to the bad state.
> -- Martha Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody"

> I grew up understanding something of the *violence of gender norms*: an uncle incarcerated for his anatomically anomalous body, deprived of family and friends, living out his days in an "institute" in the Kansas prairies; gay cousins forced to leave their homes because of their sexuality, real and imagined; my own tempestuous coming out at the age of 16; and a subsequent adult landscape of lost jobs, lovers, and homes…It was difficult to bring this violence into view precisely because gender was so taken for granted at the same time that it was violently policed.
> --Judith Butler, 1999 Preface to *Gender Trouble* (Italics added)

Introduction

What are we talking about when we talk about violence, especially bodily violence? The two accounts of violence coming from two feminists I quoted at the beginning of this chapter show two very different understandings of violence. For Nussbaum, violence is "the conditions of hunger, illiteracy, disenfranchisement, beating, and rape" exerted on a category of people who are called "women". Whereas for Butler, the target of Nussbaum's critique, violence primarily comes from "gender norms", norms that govern the discrete alignment between the sexed body, gender, and sexuality. These norms demand absolute conformity and deliver punitive consequences to those who fail to comply by rendering them unintelligible and unlivable. These two different conceptualizations of violence, as a result, lead to two drastically different kinds of feminist politics: Nussbaum sees feminist politics as a "practical struggle" that seeks to "achieve justice and equality for women." Butler, never having dismissed the importance of these concrete struggles, is more concerned with exclusion and pathologization created by gender norms and she is thus very suspicious of the

very category of women. In fact, problematizing and destabilizing the category of women is one of the most important themes running through Butler's groundbreaking work, *Gender Trouble*. Nussbaum's understanding of violence and feminist struggle reflects the common understanding of violence as the concrete physical force imposed on already formed bodies, and in this case on women's bodies. Subjects who suffer from physical harm seem to have a clear and transparent understanding of what they suffer and recognize these acts as instances of violation. The body has a real materiality that grounds any struggle waged against any violation of it. Violence is conceived as an external force that is ontologically distinct from the body. It is conceived as a physical force that is imposed on the material body. At the same time, because one's bodily reality seems so undeniable, it is also taken for granted that all bodily injury and harm will immediately be identified and addressed.

However, there is another form of violence, a more fundamental, primary, and also more invisible form of violence: the violence of norms. The violence of norms seems to be involved in the very process of becoming a body, and it also governs the intelligibility and reality of bodies. Normative violence thus necessarily creates compulsory correction and produces bodies that do not fit into discreet categories. But somehow, the violence of norms is seen as less consequential than violence exerts on intelligible bodies, perhaps because the latter is more visible and concrete, more "real". Nussbaum's utter dismissal and attack of Butler's theorization and politics, shows her inability to see and recognize the violence of norms.

So are there actually two distinct kinds of violence, and does critique of one of them have to be at cost of the other? What is at stake in this very important exchange between Nussbaum and Butler, which is a miniature of the disagreement between second-wave and third-wave feminism, is the way in which the relation between the body and violence is understood. Is violence a physical force exerting on already-formed, intelligible bodies with a

concrete materiality? Or is violence more fundamental than that—perhaps involved in the very process of body and identity formation? Is violence simply an illegitimately and unjustly exercised physical force that stands in stark opposition to power—as Nussbaum suggests, to overcome violence is for women to gain power-- which is often understood as abstract and non-physical? Or is the relation between violence and power more murky and complicated than that? In this chapter, I seek to uncover normative violence inherited in the very process of subject formation and identity formation. I argue that normative violence is not drastically distinct from physical harm; rather, normative violence is a more primary form of violence produced through the complex interplay of relations of power, and it further justifies physical harm. In other words, physical harm is the result, rather than synonym, of violence. Thus, in order to address physical harm and violation, it is pivotal to reveal and problematize normative violence. Although it might seem that stable identity categories such as "women" only describe a transparent fact, examination of normative violence shows the exclusion and pathlogization involved in the process of constructing identity categories such as the category of women.[1] Such exclusion and pathologization is often dismissed precisely because stable and clear-cut identity categories are seen as the only legitimate place to address violence. Therefore, being aware of normative violence will also help us to wage concrete struggles without producing more violence and marginalization.

Uncovering Normative Violence: Norms and the Body

> Through what exclusions has the feminist subject been constructed, and how do those excluded domains return to haunt the "integrity" and "unity" of the feminist "we"? And how is it that the very category, the subject, the "we", that is supposed to be presumed for the purpose of solidarity, produces the very factionalization it is supposed to quell? Do women want to become subjects on the model which requires and produces an anterior region of abjection, or must feminism become a process which is self-critical about the processes that produce and destabilize identity categories?

[1] I fully acknowledge that the category of women was constructed as an important means to channel political struggle. And I by no means intend to put forward an abstract and de-historicized critique. However, upon acknowledging the possible importance of such a stable

--Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'"

In this section I will show how conceptualizing the body as a natural and objective thing that we can know with certainty obscures normative violence.

What is the body? What is the relation between the body and the subject? We tend to assume that we *have* a body, a body that has undeniable reality because we can feel it, identify each part of it, *as if* the body is an object. And when something with the body goes wrong, we feel pain—an immediate, direct, private pain. And it is hard to convey such pain to others. When we go to the doctors or psychiatrists and they ask, what is wrong? Often times we do not know how to describe it. What kind of pain? Where do you feel it? How do you feel? The bodily experience becomes almost ineffable during such circumstances; we can describe symptoms—headache, abdominal pain, insomnia, vomiting, bloating, anxiety, but it is extremely hard or even impossible to describe exactly how we *feel*-- it escapes language, and seems to have a reality that is even more real than language—just because I cannot say it, does not mean I do not *feel* it. I feel my pain, and nobody else can understand it. Modern medicine and technological advancement can create all sorts of machines, tests, measures, to know what is wrong with me, and why I feel my pain. They examine my body *as if* it is an object whose reality and problems can be told by numbers and diagrams. But in these instances it becomes clear that my body is not an object, or at least not merely an object. Doctors and machines can never feel it the same way as I do, and my pain cannot ever be felt by others as how I experience it I have a feeling. I am the final and only authority of my feeling, and no one can deny my feeling because no one can feel exactly what I feel. You do not know how I feel -- even though you can try to understand as best as you can, or even realize you share my feeling or have common experience with me, you can only have mediated, and thus incomplete knowledge of my feeling. That is how we often talk about

something that is a bodily matter. If that is the case, is the body an utterly private entity, closed upon itself, being formed solely by sensations, feelings, emotions that are only available to the subject and are almost ineffable to others? Is embodied experience utterly private, transparent only to the subject and no one else?

The absolute certainty of bodily feeling and embodied experience, then, seem to have formed a closed regime of truth. It was, has, and is being used for radical politics that strives to affirm the reality of bodily oppression and domination, as well as to demonstrate that these issues are important politics issues. More specifically, in contemporary feminist and queer struggles, whether for rights of reproductive freedom, against sexual harassment, or against violence toward sexual minorities, claims and arguments have been built on affirmation of bodily autonomy, control over one's body, emphasis on protection of bodily boundary, through recourse to a bodily feeling and first-person experience. Articulation of feelings of violation, and experiences of violence and denial, make it clear that our bodies are in fact open to external and outside forces that are out of our control. Our bodies are open to caress, love, desire, compassion, but they are also subjected to arbitrary violence and violation, forces that come from elsewhere. Bodies are vulnerable. They exist in the midst of human relations that are out of our control. It cannot be denied that feminist and queer movements have already successfully called for policies and laws to be implanted and passed in order to address such vulnerability, by trying to make the most vulnerable less vulnerable, to emphasize bodily boundaries and autonomy, to affirm each body as an already formed independent entity, and to try to address vulnerability by overcoming it. The US Civil Rights Act of 1964[2] outlawed sexual harassment at work place for being a form of discrimination;[3] abortion has been decriminalized and allowed to perform in many countries across the world,

[2] H.R. 7152, 88th Congress. (1964).
[3] http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/harassment.cf

in other words, women have gained more control over their reproductive freedom. Various legislations against rape and domestic abuses have passed around the world.

These struggles can be categorized as what Nussbaum calls "practical struggles for women's empowerment" against violence. The physical nature of violence and physical effects of violence are emphasized and often used as legal evidence in these struggles. Here, again, we see how violence is understood as physical force imposed on already formed bodies, implicitly putting violence at the opposite of power, which is often taken as more abstract and less concrete. A quick examination of past and ongoing efforts to combat such violence reveals that they did appeal, and are still appealing to stable identity categories, such as women, homosexual, transsexual, indigenous peoples, etc. They have shown that physical harm does not have a transparent and unmediated nature. Rather, it relied on intersubjective recognition rooted in a stable identity category to become intelligible. The rise of identity politics since the 1960s follows this logic. For example the women's liberation movement in the 1960s, relies on a stable and clearly defined category called "women", whose reality is primarily a bodily reality that is undeniable, to make a case against bodily injury, limitation and oppression. It follows that to claim the reality and certainty of women is to recognize the oppression they have undergone, and to affirm that bodily harm has taken place. The category of women is posited as expressive and descriptive, capturing the common reality of a group of people called women. This is the claim that predominated the women's liberation movement in the 1960s, accompanied by the rise of second wave feminism. Feminist theorists such as Catharine McKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, Iris Young, and Martha Nussbaum, who by no means completely agree with each other, nonetheless all conceive the category "women" as a meaningful and real category, as the starting point of feminist critique. For them, feminist struggles are struggles of "women,"[4] which refer to a material certainty—that

[4] http://perso.uclouvain.be/mylene.botbol/Recherche/GenreBioethique/Nussbaum_NRO.htm

there is a material thing called the female body. The distinction between sex and gender is to be used to ground the ultimate reality of the female body and violence it suffers: the female body is the material reality, it is pure, transparent, untainted, whereas gender is socially constructed, subjected to social forces, oppressive power structures, and norms outside of oneself. Gender might be an imaginary fabrication, but ultimately there exists an undeniable reality of the material body. The sexed female body and female embodied experience of menstruation, puberty, loss of virginity, marriage (being a housewife), pregnancy, giving birth,[5] are regarded as the absolute foundation of feminism. Violence is seen as exerting on the female body. Hence violence imposed on the female body is real too. It is in the name of the female body that oppressive violence can be fought and reality can be restored.

Similarly, gay movements, and later on LGBT movements (in contrast to queer movements) started in the 1960s engage in a similar discourse to combat such violence. They tend to appeal to an innate feeling of being gay in order to affirm the reality of their existence. Caught in a falsely constructed binary of nature or choice conditioned by a long history of denial, violence and erasure, in order to affirm the lived reality of their experience, discourses such as "I was born gay/lesbian" or "I felt I was trapped in the wrong body" dominate contemporary queer movements.[6] This view is also reflected and reinforced in popular cultural productions, which constantly characterize queer sexuality as the basis of discreet identity categories in TV shows and movies.[7] Here "gay", "lesbian", "transgender" etc., are understood as already constituted subject positions that ground physical harm.

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[5] See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience*.
[6] Examples can be found http://www.advocate.com/ex-gay-therapy/2015/02/18/gay-man-ex-gay-billboards-counter-ad-i-was-born-gay;
[7] For examples, in the Oscar-winning movie *Milk*, which tells the story of the first openly gay person who was elected public office in California, Milk addresses his sexuality to his fellow gay men as "who we really are"; in popular ABC TV show *Scandal,* in an episode where a war-hero-turned-public speaker was found out to be gay but refuses to admit it due to his concerns of causing public backlash, the main character, Olivia Pope tries to convince him to admit that being gay is "who you really are".

However, Chambers reminds us that the so-called "origin" of the modern gay liberation starts "in the pools of blood outside the Stonewall Inn."[8] Such resistance, instead of addressing transparent physical harm imposed on already formed subjects, in fact "transformed the invisible normative violence practiced everyday against non-normative sexualities into an act of violence in the intuitive sense of force wielded by one subject against another."[9] In other words, normative violence has to be exposed and its everyday mundane practice has to be disrupted for queer lives to become livable. LGBT movements waged through the disruption of normative violence are the means through which space of livability can be created. On the other hand, movements waged in the name of authenticity and transparent bodily feeling, while having a similar goal, risk further covering and strengthening existing oppressive norms and power relations. I analyze this rhetoric and its theoretical and political implications in my second chapter.

It is understandable, however, that why a discourse appeals to an innate feeling becomes the dominant discourse of queer movement today, as queer people living in North America today still are subjected to severe violence and have very high suicidal rates. Here are just a few examples: in 2002, Gwen Araujo, a trans teenage woman, was brutally killed by four men in California;[10] in 2012, Raymond Taavel was killed in Nova Scotia for being gay;[11] January Marie Lapuz was stabbed at her home in British Columbia for being a trans woman in 2013;[12] Sumaya Ysl was found dead in her home in Toronto with the cause of her

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[8] Samuel Chambers, "Normative Violence after 9/11: Rereading the Politics of *Gender Trouble*," 2003. 52.

[9] Ibid, 52.

[10] http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/One-year-since-transgender-teen-s-death-Gwen-2584451.php

[11] http://www.thecoast.ca/RealityBites/archives/2012/04/17/raymond-taavel-killed-on-gottingen-street

[12] http://www.dailyxtra.com/vancouver/news-and-ideas/news/trans-woman-killed-in-new-west-home-3525

death still unknown;[13] Amber Monroe was shot in Detroit, marking her the 12th victim of trans women of color in the United States in 2015.[14] Other than fatal violence, queer suicide rates are also skyrocketing. Facing such an unbearable situation, contemporary queer movements have centered on the affirmation of the lived experience of queer people. Sexuality is understood in such utterance as an innate feeling that is only accessible to the sexual subject. By claiming a private and authentic self that is enclosed upon itself, the subject forms an enclosed regime of truth upon itself that is impossible for anyone else to intervene or disrupt. Such discourse, of course, is a response to a long history of violence, oppression, and erasure of queer people and queer experiences in heteronormative discourse and society. When sociality and political reality is completely denied to queer people, recourse to an inner self becomes the last, yet supposedly the strongest affirmation of their reality. As long as the innate feeling is felt as unmediated and transparent, how can it be denied? And if it cannot be, it follows that a space of liveability will be created so that such feeling can have a reality and affirm its existence in the world.

What this view suggests is that non-heterosexual sexuality can be traced back to a bodily feeling that arises from the inner self; it comes from within oneself and thus is only accessible to the subject who feels it. It is as though by recourse to an inner, authentic self, by claiming a bodily boundary that is enclosed upon itself, and by appealing to a bodily feeling, violence, injury, violation will stop happening. LGBT people, too, claim that there is material body that such feeling arises from, and that body is their last resort to reality. LGBT experience of gender and sexuality is sought to be affirmed through recourse to the natural, innate, transparent feeling. By claiming that "I was born like" or "I always felt like", people

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[13] http://www.advocate.com/politics/transgender/2015/02/25/toronto-police-trans-woman-colors-death-was-not-homicide

[14] https://www.autostraddle.com/amber-monroe-becomes-the-12-twoc-murdered-in-the-us-this-year-we-must-sayhername-done-301859/

not only champion the view of biological determinism but also claim that their bodily experience is enclosed within themselves. The absolute authority to claim their gender and sexuality valid rests with, and only with, the queer subject. On this ground people who reduce queer sexuality to stable identity categories such as "gay" and "lesbian" reject the social constructivist view of gender and sexuality, arguing that "real life" gender and sexuality are grounded on the "true" materiality of the body. Writers such as Leslie Feinberg, Jamison Green, Jay Prosser, Jason Cromwell, just to name a few, as Gayle Salamon argues, construct a stark opposition between materiality of the body and social construction theory, viewing the latter as "linguistic abstraction" and "a force whose purpose is to limit the ability of transpeople to self-define or their claims to an 'authentic' embodiment or the very possibility of transgenderism itself."[15]

It might seem that the materiality of the body is simple and definite. Bodily injuries such as sexual harassment, rape, and violence against sexual minorities are widely acknowledged as instances of injustices and oppression and thus need to be addressed solely because of their transparent bodily nature. Discomfort, anxiety caused obsessive symptoms, blood, wounds, ruptures, beating, or even, death, are just there, so concrete, so direct, and evoking; they can be seen, felt, touched. The body is real, and therefore bodily feelings are real and need to be respected.

Normative Violence and Identity Categories

While the distinction between power and violence is widely held, I concur with the following argument Foucault spells out in *Psychiatric Power:*

> "When in fact we speak of violence, and this is what bothers me about the notion, we always have in mind a kind of a connotation of physical power, of an unregulated, passionate power, an unbridled power, if I can put it like that. This notion seems to me to be dangerous because, on the one hand, picking out a power that is physical, unregulated, etcetera, allows one to think that good power, or just simply

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15 Salamon, Gayle. *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2010. Print. 74-75.

> power, power not permeated by violence, is not physical power. It seems to be rather than what is essential in all power is that ultimately its point of application is always the body. All power is physical and there is a direct connection between the body and political power."[16]

There are two major points derived from this passage that are worth scrutiny. First of all, Foucault acutely discerns that the distinction between violence and power is not as clear as it seems. Is violence only a form of physical harm that is imposed on the material body understood to be an object? As Judith Butler has shown through her elaboration of the notion of "normative violence", violence is involved in the very process that the body is formed and the subject is constituted in the first place, primarily through categorization of bodies and establishment of stable identity categories based on bodily reality and bodily difference. I problematize the notion of the body as an already formed object, which is taken up as the absolute basis of an identity. Engaging with Derridian deconstruction and Foucauldian genealogical critique, I argue that establishing and maintaining identity categories is fundamentally violently exclusionary in the sense that identity categories not only are constructed on regulatory ideals that violently limit the ways in which the body can be materialized, but also violently render bodies that do not fit in those norms unintelligible. Physical harm is but only one form of violence, while the intense violence inherent in the establishment and maintenance of identity categories is mostly concealed and rendered invisible. Normative violence may include physical harm imposed on concrete bodies, if we think about homophobic, transphobic, islamphobic violence, sexual assault, domestic violence, missing and murdering of indigenous women in Canada and mass incarceration of African Americans, just to give a few examples. Samuel Chambers argues convincingly that normative violence is a primary violence that may enable secondary violence, which we

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[16] Michel Foucault. *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the College de France 1973-1974*. Edited by Jacques Lagrange. Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Picador. 2003. Print. 14.

typically think of as physical injury; and at the same time, it might erase such violence by naturalizing it.[17]

Chambers emphasizes that "normative violence done 'before' everyday violence makes such everyday violence invisible, illegible, non-existent."[18] Normative violence, in other words, legitimizes and naturalizes physical harm done to some people. The way in which it justifies some kinds of harm shows that normative violence itself, rather than being the absolute opposite of power, is itself invested by power relations. And in order to fight the oppressive reality of exclusion, pathologization, and systematic harm, the important political task here is to reveal the ways in which normative violence operates in justifying such practices, and as a result, "to make life possible"[19].

If we think about how not long ago these forms of systematic violence were completely missing from any public attention and are only recently made into public discourse as serious political problems, despite the intense level of physical harm involved, it should be clear that contrary to the common belief that harm and injury are transparent and obvious, an injury has to first be recognized as an injury to be seen and understood. Normative violence needs to be exposed, acknowledged and addressed. As Chambers points out in his reading of *Of Grammatology* and *Gender Trouble*, this is the task that theorists of pursue. Foucault's project of genealogical critique also serves the similar purpose. Foucault, Derrida, and Butler all seek to show that before physical harm takes place, there is a more fundamental violence accompanying it that gives rise to such acts and often times naturalizes them. Their efforts to denaturalize and deconstruct reified notions of sex, gender and

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[17] Chambers 2003, 49.
[18] Ibid, 49.
[19] Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge. 1999. xx.

sexuality, as Chambers writes, serve "the political end of resisting and countering normative violence"[20].

Moreover, contrary to the common belief that bodily injury is a private matter, which serves as the absolute basis of political critique, the recognition of normative violence is an intersubjective endeavor that takes occurrences of systematic violence as social and political problems. It is established not on the transparence of bodily harm but on the intelligibility of a clearly identifiable identity.

This supposedly transparent category of women, however, nonetheless has been challenged by what is commonly referred to as third wave feminism, especially post-structuralist feminism. Third wave feminists such as Sandra Bartky, Susan Bordo, and Judith Butler argue that the category of women is a discursive construction rather than a natural phenomenon. The establishment of a discrete identity category such as "women" necessarily entails exclusionary violence to bodies that are not perfectly in line with the ideals of femininity. As a result, the supposedly generalized account of the oppressive reality of "women" does not capture the reality of many women and renders them more invisible. This form of violence is what I call "normative violence", the violence of norms that regulate and sustain unified identity categories. In the first chapter I will uncover the ways in which feminism, in its second-wave form being defined as a theory of "women" and for "women", exerts normative violence by being a regulatory ideal of bodies and an identity category established by exclusion. I attempt to uncover normative violence inherent in discourse and discursive norms that not only constitute the subject but also govern its intelligibility. Normative violence makes its mundane presence in the process of subject formation when the subject embodies discursive norms, in which case resembles what Foucault calls "disciplinary power"; and it becomes hyperbolic when a body fails to comply with existing norms and fails

[20] Chambers 2003, 52.

to fit in a discrete gender category. Normative violence then renders the body utterly unintelligible and seeks to exclude, pathologize and normalize it.

We might overlook the fact that for injuries to be seen at all, people who suffer from them have to be recognized as people first of all, and the injury that directed at them has to be *named,* and assumes a social meaning. And such recognition is intersubjective. As Sara Ahmed argues in "The Contingency of Pain" that "how we experience pain involves the attribution of meaning through experience, as well as associations between different kinds of negative or aversive feelings."[21] Moreover, an injury has to be recognized as an injury in order to be addressed as a political issue. For example, when unwanted sexual advancement and coercion takes place, we immediately know that it is sexual harassment, an act that needs to be addressed. The bodily experience of being violated seems so transparent and direct that it obviates all explanations. It thus might seem shocking that the very term "sexual harassment" was only coined sixty years ago, during the women's liberation movement in the US. An active member in the movement and a journalist, Susan Brownmiller powerfully recorded the historical context and moment when the term was coined:

> Carmita Wood, age forty-four, born and raised in the apple orchard region of Lake Cayuga, and the sole support of two of her children, had worked for eight years in Cornell's department of nuclear physics, advancing from lab assistant to a desk job handling administrative chores. Wood did not know why she had been singled out, or indeed if she had been singled out, but a distinguished professor seemed unable to keep his hands off her. As Wood told the story, the eminent man would jiggle his crotch when he stood near her desk and looked at his mail, or he'd deliberately brush against her breasts while reaching for some papers. One night as the lab workers were leaving their annual Christmas party, he cornered her in the elevator and planted some unwanted kisses on her mouth. After the Christmas party incident, Carmita Wood went out of her way to use the stairs in the lab building in order to avoid a repeat encounter, but the stress of the furtive molestations and her efforts to keep the scientist at a distance while maintaining cordial relations with his wife, whom she liked, brought on a host of physical symptoms. Wood developed chronic back and neck pains. Her right thumb tingled and grew numb. She requested a transfer to another department, and when it didn't come through, she quit. She walked out the door and went to Florida for some rest and recuperation. Upon her return she applied for unemployment insurance. When the claims investigator asked why she had left her job after eight years, Wood

[21] Ahmed 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2004. 23.

> was at a loss to describe the hateful episodes. She was ashamed and embarrassed. Under prodding—the blank on the form needed to be filled in—she answered that her reasons had been personal. Her claim for unemployment benefits was denied. 'Lin's students had been talking in her seminar about the unwanted sexual advances they'd encountered on their summer jobs,' Sauvigne relates. 'And then Carmita Wood comes in and tells Lin her story. We realized that to a person, every one of us—the women on staff, Carmita, the students—had had an experience like this at some point, you know? And none of us had ever told anyone before. It was one of those click, aha! moments, a profound revelation.' … Meyer located two feminist lawyers in Syracuse, Susan Horn and Maurie Heins, to take on Carmita Wood's unemployment insurance appeal. 'And then …' Sauvigne reports 'we decided that we also had to hold a speak-out in order to break the silence about this.' The 'this' they were going to break the silence about had no name. 'Eight of us were sitting in an office of Human Affairs,' Sauvigne remembers, 'brainstorming about what we were going to write on the posters for our speak-out. We were referring to it as 'sexual intimidation,' 'sexual coercion,' 'sexual exploitation on the job.' None of those names seemed quite right. We wanted something that embraced a whole range of subtle and unsubtle persistent behaviors. Somebody came up with 'harassment.' Sexual harassment! Instantly we agreed. That's what it was'.[22]

What this powerful account discloses, is that even the most bodily matter, the most direct bodily harm, requires a discourse to be made intelligible, to be understood, and to become recognized as an injury. Injury also has to be situated in a history to become a political claim. In fact throughout history, bodily harm inflicted upon sexual minorities, sex workers, racial minorities, just to name a few, were not recognized as injuries and dismissed. The task of bringing injuries into recognition by no means has been carried out by the subject alone, and most likely could not be. It is rather a political project that has to be brought forward collectively. While Brownmiller has no intention to argue for a discursive account of experience, her account nonetheless powerfully reveals that experience may not be intelligible even to the person who experiences it firsthand. The concrete experience of violation is not merely an utterly private and bodily issue. It is also more importantly, a discursive matter that requires language to be made possible to understand even for the subject itself. Before the term "sexual harassment" was coined, people (mostly women) who were harassed would not even know that they had been harassed; they felt they have been

[22] Brownmiller, Susan. *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution*.

wronged, but could not make sense of it. And if they tried to complain, their grievance was seen as inconsequential under sexist norms. In other words, sexual harassment was simply not seen as a political issue that needed to be addressed.

Feelings of women who have been sexually harassed have to be mediated through language and discussion to be made intelligible even for themselves. In other words, our knowledge about our own material body is mediated. Similarly, queer people might feel like they were born gay, but they still need a language to enable them to form a queer subjectivity, which is a relation to themselves, to understand and articulate their experiences, to become queer, and to be understood intersubjectively. The ironic fact is that when they are denying that their sexuality is influenced by social forces or discourse, they are themselves engaging in a discourse to articulate their experience, a discourse that has a particular history and serves a particular political purpose -- to affirm their lived experience. This shows that even the most innate feeling has a close relation to discourse. Discourse by no means determines *how* we feel, but it names *what* we feel, and more fundamentally, it constitutes how we come to feel in this or that particular way. Just as discourse has a history, bodily feeling also does. At the same time, feminist and queer accounts of feeling and lived experience do capture a very crucial point about subjectivity: even though it is constituted by discourse, it exceeds discourse and contains within it the potential possibility of resisting and resignifying discourse.

If the body is not a given materiality, a transparent entity of which the subject has absolute and unmediated knowledge, then what is it? What is the relation between the subject and the body, the body and discourse, and discourse and the subject? How to affirm lived experience without denying its relation to discourse? How to confirm that lived experience does contain with it a resistance force that exceeds discourse, and to understand the subject as neither fully enclosed upon itself nor fully determined by discourse or reducible to discourse?

In the following chapters I will put Simone de Beauvoir, Foucault, Butler and Merleau-Ponty in conversation. Their different conceptualizations of the body should help us better understand the basic question, what is the body.

De Beauvoir's Situated Body

> "Woman is the Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow-White, she who receives and submits. In song and story the young man is seen departing adventurously in search of woman; he slays the dragon, he battles giants; she is locked in a tower, a palace, a garden, a cave, she is chained to a rock, a captive, sound asleep: she waits.
>
> Un Jour mon prince viendra…Some day he'll come along, the man I love—the words of popular songs fill her with dreams of patience and of hope."
>
> -- de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Although de Beauvoir was not a self-proclaimed feminist philosopher, her works have been widely regarded as the foundation of second wave feminism. She discusses the lived female body in situation. Her account can be read as a detailed discussion of violence exerted by the existential situation on the female body, Although her famous saying "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"[23] (On ne naît pas femme: on ne devient.) has been repeatedly cited by later feminists to argue for the distinction between sex and gender, her account of the lived body does not really support such a clear distinction. This statement has been taken out of its context and its meaning has been distorted and simplified. De Beauvoir argues that the subjectivity is embodied and situated, while at the same time rejects the biological determinist view. She argues that a woman is not a given fact but a process of becoming. Biology and biological sex do not determine a woman; rather, situation and social forces interacts with biology to produce it. The female body alone does not make someone a woman; it does not constitute a meaningful reality on its own, as "No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society".[24] It is only through the active interpretation of bodily phenomenon that a woman is produced. In her existential phenomenology, the body is the neutral medium through which

[23] De Beauvoir, 267.
[24] Ibid, 267.

the subject experiences the world. For her the body is neutral, in the sense that it does not signify superiority or inferiority; "In girls as in boys the body is first of all the radiation of a subjectivity, the instrument that makes possible the comprehension of the world… The dramas of birth and of weaning unfold after the same fashion for nurslings of both sexes; these have the same interests and the same pleasures."[25] This account can be read as critique of the very disembodiment of the abstract masculine epistemological subject, as Butler suggests.[26] Although de Beauvoir takes the body as a real entity, in her account it alone does not have any meaning, it is simply a neutral medium awaiting cultural and social inscriptions. It only later on comes to signify existential freedom or hindrance because of situation. She describes the female body that is lived through various stages of its life—childhood, motherhood, social life, maturity and old age, arguing that "it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature."[27] Although she still leaves the body as a biologically formed object and somewhat still preserves the mind/body dualism, de Beauvoir's account still challenges the ways in which we conceive subjectivity by showing that subjectivity is embodied and situated. On the other hand, the body only assumes meaning and becomes legible through cultural and social interpretation. She thus challenges the reified meaning of the female body and destabilizes the connection between the female body on the one hand, and woman's behavior and practice on the other hand, suggesting that the latter can become otherwise if the fundamental existential situation is changed.

By arguing that "it is only through existence that the facts are manifest"[28], she provides a thoroughly descriptive account of the ways in which female body is lived in situation through different stages of her life. Her account can be read as an attempt to demonstrate that situation, culture, and social forces actively interpret bodily matters and

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[25] De Beauvoir, 267.
[26] Butler 1990, 16.
[27] De Beauvoir, 267.
[28] Ibid, 390.

assign meanings to them. The examples of bodily phenomena such as menstruation, pregnancy, and puberty she raises throughout *the Second Sex* and the detailed descriptions she gives about them demonstrate that bodily matters are not only understood and mediated through language, but also discursively constructed. They are neither natural nor unmediated. Their meanings are not defined by subjects who experience them but by larger social forces that are not within their control. Sex is interpreted by gender, and the sexed female body is interpreted and made culturally meaningful by virtue of being situated. It can thus be argued that rather than upholding the strict distinction between sex and gender, de Beauvoir actually shows that sex is already gendered, an account that anticipates Butler's later well-pronounced collapse between sex and gender.

Rather than giving a normative account of how the female body is lived, de Beauvoir attempts to critique the ways in which the female body is restrained by its existential situation and advocates for a change of situation that allows women to no longer live in limitation, shame and horror. One's embodied situation cannot be transcended, as it is through which the subject experiences the world and exists for the world and others. But it can be changed so that different meanings about bodily phenomenon can emerge. She explicitly states that "the varieties of behavior reported are not dictated to woman by her hormones nor predetermined in the structural of the female brain: they are shaped as in a mold by her situation."[29] Instead of saying that the female body is essentially different and has distinct and stable characteristics, de Beauvoir presents the ways in which woman is lived in situation within which her bodily phenomenon is seen as signs of her inferiority and incapacity, and her body as a hindrance that prevents her from acting and self-actualization.

[29] De Beauvoir, 597.

De Beauvoir argues that the reality of woman having ovaries and a uterus "imprisons her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature"[30] is the result of the overall situation. As early as in childhood, if a girl seems to be already sexually determined, that is not because "mysterious instincts directly doom her to passivity, coquetry, maternity" but because "the influence of others upon the child is factor almost from the start, and thus she is indoctrinated with her vocation from her earliest years."[31] She is always given a doll and led to identify with the beautiful and passive object fully, and as a result becomes passive and aspires to be beautiful herself;[32] her lack of penis is initially just a neutral difference that only later on becomes a sign of her inferiority when she learns the significant social meaning and privilege given to the organ;[33] she feels that her parents treat her male siblings with more esteem and seriousness.[34] The children's books, mythology, stories, tales she reads "all reflect the myths born of the pride and the desires of men";[35] she learns that all important events take place through the agency of men, and reality confirms such narrative,[36] to the extent that "everything invites her to abandon herself in daydreams to men's arms in order to be transported into a heaven of glory;"[37] so she "learns that to be happy she must be loved; to be loved she must await love's coming."[38] Later on in puberty, with the change of her body, she seeks to revolt and experiences turbulence; she feels that "her body is getting away from her, it is no longer the straightforward expression of her individuality; it becomes foreign to her; and at the same time she becomes for others a thing;"[39] she feels insecure

[30] Ibid, xxvii.
[31] De Beauvoir, 268.
[32] Ibid, 278;
[33] Ibid, 280;
[34] Ibid, 286;
[35] Ibid, 288;
[36] Ibid, 289;
[37] Ibid, 291
[38] Ibid, 291.
[39] Ibid, 308.

about her appearance, aspires to be thin, out of the fear of not being attractive to men.[40] De Beauvoir notes that puberty has drastically different meaning for the two sexes: boys, although also feel embarrassed about their bodies, "proudly project toward manhood the moment of their development", whereas "the little girl…In order to change into a grown-up person, must be confined within the limits imposed upon her by her femininity".[41] This difference, according to de Beauvoir, cannot be attributed to biology or nature, but rather is produced by social contexts that privilege the penis and regard menstruation as "a curse".[42] Experiences of menstruation as signs of girls' inferiority are produced by the social context.

For de Beauvoir, a girl's early education makes her passive, shameful, and timid. And the cultivated and learned passivity, shame and timidity are in turn seen as the natural traits of femininity, which further justify the continuation of such education. The woman, in the abstract sense, is thus locked in her femininity, and must accept the role that has been assigned to her by society as her destiny. She "does not think herself responsible for her future; she sees no use in demanding much of herself since her lot in the end will not depend on her own efforts."[43] In general, "to be feminine is to appear weak, futile, docile."[44] She has been determined since, and she only has one goal: to get married, be a wife and mother, and carry out the perfection of femininity. The most successful education makes her feel what she has learned is what she innately desires. There is thus little sense in appealing to innate feeling in combating normative violence exerted on women, as such feeling is always produced by social forces and mediated through interpretation. It acquires meaning and significance in social context, and the most intense and private feeling one feels is in fact the product of situation and social forces at large.

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[40] Ibid, 309;
[41] De Beauvoir, 315.
[42] Ibid, 315.
[43] Ibid, 335.
[44] Ibid, 336.

By thoroughly and exhaustively describing the ways in which the female body lives in situation in different stages of her life, de Beauvoir highlights the need to change the situation that condemns women to immanence and renders them unfree. It is the situation, not the female body itself that restrains women from acting and self-actualization. It might seem that de Beauvoir proposes that the overcoming of the female body will grant radical existential freedom and universality to woman, but a closer reading reveals that she is rather emphasizing the urgency of changing the situation. In her account, the situation at large should be changed so that female body can be freed. Situation, as the ensemble of power, knowledge, social forces and norms, and cultural meanings, etc, is a repressive site that hinders women's self-actualization and condemns them to immanence. The social reality as she sees is that women are in situation, and men are not. Man is free (in its singular form).

According to de Beauvoir, situation represses women, reifies them, determines their existence and the meanings of their lives without their own input, thus makes them unable to achieve what they could have, to the extent that "there is a contradiction between her status as a real human being and her vocation as a female."[45] They are designated to behave in certain ways, look certain ways, and to desire and do certain things. Being otherwise brings shame and pathologization to her life. Power relations and social forces are characterized by de Beauvoir as repressive. They are imposed on the female body and induce horror and shame. She conceives the sexed body as a passive medium upon which subjection takes place and cultural inscription occurs. It is already a fixed entity whose experience can be interpreted differently according to different discourses and frames of norms, even though she at the same time maintains that the natural body is inapprehensible. Thus, it is implied that if situation changes and the ways in which we interpret and perceive the body bodily matters change, female subjectivity and behavior will change accordingly. The situation, rather than

[45] De Beauvoir, 336.

the body on its own, influences subjectivity. Although the body is no longer seen as the natural foundation of gender, it is still real, and its reality is taken for granted. Although it is influenced by cultural forces and situation, it is ontologically distinct from them. It exists on its own. Here we can see the validity of Butler's critique of de Beauvoir wherein Butler argues that de Beauvoir is still "limited by the uncritical reproduction of the Cartesian distinction between freedom and the body" and "maintains the mind/body dualism."[46] De Beauvoir paradoxically claims on the one hand that the subject is embodied and situated, yet on the other hand posits the female body as something that needs to be overcome and she sees sexual difference as inconsequential. The mind or rationality or consciousness is still ontologically distinct from the body in de Beauvoir's account of the lived body. While in the introduction to *The Second Sex* she critiques the disembodied masculine subject being constructed as the universal and free subject, and seems to gesture toward an account of the subject that takes embodiment seriously, through her discussion in the text she seems to suggest women are limited by situation and liberation from such situation will help them achieve universality.

Though it can be said that she advocates for radical change in situation and creation of new forms of cultural interpretation of the body, situated in the Sartrean existentialism, de Beauvoir seems to call for overcoming sexual difference in order to achieve universal freedom. Her account of contemporary, embodied female subjectivity is descriptive and critical, while her prescription calls for the disembodied ideal of universal subjectivity. Recognizing sexual difference as the source of normative violence exerted on the female body, she nonetheless sees sexual difference itself, rather than the ways in which it is interpreted and taken up, as the ultimate cause of such violence. She calls for a universal

[46] Butler 1990, 16.

subjectivity insofar as sexual difference is but an inconsequential matter that does not produce significant differences in subjectivity.

A threefold question thus arises. First of all, is situation, pervaded by power, only repressive? Is it merely imposed on the body? Is situation merely an external force imposed on the body? How do they interact with each other and what happens in the process of their interaction? In fact the passive female subject that de Beauvoir presents is strikingly similar to Foucault's account of the "docile subject", which according to Foucault is positively produced by discourse. How can these two accounts be put into conversation? Secondly, what is the body before being situated and lived in situation? If situation and the lived body are separated and distinct, does that mean the situation will not be changed by the lived body but by some force other than that, namely, the mind/rationality/consciousness? The situation can only be changed through rational decision and action? Does the lived body have a role in changing the situation? At last, if situation is also the condition that makes a woman intelligible in the first place, insofar as it forms a reified meaning between the category of woman and the female body, what happens to the category of woman when situation is changed and the relation becomes different? If a woman is only made timid and passive by situation and learned to be shameful about her body, what happens to her when the situation is changed? Is she still a woman? According to what? Is the category of women still meaningful?

To answer these questions, I will first turn to post-structuralist account of subject formation and power, in order to show that power is productive-- it produces subject and subjectivity, rather than being an external force imposed on subjects.

The Subject, the Body and Identity Categories

While the subject has traditionally and historically been characterized in Western philosophy as disembodied, rational, and autonomous,[47] this understanding of the subject has been widely challenged in contemporary political theory, especially under the influence of Foucault, Derrida, and feminist and queer theory. Unlike de Beauvoir, who more or less takes the subject as an already formed entity, and is willing to take up the category of "women" as a meaningful political category, Foucault, Derrida and Butler all attempt to interrogate the ways in which the subject is formed. Subject formation as a process of becoming is the major target of their critical intervention. The subject is no longer seen as a stable, self-identical and self-positing being; rather, it is conceived as being constituted, sustained and transformed through a complex interplay of social and political forces. In post-structuralist critique of the subject, it becomes clear that the subject never has full control over its actions, and the effects of its action always exceeded what it rationally intends. Its autonomy is only a phantasmatic illusion, achieved by denying the social relations through which it is constituted, and disavowing its radical dependency on those social relations prior to its formation.[48] As Butler argues, the subject is fundamentally constituted through exclusion and differentiation that distinguishes it from its constitutive outside. For example, the expression "I am" suggests a "provisional totalization of this 'I'"[49], a self-determination that depends on exclusion. However, the exclusion actually constitutes the "I", which is to say, it is only possible and necessary to have self-determination when there is an acknowledgement that there is excess to the "I".

The process of interrogating the continuous interplay between subject formation and power is politically significant as it exposes the exclusions, abjections and normative

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[47] See for example, Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781); Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right* (1797); Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1797).

[48] Butler 1992, 13.

[49] Judith Butler. *The Judith Butler Reader*. Edited by Sara Salih. 2004.112.

violence that take place in the process of subject formation, and therefore, in the founding and reinforcement of identity categories. While for de Beauvoir and for many second wave feminists that I mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, the category of women is straightforwardly descriptive as it captures the reality of a group of people who exist under the identity of women, Derrida, Foucault and Butler are all very critical of identity categories. As Butler alleges, identity categories are not merely descriptive, but regulatory and necessarily exclusionary. Although de Beauvoir objects rejects that the female body determines woman, she nonetheless takes it for granted that there is a perfect correlation between the sexed body and gender. The category of women is established on the foundation of the female body. But is this relation necessary and universally valid? What is excluded and erased in maintaining this clear-cut category? Does the female body, with its distinct bodily phenomenon, grant a solid identity category on its own? What is the danger of upholding such a category? What about bodies that do not perfectly match the common descriptions of the female body? Are bodies that do not menstruate, cannot bear children, with ambivalent sex organs, not female bodies, and subjects with those bodies not women? Are subjects with female bodies that do not correspond to social and cultural understanding of women still women? Are subjects with female bodies with non-heterosexual desires not women?

These unsettling questions demonstrate that the so-called material realty of the body by no means perfectly grounds identity categories, and they reveal that identity categories are not natural but constructed through regulation and exclusion. The supposedly necessary relation among the body, gender performance, sexual desire and identity categories is in fact constructed. De Beauvoir has already acknowledged that bodily phenomenon and sexual difference are interpreted and constituted in situation but she by no means denies that sexual difference is real, as she maintains that “humanity is divided into two classes of individuals whose clothes, faces, bodies, smiles, gaits, interests, and occupations are manifestly

different…what is certain is that right now they most obviously exist."[50] Moreover, although she argues that genders are created and maintained by situation, de Beauvoir still works within the binary of genders and conceives repression as one gender—men—against the Other—women. The political project as she identifies is for women to become subjects. To do so she has to hold on to the category of women as a stable identity[51]. She never breaks the corresponding relation between the sexed body and gender. Rather, she demonstrates the ways in which sex is interpreted by gender. This relation is only contingent and peculiar to the extent that the same bodily phenomenon and the sexed body can be interpreted differently had situation and "cultural norms governing the interpretation of one's body"[52] been changed. Yet she nonetheless does not acknowledge any gender other than man and woman. It might be true that as Butler argues in "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex", one of her earliest texts, that de Beauvoir's account can potentially be radicalized and be used to support the proliferation of genders and radical breakaway of gender from sex, but de Beauvoir herself certainly does not argue that. She takes the system of binary gender for granted. This is, I argue, a foundational exclusion that renders all other non-conformist genders invisible and shuts down the possibility for new genders to emerge.

Foucault's genealogical critique of the notion of "sex" can be read as a direct critique of de Beauvoir. He goes one step further to argue that sexual difference, and binary genders, are themselves discursively constructed, and produced. He alleges that their reality is contingent rather than necessary. What is most important for Foucault is to interrogate the ways in which they come about, to trace the operations of their construction and erasure, and

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[50] De Beauvoir, xxvi-xxvii.

[51] I acknowledge de Beauvoir's affiliation with phenomenology and her endorsement of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, which I will discuss in great length in my third chapter. But I maintain that in *The Sex Second*, the frameworks de Beauvoir works in are Hegelian dialectics and Cartesian and Sartrean existentialism. And her feminist politics, at least at this stage, reflects these perspectives rather than Merleau-Pontian phenomenology.

[52] Butler 1986, 46.

to identify the possible violence involved in the process of subject and identity formation, and thus to locate the possibility of resistance with the subject. We need to ask: what is erased and excluded in the construction of binary genders? What governs the intelligibility of either of the genders? What kind of regulatory forces are involved? What is the invisible, exiled, pathologized, and condemned? To deconstruct the subject and the unified identity it assumes exposes the ways in which the subject is constructed by discursive power relations that delineate the scope of intelligibility. This project does not seek to do away wirh the subject or deny its importance in political theorization, but rather, helps clarify the subject's complicated relation to power and intends to explore the ways in which the subject can critically engage with power.

This construction of unified subject based on the notion of "sex" is the focal point of Foucault's critique of the normalizing effects and violence of modern power and knowledge. And the subject occupies the center, which is the ultimate referent of meaning in modern politics, according to Derrida. Foucauldian and Derridian interrogations of subject formation expose the contingent formation of the subject, making it clear that that the subject, instead of being self-positing and self-identical, is actually a discursive construction. To be self-identical, to persist through time, is to assume a unified and essential identity. Foucault and Derrida both regard discourse as the most important way through which power is exerted and knowledge is transmitted. But what is discourse? According to Foucault, discourse is a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable, through which knowledge and power come together to establish the truth, in this case, the unity, and the self-identical feature of the subject.[53] Foucault asserts that in order to problematize this way of understanding the subject, we must renounce all of the themes that serve to ensure the

[53] Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc.1990. Print. 100.

infinite continuity of discourse, and be ready to receive every moment of discourse in its sudden irruption, which is the "temporal dispersion that enables it to be repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, utterly erased, and hidden."[54] It is important to destabilize and question these pre-existing forms of continuity and unity, and to suspend the reified syntheses, as they do not come about of themselves but are always the result of a construction.[55]

The subject, for Derrida, is the current center that is assumed by discourse. Derrida states that the center, supposedly to be an ultimate referent of meaning within a given system, is in fact a function and its content is always absent, requiring language to come to assume the crucial role of articulating substitutions and displacements.[56] This is the moment, according to Derrida, when "everything became discourse", which is a system in which the central signified is never absolutely present.[57] The center is always displaced and supplemented discursively, which is to say, it has no essential character or transcendental validity. Thus, Derrida argues that totalization is impossible, because the field of discursivity itself excludes the very possibility of totalization.[58] In other words, the system cannot be closed but remains open for infinite signifiers to come and fulfill the lack of the center. Every signifying event, then, is a performative act through which a non-essentialist meaning comes into being to serve the function of embodying the center at any given moment. By doing so, the signifier no longer has a fixed referent, and multiple significations are able to emerge.[59] Arguably, the rational, self-making, self-positing, subject with a stable identity that is

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[54] Foucault, Michel. *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse of Language*. Translated by A.M.Sheridon Smith. New York: Pantheon Books.Print.1982. 25

[55] Foucault 1982, 25.

[56] Jacques Derrida."Structure, Sign and Play," in *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978. Print. 280.

[57] Derrida 1978, 280.

[58] Ibid, 289.

[59] Butler 1992, 16.

understood to persist invariably and unaffected by time, is the dominant discursive construction that assumes the role of the center.[60]

Through Derrida's deconstruction, however, the subject is no longer conceived as the "theorizing subject" or "self-knowing subject" that serves as an ultimate epistemological foundation. Given Derrida's argument that the center can never be fixed as it is always undergoing a series of substitutions,[61] a fully self-identical subject that assumes a coherent identity is inconceivable, as any identity category that attempts to represent or capture the essential reality of a group of people is doomed to fail in achieving ultimate authority. This is because a stable identity category as such depends on a boundary that separates the inside from the outside. What is thereby excluded actually constitutes what is inside, and vice versa. Hence, the inside and outside are always interdependent and coexistent. They always feed into each other and coexist with each other. In this sense, any particular identity that is completely divorced from all other identities is simply impossible.

For this reason, all identity categories are open, and can be constantly contested and reconfigured. They can undergo a process of resignification within the field of discursivity. Any fully fixed identity is, as Butler argues, a "phantasmatic ideal" that the subject seeks to embody but inevitably fails to occupy, hence any effort to come up with a totalizing identity always rests upon exclusions and abjections. Through such a fixing process that articulates what is inside, a hierarchy is discursively established and constructed, as Derrida points out that oppositions always form hierarchies.[62] The sameness of the self-identical subject with a fixed identity, depends on differance, which contains a double connotation: difference at every given moment and sameness that is deferred indefinitely.[63] Differance, argues Derrida, is "the displaced and equivocal passage of one different thing to another, from one term of an

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[61] Derrida 1978, 279.
[62] Derrida 1982.
[63] Derrida 1984, 3.

opposition to the other."[64] Oppositions are discursively constructed based on differance, in the sense that each of the terms must appear as the difference of the other, "as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same."[65] This is to say, in order to construct the self-identical and fully present subject, oppositions have to be established so that the subject can be differed from and against the other that has to be excluded, and at the same time the subject is posited as self-identical through time. What is excluded becomes the absence, and because of the privileging of the presence, the absence becomes what is inferior, stigmatizing, pathological, etc. However, rather than being completely unthinkable and inconceivable, as totally separated from what is articulated and assumes presence, Derrida shows that absence is always already within what is present, and presence, on the other hand, also always has a dimension of absence, which is to say that it is never fully present.[66] The subject is conceived to be fully present, yet its presence is only made possible by the absence, the differance that is deferred and has not yet present. This privilege that is granted to the fully-present subject, for Derrida, is the "ether of metaphysics, the element of our thought that is caught in the language of metaphysics".[67] The presence, argues Derrida, should not be seen as the absolutely central form of Being, but be posited as a "determination" and an "effect" produced by discourse.[68] Hence, the absence, which is the excluded and silenced, is not totally inconceivable but merely marginalized within a system that is no longer totalizingly present but privileges the present.

Derrida's deconstruction of the subject has important political implications, as the subject has historically been understood as the ultimate political agent who undertakes political actions. In her effort to make the political implications of Derridian deconstruction,

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[64] Ibid, 17.
[65] Ibid, 17.
[66] Derrida 1984, 16-17.
[67] Ibid, 16.
[68] Derrida 1994, 16.

explicit, Butler shows that releasing the subject from totalized identity categories that presume its own self-identical persistence through time serves a significant political purpose, namely it allows the excluded and abjected to enter into discourse and reality, and to challenge the norms that exclude and marginalize them in the first place. It is important to recognize that exclusions and abjections, produced by discursive constructions, have direct material effects on concrete individuals bodies as they experience emotions, desires, sufferings and oppression. It is also for this reason that Butler is against identity categories, insisting that identity categories are "instruments of regulatory regimes."[69] Further, she points out that identity is a regulative ideal, and also is fundamentally an exclusionary practice that seeks to close upon itself. However, she does not fully deny the possibility of mobilizing identity categories for emancipatory political purposes. On this point, she echoes Derrida by arguing that identity categories are perpetually unstable and incomplete, so that such struggles do not turn into a further form of oppression that establishes new hierarchies and constitutes new exclusions. Any attempt to close an identity category will inevitably fail. But a failure as such can serve as the starting point of a different kind of feminist and queer politics. As Butler argues,

> "This failure is instructive: what political impetus is to be derived from the exasperated 'etc.' that so often occurs at the end of such lines? This is a sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself. It is the supplement, the excess that necessarily accompanies any efforts to posit identity once and for all. This illimitable et cetera, however, offers itself as a new departure for feminist political theorizing" (Butler 1999, 143).

The "new departure for feminist political theorizing", I contend, consists of exposing, critiquing and undoing normative violence. Deconstructing the subject as transcendental and disembodied helps to address the exclusions and abjections that take place in such constructions and to come up with an embodied account of the subject that is alert to the dependence between its concrete lived experience and discourse. In the next chapter I will

[69] Butler 2004b, 121.

further elaborate on Foucault, Derrida and Butler's critique of identity categories and engage with Foucault's account of resisting such discursive construction.

Chapter Two:

Violence of the Self

In this chapter I seek to uncover the normative violence inherent in the process of subject and identity formation through a critical reading of Foucault. Foucault's account of subject formation can be read as a response to de Beauvoir's account of the ways in which women are produced in society. And his critique of identity, especially identity constructed by grouping together sex, gender, and sexuality, reveals the tremendous violence inherent in identity construction. I argue that through his genealogical investigation of "abnormal" experiences and outlawed sexualities, Foucault shows that the category of women, an identity that both de Beauvoir and Nussbaum uncritically take up, is in fact a product of violent exclusion that is produced by discourse, within which power and knowledge come together. Such violence/power is not an external force that is imposed on the already-formed subject, but constitutes the subject fundamentally. The subject does not preexist such violence/power.

A common critique of Foucault's account of subject formation is: how can we get out if our very existence and subjectivity is constituted by and seemingly determined by power? How is resistance possible? The answer to such criticism is evident in Foucault's own writings. For him, resistance is not only possible, but also extremely important. He locates the possibility of resistance in the self, which for him is a crucial part of experience that is outside of discourse. This self is capable of resistance because it is where pleasures emanate from. This retreat to the self, however, contains tremendous normative violence that many feminist critiques of Foucault have shown. The Foucauldian self that experiences pleasure and uses pleasure, I argue, is not theoretically inconsistent with Foucault's overall theoretical project, but also leads him to ignore and dismiss forms of violence produced and enacted by pleasure. Pleasure, I argue, is not an innate feeling and desire, but is produced within the complex interplay between power and knowledge. And more importantly, it is not a private

measure that is taken up by each subject to resist the forces the form it in the first place, but rather, it is constituted in the midst of human relations and enacted with other people. Ironically, Foucault substitutes normative violence of identity categories with another form of normative violence, violence of the self.

Identity Categories and the Unintelligible

While de Beauvoir critiques the existential situation, which she conceives as the ensemble of all social forces and norms, for repressing women and stopping them from self-actualization, Foucault explicitly critiques this way of conceiving the relation between the subject and power, a model that he calls "the repressive hypothesis" in *The History of Sexuality*. According to Foucault, relations of power in fact produce the subject by enabling it to pursue certain goals and aspire to certain dreams but at the same time delimits the scope of possibilities of their becoming. Relations of power are not external to the subject, who in de Beauvoir's case is an already formed entity; rather, they constitute the subject, which is to say that the subject does not preexist power relations that permeate it. Moreover, he shows that the category of women does not express a natural fact, but is discursively constructed through exclusion. De Beauvoir and Foucault conceive violence very differently: de Beauvoir sees violence as repression and harm imposed on subjects that belong to clear identity categories, whereas Foucault locates violence within the very process of subject formation. Violence is enacted through norms, norms that regulate, normalize and pathologize, punish and exile. Violence of norms is thus often invisible, but by no means irretrievable.

Foucault's method of uncovering the complexity of normativity is genealogy. Through Foucault's genealogical analysis of subject construction, he historicizes the discursive construction of the subject and shows what kinds of violence and power is involved. Foucault shows that genealogy is not merely the pure historical descriptions of wild facts, but serves an important political, as well as normative, purpose: to recover subjugated

knowledges. Through his genealogical investigation, Foucault seeks to reveal discontinuity, pathologization, and exclusion, forms of knowledge and experience that he calls "subjugated knowledge". Subjugated knowledge, according to Foucault, refers to "historical contents that have been buried or masked in functional coherences or formal systematizations;" and, in addition, "a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as is insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity."[70] Subjugated knowledge is the constitutive outside through which coherent subjects are formed and identity categories are constructed to classify them. Although it seems to be completely excluded, Foucault argues that subjugated knowledge has always been present within dominant discourse, only marginalized and masked. Genealogy thus brings the abjected and marginalized to visibility. In this sense, genealogical method reveals that subject formation and construction of identity categories are neither produced by a linear and ever-progressing history, nor constituted by an overarching account that takes all possible experiences into account; rather, they refer to the actualization of one of the historically contingent potentialities. Subjugated knowledge contains potential disruptive forces against the overarching and pervasive discursive construction of the unified subject and identity category. And it is through genealogy that subjugated knowledge can be recovered and come into existence again.

Genealogy, as Foucault argues, is neither an empiricism nor a positivism, but a way of "playing local, discontinuous, disqualified, or nonlegitimized knowledges off against the unitary theoretical instance that claims to be able to filter them, organize them into a hierarchy, organize them in the name of a true body of knowledge."[71] It examines effects of

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[70] Michel Foucault —.*"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France*, 1975-1976. 7.

[71] Foucault 1997, 9.

power, and discerns and exposes traces of discontinuity, conflicting possibilities, divergence and turning points. In other words, genealogy is an attempt to de-subjugate historical knowledges, as well as expose struggles that have been fought against dominant power, and continuously struggle against "the coercion of a unitary, formal, and scientific theoretical discourse."[72] For example, in his essay, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", Foucault again emphasizes that genealogy records "the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality", and these events, which are where subjugated knowledges lie, have to be sought in the most unpromising places—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts--places that commonly are thought of as without history.[73] These events and subjugated knowledges are the absence within the presence, as they seem to be excluded from history and are deemed insignificant. At the same time, they are also the presence within the absence, as Foucault shows that they have always been present within history. But unlike traditional ways of conceiving history, genealogy rejects the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations.[74] Hence genealogical investigation of history is not meant to trace and construct an origin, but to discover discontinuity, rupture, transition points---to disclose the contingency of the current situation, to uncover violence, and to show that there are possibilities of becoming otherwise.

Through his genealogical project, Foucault demonstrates that the construction of the modern subject is accomplished by discourse, which is composed of a new form of power—bio-power-- that fabricates individual bodies and a meticulous knowledge of individuals. According to Foucault, bio-power rose when Western society got rid of large scale famines and epidemics at the end of the 18th century. No longer bound by the immanent threat of death of itself, "Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a

[72] Ibid, 10.
[73] Ibid, 139.
[74] Ibid, 140.

living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, an individual and collective welfare "[75], and for the first time "biological existence was reflected in political existence"[76] and power shifted from managing death to invest in and manage life. Power and knowledge come together in discourse through which the modern subject is born. Unlike the old form of power, sovereign power, which is a possessive kind of power that rests with the sovereign figure and his right to kill, bio-power instead invests in life and administers, regulates, and manipulates life. While sovereign power is exercised by the sovereign through his right of seizure of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself, bio-power disciplines individual bodies and regulates the entire population. The highest function of bio-power is to invest in life through individualization of multiplicities,[77] and to bring life itself into "the realm of explicit calculations".[78] Bio-power "invests the body, health, modes of subsistence and habitation, living conditions, the whole space of existence."[79] Foucault also refers to the form of power that disciplines individual bodies as disciplinary power, which regulates and corrects through continuous measures.[80] These two features join together in concrete arrangements of life, among which the deployment of sexuality - which he focuses on when discussing the construction of the modern subject - is the most important task.[81] Through such direct investment in individual bodies, disciplinary power simultaneously produces the subject and subjectivates it, by managing the ways in which individual bodies spend time, inhabit and move in space, and relate to objects and each other.

Disciplinary power differs from other forms of power in the sense that it is productive rather than merely repressive: it produces subjects in a certain manner by delimiting its

[75] Foucault 1997, 142.
[76] Ibid, 142.
[77] Ibid, 140.
[78] Ibid, 143.
[79] Ibid, 144.
[80] Ibid, 144.
[81] Foucault 1997, 140.

possibilities of acting and existing. It is a mode of governing through structuring the possible field of action of others,[82] as well as "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization."[83] It is omnipresent and flowing, and is "the over-all effect that emerges from all these motilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement."[84] Meanwhile, power is complimented by a permanent knowledge of individuals, a knowledge that focuses on classify, categorize, and eventually pathologize and normalize individuals based on their bodies. The discursive construction of the univocal notion of "sex" becomes the site through which power and knowledge come together. Power and knowledge feed into each other and reinforce each other, as Foucault states that "power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations."[85] Starting in late 18th century, disciplinary power and a codified medical knowledge joined together to form a discourse that directly invests in individual bodies.

Discourse constitutes the subject in the first place, which is to say, the subject does not exist prior to discourse, but is fundamentally constituted by discourse through embodied acts and emotions. The subject assumes a coherent identity according to the univocal notion of "sex", and it is both enabled and delimited by such power. By concealing its own genealogy and contingent character, the subject appears to have transcendental validity. The subject is thus posited to be the cause of all of its conducts, sensations, and pleasures, by concealing its inheritance in power relations. Foucault stresses that the subject does not pre-exist discourse. Discourse, rather than a mere linguistic production, is in fact material as

[82] Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge* 1982, 789.
[83] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 92.
[84] Ibid, 93.
[85] Ibid, 27.

shown by Foucault, who gestures toward an embodied understanding of subject formation in his discussion of how discourse, embedded in the process of *assujetissement*—subjectivation--both constitutes the subject and subjects it.

Because sex was seen as what links the subject and the population together, as in Foucault's words, sex "was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species"[86], it became the primary focus of power and was turned into an object of knowledge. Sex was meticulously managed and posited as something that is the real, "more real than bodies, organs, functions, sensations, and pleasures": something with intrinsic properties and laws, something that tells the truth of the identity of a person.[87] It is assumed that sexualities are manifestations of this essential cause. Sexualities are conceived as the effects of the essential sex. Foucault, however, refutes this expressive model. Through his genealogical investigation, he argues that this model should be reversed, as the deployment of sexuality, with its different strategies, was in fact what established the notion of "sex". The notion of "sex", according to Foucault, is an imaginary concept that has to be evoked to make bio-power function, in the sense that it made it possible to group together "anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures", and to posit this unity as a causal principle,[88] as well as a coherent identity that each subject assumes. The subject comes to assume a self-identical, persistent and coherent identity over time according to the effects of power-knowledge. The identity is constructed by grouping reified unities together. Through genealogical recovery of the subjugated knowledge, of the persons and whose experiences that are at odds with such univocal construction as disruptive forces or even intentional struggles, as well as of experiences of the pathological, insane, inferior, abnormal, etc,

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[86] Foucault 1990, 146.
[87] Ibid, 152.
[88] Foucault 1990, 154.

Foucault exposes the contingent characteristic of such identity categories and the violence/power inherited within.

The discursive construction of the notion of "sex", Foucault argues, represents a decisive convergence of the sexed body, gender performance, and sexuality. While Foucault primarily focuses on sexuality in his critique, Judith Butler examines the ways in which gender is constructed and she argues that instead of positing gender and sex as two separate registers and understanding gender as expressive of sex, sex is already gendered. The distinction made between sex and gender understands sex as a biological fact and gender as the expression of sex. De Beauvoir's account of women's situation is a clear example of this distinction: she only problematizes the ways in which female bodily phenomenon are interpreted, but leaves such bodily phenomenon as if they are natural facts associated with the female body. Neither does she question the casual relation between the female body and femininity. Gender identity groups together gender performance, sexuality, sexual desire, and ways of experiencing pleasure. Gender is considered as expressing sex, which is assumed as substance, a prediscursive, self-identical being that assumes absolute certainty and irreducibility. Butler challenges this expressive notion of gender identity. She argues that the there is no transparent reality of the female body existing on its own, as sex is always already actively interpreted by gender. The so-called transparent materiality of the body does not exist on its own, but can only come into existence through discourse and cultural signification.

If identity categories are constructed discursively to group together a reified set of causal relations and ideals, subject formation is an embodied process through which these norms, regulations, and ideals are embodied through repetitive bodily acts both temporally and spatially. The subject comes to assume a discrete identity by embodying norms and ideals set out by discourse. It is through the process which Foucault calls "assujetissement"--

subjection, relations of power and knowledge as regime of truth are embodied. The subject is both enabled to come into place and sustain its existence, and at the same time its possibility of existence and action is delimited. Discourse functions not through abstract ideas but by producing material effects on the body. Foucault argues that disciplines signified that the art of the human body was born, an art that was directed not only at the growth of its skills, but "at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful."[89] Discipline, according to Foucault, is "a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets, and a technology of investing in bodies and producing subjects."[90] It creates a multiplicity of individual bodies. Under disciplinary power, the human body itself became the target of power, and the body was seen as the crucial site upon which subject formation takes place. From then on, a policy of coercions starts to act upon the body, and such policy is a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, and its behavior.[91] Disciplinary power imprints itself directly on the human body by monitoring every detail of its movement and action. Through this direct imprinting, it simultaneously increases the forces of the body—its utility, and diminishes these same forces, makes it obedient politically.[92] Foucault names this double movement "the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination".[93]

In general, Foucault refers to disciplinary power as "a particular modality by which political power, power in general, finally reaches the level of bodies and gets a hold on them, taking actions, behaviors, habits, and words into account; the way in which power converges

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[89] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.1995, 138.
[90] Ibid, 215.
[91] Ibid, 138.
[92] Foucault 1995, 138.
[93] Ibid, 138.

below to affect individual bodies themselves."[94] Through a political economy of detail, and a political anatomy of power, power imprints directly on individual bodies, and bodies embody power to become subjected. Foucault points out that the striking feature of discipline that distinguishes it from previous kinds of power is its meticulous attention to and control of detail, accompanied by a political awareness of every small thing associated with the human body.[95] One of the most important ways through which disciplinary power produces embodied human subjects is through distribution of individuals in space, to which end four distinct yet interrelated techniques are used: enclosure, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself;[96] partitioning, each individual having its own place and each place is individual, in order to prevent coagulation and to ensure knowing;[97] functional sites, defining particular spaces to correspond not only to the need to supervise, to break dangerous communication, but also to create a useful space for the sake of observing every single detail; and establishment of rank, in order to individualize "bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations."[98] Through these mechanisms, individual bodies are subjected and produced through the manipulation of the ways in which they inhibit space, as well as the repetitive acts that they undertake. Through this technique of subjection, a new object was being formed. The new object is "the bearer of forces and the seat of duration", and "the body susceptible to specified operations, which have their order, their stages, their internal conditions, their constituent elements."[99] This natural body, in becoming the target of disciplinary power mechanisms, is the body of exercise, a body manipulated by authority, a

[94] Ibid, 40.
[95] Ibid, 139.
[96] Ibid, 140.
[97] Ibid, 143.
[98] Foucault 1995, 146.
[99] Ibid, 155.

body of useful training, as well as a number of natural requirements and functional constraints.[100]

Subject formation is simultaneously a spatial and temporal process, achieved through manipulation of the distribution of individual bodies in space, as well as through repetitive, regulative acts that condition individual bodies. Temporally speaking, he points out that under disciplinary power, bodies experience time as linear, a time whose moments are integrated, and is oriented towards a terminal, stable point.[101] Time is conceived and experienced as evolutionary, future oriented, and ever progressing. At every moment, the subject simultaneously becomes more docile, more apt to disciplinary power, but also increases its utility through what Foucault calls exercise. For Foucault, exercise is "the technique by which one imposes on the body tasks that are both repetitive and different, but always graduated", and it assures "a growth, an observation, a qualification."[102] Through these enforced exercises, the subject bends its behavior towards a terminal state, which is ever coming and always progressing. It assures a continuous growth of utility, a linear development of the subject stretching into the future.[103] At the same time, mechanisms of disciplinary power are accompanied by a knowledge of individuals, and "the apprenticeship of the techniques induces modes of behavior."[104] Power and knowledge feed into each other seamlessly and reinforce each other in the process of subjection.

Identity categories govern the intelligibility of subjects. Failure to comply with a discrete identity category is met with punitive consequences, such as coercive normalization, imprisonment, pathologization, even death. Subjects that are associated with (e.g.) madness,

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[100] Ibid, 155.
[101] Ibid, 160.
[102] Ibid, 161.
[103] Foucault 1995, 161.
[104] Ibid, 294.

homosexuality, sexually ambiguous bodies, or sexual acts that are deemed "abnormal",[105] already have experienced violence of norms, are subjected to further violence—the violence of identity categories.

Foucault's genealogical project, I argue, was always intended to be a critique of such violence, rather than just an empirical investigation without any normative goal. Although Foucault's account of subjection is by no means a trans-historical theory of subject formation (as *Discipline and Punish* is properly a genealogy of the modern prison), nonetheless it is a generalizable account that explains the ways in which power/knowledge operates in the process of subject formation in modern and contemporary society. Because Foucault presents discourse as a ubiquitous force that constitutes the subject fundamentally, critics of Foucault often accuse him of reducing the subject to merely "an effect" of power and discourse and laments him for denying agency as well as the possibility of resistance. A certain strain of feminist theory especially finds such a determinist account of the subject problematic. In this case, theorists such as Sonia Kurks, Nancy Hartstock, and Nancy Fraser have critiqued Foucault's account of discourse and subject for putatively leaving no room for freedom, agency, and personal responsibility, all of which they deem central to an emancipatory feminist politics.[106] For example, Sonia Kurks accuses Foucault's account of the subject of being hyperconstructivist excluding the possibililty of individual agency and active resistance.[107] Out of a similar concern, Nancy Fraser argues that Foucault's account of

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[105] See Foucault *Abnormal; Psychiatric Power; The History of Sexuality: Volume One; Herculine Barbin*.

[106] See Sonia Kurks, "Gender and Subjectivity: Simone de Beauvoir and Contemporary Feminism;" Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power;" Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

[107] Sonia Kurks, "Gender and Subjectivity: Simone de Beauvoir and Contemporary Feminism".

discipline makes it impossible to distinguish external oppression from internalized norms, thus effectively making resistance to oppression impossible.[108]

Although I generally share the concerns of Kurks, Hartstock and Fraser, I argue that they fundamentally misread Foucault. In response to their critiques, I argue that, while Foucault does not develop a formal theory of resistance, he not only thinks resistance is possible but also offers a descriptive account of resistance in his genealogical account of power. Foucault, unlike what Kurks' charges him for doing, does not reduce the subject to a mere effect of discourse, but sees the subject as neither fully reducible to, nor fully determined by, discourse. For Foucault, lived experience-- and to an extent, agency-- is extremely important as it contains an element of self-reflexivity—the subject's relation to itself—within it. And such self-reflexivity is what makes resistance possible. The body is not only where power and knowledge are invested, but also the site through which the subject critically engages with power/knowledge to form a relation to itself. Foucault points out that that the subject is not only formed by discourse, but has an element of self-reflectivity, a relation to itself, and that is why that subjective experience cannot be fully reduced to discourse. Hence it is important to give an account of the discrepancy between discourse and experience, and to show how the subject can have a relation to itself, a relation that is not fully determined by discourse. The focus of his discussion shifts from power to the self, and he intends to look for "the forms and modalities of the relation to self by which the individual constitutes and recognizes himself *qua* subject."[109]

In order to give a clear account of Foucault's account of the body, pleasure, and the self, in the next section I will provide a critical reading of the notion of the self and the body in Foucault's writings. His conceptualization of the self in fact risks positing the self as

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[108] Nancy Fraser 1989, 49.

[109] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume Two: Use of Pleasure*. Vintage Books: New York. 1990b, 6.

prediscursive and authentic, a view that contradicts his whole account of the subject. The problem, however, does not stop at the conceptual level. Because Foucault develops a conception of the self that uses pleasure to become an ethical being, he exempts the self as well as all forms of pleasure from his critical reflection and at the end justifies all forms of pleasure, ignoring the (complicated) fact that pleasures themselves are produced and discursively constituted within the complex relations of power. Many feminist theorists have pointed out that Foucault's theory of sexuality and pleasure is utterly incapable of answering questions of sexual violence.[110] Just as pathologization and medicalization of primarily homosexuality and transexuality by the state and especially the psychiatric institution deprive people of livability, so do acts of sexual violence, especially in contexts where tremendous power inequality exist. While I share Alcoff and Kurks' critique and insight, I believe that their critiques fail to get to the root of the problem. It is not enough to address the potential problematic consequences of Foucault's closure. What we need to do is to probe deeper and ask why did such dismissal and erasure happen. Although it is important to critique Foucault's romanticized account of pleasure for ignoring tremendous power inequality inherited in adult-child sexual relations, we need to recognize that such closure—as well as his unwillingness to pass judgment on sexual pleasure—reflects Foucault's view of pleasure as a wild force that can be used by the subject to form a relation to itself. And although he formally acknowledges that such relation can only exist in relation to existing discourse, he sees pleasure primarily as a radical force that has the natural potential to resist discourse.

Foucault's seemingly romanticized view of pleasure, as a critique of pathologization of homosexuality and transexuality, can also be read as celebrating sexual pleasures acquired through domination, humiliation, and violent acts, and such a position can in turn be used to

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[110] See Linda Alcoff, *"*Dangerous Pleasures*;"* Chloe Taylor, "Infamous Men, Dangerous Individuals, and Violence Against Women: Feminist Re-Readings of Foucault;" Adrian Howe, "Sex, Violence, and Crime: Foucault and the 'Man' Question;" Holly Henderson, "*Feminism, Foucault, and Rape: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention*."

bash homosexuality and transsexuality. We see advocacy and struggles for queer rights and livability being distorted as justification for pedophilia, incest and zoophilia, sexual acts that are deemed to be intrinsically bad and should be categorically rejected.[111] (Ironically rape is never mentioned, a deliberate emission that reflects the prejudice of existing power relations.) Both Foucault's overtly romanticized account of pleasure and anti-queer protests show the danger of uncritically celebrating or rejecting pleasures. And the problem is not with pleasure per se, but with power relations that constituted and enacted by these various forms of pleasures. It is thus clear that the appeal to an authentic self and innate feeling is not only conceptually contradictory to Foucault's formal account of subject formation, but also politically problematic. I argue that Foucault's turn to pleasures, instead of providing a way to resignify power and resist normative violence, is rather a (failed) attempt to displace politics with an individualized account of ethics. This depoliticized ethics ultimately fails to critique normative violence inherited in the production and constitution of pleasure and masks Foucault's own epistemic arrogance and closure.

Pleasure: Bucolic or Dangerous

In the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault refers to experience as "the correlation between fields of knowledge (regimes of truth), types of normativity (relations of power), and forms of subjectivity (forms of relations to oneself)."[112] Later, in his College de France lectures, Foucault again defines experience as "forms of a possible knowledge, normative frameworks of behavior for individuals, and potential modes of existence for

[111] In American context, see for example http://www.allenbwest.com/2015/06/that-was-fast-yesterday-it-was-gay-marriage-now-look-who-wants-equal-rights/; http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/swanson-same-sex-marriage-can-justify-pedophilia-rape-cannibalism ; similar discourses were also mobilized in debates about equal rights for queer people in Taiwan; see http://panogud1314.blogspot.tw/ ; http://www.appledaily.com.tw/realtimenews/article/new/20151028/720854/ .

[112] Foucault 1990b, 4.

possible subjects" linked together".[113] We can thus see that instead of exclusively focusing on the objective side of power, Foucault is also concerned with subjectivity and the subject's possible modes of being. If his genealogical project can be seen as historical inquiries into particular modes of experience in relation to and delineated by discourse, then it is in his later works that he tries to give an account of the self by turning to the subjective side experience. Joanna Oksala aptly points out that for Foucault, experience is neither reduced to its objective—discursive -- nor subjective dimension. It is constituted by practices of knowledge and power, but at the same time contains the subject's relation to itself.[114] Experience is fundamentally constituted and shaped by discourse, in which knowledge and power come together, yet also exceeds and cannot be fully captured by discourse. The reason why experience is dependent on discourse is that the intelligibility of our experience of the world is constituted in historically and culturally specific practices, and the philosophical analysis of ourselves must be a critical study of them.[115] In his discussion of experience, Foucault challenges the idea that the conscious subject has ontological primacy in the constitution of experience. But he also does not fall back on a naturalism that posits reality as empirically given. Rather, he engages with a critical history of thought, seeking to uncover the historical a priori of a possible experience. He historicizes the transcendental consciousness that is taken for granted by traditional phenomenology, the conditions of experience, and inquires into its constitution in discourse.[116]

Oksala correctly points out that for Foucault, experience is always constituted through specific cultural and historical conditions that shape even its purely personal meaning, thus it can be rendered intelligible and analyzed formally only as already discursively structured by

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[113] Foucault 2008, 3.
[114] Oksala 2011, 211.
[115] Oksala 2011, 211.
[116] Ibid, 212.

acts of thought.[117] At the same time, however, experience is not ontologically coextensive with language or discourse: it exceeds linguistic representations because our embodied habits and sensations cannot be fully determined or captured by discourse. Foucault also holds that experience always incorporates modes of self-awareness and critical self-reflexivity, but both Foucault and Oksala remain equivocal about what such awareness and reflexivity that is attributed to the self is. Linda Alcoff, on the other hand, sharply points out that such self-reflexivity that Foucault is attached to is in fact, one simple thing: pleasure. Alcoff critiques Foucault's unreflective celebration of transgressive pleasures and argues that some forms of pleasure and sexuality should be regulated to prevent violence and domination they produce.

Foucault's genealogical investigation of abnormal and marginalized experiences exposes experiences that are not captured by, or coincident with dominant discourses, and intends to break the alignment between expert medical discourse and sexuality to make room for alternative modes of being. However, examples of marginalized experiences fail to explain where the self-reflexivity and self-awareness are located. Instead of accounting for the self-reflexive element within discourse, these experiences nonetheless further affirm the dependence of experience on discourse. Both Foucault and Oksala look for discrepancies between marginalized experience and discourse but fail to account for the way in which discrepancies come about—if discourse is what constitutes the subject in the first place, and if Foucauldian analysis denies that there is a prediscursive self, how does such discrepancy arise? The danger here is that through his account of marginalized experiences, of the insane, the outlaw, the pedophile, the hermorphidite, etc, Foucault tends to retreat to a concept of authentic self that is capable of engaging with discursive norms in different ways and choosing upon which sites to make itself an ethical being in his genealogical work on Greek

[117] Ibid, 212.

and Roman ethics.[118] He also romanticizes pleasures, sexualities, and behaviours that are deemed pathological, abnormal and astray, as a way of affirming them and critiquing discourses that pathologize and normalize them. But if discourse is productive instead of merely repressive, if the prisoner, school child, and soldier's body and its modalities are produced instead of being repressed by discourse, then are not subjectivities and the subject's possible modes of being fundamentally delineated by discourse? Or is there something peculiar about pleasures, sensations, and sexual behaviors—the site that discourse invests most intensively--that make them more likely to resist discourse? But if pleasures are fundamentally constituted and produced by discourse, how can they resist discourse and become otherwise? Does not Foucault's account of Herculine Barbin and Jouy's pleasures contradict his formal framework of subjection? Does not the self that uses pleasure to resist discourse necessarily have to be posited as a prediscursive force?

Such a fundamental contradiction, as Alcoff argues, originates from Foucault's romanticized notion of pleasure. Although Alcoff's critique centers on Foucault's inability to pass any judgment on pleasure, for her the root problem with Foucault's account is rather that, "for Foucault, pleasure is a force that can be taken up, used, incited, fomented, and manipulated, but is not itself discursively constituted."[119] From the two cases that he discusses extensively, the cases of Jouy and Herculine Barbin, as well as his entire later project on Greek and Roman sexuality, it is clear that Foucault is preoccupied with interrogating the relation between discourse and pleasure, yet his critique of discourse exempts pleasure from any reflection. Pleasure is posited as prediscursive, antithetical to

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[118] Foucault 1990b, *Use of Pleasure*. Although Foucault's account of Greek and Roman ethics of the self can be read as historical descriptions, it should also be acknowledged that they are forms of "subjugated knowledge" that Foucault intends to recover. Subjugated knowledge, for Foucault, is a way of critiquing dominant discourses and norms, especially those that constitute and govern rigid identity categories. For Foucault's discussion of "subjugated knowledge," see Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*: *Lectures at the College de France 1975-1976*. 2003. 7-10.

[119] Alcoff, 108.

power, and therefore a natural force to resist discourse. He thus fails to recognize that "Pleasures are vulnerable to social shifts in the sense that different discourses and different societies allow for differing arrangements between bodies."[120] Alcoff's critique of Foucault centers on his incapacity to form any normative judgment with regard to pleasure, specifically in the context of adult-child sexual relation. She argues that because children are vulnerable and dependent thus are more likely to subject to manipulation and violation, Foucault's reticence on the subject is extremely prolematic.[121] However, the problem is much broader than that. The fundamental problem with Foucault's account of pleasure is that he posits pleasure as prediscursive and thus conceives pleasure as the natural force of resistance. The content and forms of pleasure can vary, but pleasure in itself is wild, happy and free. Just as pleasure can be taken by discourse to form a unified subject, it can also be taken up by the subject to become otherwise.

The examples Foucault discusses, rather than accounting for the reason why lived experience cannot be reduced to discourse, actually affirm that experience is fundamentally coextensive with discourse. While in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* Foucault posits the expert medical discourse as his major target of critique and makes it look as if it is the only discourse that exists, it is important to realize the multiplicity of discourses that Foucault discusses in *The History of Sexuality* as well as *Society Must be Defended*. He argues that dominant discourse always coexists with other more fragmented and scattered discourse, with "subjugated knowledges" that are marginalized and masked, and discourse is both historically and spatially diverse.[122] Recovery of subjugated knowledges and recognition of multiplicity of discourse are effective critiques of bio-power and unified identity

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[120] Ibid, 109.
[121] Ibid, 122-133.
[122] Michel Foucault. *Society Must Be Defended. : Lectures at the College de France 1975-1976*. Translated by David Macey. Edited by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana. 1st Reprint Edition. New York: Picador. 2003b. Print. 7-10.

categories, but they only further confirm the dependence between experience and discourse hence still could not account for the discrepancy between them.[123] Oksala's analysis of these cases, however, critiques Foucault's romanticization of these outlaw experiences and point out the contradiction existing between Foucault's account of them and his understanding of the relation between power and the subject.

The example of Herculine is used by Foucault to show that a body without a definite sex, without a clear identity category, is free from the very category of sex and sexual regulations that come along with it. Therefore it is able to possess the kind of uninhibited and multiple pleasures that are original and prediscursive. Here it seems that he attacks the view that understands sex as that which grounds one's definite identity. But by doing so, he also posits the heterogeneous desire as free from, and antithetical to discourse. Butler critiques Foucault for romanticizing Herculine's multiplicity of sexual pleasures as the "happy limbo of a non-identity"[124], and portraying it as a world that exceeds and defies the categories of sex and of identity[125], as if her sexual pleasures existed outside and before any power-relation or law. Butler argues that by proposing such an emancipatory discourse that calls for sexual freedom, Foucault negates and contradicts the very argument he makes in *The History of Sexuality*: *An Introduction* himself. On the one hand, Foucault's major argument in *The History of Sexuality* is that sexuality is always coextensive with discourse, and it is always produced or constructed within specific historical practices, thus recourse to a sexuality before the law is illusory[126]; while on the other hand, he posits "multiplicity of pleasures" as a prediscursive sexuality that is waiting for liberation from the shackles of sex,[127] as if it is before the law and outside of discourse.

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[123] See for example, Foucault 1990, 34; Foucault 2003b, 7.
[124] Foucault 1980, xiii.
[125] Butler 1999, 132.
[126] Ibid, 132,
[127] Ibid, 131.

In order to save Foucault from this fatal contradiction, Butler points out that Herculine's sexuality, rather than being a utopian state of "happy-limbo of non-identity" as Foucault describes it, was actually constructed and produced in and through a set of particular and concrete social and political conventions.[128] An important force that constructed her sexuality was the things that she read, and the literary conventions those readings were embedded in. "The Romantic and sentiment narratives of impossible loves, the Christian legends about ill-fated saints, Greek myths about suicidal androgens"[129], constructed her understanding of and longing for desires and love. Her ideal of hopeless love, a love that she knew was transgressive and subjected to social sanctions, was formed through those texts. Therefore her multiplicity of pleasures fell inevitably within such literary traditions, which concealed themselves and made it looks like her sexual desires came up completely outside of any tradition.

Moreover, Butler correctly points out that Herculine's perception and experience of her body was also situated within a discourse of univocal sex, a discourse that draws necessary relation between body features and sexual desires, thus renders intersexed body and multiplicity of pleasures unintelligible. It was against this pervasive discourse that Herculine's "happy limbo of non-identity" was constructed. While Foucault seems to believe that Herculine refuted and overthrew the rigid binary category of sex within the ostensibly heterosexual environment in the covenant, Butler argues that Herculine also realized that her body was different from other girls' in and through that environment. Heruline enjoyed s/her difference from the young women s/he desires, and s/he knew that her desires were transgressive. S/he felt like a "usurper" of male privilege in her relationships.[130] She was actually participating in a discourse that she felt she betrayed and distanced herself from.

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[128] Butler 1999, 133.
[129] Butler 1999, 134.
[130] Ibid, 136.

Thus rather than overthrowing that category, Herculine's anatomy and desires confuse and redistribute "the constitutive elements of those categories", and expose the "illusory character of sex as an abiding substantive subtract to which these various attributes are presumed to adhere"[131]. Also, Herculine's sexuality challenges the very distinction between heterosexual and lesbian erotic exchange.[132] Herculine's sexuality, therefore, is not " a happy limbo of non-identity" that is outside of the law, but is the "ambivalent production of the law".[133] Herculine's body and pleasure is not simply imprinted by discourse, but rather is produced by it.

On the other hand, Oksala intends to prove that Foucault assumes that experience cannot be reduced to discourse but in turn further proves the dependence of experience on discourse. In the case of Charles Jouy, Foucault shows the discrepancy between his experiences of the incident as "inconsequential bucolic pleasures" and "everyday occurrence in the life of village sexuality" and the medical and juridical representations of it as "a degenerate and perverse act." Oksala points out that Foucault intends to uncover that the expert discourse on sexuality was a problematic representations of the lived experiences of pleasure and embodiment, and personal experience did not seamlessly conform to the dominant discursive representations of their experiences, and this was an important source of their suffering and oppression.[134] But I argue that rather than showing the irreducibility of lived experience, this case shows that discourses other than the expert medical one existed beforehand—Jouy's "bucolic pleasures" were seen as ordinary because prior to the use of medicalization of sexuality, there existed norms that constituted his sexuality and rendered his sexual behaviors and pleasures ordinary. Foucault here again commits the mistake of

[131] Ibid, 136-137.
[132] Ibid, 137.
[133] Butler 1999, 143.
[134] Oksala, 213.

romanticizing his pleasure and risks putting his experience as prediscursive by recourse to an untainted self through which he experiences sexuality and pleasures.

Thus, Jouy's case should be read as a critique of the dominant expert discourse, as a historical account of the rise of the medicalization of sexuality specifically manifested in its investment in a pedagogization of children's sex and a psychiatrization of perverse pleasure,[135] but it should not be read as explaining or proving discrepancy between discourse and experience. In fact, Jouy's lived experience did not arise from his self, but was fundamentally constituted by historical and cultural norms at the time. Oksala is wrong when she argues that through the case of Jouy Foucault successfully shows that experience is dependent on but not reducible to scientific discourses and social norms. It does not seem like Foucault has proved that what is at stake is a "broader range of possible experiences of sexuality constituted through a new or different set of cultural and social norms and discursive practices"[136] like Oksala claims it to be, although that would be a better alternative. Rather, by discussing marginalized experiences, Foucault only affirms the dependence of experience on discourse, but fails to provide an account of the discrepancy between them and the element of self-reflexivity within experience. Moreover, it is problematic that Foucault takes Jouy's experience and his pleasure as the foundation of critique. Thus, paradoxically, through his critique of scientific discourse and psychiatry as a regime of truth-telling and pathologization, Foucault does not downplay the importance of discourse in explaining experience, but rather affirms it. His critique is politically significant as it problematizes the ways in which expert medical discourse is taken up by regimes of power to classify and pathologize subjects and tentatively creates more inclusive space and discourse that can account their experience, but the problem in regard to self-reflexivity remains.

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[135] Foucault 1990, 104-105.
[136] Oksala 2011, 214.

It is precisely because Foucault recognizes that experience is highly dependent on discourse, that he argues that lived experience cannot be taken as epistemological given, transparent to the subject and can be articulated without mediation. Although his definition of experience has an important element of one's relation to itself, he nonetheless does not believe that it can be accounted for through first person narrative. In fact, he is well aware of the problem of it and is critical of lived experience. Oksala identifies two reasons for such hesitation. The first is that there is a gap that exists between lived experience and its linguistic descriptions, in the sense that experience is always mediated through language, which fundamentally has a social and intersubjective character that exceeds the speaking subject. Secondly, there is a problem concerning the authenticity of self-description in the sense that it is informed and constituted by discourse.[137] Yet from Foucault's preoccupation with marginalized experiences it is clear that he also takes lived experience as at least an important source in conceptualizing the subject and its experience. Foucault regards both discourse and the self-reflexive account of personal experience as important sources for experience. In the case of Herculine Barbin, rather than solely relying on his/her memoir, Foucault juxtaposes it with the medical discourse of it; and Butler's contextual analysis of the case expands the range of discourse that should be included in the study of his/her particular experience. Although Foucault tends to romanticize his/her experience and refers to it as "a happy limbo of non-identity" that only was later on shattered by the medical discourse, and thus tends to regard his/her experience as an authentic account of private experience, both Butler and Oksala show that Barbin's account of his/her own experiences is fundamentally shaped by the narrative conventions, the social environment, as well as the cultural conceptions of gender characterizing her time.

[137] Oksala 2011, 216.

In Oksala's explanation of Foucault's account of experience, the subject must fold back on itself to create a private interiority while being in constant contact with its constitutive outside.[138] It thus seems that the reason for this discongruity between experience and discourse for Foucault is the self, in the sense that there is a self that we have to take care of. But he does not, and neither does Oksala, explain what this self actually is. As I share Foucault's critique of dominant discourse whose regulatory forces demand rigid identity categories, and I contend that it is for this reason that he regards an articulation of the irreducibility of experience to discourse as important, the crucial self-reflexive element of experience remains undeveloped and equivocal. At times, Foucault tends to refer to the self as an utterly internal, prediscursive, private entity that although being in relation to subjection, somehow has the capacity to escape it. And such a theorization constantly risks putting the self outside of discourse, which contradicts Foucault's conceptualization of the subject and reinforces theories that he tries to displace. Contending with Foucault's definition of experience and the irreducibility of experience to discourse, as well as sharing his critique of rigid identity categories, I challenge the way that he explains this element of self-reflexivity. The notion of the self, I will show, is itself constructed by Foucault as embodying a prediscursive multiplicity of pleasures. The body, as well as bodily pleasure and embodied sexuality, are still conceived by Foucault as prediscursive. The Foucauldian self is capable of reflexivity because Foucault posits the self as having an almost natural capacity for resistance.

Foucault's detailed analyses of the cases of Jouy and Herculine Barbin reveal what he means by the self. Foucault's interpretation of the Jouy case, however, exposes more than his romanticized and contradictory account of prediscursive sexuality and pleasure. Because he situates outlaw pleasure as wildly outside of discourse and posits it as a natural force of

[138] Ibid, 211.

resistance, he also overlooks the discursive norms and power relations that were at play in cases like this. Ironically, his critique of medicalization of sexuality and pathologization of individuals at the same time covers other forms of discourses and relations of domination here. The ways in which Jouy was turned into "a pure object of medicine and knowledge"[139] and involuntarily hospitalized is certainly problematic, but his pleasure is not the only thing at stake here. As various feminist theorists have pointed out, Foucault's interpretation of this case is highly problematic. He did not even bother to mention the girl's name in his extensive presentation of the case in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, not to mention taking into account of her perspective of the exchange, her experience and her pleasure. It was later revealed in the English translation of Foucault's 1974-1975 lecture that the girl's name is Sophie Adam, and in that lecture Foucault discusses another sexual encounter between Jouy and Adam, revealing more disturbing details: Jouy dragged Adam "into the ditch alongside the road to Nancy. There, something happened: almost rape, perhaps."[140] Even then, Foucault completely dismisses Adam's side of the story; his grievance and critique still completely centers on medicalization and confinement of Jouy, which according to him "represents not merely a change of scale in the domain of objects with which psychiatry is concerned, but actually a completely new way in which it functions."[141] The Jouy-Adam case is the protocol of disciplinary power aiming at normalizing and pathologizing individuals instead of punishing crimes. The only power/domination at stake here, however, is not only that. Instead of quickly judging the incident as "the pettiness of it all; the fact that this everyday occurrence in the life of village sexuality, these inconsequential bucolic pleasures"[142] we need to ask: what discourse was at play when Jouy's sexuality was not an object of medical knowledge and psychiatric power but an "everyday occurrence of village sexuality"? What

[139] Foucault 1990a, 32.
[140] Foucault 2003, 292.
[141] Ibid, 293.
[142] Foucault 1990a, 31.

relations of power were enacted in his "inconsequential bucolic pleasures"? What constituted his pleasure and sexuality? What is Sophie Adam's side of the story?

It is beyond doubt that Foucault's interpretation of this case reveals his own "typical male and adult patterns of epistemic arrogance"[143], to use Alcoff's words. However, the problem does not stop there. Alcoff's major problem with Foucault's account of the case is that he fails to pass any judgment on pleasure that involves sexual violence, especially in the case of adult-child sexual relation, and she goes into great details to articulate her reasons why.[144] However, I think what she identifies is only a symptom of Foucault's overall conceptual inconsistency. Foucault is ultimately incapable of passing any judgment concerning pleasure and sexuality because he sees them wildly outside of discourse, and should not be tainted by discourse. Foucault's romanticized notion of pleasure is best demonstrated in the interview "Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity", wherein he compliments the S & M movement for creating new possibilities of pleasure and states that "we have to create new pleasure" as a way of resisting power.[145] Pleasure is conceived as a radical force that the subject naturally possesses and desires—probably because of its peculiar erotic nature, that magically appears through free creation from nowhere. It is rather posited, and has to be posited, to allow room for resistance. It is the impossible that has to be violently installed; it is Foucault's version of genesis, his notion of the state of nature. It is through pleasure—and specifically erotic pleasure—that the body is interpellated by discourse, and it is also through pleasure that such interprellation can be resisted.[146] Pleasure, in other words, is a fabricated beginning, the path to subjection and the way out of subjection. Our desire for pleasure, according to Foucault, is the reason why "we are not trapped" in asymmetrical power relations and the reason why "we always have possibilities… of

[143] Alcoff, 108.
[144] Ibid, 117-132.
[145] Foucault 1998, 165-166.

changing the situation."[147] The root problem of this notion of the self, I will show in the section, lies in Foucault's conceptualization of the body.

The Body Imprinted: When the "Soul" Becomes the Prison of the Body

A Foucauldian account of the body understands it as fundamentally constituted by discourse, as being invested by power, the site that embodies power, as well as the demonstration of the truth of the subject. In other words, the body only comes into being through the paradoxical process of subjection, wherein power acts upon the subject as a form of domination, but also activates or forms the subject. In Butler's words, it is a "restriction in production, a restriction without which the production of the subject cannot take place, a restriction through which the production takes place."[148] Foucault, however, claims that this process makes the body imprisoned by the soul, seeing the soul as something that is much more profound than the subject itself.[149] The concept of the soul is central to Foucault's account of discourse, to the extent that he even argues that the genealogy is in fact a genealogy of the modern "soul", a soul that exists and has a reality through the body; in his words, "A 'soul' inhabits him and brings him to existence…The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body."[150] The soul is understood to be an imprisoning frame that brings the body into existence. It rests on a different ontological register than the body. It is real and non-corporeal, in which the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge are articulated, and "the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power."[151] If the soul is the frame

[147] Foucault 1998, 167.
[148] Butler 1997, 84.
[149] Foucault 1995, 30.
[150] Ibid, 29.
[151] Ibid, 29.

that is activated by the process of subjection, then the body is presumed as a passive materiality that exists prior to subjection.

Here it seems that a contradiction in Foucault's account of the body comes into sight: as Butler argues, formerly Foucault argues that the body is fundamentally constituted by discourse, in the sense that it only comes into existence through power/knowledge; but he sometimes seems to suggest that there is a body existing prior to power, a materiality ontologically distinct from the power relations that invest in it.[152] He seems to oppose the materiality of the body to a disembodied soul: the soul is a normative ideal given rise to by power according to which the body is trained, shaped, and disciplined. In order to become a subject, the body has to be altered, molded, through which the original state of its being is altered. He elaborates more on this point in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In his attempt to underscore the historicity and social character of the body, he argues that "the body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistance."[153] History and historical meanings emerge through destruction of the body. As Butler points out, Foucault's account of the body relies on a notion of genealogy that conceives the body as a surface and a set of forces, that through which cultural construction takes place, that are external to the body imprint on it.[154] Such mechanisms of cultural construction are understood as "history", which is a writing instrument that "produces cultural significations through the disfiguration and distortion of the body."[155]

The body is conceived as a ready surface, a given materiality that has to be altered and interpellated in order for cultural signification to take place. As Foucault contends with Nietzsche that history is a signifying process through which values and meanings are created

[152] Butler 1997, 89.
[153] Foucault 1977, 153.
[154] Butler 1989, 602.
[155] Ibid, 602.

through the destruction of the body, Foucault posits the body as ontologically distinct from the historical imprints, and as a prediscursive medium that is passive and given. It can be read that Foucault's insistence on the body being a surface is a critical response to the notion of psychic in-depth and his attempt to collapse the surface-interior distinction, and as Butler suggests in *The Psychic Life of Power*, by arguing "the soul becomes the prison of the body", Foucault transposes the soul into a exterior and imprisoning frame, and by doing so "vacates…the interiority of the body, leaving the interiority as a malleable surface unilateral effects of disciplinary power."[156] In other words, the body is an inert materiality that is signified in and through the soul.

By evoking the "soul" and positing the materiality of the body against the soul, Foucault assumes a materiality of the body as radically prior and outside of discourse, a materiality that has recourse to a disembodied ideal of the soul to explain the process of subjection. In his general account Foucault presents subject formation as a process that takes place through the body, through disciplinary mechanisms within which power and knowledge come together that directly function on the body. The body, in Foucault's theorization, is a site of interpellation and signification through which the subject is formed, a site of investment that power and knowledge together fabricate modern subjects. It is a given materiality, a negative entity that has to be hailed for the subject to come into existence by inhabiting a soul that is created by disciplines. And as I have shown earlier, conceiving the body as a prediscursive materiality that is hailed by power-knowledge leads Foucault to also posit queer sexualities and experiences as prediscursive and being hailed by discourse, and he romanticizes them, but fails to come up with a politically efficacious way of resistance.

This romanticized view of pleasure as emanating from the self is demonstrated in Foucault's interpretation of Jouy's pleasure. He posits this pleasure as a natural force of

[156] Butler 1997, 86-87.

resistance against the medicalization and pathologization of Jouy. He fails to realize, or at least fails to point out, that Jouy's pleasure, too, was constituted by social norms and existing discourses, which made it accepted as part of "everyday occurrence of village sexuality"; that Jouy's pleasure was enacted within a relation of power that involves male and adult domination; that Jouy's pleasure, rather than being a personal possession that preserves the potential of resistance, was rather exercised in relation to other individuals whom he could exert coercion and violence on. It is highly problematic for Foucault to defend Jouy's pleasure against intervention on the ground that it "formed part of a social landscape and practices that were very familiar," and that "the young girl (Sophie Adam) more or less lets it happen" and "says nothing to her parents"[157], while utterly ignoring that such pleasure too was constituted discursively and performed within relations of power and discursive norms as well, and Adam's response only proves that relations of power and domination can be naturalized and become invisible. It never occurs to Foucault to ask: what kind of gendered relation was enacted, and how did they constitute the subjects that were part of such sexual exchange? Jouy's livability was more or less built on others' un-livability. The same questions and concerns also apply to Herculine's case. Foucault's sympathy for Jouy and Herculine make him fail to acknowledge that pleasure and sexuality are neither prediscursive nor personal possessions, but are discursively constituted and enacted within social relations of power. He also fails to acknowledge that, as Taylor points out, the lives of some subjects already involved intervention of power in their everyday lives, and they were beaten and killed on a daily basis.[158] Rape and domestic violence were only seen as everyday village sexuality because they were naturalized within discursive norms and power relations at the time.

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[157] Foucault 2003, 295.
[158] Taylor, 424.

The kind of pleasure gained from raping a little girl and abusing one's wife of course is different from Herculine's "happy limbo of non-identity" (although the latter certainly was practiced within relations of power as well, as Butler has shown), as well as sexual practices that were deemed unlawful or transgressive such as sodomy, homosexual behavior, or S & M. What is at stake here, I want to point out, is to acknowledge that pleasure and sexuality are always constituted within discourse and power relations, and enacted in relation to others. Pleasure gained through sexual practice in relation to other bodies is by no means prediscursive. Although I share Foucault's critique of pathologization of individuals, I think it is at least equally important to acknowledge that there are other kinds of domination and intervention that are also problematic and makes lives unlivable. A quick glance at Foucault's favorite examples reveals that he is imperceptive towards difference among the ways in which these transgressive pleasures are enacted. The case of Jouy's "inconsequential bucolic pleasures" acquired from raping Sophie Adam is undeniably a form of domination and violence. Herculine's "happy-limbo of non-identity" is enacted from an ambivalent position of power, and the S & M game, as Foucault duly notices, "is a strategic relation," which "is always fluid" as "those roles can be reversed."[159]

The forms of pleasures implicated in these cases are constituted by and enacted in different relations of power. It is most important to acknowledge that none of these forms of pleasure are created out of nowhere but are constituted discursively within relations of power and enacted in relation to others. And at the same time, we have to come up with a way of making political judgment of pleasure, no matter how dangerous that sounds, that does not turn them into total objects of medical knowledge and psychiatric power, but pertain to the complex interplay of various forms of power and norms that coexist while at the same time take into account of one's ethical relation to others. Political judgments (which are different

[159] Foucault 1998, 169.

from interventions) of pleasure should be attentive to the kind of power relations that constitute such pleasure and power relations within which such pleasure is enacted. Foucault himself would not categorically reject that as he makes it clear that his critique of certain forms of power does not mean that power is always bad, but "everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad".[160] If everything is dangerous," says Foucault, then "we always have something to do."[161] As dangerous as this task may seem, it has to be carried out in the struggle of livability of sexual minorities. A claim to livability cannot be built on an authentic self, an innate feeling, an innocent pleasure, as if they were outside of discourse and possess natural force to resist power-knowledge. Such a romanticized and uncritical view of pleasure, as I have shown, covers deeply entrenched normalized violence.

Pleasures are dangerous, but probably because they are dangerous, they can also form the conditions of possibility to address mundane normative violence. However, pleasures should not be sought through recourse to a natural multiplicity or a prediscursive bodily affect. While Foucault's account of power's complex engagement with bodily pleasures effectively situate them as spatially coextensive, throughout his discussion of pleasures he seems to imply that pleasures can either be traced back to a present time wherein power was not meddling with pleasures (and by doing so he ignores different relations of power at play), or be projected into a future wherein new pleasures, odd and queer pleasures can be created. But, as Foucault himself acknowledges, both the past and the future are inevitably projected from the present, as he states in Discipline and Punish, his genealogy is "a history of the present"[162].

Political judgment of pleasure, I want to clarify, should not seek to delimit and legitimize a field of accepted sexuality or pleasure, which is not the root of the problem. It is

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[160] Foucault 1983, 231.
[161] Ibid, 231.
[162] Foucault 1995, 31.

power relations and normative violence that uncover oppression, abuse, and violation that have to be problematized and challenged. In order to do so we need to take intersubjectivity into account and acknowledge that pleasure is not only constituted, but also enacted and practiced intersubjectively. Because each body coexists with a plurality of other bodies and it is through such interaction that pleasure, and to an extent, sexuality, are constituted and performed, pleasure and sexuality are fluid, unpredictable, and inevitably have the possibility to exceed discourse and resignify existing discourses. And because pleasures are fundamentally entrenched by power relations and contain within them tremendous normative violence, pleasures are extremely important to resignify norms and undo normative violence. In the next chapter I will turn to Merleau-Pontian phenomenology of intersubjectivity to highlight the ways in which sexuality and pleasure are constituted intersubjectively. I argue that both Foucault and Merelau-Ponty eschew from a radical politics of resistance, but they both provide rich resources that are taken up by feminist and queer theorists such as Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed, Alia Al-Saji, Megan Burke, Joanna Oksala, to provide a viable politics of resisting and resignifying normative violence.

Chapter Three:
Embodying Normative Violence, Undoing Normative Violence: Temporality, Historicity and Orientation

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which normative violence, which is inherited in the process of the materialization of the body, especially in terms of gender constitution, can be exposed and resisted so that more lives can be made livable.[163] Normative violence, as I argued in the first chapter, legitimizes physical harm done to some people and conceals its effects. The way in which it justifies some kinds of harm demonstrates that normative violence, rather than being the absolute opposite of power, is itself invested by power relations. In order to resist the oppressing reality of exclusion, pathologization, and systematic harm, the important political task here is to reveal the ways in which normative violence operates in justifying such practices, and therefore "to make life possible"[164] for people who are rendered unintelligible and invisible by normative violence. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account of the body, I argue, offers rich resources for uncovering normative violence: he shows that the body is not a passive object but has intentionality and affectivity that enable it to actualize and materialize potentialities delimited by existing social norms and cultural practices. In what follows, I engage with the feminist debate around interpretation of the notion of anonymity that is central to Merleau-Ponty's account of the lived body. I argue that anonymity should be understood not as a form of universality that underlies all bodies, but as a form of temporality and spatiality: an anonymous collectivity that we are born into, and anonymous time that becomes sedimented in our own and collective memory. The concept of anonymity reveals both the ways in which normative violence is embodied in the process of gender constitution and the disastrous consequences associated with the violence of reified norms. Moreover, anonymous time is also historical

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[163] Chambers 2003, 49.
[164] Butler 1999, xx.

time, in the sense the subject only comes into existence and becomes intelligible by embodying certain historical possibilities. Normative violence, hence, is also historical: it is produced by concrete power relations and transmitted through concrete norms. At last I argue that because these norms are intersubjectivity constituted and become reified, they cannot be resisted effectively through individual practice but have to be resignified and resisted through collective action and meaning creation.

From Materiality to Materialization: The Phenomenological Body

In Foucault's thought, disciplines are power mechanisms that are imposed on individual bodies whose materiality has different ontological existence than discourse. Foucault's conceptualization of the subject formation demonstrates the coextensiveness between power and the body. As Foucault argues both in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" and *Discipline and Punish*, power has a paradoxical relation to the body. Power hails and alters the original state of the body, "invests it, marks it, trains it, tortures it", but at the same time power enables the body to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs, and overall, to become useful.[165] Power is not only a repressive force but also a productive one that subjects the body to engage in certain tasks and have certain capacities. In this sense, power is corporeal.

However, it also seems that Foucault still preserves the body as a prediscursive materiality that is ontologically distinct from power. The body preexists power, and is a passive force that is hailed and taken up by power both through domination and subjection in order to acquire meaning and signification.[166] In other words, the-body-in-itself is, for Foucault, unintelligible. Moreover, in his detailed descriptions of the ways in which power imprints on and disciplines individual bodies, Foucault presents power as a set of external disciplines that have to be embodied by school children, soldiers, and prisoners.[167] Bodies are

[165] Foucault 1995, 25-26.
[166] Foucault 1977, 26.
[167] See *Discipline and Punish*, Part Three, "Discipline".

rendered docile, become corrected and useful through the corporeal significations power produces. Contrary to his overall account, which emphasizes the embodied aspect of power and significations, he fails to lay out the ways in which bodies actively embody norms, ideals, rules, and disciplines. The corporeal significations, in other words, ironically remain abstract and disembodied.

Much is left out of Foucault's account of the relation between the body and power. He offers, as he acknowledges, "a genealogy of the modern 'soul'"[168], the soul being the imprisonment of the body[169], the framework according to which power functions. What is needed to complement Foucault's one-directional account is a more mutual account of the relation between the body and power, not only focusing on the ways in which power interacts with the body, but also articulates the ways in which the body actively engages with power. To be fair, Foucault does present the constitution of the subject through corporeal signification as a temporal and spatial process, as I have presented in Chapter Two. And this account has been criticized, as I have mentioned in Chapter Two, as "hyperconstructive" and leaves no room for resistance. On the other hand, in his discussion of the ways in which the subject forms itself as an ethical being through diet, household economics, and most of all, erotics and sexual relations in *Use of Pleasure* and *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, as well as in interviews he gave in the same period, the self is posited as autonomous and voluntarily engaging with power in order to become an ethical being.[170] Meanwhile, in his critique of power, he locates pleasures to a prediscursive materiality of the body that can resist normative violence transmitted by disciplinary power, but is imperceptive to normative violence inherited in those pleasures (a political problem), as well as to the ways in which those pleasures are situated within existing power relations and power (a theoretical problem

[168] Foucualt 1995, 29.
[169] Ibid, 30.
[170] Foucault 1990b, 66.

that has problematic political consequences). These two accounts, thus, both ultimately fail to offer a viable politics of resisting normative violence.

The point here, however, is not to dismiss Foucault. Rather, it should be acknowledged that both Foucault's genealogy of modern power and his strategy for resisting disciplinary power by embodying pleasures are limited but offer resources for a politics of resistance. Judith Butler channels these two accounts of Foucault into a viable politics of resisting normative violence. While situating herself within the Foucauldian approach, she also brings Foucault and Merleau-Pontian phenomenology together and offers a more explicit and nuanced account of embodiment indebted to phenomenology that focuses on the ways in which the subject embodies and negotiates with power through repetitive bodily acts. Butler's critical reading of Foucault agrees with Foucault that the subject is fundamentally constituted by power, and she also introduces performativity and repetition into Foucault's account of subject formation. Although Butler attributes repetition to Foucault's account of subject formation, I argue, and as many theorists have pointed out[171], that it is through her interpretation of Foucault—as opposed to what Foucault says himself—that repetition becomes a crucial concept. She writes, "the Foucauldian subject is never fully constituted in subjection", but "repeatedly constituted in subjection, and it is in the possibility of a repetition that repeats against its origin that subjection might be understood to draw its inadvertently enabling power".[172] She reconciles Foucault's two accounts by showing that on the one hand, power fundamentally constitutes the subject through norms, regulations, and a phantasmatic ideals such as the notion of "sex", and on the other hand the subject from the beginning actively engages with power through repetitive bodily acts because it is compelled to become

[171] See Amy Allen, "Power Trouble: Performativity as Critical Theory" in *Constellations*. 5 (4), 1998. 456-471; Moya Lloyd, "Performativity, Parody, Politics" in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16 (2), 195-213; Samuel Chambers, "'An Incalculable Effect': Subversions of Heteronormativity," in *Political Studies*, Vol 55. 2007. 656-679.

[172] Butler 1997, 94.

intelligible.[173] The notion of intelligibility is extremely crucial to explain the mutual relation between the subject and power. She works mainly in the realm of sex/gender/sexuality and argues that the phantasmatic ideal—that coheres "sex, gender, sexual practice and desire"-- is made natural and conceived as the origin of all repetitive bodily acts aspiring to an end goal: becoming intelligible and thus livable. The subject does not freely choose to apply norms to itself to become intelligible: being intelligible and remaining so is not a choice but a necessity to live.

By bringing forth the notions of performativity and intelligibility, Butler compliments Foucault's genealogy of corporeal power and makes it clear that in order to become an intelligible subject and to live, the body repetitively interacts with norms, rules and disciplines laid out by power, as intelligibility is produced by "socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility,"[174] and for Butler, to be unintelligible is to be unlivable. Power and the subject *have to* engage with each other: the body is compelled to reiterate norms set out by the normative discursive ideal, and it only comes into existence and becomes intelligible through materialization according to existing norms and identity categories. Norms, as Butler explains, are neither rules nor laws, but operate "within social practices as the implicit standard of normalization" thus usually remain "implicit, difficult to read, discernible most clearly and dramatically in the effects that they produce."[175] Norms possess colossal social and political forces by constantly calling people to be in line and rendering those who fail to comply unintelligible. Their foremost investment is in how materialization takes place. Butler argues that to investigate the ways in which the subject embodies power, the pressing questions we need to ask are: what constrains the domain of what is materializable, and what are modalities of materialization that govern the engagement

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[173] Butler 1999. 23-24.
[174] Ibid, 23.
[175] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge. 2004b. Print. 41.

between the subject and power.[176] Butler, and many other feminist philosophers such as Alia Al-Saji, Sara Ahmed and Megan Burke, all articulate the importance of performativity in accounting for subject formation, especially gender constitution and possible ways of undoing gender normativity. The notions of performativity and repetitive bodily acts help them to account for the ways in which normative violence is actively embodied by subject and shed insight on the ways in which subjects, together, can resist and resignify normative violence, not as an external force, but as part of themselves.

Feminist interpretations of Foucauldian analysis and phenomenology thus bring concrete situationality and further tease out the importance of power relations that is already central to both of these two accounts. Through their engagement, both Foucault and Merleau-Ponty can be read as committed to undo normative violence inherent in essentialist identity categories in different ways: Foucauldian analysis aids the exploration of the body's relation to power-knowledge; and phenomenology, by focusing on the various acts by which identity is constituted, provides insight into the actual processes by which bodies get crafted.[177] What is most important to a politically salient account of the embodied subject is to not only situate it within concrete power relations, regimes of truth, as well as historical conditions, but also to account for the body as lived, as what Merleau-Ponty calls it: "a historical idea", as "an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities, a complicated process of appropriation."[178]

Instead of positing the body as isolated and without signification and only later becomes imprinted by power and cultural signification, Maurice Merleau-Ponty maintains that the body is born into a web of relations and norms from the beginning. By forming, maintaining, sustaining and regulating bodies at once, power and intersubjective relations

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[176] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Print. 10.
[177] Butler 1988, 525.
[178] Butler 1988, 521.

constitute the very materiality of the body,[179] instead of merely imprinting on it. He shows that the body does not exist prior to cultural signification but is a positive and necessary entity through which we have access to a world. The body can never be fully reduced to an object, as it is the entity through which I perceive and it can never be "spread out under my gaze".[180] The contour of the body is a border within which the body's parts relate to each other in a particular way: they envelop each other, rather than laid out side by side; and the subject actively integrates its body parts according to its projects.[181]

In general, the body is understood phenomenologically as the site through which the subject has access to a world and forms a relation to itself and others. It signifies not a given materiality, but rather a process of materialization. It is the "primordial habit" that "conditions all others and by which they can be understood."[182] It does not form permanence in the world, but it is permanent *for me*, and serves as "the latent horizon of our experience."[183] The body is not in space, but rather inhabits space, actively assuming a purposeful and intentional dimension. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that body parts have "potentialities" that are only actualized and become meaningful through intersubjective perception and ongoing series of acts, of physical and psychic exchanges with the world that are sometimes unconscious and sometimes volitional. The body is understood as the setting of possibilities that open up to the world, the place that enables projects to be carried out; it is only because of the body that it becomes possible for the subject to experience the world and interact with others. The body is our general means of having a world at all: sometimes it is attentive to needs that are necessary for the conservation of life, thus posits a biological world around it; sometimes it brings forth a new core of signification through new gestures and new

[179] Butler 2004, 9.
[180] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. 93.
[181] Ibid, 100.
[182] Ibid, 93.
[183] Ibid, 95.

movements, and construct an instrument projecting a cultural world around itself.[184] As he argues, "To be a body is to be tied to certain world, and our body is nor primarily in space, but is rather of space."[185]

In elaborating such possibilities, Merleau-Ponty highlights the spatiality of the body, and points out that the spatiality of the body is always a situational spatiality, in the sense the body designates "the installation of the first coordinates, the anchoring of the active body in an object, and the situation of the body confronted with its tasks."[186] According to him, the uniqueness of the body lies in the fact that bodily space is distinguished from external space insofar as it is the invisible background, "the darkness of the theatre", that makes it possible for the subject to act and against which the subject acts.[187] Therefore, it becomes clear that it is through the body that the subject becomes part of the world and begins to exist for others. The body is not simply an object among other objects in space; rather, it inhabits space and is intentional—it exists toward tasks, toward the world and others.[188] Thus, the body is not in space, but inhabits space. He argues that even when life falls back upon itself—when it withdraws from the world and retreats back into anonymity—the body still does not fully become an object in the world, as it still remains intentional so that new intentions can always sketch out and the subject can reopen itself, thus becoming active in participating in the world again.[189]

The spatiality of the body in time is best manifested through action and movement, as movement actively assumes and synthesizes time and space, and takes them up in a meaningful way that disrupts their original, passive signification.[190] In other words, it is

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[184] Mealeau-Ponty, 147.
[185] Ibid, 149.
[186] Ibid, 103.
[187] Ibid, 103.
[188] Ibid, 103.
[189] Merleau-Ponty, 168.
[190] Ibid, 105.

through movement and actions that the subject embodies time and space, in the sense that the subject starts to inhabit space through habitual movement over time. It is through space and time that the subject assumes a world within which it assumes meaning for itself through intentional and conscious movement, through its interaction and engagement with objects and others. Moreover, movement is also intentional, insofar as it is directed toward an object, or the other. It always contains a reference to the object or other, which is "this highly determinate thing toward which we are thrown."[191] Such intentionality is enabled by a form of consciousness that instead of positing "I think that", dwells on "I can,"[192] as being toward the thing or person through the intermediary of the body. Merleau-Ponty argues that each movement takes place against a background determined by the movement itself. The space within which it happens is not empty and devoid of all relations to the movement, but rather assumes an active relation to the movement.[193] At the same time, each movement is not fragmented nor radically separated from others, but is an integral part of a whole delineated by space and time in the world.[194] Each of them links between a here and a there, a past and a future.

At each moment of action, the body synthesizes space and time, which are "an infinity of relations synthesized by my consciousness in which my body would be implicated, "[195] as the body necessarily exists here and now, reflecting an absolute consciousness immanent to the particular space that the body dwells and a temporal structure that links the past to the future, as the preceding instant is not forgotten but rather forms the background upon which the present is built upon and the future is oriented by. He stresses, "the present perception consists in taking up the series of precarious positions that envelop each other by relying

[191] Ibid, 140.
[192] Ibid, 139.
[193] Ibid, 139.
[194] Merleau-Ponty, 139.
[195] Ibid, 141.

upon the current position."[196] The synthesis of space and time is always to be started anew as each movement takes place. Therefore, the body through which the subject synthesizes space and time never forms a closed system within which every single signification has already acquired its stable meaning; rather, it is an open system such that signification can be assumed anew so that new meaning can emerge. Meaning and signification are not stabilized nor essentialized once and for all; rather, they are being put into question and doubt at every movement when the body is in the world with others, and the relative degree of familiarity and stability is only achieved through repetitive actions and movement over time within space. Yet each movement, and each moment, while being open to the new, is also implicated in the past, memory and previous habitual movements through which the subject manages to establish a balance between being completely unfathomable and being overdetermined. Each bodily movement can either reinforce and reaffirm the past, or provides the possibility of resignifying and creating new meanings, which can later on again become the site upon which repetition or subversion take places. Such movements and moments thus constitute an open flow that links the past to the future. The subject is always able to incorporate new movement, new habits and discover new ways of being in the world by virtue of being embodied within space and time.

New habits can be acquired by the subject through the synthesis of space and time. Phenomenology makes it clear that it is through the body's active engagement with time and space that new habits are acquired. In other words, acquiring new habits change the body schema and the ways in which the subject interacts with objects and others in the world. A specific movement is learned and incorporated when the body has understood it and learned to how to move accordingly; in other words, when the body becomes reoriented and extends into spaces differently. Places within which concrete and embodied movements take place are

[196] Ibid, 141.

not objective but intentional—they inscribe around us the variable reach of our intentions and our gestures.[197]

Acquiring new habits makes it necessary to move differently, to form different relations to objects and to be of space and time differently. As Al-Saji writes, habit-change means the synchronization between the world and the body changes.[198] It is shown that to habituate oneself in space in relation to objects is to take up residence in such objects and at the same time make them participate within the voluminosity of one's own body.[199] Habit expresses the power we have of dilating our being in the world, or of altering our existence through incorporating new instruments and skills. Hence, it is neither a form of knowledge nor an automatic reflex, but rather a process of acquiring knowledge through bodily effort.[200] In other words, acquiring habit is not a sovereign decision willfully made possible by the subject; rather, the subject can only acquire new habits through an embodied practice that makes it possible for intentions to be realized—it is the body that comes to understand, to experience the accord between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the realization through the course of time; it is through the body that coordination of movements and intention and knowledge becomes possible and realized.[201] The body is the mediator of a world within which the subject inhabits. And because it is through the body that the subject acquires new habits, what is learned and incorporated is a holistic relation between the body, space, as well as objects and others in the world. The bodily schema as a whole is altered and its ways of being in the world are extended and changed. For Merleau-Ponty, habit-change takes place primarily through perception, as it is through perception that the relation between sensing (subject) and the sensible (world) is negotiated. Habit-change

[197] Merleau-Ponty, 144.
[198] Al-Saji, "A Past Which Has Never Been Present". 2008, 52.
[199] Merleau-Ponty, 145.
[200] Ibid, 145.
[201] Merleau-Ponty, 146.

thus means that the body synchronizes with new objects both temporally and spatially by developing "a new rhythm or pattern of movement."[202] As a result, "the sensing body is instituted as perceiving subject, while the sensible ceases to be a universe of distinct rhythms and becomes a world of concrete, perceived things."[203]

Perception takes place neither solely through the body/sensing subject, nor is it bestowed by the world *a priori*; rather, perception happens in-between the world and the body. As Al-Saji explains, for Merleau-Ponty, "to perceive is not to coincide with a sensible in-itself but to coexist with the sensible in a mode of synchronization that allows it to come into focus, to be sensible for itself."[204] Here we can see that the intentionality of the body makes it possible for such synchronization to take place, as it prepares at every single moment to perceive differently, move differently, and acquires new habit. The world becomes meaningful to me through perception, which is the synchronization between the world and my body. The world starts to exist absolutely for me through the intentionality of my body that enables perception to take place. And because of the intentionality of my body, as the sensing subject, I am always able to perceive differently and thus acquire new habit by altering the rhythm existing between the sensing body and the sensible world; which is to say, new meaning can always arise through negotiation between the sensing body and the world.

Affectivity, Anonymity, and Temporality: Merleau-Ponty on Sexuality and Gender

If the body is not a given or prediscursive materiality, but only becomes our being in the world through a process of materialization within the field of discursivity, then subject formation takes place primarily through the body, through the embodiment of norms, relations with objects and others, as well as experience of desires and affect. Or, subject formation *is* materialization of the body. It is through the body that the subject embodies

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[202] Al-Saji, 56.
[203] Ibid, 56.
[204] Ibid, 56.

power and knowledge by repetitively citing norms and possibilities that are already laid out by discourse—power/knowledge, history, and culture, and experiences the world, as well as forms a relation to itself and others. In other words, the way in which the body becomes materialized, or more specifically*, is allowed to* become materialized, is historically and culturally specific and contingent. It can become otherwise, resist and resignify the norms that it has embodied through repetitive acts. And the question here is how that can be made possible. This project, borrowing Butler's words, is to "expand and enhance a field of possibilities for bodily life and to conceive of bodies differently", especially in regard to the abjection of certain kinds of bodies".[205] Attending to the materialization of the body should help us not only to understand the ways in which the subject experiences the world, but also bring insight to how to make bodies that are abjected, marginalized and excluded become more intelligible, thus make their lives livable.

Materialization of the body, as I have shown, takes place primarily through bodily perception. The body, as Merleau-Ponty argues, is both intentional and affective. The intentionality of the body makes perception and habit-change possible, and the affectivity of the body, however, seems to be more primary than its intentionality, as Merleau-Ponty argues that it is through the "affective milieu" that the sensible starts to exist absolutely for the sensing subject. Moreover, the body's affectivity also opens itself to the world in the first place. Such openness not only allows the body to "take up and 'sympathize' with" worldly rhythms,[206] but also, and more importantly, demonstrates that the body does not exist in isolation but is open to other bodies. If the primary relation between the body and other bodies is founded upon such primordial affectivity—which in other words, sexuality, then an investigation of sexuality will not only help us to understand how we relate to objects and others, but also provide important insights into reconfiguration of power and resignification

[205] Butler 1998, 277.
[206] Al-Saji, 50.

of discursive norms. Hence, problematization of the materialization of the body should start with a critical investigation of gender and sexuality.

I will focus on the way in which the body becomes gendered and sexualized in the following section. Both gender and sexuality ought not to be understood as being founded by a single act, but are ways of becoming through "a process within which a set of actions are mobilized by discourse, the citational accumulation and dissimulation of the law that produces material effects, the lived necessity of theses effects as well as the lived contestation of that necessity."[207] In other words, materialization is both discursive and corporeal, a process through which the body is compelled to reiterate norms that are laid out by the discourse. But because materialization has to be renewed and repeated at every single moment, there is always possibility of resignification, reorientation, and reiteration. Thus, investigation of gender and sexuality should not seek a founding moment or an innate feeling, but explore a process of becoming made possible by repetitive bodily acts. Citationality and reiterability are crucial in our understanding of gender and sexuality as they demonstrate and establish them as temporal concepts that are acquired through time.

Understanding gender and sexuality as temporal concepts requires us to focus on another central concept that has been taken up widely by feminist theorists in Merleau-Ponty's account of the body: the anonymous body; or, anonymity. Merleau-Ponty refers to anonymity through *The Phenomenology of Perception (PPH)*, as "an original past," "natural time," "absolute past of nature," "primordial silence," "pre-history," and "a past which has never been present". Feminist theorists such as Elizabeth Grosz, Judith Butler and Shannon Sullivan argue that Merleau-Ponty's anonymous body, just as any other abstract universal model of the body, assumes masculine universality thus neglects bodily difference, and to

[207] Butler 2004, xxi.

their concern, mainly sexual difference.[208] Megan Burke, on the other hand, argues in "Anonymous Temporality and Gender: Rereading Merleau-Ponty" that such readings miss a very important implication of anonymity: a kind of temporality.[209] Burke contends that for Merleau-Ponty, anonymity denotes a certain kind of temporality, "a lived time that is prior to the present, a generative time before the history of the 'I'."[210] And she argues that the feminist interpretations of Merleau-Ponty above fail to acknowledge this important aspect of anonymity.

For example, Sullivan argues that because Merleau-Ponty understands the body as an anonymous body that has no particularity, his "intersubjective dialogue often turns out to be solipsistic subject's monologue that includes an elimination of others in its very 'communication' with them;" thus, "because the particularities have been overlooked, Merleau-Ponty's account of intersubjectivity is built upon the domination of others."[211] Sullivan claims that because Merleau-Ponty's anonymous body erases all concrete particularities that have concrete consequences in the real world, it renders inequalities and domination involved in the process of intersubjective recognition invisible. It collapses the concrete difference between the posited anonymous and universal subject and the other, and fails to take into account any kind of difference and particularity. Sullivan reads Merleau-Ponty's account of the anonymous body as stating "beneath their [bodies'] differences lies an original similarity or common ground not yet marked by our differences."[212]

Butler also shares this reading of anonymity. She argues that Merleau-Ponty's understanding of lived experience rests upon heteronormativity, insofar as his descriptions of sexuality are "tacit normative assumptions about the heterosexual character of sexuality," as

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[208] Burke "Anonymous Temporality and Gender: Rereading Merleau-Ponty" 2011. 139.
[209] Ibid, 140.
[210] Burke, 140.
[211] Shannon Sullivan, "Domination and Dialogue in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*." 1997.1.
[212] Sullivan, 5.

"not only does he assume that sexual relations are heterosexual, but that the masculine sexuality is characterized by a disembodied gaze that subsequently defines its object as mere body."[213] For Butler, Merleau-Ponty's account of "normal sexuality" suggests that "the female body has an 'essence' to be found in the 'schema' that invariably elicits the gestures of masculine desire."[214] And she suggests that if the female body denotes an essence, but bodies in general denote existence, then "bodies in general must be male", and existence does not belong to women.[215] Thus, Butler argues that although Mealeau-Ponty suggests that the body is anonymous, he in fact just proposes another form of universality taking into account only male bodies. For both Sullivan and Butler, anonymity here is understood as another form of abstract universality, except this time Merleau-Ponty locates it within the body. Sullivan and Butler's critiques can be read as attempts normative violence that might be contained within Merleau-Ponty's account of the body, because the assumed similarity of all bodies often only takes into account the particularity of the dominant view yet at the same time renders such domination invisible. Sullivan and Butler's critiques can be read as attempts to uncover such normative violence inherent in universalist account of the body.

But before accusing Merleau-Ponty for making a male-centric and Eurocentric mistake, it is important to figure out what he actually means by anonymity. In response to Sullivan and Butler's critiques alike, Burke defends Merleau-Ponty's notion of anonymity by emphasizing anonymity as a form of temporality, and she argues that reading anonymity as a temporality also help us to come up with a non-reified and non-natural account of gender that is fruitful for feminism. Ironically, although Butler fails to acknowledge anonymity as a form of temporality, her own engagement with phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty in her larger intellectual framework coincides with Burke's reading of gender as a temporality.

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[213] Butler 1989, 86.
[214] Butler 1981, 94.
[215] Ibid, 94.

Understanding anonymity as a form of temporality brings us back to the fundamental understanding of the body as perceiving and habitual. As I have argued before, because the body always occupies a place between the past and future, it can link the past to the future; it is simultaneously connected to its memory and open to the future. The past, however, is an impersonal time that precedes the "I", the personal time.[216] Merleau-Ponty clarifies that these are two temporalities: one of the habitual body and one of the actual body.[217] The habitual body, instead of being abstract or neutral, is rather a "repository of habitual experience."[218] It consists of fragmented and repressed memories prior to the formation of the subject and its actual body. Anonymity here is understood as a surplus and repressed time that underlies and informs my present. These "sedimentations of previous constitutions" emerge from sensing, "prereflective moments that actualize my reflective self."[219] And Burke argues that, because sensing takes place before perception, before the formation of the "I", I am unable to know reflectively these sedimentations.[220] Yet I can feel them as the habitual past of my body; they are the anonymous past that conditions and underlies my actual body and me as a subject. "My" present only arises after sensing the anonymous past that I cannot reflect on; I am formed upon such anonymous temporality. In Burke's words, this generative and anonymous past "actualizes one's personal temporality, but only insofar as it is a forgotten past."[221] Although this sensing past is forgotten and remains largely unreflective, it is by no means insignificant in the process of subject formation, as Merleau-Ponty stresses that "Sensation is intentional because I find in the sensible the proposition of a certain existential rhythm...and because, taking up this proposition, and slipping into the form of existence that is suggested

[216] Burke, 146.
[217] Merleau-Ponty, 60.
[218] Burke, 146.
[219] Ibid, 147.
[220] Ibid, 147.
[221] Ibid, 148.

to me, I relate myself to an external being."[222] Thus this sedimented history is always available to us, because "every memory reopens lost and invites us to again take up the situation that it evokes."[223] The intentional threads within sensing link the lived past to the present, and situate the "I" within the world.

Thinking gender in terms of such anonymous yet intentional past means that relations, sensations, and habits that are repressed and forgotten prior to the formation of the "I" as a gendered being nonetheless "are habituations that inform my gendered style of being, my gendered style of relating to the world."[224] "I" do not have willful control over how such past moments are played and how they constitute me, as I cannot even reflect on them. I am formed as a gendered being through anonymous temporality and "sedimentations of gendered habits."[225] Gender norms are neither taken up by the sensing subject nor naturally given. Rather, gender norms are inherited in the anonymous temporality that is lived by us through pre-reflective sensing and affectivity. This past makes sensing and perceiving possible, as Merleau-Ponty states, "sensation is a reconstitution, it presupposes in me the sedimentations of a previous constitution."[226] What is reconstituted in reflection is such sensing in anonymous temporality, which is "the time of the sedimentation of gendered norms",[227] and, "insofar as sedimentation occurs in anonymous temporality it becomes possible to understand why and how it is that gender comes to be a habit that is ordinarily done prereflectively."[228] This is to say, gender is a habit, a sedimented history, as well as a corporeal style that is performatively established. Burke's phenomenological account of gender compliments

[222] Merleau-Ponty, 221.
[223] Ibid, 88.
[224] Burke, 149.
[225] Ibid, 149.
[226] Merleau-Ponty, 222.
[227] Burke, 150.
[228] Ibid, 150.

Butler's account of gender as performative by highlighting that gender is constituted through an anonymous past whose origin cannot be accounted for.

Similarly, although Butler does not explicitly engage in phenomenological language, her performative account of gender constitution actually also understands gender as temporality. Butler reveals that gender is an identity as well as a bodily existence constituted in time, through repetition of acts.[229] The gendered body is a corporeal style, which is both intentional and performative. "Performative", according to Butler, in the sense that it is a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning, through repetition.[230] Such repetition is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings and norms already socially and discursively established, as "the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation."[231] Gender constitution is thus an embodied experience, consisting of the mundane ways in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds that are incoherent and discontinuous yet are grouped together to create the illusion of an abiding gendered self.[232] Butler argues that the "unity" of gender is not the expression of a genuine self, but the effect of regulatory practice, through which gender identity is constituted within the frame of compulsory heterosexuality.[233] Within the regime of compulsory heterosexuality, gender coherence is desired and idealized, and acts, norms, and practices that constituted it within time are erased. Such idealization is an effect of a corporeal signification, in the sense that acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core of substance, but produce it on the surface of the body.[234] Such acts, gestures, enactments are performative in the sense that the essence of identity that they seek to express is merely fabrications manufactured and

[229] Butler 1988, 519.
[230] Ibid, 190.
[231] Ibid, 191.
[232] Ibid, 519.
[233] Butler 1999, 43.
[234] Butler 1999, 185.

sustained through corporeal signs and discursive means.[235] And bodies can only be materialized aspiring to a uniformed gender identity.

Butler thus is able to link Foucauldian analysis of bodily interpellation and inscription to a phenomenological account of the lived body. She shows that subject formation is not only a discursive production, but also a repetitive temporal constitution. Identity categories are violent not only because they are fundamentally exclusionary, but also because the norms they lay in anonymous time are repetitively embodied pre-reflectively and become naturalized, thus are extremely hard to be exposed and undone. Interpellation, unlike what Althusser claims[236], is neither accomplished by a single act nor a linguistic production; and unlike what Foucault implies, it is not a project imposed on the passive bodily surface. Rather, interpellation is repetitive and corporeal, as well as regulatory and punitive. Through interpellation, normative violence becomes an integral part of subjectivity and is embedded in repetitive bodily acts over time. It circulates through social norms and sanctions. It entails a continuous bodily "project", which has cultural survival as its end, and regulates through serious punitive consequences.[237] Normative violence is rendered invisible in the face of coherent and unified identity. On the other hand, queer bodies and subjectivities that disrupt the discrete gender identities are punished and rendered as unreal.

If the inner truth of gender is a discursive fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, if gender is a temporal and spatial constitution, then gender can be neither true nor false, neither original nor derivative, but is only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity.[238] The construction of gender achieves its efficacy through power relations that have punitive consequences, in the sense that it produces a set of norms embodied through a set of

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[235] Ibid, 185.
[236] See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus".
[237] Butler 1999, 190.
[238] Butler 1999, 186.

corporeal styles, which appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in a binary relation to one another.[239]

Compulsory heterosexuality paradoxically both forms the background that enables actions to take place, and limits the possibility of such acts and ways of materialization of bodies. And because identity is a discursive construction that poses itself as necessary and natural, its contingent characteristic can be exposed by discontinuous and incoherent gendered beings that are constantly prohibited and produced by such power,[240] as they reveal that biological sex, gender identity, sexual desire, and sexual practice do not necessarily align together and can be neatly grouped in discrete genders. And because certain kinds of gender identities or gender expressions fail to conform to norms of cultural intelligibility delineated by historical, cultural and discursive conditions, they are constructed and seen as developmental failures or logical impossibilities thus remain marginalized and almost invisible. And it is for this reason that queer individuals are unlivable. Yet their persistence and proliferations in turn expose the contingent character of sex as a unifying principle and the limits of such regulatory ideal.[241] They also reveal that such discontinuities also exist within discrete sexes and genders, by showing that gender identity, sexuality, and sexual practices do not generate from an essential substance but rather are constituted, and become self-identical through and persist in time, through exclusions and abjections that are regarded as unintelligible or tabooed.

Performativity thus explains the ways in which binary gender identity and heterosexuality are naturalized. It is a temporal process within which normative violence embedded in circulating norms is embodied by repetitive bodily acts. Therefore, performativity entails a temporality, which coincides with Burke's explicit phenomenological

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[239] Ibid, 191.
[240] Ibid, 25.
[241] Ibid, 24.

account of gender constitution. Butler and Burke's readings of gender as temporality pose a direct challenge to the understanding of gender as expressive, which assumes that gender enacts an inner essential self according to which gender acts, sexuality, and sexual desires are measured. Such a view suggests an exterior-interior dualism, a separation between the bodily surface, which is subjected by social forces, and the bodily interior, which is the substance of the subject that dictates all acts taken by the subject. Understanding gender as performative collapses the distinction between the bodily surface and the bodily interior, and denies the existence of an authentic self that is untainted by social forces, a self against which all actions is measured as either true or false. This argument can be read as a direct refutation of Foucault's recourse to a self. The authentic self, for Butler, is a phantasmatic ideal made real through rule-governing bodily acts.

The interior self, as Butler shows, is actually publicly produced and regulated. The important implication here is that gender is never a personal possession, but always assumes a public character, embedded in norms that are outside of the subject, who is nonetheless subjected and influenced by them. Gender identity, as a socially produced presence, conceals its own genesis and is made possible by the "tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fiction", within which normative violence is deeply embedded in. She points out that although gender is achieved through acts, one does not act alone, but always does it in accord with conventions and sanctions conditioned by the historical situation.[242] As she says,

> one is compelled to live in a world in which genders constituted univocal signifiers, in which gender is stabilized, polarized, rendered discrete and intractable. In effect, gender is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which not only contradicts its own performative fluidity, but serves a social policy of gender regulation and control.[243]

[242] Butler 1988, 525.
[243] Ibid, 528.

In other words, norms and reified meanings form and consolidate the gender identity taken up by the subject, and accord discontinuous acts into a coherent identity. Through such tacit collective agreement whose participants are well aware of the punitive consequences of not conforming thus are socially compelled to comply, gender identity is then reproduced and sustained. Gender construction is an important political project invested by power and knowledge. The illusion of an interior as the substance that gender strives to embody is itself a discursive construction, maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality.[244] Gender and sexuality, thus, are not expressions of an innate feeling or self, but are concrete ways of becoming within the confinement of compulsory heterosexuality. Thus resistance necessarily entails resignifications of norms, according to which space of livability can be created, and different temporalities of gender constitution can be created.

Burke, however, puts resistance as an individual endeavor and argues that it is up to each individual body to undo and resignify normative violence that has been embodied in anonymous time. She points out that "given the plurality of sensible givens in anonymity, anonymity is a time in which different meanings are generated. Different sensing can unfold in me such that my gendered existence may actualize differently."[245] Gender constitution is thus not determined but is open to different ways of being sedimented. How gender and gender norms become sedimented, of course, are largely affected by the particular situations within which such constitution take place. Because of such abstract indeterminacy, Burke has a very optimistic reading of gender-reconstitution and resistance of oppressing gender norms. She argues that just as my habituated senses happen to lay themselves in a particular way so that I am a certain gender, "such habituated senses can also be disrupted in such a way that

[244] Butler 1999, 186.
[245] Burke, 151.

who I am now as a gendered being may shift."[246] Such a claim mainly builds on temporality of gender: gender is repetitively and habitually constituted, and is fundamentally dependent on such repetitive and habituated sedimentation. Pre-reflective sensing can be disrupted and resignified consciously through perceptive intentionality that arises upon such anonymous and sedimented history.

By showing that gender normativity is temporal, as it is constituted through a past that is forgotten, Burke uncovers that that "becoming women is the sedimentation of normative violence at the level of senses; it is a violence that is taken up and lived by my personal body."[247] Because this is a past that I cannot recall but nonetheless carry on within my body, it seems that the only way to undo such violence and become otherwise is by "cultivating new practices, habits, and visibly changing oppressive norms as a means to destabilize the sedimentation of norms."[248]According to her, "new practices can renew perceptual experience such that how 'I' did gender in the past does not solidify 'me' as a gendered person in the future;" suggesting that past normative violence can be undone through my personal confrontation with gender normativity that constituted me.

This overtly optimistic and rather simplistic solution to normative violence conduced by gender normativity greatly downplays the importance of gender as temporality, the point that Burke seeks to advance in her article. It is as though the violence done in the past can be consciously and magically undone through individual resistance, as if gender norms can be created by individuals alone and gender is a personal possession that can be altered by personal will. Merleau-Ponty's great insight that the body does not dwell on "I will" but on "I can" is forgotten. The question is not how I "will" disrupt and resist gender normativity, but how I "can" do so. If the sedimented history of gender is deeply embedded in the constitution

[246] Ibid, 154.
[247] Ibid, 155.
[248] Ibid, 155.

of the gendered subject, how can such compulsory violence be undone? How can such violence itself be addressed? It has to be realized that undoing past gender sedimentations cannot be achieved through individual practice and resistance. What is more important is to realize that anonymity also has to be resignified through collective creation of new norms and collective resistance to oppressive power structures. Anonymity does not entail radically free senses; it should be acknowledged that even "pure sensing" is affected by the situation within which sensing takes place. The seemingly radically open possibilities of becoming and actualization, are fundamentally conditioned and delimited by existing power relations, circulating social norms, and pervasive cultural practices.

Here I want to engage with a third reading of anonymity in Merleau-Ponty by turning to Gayle Salamon's reading of anonymity as bodily interiority. Here anonymity is understood both as temporality, a time that freezes; and more primarily as spatiality, a place where life can hide away. Salamon uses the case that Merleau-Ponty discusses in *The Phenomenology of Perception* in great length to demonstrate the significance of bodily interiority for our being in the world and subjectivity. The case is of a girl who lost her voice when her mother warned her away from her lover. Although he discussed in the section "The Body in Its Sexual Being", Merleau-Ponty does not dismiss the case as one of female hysteria. Rather, he breaks with Freudian psychoanalysis by suggesting a more nuanced and coherent theory of the relation between the body and the world. He aims to prove that the possibility of the body's existence in the world depends on its ability to retreat into itself, into bodily interiority, which is "the place where life hides away".[249] According to Merleau-Ponty, the girl did not voluntarily choose to stop speaking; rather, she is arrested in her bodily symptom, cut off from the outside world and all possible subjects as they exist for her, and thus lost the

[249] Merleau-Ponty, 167.

possibility of communication and refused to open herself up to the future.[250] In Salamon's words, her loss of voice is "the result of a qualitative change in her ability to relate to her body and a corresponding change in her body's ability to relate to the world".[251] As the object of her desire is denied access to her, out of self-protection, "life flows back on itself and history is dissolved in natural time"[252]. However, this withdrawal is not only a pathological symptom; rather, he argues that it is an ability that even normal people have as a means to escape from hazardous social situation and to retain their bodily integrity; and it is precisely because they possess this possibility of withdraw that their existence in the world with other people is possible and meaningful, as they can also open themselves up and be mutually constitutive of the world along with interactions with other people:

> At the every very moment when I live in the world, when I am given over to my plans, my occupations, my friends, my memories, I can close my eyes, lie down, listen to the blood pulsating in my ears, lose myself in some pleasure or pain, and shut myself up in this anonymous life which subtends my personal one. But precisely because my body can shut itself off from the world, it is also what opens me out upon the world and places me in a situation there. The momentum of existence towards others, towards the future, towards the world can be restored as a river unfreezes. (PPH 168).

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that even when the body retreats back into itself, it never completely loses or abolishes all connections to the world, in the sense of being reduced into a thing, a mere object in the world. And as some intention springs inside me anew, my body can successfully reopen itself to the world.[253]

It is because of the body's potential to both open to the world when it desires and retreat into itself to escape threat and harm that Merleau-Ponty stresses that anonymity, the ability for us to retreat into the interiority of our bodies, is the "foundation of our lives as

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[250] Ibid, 167.
[251] Salamon 2006, 104
[252] Merleau-Ponty, 168.
[253] Merleau-Ponty, 168.

social beings, and the condition of relation itself",[254] as well as the condition of the formation of intersubjectivity thus our being in the world. Gender and gender performance fundamentally condition and limit the body's ability to retreat to itself. Here we can see the anonymity is hierarchical: the little girl can retreat into her anonymous self and reopen to the world, but in spaces that are tacitly agreed and taken for granted for being "white", women of color immediately stand out and cannot retreat into the anonymity[255]. Anonymity is denied to them, in instances that in public places, they are simultaneously eroticized (within the matrix of heterosexuality, which contains normative violence against all queer people, who either have to come out again and again, or not bother to do that but feel violated), like white women, and also externalized (Where are you from? How long have you been here? Are you from—inserting arbitrary guesses? Or people would even go so far to randomly say greetings in a random language that out of their whim they think you must speak.) Their bodily anonymity is further denied: they are condemned to hyper-visibility all the time. Such mundane instances demonstrate that anonymity itself contains tremendous violence that needs to be addressed and resisted.

In the following section I will situate anonymity within concrete power relations and social norms. By critically engaging with Sara Ahmed and Judith Butler's elaborations and critiques of Merleau-Ponty, I argue that first of all, the availability of objects is itself delimited by power and cultural intelligibility within concrete social conditions, thus should be closely examined. And secondly, discourse and embodiment necessarily implicate each other and are both indispensable in the materialization of the body and subject formation. Through their critique and their investigation of how the subject is sexualized by the immediate objects available to it and its way of relating to those objects, I intend to

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[254] Salamon 2006, 110,

[255] I have not discussed racial embodiment in this thesis, but I believe that what I have discussed so far is highly relevant in discussing it. And in the case of anonymity, gender, sexuality and race certainly intersect.

underscore how it can be transformed by discovering different objects and reorienting its own way of relating to objects. Moreover, I argue that such possibility of resistance is necessarily both personal and social, in the sense that it is through individual bodies that such reorientation can take place, but at the same time, the possibility of such reorientation needs to be created through collective action and new discourses.

Gender, Sexuality and Delimitation of Norms: Becoming Queer

There is another important aspect of anonymity, historicity, which is left out by Burke and Merleau-Ponty. Anonymity is not just radically free temporality and spatiality, but rather entails historical time, as Butler points out that the body's concrete expressions in the world are a set of historical possibilities, constrained by available historical conventions and norms.[256] Butler's interpretation of Merleau-Ponty, especially of the notion of anonymity, fails to read anonymity as temporality, but she brings another important aspect of anonymity into attention: historicity. She points out that historical norms and possibilities fundamentally condition the ways in which the body can be materialized, and they also transmit normative violence in the process of embodiment. As Butler argues, "the body is a historical situation," which "is a manner of doing, dramatizing, and reproducing a historical situation."[257] By arguing that historical situation conditions and limits the possibilities of bodily styles and acts, she exposes the importance of temporality in subject formation and materialization of the body.

The contingency of the bodily existence of the subject is best exemplified by its relation to concrete objects. Merleau-Ponty points out that in order for a subject to be able to move its body toward an object or being, the object or being must first exist for it, be available to it, be ready to be taken up and directed toward. And he makes it clear that the way in which an

[256] Butler 1988, 521.
[257] Butler 1988, 521.

object or being begins to exist for us is primarily through desire or love.[258] It is through this "affective milieu" that an object or being begins to exist for us and only for us, through the mediation of the body as a sexed being.[259] Here, Merelau-Ponty and Foucault come to agreement by commonly suggesting that there is something peculiar about sexuality and sexual pleasure in the sense that they are the location upon which power, body and history intersect. The erotic nature of sexual pleasure makes Foucault see it as a radical force of resistance. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, suggests that sexuality is coextensive with life itself . For Merleau-Ponty, sexuality and sexual desire are intentional, and they are the fundamental means through which the subject experiences the world. It is through sexuality that the subject forms relation to concrete objects and other beings.[260] Moreover, for Merleau-Ponty, sexuality is also the primary register through which the subject has a world, to the extent that he asserts "There must be an immanent function in sexual life that guarantees its unfolding, and the normal extension of sexuality must rest upon the internal powers of the organic subject."[261] Sexuality not only animates perception so that the subject can come into existence, but also, it brings the lived body into its existence. It is through the active realization and satisfaction of one's sexual desire that the world starts to exist absolutely for the subject. It is on this ground that Merleau-Ponty argues sexuality is "coextensive with life itself".

The case Merleau-Ponty uses to elaborate this point, however, is rather bizarre. He tells the story of Schneider, who is "a patient who no longer seeks the sexual act of his own volition."[262] The first problem is that Merleau-Ponty pathologizes Schneider on the ground of his "abnormal" sexuality, and Schneider is a case of pathology "because "obscene pictures,

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[258] Merleau-Ponty, 156.
[259] Ibid, 156.
[260] Ibid, 156.
[261] Merleau-Ponty, 158.
[262] Ibid, 157.

conversations on sexual topics, and the perception of a body fails to arouse any desire in him", and kisses have "no value of sexual stimulation for him".[263] What is more, his view of "normal sexuality" and "normal existence" is very problematic here, since it takes being aroused by objectification of female bodies—pictures and representations, and "the gestures of the masculine body, which is itself integrated into this affective totality" as normal. Given that Merleau-Ponty's entire elaboration of sexuality is based on this case, on this pathological male, it is fair to say that Merleau-Ponty excludes females as subjects who exist through affective perception, as Butler argues, such that females are objects to be seen, not subjects to see. It reveals that the supposedly open affectivity and existence are in fact built on reification and domination of male bodies over female bodies. This problem, as Butler summarizes, shows a contradiction in Merleau-Ponty's account of the anonymous and sexuality: on the one hand "he wants sexuality to be intentional, in the world, referential, expressive of a concrete, existential situation,"[264] but on the other hand, he "offers a description of bodily experience abstracts from the concrete diversity that exists" (Schneider's case is one of those concrete examples of diversity). As a result, circulating normative violence embedded in "reification of a relation of domination between the sexes" and "a relationship of voyeurism and objectification"[265] is reified as part of natural sexuality that is "coextensive with life itself" and granted legitimacy.

Based on such tremendous contradiction within Merleau-Ponty's project and the problematic political implications it can give, Butler thus suggests that Merleau-Ponty's project is a failure since it only offers another male-centric view of the body and sexuality. However, before such harsh determination, we might ask: does not this contradiction demonstrate the point that Merleau-Ponty himself is fundamentally constituted and

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[263] Ibid, 157.
[264] Butler 1981, 95.
[265] Ibid, 95.

conditioned by his own pre-reflective sedimented history to the extent that he could not see? Does he not show that despite his philosophical commitment to the lived body and intersubjective perception, his own pre-reflective history nonetheless carries with it particular cultural and historical norms that he mistakenly universalizes? I think it better to read Merleau-Ponty's failure against his own theory, and show that his failure does not collapse his entire system but rather proves its political relevance and efficacy. His fundamental claim that "sexuality is coextensive with life" is still resourceful for feminist and queer theory and politics if we understand it to say that sexuality is fundamentally constituted by the historical condition within which it is inevitably situated in. Acknowledging the concrete historicity of sexuality can help us locate and uncover normative violence inherited in those existing norms and practices. And, as I have already argued in the previous chapter, it is important to acknowledge that sexuality is not a solipsistic experience of one's natural desire that is built upon the domination of others, but is rather a culturally and historically conditioned intersubjective relation.

At the same time, historicity does not only denote temporality, but also spatiality, insofar as space itself is performatively established by repetitive bodily acts and their habitual interactions with objects. Particular spatiality is also conditioned by its historical condition and cultural background. As Sara Ahmed puts it, the space is "being shaped by the purposefulness of the body", as "a field of action."[266] The body is not an object among other objects, although it is crucial in forming spatial relation between objects and the subject. Space is not merely a container for the body; rather, the body is "submerged"—it moves through space and forms a relation with it.[267] Ahmed draws our attention to the way in which the body is sexualized through how it inhabits space and is inhabited by space, and the ways

[266] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*. 2006, 65.
[267] Ibid, 53.

in which it relates to objects around it.[268] She points out that objects have qualities that make them tangible in the present, and these qualities depend on a history of the way in which they are occupied. The objects around the body allow the body itself to be extended, and their coordination allows action to take place.[269] Action, understood this way, is a way that the body inhabits space and takes up objects. According to Ahmed, objects have to be near enough to complete specific actions, and at the same time actions bring objects near the body.[270] Action, hence, is possible only when the body, the space, and the objects come together to fulfill an intention.

How they come together, however, is always conditioned by history, social norms, and cultural intelligibility. Merleau-Ponty has already acknowledged the historicity and contingency of the body; although it remains underdeveloped in his own theorization of the body and he sometimes falls back to a notion of "anonymous body", this point is extremely valuable for queer theory and has been taken up by queer theorists to explore the historicity of the body in order to both affirm queer experiences that disrupt the "normal" heterosexual bodily orientation and account for their ways of becoming. By looking behind the body and discovering its historicity, phenomenology exposes how heterosexuality and heterosexual gender configuration are made natural: by orienting the body towards certain objects (including objects of desire) and not others. And because the body has an active and reciprocal relation with the spaces that it inhabits, phenomenological investigation also shows how spaces are heterosexualized. Ahmed thus situates phenomenology within concrete power relations and reveals the ways in which normative violence is embodied through the body's active relation with space.

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[268] Ibid, 67.
[269] Ibid, 51.
[270] Ibid, 52.

Ahmed takes up Butler's theoretical point that repetitive bodily acts constitute the body and reinforce norms, which rely heavily on a temporal metaphor. Her engagement with repetitive bodily acts, reveals the spatial dimension of materialization of the body, which Butler leaves out. Ahmed argues that the process of becoming is a process of orientation: by orienting ourselves toward some objects and not others, the body acquires a way of inhabiting space and relating to others. She emphasizes that the objects are not limited to physical objects, but can be "objects of thought, feeling, and judgment, aim, aspiration, and objectives--"[271] ideals that are made concrete through being embodied by physical objects. The body works together with the objects in space repetitively and establishes a habitual relation with them, and only becomes oriented by forming relations with specific objects. Such orientation in turn further strengthens the nearness of certain objects over others.[272] In this sense, race, gender, sexuality, etc, bodily traits that are deemed natural, are results of bodily orientation. Ahmed, echoing Butler, contends that gender is a bodily orientation, a way in which bodies get directed by their actions over time. And orientations are both an effect of repetitive bodily acts, and a mechanism for their reproduction. Thus, "gender is an effect of the kinds of work that bodies do, which in turn 'directs' those bodies, affecting what they 'can do'",[273] and so is sexuality.

As a result, heterosexuality becomes a compulsory orientation that enables its own reproduction: to become an intelligible subject under the heterosexual law, one is made subject to the law and decides what forms of life it must take in order to be worth living. The subject is required to tend toward some objects and not others.[274] Bodies literally become straight by tending toward straight objects, which such normativity forms the heterosexual background that further reproduces heterosexual bodily acts and heterosexual orientation. As

[271] Ahmed 2006, 56.
[272] Ahmed 2006, 57.
[273] Ibid, 60.
[274] Ibid, 84-85.

Ahmed argues, "The nearness of objects to each other comes to be lived as what is already given… What puts objects near depends on histories, on how 'things' arrive, and on how they gather in their very availability as things to 'do things' with".[275] Because of this background, then, queer objects are excluded in advance, and they do not even get near enough to come into view as possible objects to be directed toward. Sexuality is then produced and reinforced through such repetitive bodily acts that repetitive reinforces the heterosexual orientation. Bodies become heterosexual by repetitively being oriented towards the heterosexual background filled with heterosexual objects, acquiring their natural status by excluding queer objects in advance. The tacit heteronormative background guides bodies to repeat some acts and not others, act with certain objects and not others, inhabit spaces in some ways and not others,. As a result bodies become "contoured", in the sense that "they get twisted into shapes that enable some action only insofar as they restrict the capacity for other kinds of action."[276] Only bodies that are "in line" can act by successfully coordinating themselves and objects. Only they can—and are allowed to-- extend into spaces. And this is how heterosexuality becomes naturally felt. These habitual ways of being in the world are habitual significations that allow us to understand others and ourselves. But how can new significations emerge if bodily acts are compelled to take place in certain ways in order to be intelligible?

If heterosexuality is lived through repetitive bodily acts to become naturalized, then queer sexuality can be as well. Instead of falling back to an innate feeling, or reducing queer sexuality into stable identity categories such as "gay" and "lesbian", Ahmed shows that discussion of queer sexuality should be focused on the process of "becoming queer", a way of "gathering queer tendencies into specific social and sexual forms." Ahmed argues that such a gathering requires a "habit-change", a reorientation of one's body to allow objects that are

[275] Ibid, 88.
[276] Ahmed 2006, 91,

not reachable before to be reached.[277] Instead of happening on its own, in societies that are compassed by compulsory heterosexuality, such queer reorientation requires explicit work, and such work in turn further consolidates the orientation. Reorientation rematerializes the body, as orientation shapes what bodies can do, what bodies have access to, and how do they relate to objects and others. The body also has to reinhabit space and by doing so alters space. Such calling for resignification, however, creates a temporal paradox: in order for bodies to be reoriented, space must allow bodies to relate to objects that were unreachable before; at the same time, only by reorienting bodies and bodily relations with space, can norms and conventions that govern space be reoriented. This paradox shows that change has to be initiated on both ends simultaneously so that they can form a reciprocal process: queer bodies can become reoriented by relating differently to space and objects, and bodies that are reoriented can in turn resignify norms and conventions that govern spaces so that queer bodies can extend into spaces more "smoothly" and act within such spaces without hindrance.

What needs to be noted is that this is not a task that can be carried out solely by individual bodies, will or intention. Attempts to reorient one's body within compulsory heteronomrativity, although shakes its omnipresence, fails to challenge it fundamentally and brings tragic results to individuals: Gwen Aurojo was murdered, Brandon Teena, Leelah Alcorn…the list goes on. While neither Foucault nor Merleau-Ponty who focuses on different dimensions of bodily being takes notice to the relationality of the body, feminist and queer theorists have shown that materialization of the body and bodily acts assume a social character. Because bodily traits such as gender and sexuality are constituted and can be reconstituted by norms-governed bodily acts, materialization of the body is a fundamentally intersubjective process. As Joanne Oksala argues, "the body is constantly materializing different social norms, it reiterates them but always through its individual style… The

[277] Ibid, 95.

intersubjective horizon of meaning is constantly transformed because what the lived body generates is unpredictable."[278] What needs to be recognized is the fundamental relationality of the body and the subject: although it is through which the subject experiences the world and acts, it is also out of the control of the subject as it is conditioned by norms and conventions that are intersubjectively constituted and maintained. The body is always vulnerable to violence, pathologization, exclusion, etc. Hence, although it is important to investigate the way in which queer bodies extend into space, and resignify norms and rules that govern spaces and materialization, it also has to be recognized that resignification is not possible without collective actions and resistance. It is not a task that can be taken by individuals through recourse to their felt sense of sexuality, but is an important political project that has to be sought through collective and repetitive action, as well as fundamentally structural change to rules and norms that govern intelligibility of the body and the subject. It is crucial to ask how to collectively transform discourse and norms and create conditions to make queer lives livable. The livable condition is a condition that allows queer bodies to materialize beyond the compulsory heterosexual framework, create their own reality and affirm their lived experience while being in relations with others. Livability is not absolutely justified by the authentic self and the innate feeling, but has to be negotiated and practiced through intersubjective interactions.

Conclusion

We live in relation to ourselves, but even the most innate feeling we have of ourselves are influenced, if not constituted, by norms and relations of power larger than ourselves. We also live in relation to other bodies, and our very survival and livability are subjected to them, and our collective livability is negotiated through our interaction. Because materialization of the body and experience of gender and sexuality are fundamentally intersubjectively

[278] Oksala 2006, 225.

constituted, they need to be subjected to intersubjective investigation and critique. Reorientation, resignification, and resistance cannot only be achieved by individuals; rather, they demand collective action and structural change. Only through collective action undertaken by lived bodies can we reconstitute meanings, resignifiy norms and conventions, and attempt to undo violence norms that constitute us in the first place. Making lives livable for queer people and affirming queer experiences should not be and could not be sought through recourse to an innate feeling or a private self, or establishment of new identities—doing so will just create more violence of norms that rendered queer sexuality unintelligible and unlivable in the first place.

Just as feminist politic should not be understood as politics of "women", in which "women" is understood as a stable identity category, as I have argued in chapter one, queer struggles cannot be reduced to a politics of "gays" and "lesbians", pinning down sexuality as a stable and unchanging feature of human existence. Rather, as Chambers argues, queer theory "starts from an impulse to question, problematize, or even disclaim the very idea of a fixed, abiding notion of identity. A queer approach always insists on a relational understanding of identity, and it customarily asserts the importance of gender and sexuality to that relational conception."[279] "Queerness" can come to assume many different significations, and queer struggles and resistance should be fought through collective actions and collective resignifications and create a relational understanding of queer livability, a livability that is not built on the expense of and against other people, but with them. Normative violence can only be undone, reorientation can only take place, intelligibility and livability of queer people can only be created, in and through our intersubjective relations.

[279] Samuel Chambers, *The Queer Politics of Television*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd. 2009. Print. 18.

Epilogue:

Acting Together

I started my thesis with a common assumption about the body: it is private, and the subject ought to have sovereign control over it. But it is also acknowledged that the body is vulnerable to violence and negation. Many contemporary "empowerment" movements recognize this paradox in their agendas and slogans. The movement of body-positivity, public presence of menstrual blood, public demonstration of queer love and movement against sexual assault, we hear the overwhelming positive aspiration "be who you really are" and "do not let anyone tell you how to feel about your body". But the very necessity to even make such claims demonstrates that how we feel about ourselves, and our relation to our bodies are not only up to us, but are subject to larger social forces and norms that are out of our control.

It is curious that advertisements that advocate for cosmetic surgery and online platforms of advocacy for body-positivity engage in the same discourse: be who you really are, let your body show the real you, you are beautiful, everyone can be beautiful. Self-transformation, empowerment, and recognition are often mingled together. And it is so hard to figure out how to act. Am I just being complacent in dominant patriarchal and heteronormative ideals, or am I effectively resisting them through my actions? What should I do? What can I know? Or even, may we even hope?

These Kantian questions transmit through the chaos and turbulence of the past centuries to haunt us. The echo of modernity haunts us, when we think we have figured out, when the subaltern seems to start to speak, when we have deconstructed the transcendental truth and subject, when we have shown the transcendental subject as Euro-centric and male-centric. But we ask, what should I do.

As a feminist academic, and simply as a female bodied heterosexual woman who identifies as a woman, these questions haunt me in my everyday life. Their shadows cast

everything I do and decide to do. Should I wear makeup? –Does not that just fall into patriarchal ideology that conceives omen as objects that ought to be desirable? – But should I let that determine what I should do? –Maybe you should just do whatever you want to do? – But has not what I want to been influenced by norms and ideals set by the patriarchal structure in the first place?

Or, should I take a leave when I suffer from extreme menstrual pain? –No, that will just show that you are weak and not as strong and capable, because you are a woman. – Should you not just be strong and overcome your pain and not require any special need? – But why is sexual difference something that I have to overcome to prove my equal capacity? Have not many feminists argued that sexual difference is just a fact has to be take into account? –A fact? A biological fact? So biology does exist? Then why do you insist that "women" is a social construction?

Almost twenty years into the second millennium, I still find myself in all kinds of double binds. I feel wrong no matter what I do. But still, I have to act, even though each act risks being wrong. I identify as a feminist and queer activist, but most of the so-called feminist self-help and action guide webpages, upworthy stories and youtube videos irritate me. The worrying trend of displacing collection movements and actions with individual empowering acts and practices deeply bothers me.

What should I do?

I have to act. I have to figure out how.

And more importantly, I can act. And I am not at risk when I act. Because I am so intelligible as a woman, even the fact of also being an obnoxious feminist who incessantly objects to every single occurrence of patriarchal-heteronormative act does not obliterate the recognizable fact—I am a woman. I am female bodied, heterosexual, would not be stared at or threatened when me and my partner appear in the public together, have no problem picking

one of the two gendered washrooms to go to in any public place. And even menstrual pain, simply further proves that I am a woman.

But what about people who identify as woman and do not menstruate and can never bear children? People who hesitate which washroom to go to? People who are considered lying if they pick one of the two sexes but fell deeply wronged when they pick the other? People who are abandoned, condemned, because of their sexuality? What about people who are shamed and bullied because their body sizes make them undesirable? Those who are condemned, shamed, pathologized because of the clothes they like to wear, things they like to do, occupations they like to choose, and people they love?

There are a million real examples I can list here. But I will not. I prefer avoiding representational violence rather than making the partial stands for the incalculable whole.

I have learned the violence of gender norms, around me, in TV shows and movies, and in my past. I learned to understand why I felt shameful about my periods, sexual desires and my body, why I quit all athletic pursuits shortly after I entered puberty, why I was pitied since age six for being "not feminine and elegant enough"; I remembered my mother saying "no one will marry you if you keep acting like this" in a tone that was supposed to bring tremendous shame to me, when I was thirteen; remembered being told "girls can't do that, you have to quit" all through my life; remembered being asked "you are just a little girl, why are you studying politics; politics is a man's game" ever since I was eighteen.

All of these sedimented stories in the past came back through recollection, as I read Judith Butler, Sandra Bartky, Gayle Rubin, Susan Bordo, Linda Alcoff, bell hooks, Sara Ahmed, …… I can still feel the harm, frustration, and tremendous shame they brought me. Feminist theory has taught me how to make sense of them, in the larger context within which I am situated. It has taught me that I am simultaneously governed and enabled by the social and political matrices to feel certain ways, desire certain things, and do specific things.

It is through violence exerted through gender norms that I have become a woman. The sum of these instances have constituted me and become part of me. They are part of my habitual ways of acting and existing. I suffered them. But they also constituted me. I survived them as I incorporated them.

(What should I do?)

But am I not an oppressor at the same time? Have not I exerted violence on others? Did I not partake in ridiculing boys for being too feminine when I was fifteen? Did I not utter homophobic and transphobic remarks when I was even younger? Did I not shame girls for being fat or ugly throughout my puberty? Did I not think my mother petty and annoying when she was "neurotic" about housework and think my father, who seldom took part in that, as carefree and "cool"?

Gender norms did violence to me. I embodied them. I suffered them, but at the same time have enacted them to inflict violence on others, on those who are more vulnerable. But this kind of violence, so often, is invisible, and trivialized—until it culminates in brutal harm, and sometimes death. Then the tragic consequences are addressed, in courtrooms, in the streets, in parliaments and other institutions, but what is forgotten is that such physical harm is only the symptom, but not the root reason. What has to be addressed foremost is gender norms themselves.

This is by no means only my story. So what does it mean to be "who I am", to "do things I really want to do", to "embrace my true self"? Embrace myself as a girl who is ashamed of her body? An oppressor of queer people? An ungrateful daughter who allied herself with patriarchy?

I began to understand the tremendous violence inherited in the discourse "just be yourself"—is myself transparent to me? And if the self is always relational, if I am inevitably embedded in human relations and my very survival relies fundamentally on other people's

meticulous care and benevolence, if my social survival depends on intersubjective recognition and norms that govern my intelligibility, if I am always susceptible to violence of those norms, then how can I ever "just be myself"?

I turned to phenomenology. Or more specifically, Merleau-Ponty's perspective on phenomenology. The lived body and intersubjective world fascinated me. The question of "what should I do to manifest my agency" is fundamentally displaced by question of "how do we act together". Contrary to earlier philosophical tradition that presumed the individual to be primordial-- a solipsistic self--, Merleau-Ponty argues that there is no distinction or separation between the self and other. The infant is born into a primordial anonymous collectivity, instead of individuality. It has to learn to distinguish itself from others, by living its own body, by reaching the coincidence of my-body-as-an-object and my-self-as-a-subjectivity. It has to learn to see its body like other bodies, but at the same time different from all other bodies, insofar as it lives it. To do so it has to go through a painful process of self-alienation, which is also the foundation of intersubjective recognition: we are one, but we are separate beings now, there is distance between us. Yet we dwell in this common world together. We suffer through its violence together, although definitely in different ways and degrees. But nonetheless we coexist. We can be harmed, and harm others at the same time. We are reminded of the syncretic beginning of our existence, sedimented in the past.[280]

But norms that we encounter in our separate lives, sedimented not only in my own personal past, but carved in the collective memory of our society, disrupt intersubjective recognition and produce violence. They are not external forces outside of us, but fundamentally constitute and subject us, enable us to become subjects, and at the same time punish, regulate, and pathologize. This sedimented history is constituted temporally and

[280] See Merleau-Ponty, "the Child's Relation with Others" in *The Primacy of Perception*; M.C Dillion, "Intersubjectivity: The Primordiality of Pre-Personal Communion" in *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*.

persists through time, carved into the seemingly blank and anonymous temporality that we live through. And because of which, no one can live free of norms, and no one can fight them alone. Even death does not shake them.

Because we are together, implicated in the human condition together, we have to learn how to undo normative violence. Together.

We have to recognize that the world we share is intersubjectively constituted and sustained, and meanings and significations we have of our selves are deeply constituted by it, we also partake in the intersubjective process of meaning creations together (while many people are excluded from the process, and because of which their situations is simply unlivable). If violence of gender norms is manifested temporally, gender norms can be resignified, resisted, and recreated temporally as well.

We will change, and be changed, through our collective interaction and negotiations with norms and power. Spaces of livability cannot be created by "who we really are" and "doing what we want to do"—what if our desires and pleasures are constituted and enacted through oppression of others—but through collective action and intersubjective resignification of meaning and norms. The meaning of our existence and action is never solipsistic, but always social and political. So if we want to figure out how to together, we have to figure it out together, we have to act together. Our closures, prejudices, and past constituted by sedimented violence, have to be exposed, discussed, sincerely faced.

--I still do not know exactly how to act, how to make every single decision in my life. I still face numerous double binds.

--But I understand my dilemmas, puzzles, and frustrations are shared by many other people, by people who are also trying to understand their past and our collective memory, much better now. I know how I have been constituted by normative violence and have enacted them. And I want to address the harm and violence they have done to us, together.

--And we act together.

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