A FEMINIST POLITICS OF DISCURSIVE EMBODIMENT:

Rethinking Iris M. Young's Gender Seriality

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ABSTRACT

In the politics of difference, the diversified female embodiments prompt contemporary feminist politics to depart from gender essentialism and draw attention to the heterogeneity of gender performances in the (re)conceptualisation of 'women'. As a democratic framework, feminist politics may become ossified and repressive, if the public arena fails to reflect the plurality of women and their political claims in the political participation and deliberation. Engaging in the feminist investigation into the theorisation of 'women', the thesis explores the reciprocal relationship between the construction of 'women' and the pluralisation of feminist politics, by articulating a 'feminist politics of discursive embodiment'. I begin with Iris M. Young's idea of 'gender seriality' to categorise 'women' as a social series, which is passively constructed through a practico-inert reality of gender and characterised by a passive member relationship, rather than a social group with common objectives and essential attributes. From which, I then draw on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological concept of 'the lived body' to sketch out how the female body is the material locus of gender imperatives and primary site of politicisation in gender seriality.

After the serial womanhood and the gendered lived body are introduced in the first half of the thesis, the second part of articulating a feminist politics of discursive embodiment concentrates on how does the politicisation of different gender experiences from female embodiments pluralise feminist politics. I argue that the combination of a renovated understanding of female authority and an agonistic ethos as a political practice can facilitate democratic deliberations among wider interlocutors and, subsequently, a progressive and tolerant feminist politics. Specifically, Milan Women's Bookstore Collective's depiction of 'the symbolic mother' can shed lights on how politicising womanhood can recuperate the historically absent female relationship against patriarchy. Meanwhile, an agonist pluralism assists the (re)openness of temporal closures of that claimed political 'womanhood'.

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INTRODUCTION

Woman and 'Women' in a World of Political Plurality

Contemporary feminism has blossomed with the immense progression of digital technologies, social media and networking, resulting in diversified formations of engagement in a multifaceted world. There are inspiring individuals demonstrating brave acts: Wendy Davis, a Texas State Senator who filibustered for approximately twelve hours against restrictive legislation on abortion in 2013; Malala Yousafzai, an Afghan girl who survived a gunshot wound after she stood up to the Taliban for her right to be educated in 2012; and the three Nobel Prize laureates - Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee, and Tawakul Karman - who were recognised for their respective contributions to non-violent actions in support of women's rights in 2011. Furthermore, women have collaborated across geographical boundaries: SlutWalk in 2011, which was originated in Toronto, Canada, soon became a global sensation; and Amnesty International named 18th August 2012 'Pussy Riot Global Day' in support of the politically persecuted Russian activist musicians. The capacity to advocate issues and assemble alliances internationally also invites women to reflect on their diverse situations and different imaginations of women's wellbeing. The topical controversy around the Muslim burqa and hijab, which has resulted in public bans on such Islamic clothing in several European countries, is a prominent example of the cultural clash of perceiving female bodies and sexual liberation differently. The ferocious confrontation between FEMEN and Muslim Women Against FEMEN (MWAF) also demonstrates the presence of socio-cultural complexities of perception and portrayal among women, in relation to the debate about the suitability of using topless female bodies to protest. The dissonance and concordance that are generated

by such corporeal performances contests the figurative boundary of 'what signifies women as "women"' and calls a simplistically unified conception of women as 'women' into question. These heterogeneous politicisations of female corporeality set the scene for the conceptual investigation of this thesis.

Intrigued by the diverse (re)significations of 'women' and their differing potentialities in contemporary democratic society, this thesis provides a theoretical articulation of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment. Specifically, this conceptual project offers a possible vision about how the revitalisation of contemporary feminist politics can be envisaged in relation to the rapid, intersectional changes of the global scenery of human society. In other words, it tackles the questions of how diversified female embodiments are derived from and substantiate the 'collectiveness' of women and, crucially, how such existential plurality can be projected onto the contingent landscape of contemporary feminist politics in a democratic society. I begin with a reconsideration of the concept of 'women', and argue that Iris M. Young's articulation of gender seriality is constructive in rethinking the collectivity of women. The notion of serialisation disconnects the construction of women from a deterministic group identity and draws attention to the unceasing interaction between individuals and the historically-congealed world, which the political possibility to re-imagine 'women' emerges. However, gender seriality alone is conceptually insufficient in theorising why is the construction of 'women' a political project of understanding plurality and how can the constituted tension between different articulations of 'women' be accommodated in a democracy.

To substantiate Young's initial conceptualisation of gender seriality, I investigate different constituents, namely the body, politicisations of gender, and agonistic ethos, in each chapter, in the hope of those detailed reflections can contribute to the existing literatures on Young's work and to the way that a pluralist feminist politics is theorised. In particular, I identify a conceptual gap of the understanding of female body in Young's theorisation of gender seriality and her other works on female experiences. The corporeality plays a vital role in the construction and maintenance of gender structures, as its actions reveal and conform the effects of gendering training. Meanwhile, the body is the fundamental site of gender deconstruction, as the individuals use it to defy and to reconfigure the hegemonic practices of gender. Owing to these, the body should not be construed as a passive entity awaiting instructions, but something that can reflect and project its intentions onto the world around it.

While she briefly considered the role of the body in the construction of gender seriality, Young did not explicate its ontological status nor systematically scrutinise the normative and ethical dimensions of a gendered corporeality. However, her understanding of gender serialisation as a result of existential reciprocity between the individuals and the world provides a clear indication of the need to depart the consideration of female corporeality from the traditional Cartesian mind/body dualism, which has infused much of Western philosophical thinking. Her other works on female bodily experiences, such as pregnancy, throwing posture, and family home, also repudiate the idea of body as an indolent, material-laden subject. To deepen the initial development of serialised body and bridge the conceptual gap of Young's works, I draw on the phenomenological articulation of the live body in the course of

formulating a feminist politics of discursive embodiment. Specifically, I argue that Maurice Merleau-Ponty's conceptualisation of the body as lived can broadens the analytical scope of how female bodies entwine both the particularisation and universalisation of gender in connection with embodiments and project such entanglements onto public life.

In a more straightforward sense, this conceptual work aims to propound a detailed way of thinking about female embodiment as a political apparatus for revitalising feminist politics. I should note here that, by and large, the thesis focuses on reflecting the political ethos among women, rather than on governmental organisations and institutionalised political mechanisms, when mentioning the democratisation of feminist politics. This is not to suggest that the institutional dimension is inconsequential for feminist politics, i.e. a free public sphere where everyone has equal rights and fair access under constitutional protection. Having a functional democratic structure in place is indubitably crucial for the creation of a healthy feminist politics. However, the progression of a democracy and the attainment of its promised merits and virtues are critically hinged upon the general perceptions and beliefs of the populace, especially during the malfunction of political systems or when a society is in crisis.

In an open letter regarding the enrolment of Norwegian mass killer, Anders Breivik, at the University of Oslo, the rector Ole Petter Ottersen compellingly points out that the trial of Breivik is a test for democratic society, and the outcome of such ferocious examination is subject to the will of the public 'to take responsibility for upholding democratic values, ideals and practices, including when these are challenged by

heinous act.'[1] Such comment brings to light the importance of political ethos in the constitution of a well-functioning democratic politics. It is generally believed that institutionalised democratic mechanisms, such as the separation of powers, equal citizenship, and periodical elections, can lessen political corruption, public aggression, and the erosion of human rights, which may encourage amicable interactions and facilitate a positive relationship between citizens. Nevertheless, established democratic institutions and principles may turn into a hollow carcass or become secondary to illogical vengeances by the provocated when grave social disruptions unexpectedly happen or political conflicts polarise the community. Under such circumstances, the characteristics of the political ethos may grow to be a decisive factor in either the survival or shattering of the democratic system in crisis. That is, the robustness of a democracy and the true face of that community are most likely to be revealed in how citizens contend with their social differences as well as the disagreement on public issues which may arise from those differentiations.

Owing to the above considerations, the last part of the thesis explores the political relationship among women, whose politicisations of discursive embodiments may differ from each other, pertaining to the democratisation of contemporary feminist politics. Put another way, the element of democratisation in the present context refers to the issue concerning what form of political ethos can facilitate feminist politics in being a free and equal public forum for its participants. More specifically, feminist politics as a democratic space should be a freely available sphere where women can and are enabled to translate their existential plurality into a political reality of diversification. Various feminist scholars, like Elizabeth Spelman, Iris Marion Young,

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[1] Ole Petter Ottersen, 'Why Anders Breivik is welcome at our university,' *the Guardian*, 12/09/2013 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/12/anders-breivik-university-oslo>.

and Linda Alcoff, have ardently argued that the disputed attempt to locate a universalistic set of feminine qualities or female experiences may only reproduce internal exclusions and discriminations, owing to the intersection of gender differences and other social factors such as race, social class, and sexual orientation. The interconnection between gender and different societal components can create varied and dissimilar conditions for individual women, which situate those persons differently and reduce them to divergent experiences and interpretations of the gendered world. As the assorted individual encounters with gender occasion the desire to express differences on the grounds of gender liberation and equality, contemporary feminist politics may be prompted to work toward a pluralist path of democracy.

Following from the above, I shall suggest that the revitalisation of feminist politics should be understood, on the one hand, as indicating that the socio-political differences among women and their politicisations under the universal sign of 'women' should have the same opportunity to be presented and scrutinised. On the other hand, the political conflicts instigated by the different political comprehensions of the general name should be conceived and attended to in a positive and dynamic way. As the University of Oslo rector's statement on the matter of the enrolment of Breivik may have indicated, a controversial public confrontation in a society could undermine the democratic society. By analogy, I shall argue that the political disagreements between incongruous politicisations of 'women' can democratise feminist politics in so far as such confrontation signifies a crucial prospect to (re)open dialogues between the members and invites careful reflections and reassessments on operative socio-political principles and structures. In such a context, public

deliberation of the opposing visions and voices can ameliorate dissatisfactions and antagonisms and may prompt the existing political system to reform, in response to the change of the societal circumstances. In the thesis, such processes of democratisation are depicted through understanding how the term 'women' denotes both a common gendering operation in action and a specific political practice of gender simultaneously. Furthermore, the conceptual work pinpoints the female body as lived to unpack the universality and particularity of gender in the articulation of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment.

With the overall picture of the thesis laid out, I shall now contextualise the themes further.

1. THE GENDER PARADOX UNDER THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

In an effort to disqualify biological determinism, feminists have been seeking to conceptualise womanhood from different approaches and have offered new terminologies to re-evaluate the historically oppressed situation of women. Patriarchy, for instance, is often identified as an unjust form of social system that contributes to the inequality between the sexes. The patriarchal system cultivates an asymmetrical power relationship between men and women by promoting male privileges in every aspect of society and relegating women to the position of otherness. While arguing male domination, male identification, and male-centred as the main characteristics of patriarchy, Bell Hooks and Allan Johnson both point out that it is a systematic

operation on both men and women and, therefore, should not be reduced to the actions of a particular group.[2]

Although the term is useful in differentiating sexual discrimination from other forms of injustice like race and religion, Gayle Rubin argues that the implication of patriarchy is too universal and fails to provide alternative structures for the relationship between the sexes. She claims that 'it is important - even in the face of a depressing history - to maintain a distinction between the human capacity and necessity to create a sexual world, and the empirically oppressive ways in which sexual worlds have been organized. Patriarchy subsumes both meanings into the same term.'[3] In order to underline the possibility of a sexually egalitarian system, Rubin advocates the use of 'a sex/gender system', which is 'the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied', rather than patriarchy.[4] Such advocacy of a sex/gender distinction helps to facilitate the development of the idea that wo/men result from the somewhat innocent body being socially constituted. She also suggests that the sex/gender differentiation is 'a neutral term which refers to the domain and indicates that oppression is not inevitable in that domain, but is the product of the specific social relations which organise it.'[5] The theoretical neutrality of the sex/gender system and its possibility to constitute particular social relations differently, for Rubin, render it a better term than 'patriarchy', which fixates on the disproportionate positions between the two sexes, to theorise the situations of women.

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[2] See Bell Hooks, "Understanding Patriarchy", in Bell Hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (Washington Square Press, 2004); and Allan G. Johnson, "Patriarchy, the System", in Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy* (Temple University Press, 2005).

[3] Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex", in Rayna Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 168.

[4] Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex", in Rayna Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 159.

[5] Ibid, p. 168.

In line with the differentiation of sex and gender, Kate Millett and Sally Haslanger both attribute gender differences to a causal connection between body and social norms.[6] Moreover, Nancy Chodorow and Catherine MacKinnon further complicate the gender socialisation of the body respectively with the dualistic social assignments of feminine/masculine characteristics.[7] In addition to this, an oppressor/oppressed model to describe the relation between men and women also emerges, in accordance with the increasing emphasis on the conceptual opposition between gender and sex, and then between masculinity and femininity. Such positional dichotomy is depicted as intrinsically interweaved with the patriarchal system and, habitually, men are presented as the privileged class who exercise power and inflict sexual objectification on the disadvantaged rank of women. For instance, MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin argue that there is an intense correlation between the constitution of female/male sexuality and gender inequality, in which the male consumption of female pornography constructs the general condition of men as dominant and women as subordinate.[8]

On the one hand, the articulation of a sex/gender system and conceptual exploration of the constitution of femininity and women by early wave feminism certainly provide crucial insights into gendered relations of power, which deeply typify the development of human society. On the other hand, the sharp opposition between men and women, and understanding gender as a plain result of socialisation initiate

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[6] See Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Granada Publishing Ltd., 1971); and Sally Hanslanger, "Ontology and Social Construction", *Philosophical Topics*, 1995:23.

[7] See Nancy Chodorow, *Reproducing Mothering* (University of California Press, 1978) and "Family Structure and Feminine Personality", in Nancy Tuana, and Rosemarie Tong (eds.), *Feminism and Philosophy* (Westview Press, 1995); and Catherine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of State* (Harvard University Press, 1989a).

[8] See Catherine MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified* (Harvard University Press, 1987) and "Sexuality, Pornography, and Method: Pleasure under Patriarchy", *Ethics*, 1989b: 99(2); and Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women,* (E.P. Dutton, 1989) and *Intercourse* (Free Press, 1997).

critiques of essentialism and prompt further debates around the sameness/difference between women. For example, Harris and Stone call into question MacKinnon's argument that sexual objectification is a shared condition in constituting female sexuality by criticising its lack of textual sophistication and sensitivity to the diverse backgrounds of women and men.[9] Also, Martha Nussbaum and Leslie Green argue against MacKinnon's one-sided understanding of objectification under the absent contextualisation and contend that a person can be objectified positively and then become subjectified.[10] Elizabeth Spelman's critique of the 'white solipsism', which is derived from Adrienne Rich on the issue of racism, is another representational assessment of contextual negligence in sexual realism. While feminism shares the pursuit of equality and freedom with civil rights/racial movements, Spelman observes a particular tendency among certain white feminists to generalise the social conditions of white middle-class Western women as a 'golden nugget of womanness', regardless of the specific socio-historical circumstances behind, for example, African-American women or those in postcolonial countries.[11] Owing to those criticisms, it becomes clear why the gender grouping of women by a general set of social features is problematic. The social generalisation of womanness, to symbolise through Rich's words on white solipsism, 'simply does not see non-white experience or existence as precious or significant, unless in spasmodic, impotent guilt-reflexes, which have little or no long-term, continuing momentum or political usefulness.'[12]

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[9] See Angela P. Harris, "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory", in D. K. Weisberg (ed.), *Feminist Legal Theory: Foundations* (Temple University Press, 1993); and Alison Stone, *An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy* (Polity Press, 2007).

[10] See Martha Nussbaum, "Objectification", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1995:24(4); and Leslie Green, "Pornographies", *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 2000:8(1).

[11] Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman* (Beacon Press, 1988), p. 159.

[12] Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence* (Norton, 1979), p. 23.

In addition, the quick distinction of biological sex from the social intervention of gender in early scholarly works also causes concerns about its somewhat simplistic nature, potential reinforcements of essentialist tendency, and unintended exclusions. Thomas Laqueur's work on the transition of scientific belief in late eighteenth century Europe from the one-sex model, which construes female genitalia as a mere biological variation of male genital, to the nowadays prevalent two-sex model, which consider man and woman to have different types of human anatomy, is an important indicator of the discursive arrangement between sex and gender.[13] That is, such a paradigm shift regarding the biological study of human sexuality challenges the sexual realistic claim of sex as a natural fact by underlining the way that the scientific interpretations of sexual organs are modified, reflecting the attitude change towards methodical observations, rather than the tangible evolution of sexual anatomy. Furthermore, the establishment of sexual dimorphism conveys normative implications, as the systematic categorization assigns values of normality and abnormality to the human body with concrete polarity of the two sexes. It can then be argued that the normalisation of the wo/men differentiation delineates our scope of knowledge of the human body by turning other forms of sexuality into something 'wrong' or unintelligible. The normalisation of supposedly scientific explanations of sexuality thenceforth may entail what Michel Foucault speculates as the 'power/knowledge' interplay. That is, as Foucault articulates, power produces historically specific mechanisms to manufacture different forms of knowledge which function as true in

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[13] See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud* (Harvard University Press, 8th ed., 1994); and Helen King, "The mathematics of sex: one to two, or two to one?," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History: Sexuality and Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, 3rd series, 2005:2,

particular time and space and, in turn, is maintained via the materialisation of those truth discourses in human activities and existences.[14]

A further account of power relations and its disciplinary function in the gendering process will be considered in Chapter 3. Additionally, I will further contextualise sexual dimorphism in connection with the dualistic inclination in traditional Western philosophy in the later sections, especially with reference to how the female body is not only underestimated, but also absent historically when conceived from within the Cartesian mind/body dualism. Here, I will continue to address the issues of how conceptual ambiguity and social differences trouble the feminist quest for 'womanness'. Relating to sexual dimorphism and knowledge as a production of power play, Anne Fausto-Sterling notes the limitations of the dichotomous construction and its constraints on linguistic expressions by pointing out the anatomical evidence of at least three other types of sexuality, which are generally simplified under the terms 'intersex' in standard medical literatures and the fe/male polarity, with the mixture of biological features across the fe/male spectrum.[15] What the five-sexes classification intends to problematise is a discursive discrepancy between social norms and scientific facts. That is, while the co-existence of fe/male sexual organs in a single individual is recognised medically, such reality is hardly a social actuality, as the intersex body is often being obliged to be 'corrected' or simply

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[14] See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, (ed.) Colin Gordon and (trans.) Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (The Harvester Press, 1980).

[15] Additionally, three major sexual classes are listed in her 1993a article and Fausto-Sterling provides specific names for each category beside their medical terminologies. The refined five sexes spectrum includes: 'herms' for true hermaphrodites, who have one testis and one ovary; 'merms' for male pseudohermaphrodites, who have testes and part of the female genitalia but no ovaries; 'ferms' for pseudohermaphrodites, who have ovaries and part of the male genitalia but no testes; and, finally, the sexes of men and women. See Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are Not Enough", *The Sciences*, 1993a:33; *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men* (Basic Books, 2nd ed., 1993b); "The Five Sexes: Revisited", *The Sciences*, 2000a:July/August; and *Sexing the Body* (Basic Books, 2000b).

being ignored by social practices or mechanisms. Sex-reassignment surgery on intersex infants can be argued to be one of the common examples that demonstrate a lack of social tolerance towards intersexuality. For being an intersex as a life choice is generally unintelligible for both the parents and the doctors, not to mention the subjectivity of the newborns, who undertake the surgical procedure, which bears no significance in this case. Meanwhile, Fausto-Sterling argues that the medical operation, as well as remedial researches on intersexuality, tend to fortify the exercise of sexual dimorphism and the rhetoric of ab/normal body, as the objective of both items tend to be 'assigning the young mixed-sex child to the proper gender' to 'assure proper psychosexual development', rather than offering an alternative outside of the two-sex model.[16]

Another example which illustrates how the sex/gender dichotomy is discursively installed and essentialised in the social world is that of the 'Identity Screening Regulations' for air travellers in Canada, 2011. Issued under the programme of 'Passenger Protect', the new transportation policy caused controversy as one of the items states that '5.2 (1) An air carrier shall not transport a passenger if ... (c) the passenger does not appear to be of the gender indicated on the identification he or she presents'.[17] Although no social groups nor descriptions of differences between the documented and the presented gender are specified, the above sections limit the freedoms of movement and expression of transgender groups, as the definition of 'transgender' itself defies the content of new regulations.[18] Furthermore, it has been

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[16] Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 46.
[17] For the detail of 'Identity Screening Regulations' (SOR/2007-82), visit: laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2007-82/index.html.
[18] See Althia Raj, 'Canada Identity Screening Regulations: Transgendered Community Effectively Banned From Flying,' *Huffington Post*, 31/01/2012 <http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/01/31/canada-air-travel-transgendered-

the case that not every member of the transgender community would choose full sex-reassignment surgeries in order to change their gender designation on official documents, owing to various concerns such as surgical risks, financial limitations, or prolonged mental health referrals. [19] Under such circumstances, a transgender passenger might be unable to acquire a health care professional document, which is required by the indicated legislation for travelling under different genders, and, arguably, is subliminally confined by state regulations without valid charges. [20] What the particular clause of identity screening policy in question has obliquely underlined, to consider the Foucauldian construction of 'power/knowledge', is a normative imperative between the physical appearance and biological sex of a person. That is, while no descriptive traits are stipulated, the indicated passage presumes a tactical but institutionalised understanding about what constitutes appropriate presentations of gender, which is shared by airport screeners and passengers in the indicated case.

To illustrate the above point of gender as a normative imperative: consider a transgender traveller whose documented sex is male with an identifiable Adam's apple and wearing heavy make-up and in a dress that shows cleavage. Although no

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community_n_1245598.html>; Matthew Kassel, 'A New Rule In Canada Appears To Ban Transgender People From Boarding Planes, Business Insider, 02/02/2012 <http://www.businessinsider.com/a-new-canadian-rule-appears-to-ban-transgender-people-from-boarding-planes-2012-2?IR=T>; and Mark Gollom and Joseph Engelhardt, 'Are transgender Canadians being banned from boarding flights?,' CBC News, 03/02/2012 < http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/are-transgender-canadians-being-banned-from-boarding-flights-1.1293810>.

[19] See Rose Eveleth, 'Transgender People Face Outsized Barriers to Genital Surgery,' the Atlantic 17/12/2014 <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/12/transgender-people-face-outsized-barriers-to-genital-surgery/383788/>; Paul Mchugh, 'Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution,' The Wall Street Journal, 12/06/2014 <http://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120>; Anemona Hartocollis, 'Insurers in New York Must Cover gender Reassignment Surgery, Cuomo Says,' The New York Times, 10/12/2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/11/nyregion/in-new-york-insurance-must-cover-sex-changes-cuomo-says.html?_r=0>; and American Medical Association, 'AMA Calls for Modernizing Birth Certificate Policies,' American Medical Association, 09/06/2014 <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/news/news/2014/2014-06-09-modernizing-birth-certificate-policies.page>.

[20] The Section 5.2 (2)(*a*) of 'Boarding Gate' under 'Identity Screening Regulations' states that "the passenger's appearance changed for medical reasons after the photograph was taken and the passenger presents the air carrier with a document signed by a health care professional and attesting to that fact". (http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2007-82/page-2.html#h-5)

external specifications are outlined in the identity screening regulation, it can be reasonably anticipated that the established knowledge of binary gender would compel the airport screener to ask the passenger in question for further clarification of their gender. It could be argued by the screener that this particular flight customer fails to demonstrate their gender correctly, as their physical appearance exhibits a major clash of feminine and masculine characteristics. Upon the request for clarification, however, the transgender passenger might produce a professional medical document to 'legitimise' the physical contradiction as a transitional step before a full sex-reassignment surgery. Following that, it would be logical to presume that the traveller prepares the health certificate beforehand, because they already 'know' that their appearance does not necessarily conform to the generalised two-sex model and such divergence might prevent them from air travel under Article 5.2(1), if they fail to obtain the required document. The depicted scenario helps to elucidate how the intelligibility and functionality of the identity screening policy are deeply embedded in a hegemonic construction of binary gender, while the exact determinants of 'male' and 'female' are left up to the airport screeners' discretion. In other words, a major discrepancy between 'the incapability of defining essential characteristics of two genders' and 'the ability to judge whether a gender is conformed correctly by a person' can be detected from the illustrated situation of gender identification under the 'Identity Screening Regulations'.

The above suggested inconsistency between a person's ability to define and to judge gender indicates an indefinite, complicated construction of the gender/sex hegemony. Feminist explorations of effects and operations of that dominance should be looking to move beyond a linear, standardised, and irreversible approach. As pointed out

earlier, neither biological determinism nor social essentialism provides an apposite and sensible consideration of the sex/gender relationship. This is because both accounts rest upon a universalistic theorisation of gender as a biological/social constituent which has invariant effects that uniformly differentiate all women from men. The universality of sexual dimorphism, such as in the format of feminine and masculine personalities or sexualities, thus risks explaining gender differences by reinforcing a stereotypical sameness of women and of men respectively. Under such circumstances, the shared knowledge matrix of biological sex and gender imperative is being substituted with another discursive structure of power, rather than being opened up for retrospection and renovation. In particular, a one-dimensional, generalised understanding of gender construction leaves little room for the acknowledgement of individual subjectivity and collective diversity. Meanwhile, the rigid concentration on locating elemental gendering factors in certain social/biological dimensions may underestimate the interconnectivity of the body, social discourses, and the materiality in the multifaceted and miscellaneous processes of gendering. Specifically, the universalistic approach has a propensity for discounting the activeness of the body in the consolidation and the transgression of gender. The thesis will further elaborate the significance of the body in later chapters.

2. RECOGNISING DIFFERENCES UNDER SAMENESS

As the rise of the politics of difference and the subsequent political advocacy of pluralism gradually became influential in contemporary multicultural democracy, the understanding of gender difference also evolved from a flat interpretation of different sexualities, to a more delicate and versatile articulation that pertains to a variety of social differences such as race, religion, and perceptions of ab/normal bodies.

Popularised alongside a series of consciousness-raising social movements in the late 1960s, the politics of difference may be conceived as a counter-reaction to the liberalist claim of 'equality as sameness', which suggests that democratic institutions and mechanisms should be difference-blind toward every citizen. Instigated by the problem of discrimination, the traditional egalitarian perspective on equality argues, to paraphrase Angela P. Harris, that 'differences' should be a distinction that make no difference.[21] Particularly, the criterion of 'sameness' exemplifies distributive justice and the presumption of equality, which justifies fair distributions of common goods as a practice of non-discrimination on the grounds of available information in relation to the notions of universal reason and morality of equal respect.[22] The liberal egalitarian conception of equality that promised sameness, of course, then laid a crucial cornerstone for the establishment of democracy, as many previously excluded or marginalised social groups, such as women, African-Americans, and LGBT+ community, have been invoking this very principle to fight their political demands for inclusion and equality in the public sphere. In short, the practice of the principle of 'equality as sameness' effectively eliminated institutional, formal barriers toward inclusion, especially in political and legal systems.[23]

Regardless of the notable contribution of the conception of 'sameness', the continued phenomenon of disproportionate presentations of previously privileged groups and

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[21] See Angela P. Harris, "Equality Trouble: Sameness and Difference in Twentieth-Century Race Law," *California Law Review*, Dec. 2000:88(6), p. 1984.

[22] For the presumption of equality and its connection with justice debate, see John Kane, "Justice, Impartiality, and Equality," *Political Theory*, 1996:24(3); Wlodek Rabinowicz, "Presumption of Equality as a Requirement of Fairness," in Ehtibar Dzhafarov and Lacey Perry (ed.), *Descriptive and Normative Approaches to Human Behavior* (World Scientific, 2011); and Andrew Harrop, *A Presumption of Equality* (Fabian Society, 2013).

[23] Ratna Kapur points out that the idea of 'equality as sameness' has been prevalent among liberal feminists of law; see her "Challenging the Liberal Subject: Law and Gender Justice in South Asia," in Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay and Navsharan Singh (ed.), *Gender Justice, Citizenship and Development* (Zubaan and International Development Research Centre, 2007).

formerly disadvantaged factions in the public sphere invites critical debates about whether the practice of 'sameness' represents the full picture of equality. In recent years, the lack of correspondence between social groups remains evident in various domains of human society including politics, economy, and the workplace. For instance, while women comprise approximately 50% of the global population, female legislators constitute less than 22% of the overall amount of parliamentary members in the world, according to the Intra-Parliamentary Union in 2014. [24] Similar imbalances are found in the private sector of employment, revealed, for instance, when the internet search engine giant, Google, released its workforce data in May 2014.[25] Latinos and African-Americans make up around 30% of American populace, but they only form a mere 5% of the total employees in the corporation.[26] Meanwhile, white males make up an overwhelming 61% of the entire staff and a 72% absolute majority of the management level. Additionally, a 2015 report on world poverty by Oxfam International presents a staggering prediction that the richest 1% of the world will control over 50% of the global wealth by 2016, with the other 99% sharing the less than half of worldwide resources.[27] As mentioned earlier, it is the procedural justice that the liberal egalitarian conception of 'equality as sameness' concentrated upon, in which non-discriminatory distribution of social goods is prioritised and contributing the improvement of general equality. Nonetheless, it is difficult to argue that the asymmetrical outcomes of those examples are incidental inequalities,

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[24] Visit the section of 'Women in National Parliaments' under the website of Intra-Parliamentary Union: http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world011214.htm

[25] The following percentage data regarding Google employment are from the website of the company: http://www.google.com/diversity/at-google.html#tab=overall.

[26] The population statistics of Latino and the blacks in the U.S.A. are adopted from 'United States Population 2014' on the website of World Population Review: http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/united-states-population.

[27] See Oxfam International, 'Richest 1% will own more than all the rest by 2016,' *Oxfam International* < http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2015-01-19/richest-1-will-own-more-all-rest-2016>, 19/01/2015; and New Statesman, 'Leader: The 1 per cent and the masses,' *New Statesman*, < http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/01/leader-1-cent-and-masses>, 22/01/2015.

therefore bringing into question the effectiveness of the 'sameness' principle in attaining distributive justice.

Although the intentional dismissal of contextual differences of individuals and groups efficiently extends the range of equal citizenship in a democratic society, what is at stake here is that the act of discharging differences may at the same time write off the opportunity to resolve the legacy of former discriminations, as the very causes of unfairness are being disregarded, or even suppressed, in connection with the 'insignificance' of those individual/group differences. More precisely, the general equalisation of individuals by simply dismissing social differences may thwart the opportunity of addressing the origin of asymmetrical power relations between dominant and marginalised groups, which may continue to have an effect on their social status under the practice of the 'equality as sameness' principle. Take gender equality as an example: the historical exclusion from citizenship and the traditional gender division of labour, such as 'men are breadwinners and women are homemakers', in a patriarchal society have patently confined women to private sphere and family-orientated responsibilities, as well as having placed them in a disadvantageous position regarding control over common resources and access to the decision-making process. While women are entitled to the same socio-political rights as their male fellows under the realisation of 'equality as sameness', the liberal egalitarian principle itself does not, or even attempt to, transpose the historically established disproportionate influence of the two sexes, as the character of gender bears no significance under the standard of 'sameness'. Following this, how does a woman, let's say, compete for a political office with her male counterpart on an equal footing, since she does not have the same amount of resources nor the same organised

social networks at her disposal as her male competitor? Specifically, how does she counterbalance the patriarchal discrimination against women, when she has the legal right to do so but remains excluded from the existed and functioning power circle, which is dominated by men?

Aside from second wave feminism, similar lines of enquiry were also pursued by other marginalised social groups and minorities, such as African-Americans, aboriginal groups, and LGBT+ communities, during the wide-ranging political movements of the 1970s. As pointed out earlier, it is not the equalisation effect under the practice of 'sameness' that the activists and critics of the liberal egalitarian conceptualisation of equality aim to problematise here. The removal of discriminative differentiations in terms of treatment and opportunities is a crucial action towards the realisation of a just democracy within which the fact of whether every individual is being furnished with the same quantity of material goods and services becomes the essential parameter of equality. Michael Walzer characterises such conceptualisation of equality as 'simply equality' and, furthermore, argues that its singular measurement cannot cope with the intricate conversion process of diverse social goods without forceful interventions from 'a centralized and activist state'.[28] 'Equality is a complex relation of persons, mediated by the goods we make, share, and divide among ourselves; it is not an identity of possessions. It requires then,' as he asserts, 'a diversity of distributive criteria that mirrors the diversity of social goods.'[29] Walzer then proposes a 'regime of complex equality' to target the oppressive mechanisms that dominate the different distributions of common goods in the respective spheres.[30] Through acknowledging the plurality of distributive criteria for social goods and

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[28] Michael Walzer, *Sphere of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (Basic Books, 1983), p. 16.
[29] Ibid, p. 18.
[30] Ibid, Chapter 1.

services, it advances deep reflections on the correspondence between existential circumstances and human relations. Moreover, the delineation of different general spheres helps to identify the relevance of certain social constituents and prevents advantageous transferences of special consideration from one area to another.

The contrast between 'simple equality' and 'complex equality' helps to highlight the inadequacy of the liberal egalitarian conceptualisation of 'equality as sameness' in exposing the history-laden, multifarious power relations that condition diversified human existences. Echoing Walzer's advocacy on complex criteria for distributive justice, various scholars also argue for a changed conceptualisation of equality, namely 'equality as difference', to, not overthrow, but complement the blind spot of the principle of 'equality as sameness'. In a broad understanding, what distinguishes the idea of 'equality as difference' from the conception of 'equality as sameness' is the particular emphasis on the normative significance of social differences with regard to the construction of individual/group identity and equality. On the one hand, it is observable that the world we live in is already organised by multifarious social structures and patterned relations between social groups at both macro and micro levels. Individuals are born into an established, structured environment and integrate the conditions of their social positions into the development of individual identity to some extent. Derived from this, social differences are considered to be positive and pertinent to individuals and should be recognised in certain aspects, even when the conditioning effect of those differences cannot be measured with conclusive precision. On the other hand, social differences are intrinsically intertwined with socioeconomic stratifications, in which social groups are being situated in relatively privileged/disadvantaged social positions in accordance with their unintended

possession of those differences. That is, to use Melvin M. Tumin's definition of social stratification, social differences also signify the 'arrangement of any social group into a hierarchy of positions that are unequal with regard to power, property, social evaluation, and/or psychic gratification'.[31] Such structural differentiation transforms these descriptive differences into terrains of power.

The transformation of social differences into frontiers of power has manifested itself in various forms in different societies. Throughout human history, power structures of social differences produce discriminative measures and non-voluntary impositions, which lead to unequal outcomes at both the material and the discursive level. The history of the slave trade that occurred between Africa and Western Europe and North America is an evident example. In the abhorrent 'business' across the Atlantic, racial differences are translated into an arbitrary measurement of human worthiness, in which certain racial groups are commercialised and estimated in monetary term by the members of another race. The process of commodification of particular racial differences creates a master/slave relationship between the racial groups involved and, subsequently, such articulated status of superiority and inferiority manifest themselves in aspects such as physical space and individual mentality. In terms of public facilities and services, African-Americans were spatially and institutionally separated from White Americans in places like the armed forces, schools, and public transportation, where they were allocated with less resources and inferior equipment. The historical practice of enslavement and racial segregation continues to structure and impact on issues like human capital transmissions, underclass cultures, and racialised discourses of welfare policy in contemporary American society.

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[31] Melvin M. Tumin, *Social Stratification: Forms and Functions of Inequality* (Prentice Hall, 1967), p. 12.

The historical problem of inequality becomes trickier for exploration and remediation when the entanglement of social differences and the interconnection of social structures are taken into account. In addition, the issue of race is further complicated, owing to the interconnectivity of social structures, which situates individuals in a criss-crossed social position. For instance, Susan Bordo argues a 'triple burden of negative bodily associations' for the sexualised and racialised body of an African-American woman, in which her sex 'represents the temptations of the flesh and the source of man's moral downfall. By virtue of her race, she is instinctual animal, undeserving of privacy and undemanding of respect. ... But by the legacy of slavery has added an additional element to effacements of black women's humanity. For in slavery her body is not only treated as an animal body but is property, to be "taken" and used at will [of the slave owner].'[32]

Bordo's words on the multiple layers of negative connotations of a black female body echo the feminist critique of gender essentialism and underline the problem of equality as sameness. As an African-American woman, her gender differences place her in submission to the fellow African-American male and yet the racial differences alienate her status from other White women, while the combination of both differentiations distance her even more drastically from the position of White men. Therefore, it is problematic to tackle the unjust discrimination and injurious stereotyping that an African-American woman may encounter within the social hierarchy by merely concentrating on either the axis of race or of sexuality. For there are different modes of power relationship at work at each layer of suggested negative bodily connotations and their overall interactions constitute the distinct social

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[32] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (University of California Press, 1993), p. 11.

position of African-American women. With regard to this, the conception of 'equality as sameness' as the singular principle for a just society is problematic, as it fails to recognise the historical imprints that structure existing social relations and the implicit discursive imperatives that are denoted in the physical characteristics of individual body.

3. THE ABSENCE OF EMBODIED AUTHORITY

It is noteworthy that the significance of corporeality in the constitution of the social world has often be undervalued in traditional Western philosophy. This is the result of the influential Cartesian dualism that constructs a hierarchical relationship where the spiritual mind is conceived as superior to the material body. Some have argued that this philosophical principle contributes to gender inequality as it attributes the leading mind to men and the reactive body to women. This Cartesian dichotomy continues to have an effect. Given this, is it achievable for female corporeality to break with the historically inscribed passivity and inferiority? If so, how can one delineate the pluralist relationship between female embodiments and feminist politics? Additionally, as it will become clear in my later discussion, the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective (MWBC) offers a provocative argument: in comparison with men, a sense of female authority is missing in the history of women living in a patriarchal system.[33] For the MWBC, such a female authority is conceived as a symbolic, collective figure who cultivates her figurative presence throughout history and signifies social connections between women in a public arena. Nevertheless, the patriarchal system interferes with the development of female authority via socio-cultural imperatives, which position men as primary guardians and mediators of

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[33] See Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, *Sexual Difference: a Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice* (Indiana University Press, 1990).

society. For instance, the idea that 'men are breadwinners and women are homemakers', in collaboration with women's material dependency on their husbands or male relatives under primogeniture, indirectly excludes women from the opportunity to participate in public forums. Or, to reflect on the wedding tradition of the father giving away the bride, in relation to the economy exchange between the families of the newlywed:[34] the 'give away' can be read as symbolising a public demonstration of power transference between two men, as well as in different generations, and a new social connection of males is established.

In comparison, the prerogatives of women scarcely find similar occasions to manifest or be recognised publicly in the history of women. Although some may argue that the traditional maternal, nurturing role in family life bestows women with moral superiority, the domestication of women in the private sphere inevitably yields their problematic absence in public forums and human history, which excludes women from political participation and, arguably, reproduces their inexperience or lack of political skills in issuing concerns or in redressing unbalanced power relations openly.[35] The idea of a symbolic mother, is thus advocated by the MWBC as a social

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[34] The money or property that the groom gives to the family of a bride is called 'bride price' or 'bridewealth'; and 'dowry' refers to a inheritance that a daughter is given by her parents at her marriage. See Monique Borgerhoff Mulder, "Bridewealth and Its Correlates: Quantifying Changes Over Time," *Current Anthropology*, 1995:36(4); Laura Fortunato, Clare Holden and Ruth Mace, "From bridewealth to Dowry?," *Human Nature*, 2006:17(4); and Lee Cronk and Bria Dunham, "Amounts Spent on Engagement Rings Reflect Aspects of Male and Female Mate Quality," *Human Nature*, 2007:18(4). Buchi Emecheta has wrote a compelling novel that depicts a Nigerian girl's struggle against traditional marriage customs, see her *The Bride Price* (George Braziller Incorporated, 1976). Also, see Louisa Lim, "For Chinese Women, Marriage Depends On Right 'Bride Price'," NPR.org, 23/04/2013 (http://www.npr.org/2013/04/23/176326713/for-chinese-women-marriage-depends-on-right-bride-price), which reflects on how the tradition is affected by the one-chid policy in China and the accompanied problem of gender disproportion.

[35] For the concern over how women may lose the role as moral enforcer in politics during suffrage debates, see Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *The American Historical Review*, 1984:89(3). For how political power intervenes in domestic life in relation to modernisation in postcolonial Indonesia, see Suzanne April Brenner, *The Domestication of desire: Women, Wealth, and Modernity in Java* (Princeton University Press, 1998). Also, see Christine Straehle, "Conditions of Care: Migration, Vulnerability, and Individual

force to counterbalance the historical patriarchal hierarchy, which celebrate the legitimacy of the father-son relationship and dismiss the mother-daughter connection in both public and private domains. Democratic politics, with its emphasis on liberty and equality, requires the participants to be active and visible in public forums, to articulate and judge political claims, and to be able to form alliances strategically. Since contemporary democracy is developed upon and with the intention of rectifying past injustices and prejudiced social systems, how do women rise to the political challenge, with regard to the pacification of the female body under Cartesian dualism and the historical exclusion of female power? The historical absence of 'public' women continues to condition the hierarchy between men and women and the gender status quo in democratic societies, where, for instance, the numbers of women in parliaments and corporate management roles remain disproportionate in comparison with men. For existential plurality to obtain political significance, it requires individuals to take public action in relation to such plurality. Only then does corporeality become not only the fundamental conduit that laboured with embodiments which stimulate and inform political rhetoric and behaviours, but also the initiator of those political actions. If, as the MWBC argues, the historical-congealed female authority potentially gives visibility to a collective sense of legitimacy of sexual differences between women, how does female corporeality break with the traditionally inscribed inertness and being validated as a political subject to renovate the asymmetric power relation between the sexes?

Furthermore, as the disagreement between FEMEN and MWAF and many other cases indicates, feminist politics is complicated by internal complexity and individual

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Autonomy," *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, 2013:6(2); and Sarah Tyson, "Reclamation from Absence? Luce Irigaray and Women in the History of Philosophy," *Hypatia*, 2013:28(3).

struggles, which are derived from diversified embodied experiences, in relation to the general categorisation of gender inequality. Under such circumstances, how may female bodies utilise themselves as an open means to deliver the contingent and relational politicisation of female embodiments in public forums, so pluralising feminist politics democratically? I use 'democratic pluralisation' to describe a positive political relationship between corporeal embodiments of women and feminist politics so that the internal complexity of 'women' - a term that refers to a particular social collective with distinctive historicity - would not be dismissed or suppressed under general political claims that are made in its name. For each politicisation of 'women' entails certain specifications and exclusions in consideration of how such a political demand is contextually initiated. To thwart the authoritarian installation of a political particularity, political actors should be able to conceive such political construction as a temporal, contingent frontier open to future deliberation and reformulation. However, such political practice cannot simply be preserved and facilitated by institutionalising political mechanisms; it requires a specific political ethos. 'Political ethos' refers to a particular set of political beliefs, rhetoric, and relations that are shared by a collection of individuals, which reflects the general attitude towards political deliberations and conflicts as well as attitudes towards political competitors.[36] Since female corporeality is entwined with feminist politics, what political ethos can divert feminist politics from ossification and grasps the contingency and particularity of politicisation?

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[36] For the relation between ethos, ethics, and political actions, see Seamus Carey, "Cultivating Ethos Through the Body," *Human Studies*, 2000:23; Jason Glynos, "Radical Democratic Ethos, or, What is an Authentic Political Act?," *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2003:2; and Blain Neufeld and Chad Schoelandt, "Political Liberalism, Ethos Justice, and Gender Equality," *Law and Philosophy*, 2014:33(1).

Derived from the heterogeneous presentations of female embodiment, the above contextual questions may be compressed into a simple but challenging enquiry: how does 'women' become political? The general term of 'women', as discussed earlier, contains an particular aggregation of individuals who cannot be defined by essential, universal features and make 'plurality' an comprehensible expression via respective corporeal existences. Conceived thus, the collective imagination of women stands in an existential relationship with individual corporeality on the one hand; and on the other hand, the individual embodiments find their intelligibility through the common languages related to 'women'. While the body channels individuality to collectiveness, how does female corporeality produce feminist politics when its socio-political legitimacy and authority are undermined by the philosophical subordination of body to mind? With the symbolic 'absence' from public sphere, how do women transcend, to draw on MWBC's words, 'the fear of judging and being judged' and haul 'female desire out of its reticence'?[37] The idea of symbolic, collective authority can be connected with the empowerment and liberation of women, in a sense that it signifies a counterbalance to patriarchal power and a figurative authentication and legitimisation of women's rights to provide alternative interpretations of the world and human relations.[38] Thus, in the political attempt of converting 'absence' into 'presence', how can feminist politics maintain plurality and democratically cultivate a collective confirmation of female authority at the same time?

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[37] Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, p. 95.

[38] The empowerment of women is a core theme for the United Nations Population Fund (formerly known as the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, UNFPA) under the programme of gender equality. The organisation identifies six major categories in its empowering women programme: reproductive health, stewardship of natural resources, economic empowerment, educational empowerment, political empowerment, and empowerment throughout the life cycle. These items intend to improve the psychological and material confidences of women in a way that develops a mentality of 'I-can', which can be understood as a form of authority towards self and, through practices, can be extended to a woman's perception of another woman as someone who also possesses the same authority. Noteworthy is that UNFPA acknowledges the relational dimension of gender equality and underlines the involvement of men and boys as a key element in restoring gender equality. See UNFPA, "Gender Equality," unfpa.org <https://www.unfpa.org/gender/index.htm>.

4. A POLITICAL PATH TO EMBODIED DIFFERENCES

Acknowledging the essence of female corporeality in the constitution of feminist politics, the thesis aims to offer an explorative theorisation of, as I term it, a feminist politics of discursive embodiment. It investigates the existential relationship between individual woman and women as a social collective and, subsequently, the political connection between the plurality of women's embodiments and feminist politics. Specifically, the thesis tries to tackle the question of how 'women' can be construed as a feasible and intelligible social category that produces diversified bodily experiences, while recognising it as a political question generated by corporeal existence and its power to produce materially and discursively. Owing to this, it is crucial to take a step back and look into the principal constituents of that social collective, namely the individual female body. Such enquiry into the body, I shall argue, will have to focus on how it enters into the existing world with its developing structures and, most importantly, to cultivate relationships with not only the changeable surroundings, but also each other. The co-existence of individuals in the same world raises the issue of politics, in view of the fact that a collective life involves making decisions about resource distribution, institutional arrangements, and community vision. The political issue is further complicated by the fact that individuals are placed in different social positions in relation to the historical-congealed structures of the world. Communal life is intersected by social tags like ethnicity, gender, age, disability etc., which render individuals as relatively privileged or disadvantaged compare to one another. Under such circumstances, politics, as an art of governing, is laden with discrepant human relationships and perceptions of the world and, consequently, political participants must deal with the power relations and conflicting visions within the community.

Democracy, as one of the collective forms of political governance, is praised for its establishment upon the concepts of freedom and equality and its aspirations to amend privileges and disadvantages, via encouraging mass participation and providing fair accesses to everyone. As pointed out earlier, the principle of 'sameness', which is deeply instigated by the concept of 'discrimination', has been predominant in the political ideas and practices of equality, especially in the area of law and its enforcement.[39] Such 'sameness' criterion resonates with the presumption of equality, which justifies fair distributions of common goods as a practice of non-discrimination on the ground of available information in relation to the notions of universal reason and morality of equal respect. Feminists and multiculturalists criticise such a conception of equality for unintentionally reproducing inequality and oppression, because the sameness criterion ignores the pertinent differences among individuals and the pre-existing structural inequality of opportunity and social status that constrain them.[40] Take the workforce data of Google that was released in May 2014 as an example:[41] although there are equality and diversity charters in its manifesto, Google, as a global corporation founded in a long-standing democracy, the United States, has only 30% of women in the overall workforce and only 21% of them occupy a leadership role. In terms of ethnicity, white male domination continues to be an evident phenomenon, as that particular category makes up an overwhelming 72% of management level and 61% of entire staff. In contrast, people of Black and Hispanic origins form a mere 5% of company's employees. Such a disproportionate workforce formation highlights the insufficiency of procedural equality in expanding

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[39] Ratna Kapur points out that the idea of 'equality as sameness' has been prevalent among liberal feminists of law, see Kapur, 2007.

[40] For the comparison of simple equality and complex equality, see Walzer, 1984, especially Chapter 1. Also see Richard J. Arneson, "Against 'Complex Equality'," *Public Affairs Quarterly*, 1990:4(2).

[41] The following statistics on Google employees and references to its company values are drawn from the corporation's website: http://www.google.com/diversity/at-google.html#tab=overall.

social inclusion and fairness and the necessity to take concrete measures to substantiate the meaning of equal opportunity.

The thesis will not engage further in the debate of the conceptualisations of equality and justice, but will instead explore the connection between the political recognition of differences and the democratic ethos in the context of feminist politics. To be precise, it is not the justification of democracy or the virtue of justice/equality with which I am concerned here. I believe in the values of democracy and acknowledge the importance of the 'sameness' principle in the practices of equality, which lays down the groundwork for developing a just and free society. What is being underlined via the case of Google, however, is that the existing structural barriers and general perceptual discriminations continue to be operative within a democratic framework. Following that, the deliberate ignorance about social differences have only restricted capacity in improving the overall status of the already disadvantaged social minorities and marginalised groups. It then requires a sense of public recognition of those social differences, which are the very cause of their suffering in the beginning, in order to substantiate the foundation of democracy and remedy disparities between mainstream and minority. There are many scholars, such as Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka, and Iris Marion Young, who produce abundant literature to argue the significance of social differences in deepening the foundation of democracy and propose various phrases - such as 'identity politics', 'politics of recognition', and 'politics of difference' - to pinpoint such re-evaluation of social differences.[42]

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[42] See Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of difference* (Princeton University Press, 1990); Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton University Press, 1992); James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge University Press, 1995); Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford University Press, 1995); and Amy Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2003).

Among the broad scope of scholarly discussions, it is being generally identified that social differences, as a set of collective characteristics that differentiates one social group from the other, play a critical part in the constitution of individual identity and subjectivity. That is to say, drawing on a structuralist perspective, that individuals as micro-level units, whose 'relationships are embedded in macro-level, collective representations. Collective representations have a life and logic of their own and cannot be reduced to actors' perceptions or behaviour'.[43] The depiction of micro and macro levels, in relation to the distinction between individual and group, indicates that a structural conceptualisation of social differences is needed in order to make sense of why some people are systematically emasculated but not the others under the large-scale operations of institutions and practices. The persistent and public denial of specific social differences thus not only undermines group relations, but also obstructs self-development of individuals, given that the manifestation of social differences is located in the (collective) presentation of individuals. For instance, Axel Honneth argues that 'self-esteem' 'demands a social medium that must be able to express the characteristic differences between human subjects in a universal and, more specifically, an intersubjectively obligatory way'.[44] 'For it is only due to the cumulative acquisition of basic self-confidence, of self-respect, and of self-esteem... that a person can come to see himself or herself, unconditionally,' as he further elaborates, 'as both an autonomous and an individuated being and to identify with his or her goals and desires.'[45] Such a portrayal of the construction of 'self' points to the interdependency between individuals and social collectives, in which the latter

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[43] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 264.

[44] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Polity, 1996), p. 122.

[45] Ibid, p. 169

differentiates one person from another, while the enactment of the 'characteristic differences' relies on the former.

Since there are extensive literatures already, it is not the objective of the thesis to conduct a genealogy of social differences or to map out the conceptual distinction of various political formations of those differences. In other words, I will not ponder upon, for example, whether it is 'politics of identity' or 'politics of recognition' which offers an appropriate conceptual dialectic to capture the political implication of social differences. Rather, the model of feminist politics of discursive embodiment is elaborated upon the premises, which are shared by the above scholars, that (1) social differences play important role in shaping individual identity/subjectivity and perception of the world; and (2) the recognition of social differences is essential in promoting a inclusive and effective democracy, in conjunction with the principle of equality as sameness. Upon those foundations, the thesis will explore the political representation of the discursive and material entanglement between individual woman and women as a social collective in contemporary democracy, with specific emphasis on the female body as the crucial medium within. That is, the body is the recipient and initiator of the world in a way that it is enabled and constraint by the social differences which structure social contexts and human relations, on the one hand. On the other hand, the bodily enactments are the essential sustenance of such social differences and aggregate their collectiveness. Following that, the idea of social differences and the discursive imperatives that are articulated around them are comprehensible by reason of corporeal performances, rather than being the state of a concept.

The orientation towards corporeality is how the thesis will narrate the model of feminist politics of discursive embodiment: how does the body become a political subject and how does it create something new from the old? Moreover, as democracy aims to provide a fair and open public forum for everyone, how can the individual interpretations of their social differences, which signify the political recognition of corporeal abilities to perform, be enacted politically? In what way can the relationship between the individual enactments of social differences and the political space remain democratic, while the respective performances may be in conflict? By revisiting the conceptions of women, female body, and political ethos in stages, the articulation of feminist politics of discursive embodiment, hopefully, can offer insights and reflections in response to the troublesome and progressing relationship of the plurality of female existences and contemporary feminist politics. In particular, can putting forward the diverse understandings of 'women' constitute a system of checks and balances to patriarchal society? Are the individual enactments a mere demonstration of individuality, or a symbolic empowerment in the name of a particular social collective? Meanwhile, how does the existential connection between individuals and their social collectives inform democracy? These questions have been phrased differently but bear correspondence with previous sections, which, expectantly, can help to exemplify how the thesis is stimulated upon the pluralist framework of politics of differences and is contextualised in the contemporary debates of feminist politics.

Following the above problematisation, it is time to introduce the key structure of feminist politics of discursive embodiment that the thesis intends to articulate.

5. A FEMINIST POLITICS OF DISCURSIVE EMBODIMENT

Feminist politics of discursive embodiment, as the specific subject that the thesis ultimately aims to articulate, is a conceptual political project that sets to tackle, and offers a possible interpretation on, the reciprocal connection of 'women', female corporeality, and feminist politics. I come up with 'discursive embodiment' to underline the fact that our bodily experiences are constructed upon both material and discursive constituents on the one hand; and, on the other hand, to capture the corporeal power to produce materiality and discourses in the world. Think of the gender distinction of femininity: apart from the physical differentiation of the female body from the male body, this gender quality requires collaborations from a shared set of social perceptions and norms, which instructs and regulates, for instance, the social etiquette and relations of the opposite sexes, female bodily movements and postures, and lifestyle choices. Moreover, the discursive nature of femininity places social demands on material production, like when considering clothing designs like skirts, bras, and high heels. Meanwhile, developing corresponding vocabularies is also essential for characteristics of the term to be comprehensible. Additionally, as Chapter 2 will demonstrate, I ground the idea of 'discursive embodiment' particularly on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological conceptualisation of the body as lived. The lived body rejects the Cartesian mind-body dualism and, as Merleau-Ponty argues, they are not 'two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary degree. It [the union of soul and body] is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence.'[46] Such re-conceptualisation of the relationship between mind and body breaks with a conventional gender hierarchical categorisation of man-mind

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[46] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 88-89.

and woman-body, in which the first grouping is construed as superior and desirable and the second one as subordinate and unfavourable.[47]

Following from the above, the conceptual reformation of the mind/body dichotomy helps the female body to repudiate the imposed inert position, in comparison with the opposite gender, and rise above a mere object that is being gazed. Such potential transcendence of corporeality recasts female bodies, to paraphrase the prominent claim by Carol Hanisch, as the initial access to public arena, rather than as a private matter. Derived from this, discursive embodiments of women, which are cultivated upon corporeal capabilities and individual situatedness, bear existential indications of how one woman is different from another woman, while both share the same social label as 'women' in contrast with 'men'. Such differentiation under the terminological 'sameness', as Chapter 1 will propose, can be construed as a social serial relationship among women. Social seriality, which was first articulated by Jean-Paul Sartre and later developed by Iris Marion Young to conceptualise gender, incorporates individual-praxis as part of its constitution, while acknowledging the interchangeability of respective members and material/practical exteriority. Furthermore, women are a serialised social collective in a sense that they are constrained by the practico-inert reality of gender, which signifies a particular 'confluence of institutional rules and interactive routines, mobilization of resources and physical structures' and those elements 'constitute the historical givens in relation

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[47] For general feminist critiques of mind/body dichotomy, to list a few, see Raia Prokhovnik, *Rational Woman: A Feminist Critique of Dualism* (Routledge, 1999); Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (Routledge, 1993); Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Open University Press, 1986); and Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (Methuen, 1984). In addition to gender relation in society, Cartesian dualism also has been argued that affecting legal and medical practices in our daily life. See Dan L. Burk, "Feminism and Dualism in Intellectual Property," *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, 2007:15(2); George D. Pappas, "Feminist Jurisprudence," Lecture, Jurisprudence Lecture from International Center for Legal Studies, 02/2006; and Neeta Mehta, "Mind-Body Dualism: A Critique from a Health Perspective," *Mens Sana Monogr*, 2011:9(1).

to which individuals act, and which are relatively stable over time.'[48] The 'relatively stable' practico-inert reality of gender underlines its consistent effects that constrain the individual subjects, on the one hand; while, on the other hand, it indicates its contingent encounters with them. That is, gender structures will not be self-altered in accordance with whoever is happened to be positioned under that particular moment. However, the potential transcendence of a lived body suggests that a woman can move beyond the given conditions toward plural possible futures. Therefore, the coincidental interactions between gender seriality and individuals may produce different outcomes depending on whether it is, for instance, Mary or Sue in that detail.

The conceptual collaboration between gender seriality and the lived body helps to sketch out the existential reciprocity of the collectiveness of women and woman as an individual performer and, furthermore, implicitly points to the potential connection between discursive embodiments and the progression of feminist politics. As explicated earlier, discursive embodiments can only stand in a democratic pluralist relation with feminist politics if the political forum can recognise and accommodate the contingency and openness of the politicisation of those corporeal experiences. Since feminist politics aims to tackle the connection between equality and difference, the difficulty of the plurality of women and feminist politics can also be asked in different way: how does one construct a democratic relationship between the discursive embodiments of individuals and the collective imagination of women? In conceptualising 'discourse', David Howarth underlines that 'it is only because of the contingency and openness of all social relations that articulatory practices and

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[48] Iris Marion Young, "Lived Body vs Gender: Reflections on Social Structure and Subjectivity," *Ratio*, 2002:XV (4), p. 420.

political agency are possible.'[49] Meanwhile, the distinction between 'what is and what is not legitimate' established by each articulation 'is a political one, and for that reason it should remain contestable.'[50] Connecting democratic pluralisation with political contestability, the last section of the thesis explores what political ethos can facilitate the reciprocity between discursive embodiments and feminist politics. An agonistic account will be advocated, for such ethos recognises the particularity of each politicisation and encourages contemplations and contestations of the inclusion-exclusion regime. Moreover, political settlements are construed as temporal closures and 'can be re-examined afresh, re-argued, and re-negotiated in the light of' the new exemplification of discursive embodiments.'[51]

6. OUTLINING THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The above section is a condensed version of the theoretical articulation of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment that I intend to develop in the thesis. Such conceptual exploration aims to contribute a viable and constructive, but not exclusive, way to channel the existential plurality into the political space, with the aim of exemplifying how democracy can be an open and fair form of governance. My examining approach is to look into different-yet-related concepts and engage with specific scholarly works in each chapter in the hope that the aggregation of the chapters will be able to enunciate the conceptualisation of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment. Thus, I begin with the conception of 'women' in Chapter One, in order to map out the existential entanglement of individuality and social collectivity. Within this, I particularly draw on the concept of social seriality, which

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[49] David Howarth, *Discourse* (Viva Books Private Limited, 2002/2005), p. 110.
[50] Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (Verso, 2000), p. 49.
[51] John Barry, *The Politics of Actually Existing Unsustanability* (Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 269.

was initially developed by Jean-Paul Sartre and later applied by Young on the notion of 'gender', to capture why some individual practices are categorised as gendered and the others are not. It will help to show, for example, that the absence of female authoritative figures in the public sphere is a systematic and structural problem, which is interweaved with the historically unbalanced relationship between particular social collectives, rather than an individual issue. With the shared framework presented, Chapter Two offers a close inspection of the individual units that are comprised in the social collective of women. To break with the Cartesian dualism, I will introduce the phenomenological depiction of the lived body, especially Merleau-Ponty's, as the primary social medium that enacts as well as creates the gendered world.

Building on this, Chapter Three focuses on the corporeal capability to produce 'plurality', with reference to Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity. This chapter explores further how the body acquires its understanding of social structures, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, how it 'individualises' social differences as part of its own existence. In other words, while the corporeality can be disciplined to reiterate gender practices, it may also have the creativity and ability to reconfigure them and project a different imagination of the world. Thus, I conceive the opportunity of politicisation as having emerged initially from the interplay of reiteration and reconfiguration, which can be detected in the daily (intentional or unintentional) performances of gender. Chapter Four then proceeds to look at the theme of politicising discursive embodiments. I will suggest a distinct political imagination of the aggregation of individual reiteration and reconfiguration as a (re)affirmation of female authority, which legitimise the actions of individual women

to counterbalance the asymmetric gender relationship, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, to authenticate the serial relationship among women. Put another way, the political reciprocity of the existential plurality and feminist politics is constituted and intensified through the power of female bodies to manifest individualised social differences on the collaborated empowering ground of a female authority. That is to say, the symbolic figure can help to identify why certain political claims are not merely about personal interests, but concern the injustices between different collections of individuals. But how does one deal with the different claims of the same unjust issue? How does the consecutive tension between competing politicisations not impede and spoil the very equal foundation that they stand upon, when the intersection of sexual and other social differences constructs the internal hierarchy among women?

In an attempt to answer these questions, the final chapter, Chapter Five, will interrogate the notion of political contestability in relation to political ethos. The effectiveness and success of a democracy does not simply rely on having fair and open mechanisms and institutions in place, but also depends on the general perception of such political governance. To be exact, a democratic political system, which offers equal access to every citizen, might be endangered or abused, if there is no corresponding set of shared beliefs in democratic values among the public. For instance, political debates about the distribution of common goods can become either an ugly power struggle with catastrophic consequences, if the competing parties conceive the whole conflict as a zero-sum game; or it can be a constructive deliberation between frenemies, if the persons involved are willing to defend something beyond their current disagreements and can see the future possibility to re-

negotiate. To tackle the political contestability of female authority in connection with the plurality of women, I will look into the function of political ethos and argue that an agonistic account, especially with reference to William Connolly, can facilitate a pluralist imagination of female authority which ensures the responsiveness of contemporary feminist politics to the challenges in hand.

I acknowledge the feminist politics of discursive embodiment that proposed in this thesis is a specific way to theorise contemporary feminist politics and consider the methodology employed in such a explorative theorisation akin to the approach that James Tully depicted in his 2002 article, 'Political Philosophy as a Critical Activity'. In reflecting on the purpose and function of political theory, Tully argues the critical ethos in the philosophical investigation of politics is stemmed from 'a communicative relationship of reciprocal elucidation and mutual benefit between political philosophy and public affairs.'[52] Departed from the traditional stand of universalistic theorisation, the value of political philosophy in Tully's understanding is hinged upon its abilities to contextualise the socio-political struggles and to problematise the dominate practices of governance and language, which shape the public perception of these events. By questioning the governing discourse of a struggle in its historical context, it becomes possible to identify the characteristics of normalisation and liaised

The interactive relationship 'starts from the present struggles and problems of politics and seeks to clarify and transform the normal understanding of them so as to open up the field of possible ways of thinking and acting freely in response.'[53] While the intellection tool of abstraction is applied, political philosophy as a critical practice

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[52] James Tully, "Political Philosophy as a Critical Activity," *Political Theory*, 2002:30(4), p. 551.
[53] Ibid.

Tully's understanding of such a study of politics

Although the thesis is an explorative theorisation of a particular type of politics, the articulation of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment, to quote Tully, 'starts from and grants a certain primacy to practice.'[54] I agree with Tully that a socio-political practice and the theorisation of this particular practice is in a relationship of 'open-ended dialogue '; and from this, I consider the interaction between feminist activists and theorists is an 'activity of reciprocal elucidation itself'.[55] Beginning the introductory chapter with instances of various women's actions in the public arena is a way to show how such a reflective engagement may be initiated. Moreover, it is to recognise what feminist politics must deal with is not 'plurality' as a concept, but the diversified, discursive embodiments behind it, which make the idea of plurality intelligible and pose challenges and questions to the existing political governance. Therefore, while every chapter is designed to investigate each conceptual constituent of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment, I draw on particular instances as examplars in different stages, not only to illustrate a case in point, but also to demonstrate the analytical character of the specific concept.

Orienting the thesis as a project of political philosophy, it is neither the statistical fact of how many women are currently disadvantaged in the world, nor the types and reasons of their suffering that I am concerned with here. Instead, I understand gender equality as a continually existing operation under democracy and would like to suggest a potential and critical strategy to disclose 'the conditions of possibility of the problematic form of governance in a re-description (often in a new vocabulary) that

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[54] Ibid, p. 534.
[55] Ibid, p. 533.

transforms the self-understanding of those subject to and struggling within it, enabling them to see its contingent conditions and the possibilities of governing themselves differently.'[56] Furthermore, I am aware of the particularity of the disclosure and the contextualised problematisation of governance and, therefore, a sense of uncertainty and contestability is retained in my conceptual formulation of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment. In other words, it is not a philosophical absolute Truth that I am after or able to supply here; I am, instead, proposing an alternative vision about how the world could be.

The acknowledgement of the feminist politics of discursive embodiment as a specific type of political discourse brings me back to reflect on the relationship between feminist scholars and activists again. I admit that it is inevitable that certain aspects and details may not be able to be fully reconstructed or accounted in scholarly studies of particular feminist events. However, the systematic study or documentation of women's activities can be considered as a method of facilitating retrospection and participation at both the individual and collective level for building a feminist praxis of everyday life. More specifically, feminist study is a form of witnessing the bodily experiences and life struggles of women that have been marginalised or absent in the writing of history controlled by men. 'When women learn, hear, read, dance to, and share stories about the past they realise that what they feel has been felt in similar ways before, what they experience has been experienced in similar ways by their predecessors and what they are angry about was previously also a cause for rage. We

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[56] Ibid, p. 534.

realise that there is nothing wrong with us. We begin to build the grounds for individual and collective voice,' as the Sisters of Resistance point out.[57]

Apart from providing recognition for past experiences and validation for the present struggles of women, feminist study also offers critical insights and helps feminist activists to identify the dominant structure and hegemonic discourse which might undermine the objectives or the efficacy of a feminist movement. In other words, the intellectual theorisation of women's activities constructs a space of reflection in which it provides historical indications to the potential limitation of the current movement and invites participants to think beyond the present construction and obvious alliance. Overall, I employ conceptualisation and exemplification simultaneously in this thesis, in order to demonstrate how empirical practices can inform the clarity of feminist theorisation and, in turn, how the conceptual investigation can problematise the current forms of governance exercised in contemporary feminist movements.

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[57] Sara Motta, Christina Flesher Fominaya, Catherine Eschle, and Laurence Cox, 'Feminism, women's movements and women in movement,' *Interface* 2011: 3(2), p. 17.

CHAPTER ONE

The Serialized Women: Re-conceptualising Iris M. Young's Gender Seriality

Conceiving the idea of 'woman' as a contestable subject and the construction of 'womanhood' as a political project, the first two chapters of the thesis focus on introducing the fundamental constituents of a gendered embodiment, namely gender structures and corporeality, before proceeding to explore their connections with articulating a feminist politics of discursive embodiment. Among the two essential components, this chapter is designated to sketch out the theoretical framework of 'gender'. Specifically, I focus on examining the conception of 'gender seriality' that developed by Iris M. Young, as it underlines the interconnectivity of the body and the world and the fluidity in the construction of gender. By beginning with a detailed reflection of the construction of gender, it helps to situate the locus of this thesis and revisit the feminist debates on the sex/gender dichotomy that is initiated in the introductory chapter on the one hand. On the other hand, it outlines in advance the referential foundation for the phenomenological enunciation of gendered body as lived, which will be surveyed in the next chapter.

Additionally, as indicated in the first part of this chapter, Young considers gender inequality as a manifestation of structural injustice. Such conceptualization is in conjunction with her endeavour to disconnect the concept of gender with the logic of identity. It can be seen clearly in her effort to combine Toril Moi's advocacy of the concept of the lives body with her insistence of importance of a conceptualization of

gender. Therefore, this chapter begins with such situatedness by showing how Young distinguishes the politics of positional difference from the politics of cultural difference and then positions feminist politics as a form of the front. Following this thread, I then explicate why gender series is insinuating a structured position, in reference to Jean-Paul Sartre's differentiation between social series and social groups.

Afterward, I moved away from the discussion of the gender structured position and turn to a phenomenological-informed elaboration of the female body. In this order of body as socialized, as a way of being-in-the-world and, finally, as lived, I demonstrate how Young constitutes the function of female body within the framework of gender seriality. Following that, this chapter concluded in her phenomenological analysis of feminine modality, with the attempt of bring together Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea of the lived body and Simone de Beauvoir's articulation of the situation of women.

1. FEMINIST POLITICS AS AN POLITICS OF PLURALITY

Following the deconstructive challenge to the sex/gender distinction that connotes the differentiation of nature/culture, Toril Moi advocates replacing such dichotomy with the existential phenomenological concept of the lived body.[58] On the one hand, the biological evidences have shown the existence of the intersexed body, Anne Fausto-Sterling says that the traditional differentiation of men and women is a social norm posing as a fact of biological nature, and thus such sexual dimorphism should be challenged.[59] On the other hand, the deconstructive feminists, such as Diana Fuss and

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[58] See Toril Moi, 'What is a Woman?', in *What is a Woman and Other Essay* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

[59] See Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are Not Enough," *The Sciences* (March/April 1993).

Judith Butler, have been criticizing the essentialist account of gender often neglects the historical and cross-cultural specification in the construction of gender. These deconstructive moves somehow weaken the effectiveness of a concept of gender in theorizing gender identity and subjectivity. Moi thus suggests reinventing in the idea of lived body as it can bring specific physical facts of different bodies into theory and capture the way they constitute our subjective sense of self. Similar suggestion also be made by Linda Nicholson, as she emphasizes the socio-historically differentiation of bodies as lived and then disconnected with a biological foundationalism.[60]

Opposite to the advocacy of abandonment of gender, Iris Marion Young argues in favor of a concept of gender in relation to structural inequalities, while aware of the deconstructive challenge to the sex/gender distinction and the benefits of the idea of lived body. Similar to the deconstructive challenge, she also criticizes the essentialist approach to a common gender identity for excluding or devaluing some bodies, practices, and discourses by enforcing a normalization process, and at the same time, such approach obscures the constructed, and thus contestable, character of that gender identity.[61] However, Young's method of approaching such 'gender issue' is to disengage women's differences from logic of identity and situates gender inequality as a structural problem for politics of positional difference. Following such account, feminist politics are understood as a form of the politics of difference and it is necessary to attend to existing structural processes that differently position men and women, in order to achieve gender equality.[62]

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[60] See Linda Nicholson, 'Interpreting Gender,' *The Play of Reason: From the Modern to the Postmodern* (Cornell University Press, 1999).

[61] Iris Marion Young, 'Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective,' *SIGNS*, 1994:19 (3).

[62] Iris Marion Young, 'Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference,' in Anthony Simon Laden and David Owen (ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Politics of difference, in Young's works, is a response to the criticisms toward the difference-blind principle in the dominant liberal paradigm.[63] This principle exhibits the ideal of equality as sameness, in which 'the application of the same principles of evaluation and distribution to all persons regardless their particular social positions or backgrounds.'[64] However, various scholars from different approaches have been criticizing such sameness principle for failing to achieve substantial equality, for its ignorance of social differences. For instance, Charles Taylor points out that 'the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture,' and thus powers an acknowledgement of specificity.[65] Against the presupposition of the uniformity of a nation state, James Tully argues that 'if there is to be a post-imperial dialogue on the just constitution of culturally diverse societies, the dialogue must be one in which the participants are recognized and speak in their own language and customary ways.'[66] For Young, the liberal paradigm 'ignores deep material differences in social position, division of labor, socialized capacities, normalized standards, and ways of living that continue to disadvantage members of historically excluded groups.'[67] Owing to this, she asserts that democratic communications should attend to different social positions and drawing on social difference as a political resource. Her idea of communicative democracy and the proposed communicative techniques for participants to engage in democratic processes will be discussed in the later chapter on agonistic democracy.

As mentioned above, Young, alongside with other feminists like Anne Phillips and Jane Flax, questions the existence of a shared gender identity and its potential

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[63] See Young, 2007 and 1990.
[64] Young, 2007, p. 60.
[65] Taylor, 1992, p. 43.
[66] Tully, 1995, p. 24.
[67] Young, 2007, p. 61.

essentialist inclination. Perceiving feminist politics as a realization of the politics of difference, she suggests to disengaging social group difference, which group-based social movements mobilized upon, from a logic of identity in two ways. First of all, social groups should be conceptualized 'according to a relational rather than a substantialist logic;' and secondly, 'individuals construct their own identities on the basis of social group positioning.'[68] Derived from these two propositions, the social difference plays certain roles in the construction of individuals' identity but indecisively, and then individual autonomy and creativity emerged to the scene. Meanwhile, the similarity and difference between individuals judged in relation to their respective social positions. Hence, the politics of difference and its mobilizations and demands are not centred on a common identity, and thus, irreducible to any forms of the identity politics.

Here, it is crucial to point out Young's two categories of the politics of difference, namely the politics of positional difference and the politics of cultural difference, and how she conceptualizes women's social differences as a species of structural difference. However, I would also show that such distinction somehow becomes blurred, owing to Young's articulation of the politics of difference. Since they are in the genre of the politics of difference, the politics of positional difference and the politics of cultural difference certainly share a critical attitude towards the difference-blind principle uphold in the liberal paradigm. Yet, in Young's words, those two versions of the politics of difference differ 'in how they understand the constitution of social groups, and in the issues of justice that they emphasize.'[69] The politics of positional difference is concerned about structural inequalities and different social

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[68] Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 82.
[69] Young, 2007, p. 60.

positioning. More specifically, '[P]ersons suffer injustice by virtue of structural inequality when their group social positioning means that the operation of diverse institutions and practices conspires to limit their opportunities to achieve well-being.'[70] For the politics of cultural difference, it tackles specific culture-based injustice, as when individuals or groups 'are not free to express themselves as they wish, to associate with others with whom they share forms of expression and practices, or to socialize their children in the cultural ways they value, or when their group situation is such that they bear significant economic or political cost in trying to pursue a distinctive way of life.'[71]

Although Young distinguishes cultural differences from positional differences, it seems she implicitly conflates the former to the latter when arguing for the politics of difference and disengaging it with identity politics. In the *Inclusion and Democracy*, she defines 'social group' in a relational conceptualization as 'a collective of persons differentiated from others by cultural forms, practices, special needs or capacities, structures of power or privilege,' and it is not explicitly constituted, in contrast with associations.[72] Following this, she seems to perceive cultural groups and other social groups that are constituted by social structures or positions as the same thing, in respect of a relational approach. Furthermore, she states that the group-based social movements that mobilized around the specificity of group difference, like gender, ethnicity, or religion are primarily responses to structural differences.[73] Despite the fact that she claims the politics of positional difference is irreducible to the politics of cultural difference and how the former sometimes is build on the latter, it may be

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[70] Ibid, p. 63.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid, p. 90/
[73] Young, 2000, p. 86.

argued that Young regards the structural difference as the fundamental form of the politics of difference, even for the politics of cultural difference. For she explicitly claims that '[W]here there are problems of lack of recognition of national, cultural, religious, or linguistic groups, these are usually tied to question of control over resources, exclusion from benefits of political influence or economic participation, strategic power, or segregation from opportunity. A politics of recognition, that is, usually is part of or a means to claims for political and social inclusion or an end to *structural* inequalities that disadvantage them.'[74]

From Young's descriptions of the politics of difference and the subsequent politics of positional difference above, we can see that social structures and social positions occupy crucial roles in her theorization of social differences and her assessment of social inequalities. Identifying herself as a critical social theorist, Young claims that occupants of structural positions 'are privileged or disadvantaged in relation to one another due to the adherence of actors to institutional rules and norms and the pursuit of their interests and goals within institutions.'[75] Such description resembles Nancy Folbre's idea of the 'structures of constraint,' in which she pinpoints assets, rules, norms, and preferences as the structural factors that within which decisions can be made and social action and interaction takes place.[76] Noteworthy is that the occupants of social structures are also being enacted by those social norms, conventions and positions etc., albeit their inhibitions that emphasized here. The enactment of social

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[74] Ibid, p. 105, emphasis added.

[75] Young, 2002, p.421. Also see, Iris Marion Young, 'Equality of Whom? Social Groups and Judgments of Injustice,' *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 2001:9(1).

[76] Folbre's idea of the 'structures of constraint' is aim to analyze the situation of child caring in contemporary family. She concerns the way in which families are structured, how the costs of socialization and caring for children are distributed, and thus, the relations between men and women as well as between the family and other social institutions. Her analysis adopts a multi-systems approach, whereby individuals simultaneously occupy various positions, where no particular structural factors are to be considered primarily than another in a theoretical sense. See her *Who Pays for the Kids?* (Routledge, 1994), especially Chapter 2.

structures will be discussed further when we exploring Young's conceptualization of gender in chapter two.

Following the critical social theory approach and recalling her politics of positional difference, Young conceptualizes 'gender' as 'an attribute of social structures' in her work, 'Lived Body vs Gender: Reflections on Social Structure and Subjectivity.' Meanwhile, she provides a concise articulation of gender as 'a particular form of the social positioning of lived bodies in relation to one another within historically and socially specific institutions and processes that have material effects on the environment in which people act and reproduce relations of power and privilege among them,' while referring back to her 1994 work, 'Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collection.'[77] This reference suggests a revisit to Young's articulation of gender seriality is crucial to understand her theorization of gender and its correlation with the politics of positional difference.

2. GENDER SERIALITY: A STRUCTURED SOCIAL POSITION

As indicated above, Young conceives gender as a form of a structural positioning and feminist politics as an exemplification of the politics of positional difference. This conceptualization of gender is partly aimed at disrupting the connotation of a fixed gender identity with feminist politics. Drawing on Sartre's idea of a social series, 'gender seriality' can be understood as a critique of feminist essentialism, on the one hand and, on the other hand, such a conceptualisation of gender structure provides a useful way to make gender inequality intelligible, which is a crucial reason for Young

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[77] Young, 2002, p. 422.

to reject Moi's advocacy of abandoning the concept of gender in relation to the sex/gender debate.

In his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Jean-Paul Sartre distinguishes social series from social groups, in the light of the internal complexity and reflexivity of social collectivity. The differentiation between these two forms of social collectivity, to put it simply, exhibited in individuals' relationship between individuals and their interaction with practico-inert reality. The 'practico-inert reality,' as Young summarises, refers to a situation that is constructed by social subjects and the subsequent effects resulting from human actions, which make them 'practical' on the one hand; and, on the other hand, they are also experienced as 'inert', because the materiality poses as a constraints on and as resistance to actions.[78] Sartre argues that members of a social group self-consciously and mutually acknowledge each other's existences, and they are organized actively and purposefully around shared objectives.[79] This suggests a unified relation between members of a social group, in which they act necessarily through the medium of the practico-inert field while producing a collective structure to the group.[80] The members are still separated as organic individuals, but their common interests, shared structure of their practico-inert being, play the role of unification from outside and, thus, constitute the ground for the development of a group identity.[81]

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[78] Young, 1994, p. 725.
[79] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* Book I, in A. Sheridan-Smith (trans.) and J. Ree (ed.) (Editions Gallimard, 1976).
[80] Ibid, p. 254.
[81] Ibid, p. 259.

In contrast, a social series is a form of social collective that 'neither has specific boundaries nor defines identity,' as Young points out.[82] Sartre formulates social series as 'a mode of being for individuals both in relation to one another and in relation to their common being and this mode of being transforms all their structures.'[83] Furthermore, it is a 'practical and material reality, constituted by an infinite series of unique entities; and the uniqueness of each member due to the fact that it stands in the same relation to the one that precedes it as this one does to the one preceding it.'[84] Series structure, in Sartre's understanding, is 'the most ordinary, everyday gathering: as a fundamental constitution of sociality.'[85] As the members of a social series are not motivated by common goals and are not automatically nor self-consciously aware of their relationship with each other, as in the context of social group, they are connected passively 'by the objects around which their actions are oriented or by the objectified results of the material effects of the actions of the others.'[86] 'To be said to be part of the same series it is not necessary to identify a set of common attributes that every member has,' as Young further clarifies, 'because their membership is defined not by something they are but rather by the fact that in their diverse existences and actions they are oriented around the same objects or practico-inert structures.'[87]

The 'membership' of a social series is anonymous and 'the unity of the series is amorphous, without determinate limits, attributes, or intentions.'[88] Since Young devotes to conceptualize gender in a way that is disconnected with the logic of identity, the passiveness manifested in social series provides leverages to theorize

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[82] Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Princeton University Press, 1997), Introduction, p. 6.
[83] Sartre, 1976, p. 266.
[84] Ibid, p. 262.
[85] Ibid, p. 269.
[86] Young, 1994, p. 724.
[87] Ibid, p. 728.
[88] Ibid, p. 726.

gender as a concept of structured social position while rejecting the conjunction with group identity. For she claims that 'we all find ourselves passively grouped according to these structural relations, in ways too impersonal to ground identity' when we are in the same social series.[89] Social series is a background force that individuals must deal with in relation to the collective social structures and histories in which they are situated. It is a serial milieu that is generated by practico-inert objects, as 'the already-there set of material things and collectivized habits against the background of which any particular action occurs.'[90] Such a serialized 'background' is not particular or individualized, rather it is something like a general condition enabling human agency and subjectivity to come into being. The affinity between individuals within the same social series is, thus, developed from their similarly positioned experiences and similar perspective of other social positions and events.[91]

Noteworthy is that Young tends to use the phrases like 'structured positioning' or 'social position' when considering notions of, for instance, gender, ethnicity, and class, rather than referring them as an expression of social series. This inclination, I suggest, highlights Young's theoretical position as a critical social theorist and her subsequent concentration on social structures when analyzing the sources of injustice. As individual subjects cannot choose the surroundings and conditions they are born into, they thus face 'an already structured configuration of power, resource allocation, status norms, and culturally differentiated practices,' in which individuals make their own identities.[92] Also, Judith Squires interprets the unequal distribution of positions of political power as an indication of structural barriers to deny particular social

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[89] Young, 2002, p. 422.
[90] Young, 1994, p. 726.
[91] See Young, 1997, Introduction, p. 7.
[92] Young, 2000, p. 99.

groups access to certain scarce resources.[93] Conceiving individual lives as constrained and enacted by their positions in social structures such as age, gender, and class, hence, we can recognize Young's strong affiliation to an institutional account of the roots of injustice. Meanwhile, the use of 'social position' or 'structured positioning' underlies her resistance to the essentialist assumption of a shared group identity in the context of the politics of difference, as indicated above, for it fails to appreciate sufficiently personal freedom and individuality.

Regardless of the different phrasings, it is reasonable to suggest that Young's formulation of structured social position bears the marks of Sartre's concept of social seriality. This is evident in the case of gender seriality, as Young contends that 'the gender position of being a woman does not itself imply sharing social attributes and identity with all those others called women'; but, rather, the name of a series in which some individuals' dispositions are conditioned and affinities of people are created by 'the norms and expectations of heterosexual interaction and the habits developed in certain social activities,' without constituting their identities.[94] Similar contention can be equally applied to the scenario of, for instance, race. In the context of the politics of difference, Young argues that 'race' represents a set of racialized structures in which some individuals experience racial categorization, stigmatization, and segregation, in relation to dominant norms of respectability and to the normalization of certain bodily characteristics.[95] Being white or being of colour, therefore, is to occupy certain social position(s) that privilege someone or make as a deviant in accordance with dominant discourses of bodily affects. As Young claims the idea of structured social position is a solution to the problem of 'pop-bead' identity, namely

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[93] See Judith Squires, *Gender in Political Theory* (Polity Press, 2000), especially Chapter 7.
[94] Young, 2000, pp. 100-1.
[95] Ibid, p. 102.

'[A] person's identity is not some sum of her gender, racial, class, and national affinities,' we can recognize this objective is achieved on the intellectual ground of Sartre's social serialty and to acknowledge the possible reason for her interchanging of different phrases.[96]

The discussions of Sartre's social seriality and Young's structured social position above are helpful in understanding the broad framework in which Young situates her articulation of gender seriality as well as the theoretical ground on which she moves back and forth occasionally between gender series and gender position. Before turning to the detailed constitution of gender seriality, I would like to briefly sketch out the epistemological impact in connection with the idea of structured social position and its consequent political implications. As mentioned earlier, the politics of difference claims that social difference is a political resource that democratic communications should draw on in order to achieve justice and to facilitate democratic deliberations. This is because individuals obtain their 'situated knowledges', as Donna Haraway calls it, from their unique social positions, and 'those social positionings also influence the interests and assumptions they bring to [political] inquiry.'[97] Since social series reject the logic of a shared group identity, there is no 'authentic' experience or perspective that individuals who are similarly situated should uphold. Rather, individuals as political actors 'bring specific and

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid, p. 114. The 'situated knowledges' is introduced as a postmodern feminist objection to universal claims of reason and to the possibility of the impartial view-from-nowhere that is closely connected with the perspective of objective knowledge. Rather, it argues for the partiality and locality of knowledge and an embedded objectivity. That is to say that individuals' knowledge is always partial, given the limited and perspectival nature of all knowing, and is acquired through our material locations. See Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective, in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Routledge, 1991). Jennifer Hochschild has also examined the correlation of social position and individual's perspectives by reviewing survey outcomes, see her 'Where you Stand Depends on What you See: Connections among Values, Perceptions of Fact, and Prescriptions,' in James Kuklinski (ed.), *Citizens and Politics: Perspectives From Political Psychology* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

differing perspectives to public life and communication because of these serializes structural positionings,' as Young asserts.[98] Such an understanding of individuals' knowledge embarks on the explicit voicing of the plurality and contestability of positions, and it echoes with Chantal Mouffe's critique of deliberative democracy that the domain of politics 'is not a neutral terrain that could be insulated from the pluralism of values and where rational, universal solutions could be formulated.'[99] A further account of the situated knowledge in the context of feminist politics is elucidated in the chapter on agonistic democracy.

It is now we turn to the articulation of gender seriality in reference to the concept of structured social position. 'Women,' in Young's conceptualization, signifies a collection of individuals who are similarly positioned within historically and socially specific material organizations and objects as enabled and constrained by the structural relations of, as she identifies, enforced heterosexuality, gendered hierarchies of power, and sexual division of labour.[100] From this encompassing conceptualization of gender seriality, a thorough elaboration and close examination respectively into the two substantial factors emerged within, namely the materiality and social structures that associated with gender, is needed.

3. THE HISTORICAL FACTOR IN GENDER CONSTITUTION

However, it is crucial to be aware of a substantive notion of 'history' is embedded in the constitution of gender seriality, even when the discussions of the materiality and

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[98] Young, 1997, p.7.
[99] Mouffe, 2000, p. 92.
[100] In Young's 1994 work, 'Gender as Seriality,' she identifies that enforced heterosexuality and sexual division of labour are the two major social structures that define our gendered bodily practices. However, she adds a third social structure, namely hierarchies of power in the 2002 article, 'Lived Body vs Gender.'

social structures are not necessarily situated in specific historical contexts. Since the purposes of this thesis and Young's articulation of gender seriality is not providing a historical analysis of feminist politics, a review of the historical development of feminist movement would not be addressed here. As Young claims that 'as a series woman is the name of a structural relation to material objects as they have been produced and organized by a prior history,' the historicity that I intend to emphasis here is the evident history of strong prejudice against women across the world. [101] The prejudice may take different forms in different places, like that male is the sole heir of the crown in the Japanese Royal Family, the female genital mutilation in Africa, and women are not allowed to drive in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it is until the late nineteenth century that women finally have the right to vote in elections. Those instances clearly signal a historical fact that women have suffered different types of marginalization and oppressions in human history.

This painful past has profound and material effects on the environment in which individuals interact and reproduce power relations. For instance, the preference over boy than girl that motivated by patriarchy may contribute to the disproportionate birth rate of male and female babies in China, which is worsening under the notorious one-child policy.[102] Martin Heidegger and Sartre also underline the influences of history in their respective account of the constitution of social relations and the making of self. Heidegger argues that individuals will always understand themselves in terms of

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[101] Young, 1994, p. 728.

[102] In order to control the growth of population, China has implementing the one-child politcy since 1980. However, the sex ratios of the newborns in China have gradually became skewed every year, while the fertility rate began to decline. In 2010, the new census date shows that the sex ratios between boy and girl was approximately 118:100, which was quite deviated from the world average, namely around 103-7 boys for every 100 girls. See 'The most suprising demographic crisis,' The Economist, 05/05/2011 (http://www.economist.com/node/18651512); and Sharon LeFraniere, 'As China Ages, Birthrate Policy May Prove Difficult to Reverse,' The New York Times, 06/04/2011 (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/07/world/asia/07population.html?pagewanted=all).

some way of existing that has been handed down from historical heritage and the norms that belong to it.[103] Some may disagree with the imperative aspect of one's historical situation that derive from his existential notion of historicity, but the point is the historical situation that one inherited in the society holds certain authority for that person, via institutionalized social conventions or practices, and, not inevitably, affects one's choice.[104] Sartre, motivated by historical materialism and in relation to the struggle over subject position, claims that social relations not only occur between human beings, but take place within institutions that have developed historically and imprinted with relations of superiority and deference.[105] 'History', in feminists' account, conveys the story of 'the persistence of asymmetries between men and women, the denial of being and justice to women by men in and through concrete social relations and the at best partially successful struggle by women against these relations of domination.'[106] A comprehensive analysis of women's subordination in the world by using Sartre's view on historicity is developed by Simone de Beauvoir. She examines how the repeated reproduction of power relations in history defines women's place in the world as a permanent 'object' status, as the 'second' sex, in accordance and in comparison with men.[107]

Young acknowledges the effects of history in the way that she argues that the individual person 'is born in a particular place and time, is raised in a particular

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[103] See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (trans.) (Haper and Row, 1962).

[104] It is difficult to judge what the limits of historical tradition are, see Charles B. Guignon, "Authenticity, Moral Values, and Psychotherapy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge University Press, 1006), and Steven Crowell, "Authentic Historicality," in David Carr and Cheung Chan-Fai (ed.), *Space, Time, and Culture* (Kluwer, 2004) for contrasting views.

[105] See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, Hazel E. Barnes (trans.) (Vintage Books, 1968) and *Being and Nothingnes*s, Hazel Barnes (trans.) (Routledge, 1989).

[106] Jane Flax, 'Beyond Equality: Gender, Justice and Difference," in Gisela Bock and Susan James (ed.), *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics, Female Subjectivity* (Routledge, 1992).

[107] See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, H. M. Parshley (trans.) (Vintage Books, 1974).

family setting, and all these have specific socio-cultural histories that stand in relation to the history of others in a particular way.'[108] In terms of gender, the prior history of women's subordinated, marginalized, and oppressed situation contributes to the materiality and social structures that are associated with gender as biased and lead to their different treatments toward men and women. How those 'gendered' social structures and material organizations enable or condition individuals, and in turn, how they perceive their social positions and interact with those 'gendered' social structures and material organizations becomes matters of contextualization and subjectivity. For instance, the gender discriminations that an American black woman, where a dreary history of slavery exists, encountered may differ from the one who live in Congo where suffers the turmoil of war. However, their worldly situation as 'the second sex,' using Beauvoir's vocabulary, in contrast with the status of men is a historical fact, which provides justifications for affirmative steps for women.[109]

Young asserts that women's condition would be simply unintelligible 'if we "explain" it by appeal to some natural and ahistorical feminine essence.'[110] Nevertheless, the force of manifestation of history to lived bodies and gendered social structures is not unidirectional, but mutually reinforcing between each other. Gender as a form of social position, under Young's conceptualization, does not imply Heidegger's formidable sense of historicality in which individuals' authentic choice must respond to the claim that history makes on the people to whom one belongs, to seize its

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[108] Young, 2002, p. 417.

[109] Jane Mansbridge uses women's historical situations as a contingency argument to support affirmative steps. While concern about essentialism, she argues the highlight of the historical contexts reflects the inner diversity of any descriptively dominated groups on the one hand; and on the other hand, it is more likely to advance the substantive representation of interests for descriptive representation. See her 'Should Black Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes",' *Journal of Politics* 61:3 (1999).

[110] Iris Marion Young, 'Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality, in *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 29.

'destiny'. [111] 'The situation of women within a given socio-historical set of circumstances, despite the individual variation in each woman's experience, opportunities, and possibilities,' as Young argues, 'has a unity that can be described and made intelligible.' [112] To summarize, it is the reinforcements between those fundamental factors, namely history, the materiality, and social structures, in the constitution of gender seriality create a general sense of 'unity' that make women's situation comprehensible.

The materiality, in Young's concept of gender seriality, comprises the objects associated with the constitution of women's collectivity and, most importantly, female bodies. While both of them are inscribed by cultural and social practices, the female body is the site of agency, where individuals experience their enactments and restrictions by structured social positions and where they manifest their subjectivity and uniqueness. For '[T]o be an agent means that you can take the constraints and possibilities that condition your life and make something of them in your own way.' [113] To understand how the gendered social structures carry out their power of enforcements and how they may be transformed in the context of gender seriality, an investigation into lived bodies is certainly useful and that is the subject I now turn to.

4. ARTICULATING WOMAN'S BODY

As stated earlier, Toril Moi argues, instead of a concept of gender, an existential phenomenological concept of the lived body can disconnect feminist subjectivity with the danger of making sexual difference dimorphous, as in accordance with the

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[111] See Heidegger, 1962.
[112] Young, 2005, p. 29.
[113] Young, 2000, p.101.

sex/gender distinction. Meanwhile, she asserts that '[T]he distinction between sex and gender is simply irrelevant to the task of producing a concrete, historical understanding of what it means to be a woman (or a man) in a given society.'[114] Such strong claim of the irrelevance of the sex/gender distinction, from Moi's perspective, should be understood specifically in the tasks of conceptualizing the sexual different body and subjectivity, rather than a general application to all aspects of feminist projects. Aware that the distinction of sex/gender is a feminist attempt to battle the biological sexism, Moi claims that the return to the phenomenological concept of the lived body, especially drawing on Beauvoir's idea of 'the body as a situation', can break the seemingly necessary connections between biological facts and social norms. Since we cannot eliminate the biological existences of sex, the denial of the idea that 'biology grounds or justifies social norms,' in her account, opens up the possibility to 'produce societies that either multiply or eliminate gender.'[115]

I also mentioned that Young agrees with Moi that the lived body can account for both physical and social dimensions of the human body, and thus it is beneficial for feminists to conceptualize women's situation in the world. However, Young disagrees with Moi on the stand of renouncing the concept of gender with feminist theory, for she is concerned about the theorizations of women as social collective and gender as specific form of social structure that contributes to women's subordinated status. In short, their different attitudes toward the viability of a concept of gender are oriented from their respective feminist concerns. While Moi uses a concept of the lived body as an approach to produce a feminist theory of subjectivity, Young argues a concept of gender is crucial for understanding one of the motivations behind

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[114] Moi, 1999, p. 4-5.
[115] Ibid, p. 113, 114.

feminist politics, which is to trace the roots of injustices between the two sexes. In other words, 'feminism expresses a distinct politics…but asking a unique set of enlightening questions about a distinct axis of social oppression cannot be sustained without some means of conceptualizing women and gender as social structures.'[116] Acknowledging the deconstructive challenge to the sex/gender distinction and the critique of sexual dimorphism, Young then provides a structural account of gender while incorporating the notion of the phenomenological concept of lived bodies.

I should briefly sketch out the timeline of Young's works that surrounds gender seriality and the existential phenomenological account of the lived body here. Young's phenomenological articulations around female bodies and their lived experiences, in respect of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's contribution of the lived body, are written before her 1994 work on gender seriality. Meanwhile, there is no direct reference to the phenomenological lived body presented in her 1994 article on the constitution of gender seriality, and her reflection on social structure and feminist subjectivity regarding to Moi's advocacy of turning to a concept of the lived body appears in 2002. In fact, Young refers to the physical body as either a 'female body' or a 'social body', instead of the direct use of 'lived body', in her theorization of gender seriality. As one of the tasks of this chapter is look into those applications of the lived body in Young's works that across two decades, I will also argue that a consistency is behind them regardless the terminology differences.

In the following, I take Young's articulation of female bodies that she specifically formulated in relation to gender seriality as the starting point for my investigation into

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[116] Young. 1994, p. 719.

the theorization of gender as a structured social position. From there, I then examine
her earlier and later works, in which she provides rather abundant materials and depth
analysis, with particular focus on the lived body and lived experiences. Why is the
carnal body social, even described as lived from a feminist perspective? As the map
of Young's idea of lived female bodies be sketched out, it will become clear that her
establishment of the idea is grounded upon Simone de Beauvoir's idea of body is a
situation and, with emphasis on the concept of lived body, upon French
phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Phenomenology, under Merleau-Ponty's
construction, provides an alternative route, in the form of transcending the conflict
between realism and idealism, to rediscover the constituted, structural relations
between the perceived subject and the perceived world, relations of intentionality
rather than causality.[117] Following that, our bodies reveal themselves as the initial and
direct access of being in this constituted world and 'the body invites the radicalization
of our concepts by way of being the root of the creative operation that opens up the
phenomenal field.'[118] This existential phenomenological body bears both the marks of
enactment and restriction from its situated surrounding, and it motivates Young to
examine embodied being-in-the-world by describing the body modalities of sexual
and gender difference.

4a. Female Body is a Social Body

In the above formulation of gender seriality as a specific form of social positions,
Young had pointed out that it is the individual body that being situated and lives out

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[117] Merleau-Ponty argues that phenomenology must be transcendental, but not an equivalent of the
transcendental idealism of critical thought. See Maurice Marleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*,
Alden L. Fisher (trans.) (Methuen, 1965), p. 206-220; and Rosalyn Diprose and Jack Reynolds (ed.),
Merleau-Ponty: Key Concepts (Acumen, 2008).
[118] David Morris, 'Body,' in Rosalyn Diprose and Jack Reynolds (ed.), *Merleau-Ponty: Key Concepts*
(Acumen, 2008), p. 112-3.

her unique bodily experience 'in a social-historical context of the behaviour and expectations of others,' without worrying about generalized group identities constituting her individual identity. [119] The social-historical context where the individual body moves and her movements are subject to other people's gazes, all of these render the material body as a potential bearer of discourse and is awaited for picking up or initiating her own social conditions.

Beauvoir's influential work, *The Second Sex*, provides a perceptive analysis of the prominence of other people's gazes on individual bodies. In light of the relation between the body and the self, she argues 'to be present in the world implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world.'[120] She then contends that men and women live differently through such bodily existence and the point of view, and women are situated as the prominent Other. How the female body is disciplined to reflect the dominant social ideals, which often associate with certain kinds of slim, white, always able, bodies, under the constant gaze of the others also received considerate attentions in 1970s feminist writing. 'In our culture not one part of a woman's body is left untouched, unaltered … From head to toe, every feature of a woman's face, every section of her body, is subject to modification,' Andrea Dworkin writes.[121] Despite that, Moi argues a contingent relationship between individual's subjectivity and body is then developed. It is because that individuals are aware of their bodies 'will significantly influence

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[119] Young, 2002, p. 417-8. Also see Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman: problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Beacon Press, 1988).

[120] Beauvoir, 1974, p. 39.

[121] Andrea Dworkin, *Women Hating* (Dutton, 1974), p. 113-4. Also see Iris Marion Young, 'Women Recovering Our Clothes,' in *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays* (Oxford University Press, 2005), where she discusses the fantasy of fashion cloth and points out the liberating and valuable aspects in women's experience of clothes. However, such possibility of transformative in the fantasy of fashion is intertwined with exploitative and imperialist aspects especially in the context of patriarchal consumer capitalism.

both what society-others-make of [me], and the kind choices [I] will make in response to the Other's image of [me].'[122]

In other words, female physical features, such as breast and uterus, and female corporeal activities, like pregnancy and child caring, are not merely material but incorporate with social meanings, which may vary across different cultural backgrounds. In short, the corporeal body is a social embodiment. 'Our bodies are trained, shaped and impressed with the prevailing historical forms of … masculinity and femininity,' as Bordo asserts.[123] Take menstruation as an example. One of the traditional customs in Taiwanese society states that woman in her menstruation is not allow to enter religious temples, for people believe the biological periodical occurrence of bleeding is a sign of 'uncleanness' from a religious convention point of view. Thus, a female body is a social body, in which action is oriented as well as confined by rules.

The incorporation of sociality and materiality of a body, as pointed out earlier, is the foreground of the phenomenological existential concept of the lived body. This is because, in Merleau-Ponty's point of view, the aim of phenomenology is to study the essences of things by situating such essences back into existence, and 'does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their "facticity."' [124] Under such circumstances, the primary focus of a phenomenological research is not trying to bridge the gap between consciousness and being. In fact, the fundamental presupposition underlying phenomenology is that

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[122] Moi, 1999, p. 114.
[123] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (University of California Press, 1993), p. 91.
[124] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. x.

'[T]he world is there before any possible analysis of mine, and it would be artificial to make it the outcome of a series of syntheses which link, in the first place sensations, then aspects of the object corresponding to different perspectives, when both are nothing but products of analysis, with no sort of prior reality.' [125] Thus, phenomenology calls a radical reflection on our bodily experiences, since the body is our locus of being-in-the-world, or as Merleau-Ponty describes it, '[T]he body is our general medium for having a world.'[126]

4b. Body Being-in-the-World

David Morris suggests Martin Heidegger's term, 'being-in-the-world,' 'names an ontological structure fundamental to beings such as ourselves; its hyphenated construction flags the indissoluble reciprocity of our being, the world and the relation of being-in.' [127] Inheriting Heidegger's account of 'being-in-the-world,' Merleau-Ponty uses the concept of the lived body as a transcendental approach to against the traditional subject-object dualisms. Moi argues that his approach can 'expand our understanding of nature, to wrench it away from the deadening hand of positivism and scientism by showing that in so far as the human body is concerned, one can draw no clear-cut line between that which belongs to the realm of nature and that which belongs to the realm of meaning.'[128] For Merleau-Ponty, '[T]he body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be intervolved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them.' [129] He explores such corresponding relationship between our body and the world by describing the case of the phantom limb. 'What it

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[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid, p. 146.
[127] Morris, 2008, p. 114.
[128] Moi, 1999, p. 114.
[129] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 82.

is in us which refuses mutilation and disablement is an I committed to a certain physical and inter-human world, who continues to tend towards his world despite handicaps and amputations and who, to this extent, does not recognize them de jure,' and therefore constructing the phantom limb as an ambivalent presence of an arm.[130]

This ambivalence of the arm's existence, as Merleau-Ponty argues, is issued from that individual's appeal to the customary world s/he is committed to before the mutilation, but in turn, revealing the present truth of that person's disability.[131] In other words, the body is in acquisition with habits, while simultaneously attending to the external world via that body. 'Habit is not a function of reflective thought, nor is it transparently accessible to reflection in pure consciousness, rather it manifests itself in the perceptual body,' as Taylor Carmon argues.[132] He also points out that Merleau-Ponty shares this perception of habit with Kantian predecessor, 'the notion of an integrated set of skills poised and ready to anticipate and incorporate a world prior to the application of concepts and the formation of thoughts and judgments.'[133] The departure between the habitual body and the body at contemporaneous moment then depicts the body as our anchor to the world: 'for if it is true that I am conscious of my body via the world, that it is the unperceived term in the centre of the world towards which all objects turn their face, it is true for the same reason that my body is the pivot of the world.'[134] Sartre provides similar point when he asserts that 'all this in so far as I surpass it in the synthetic unity of my being-in-the-world is my body as the necessary condition of the existence of a world and as the contingent realization of

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[130] Ibid, p. 81
[131] See Ibid.
[132] Taylor Carmon, 'The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty,' *Philosophical Topics*, 1999(27):2, p. 219.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 82.

this condition,' while arguing how our experiences of the world condition our perspectives 'on the world by the world itself.'[135]

Following the same line, Young understands the lived body as signifying 'a unified idea of a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific socio-cultural context; it is body-in-situation. … The person always faces the material facts of her body and its relation to a given environment. Her bodily organs have certain feeling capacities and function in determinate ways.'[136] Furthermore, she defines 'femininity' as denoting 'a set of structures and conditions that delimit the typical situation of being a woman in a particular way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves.'[137] Such femininity is the general milieu that characterizes the gender seriality, in which the lived body experiences itself as a gendered practico-inert reality. More specifically, femininity as a specific facticity of gender is constructed by the interwoveness between gendered social structures and gendered materiality.

As a result of material relations of one's corporeal existence and one's social and physical milieu, femininity, as a facticity, is revealed by a woman's lived experience. It is because that 'our existence is too tightly caught up in the world to know itself as such at the point where it casts itself forth, and that it needs the field of ideality in order to come to know and prevail over its facticity.'[138] How such facticity of femininity is acknowledged and to be dealt with are partially a matter of individuals' projects, since individuals do not encounter this facticity with a blank mind, but with freedom and intentionality. For instance, faced with the competition between Barak

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[135] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (Routledge, 2005), p. 328.
[136] Young, 2002, p. 415.
[137] Young, 2005, p. 31
[138] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, xiv-xv.

Obama and Hilary Clinton in 2008 Democratic Party presidential primaries, white feminists like Gloria Steinem and Robin Morgan urged stridently the female electors should vote for Hilary Clinton, as her winning of presidential nomination would represent a victory for feminism.[139] Nonetheless, many black female constituents perceived the same competition differently, in virtue of their attachments to the agonizing history of racism in America. Those 'facts of embodiment social and physical environment appear in light of the projects a person has' then engender our body as a body in situation.[140]

'Body-in-situation,' renowned by Beauvoir's observation of women's place in the world as the secondary sex, is firstly developed by Sartre in the *Being and Nothingness*, in which he claims that individuals are always situated, in terms of their, say, nationality, gender, and social class. Sartre argues that the understanding of our own bodily existences cannot escape the making of our relationships with the Other; '[I]t is as body-in-situation that I apprehended the Other's transcendence-transcended, and it is as body-in-situation that I experience myself in my alienation for the Other's benefit.'[141] We do not anatomize our bodies to comprehend the body organs and their function, but refer to 'all those which have been shown to me on the dissection table or [of] which I have seen colored drawing in books.'[142] The dependence of the other's being displayed above, for Sartre, points out that human body cannot be a self-sufficient existence as being-in-itself, but a being-for-itself that consisting in its own

[139] See Gloria Steinem, "Women Are Never Front Runners," *New York Times*, 08/01/2008 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/08/opinion/08steinem.html?ref=gloriasteinem>; and Robin Morgan, " Goodbye to All That #2," *Women's Media Center publication*, 02/02/2008 <www.womensmediacenter.com>. For a series of feminist debates over sexism versus racism specifically on the 2008 presidential campaign, see Beverly Guy-Sheftall and Johnnetta Betsch Cole (ed.), *Who Should be First?* (SUNY Press, 2010).
[140] Young, 2002, p. 415.
[141] Sartre, 2005, p. 361.
[142] Ibid, p. 303.

activity and purposive nature. Merleau-Ponty describes such purposive and active nature of the body in connection with 'motility as intentionality.' The body is the realization of 'consciousness projects itself into a physical world,' and, as he accounts further about how the body is the concrete access to the world, '[S]ight and movement are specific ways of entering into relationship with objects and if, through all these experiences, some unique function finds its expression, it is the momentum of existence, which does not cancel out the radical diversity of the contents, …, [but] by guiding them towards the intersensory unity of a 'world'.'[143]

Regardless of the intentionality embedded in body movements, Sartre emphasizes the significance of the Other in our self-identification, as 'it is the fact that the for-itself is not its own foundation, and this fact is expressed by the necessity of existing as an engaged contingent being among other contingent beings.'[144] There are two major modes of 'otherness' presented in Young's works on the gender issues. One is 'otherness' as a serial interchangeability of subjectivity in the gender seriality. Since a series is the opposite of a group where members mutually recognize and positively identify with each other, Young argues that a woman experiences a sense of alterity when she uttering 'I am a woman' in the context of the gender seriality. That woman undergoes the serial facticity of gender and she is anonymous because her contingently fungible relationship with other women, as she experiences 'Other to herself, and Other to the others.'[145] The individual is aware of herself as a woman in the sense that '[I]n the newspaper I read about a woman who was raped, and I empathize with her because I recognize that in my serialized experience I am rapeable,

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[143] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 137.
[144] Sartre, 2005, p. 309.
[145] Young, 1994, p. 731.

the potential object of male appropriation.'[146] This self-awareness of one's position as a woman and her relation with other women who are closely situated, from Young's perspective, 'depersonalizes me, constructs me as Other to her and Other to myself in a serial interchangeability.'[147]

Such 'depersonalization' renders gender, in respect of social seriality, as a 'background' that one must deal with but does not necessarily determine one's identity. When analyzing the point of perception, Merleau-Ponty once described 'perception' as 'a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them,' and thus our body is the background of our movements [148] Moi provides a further illustration of Merleau-Ponty's differentiation of background and foreground: '[A] background is not the meaning or essence of whatever takes place in the foreground: the natural processes of the body cannot in themselves explain the acts and thoughts of human beings. On the other hand, the specific background that the body is cannot be thought away or denied, or presumed to have no effects on the foreground.'[149] Following this, gender seriality can be interpreted as a specific background, in which it provides indications and signs to understand how the actors' words and behaviors are gender-coded.[150] Meanwhile, to borrow Moi's words, 'whereas at other times a relentless focus on the background would be quite misplaced,' since there is no exclusive background can dictate the individual's subjectivity.[151]

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[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, x.
[149] Moi, 1999, p. 195.
[150] See Young, 2002.
[151] Ibid, p. 196.

Although sharing certain similarities with Merleau-Ponty's understanding, Beauvoir takes the account of the body as a background and the relationship with the Other presented within from a different, rather obligatory angle, in relation to women's situation in the world. As emphasized before, she argues that woman is in a subordinated status in the world, as a second sex to her male counterpart. This sense of inferiority implied in the asymmetric position between man and woman provides another form of 'otherness,' which Young draws on to analyze the phenomenology of female comportments and this is the subject I now turn to.

5. INHIBITED FEMALE CORPOREALITY: THE PERMANENT OTHER(S)

Written in 1980, Iris Marion Young's 'Throwing Like a Girl' marks a return of second-wave feminism to the phenomenological understanding of women's embodied experiences. This particular essay is 'aimed to theorize the effects of feminine socialization and sexual objectification on a woman's world-making movements describing us as unable to be free in movement,' as she wrote in a postscript in reflection that is published in 1998.[152] Various scholars have been drawing on this existential phenomenological analysis on female modalities into different areas of research. For instance, Ann-Carlta Evaldsson explores the particularities of modality in the context of same-sex and cross-sex foursquare games, with attention to cultural and institutional structures embedded in the games; Greg Downey investigates the

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[152] Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: Twenty Years Later," in Donn Welton (ed.), *Body and Flesh: a Philosophical Reader* (Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998).

meaning of 'throws like a girl' in relation to the physiological and neurological consequences of learning the ability of throwing, especially among Brazilians.[153]

Apart from challenging Erwin Straus' analysis on the motilities of throwing between two sexes, Young also exploring the specific female lived experiences of pregnancy, menstruation and the meaning of woman's breast, by drawing on personal experiences and observations from a phenomenological approach. The attention to gender-specific bodily comportments and lived experiences constitute what Nick Crossley called 'the gender politics of comportment.'[154] The advocacy to female-specific lived experiences can be regarded as a theoretical aversion to poststructuralist feminism's negligence of the cognitive importance of experience, as well as against the tendency of reducing the lived experience to the analysis of language.

Linda Martin Alcoff provides such criticisms toward the ignorance of the phenomenological articulation of lived experiences, when she reflecting on Joan Scott's theorization of 'experiences.' In her reading of Samuel R. Delany's memoir as being a black gay man, Scott recognizes the existence of 'experience' in our everyday language and attempt to politicize the discursive nature of 'experience' by questioning its originary status in historical explanation. She then drawing on Delany's words and argues this is done by 'tracking "the appropriation of language…in both directions, over the gap," and by situating and contextualizing that language that one historicizes the terms by which experience is represented, and so

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[153] See Ann-Carita Evaldsson, 'Throwing Like a Girl?: Situating Gender Differences in Physicality Across Game Contexts,' *Childhood*, 11/2003:10; Greg Downey, 'Throwing Like a Brazilian: On Ineptness and a Skill-shaped Body,' in Robert Sands (ed.), *Anthropology of Sports and Human Movement* (Lexington Books, 2010).
[154] See Nick Crossley, 'Body-Subject/Body-Power: Agency, Inscription and Control in Foucault and Merleau-Ponty,' *Body and Society*, 1996:2(2).

historicizes 'experience' itself.'[155] Alcoff questions the historicizing of 'experience' in

terms of language struggles and claims that '[E]xperience sometimes exceeds

language; it is at times inarticulate.'[156] She further urges 'a better account of the

relationship between theory and experience, one in which theory is understood as

itself embodied rather than simply formative of, without being formed by, bodily

experience.'[157] The informative transformation of lived experience to theory is

generated from 'descriptions of specific bodies, with their own specific individual

histories and inscriptions, rather than an abstract concept of the body or one that

exists only in textual representation.'[158]

As the phenomenological understanding of the lived body exceeds language, it

politicizes the female body without reconstituting dualisms, for the lived body is both

the medium and enactment of consciousness and subjectivity. According to Young,

this peculiarity of the lived body not only challenges the traditional philosophical

dualism of mind and body, which contributes to the subordinator status of women in

feminists' opinion, but disrupts with 'a dualist language' that operated among

antidualist philosophers.[159] Arguing that Merleau-Ponty assumes 'a unified self as a

condition of experience,' she holds that this is how phenomenology repudiates the

antidualist distinction between body as subject and body as object.[160] The female

comportments and experiences thus acquire their political significance because the

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[155] Samuel R. Delany, *The Motion of Light in Water: Sex and Science Fiction Writing in the East Village, 1957-1965* (New American Library, 1988), p. 30; and Joan W. Scott, 'Experience," in Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (ed.), *Feminists Theorize the Political* (Routledge, 1991), p. 36

[156] Linda Martin Alcoff, 'Merleau-Ponty and Feminist Theory on Experience,' in Fred Evans and Lenoard Lawlor (ed.), *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh* (State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 256.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid, p. 256-7.

[159] Iris Marion Young, 'Pregnant Embodiment,' in *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 48.

[160] Ibid. Also see Jacques Sarano, *The Meaning of Body*, James H. Farley (trans.) (Westminster Press, 1966), p. 62-3.

body is engaged in the world as pointed earlier, by taking up gendered 'habitual schemas and deploy[s] them, in situ, with competence and skills. It applies them and modifies them as and when appropriate.' [161] While allying with Alcoff's acknowledgement of the contestability of the lived experience, Diana Coole summarizes the worthiness of attending to female corporeal experiences by identifying them as 'the realm where the politics begins and, to a significant extent, remains. It is in experience that discourses, ideologies, and sedimented practices are reproduced, and it is in lived experience and perceptions of dysfunctions and lacunae that resistance is first motivated and appears.'[162]

Perceiving the subject lives as flesh, woman's body is value-laden with socio-historical discursive applications that result in practical effects in her daily movements and relation with the others. Young, along with Christine Battersby, coins the pressing need to inquire into 'the status and malleability of bodies in relation to social status' is originated from the dichotomy of masculine/feminine, 'where the first is more highly valued than the second, and where the second is partly defined as a lack with respect to the first.'[163] The relational dimension of such masculine/feminine is displayed when Young formulates the feminine 'as a set of normatively disciplined expectations imposed on female bodies by male-dominated society,' especially '[N]ormative femininity detaches persons who fall under its disciplines from expressions or enactments of power and authority.'[164] Such relational facet leads to the issue of otherness, in which the existence of the Other is our prerequisite of being-

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[161] Crossley, p. 101.

[162] Diana Coole, *Merleau-Ponty and Modern Politics After Anti-Humanism* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), p. 107.

[163] Young, 2005, Introduction, p. 4-5; and see Christine Battersby, *Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity* (Routledge, 1998).

[164] Ibid, p. 5.

in-the-world, but not in terms of alterity, rather a signification of involuntarily subordination as in Beauvoir's depiction.

5a. The 'Other' Who is Not 'Man'

As indicated earlier, Young's analysis on feminine existence in patriarchal society is partially but indicatively depends on Beauvoir's delineation of the situation of women. More specifically, she utilizes the tension between immanence and transcendence that caused by women's situation as Other to inquire into the contradiction embedded in modalities of the structures and conditions of the female body's existence in the world. [165] This contradiction, in short, is stemmed from the fact that woman's subjectivity is being denied and being necessitated at the same time, owing to her situation of being-in-the-world. That is to say, by interpreting Beauvoir, Young argues that the immanence of woman is derived from her inessential correlation to man that defined by the culture and society that she engages in. She 'is thereby both culturally and socially denied the subjectivity, autonomy, and creativity that are definitive of being human and that in patriarchal society accorded the man.' [166] Nonetheless, 'woman is a free subject who participates in transcendence,' owing to the fact that she is a human existence. [167] The tension within women's bodily comportment, motility, and spatiality thus emanated.

The contradiction in the feminine body modalities, as Young proclaims, is rooted in 'the particular *situation* of women as conditioned by their sexist oppression in contemporary society.' [168] She then elaborates on the principle circumstance of such

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[165] Ibid, p. 31.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid, p. 31-2.
[168] Ibid, p. 42.

women's situation in the world as ' of living the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subject's intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention.'[169] The possibility of subjectivity deprivation in women's situation marks the distinction between the gaze of the Other as a condition of self-consciousness in Sartre's account, and as a mere objectification of body in itself in Beauvoir's articulation.[170] This dictatorial mode of otherness that Beauvoir enunciates in connection to the repressive relation between men and women is grounded upon Hegel's prominent 'master-slave dialect.' However, she employs the terms 'Subject' and 'Other', instead of Hegel's 'master' and 'slave,' in her phenomenological analysis of women's alienated situation.[171]

Under Beauvoir's formulation, the status of the Subject and the Other, in terms of man and woman, is inequitable in the sense that the front is in an absolute position and the latter is being regarded as the inessential. 'Woman is enticed by two modes of alienation. Evidently to play at being a man will be for her a source of frustration, but to play at being a woman is also a delusion: to be a woman would mean to be the object, the *Other*-and the Other nevertheless remains subject in the midst of her resignation,' she once remarks.[172] The failure to reach the same status as the masculine Subject and being silenced in the position as the Other, women are confined in their corporeal existences and is the alienated Other to their male counterparts. Man is disembodied as he identifies himself with a noncorporeal reality and renders his body as a strange Other to him. Following that, 'the body repressed or

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[169] Ibid, p. 44
[170] Ibid, this differentiation is underlined in the footnote 24.
[171] See Beauvoir, 1974.
[172] Beauvoir, 1974, p. 57.

denied and, then, projected-reemerges for this 'I' as the view of Others as essentially body. Hence, women become the Other; they come to embody corporeality itself,' and such expendability then constitutes the essence of women's existence.[173] Judith Butler identifies such correlation as 'the essential interdependence of the disembodied "man" and the corporeally determined 'woman',' when reflecting on Beauvoir's prominent work, *The Second Sex*.[174]

Unlike the Hegelian master and slave dialect, woman, as the oppressed Other, may find it difficult to appeal to a shared abusive situation and to identify themselves with a common history, in which she can obtain her subjectivity and demand recognition and reciprocity, as similar to the Hegelian slave. For Beauvoir argues that the diversity of women's suppressed circumstances around the world make them ineffectual to recognize the origin of their otherness. An example of an Islamic veiled women's situation in France, where the burka ban is implemented, may illustrate this point. In a simplifying manner, one may argue that an Islamic woman in France may experience a double-level negation of subjectivity than her fellow French women. To begin with, her religious practice of wearing a burka positions her as an inharmonious Other, who is incompatible with France's secular milieu. In the examination of a three Islamic veil cases in French public schools, Joan W. Scott indicates that 'the veil became a screen onto which were projected images of strangeness and fantasies of danger-danger to the fabric of French society and to the future of the republican nation.'[175] The marginalization and discrimination that she experienced in relation to

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[173] Judith Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex,' *Yale French Studies*, 1986:72, p. 44.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Joan W. Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 10. Also see Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Gender and Secularism of Modernity: How Can a Muslim Woman Be French?" *Feminist Studies*, 2006:32(2).

her religious belief may enhance her fellow feeling with other Islam men in French society. Regardless her sympathetic identification with other fellow Muslims, she may find that her suffering as an estranged Other in society signals the same significance as her Islamic male counterparts. For, according to Beauvoir's articulation of the situation of women, she occupies an inferior status in the patriarchal Islamic community and hence her bodily experiences, in connection with her corporeality from a male's eyes. She is also the Other to her Muslim male peers, and thus fails the attempts to seek equal recognition of her experiences and subjectivity.

The plurality of individual identity complicates women's situation in the world by implanting ambiguity in the source of otherness. 'Thus woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the Other,' as Beauvoir observes.[176] Such tendency leads Coole to conclude that '[I]nstead of a dialectic that results in the victory of the slave, there is therefore an unproductive dichotomy that keeps women in permanent servitude, without recognition.'[177] What Young observes in the feminine bodily comportments, with reference to Beauvoir's account of women's existence in the world, is a fundamental tension between immanence and transcendence that embedded within. How she articulates such contradictory in the lived body of a woman is the discussion I now turn to.

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[176] Beauvoir, 1974, pp, xxiv-xxv.
[177] Coole, 2007, p. 207

5b. The Contradiction in Woman's Body

Young's phenomenological investigation of feminine modality is offered as a critique towards Straus' analysis of the different developments of lateral space between the two sexes.[178] She contends that Straus using a mysterious 'feminine essence', rather than on the ground of physical attributes, in his understanding of 'masculine' and 'feminine' corporeal movements. In her words, 'Straus explains the difference in style of throwing by referring to a 'feminine attitude' in relation to the world and to space. The difference for him is biologically based, but he denies that it is specifically anatomical. Girls throw in a way different from boys because girls are 'feminine."[179] Rejecting the peculiar feminine essence implied in Straus's study of body movements, Young further draws on Beauvoir to highlight a potential phenomenological framework of the lived body can help us to comprehend the gendered modalities. In her articulation of women's situation, Beauvoir explicitly provides 'a common basis which underlies every individual female existence in the present state of education and custom.'[180] Although Young appreciates Beauvoir's theoretical intervention in making women's situation intelligible, she claims that '[B]y largely ignoring the situatedness of the woman's actual bodily movement and orientation to its surroundings and its world, Beauvoir tends to create the impression that it is woman's anatomy and physiology *as such* that as least in part determine her unfree status.'[181] In order to counterbalance Beauvoir's potential appeal to nature determinant, Young brings Merleau-Ponty's concept of the lived body into her phenomenological articulation of feminine comportments as the lived body is always enculturated.

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[178] See Erwin W. Straus, "The Upright Posture," *Phenomenological Psychology* (Basic Book, 1966).
[179] Young, 2005, p. 28.
[180] Beauvoir, 1974, xxxv.
[181] Young, 2005, p. 29.

As indicated above, Young is allied with Moi for the latter's advocacy of the concept of the lived body, for she argues that this concept repudiates the sexual dimorphism. Such refutation is achieved, in accordance with Merleau-Ponty, for '[T]he body is enculturated by habits of comportment distinctive to interactional settings of business or pleasure; often they are specific to locale or group.'[182] More specifically, 'by the phonemes a body learns to pronounce at a very early age, by the clothes the person wears that mark her nation, her age, her occupational status, and in what is culturally expected or required of women.'[183] Under such circumstance, the body becomes our primary site of cultural enactments and thus is regarded as an expressive space. Merleau-Ponty interprets this as a power of loco-motion, which extends individuals' motor intention. 'The main areas of my body are devoted to actions, and participate in their value, and asking why common sense makes the head the seat of thought raises the same problem as asking how the organist distributes, through 'organ space', musical significance,' he argues through the instance of a music organist performing.[184]

Yet, he does not think that our body stops at the stage of a mere expressive space. On the contrary, he argues that '[I]t is the origin of the rest, expressive movement itself, that which causes them to begin to exist as things, under our hands and eyes.'[185] The body thereby is constituted and it builds itself a biological or cultural world in respect of its motor intentionality. 'Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly it posits around us a biological world', he continues, '[S]ometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the

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[182] Young, 2002, p. 416.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 146.
[185] Ibid.

body's natural means; it must then build itself an instrument, and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world.'[186] Interweaving merleau-Ponty's concept of the lived body and Beauvoir's idea of the situation of women, one may argues that Young perceives the body's projection of biological/cultural world in feminine modality as the sign of a tension between transcendence and immanence. She then articulates three major contradictory feminine body comportments, namely inhibited intentionality, ambiguous transcendence, and discontinuous unity, which I turn to elaborate now.

When Young argues that women live in a contradiction and 'she must try to be a for-itself-in-itself, she refers to the following situation: 'Human subjects instantiate transcendence inasmuch as we are conscious, creative, and formulate projects. As such, women instantiate transcendence. Male-dominated institutions, however, assign women roles that thwart this transcendence, and aim to confine women to the immanence of natural objects and species being.'[187] The awareness of the male-gaze cultivates an air of distrust in women's attitude towards her body and then creates what Young calls an 'ambiguous transcendence' in describing the cultural-laden feminine behaviours. Young observes such paradoxical performance in women's physical relation to things. From the daily movements such as gait and stride to large-scale muscles uses like lifting and jumping, she points out that women tend to refrain their body motions and showing a double hesitation, rather than throwing herself into action, owing to her lack of confidence and a sense of self-preservation. 'Only part of the body, that is, moves our toward a task, while the rest remains rooted in immanence. … Consequently, she often lives her body as a burden, which must be

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[186] Ibid.
[187] Young, 1998, p. 287.

dragged and prodded along and at the same time protected', she remarks.[188] This tendency renders it difficult for female body to experience a pure transcendental action, which she moves 'in an open and unbroken directness upon the world in action,' rather a struggle between 'reach out' and 'stay put'.

In partially withholding of her body comportments and her double hesitations, a woman also indicate her 'inhibited intentionality' towards her corporeal existence. Instead of experiencing 'the harmony between what we aim at and what is given, between the intention and the performance,' her suspicion and self-imposed restrictions impedes her from straightforwardly performing physical tasks.[189] Young notes the presence of 'I-can' and 'I-cannot' in feminine modality at the same time prompts the wasted motion that is 'resulting from the effort of testing and reorientation, which is a frequent consequence of feminine hesitancy.'[190] The constituted tension between immanence and transcendence discloses a discontinuity between woman's body and the world around her. 'Women tend to project an existential barrier closed around them and discontinuous with the 'over there' in order to keep the other at a distance.'[191] Young suggests the rupture exhibited within is derived from these three dimensions: first of all, 'the women takes herself to be the *object* of the motion rather than its originator'; secondly, 'a woman is uncertain of her body's capacities and does not feel that its motions are entirely under her control'; and the last, 'the feminine subject posits her motion as the motion that is looked at'.[192]

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[188] Young, 2005, p. 36.
[189] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 144.
[190] Young, 2005, p. 37.
[191] Ibid, p. 45.
[192] Ibid, p. 38-9.

To conclude, in respect of Beauvoir's and Merleau-Ponty's respective works on phenomenological analysis of the existence of human-being, Young coins ambiguous transcendence, inhibited intentionality and discontinuous unity as the pivotal tool in understanding the lived body of women. However, as demonstrated in the early section, Young argues the necessity of a conception of gender in addition to the idea of the lived body, in order to comprehend women's suffering of structural injustice and their potential to transform feminist politics. It is because that the 'woman lives her space as confined and closed around her, at least in part as projecting some small area in which she can exist as a free subject.'[193] Gender as structured serial position does not determine a woman's identity and thus there is the opportunity for she to transcend her immanence in her situation as a woman. Notwithstanding of such prospects, Young insists a set of common gendered social structure constraint the members of the gender series, which is the subject of the next chapter.

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[193] Ibid, p. 45.

CHAPTER TWO

The Lived Womanhood: A Phenomenological Approach to Female Corporeality

The traditional mind/body dualism has been dominating the Western philosophical thinking for centuries and its influences clearly marked in our different treatments to the relation between body and mind. Two of the most fundamental and correlated effects from such Cartesian dualism are the prioritization of mind with intellectual purity and the negligence and discredit of body in human thinking. Those effects subsequently facilitate the subordination of body to mind and, with the aids of patriarchal society, a hierarchical discourse between men and women is developed in accordance with the mind/body dualism. Derived from such dualism, women are conventionally associated with emotion and physicality, while men with rationality and mentality. 'Women are somehow more biological, more corporeal, and more natural than men', as Elizabeth Grosz stated. [194] Following the rationalist and enlightenment traditions, those equations between the sexes and the assumed characteristics constitute the interactions and relations between men and women, in a way that ascertaining the inferiority of the latter. Consequently, women have asymmetry power relation with men in all aspects of social and political life, with regards to civil rights and material possessions, in the patriarchal society.

This arbitrary signification of men and women, in terms of mind/body distinction, has came under fierce criticisms from feminism in civil rights movements   at the

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[194] Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Routledge, 1994), p. 14.

beginning of twentieth century. Nonetheless, the intellectual significance of bodily experiences is continuously under-evaluated and remain largely unspoken in the early feminist literatures, under the profound and prevailing influence of rationalism and liberalism. Moreover, the concerns over the pitfalls of biological determinism may reinforces the underestimation of bodily experience and increases the concentration on socialization process in feminist theory. However, the downplay attitude towards the body in feminism has been gradually transformed, with influences from the Marxist investigation into the relations between human labour and materiality as well as the poststructuralist analysis of discourses. Such alteration can be observed from the fact that the feminist accounts of subjectivity, agency and sexual differences are progressively taken on board the philosophy of embodiment and confronted with corporeality. One impact from such alteration is feminist interrogations into gendered practices as the collaboration between gender conformity and corporeality, such as de Beauvoir's account of 'body-in-situation' and Butler's gender peformativity.

Moreover, with the widespread of the politics of difference in recent decade, the interconnection and interplay between sexual differences and other social differences, like race and religion, has steadily attracted the spotlight and even constituting the challenges to feminist politics. 'What is required, and what has emerged over subsequent years, is a theory of embodiment that could take account not simply of sexual difference but of racial difference, class difference and differences due to disability; in short the specific contextual materiality of the body', Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick have observed.[195] Apart from neuropsychologists' and psychiatrists' attention to the phenomenological research on bodily awareness, contemporary

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[195] Janet Price and Maargrit Shildrick, *Vital Signs: Feminist Reconfigurations of the Bio/logical Body* (Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 5.

feminists are in active investigation into the interconnections between gender and various aspects of life. For instance, Maria Lugones examines the issues around gender, race ,and sexuality between the colonizer and the colonized in the context of modern capitalist colonial modernity; Anne Fausto-Sterling looks into the feminist implications of scientific discovery of different sexes; and American critic Susan Sontag's reflection on the different attitudes towards women's and men's aging under social imagination.[196]

Apart from that, a considerable amount of feminist works are invested in gaining insights from female physical comportments and body images as well as women's lived experiences like pregnancy and menstrual period. The increased interest in the feminist phenomenology of embodiment is questioned by the poststructuralists for its deeply humanist root on the one hand; and on the other hand , it is troubled by our conventional understanding of the immediacy of body and world and the inevitable translation of experiences. However, Merleau-Ponty, whose valuable works on phenomenological lived body inspire many, provides an alternative thinking to soothe the worry over natural/social distinction in addressing daily experiences. He claims that 'everything is both manufactured and natural in man, as it were, in the sense that there is not a word, not a form of behaviour which does not owe something to purely biological being—and which at the same time does not elude the simplicity of animal life'.[197] The ambition to disrupt the binary opposition between culture and nature is further pursued by feminists like de Beauvoir's idea of 'body-in-situation' and Butler's concept of 'heterosexual matrix'.

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[196] See Maria Lugones, 'Toward a Decolonial Feminism,' *Hypatia*, 2010:25(4) and 'Heterosexualism and the Colonial/ Modern Gender System,' *Hypatia*, 2007:22(1); Fausto-Sterling, 1993; and Susan Sontag, 'The Double Standard of Aging,' *The Saturday Review*, 23/09/1972, <http://www.unz.org/Pub/SaturdayRev-1972sep23-00029?View=PDF>.
[197] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 189.

Both de Beauvoir and Butler remarkably elucidate how male and female bodies become gendered subjects, through the internalization and normalization of the ideal model of heterosexuality and the repetition of gendered practices. Furthermore, before Butler's prominent account of gender performativity, Donna Haraway tackles the untenable boundary between nature and culture via the biological and artificial mixed creation of cyborg to expose the a world of ambiguously nature and crafty.[198] Such depiction of body as the embodiment of sexual differences opens up a renowned approach to explore the complex constitution of gendered subjectivity, identity, and the category of women itself. As Coole asserts that 'experience, corporeal or otherwise, is not some epistemological ground zero, but it is the realm where politics begins and, to a significant extent, remains. It is in experience that discourses, ideologies, and sedimented practices are reproduced, and it is in lived experience and perceptions of dysfunctions and lacunae that resistance is first motivated and appears.'[199]

Noticing the centrality of human interpretation and reflexivity of human agency in explaining the social world, some feminists such as Alcoff and Kathy Miriam deploy a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach to deconstruct gender identity and female sexual agency.[200] Apart from that, de Beauvoir's descriptive phenomenology of a woman's life from entering puberty to menopause motivates some feminists to look into how the general situation of women have an effect on her corporeal modality. For she declares that 'if the biological condition of women does constitute a handicap, it is because of her general situation ... It is in a total situation which leaves her few

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[198] See Haraway, 1991.
[199] Coole, 2007, p. 107.
[200] See Alcoff, 2006 and Kathy Miriam, 'Toward a Phenomenology of Sex-Right: Reviving Radical Feminist Theory of Compulsory Heterosexuality,' *Hypatia*, 2007:22(1).

outlets that her peculiarities take on their importance'. [201] Resonance with de Beauvoir's eloquent observation, Young has written several perceptive articles in above fields of female corporeality and bodily experience. Her works on the throwing posture, childbirth, and appearance are praised by many fellow scholars as the pioneer in re-introducing phenomenological analysis back to feminism. For the analytical value of those works are expressively and controversially derived from using, for instance, the existentialist concept of 'being-in-the-world' as well as the phenomenological idea of 'lived body' to inspect and appraise her vivid personal experiences.

Among Young's variation on the theme of her critical phenomenological intervention on the social meaning of female embodiments, in particularly the article on the different styles of throwing between boys and girls, has motivated contemporary feminists and scholars in other fields to explore the different aspects of corporal attributes. For instance, Linda Fisher deconstructs both subjective and intersubjective experiences by looking into a renaturalized and immanent corporeality and retrieve the material female voice through an account of embodied vocality.[202] Also, Kerreen Reiger and Rhea Dempsey analyse birth-giving as a 'biopsychocultural' activity and identify cultural norms of anxiety and fear of birth can limit women's capacity to experience the agency of their lived body and confidence of 'performing' birthing.[203] Additionally, Susan Leigh Forster explores how Young's theorization of a feminine physicality supplies conceptual tools for rising studies in performance and dance; and Sandra Lee Bartky connects feminine body style with Foucault's idea of self-

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[201] de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, p. 356-7.

[202] See Linda Fisher, 'Feminist Phenomenological Voices,' *Continental Philosophy Review*, 2010:43(1).

[203] See Kerreen Reiger and Rhea Dempsey, 'Performing Birth in a Culture of Fear: An Embodied Crisis of Late Modernity,' *Health Sociology Review*, 2006:15.

disciplining to expose how the daily practice of femininity through clothing, makeup, and exercising may distort the female body.[204] Likewise, Dianne Chisholm uses women's climbing as a paradigm case to contrast Young's case of 'throwing', which aims to analyse how women evolve and cultivate their bodily motility and spatiality and stress the idea of the lived body over the category of gender.[205]

Yet, why such diagnostic intervention is needed? 'Because much feminist reflection begins from the sociohistorical fact that women's bodily differences from men have grounded or served as excuses for structural inequalities, inquiry about the status and malleability of bodies in relation to social status is for us a matter of some urgency', as Young points out.[206] Such claim signifies feminist attempt to disrupt the customary hierarchy between mind and body through capture the embodied practice of social and cultural norms, with the aim to rectify the asymmetric power relation between men and women. Therefore, contemporary feminists are enduringly invested in understanding de Beauvoir's claim that 'one is not born, but rather becomes , a women', to expose the long-established dynamic and corporeal process of gendering.[207] 'To be a gender', in Butler's account of de Beauvoir, 'is to be engaged in an ongoing cultural interpretation of bodies, and hence, to be dynamically positioned within a field of cultural possibilities.'[208] In short, the centrality of body in the constitution of gender becomes manifested and undeniable, for it represents both the recipient and agent of, and is enacted and conditioned by, gender.

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[204] See Susan Leigh Foster's 'Throwing Like a Girl, Dancing Like a Feminist Philosopher' and Sandra Lee Bartky's 'Iris Young and the Gendering of Phenomenology', in Ann Ferguson and Mechthild Nagel (ed.), *Dancing with Iris: the Philosophy of Iris Marion Young* (Oxford University Press, 2009). Also see Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (Routledge, 1990).

[205] See Dianne Chisholm, 'Climbing like a Girl: An Exemplary Adventure in Feminist Phenomenology,' *Hypatia*, 2008:23,

[206] Young, 2005, p. 4.

[207] de Beauvoir, 1983, p. 295.

[208] Butler, 1986, p. 36.

In the phenomenological feminist interventions into the category of women, Merleau-Ponty's concept of body as lived stands out as the principle constituent in those configurations of female bodily experience. He perceives phenomenology as an alternative route to the binary of realism and idealism, in which the transcendence of the discipline that he emphasized can rediscover the constituted, structural relations between the perceived subject and the perceived world via the attention to intentionality, rather than causality.[209] 'His acknowledgement of the inescapability of ideology in its more neutral sense as a horizon of the lifeworld, and his view that experience is mediated by rather than determined by culture, show indeed why it is crucial to interrogate experience if one is interested in politics', as Coole comments when politicizing his phenomenological investigation.[210] Such commentary may indicates the strategic inflection point of feminism in conceptualizing women's situation in the modern world.

I have pointed out in the first chapter that Young's concept of gender seriality theorizes 'gender' as a particular form of social position, and 'women' is a social category in which those individuals are situated in accordance with a particular sets of practico-inert reality and sociohistorical structures. Furthermore, I mentioned here that, unlike other forms of materiality, body is the principle physicality that lived through restricted cultural possibilities in connected with the notion of gender. The milieu of gendered serialized existence, derived from above formulations, indicates the material structures that arise from people's historically congealed institutionalized actions and expectations that position and limit individuals in specific way that they

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[209] Noteworthy is that Merleau- Ponty conceives the transcendence of phenomenology in a way that is not equivalent with the transcendental idealism of critical thought. See Merleau-Ponty, 1965, p. 206-220; and Rosalyn Diprose and Jack Reynolds (ed.), 2008.

[210] Coole, 2007, p. 107.

must deal with.[211] Such milieu of gender presents body with passivity as socialized and contextualized, as the accent is on locality and specificity in Alcoff's account of the identity politics. On the other hand, it is in the actions of body that conveys the potential capacities of transformation and subversion of corporeality toward enforced gendered norms. This notion reminds us with Derrida's concept of iterability that cited in first chapter, in which the repeatability and alterability of language signs symbolise the possibility to create something 'new' from the 'old'.

Butler also drawing on notion of the bodily repetition of gendered practices to picture how the subjection to power unenthusiastically but unavoidably produces the prospects for agency. 'It is also the fact that they must be repeated,' in Lloyds' reconstruction of Butler's advocacy of a subversive gender politics, 'however, that creates the space for them [women] to be repeated differently and thus is also the condition of possibility for action.'[212] Following the significance and vital role of body in the constitution of gender that hitherto depicted, this chapter aims to provide a constructive consideration of female body and lived experience in the context of gender seriality. Women, under Young's conceptualization in terms of gender seriality, indicates a collection of individuals who are positioned in resemblance within socio-historical material organizations and objects as well as enabled and constrained by the structural relations. More specifically, it is the female body that taking up the serialized position of gender and inscribed by cultural and social norms, while being the site of agency to manifest its subjectivity and uniqueness.

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[211] See Young, 1994, p. 732.
[212] Moya Lloyds, Judith Butler (Polity Press, 2007), p. 65; and also see Lois McNay, 'Subject, Psyche and Agency: the Work of Judith Butler,' *Theory, Culture and Society*, 1999:16(2).

For Young, female body is a crucial component in the constitution of gender and therefore her investments in conceptualizing female experience and corporeal movements. However, there is no specific discussion to situate phenomenological lived body in her articulation of gender seriality, but a indicative note on materiality. To delineate the correlation between gender seriality and lived body therefore will be beneficial and is the overall objective of this chapter. In order to cast light on the relation between female body and gender seriality, it is the components of historical locality and contextualization of body that I will first lay out to ground further discussions. Body as existence is lived through a linear series of events, rather than at a particular moment in history, from a existentialist perspective. Also, the cultivation and institutionalization of gender norms in patriarchal society is established upon and presented as a discrete series of temporal instants. By examining the historicity of gender, as Jane Mansbridge advised, it will disclose the contingency of the constitution of women, and render the history of strong prejudice against women the evidence for affirmative actions.[213] Moreover, such contextual inspection will help us to understand how social structures enculture the lived body.

Following that, it becomes patent that the movements of body, the kinetic energy of an actor, share a dialectical relationship with other agents and organizations. Such dialectical interaction is a process of socialization, in which the actors learn to conform to and normalize certain norms, in the case of gender, like heterosexuality, that serves as criteria for individuals to form their choices and preference. Talcott Parsons has defined 'norm' as 'a verbal description of a concrete course of action, ... , regarded as desirable, combined with an injunction to make certain future actions

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[213] See Mansbridge, 1999.

conform to this course'.[214] In the traditional division of labour between the sexes, woman tend to be confined at home and allocated with the role of a carer in accordance with her biological capability of reproduction. Following that, women are expected by public gaze to express the characteristics of caring, warmth and loving that derived from the idea of carer, while being 'taught' and 'trained' to do so in both public and private spheres. The facet of socialization with regard to the lived body will then be discussed after looking into the historicity and contextualization of gender. Specifically, the section will survey how the female body is situated in the world. Young develops her conception of female body as lived partly from de Beauvoir's idea of 'body-in-situation'. Taking it as the starting point, I will retrieve such feminist situating back to the existentialist conception of 'being-in-the-world' and the eminent paradigm of the master-slave dialect.

It is argued by feminists like de Beauvoir and many other feminists that women are positioned as the Other as objectified by men through the process of socialization and normalization of gender normatively. Feminists working in the field of moral psychology, such as Barbara Herman and Carol Gillian, are focused on how patriarchy plays in a person's motivation and subsequent action, as well as questions like how the systematic oppression against women are magnified by the satisfaction of women's deformed desires. Apart from that, other feminists like Young, Lois McNay and Grosz concentrated on the embodiment of gender system and the accompanied lived experiences, in which they deal with around the issue of the formation of embodied subjectivity and the persisting interrogation of the appropriate way of understanding biological and social embodiment. As the chapter is inspired by

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[214] Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action: a Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers* (Free Press, 1968), p. 75.

the feminist phenomenological intervention into the corporeal effects of gender, the last section will taken from Young's observation of the female throwing posture and incorporate it with the notion of socialization and body-in-situation. Hinged upon de Beauvoir's concept of women as the situated Other, Young pinpoints a crucial contradiction in women's corporeal modality, namely a paradoxical presence of ambiguous transcendence and uninhibited intentionality is acknowledged. It is the co-existence of 'I-can' and 'I-cannot' in the socio-historical-laden feminine movements that this chapter will finally be concluded with.

1. CONTENDING THE NORMALISING GAZE OF THE FEMALE BODY

In providing an anti-essentialist account of the body and sexuality, Foucault embarks upon a genealogical study as a modality of social critique to analyse the entanglement and paradigm shift of relations between knowledge, power and the body. For him, such genealogical investigation, which he distinguishes it from traditional historiography, is aim to reveal how historically specific figures of subjectivity are constructed. His argument of power is constitutive also contributes to feminist understanding of gender and power, to enable feminists to explore how women's subjectivity, experiences and comportments are produced in and by the power relations which they devote to transform. For instance, Jana Sawicki contends, drawing on Foucault's redefinition of power as exercised and is productive, that the understanding of women's subordination should move from simplified domination and victimization by male power, but textured depiction of localized forms of gender

power relations.[215] Foucault's insight into the historical construction of sexual body also deconstruct the seemingly unruly natural fact of sexuality. 'The notion of sex brought about a fundamental reversal; it made it possible to invert the representation of the relationships of power to sexuality, causing the latter to appear, not in its essential and positive relation to power, but as being rooted in a specific and irreducible urgency which power tries as best it can to dominate', Foucault asserts.[216]

Noteworthy is that Foucault's anti-essentialist articulation of sexuality did not deny the materiality of sexed body, in his acknowledgement of the cultural construction of the category of sex and its function in regimes of power. His acceptance of body may be regarded as a poststructuralist reaction to what he construes as a normalizing gaze from modern scientific reason.[217] 'Modern science and philosophy construct a specific account of the subject as knower, as a self-present origin standing outside of and opposed to objects of knowledge', as Young discusses the disembodiment of modern reason in relation to the pursue of authoritativeness of objective truth in modern discourse.[218] She further points out that modern subjectivity is constructed 'by fleeing from material reality, from the body's sensuous continuity with flowing, living things, to create a purified abstract idea of formal reason, disembodied and transcendent.'[219] In order to destabilize the dualism of mind/body and the subsequently established subordination between the sexes, it is indispensable for contemporary feminism to recognize the corporeal reality of body when deconstructing the authoritative figure of heterosexuality.

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[215] See Jana Sawicki, 'Feminism and the Power of Discourse,' in Jonathan Arac (ed.), *After Foucault: Humanistic Knowledge, Postmodern Challenges* (Rutgers University Press, 1988).

[216] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Robert Hurley (trans.) (Penguin Books, 1978), p. 155.

[217] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Pantheon, 1977) and Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary* Christianity (Westminster, 1982).

[218] Young, 1990, p. 125.

[219] Ibid.

Meanwhile, his consideration of body can be seen to challenge the problematic dissociation of culturally constructed genders from ahistorical biological bodies under social construction theory of sex/gender. This can be seen when Foucault envisages his genealogical research on the establishment of sexuality as a examination on a 'history of bodies'.[220] Although the accounts of materiality and social structures that in relation to gender not necessarily to be pinned down in specific socio-historical contexts, it is undeniable that the historical authenticity of a strong prejudice against women does affect the construction of gender. Young points out the influence of history by defining the term 'women' represents 'the name of a structural relation to material objects as they have been produced and organized by a prior history' in terms of gender seriality.[221] For instance, as mentioned in Chapter One, the statistical fact of the disproportionate birth rate of male and female babies under China government's 'one-child policy' can be better explained, with reference to the historical convention of male member is the sole heir in the household in traditional patriarchal society.[222] Hence, history, from a feminist perspective, may conveys a story about 'the persistence of asymmetries between men and women, the denial of being and justice to women by men in and through concrete social relations and the at best partially successful struggle by women against these relations of domination'.[223]

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[220] Foucault, 1978, p. 152.

[221] Young, 1994, p. 728.

[222] Regarding the skewed sex ratios of the newborns in China, see 'The most suprising demographic crisis,' *The Economist*, 05/05/2011 (http://www.economist.com/node/18651512); and Sharon LeFraniere, 'As China Ages, Birthrate Policy May Prove Difficult to Reverse,' *The New York Times*, 06/04/2011 (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/07/world/asia/07population.html?pagewanted=all). In order to control the growth of population, China has implementing the one-child politcy since 1980. However, the sex ratios of the newborns in China have gradually became skewed every year, while the fertility rate began to decline. In 2010, the new census date shows that the sex ratios between boy and girl was approximately 118:100, which was quite deviated from the world average, namely around 103-7 boys for every 100 girls.

[223] Flax, 1992, p. 188.

Other instances of the marginalization and discrimination of women may take on different forms under different circumstances, such as female genital mutilation in Africa and women's driving ban in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, those examples did not occurred in a vacuum nor without contexts. As Martin Heidegger understood to exist must be historical, the meaning of those 'current' occurrences, argued in existential temporality terms, is a narrative constructed by 'future' possibility reminiscing what has been done in the 'past'. [224] Following that, the transformation of a female body into a feminine body is a historical process and thus should be tackled with attention to the historicity of bodies. Such awareness of body as historical can expose the contingency of gender, borrowing Foucault's words, by demonstrating 'how deployments of power are directly connected to the body - to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations, and pleasures; far from the body having to be affected, what is needed is to make it visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another'.[225] Such Foucaultian articulation of the relation between history and corporeality then is appreciated and retained by many feminists like McNay, Grosz and Butler, for it eludes from the dubious traditional gendered opposition between culture and the body as in other poststructuralist theorizations.

In addition to Foucaultian historical imprint on the body, Heidegger and Sartre both underline the historical authenticity in their respective considerations of the construction of subjectivity and social relations. Regarding individual making of self, Heidegger argues that individuals always understand and constitute their existences by making reference to historical heritages and norms that has been handed down

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[224] See Heidegger, 1962.
[225] Foucault, 1978, p. 151.

within one's tradition.[226] Individual is inescapable from the influences of history because a person, as Young explains, 'is born in a particular place and time, is raised in a particular family setting, and all these have specific socio-cultural histories that stand in relation to the history of others in particular way.'[227] Thus Heidegger concludes that one's choice will always be derived from certain 'possibility of Dasein that has been there', in which Dasein signifies the influential ground of past temporalities that may have significance for individuals.[228] Some may disagree the potential social determinism arises from Heidegger's imperativeness of historicality on individuals. Richard Polt depicts a bitter scenario in which one's creative appropriation may be judged as inauthentic practice when drawing on other cultures other than one's own.[229] However, this section aims to underscore the fact that the historical situation that one inhered in a society does hold a certain degree of authority for that person, in a way that individuals' choice is affected and shaped by interiorizing social norms and disciplined practices that cultivated throughout history.

Apart from individual subjectivity, Sartre points out that even institutions and organizations in a society are developed with historicity and thus are imprinted with relations of superiority and deference, from a historical materialist perspective.[230] Noteworthy is that such effect of history on corporeal reality, social structures and institutions is not unidirectional, rather shapes and characterizes each other and produce what de Beauvoir articulates as women's worldly situation as 'the second sex'. Butler suggests that de Beauvoir understands the body as a historical constructed idea

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[226] See Heidegger, 1962.
[227] Young, 2002, p. 417.
[228] Heidegger, 1962, p. 438.
[229] See Richard Polt, *Heidegger: an Introduction* (Cornell University Press, 1999). Additionally, it is difficult to judge what the limits of historical tradition are, see Guignon (1006) and Crowell (2004) for contrasting views.
[230] See Sartre, 1968 and 1989.

and 'gendering' is a life-long process, because individuals are 'engaged in an ongoing cultural interpretation of bodies, and, hence, to be dynamically positioned within a field of cultural possibilities.'[231] It is within the constant engagement with different social and cultural milieus and ethos that women's diversity and plurality emerge. For example, a black women who live in USA, where has a dreary history of slavery, may face different forms of gender discrimination in comparison with another woman who lives in Congo, a post-colonized country in the turmoil of war. Therefore, it is a matter of contextualization and subjectivity when feminists attempt to specify how gendered social structures and materiality enable and condition individual in a micro level of social setting, as well as how one makes sense of the world.

Nonetheless, de Beauvoir's claim of women's situation as second sex and many other feminists' advocacy of women as a reasonable social category are indicative of a form of collectivity that ground beyond the variation of women's individuality. 'The situation of women within a given sociohistorical set of circumstances, despite the individual variation in each woman's experience, opportunities, and possibilities, has a unity that can be described and made intelligible', as Young contends.[232] In my opinion, the 'unity' that derived from 'a given sociohistorical set of circumstances' in Young's claim is distinct from Heidegger's construction of historicality as a fate or destiny. As indicated by his critiques for the problem of social determination, Heidegger's formidable sense of historicality implies that one's choice can only be justified as authentic when it corresponds to one' own culture, to seize one's 'destiny'

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[231] Butler, 1986, p. 36 and also see Judith Butler, 'Gendering the Body: Beauvoir's Philosophical Contribution,' in Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall (ed.), *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy* (Unwin Hyman, 1989).
[232] Iris Marion Young, 'Throwing like a Girl: a Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality,' in Young, 2005, p. 29.

in a given circumstance.[233] Such resolution is unfavourable for a feminist politics that aspires to pluralisation and democratization. In the following, I will draw on Hannah Arendt's grasp of the role of history in human affair to solidify Young's claim of women's situation.

2. FROM A HIDDEN WOMAN TO THE SYMBOLIC MOTHER

In sketching out the role of action in human condition, Arendt made a seemingly contradictory observation, in which she construes human action as creating the condition for history while history is a story of events without authors.[234] I will look into the first part of the observation to start with. Arendt argues it is the collaboration of acting and speaking shapes history through the revelation of agent's existence and human distinctness. 'Through them, men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but *qua* men', as she points out.[235] It is through action that individuals transcend their mere material existence and make themselves visible to the others as a beginning of social relations. 'With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world,' Arendt explains, 'and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance.'[236] As human beings are prompted to act by their ability of initiating, the human plurality that Arendt perceived is expressed in the infinite improbability derived from men's unexpected behaviour. Under such circumstances, 'action' is

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[233] See Heidegger, 1962.
[234] See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 2nd Edition, 1998), especially Chapter 5.
[235] Ibid, p. 176.
[236] Ibid.

conceived as a more fundamental dimension of human condition than 'labour' and 'work', for cease to action means cease 'to be a human life'.[237]

Although human action as the source of uniqueness and the possibility of creating something anew in the world, Arendt intriguingly claims the decay of actor's identity with the person's life story becomes part of the history. Individuals use acting and speaking to create a beginning of their life and insert themselves into the human world, but their words and deeds, as existential temporalities, can only be meaningful when they adopt the rules and vocabularies from the existing world. It is the display of continuity that exhibited by history that men may claim they are equal. That is to say that '[I]f men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and forces the needs of those who will come after them.'[238] Let's consider the continuity of history in another way, as a representation of the existing web of human relationships, which is no less real and effective than materiality. Arendt does not deny that an agent is revealed and inserted into the human world when someone acts and speaks. But this agent, acting through the lived body, is the subject of his/her actions 'in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer'.[239] Individuals may set to act and speak a new beginning, however, they 'always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt.'[240] Given that human beings do not and cannot live their individual stories in nothingness, it is within the history the doers grow to be undistinguished and nameless.

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[237] See Ibid.
[238] Ibid, p. 175.
[239] Ibid, p. 184.
[240] Ibid.

Arendt then concludes the reason 'why history ultimately becomes the storybook of mankind, with many actors and speakers and yet without tangible authors' is due to the fact that both individual story and history 'are the outcome of action.'[241] As individual action is entangled with and only make sense in the context of the established web of human relationships, the audience nevertheless 'never can point unequivocally to [him] as the author of [its] eventual outcome', even the actor remains to be the subject of the story.[242] Such formulation of history, in relation to the constitution of gender, echoes the idea of gender seriality is understood as a background in individuals' action that indicated in Chapter One. For the effects of gender norm has been embedded and institutionalized deeply in human relations and organizations, the subjects who grown up within, even achieve human distinctness through individual action and speech, still cannot escape from the captivation of the frame of reference of sexual differences. The same as Arendt highlights the importance of action in human conditions, Zerilli also asserts that the actor's 'doings' in daily life may be construed as an enactment of subjective certainty of sexual difference.[243] Aside from the implicit authority of history on human actions, both scholars also appreciate human plurality and distinctness that achieved through speech and action. I will utilize Zerilli's discussion of 'symbolic mother' to illustrate its implication before concluding the character of history in gender seriality.

By integrating Arendt's and Zerilli's thoughts, what I plan to show succinctly here is how the power of actions of symbolic figure and historical precedence enables women to practice claim-making in political arena. Drawing on Milan Women's Bookstore Collective and Arendt, Zerilli suggests that women can make use of the

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[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid, p. 185.
[243] See Zerilli, 1998.

idea of 'symbolic mother', in terms of historical events, as an enabling tool to politicize ordinary experiences and practice freedom. 'A symbolic mother', as she wrote, 'is a gendered figure of origin around which to organize a feminist practice of freedom, a new social contract.'[244] Such symbolic figure, according to Zerilli's account of Milan Women's Bookstore Collective (MWBC), is not a duplication of primal father who must be exterminated nor a Platonic ideal type of perfect mother, for the iconographic position is not absolute or transcendent.[245] In contrast, what they try to advocate is a figurative model who not only can authorize but be contested by her fellow women via the employment of argumentations and persuasions of language. 'Attributing authority and value to another woman with regard to the world was the means of giving authority and value to oneself', as MWBC urges.[246] Two notions inherent in the idea of symbolic mother are, one, a feminist practice of freedom; and two, a feminist exemplification of entrustment. The self-affirmation derived from the recognition of others can facilitates the intersubjectivity among women, but at the same time preserves the possibility of contestation and diversity because it is a practice of claim-making which grounded upon women's freedom.

Zerilli neatly connects freedom with entrustment as a political practice of sexual difference. With the intellectual aids from MWBC, entrustment in feminist politics is perceived by her as a social relation that generated by the acknowledgement and recognition within women, yet a feminist political project in which 'answered to a need that was experienced as necessary: the absence of authoritative interlocutors.'[247] Nonetheless, such authoritative interlocutor is neither a hegemony or a superiority,

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[244] Zerilli, 2005, p. 113.
[245] Ibid. Also see Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, 1990.
[246] Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, 1990, p. 112.
[247] See Ibid and Zerilli, p. 115.

nor an absolute Truth. For Zrilli and the authors of MWBC, symbolic mother is 'a figure whose authority is self-evident and requires no agreement or action on one's own part.'[248] The legitimacy of such representational figure is granted in the reciprocity of freedom, which is 'developed as one possible response to women's symbolic homelessness and their lack of relation among themselves'.[249] The founding of their relationship, following that, cannot be outsourced and does not require a endorsement from third party, for it is a free affiliation that one woman develops with the other via political and democratic communications. Recalling Zerilli's idea of defamiliarization in Chapter One, inaugurating with the deconstruction of gendered grammar, the idea of 'symbolic mother' is an approach to politicize the Ordinary in the sense that women appeal to one another 'through the words and gestures of daily life, ... in proximity to everyday things.'[250] Feminist politics, under such circumstances, can be regarded as a political practice of enablement of women via authorizing each other freely in a democracy.

The feminist practice of symbolic mother indicates significance of the action of speech in politics. In the previous chapter, I have pointed out the iterablility and the subsequent of alterability of language and how Zerilli calls for a practice of doubt by using these two characteristics. In terms of discourse theory, speaking as articulatory practice can only fix meanings of language partially, due to the openness of the social.[251] Put it differently, no determination can be guaranteed in the application of language, for every practice of Wittgenstein's rule-following is embedded with the possibility of failure. Those phenomena demonstrate the traits of uncertainty and

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[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, 1990, p. 111.
[251] See Howarth, 2000, especially Chapter 6.

openness, which correspond to the political ethos of agonistic democracy. I will leave the elaboration of above claim to Chapter Three and Four; and it is the correlation between Zeriili's advocacy of symbolic mother and Arendt's concept of the relation of history and action that I shall argue for now.

Return to the anonymity that history caused on individual actors, Arendt coins it as 'the political nature of history', in which 'its being a story of action and deeds rather than of trends and forces or ideas - than the introduction of an invisible actor behind the scenes whom we find in all philosophies of history, which for this reason alone can be recognized as political philosophies in disguise.' [252] Those 'political philosophers' that termed by Arendt are disguised because of their anonymity, but their actions and doings may continue to stimulate and inspire future generation in the form of, situating in feminism, women's collective story. The political philosophers in disguise bear ideal resemblance with the symbolic mother, in which both historical figures enable women to speak in women's name while waiting the others to speak back. 'Only the actors and speakers who re-enact the story's plot can convey the full meaning, not so much of the story itself,' Arendt points out the worth of retelling historical stories, 'but of the 'heroes' who reveal themselves in it.'[253] As she puts action in the centre of human affair, it is the 'what' has been done rather than the 'who' done it makes historical stories more telling and appealing. The original authors in this account, paralleling to symbolic mother, cannot dictate how their stories be told but provide legitimate ground for successors to act upon. To conclude by an analogy with art that articulated by Arendt, '[T]he specific content as well as the general meaning of action and speech may take various forms of reification in art works which glorify

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[252] Ibid, p. 185.
[253] Arendt, 1998, p. 187.

a deed or an accomplishment and, by transformation and condensation, show some extraordinary event in its full significance.'[254]

From above, we have seen how the Foucaultian concept of body challenges the conventional natural/cultural distinction between sex and gender, by developing a historical construction of body. Such highlight to the function of history can also be traced in existentialism like Heidegger's and Sartre's works. Feminists such as de Beauvoir and Butler also share their opinion and drawing on the notion of historicity in conceptualizing women's situation in the world as well as the institutionalization of gender in a society. Following this stance, Young asserts that women's subordination and marginalization would simply be unintelligible 'if we 'explain' [it] by appeal to some natural and ahistorical feminine essence.'[255] However, such historicity of gender is not a 'destiny' that calling women to choose an authentic fate for themselves, as Heidegger urges his fellow citizens in Weimar Germany. History, argued by Arendt, is constructed by human actions and in turns conditions human beings. It signifies, as indicated above, an already existing human relation, in which individuals make sense of their speech acts by inserting themselves into established language framework. With the aids from precedent deeds and achievements of symbolic mothers, feminist politics becomes a public forum in which women speak to and confront each other.

The above summarization of the role of history and the idea of feminist politics derived from it convey us back to the subject of this chapter, namely body as the indispensable materiality in the articulation of gender seriality. Inscribed with cultural practices and social structures, the body is not merely an extended material substance

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[254] Ibid.
[255] Young, 2005, p. 29.

as opposed to a non-extended mind. According to existential phenomenologist like Edmond Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, it is a locus of sensations and movement possibilities allowing the embodied subject to experience and interpret the practical-perceptual and situated life. And subsequently, the embodied registers can put forward their lived experiences by languages. In other words, the body itself denotes a material contradiction, for its enactment and restriction by structured social positions. 'To be an agent', as Young explicates the paradoxical phenomenon of female body, 'means that you can take the constraints and possibilities that condition your life and make something of them in your own way.'[256] Foucault's identification of the body as the core site of his analysis on micro level power relation of sexuality also motivates feminists to examine how current social forces control over women's minds and bodies. As mentioned above, the negligence of body in traditional political philosophy has prompted feminist scholars to look into research subjects like female body and women's lived experiences. After presenting how history plays a part in the constitution of gender seriality, I will turn to the phenomenological dimension of female body, with references to Merleau-Ponty's innovating concept of lived body.

3. BODY CONTRADICTIONS IN WOMEN'S WORLD

3a. Deconstructing Gender: the Advocacy of Body

The Foucaultian approach to the body has raised questions to the conventional feminist distinction of sex and gender, because its connotation of nature and culture that developed by social theory scholars in early feminist movement. Following de Beauvoir's proclaim that 'one is not born a woman, but becomes one', some feminists were keen on pinpoint masculinity and femininity as products of gender socialization.

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[256] Young, 2000, p. 101.

[257] The prominent distinction of sex and gender is developed by Gayle Rubin to combat the notorious biological determinism. In reviewing her antideterministic strategy, Alcoff describes 'Rubin conceded the naturalism of sex in order to denaturalize gender, thus allowing for the commonsense idea that males and females have different bodies, but that these bodily differences are not sufficient to explain the elaborate cultural practice and beliefs surrounding gendered identities'.[258] Functioning as a advanced argument of de Beauvoir's eminent slogan, Rubin asserts that 'we are not only oppressed as women, we are oppressed by having to be women, or men as the case may be'.[259] Her approach breaks the concept of women with a sexual categorization based on the biological division of reproduction, and strengthens feminists' attention to the cultural construction of gender.

Many feminists embrace the sex/gender distinction and its nature/culture connotation and further develop the idea of gender socialization, in which they attribute the nurture of those two gender personalities to social learning process in people's upbringings. Social learning theorists like Kate Millett, Kay Deaux and Brenda Major have branded gender differences plainly as fundamentally cultural, rather than having biological bases. Millett asserts that gender is 'the sum total of the parents', the peers', and the culture's notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression'.[260] Or, Nancy Chodorow even pushes such learning theory of gender socialization forward to the stage of early infancy. She holds the believe that different parenting practices on male and female babies are the determinant in producing feminine and masculine

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[257] de Beauvoir, 1983, p. 267.
[258] Alcoff, 2006, p. 155.
[259] Rubin, 1975, p. 204.
[260] Millett, 1971, p. 31.

personalities. [261] No doubt that gender socialization has unsettled the prevalent discourse of biological determinism of that time and has contributed illustrious insights into the socio-cultural aspect of gender construction. Nonetheless, the sex/gender distinction constructed by social theory feminists is under attacked for the binary terminology and possible essentialism on the one hand; and on the other hand, its underestimation of the potentiality and agency of body.

One of the main criticisms to the sex/gender distinction is its close resemblance with the traditional philosophical opposition between mind/body, which, as declared earlier, is conceived as contributing to women's inferiority in the world. The weighty asymmetric power relation in the hierarchal forms of binary terminology, as implicitly adopted by the scholars of gender socialization, is clearly questionable for feminists who aim to deconstruct heterogeneity of gender but rooted her approach on the challenged subject itself. Different feminists provide similar criticisms from various perspectives. Presenting with biological evidence, Fausto-Sterling accuses the traditional differentiation of men and women is fundamentally a social norm of heterosexuality poses as a pretentious natural fact. [262] Thus, sexual dimorphism, in here includes the distinction of men and women and the sex/gender differentiation derived, should be challenged. On the other hand, Butler's normative critique of traditional sex/gender distinction and its potential essentialist tendency is actually taking the form of a critique of feminist identity politics. Opposing the normative force accompanied with the development of masculine and feminine personalities, she criticizes such gender socialization account fails to recognize 'the multiplicity of

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[261] See Chodorow, 1978.
[262] See Fausto-Sterling, 1993 and 'The Problem with Sex/Gender and Nature/Nurture,' in Simon J. Williams, Lynda Birke, and Gillian A. Bendelow (ed.), *Debating Biology: Sociological Reflections on Health, Medicine and Society* (Routledge, 2000).

cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of 'women' are constructed.'[263] A worry of the emerge of a rigid and fixed gendered identity can be sensed from her words. Concerning the upholding of those gender personalities may leads to gender essentialism, Butler argues such tendency may deceives us about the regulatory power of norms that govern our performances of gender, by masquerading gender identity as a natural kind of being.

Apart from the negligence of the variations of body and the danger of a essentialist gender identity, Wendy Brown tackles the problem of gender socialization from its constrain on feminist politics and its appeal to the authenticity of women's experience. She indicates a crucial paradoxical situation that feminist politics encounters when situating itself as a form of identity politics: feminists incline to use the authenticity of women's experiences to obtain political and moral authority, but they are well-aware that the feminine experience and identity are constructed under patriarchal term at the same time.[264] In short, the authenticity of women's experience in feminist politics of identity functions as a political legitimacy and moral high ground, upon which feminists can condemn the repressive effects of patriarchal power and demand for the restoration of truth and reparations. In Brown's eyes, such feminist attempt to claim for innocence and genuineness of experience implies a rejection of politics, for it '...betrays a preference for extrapolitical terms and practices: for Truth (unchanging and incontestable) over politics (flux, contest, instability); for certainty and security) safety; immutability, privacy) over freedom (vulnerability, publicity); for discoveries (science) over decisions (judgments); for separable subjects armed with established rights over unwieldy and shifting pluralities adjudicating for themselves and their

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[263] Butler, 1990, pp. 19-20.
[264] See Wendy Brown, 'Postmodern Exposures, Feminist Hesitations,' in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton University Press, 1995).

future on the basis of nothing more than their own habits and arguments.'[265] Her accusation, combined with the criticisms above, suggests a necessity to call the conventional sex/gender distinction into question.

Another element that is rather under-developed in gender socialization approach is the function of body in the constitution of gender. Although learning theorists of gender seem to be aware of body as the manifestation of gender practices, they perceive it as a mere negative corporeal existence, which is subject to taming and institutionalize in the very beginning. Reflecting on the feminist idea of the body in the late sixties and seventies, Susan Bordo comments that the dominant feminist discourse at that time has '[T]hat imagination of the female body [was] of a socially shaped and historically 'colonized' territory, not a site of individual self-determination.' [266] She admires that the second-wave feminism 'inverted and converted' human body 'as itself a politically inscribed entity', but questioning the seemingly eternally obstructive relation between men and women, in relation to the oppressor/oppressed model, by underplaying the agency and autonomy of female body.[267] With Foucaultian analysis to power and body, poststructuralist feminists have been working hard to shed lights on the complexity of body in the articulation of gendered practices. As noticed by scholars like Butler, Bartky and Kathy Davis, Foucaultian insights regarding disciplinary practices of the body indicate a contradiction: the material existence of bodies is undoubtedly modified and regulated by those practices on the on hand. And on the other hand, such bodies signal specific contexts and convey social meanings through their motility in social groupings, which reproduce the very practices that 'correct' them.

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[265] Ibid, p. 37.
[266] Bordo, 1993, p. 21
[267] Ibid.

The overemphasis on socialization and the undertone of corporeality featured critically in the campaign of destructive challenge to the sex/gender distinction. An advocacy of a return to feminist phenomenology gradually emerged into the scene under such circumstances, with specific attention to embodiment and lived experience. Following the footsteps of de Beauvoir, Young and Bartky started to work on the experience of daily life and body movement from a phenomenological perspective. But Moi's enthusiastic advocacy of the 'lived body' concept can be perceived as a direct attack on the sex/gender distinction. Holding the rejection to the sex/gender and nature/culture dichotomies, Moi believes that a reinvention into a existential phenomenological concept of lived body can effectively brings specific physical traits of different bodies into feminists' consideration of our subjective sense of self.[268] Such advocacy enshrines Fausto-Sterling's presentation on the variation of sexes as a biological fact and increasingly attracts other feminists' attention. For instance, Nicholson claims the importance of understanding the socio-historical differenciation of bodies as lived, in which it helps to disconnect corporeality with a biological foundationalism.[269] Through conceiving female body as lived, in my opinion, such concept can enables feminists to explore and examine a wider range of feminine experiences, in a way that celebrating the complexity of female body.

As declared before, the objective of this chapter is to sketch out the role of the phenomenological lived body in the context of gender seriality. Although Young's articulation of female body in gender seriality in 1994 did resemble some conceptual trace of Merleau-Ponty's idea of the lived body, she never explicitly uses such terminology but calling physical body as either a 'female body' or a 'social body' at

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[268] See Moi, 1999.
[269] See Nicholson, 1999.

that time. However, her respective phenomenological works on female throwing postures in 1980 and on conceptualizing the lived body with relation to gender, which has a direct discussion of Moi's argument, in 2002 both presented overtly with reference to the concept of the lived body. Such conceptual gap and time differences of those published works thus necessitate my further investigation into Young's deployments and articulation of body in different period. Although some inconsequential variations may exist in her works, I will argue that a consistency can be detected in her theorization of gender regardless the terminological and time differences. To bridge the possible split between the lived body and gender seriality thus constitutes the vital contribution of this chapter to the thesis.

Noteworthy is that Young and Moi are diverged on the issue of abandoning the sex/gender model wholly, even they allied on the integration of phenomenology and feminism. In the following, I will firstly present their respective reasons regarding why a concept of gender should/should not be preserved in feminism, and I will suggest that such concept still merits feminism in its understanding of women's subordination throughout human history. Secondly, as the concept of the lived body is initially derived from Merleau-Ponty's works, I will then sketch out his primary articulation of the concept. However, it is well-acknowledged by feminists that his deficient account on gendered bodies and thus other intellectual sources are required to substantiate its application in connection with women. Among the variety of feminist theory, de Beauvoir's concept of 'body-in-situation' and the body as a mode of our 'being-in-the-world' that Young derived from her are considered to be perceptive and instructive in this occasion. From a phenomenological perspective, our bodies reveal themselves as a initial and direct access of being in the constituted

world. In David Morris' words, 'the body invites the radicalization of our concepts by way of being the root of the creative operation that opens up the phenomenal field.'[270] Following that, I will move on to discuss the lived experiences of women and their motility to conclude this chapter.

The reason that body is considered to be lived is due to the fact that it not only can move and interact with the surrounding objects and conditions, but acquires life experiences and develop subjectivity from those interfaces. In short, the significance and real function of body can only be revealed by above phenomena. As Grosz contends that 'without some acknowledgement of the formative role of experience in the establishment of knowledges, feminism has no grounds from which to dispute patriarchal norms.'[271] But she also points out 'experience cannot be taken as an unproblematic given, a position through which one can judge knowledges, for experience is of course implicated in and produced by various knowledges and social practices.'[272] Here, Young's various exploration on female bodily experiences and comportments, as well as the later attempts by others, provide abundant materials to investigate the collaboration of gendered discourse and materiality, in relation to gender seriality. Among those explorations, it is her observation of the contradiction in female lived body signals such collaboration. Therefore, in the last section of the chapter, I will show how female modality is troubled by a tension of transcendence and immanence that caused by women's situation in the world.

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[270] David Morris, 'Body,' in Rosalyn Diprose and Jack Reynolds (ed.), *Merleau-Ponty: Key Concepts* (Acumen, 2008), pp. 112-3.
[271] Grosz, 1994, p. 94.
[272] Ibid.

3b. Lived Body: the Manifestation and Socialization of Gender

From above, it has been shown that gender socialization approach, based upon the sex/gender paradigm, may naturalizes the biological aspect of sex in order to unsettle the social hegemony of gender. Facing such conceptual binary model, contemporary feminists have been attacking the supposed femininity and common identity emerged from gender socialization and social learning theory. Some feminists took a radical stand regarding the problems of the sex/gender dualism and suggested abandoning such dualism completely. Among others, Moi leads the charge of the sex/gender distinction engenders feminist subjectivity by rendering sexual differences a dimorphism. 'The distinction between sex and gender is simply irrelevant to the task of producing a concrete, historical understanding of what it means to be a woman (or a man) in a given society', as she claims.[273] It should be noted that the irrelevance of the distinction in her account is specifically targeting the task of conceptualizing the variation of sexed bodies and their impact on individual subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty's concept of the lived body appears to the picture, when she argues for the contingency between subjectivity and the body as well as the ambiguity of the latter. 'His project is to expand our understanding of nature, to wrench it away from the deadening hand of positivism and scientism by showing that in so far as the human body is concerned, one can draw no clear-cut line between that which belongs to the realm of nature and that which belongs to the realm of meaning', Moi summarizes how the phenomenological approach can transcend the conventional sex/gender dimorphism.

Moi's support for utilizing the phenomenological concept of lived body to study feminist subjects is shared by scholars across different fields. For instance, Sarah-

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[273] Moi, 1999, pp. 4-5.

Vaughn Brakman and Sally J. Scholz context the equation of the natural with the genetic and biological and argues for a feminist embodied maternity instead, in the context of adoption and ART (Assisted Reproductive Technologies); Kirsten Jacobson analyses agoraphobia as an emblematic expression of the ongoing pathology of being a women in contemporary society, where women may continue to fully participated in the public arena.[274] Young also recognizes the positivity of drawing on the phenomenological approach to female body and experience in feminism, and believes a descriptive dimension of these subjects will be beneficial. 'Descriptions of lived female and feminine experience can reveal reasons that differently situated women may have to sympathize with one another's embodied situation, while at the same time remaining sufficiently vague to allow for concrete variation', as she declares with reference to Kruks' likewise recommendation.[275] In short, a phenomenological investigation into women's respectively situated social position can enhance our understanding of the plurality and diversity among women, in relation to the politics of difference.

Although Young and Moi are like-minded on the issue of the lived body, in my opinion, Young would not accept Moi's advance claim of 'the human body is neither sex nor gender, neither nature nor culture', which she derived from the ambiguity of human existence.[276] In Young's opinion, our understanding of gender should be supplemented with a concept of the lived body, rather than a replacement. Unlike Moi's attempt to theorize a feminist theory of the relation between body and

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[274] See Sarah-Vaughn Brakman and Sally J. Scholz, 'Adoption, ART, and a Re-Conception of the Maternal Body: Toward Embodied Maternity,' *Hypatia*, 2006 21(1); and Kirsten Jacobson, 'Embodied Domestic, Embodied Politics: Women, Home, and Agoraphobia,' *Human Studies*, 2011: 34(1).
[275] Young, 2005, p. 9; also see Sonia Kruks, Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics (Cornell University Press, 2001).
[276] Moi, 1999, p. 114.

subjectivity, Young tackles women's issues from a different angle and places 'gender' in the spotlight of conceptualizing and tracing the root of disparities and injustices between the sexes. Oriented her argument on the viability of a concept of gender from a different feminist concern, she argues that 'feminism expresses a distinct politics ... asking a unique set of enlightening questions about a distinct axis of social oppression cannot be sustained without some means of conceptualizing women and gender as social structures.'[277] I believe that Young would agree with Moi's opinion that feminist theory should not 'reaches fantastic levels of abstraction without delivering the concrete, situated, and materialist understanding of the body', as Moi claims that poststructuralist feminists have leaded us to.[278] But the core feminist in Young's mind, from my understanding, is: what has been, is being and will be experienced by different lived bodies as enactment and restriction across time and place, in terms of sexual differences? More plainly, what is the object, which individuals interact with, that makes their sexual differences meaningful and consequential?

Regardless the formats of enactments or obstruction one may encountered in relation to sexual differences, Young's assertion of retaining a concept of gender is set to capture such perpetuation of social facticity. It is quite difficult to answer the above question by simply putting forward a concept of the lived body, for it signals a variation of experiences and corporeal features, rather than theorizing a specific social position that everyone must cope with. A concept of gender can encapsulates an objective sense of a long-existed social structure of sexual differences, which leaves marks on the lived bodies. The concept signifies the perpetuated effects of social structures, such as normative heterosexuality, sexual division of labour and

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[277] Young, 1994, p. 719.
[278] Moi, 1999, p. 31.

hierarchies of power that proposed by Young, which continuously are exemplified through peculiar temporal materiality, namely the lived bodies.[279] The numerous exemplifications of the lived body indicate the exertion of gender can result in multiple realizable outcomes, which is a feature of a macro level of social structure in Alexander Wendt's theorization.[280] Following that, we can acquire 'a picture of large-scale systematic outcomes of the operations of many institutions and practices which produce outcomes that constrain some people in specific ways at the same time that they enable others', via using a concept of gender as a macroscopic lens to make women's situation in the world intelligible.

Under such circumstances, the sex/gender binary does not necessarily be interpreted as an unambiguous differentiation between biological sex and cultural gender. Rather, it should be perceived that the entanglement of corporeality and cultural practices in such sex/gender model can be better explained by drawing on the phenomenological notion of the lived body. 'The diverse phenomena that have come under the rubric of 'gender' in feminist theory can be redescribed in the idea of lived body as some among many forms of bodily habitus and interactions with others that we enact and experience', as Young agreeably concludes the function of the lived body under feminist theory of gender.[281] With above statement in mind, I will then turn to illustrate the meaning of our 'bodily habitus and interactions with others that we enact and experience', in which it highlights the conceptual facts that a lived body is always in a dynamic state with regard to interiority and exteriority, as de Beauvoir describes as a 'body-in-situation' on the one hand. And on the other hand, a lived body does not act alone and is in a constant interaction with others, including social milieu and

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[279] See Young, 2002 and footnote 93.
[280] See Wendt, 2000, especially Chapter 4.
[281] Young, 2002, p. 416.

facticity, and it is a phenomena of 'being-in-the-world'. Moreover, those two elements are fundamentally build upon Merleau-Ponty's articulation of the phenomenological lived body, which I will begin with in the following section.

4. WOMEN AS THE WORLDLY 'OTHER' SEX

From the criticisms toward gender socialization theory and the subsequent deconstructive challenge to the sex/gender distinction that discussed above, it becomes fairly clear that a incorporation of sociality and materiality in the understanding of women as a social collective is favoured by contemporary feminists. Such amalgamation is the foreground of the existential phenomenological lived body. Merleau-Ponty advocates the interdependence and mutual encroachment in the human relations with the world and each other. From his perspective, phenomenology is designed to study the metaphysic of presence and its method is to investigate the essences of things by looking into their very own existences. A person 'does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their "facticity".'[282] This is an rejection to the absolute truth that created by analytical reflection, which, Merleau-Ponty criticises, 'is carried away by itself and installs itself in an impregnable subjectivity, as yet untouched by being and time.'[283] 'For if I am able to talk about "dreams" and "reality", to bother my head about the distinction between imaginary and real, and cast doubt upon the 'real', it is because this distinction is already made by me before any analysis'; such statement directly attacks our general believe about the self-evidence of our perceptions, in a way that aims to escape both sensationalism and transcendental idealism.[284]

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[282] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. x.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Ibid, p. xvi.

As he criticizes the reductionism in both sensationalism and idealism, phenomenology is said to reflect 'the unreflective life of consciousness, by 'making explicit our primordial knowledge of the 'real', [of] describing our perception of the world as that upon which our idea of truth is forever based.'[285] In order to do so, a new relation between the world and 'I' is envisaged by Merleau-Ponty: 'The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible.'[286] Following these declarations, phenomenology calls a radical reflection on our bodily experiences, for human body is the locus of perceptions as well as the interpreter of them. Put it in Merleau-Ponty's own words, '[T]he body is our general medium for having a world.'[287] de Beauvoir touches on the same point in the light of the relation between the body and the self; as she wrote that 'to be present in the world implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world.'[288] A dynamic and interdependent relation between individual subjectivity and the body thus developed and, in Moi's view, also underlines the contingency dimension between them. Under the existential phenomenological articulation, my body 'will significantly influence both what society--others--make of me, and the kind of choices I will make in response to the Other's image of me, but it is also to acknowledge that no specific form of subjectivity is ever a necessary consequence of having a particular body.'[289]

The fundamental reorientation of the body from the mind/body dualism implies that corporeal embodiment is our primary and everyday mode of being-in-the-world.

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[285] Ibid, p. xv and p. xvi.
[286] Ibid, pp. xvi-xvii.
[287] Ibid, p. 146.
[288] de Beauvoir, 1983, p. 39.
[289] Moi, 1999, 114.

'Being-in-the-world' in Heidegger's understanding, under Morris' interpretation, 'names an ontological structure fundamental to beings such as ourselves; its hyphenated construction flags the indissoluble reciprocity of our being, the world and the relation of being-in.'[290] As mentioned earlier, human being is the perceiver of the world in a way that who actually lived within a worldly context. Following that, individuals are not the sole makers of themselves in the sense that they are under constant influences of the others. Such dynamic interaction between perceiver and its environment is also noted in the historicity of the body. The next chapter will look into the situatedness of the lived body in gender serial structures, in order to further articulate a feminist politics of discursive embodiment.

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[290] Morris, 2008, p. 114.

CHAPTER THREE

The Reiteration and Reconfiguration of Gender Performativity

Continuing the previous discussion on how the lived body interacts with its social surroundings, this chapter examines closely the constitutive interplay between female bodies and gender serial structures. As indicated in Chapter Two, a conception of phenomenological embodiment is beneficial in relation to provide insights into the conditioning effects of gender on female bodies. Yet, it is still unclear how the lived body re-enacts or even renovates gender practices. It is, then, the purpose of this section to sketch the mechanism operative in the process of gendering, especially in the way in which the agency of a lived body comes into play under the constraints of gender structures. While the operationalisation of gender may be tackled from different angles, this thesis concentrates on the aspect of reiteration and the potential possibility of reconfiguration in gender performances. This is because the idea of trained body, which is articulated by Merleau-Ponty, hints at how the initial mastery of a lived body can be utilised as both a foundation for learning and a resource for producing. Those two primary abilities, in relation to the gendering process, then provide indications regarding how gender acts can take place in different individuals with certain degrees of variance, i.e. how they can be reiterated and (even if only slightly) reconfigured in each gendered practice.

Furthermore, I intend to draw on Judith Butler's theorisation of gender performativity to capture the productivity and disciplinary forces of gender hegemony, in order to

elucidate the correlation between bodily reiteration and reconfiguration of gender structures. 'Gendering', as this thesis portrays it, refers to the everlasting process in which a lived body becomes a gendered subject via disciplinary trainings and actualising such trainings in its daily performances. In other words, the constructedness of gender is detected in the way that a body is disciplined to imitate and repeat gendered practices. Although Butler may have coined the compulsiveness of gender as a 'forced recitation of norms', the trained imitation of gender acts is never a precise repetition of a well-defined gender paradigm.[291] If one reviews the history of human activity, it can be clearly identified that the corporeal re-enactment of gender performances is not entirely a mechanical production of certain consistent gender routines. Rather, 'gendering' should be conceived as an on-going and semi-open socialising project, in which corporeal mastery is camouflaged in the way that individuals recite gender norms with subtle variations.

By considering the relational interplay of reiteration and reconfiguration in the constitution of gender embodiment, the feminist politics of discursive embodiment will be able to identify the intrinsic correlation between normative powers and corporeal performances of gender. From this, a crucial opportunity for politicising and contesting the existing gender hegemony can be revealed, in relation to the potential variations of individual reiterations of gender acts. I should point out that the term 'relational interplay', which is used extensively in this chapter to define the situation between the roles of 'reiteration' and 'reconfiguration', is designed for describing an unceasing, dynamic process of interaction between two forces. During this, those two forces have an effect on the development of each other. Noteworthy is

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[291] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (Routledge, 1992), p. 94.

that the relational interplay between reiteration and reconfiguration, as will be demonstrated in this chapter, does not intend to reach a settlement between corporeal performances and gender hegemony. Instead, such relational interplay is envisaged as a crucial mechanism to disrupt the dominant gender relations between the sexes under the feminist politics of discursive embodiment. More importantly, the opportunity for gender disruption, i.e. for deconstructing the hegemonic meanings of gender, is rooted in bodily actions. The corporeal capability to contest, as this chapter and Chapter Four will elaborate, can be transformed into the political skill to question and reinvent the existing feminist political ethos.

Under such circumstances, the relational interplay between reiteration and reconfiguration bears the marks of both normative imperatives and materiality. The normative imperative of gender refers to the forcible reiteration of gendered practices in the lived body; at the same time, the realization of such gender imperatives is material, because its maintenance relies on corporeal actions. Following that, gender reconfiguration entails that the material aspect to which the possibility of change is owed is detected in the action of the trained body. Meanwhile, the corporeal re-enactment is laden with the normative imperative of existing gender structures. Within which, the notion of mastery, which is presumed in Merleau-Ponty's trained body, signifies that an actor can reiterate forced gender practices with restrained differences. The potential individual variation of a gender reiteration is 'restrained' because the gendered subjectivity of individuals is enabled and constrained at the same time by the routine training which sustains, as well as provided by, the established gender hegemony. The subtle difference in re-enactments not only points to the constitutive tension between individuality and regulative normativity of gender,

but also suggests that gendering is an open-ended process. The delicate reconfiguration of established gender practices, as this thesis intends to argue, will renew the discursive territory of gender with inspiring and maybe provocative examples, which yield symbolic support for future contestations, open up women's perceptions as well as the imagination of 'women'.

The relational interplay between reiteration and reconfiguration in the feminist politics of embodiment will be unfolded through the following sections: 'Reflecting on the normative imperatives and materiality of gender', 'The corporeal reiteration of gender performativity', 'The discursive reconfiguration of gender performance' and 'The discursive embodiment in gender seriality'. It has been repeatedly pointed out that a conceptualisation of women as a heterogeneous social collective is a crucial task for contemporary feminist politics in a pluralist age. By considering the discursive and material correlations of gender in this way, I will demonstrate how individual women can deconstruct the disciplinary gender norms in front of the public eye. Furthermore, such a depiction of relational interplay of gender reiteration and reconfiguration pinpoints how women are informed by social differences to perform their assigned gender differently. Moreover, articulating reiteration and reconfiguration brings back the conceptual task set out in previous chapters, namely how a phenomenological lived body can substantiate Young's conceptualization of gender seriality. While the consideration on Merleau-Ponty's idea of the lived body enunciates the significance of corporeality in constituting the serial structure of gender, articulating the relational interplay between corporeal reiteration and discursive reconfiguration will here supplement the operative dimension of that

enunciation. I will therefore conclude Chapter Three with a section on 'Discursive embodiment in gender seriality'.

1. Reflecting on Normative Imperatives and Materiality of Gender

In the preceding chapters, I introduced and sketched out Young's primary development of gender seriality and Merleau-Ponty's depiction of a phenomenological lived body respectively, in order to set the scene for the articulation of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment. In this framework, I also pointed out that both ideas can complement each other, since the concept of a lived body can enlighten us to how gender structures work on individuals and the idea of gender seriality provides a non-essentialist approach to situate a female body. Nevertheless, how the gender hegemony is operationalised and transformed in relation to the performativity of the female body remains an open question and requires a detailed discussion. In particular, how does the heterogeneity of women emerge from female performances of gender under the conditioned environment of gender structures? A conceptual elucidation on the roles of gender reiteration and reconfiguration will therefore be useful to provide operational insights into the ways that individuals take up constrained possibilities 'in their own way, forming their own habits as variations on those possibilities, or actively try to resist or refigure them', while gender serial structures 'condition the action of consciousness of individual persons'.[292]

On the one hand, the role of gender reiteration illustrates how the lived body is informed by its situatedness and, on the other hand, individuals demonstrate how they

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[292] Young, 2002, p. 426.

make sense of their ideas of being-in-the-world through the ability to reconfigure existing practices. The following sections will sketch out the conceptual essence of the relational interplay of gender reiteration and reconfiguration gradually. I shall highlight here that the connection between corporeal reiteration and discursive reconfiguration of gender norms is a two-way street: One the one hand, the normative effect of gender structures condition the lived body via prompting the bodily reiteration of gender performances. On the other hand, as Merleau-Ponty perceives, through a presumed mastery, (or 'agency' in Butler's account of gender performativity) in the lived body's way of being-in-the-world, corporeal reiteration generates a transformative possibility of reconfiguring gender norms. Such acknowledgement leads to the other aspect of this relational interplay. That is, inherently individual, performative, bodily acts contribute alternative interpretations to the development of discursive effects of the existing gender structures. This contribution has transformative merits, which may not exhibit immediate, drastic effects, but can be potentially reiterated, even developed further, by future gendered corporeal practices. This half-constrained and half-open interaction between the discursive and the material aspects of gender, as I will conclude, sustains the communal ambience of gender serial structures, while preserving the heterogeneity that are cultivated from temporal individual performances of gender.

I will here coin another term for gender reiteration; 'corporeal reiteration'. This is to underline the vision that, drawing on Butler, gender performativity is 'a citational chain lived and believed at the level of the body'; with the act of disruption a 'discursive reconfiguration', accentuating the iterative power of that disrupting action in contesting the discursive imperative of gender hegemony. Nevertheless, I must

contend, such terminological differentiation should not be read as an arbitrary, definite categorization, which neglect that both reiteration and reconfiguration are resulted from the interplay of discourse and materiality. Apart from that, I also recognize the irreducibility of the discursive and the material, even though gender performances are construed as corporeal embodiments here. As Butler notices, following Shoshana Felman's idea of scandalous body, '[S]peech is bodily, but the body exceeds the speech it occasions; and speech remains irreducible to the bodily means of its enunciation.'[293] In other words, the discursive and the material always have effects in excess of intention. More importantly, it is in this notion of excess that the corporeal reiteration of gender produces the possible discursive reconfiguration of gender hegemony. In turn, this discursive excess provides a historically-congealed ground for future forms of corporeality to reiterate. However, as James Loxley observes in Butler's account of performativity, the changing of gender structures via the relational interplay of reiteration and reconfiguration cannot assure effectively a positive progression.[294] Since the gender structure is subjected to the ambiguity of human existence and the indeterminacy of serial members' individual projects, as noted in the previous chapters, the corporeal reiteration and the subsequent discursive reconfiguration are also vulnerable for the same reason. For example, women's political and civil rights may be granted by democracy but not necessarily the autonomy over women's body, especially when it comes to issue of reproduction.

Of course, the issue around reproduction, such as abortion, surrogacy, and contraception, is more than a matter for feminist theory alone as it is entangled with

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[293] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (Routledge, 1997), p. 156. Also see Shoshana Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages*, Catherine Porter (trans.) (Stanford University Press, 2002).
[294] See James Loxley, *Performativity* (Routledge, 2007), especially Chapter 6.

other ethical and moral questions, and often, with religious concerns. Nonetheless, what feminist ethos, let's say, around the reproduction issue should be cultivated, via the reiteration and reconfiguration of gender, is fundamentally a question of democratic politicization. That is to say, in line with the ambiguous atmosphere of human existences, contemporary feminist politics not only should acknowledge the interplay of discourses and materiality, but also should be acclimatized to the accompanied indeterminacy and uncertainty of that interaction in its democratic framework. As I will argue in the next chapter, to construe the relational interplay between corporeal reiteration and discursive reconfiguration as a democratic method of political contestation, is to consider the political competition between potential interpretations of the excess factor as an agonistic pluralism, than an antagonistic battle over power.

Agonistic pluralism, as William Connolly states, comprehends '[a] recurrent tension between already existing diversity and new movements that press upon this or that established assumption about', in the current case, gender. [295] Connolly then encourages an 'ethos of engagement' between multidimensional constituencies, in which the agonistic pluralism can solicits participants 'to affirm without existential resentment the profound contestability of each in the eyes of others.'[296] Such an ethos of engagement, in my opinion, takes form via the relational interplay between corporeal reiteration and discursive reconfiguration. Also, it can democratize the feminist politics of discursive embodiments by inviting contributors to rethink politically some 'previously unstated implications, toward an ethic of cultivation as

[295] Mark Anthony Wenman, 'Agonism, Pluralism, and Contemporary Capitalism: An Interview with William E. Connolly', *Contemporary Political Theory*, 7:2008. Also, see William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
[296] Ibid.

you become alert to new forces arising in the world.'[297] Following the above, the relational interplay between corporeal reiteration and discursive reconfiguration constructs a circuitous route between discourse and material, and, as I will elaborate upon, bridging the access between individuals and the world. With the intrinsically entwined discourses and materiality in mind, I will turn to the subject of corporeal reiteration in the next section with cautiousness, to elaborate the first operational dimension of gender construction. Connecting Merleau-Ponty's idea of the trained body with Butler's articulation of gender performativity, the amplification of corporeal reiteration will demonstrate not only the constructedness of gender, but also that the possibility of reconfiguration is embedded in the body.

2. The Corporeal Reiteration of Gender Performativity

In the previous section, I suggested that the corporeal reiteration of gender is itself a gendering process, in which the female body is enabled as a feminine subject in accordance with the situatedness of gender. To put it differently, the corporeal reiteration of gender refers to the fact that the normative imperative of gender structures prompts the lived body to re-enact certain gender practices which supposedly correspond to the sex of the body. In this sense, the corporeal reiteration of gender performativity can be understood as a normalizing process of gendering, with the aim to train the body to produce standardised performances. In order to capture the normative imperative of gender structures that enable women's corporeality, I will engage with Merleau-Ponty's articulation of the training process of the lived body with Butler's conceptualization of gender performativity. Merleau-Ponty's account of the trained body underlines that corporal reiteration is

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[297] Ibid.

fundamentally a historically-congealed corporeal practice; and his crucial oversight of the lived body's sexual situatedness can be supplemented by Butler's understanding of gender practices. Specifically, I will concentrate on her idea of heteronormativity, to elucidate how the body adopts the sexual dimorphism as its way of being-in-the-world. With the above characterization of corporeal reiteration in mind, I will further elucidate the training of the lived body.

2a. Merleau-Ponty: Training the Lived Body

As presented in the last chapter, the phenomenological articulation of the body is lived as a condition of its being-in-the-world. That is to say, the material body can be construed as a metaphorical carrier, laden with the discursive meaning of the world. According to Merleau-Ponty, 'The relations between things or aspects of things having always our body as their vehicle, the whole nature is the setting of our own life, or our interlocutor in a sort of dialogue'.[298] The phenomenological understanding of the 'lived', under such circumstances, points to the constructedness of the meaning of the world, given that lived experience inescapably relies on the sensory and motility of the body. 'Our sense of 'reality' must come from our lived experience of reality,' as Thomas Busch argues, 'that is, from the body's involvement in and transactional dealings with reality.'[299] It is noteworthy that the 'involvement' or 'dealings' that the body has with the world is made possible by the simultaneous collaboration between the passivity and activeness of the lived body. I shall expand upon the above statement as follows: the activeness of the lived body is exemplified in the way that individuals, through their particular praxis, project their intentionality via bodily actions, in accordance with their situatedness. Merleau-Ponty defines the

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[298] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 320.
[299] Thomas Busch, 'Essentialism: the 'New Philosophy', in Diprose and Reynolds (ed.), 2008, p.34.

body's capacity to act itself or on one's own accord as 'mastery', or 'agency' in other conceptual contexts.[300] But such activeness, as hinted by the prepositional phrase earlier, can only happen within the already-there world, which brings us to the passivity of the body.

The passivity of the lived body, in a provisional sense, can be interpreted in a way that every bodily action is always contextualized; or to put it differently, it is a materialization of its surroundings to some extent. The body does not make sense of its existence in a vacuum, but with recourse to something other than itself, namely the world. As Merleau-Ponty diligently points out, "existence' is the movement through which man is in the world and involves himself in a physical and social situation which then becomes his point of view on the world'.[301] Individuals are cast in the same mould, by acquiring the corporeal habits from a ready-made physical and social situation. Embodied behaviour 'is irreducibly historical. It is structured through human values and the exigencies of the historical world', as Crossley claims.[302] In short, the lived body is passive for it is 'in the world', and consequently is subject to the conditioning of common praxis. The manner in which the lived body adopts historical and habitual behavioural moulds from the world is associated with the notion of training, in which conventional rules are learned by the body in order to (re)produce acceptable carnal actions. Similar to the entanglement between the discursive and the corporeal, it is also difficult to discuss the passive training of the lived body without referring to the presumed notion of mastery in the active body. However, in order to proceed with this section, I will concentrate on elaborating

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[300] See Merleau-Ponty, 1962 and Crossley, 1996.
[301] Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, Hubert Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (trans.) (Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 72.
[302] Crossley, 1996, p. 102.

'training' as a normalizing, institutionalized procedure, in order to facilitate an efficient transition to the discussion of normative gender reiteration later.

Perceiving the world as a physical and social situation in which individuals act, the idea of training, although Merleau-Ponty did not specify it as such, can be interpreted as follows: The world as a historical-congealed reality has specific modes of physical and social actions that can be (partially) imposed on individuals. Following that, training is a conditioning process, in which individuals learn to inscribe those physical/social practices in their existences, to the degree that they can reproduce expected habitual behaviours in correspondence to specific situations. Take, for example, physical movements like speaking or walking. To learn how to walk, children will imitate the walking posture from the people around them, and improving their imitation and bodily coordination through a series of attempted practices. Apart from imitation, reproducing similar behaviours under similar circumstances is also a fundamental purpose of training. When a person is trained to acquire certain skills, for instance, walking, that person not only observes the bodily movement of walking, but also obtains perceptions about the circumstances/conditions around that particular movement. It is both the physical coordination and the conditioning surroundings that are institutionalized in the lived body, after certain amounts of preparatory drill, or put it another way, corporeal reiteration of that act. I will rely on Merleau-Ponty's understanding of 'association' to elucidate how training facilitates transferable skills.

Training as a form of reproduction teaches the lived body to re-enact specific modes of physical/social practices under more or less specific physical/social situations. For instance, once children have mastered the skill of walking, they can apply this

physical performance on various, yet similar, occasions, such as walking up hills or on a flat surface. This is because, drawing on Merleau-Ponty's construction of 'association', the actor inclines to 'take[s] advantage of what he knows, and sets it in a "reproduction intention"', after assessing the similarity between the physical/social situation that he currently encounters with those he has been faced.[303] If the actor cannot identify the resemblance between the present and the past, the acquired skills for that particular occasion then has no effect, In short, no reproduction intention exists, if the actor cannot make associations between the two circumstances of now and then. Following this, corporeal reiteration, with regard to association, 'acts only by making probable or attractive a reproduction intention; it operates only in virtue of the meaning it has acquired in the context of the former experience and in suggesting recourse to that experience; it is efficacious to the extent to which the subject recognizes it, and grasps it in the light or appearance of the past.'[304] Such a characterization of re-enacting under resemblance explains why some habitual behaviours are categorized as gender performance and some are not, as well as why a person is compelled to re-enact.

Merleau-Ponty further argues that once the reproduction intention is put into operation, 'instead of simple continuity, ... it would still be seen that in order to recall a former image which present perception resembles, the latter must be *patterned* in such a way that it can sustain this resemblance.'[305] The term, 'patterned', and the phrase, 'sustain this resemblance', are indicative of the regulative dimension of training. Recall the case of children learning to walk: the fact that they are learning

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[303] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 18. He derives the term, 'set in a reproduction intention', from Kurt Koffka's use of '[S]et to reproduce'. Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1935), p. 581.
[304] Ibid.
[305] Ibid.

the human mode of walking indicates that such physical training is rule-bound and with exclusion, which aims to standardize embodied behaviours in accordance with specific ends. In other words, the regulative constraint of training is revealed when a child, encouraged by social situatedness, learns to walk like other human-beings, rather than like other animals. Derived from this, the physical training of walking always entails a social, normative dimension, namely distinguishing the 'correct' way of walking from the 'wrong' one. Such a regulative division of right and wrong modes of walking is inscribed in individual bodies, by providing rewards and punishments during the training process of repeated practices. For instance, children may get a round of applause from the parents when their imitation of walking is 'patterned' to resemble what they have observed from their parents. In contrast, children may subject to forceful verbal or physical correction/rejection as punishments from their parents, if they fail to sustain that resemblance and walk, say, like a cat or a penguin.

The individual experience of consequences of reward/punishment in the training process of specific motility gradually builds into an individuals' bodily schema. The lived experience that individuals have under the condition of their social/physical situatedness, therefore, constitutes their existences in the world. Consequently, the role of training is to make certain that some options are more attractive than the others within specific circumstances. Meanwhile, the lived body as trained is conditioned by the social/physical situatedness that it is in, and is compelled to reproduce preferable choices with recourse to the past experience of a particular type of action. Such understandings of training and the urge to sustain resemblance sheds some lights on how social structures are upheld over time, as well as alluding to the interaction between materiality and discursive imperatives. Corporeal reiteration

induced by normative discursive imperatives, and initiated through training, is conceived as a form of power struggle by various poststructuralists like Foucault and de Beauvoir. Therefore, the lived body as the primary contested site of different intentionalities, from the Self and the Other, points to the political aspect of our embodiments. 'It is because we exist by means of embodied action that it matters how our bodies are treated and how they perform', as Crossley declares.[306]

From above, we can see how training can produce constraints on the lived body's actions under Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological articulation. 'All embodied existence manifests a tendency to inertia because of the sedimented habits of the flesh, due to which even cultural innovations tend to sink into the taken-for-granted horizons and repetitions of the lifeworld', as Coole argues.[307] The maintenance of resemblance is not necessarily undesirable, when taking into account the need for a level of institutionalization in order to sustain an ordered collective life. However, Young's investigation of female throwing posture, presented in the last chapter, poses a sharp challenge to the boundary between necessary and desirable resemblance. From her examination, it may be argued that the throwing posture itself is required for accomplishing some human activities; but the self-restrained feminine throwing posture is a questionable phenomenon that requires further contestation on both corporeal and discursive levels. However, Merleau-Ponty did not provide insights into gendering as a form of training and the possible political implications of the trained body. Thus, in what follows, I will turn to Butler's critical articulation of corporeal reiteration in the field of gender performativity, to give a more explicit consideration of the trained body in the feminist politics of discursive embodiments.

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[306] Crossley, 1996, p. 114.
[307] Coole, 2007, p. 141.

The discussion will aim to shift the focus towards the idea that the lived body is acted upon by power, although under the presumption of its activity. As a result of this tension between acting and being acted upon, a political opportunity is recognized in corporeal reiteration and leads to a possible discursive reconfiguration.

2b. Butler: Training the Lived Body in the World of Heteronormativity

In tackling the female throwing posture as a phenomenological exemplification of gendered practices, Young underlines the effects that normative imperatives of gender structures have on women's bodies in the form of 'ambiguous transcendence' and 'inhibited intentionality'. She argues that the cause behind these normative effects and the subsequent self-constrained female throwing posture is, in contrast to men, woman's situation in the world as the perpetuated Other. Instead of recognizing the active intentionality in the lived body, women, under the male gaze, are unsuccessful in claiming full Selfhood and consequently are confined to the immanence of corporeality. Incorporating this immobility into women's exploration and formulation of own existence, as Young observes, women are thus ineffective in utilizing the capacity of the whole body and awkwardly half-withdrawing from the throwing motion.[308] Merleau-Ponty's idea of training can certainly explicate how the feminine throwing pose is conveyed from one woman to the others via, quoting Butler's phrase, 'the repeated stylization of the body'.[309] Nonetheless, the conception of training can only shed light onto the operational dimension of the gender practice. However, as suggested in previous chapters, it is insufficient to questioning how the structural differences of throwing arise between men and women. Or, to put it in another way, why women and men are 'trained' differently in relation to the same corporeal posture?

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[308] See Young, 'Throwing Like a Girl', 2005.
[309] Butler, 1990, p. 33.

To further situate corporeal reiteration as a training process in the context of gender, I will briefly summarize Merleau-Ponty's understanding of sexuality, which is presented in the second chapter, and then point out the common critique of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological understanding of the lived body in its sexual being. Following that, I will suggest that Butler's articulation of 'heteronormativity' under gender performativity can provide an intelligible situatedness for the idea of the trained body, to unveil the constructedness of gender and its discursive effects on conditioning bodily practices. In particular, her conceptualization of 'heteronormativity' indicates that the sexual dimorphism of masculinity and femininity compels gendered corporeal reiterations, in a way that naturalizes and maintains the fundamentally contingent gender system. Furthermore, Butler's claim that the body is constrained by a hegemonic heteronormativity indirectly suggests that, following Foucault, a constant tension between exterior (i.e. gender norms) and interior (i.e. agency/subjectivity) pressures on corporeality. In addition to this, a Foucauldian account of the interaction between power and agency also echoes Merleau-Ponty's consideration of training and presumed mastery. I will therefore trace those connections to elucidate how the contingent association between different modulations and sexual bodies becomes regulative.

For Merleau-Ponty, sexuality is understood as a particular aspect of our being-in-the-world in relation to the existence of sex, in which our body takes up a de facto situation of sex and projects our intentionality to constitute our body-to-body relation with the others. He manifests the phenomenological connection between sexual desire and bodily functions, via the case of a girl who lost her voice because of her

suppressed love.[310] Sexuality thus gains its significance and meanings via intentional bodily actions. That is, 'existence takes up, for its own purposes, and transforms [such] a situation.'[311] It is clear that Merleau-Ponty recognizes the individual intentionality in making explicit one's sexual situation and the accompanied indeterminate interpretations of such situatedness, Also, he problematizes the construal of sexuality as either 'governed by natural laws, or even as "a bundle of instincts"', for the existential connection between one's being and sexual desire.[312] Under such circumstances, sexuality 'forms the "current of existence" at work in perception, which firmly anchors the libidinal body in the world shared with other embodied and desiring perceivers.'[313] Such formulation of sexual existence, however, understates the power struggle between oneself and the world in the process of constituting the current of sexual existence. While the lived body can take up a de facto situation with intentionality, how it transforms this chance into reason, via the bodily capability and modality acquired through repeated practices, is inevitably constrained by the question of 'how the body is trained'.

Merleau-Ponty's oversight regarding the role of gender power in constructing the existential connection between sexual beings and surroundings is also criticized by various feminists and scholars. Butler, Elizabeth McMillan, and Jillian Canode all contend that his conceptualization of the general Subject is essentially masculine, which implicitly assumes the male body as the foundation of all embodiments and, therefore, fails to consider other possibilities of embodied practices.[314] For instance,

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[310] See Merleau-Ponty, 1962, especially 'The Body in Its Sexual Being'.
[311] Ibid, p. 169.
[312] Ibid, p. 166.
[313] Beata Stawarska, 'Psychoanalysis,' in Diprose and Reynolds (ed.), 2008, p. 63.
[314] See Judith Butler, 'Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description: A Feminist Critique of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*,' in Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young (ed.), *The*

Merleau-Ponty draws an analogy between casual bodily movements and the role of sexuality in existence. We integrate sexuality into our fundamental existences and such a notion becomes a 'general function of unspoken transposition which we have already recognized in the body during our investigation of the body image.'[315] He accepts that sexuality can direct our specified lived experience without us 'being expressly conscious of the fact'.[316] Yet his unreserved credence of sexuality with general significance, as Coole abridges Butler's critique of him, may 'actually hides a deeper masculinist and heterosexist bias.'[317]With those critiques in mind, I world like to suggest that Butler's articulation of heteronormativity under gender performativity can help to tackle the neglected existential power struggle between heterosexual training and the lived body.

Before detailing the notion of 'heteronormativity', its corporeal reiteration, and its Foucauldian connotation of power struggle, I should point out that Butler has used other terminological variations such as 'the heterosexual matrix' and 'heterosexual hegemony' in her works.[318] And the term, heteronormativity, is pronounced by Michael Warner and draw on Gayle Rubin's 'sex/gender system' and Adrienne Rich's idea of compulsory heterosexuality.[319] Among those terminologies, I will use 'heteronormativity' in this thesis, for it effectively signifies an gendered social milieu, in which heterosexuality is conceived as natural to humanity and at the same time that poses itself as normatively the right way to live. Both Butler and Warner intend to

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Thinking Muse (Indiana University Press, 1989); Elizabeth McMillian, 'Female difference in the Texts of Merleau-Ponty,' *Philosophy Today*, 1987:31; Jillian Canode, 'Thinking the Body: Sexual Difference in Philosophy: An Examination of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Account of Embodiment in Phenomenology of Perception,' *McNair Scholars Journal*, 2002:6(1).

[315] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 168.

[316] Ibid, p. 169.

[317] Coole, 2007, p. 202. Also see Butler in Allen and Young (ed.), 1989.

[318] For a discussion on Butler's changing in those terminologies, see Lloyd, 2007, especially Chapter 2.

[319] See Michael Warner, 'Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet,' *Social Text*, 29:1991.

deconstruct the gender dimorphism that is upheld by the institutionalized heterosexual practices, by applying those phrases. As Warner points out that 'so much of heterosexual privilege lies in heterosexual culture's exclusive ability to interpret itself as society.'[320] His recognition of the control over discursive interpretation of bodies points to the core problem of Merleau-Ponty's presentation of sexuality: In ' presenting sexuality as a level on which the body lives its relationship with the world and with others', Merleau-Ponty fails to consider that the body's relationships with the world and with another body may be asymmetric and distorted by historical precedents in the very beginning.[321] It is thus debatable that a fair and reciprocal relationship is developed between the subjects in question under such circumstances.

Following above, the relationship between heteronormativity and the lived body can be understood as follows: the idea of heteronormativity refers to the heterosexualization of the world, in which an gender dimorphism is constructed to categorize human beings into two categorizes, men and women, who are assigned with supposed characteristics, masculinity and femininity, respectively. Accordingly, the relationship between the two sexes is conditioned by heterosexual practices, as opposed to homosexuality. That is, men should desire women sexually and vice versa, rather than the same sex. Such a comparison between heterosexuality and homosexuality, following Butler, constitutes the 'cultural matrix', and thus the normative framework, of heteronormativity.[322] 'The grammatical subject is, ..., never self-identical, but always and only itself in its reflexive movement', as Butler reflects Hegelian rhetoric to explain the necessity of understanding heterosexuality via

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[320] Ibid, p. 8.

[321] Coole, 2007, p. 204.

[322] For 'cultural matrix', see Butler, 2006. See Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France* (Columbia University Press, 1987), especially Chapter I.

homosexuality.[323] In other words, the purpose of the distinction is to define what the subject is by showing what it is not. Along these lines, the differentiation between heterosexuality and homosexuality provides an intelligible cultural matrix for individuals to make sense of their sexes, in a mode of rule-following. '"Intelligible" genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire', as Butler argues.[324]

Following on from the above, the heterosexualization of the lived body is that a person is born as man/woman with masculine/feminine attributes, and consequently must desire the opposite sex. This relational association between sexuality and sexual practices is existential, given that the cultural matrix behind it regulates how one should make sense of one's life and what traits should be incorporated into one's existence. Under such circumstance, the cultural matrix of heterosexuality is normative and can be interpreted as an act of power. I will now look into the connections of cultural matrix and normativity, and power correspondingly. Heteronormativity is culturally intelligible because it has a reference framework of sexuality that, borrowing Lloyds' words, 'conditions who can be recognized as a legitimate subject.'[325] Putting this into a normative language, the cultural matrix provides both 'norms for actions', i.e. what should a person do, and 'norms for being', i.e. what state of affairs a person must arrive at, as the evaluating criteria to assess individuals' validity of existence.[326] For instance, gays and lesbians have been labelled as abnormal for their homosexual desire within a heterosexualized society; a

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[323] Ibid, p. 18.
[324] Butler, 2006, p. 23.
[325] Lloyd, 2007, p. 33.
[326] For details of the normativist understanding of 'norms for being' and 'norms for actions', see George Henrik von Wright, *Norm and Action: a Logical Enquiry* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963); and George Edward Moore, 'The Nature of Moral Philosophy', in his *Philosophical Studies* (1922).

transvestites actions amount to heresy for defying masculine/feminine norms. Those populations are considered as unintelligible and inadmissible in accordance with the cultural matrix of heteronormativity, and thus are denied legitimated subjecthood. To use Butler's term, it is a process of 'abjection'.[327]

Young also provides a similar account about how the normative violence of gender dimorphism permeates the social milieu and thus constrains individuals. Identifying 'normative heterosexuality', 'sexual division of labour', and 'patriarchal system' as the major gender structures, she argues that the privileging of heterosexual coupling produces fundamental impacts on the structuring of our society: 'These include the form and implications of many legal institutions, many rules and policies of private organizations in allocating positions and benefits, the structuring of schooling and mainstream media to accord with these institutions, as well as the assumptions many people make in their everyday interactions with others.'[328] Since heterosexuality is institutionalized in both public and private arenas, and interpersonal and personal relationships, the lived body, in making sense of itself, materializes heteronormativity. The heterosexualization of the lived body thus points to the interplay between normative signification and corporeal reiteration. That is, the lived body signifies its position in the world of sexuality, which is constructed by the cultural matrix of binary sex/gender system, by reiterating heterosexual practices overtime. This process of signifying one's sexual existence, recalling Merleau-Ponty, can be construed as a work of training the body, in which the body's being-in-the-sexual-world is constituted by practicing heteronormativity repeatedly until proficient. Following this, I will now turn to the bodily reiteration of heteronormativity.

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[327] See Butler, 1992.
[328] Young, 2002, p. 424.

2c. Constituting Gender Reiteration of Power

To understand the lived body as the materialization of heteronormativity is to say that the body becomes gendered by training to recite gender imperatives in its corporeal and discursive actions. The recitation of gender imperatives, according to Butler, is performative, and suggests that the existence of gender is only manifested when the body actively, yet non-voluntarily, re-enacts the cultural matrix of gender.[329] The 'actively' here refers to the individual praxis projected by subjects; alternatively, it can also be the phenomenological idea of mastery of the presumed agency in a person's subjectivity. Owing to this, the normative effect of the cultural matrix on gender is discursively coercive and violently regulative, but is not deterministic, regarding corporeality. To put it differently, subjects have to develop their respective ventures within the already-there framework of common praxis, such as social class, gender, and ethnicity, in order to make their schemes intelligible or acceptable for the fellow people. This background preconditions unavoidably suggest that individuals are involuntarily constrained in the available formations of individual praxis that they can adopt. Nonetheless, the fact that an individual praxis can be articulated itself indicates the flexibility of common praxis as non-deterministic, even if it has the tendency to totalize. Reading the interplay between the body and gender structures in this way, a power relation can be detected.

Following on from the above, I will argue in this section that the corporeal reiteration of gender is actually a gender reiteration of power. Conceiving gender performativity as a demonstration of one of the fundamental forms of power, the corporeal reiteration of heteronormativity is discursively prompted by gender codes, with the

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[329] See Butler, 2006.

intention to discipline the body to uphold gender hegemony. In other words, the cultural matrix of gender provides a set of institutionalized conventions and codes for actions to enable individuals, while they live in and acquire the necessary skills to make their way in the world. Under such circumstances, corporeal reiterations are always historically-congealed and, in turn, contribute to the authority of existing forms of hegemony. To comprehend the connection of gender, corporeality, and power, I will use Butler's account on (re)iterability to elucidate the necessity of repetition in gender performativity. This allows one to understand why the trained body in the world of sexuality must be gendered, rather than a seemingly neutral sexual being with sexually-motivated passion and desires towards another sexual being as depicted by Merleau-Ponty. Furthermore, as Lloyd and Loxley have observed, Butler may borrow the term, iterability, from Derrida, but her articulation is inherently associated with Foucauldian analysis of power.[330] In addition, Merleau-Ponty's idea of 'training' resembles Foucault's account of 'investment' on the body from the world, as I will elucidate below.

Gender structures and gender practices stand in a reciprocal relation; gender performance confirms the power of gender structures, while gender structures enable the materialization of gender. In this back-and-forth interplay between normativity and performativity, Butler highlights the linguistic notion of '(re)iterability' as the medium of conveying meanings or the excess effects between the discursive and the material. As mentioned earlier, she borrows the term 'iterability', or 'citationality' from Derrida's linguistic analysis of writing. For Derrida, the iterability of writing text is the reason for it to continue to be 'communicable, transmittable, decipherable', even

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[330] See Lloyd, 2007 and Loxley, 2007.

'in the absence of such and such a person [i.e. the death of the receiver], and hence ultimately of every empirically determined "subject".' [331] That is, with essential iterability being built into written symbols, it not only preserves the intelligibility of the words over time and across receivers, but also allows the words to remain functional, or, 'readable', even they were taken out of their original contexts, without however, denoting an essential meaning. Under such circumstances, the authority and sovereignty of an author is being challenged, for the original writer cannot determine how the receivers, including the intended and the unintended ones, understand those texts or apply them. Yet, same as the cultural intelligibility of corporeal actions, the possibility of alteration or the mode of iterability of words are executed within the already-there linguistic boundary.

Although the intelligible periphery is challengeable, one cannot simply deprive the written symbol from any preceding contexts abruptly, and then re-signify the word and claiming the result of re-signification as how it should be understood, or as its original meaning. For a linguistic instance, it is unintelligible to suddenly use the word 'apple' to signify an animal, than to identify a type of fruit. However, one is allowed to call a technological product 'Apple', since such an application can be contextualized through previous linguistic usages. The linguistic rules of that particular word, constructed its previous iterations, must be followed to make its reiteration intelligible. Following that, to make a reiteration of a written symbol 'successful', one must include the repetition of the symbol itself and there should be a certain level of conformity to its previous applications in its current practice. As Searle argues that iterability requires '[not only] the repetition of the same word in

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[331] Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context,' (trans.) Alan Bass, in *Limited Inc* (Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 7-8.

different contexts, but also includes an iterability of the application of syntactical rules', in replying to Derrida's article, 'Signature Event Context'.[332] Iterability as a necessary presupposition for the intelligibility of languages, therefore, indicates the implicit conventionality and historicity that are embedded into linguistic reiterations.

Iterability is conventional given that a specific set of principles must be referred to during linguistic citations; and it is historical, since the effectiveness or authority of those principles is cultivated 'from the fact that the conventions that underpin them have accreted over time.'[333] The recognition of the historically-developed effectiveness of iterability, in Derrida's eye, uncovers the constructedness, or, fictiveness of language systems. He rejects the plausibility of a natural reality of discourse, and arguing that 'the rules, and even the statements of the rules governing the relations of "nonfiction standard discourse" and its fictional "parasites," are not things found in nature, but laws, symbolic inventions, or conventions, institutions that, in their very normality as well as in their normativity, entail something of the fictional.'[334] In demolishing the essential naturalness of nonfictional discourse, all forms of re/iteration and citation are construed as de-essentialized but constructed, due to their conventionality and historicity. Such articulation of linguistic iterability then becomes a conceptual tool to analyse social iterations like social movements, beliefs, and, most notably, gender performativity, which is developed by Butler, who I will now turn to.

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[332] John Searle, 'Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida,' in *Glyph* I (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 208.
[333] Lloyd, 2007, p. 63.
[334] Derrida, 'Afterward,' 1988, pp. 133-4.

The iterability of gender for Butler, as Lloyd indicates, refers to the idea that 'the particular repertoire of gestures and corporeal acts that generate the effect of gendered identity' is being repeated.[335] Butler agrees that authoritative conventionality must come into play in order to make social practices intelligible, and such normative power is not an invariable force but embedded with uncertainty, while enabling the subjects to reiterate. However, as Loxley points out, Butler also contends that Derridean linguistic iterability cannot capture the specific and normative performativity of reiterations of social structures and norms, for it is articulated as the general presupposition of all linguistic utterances.[336] Such a generality of linguistic iterability, from Butler's perspective, is 'paralysing the social analysis of forceful utterance.'[337] Instead, she incorporates Foucauldian articulation of power to emphasize that gender reiterations are, using Lloyd's words, deeply imbricated in relations of domination, reprimand and control ... and they are inescapable.'[338] The practice of forced marriage in Islamic communities is an demonstration of patriarchal and heterosexual control over marital and family system, in which women's physical/mental submission is 'secured' by sexual and non-sexual violence. As much media coverage shows, the female victims of forced marriage are commonly being tricked by family members, and their safety is threatened by means like confinements,

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[335] Lloyd, 2007, p. 63.
[336] See Loxley, 2007, Chapter 6.
[337] Butler, 1997, p. 150.
[338] Lloyd, 2007, p.63.

beating, and mental abuse.[339] If the female victim chooses to escape, she may be in danger of 'honour killing', for the disgrace and shame she brings to the families.[340]

In the case of forced marriage, a woman's sovereignty and autonomy over her body are being confiscated, by the patriarchal demand of heterosexual marriage with normative/physical intimidation. For Butler, such gender reiteration should be construed as corporeal, and the power of gender performativity is 'a citational chain lived believed at the level of the body,' in which the body is trained and stylized in 'embodied rituals of everydayness'.[341] To capture the micro level of power relations between social rituals of everydayness and gendered corporeality, Foucault's insight into power and the body is introduced by Butler, to 'contextualize' social iterability. Power, for Foucault, is always social and relational in the way that it is constantly exercised through social interactions among individuals, between them and social institutions.[342] Furthermore, the characteristics of power are not merely coercive or suppressive but also productive, in the sense that they 'produces' knowledge, or in other words, orchestrates the scheme of cultural matrix of an given historical period.[343] These attributes of Foucauldian power not only enables feminists to deconstruct the naturalness of sex/gender dichotomy, but also helps to form a textured

[339] See Poonam Taneja, 'Two-year-old "at risk" of forced marriage,' *BBC Asian Network*, 05/03/2013 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21665322>; Neha Jain, 'Forced Marriage as a Crime against Humanity: Problems of Definition and Prosecution,' *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 2008:6(5). Also, visit U.K. Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office's 'Forced Marriage Unit': https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage#overview. Or see BBC Ethics Guide, 'Forced Marriage,' BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/forcedmarriage/>.

[340] See Helen Carter, 'Shafilea Ahmed murder: UK urged to act against "honour" crimes," *the Guardian*, 03/08/2012 <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/aug/03/shafilea-ahmed-charity-honour-killings>; and Peter Wilkinson, '"Honor" crime: Why just kissing a boy can trigger murder,' *CNN Europe*, 24/08/2012 <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/08/24/world/europe/uk-honor-murder-sanghera>.

[341] Butler, 1997, p. 155 and 150.

[342] See Foucault, 1977 and 1978.

[343] Ibid.

depiction of women's subordination, than a simplified understanding of domination and victimization by male power, as Jana Sawicki argues.[344]

With these traits in mind, Butler intends to utilize the Foucauldian concept of power to problematize the institutionalized apparatus of heternormativity and its cultural intelligibility, which produce the discursive 'knowledge' to enable the subjects' corporeal practices of gender. In particular, the heterosexualization of the body is a training process in which the body learns to realize its sexual position as male/female in an binary system of heterosexuality, as opposed to homosexuality, by embodying masculine/feminine iterations. Butler's articulation of the social iterability of heteronormativity can therefore be construed as a gendered reiteration of power, and I will focus on the relationship between power and knowledge and the disciplinary aspect of power here. Power as a disciplinary force in Foucault's account, as Loxley argues, is to understand the operation of power 'as the prohibition or containment of energies and possibilities arising from other sources'.[345] Like heterosexualization it is functioning through excluding and condemning homosexual desires. What such acts of power intend to form is a specific hegemonic apparatus, in which various physical organizations, institutionalized mechanisms, and knowledge structures are arranged in a way that support the exercise of power within the social body. Furthermore, as Loxley points out, such acts of power via the form of discipline operate not only 'by discursive means,' but also 'make practical interventions into the everyday embodied lives of those [they] set out to classify and organise.'[346]

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[344] See Sawicki, 1988.
[345] Loxley, 2007, p. 121.
[346] Ibid, p. 122.

Noteworthy is that Foucault's articulation of disciplinary power brings the attention back to the body, its corporeal actions, and its relation with the world. His emphasis on corporeality, for Butler, effectively substitutes the abstract generality of Derridean linguistic iterability. 'What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act on the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it... Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies.' as Foucault asserts.[347] He also points out that the 'machinery of power' is exemplified through a continuous surveillance and intense scrutiny over bodily actions, in order to 'induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power', as used in disciplinary institutions like prison, mental asylum, and army.[348] That is, disciplinary power can 'tame' and '(re)produce' the body at the same time, in accordance with the need and nature of hegemonic apparatus. While the body is being tamed by being accustomed to the constrained possibilities and defined practices designed by an instituted apparatus, it is simultaneously enabled with skills and capabilities to act them out by that same system, as in the case of social iterability.

The productivity of power thus can cultivate the 'conscious and permanent visibility' of the tamed subject, by reason of 'it arranges things in such a way that the exercise of power is not added on from the outside, like a rigid, heavy constraint, to the functions it invests, but is so subtly present in them as to increase their efficiency by itself increasing its own points of contact.'[349] Such an understanding of the relationship between power and the subject indicates that the disciplinarity of power is not merely a repressive force that only functions to quell any disobedience, like a king sends

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[347] Foucault, 1977, pp. 138-9.
[348] Ibid, p. 201.
[349] Ibid, p. 206.

heavily armed troop to stomp on the revolutionaries. Instead, it is a form of investment, in which the power of an apparatus 'deposits' discursive and non-discursive skills in the body, in order to train the body to reiterate specific practices, which, in turn, support the authority of that hegemonic power. Following that, power conditions the body, rather than determines it. This investment of power to act on the body resembles Merleau-Ponty's articulation of training. Both him and Foucault are agreed on the idea that the trained/invested body can exploit the embodied techniques and capabilities, which are acquired through the training/investment of a specific apparatus, and turn them against that force of disciplinary. In short, they recognize the possibility of resignification in the trained/invested body. The interplay between the body and the resignification of discursive apparatus will be elaborated in the next chapter.

Apart from that, Foucault's invested body and Merleau-Ponty's trained body supplement each other's conceptual deficiency: on the one hand, as Crossley argues, Foucault's acknowledgement of disciplinary power in investing the body supplements Merleau-Ponty's lack of discussion on the controlling force of training over the lived body; and on the other hand, Merleau-Ponty's presumed notion of mastery in the lived body, which refers to the basic corporeal motility and senses, provides the ground for the invested body to be able to learn, or, say, 'be invested'.[350] Moreover, feminists like Amy Allen and Lois McNay also criticize Foucault's ambiguous account on the connection between power and subjectivity cannot demonstrate how the disciplinary force is not deterministic on individuals.[351] Butler's conceptualization of social

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[350] See Crossley, 1996, and also his *The Politics of Subjectivity: Between Foucault and Merleau-Ponty* (Avebury, 1994).
[351] See Amy Allen, 'Power Trouble: Performativity as Critical Theory,' *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*, 1998:5(4); and McNay, 1999.

iterability, in relation to gender performativity, then comes into play. I have pointed out earlier that Foucault's idea of power on the body places attention back on corporeality, and such emphasis, for Butler, allows Derridean iterability to be localized and thus is able to capture the constructedness of social (re)iterations. Now I will return to Butler's integration of the Foucauldian power into gender performativity, to show how the lived body is signified as a male/female body in the process of gender training/investment. In doing so, a conceptual picture of corporeal reiteration will become clear and reveal the way to politicize the discursive embodiment of gender.

Incorporating power into iterability, gender performativity can be understood as a social reiteration of gender power. That is, gender hegemony exercises its power in dictating the knowledge structure hierarchy of sex and gender, which posits a supposedly natural order, namely that sex as a biological feature is followed rigidly by a cultural matrix of gender. 'The notion of sex brought about a fundamental reversal; it made it possible to invert the representation of the relationships of power to sexuality, causing the latter to appear, not in its essential and positive relation to power, but as being rooted in a specific and irreducible urgency which power tries as best it can to dominate', as Foucault argues.[352] Such a 'rule-following' supposition also possesses a normative function to judge the intelligibility of the body and its performances, as well as collecting information on individuals' existence and activities. In particular, heteronomativity as the core structure of gender hegemony validates heterosexual desire by penalizing homosexuality, and applying such differentiation to define the appropriate relationships between and among two

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[352] Foucault, 1978, p. 155.

sexes.[353] In short, the power of gender is manifested in its control over the regime of gender practices, including what can be performed, in relation to the disciplinary force, and what is being performed, in corresponding to the productivity of power.

Meanwhile, in constructing the cultural intelligibility of the body, the power of gender hegemony is, in turn, (re)confirmed by that very same cultural matrix. The confirmation is fundamentally achieved by the corporeal reality, since the understanding of body cannot be abruptly separated from culture. Owing to this, the corporeal reiteration of gender becomes fundamental in demonstrating the effectiveness of heternormativity. In other words, it is in the repetition of gender practices that the power of gender is reproduced. Butler's gender performativity then constructs a conceptual interplay of corporeality, gender power, and subjectivation: '[T]he effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self', as she asserts.[354] Foucault's conceptualization of power underlines the notions of subtlety and productivity, which, as Young and Jeffner Allen claims, is 'through micro-processes of social interchange that direct the boy's energies toward production, including the production of power.'[355] The 'micro-processes of social interchange' can be the way one sex is 'viewed' by the other sex, both literally and metaphorically; or the way a grammatical gender governing the linguistic application of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives. Or the fact that a nappy/baby changing room is often located near/inside female restroom rather than male's. Such a location arrangement

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[353] See Butler, 1993 and 2006.
[354] Butler, 2006, p. 191.
[355] Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young, 'Introduction,' in Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young (ed.), *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy* (Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 7.

implicitly assumes it is women's responsibility to take care of children in a heterosexual family, while neglecting other types of family like single father or same-sex couple.[356]

The above examples echo Foucault's claim that the operation of power within the social body can be in localized forms, in which its efficiency is improved by increasing its points of contact with the intended subjects. The disciplinary force of gender power thus is pervaded in daily routines, in particular with the way the corporeal reality is stylized and arranged as resulted from normative discursive practices. As Butler discuss Mary Douglas' articulation of body and taboos and how such relation defines the social of a specific historical and cultural context: 'what constitutes the limit of the body is never merely material, but that the surface, the skin, is systematically signified by taboos and anticipated transgressions; indeed, the boundaries of the body become, within her analysis, the limits of the social *per se*.'[357] In the process of gender signification, individuals are enabled with corporeal skills and understandings of the world to prompt for appropriate gendered actions under specific conditions. Although the aim of the training/investment of gender power on individual bodies is to produce what Butler calls 'an abiding gendered self', the enabling process of gender hegemony also risks the possibility of providing the fundamental tools for the intended subjects to use against the apparatus itself. 'Agency thus inheres in the regulatory repetition of the very norms that sustain the

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[356] See Andrew Adam Newman, 'Changin' in the Boys' Room,' *New York Times*, 05/02/2006 <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/05/fashion/sundaystyles/25DIAPERS.html?pagewanted=print&_r=0>. In the article, a internet blog call 'daddytypes.com' is mentioned, since one of the topic categories in that blog is dedicated to list the public places where have a changing table in men's restroom. The existence of such blog article may indirectly point to larger gender issues like the need to have gender separation of public toilets, and the applicability of a gender-neutral public toilet, which can accommodate different types of users. Also see Dana Tims, 'Multnomah County becomes one of first in nation to require-neutral bathrooms for transgender users,' *The Oregonian*, 13/06/2013 <http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2013/06/multnomah_county_becomes_one_o.html>.
[357] Butler, 2006, p. 179.

system,' as indicates the path from corporeal reiteration to discursive resignification.[358]

With the disciplinary and productivity of power in mind, gender performativity can be interpreted as a particular corporeal practice of *improvisation* within a specific historically-congealed scene of gendered discursive constraints. The notion of presumed mastery in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological trained body conceptually bestows gender hegemony with an able corporeality, which allows heternomativity to train under the discursive formation that it also have constructed over the time. Moreover, the able body, as a continuous existence in itself, cannot fully break away from the gendered training, for the understanding of corporeal existence is always cultivated from its way of being-in-the-world. Such a recognition of corporeality as the materialization of the world indicates that the lived body is constantly positioned in a worldly situation and, hence, its embodiments are constituted, not determined, partially by the situation it is in. In short, the lived body acts within a common serial praxis. However, the bodily (re)iteration of gender paradigms is always incomplete and unsuccessful. In this way, gender performance is essentially an imitation, rather than the full realization of original authorship, if one is comparing the current performer with the unidentifiable originator. Such 'incompleteness' of gender reiteration, interweaving with subjectivity, thus indicates why the conditioning of common praxis is conceived as partial and constitutive, than absolute and determinant.

More importantly, the above interplay between partial reiteration and subjectivity puts instability and uncertainty into the constructed nature of gender performativity.

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[358] Lloyd, 2007, p. 65.

'Consider gender, for instance, as a corporeal style, an "act," as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where "performative" suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning', as Butler announces.[359] That is to say that the partial reiteration of hegemonic (original) gender paradigm is also a creation of one's own in a sense. The development of agency inserts another source of originality into the ongoing, in comparison with the existence of individual body, (re)production of gender hegemony. Such 'original' authorship, however little, provides a temporal ground to differentiate itself from other (re)creations, in which gender hegemony becomes, as Butler calls, 'a constituted social temporality' that is able to be re-signified.[360] Since our lived bodies are always encultured and the history can be construed as resulted from human actions, the alteration in bodily actions have the chance to transform the situatedness of the lived body. In other words, as the corporeal reiteration of gender power can be *performed differently* within constrained scope, the lived body can politicize itself as a corporeal resistance to existed gender apparatus. This process of gender resignification is the other level of the reciprocal relationship between the discursive imperative and the materiality, which is the topic I will now turn to.

3. The Discursive Reconfiguration of Gender Performances

A depiction of the relational practice between corporeal reiteration and discursive reconfiguration, as I stated in the beginning of this chapter, can fill the operational gap between gender seriality, the lived body, and their politicization for constituting a feminist politics of discursive embodiment. The articulations of corporeal reiteration and discursive reconfiguration are provided separately, and they are labelled

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[359] Butler, 2006, p. 190.
[360] Ibid, p. 191.

respectively with the adjectives of 'corporeal' and 'discursive, for I believe such an arrangement can better present the clarity of each element and unfold their connections step by step. Regardless of such conceptual differentiation for the purpose of writing, I am fully aware that corporeal reiteration and discursive reconfiguration should not be treated as two intrinsically independent particulars, as if they were only connected together under specific theoretical circumstances. Instead, those two aspects are inherently interweaved with each other in their relational constitutions. Particularly, as I will argue below, such relational practices actually resemble the co-existence of discipline and productivity in Foucauldian power. That is, while corporeal reiterations (re)confirm the authority of gender apparatus, the difference in reiterations produces a deconstructive force to that power formation, in relation to the function of discursive reconfiguration. I will articulate this point and then situate it in the context of gender seriality here, with the intention of providing a feminist vision of politicizing discursive embodiments in contemporary politics of difference.

In the previous section, I have shown that Foucault argues that power functions with both the forces of disciplinarity and productivity within the social body and on individuals, in order to sustain the authority of a dominant normative apparatus. Such conceptualization indicates the crucial energy in maintaining the power of a normative apparatus is provided by human actions, including linguistic utterances, bodily comportments, and social relations. More specifically, power must invest the targeted subjects with certain skills, capabilities, or forms of action, in order to discipline the bodies in the way it intends to. In other words, power produces a subjugated and skilled body via disciplining processes. Butler then drawing on

Foucauldian power to articulate the construction of gender performativity as a particular form of social iterability. The heteronormativity of gender apparatus regulates the lived body via a series of localized trainings, which are dispersed in daily routines and social institutions like dress codes, linguistic grammas, and body postures. Under the close scrutiny and constant surveillance, the lived body then internalizes the normative gaze of gender in its embodiments, and using gender reiterations as a method to define its corporeal boundary in the sexual world. The normativity of gender apparatus thus disguises itself as one of the fundamental parts of everydayness, an assumed nature act in corporeality, rather than resulted from long sequences of gender training.

Nevertheless, as training operates alongside subjectification, Butler asserts that the gendering process also provides the conditions for the body to form a gendered subjectivity.[361] As the trained subject, who is invested by gender systems with necessary skills and capabilities and thus fully equipped to perform its gender role, can utilize its mastery over corporal functions and senses to improvise gender reiterations in accordance with different situations. Such spontaneity is fundamental for gender performativity, given that gendering, as a life-long experience, cannot prepared the lived body for every possible situation before positioning the body in the sexual world. Moreover, it is only in the act of gender reiteration that the existence of gender apparatus presents itself. In other words, gendered movements and the background of gender are, 'in fact, only artificially separated stages of a unique totality.'[362] The ability of responding to the unexpected or, say, to translate strangeness into something familiar points to the creative side of corporality, an

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[361] See Butler, 2006.

[362] Kurt Goldstein, *Über die Abhängigkeit der Bewegungen von optischen Vorgängen*, as cited in Merleau-Ponty, 1962. p. 138.

indication of subjective control over the body. The creativity of the body is originated from its essential activeness, which refers to fundamental motilities and senses of the lived body. Connecting this with Merleau-Ponty's idea of presumed mastery in the trained body: the subject must be able to act, before that person can reiterate gender acts. In other words, the mastery that is inscribed in the lived body is the corporeal ground for different forms of social apparatus to work on.

In addition to that, the mastery of the lived body is further facilitated by the body's engagement in a cultural world, in which a person begins to aware the bodily fact of 'I-can' and developing a corporeal subjectivity. Crossley points out that Merleau-Ponty upholds that the lived body 'is not an object of its own awareness in any straightforward sense', even 'it develops an awareness and understanding of its environment.'[363] What such a statement indicates is that subjectivity is not a pre-existing feature, although the lived body has an essential corporeal motility and sensations, in terms of inscribed mastery. The abstraction of subjectivity from corporeality as an independent existence would implicitly return to Cartesian dualism of mind and body, which is a concept that Merleau-Ponty devotes to its challenge to phenomenology. Instead, the development of subjectivity is achieved through the lived body's incorporation of its environment, as learning to walk, speak, and inhabit in the world. Such a phenomenological understanding of subjectivity thus suggests that the process of subjectification can only happen when the lived body with inscribed mastery is being invested by the social world. As the mastery of the lived body cannot be useful in a vacuum world, it is the social world provides indispensible

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[363] Crossley, p. 111.

techniques and knowledge structures for the lived body to consciously acknowledge of its mastery and, recalling the purpose of trainings, to (re)produce social modalities.

Following this, the constitution of subjectivity is interlaced with the training/investment from social apparatus, when taking disciplinary and productive forces of Foucauldian power into account. In particular, the development of subjectivity is rooted in corporeality and both share a formative existential connection, as the result of a power struggle between body and social world, than a pure psychological state. 'It is by tracing its hazardous genesis within corporeal existence that phenomenology avoids positing abstract consciousness as a pure existence or substance', as Coole claims.[364] As the lived body must act within the conditioning context of the world, subjectivity, can be regarded as a by-product of training, which demonstrates itself in the subject's way of coping with accidents and events, as to construct the body's being-in-the-world while carrying out world history. 'Taken exactly as I see it,' as Merleau-Ponty illustrates via the case of vision, 'it is a moment of my individual history, and since sensation is a reconstitution, it presupposes in me sediments left behind by some previous constitution, so that I am, as s sentient subject, a repository stocked with natural powers at which I am the first to be filled with wonder.'[365] His elucidation shows how temporal existences of individuals co-exist with the generality of the world, in a way that the body is constituted, than determinate, by the world. Within which, the world deposits skills and capabilities indirectly in the body and, in return, the body presents the world in its embodiments.

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[364] Coole, 2007, p. 167.
[365] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 215.

To understand subjectivity as produced through the interplay between bodily mastery and social apparatus' training over corporeality, it becomes clear why gender is a non-voluntary position that individuals take up and, within constrained possibilities, and can make their own use of it. The lived body can exhibit, as Coole calls it, 'agentic capacities' by recognizing the reality and making it real in the bodily existence of being-in-the-world.[366] In discussing Merleau-Ponty's understanding of lived totalities, she recapitulates the corporality and the reality are combined 'over time through unpredictable affinities whereby longstanding habits or unexpected events, including, for example, piecemeal political resistances, are incorporated into constellations whose overall significance is a consequence of internal relationships and whose shifting patters might result in a gradual mutation but also in a more sudden gestalt switch if their ordering principle changes.'[367] Following that, the body is a dynamic, than a stable, construction over its temporal existence, for it is the primary site of power struggle, in which the body is referring back and forth between individual projects and common praxis. Incorporating subjectification with embodiment, corporeal reiterations of gender apparatus, as Butler has noticed, consolidate instability and uncertainty in the essence of gender performativity. More precisely, heteronormativity, which invokes the corporeal urge to reiterate, cannot fundamentally determine what kind of unexpected affinity that the body can form during its gendered performance. Therefore, the normative hegemony always risk the emergence of contingent resistances, and subsequently, possible resignifications during the trained bodily performance.

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[366] See Coole, 2007. Also her 'Rethinking agency: A Phenomenological Approach to Embodiment and Agentic Capacities,' *Political Studies*, 2005:53.
[367] Coole, 2007, p. 127.

The trained body of subjectivity therefore paves the way for the discursive reconfiguration of gender apparatus. Unlike standardised mass production by programmed machines, the disciplined corporeal reiteration of gender is more akin to, for instance, art students imitating masterpieces as a training method to sharpen painting skills while developing their own interpretation of those works. Such analogy signals that the purpose of corporeal reiterations of the lived body is to, from the perspective of the subject, actualize its individual projects under the constraint of common milieus. Within which, the reconfiguration force from the corporeality can be understood broadly, in a way of reading every variation of corporeal reiteration as invoking the uncertainty of power apparatus, and inserting individual interpretations into the collective history of that system. Take the idea of 'motherhood' for instance: even defining it in a strict sense as referring to the state of a woman being a mother in relation to her offspring, mothers within different social settings, like in a traditional heterosexual family, single-parent household, or a matriarchic background, will cultivate their own mothering experiences. The diverse mothering practices then pluralize the substance of motherhood, by becoming part of historical sediments of the terminology and are available for future reiterations.

The force of reconfiguration can also be read in a narrower way: as an explicit resistance to the existing apparatus by calling the hegemonic imperatives into question. Butler's reflection on the case of 'drag' is an eminent example, which deconstructs the supposed causal and dimorphic association of 'men are masculine and women are feminine' and subverting heteronormativity. Another instance is the 'Slut Walk' in 2011, which was briefly discussed in the last chapter. This mass demonstration openly confronted the negative connotation of the word 'slut' and its

moral consequences in relation to the male gaze. It can be conceived as to claim back women's right over her body as a fundamental place for subjective articulations, in which the protesters try to disconnect morality with sexual expressions. In particular, such claiming of 'slut' rejects the reduction of a woman into merely a passive body, which her active declamations, like 'Stop!' and 'I don't want this!' in the situation of sexual harassments, are, as some male perpetrators claim, overridden by an inert body. The feminist claiming thus is a purely dispute about the cultural intelligibility of good/bad women under hegemonic gender apparatus. Rather it is, as I believe, a feminist contestation regarding women's autonomy. Yet no matter how discursive reconfiguration is envisaged as a direct resistance or an unintentional outcome, a replication of past act or a individual design, it is always historically-congealed in the same way as corporeal reiteration. I will consider this last point with reference to Young's gender seriality, before concluding this chapter.

4. The Discursive Embodiment in Gender Seriality

The relational practice of corporeal reiteration and discursive reconfiguration, as presented above, constitutes the operational phase in elucidating the interaction between the lived body and gender seriality. A gendered discursive embodiment is thus occurred under the interplay between the discourse and the materiality of gender, in which the embodiment conveys both the generality and temporality of existential lives. In the final section of this chapter, I will further consider how the relational operation of corporeal reiteration and discursive reconfiguration is features in gender seriality, in relation to the facilitation of discursive embodiments. In particular, corporeal reiteration can be perceived as indicating the continuity of gender serial structures; and meanwhile, the discursive reconfiguration points to the preservation of

individuality and distinctiveness in that serial ambience. To put it differently, the seriality of gender that Young intends to articulate can be manifested in the interaction between gendered subjects' reiteration and reconfiguration of gender practices. Furthermore, an intelligible and distinct history of women can thus be sketched out and continue to be told by women's heterogeneous voices. Gendered discursive embodiments, as I will advocate in the next chapter, can be politicized with an agonistic ethos as, borrowing Rosi Braidotti's words, 'the affirmation of fluid boundaries, a practice of the intervals, of the interfaces, and the interstices', in order to democratize contemporary feminist politics.[368]

The individual articulation of discursive embodiments within gender seriality can be enunciated in this way: the lived body actualizes itself as a gendered being, by incorporating the fundamental skills and knowledge matrix of gender seriality into its way of being-in-the-world. Under such circumstances, gender seriality, as one of the essential normative apparatus in human relations, conditions the individual discursive embodiment, by providing disciplinary trainings and normative frameworks of reference under the disguise of enabling its subjects. The formats of those regulative trainings and intelligible referencing structures of gender may vary across cultures and societies, but presenting themselves as the dominant common praxis in societies, via those historically practiced schemes. Such historicity of repeated gendered performativity helps to convert the contingent gender structure into a naturalized and institutionalized gender hegemony. Specifically, as noted before, the authority and effectiveness of gender power are reasserted and reproduced in individuals' non-voluntary adoption and reiteration of gender performances. Although the subjects'

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[368] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 6.

have the capacity to design individual projects, they integrate the common praxis of gender into individual praxis non-voluntarily, given that, considering the productivity of Focauldian power, the subjects are enabled and their subjectivity is consecutively produced by that dominant gender force. Also, such productivity of gender power is localized in daily life, in which it begins to instruct individuals indirectly even before they can make their own judgements. One may argue, for instance, gendering can start as early as the moment of a baby's sex is announced, which obliquely situates the baby in a culturally assigned gender position.

Subsequently, the skills and modalities that individuals acquired from the training and cultural matrix of gender hegemony become, as one may call it, the default system to individual existences. Putting it differently, those modes of gendered mindset and modalities are always existed in the existential periphery of individual conscious, given that they are the introductory materials that the subjects utilize to develop their individual praxis and further personalities. 'In so far as consciousness is consciousness of something only by allowing its furrow to trail behind it, and in so far as, in order to conceive an object one must rely on a previously constructed "world of thought",' as Merleau-Ponty asserts, 'there is always some degree of depersonalization at the heart of consciousness.'[369] Thus, from a phenomenological perspective, the gendered performative repetitions by the lived body always burdened with the historicity of gender hegemony. For 'it cannot be consciousness without playing upon significances given wither in the absolute past of nature or in its own personal past, and because any form of lived experience tends towards a certain generality whether that of our habits or that of our "bodily functions."'[370] The serial

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[369] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 137.
[370] Ibid.

milieu of gender hegemony therefore is inherited in and is keeping at the gendered performance of the lived body, which is facilitated by the discursive and practical structures of that hegemonic power.

Within the historically-congealed constrictions of gender seriality, as argued earlier, the lived body nevertheless *can* articulate individual praxis in accordance with its subjective intentions. Recalling the instable nature of gender performativity, as Lloyd points out, the fact that gender performances 'must be repeated, however, creates the space for them to be repeated differently, therefore providing the condition of possibility for action.'[371] Since repetition is construed as an imitation than a perfect replication of original paradigm, the subjects are able to inject, with restrained flexibility, their individual authorships into their gendered practices. Considering the gendering training cannot prepare the subjects comprehensively, as 'individual authorship' here can be regarded as being invoked by individual judgements about different situations. Following this, a transformative possibility emerges from the individual imitation of hegemonic gender practices. In the next chapter, I will look into how this transformative possibility is politicized in contemporary feminist politics. I will argue that such politicization is a historical practice. On the one hand, it carries the historicity of gender seriality, whilst, on the other hand, creating the individual history of temporal existence. Furthermore, I will bring Zerilli's account of the symbolic mother into play, to illustrate how the symbolic corporeal practice of reiterating discursive reconfiguration works. The symbolic practice of reiteration and reconfiguration can take place across history or among peer members, and it should be regarded as a democratic deliberation between agonistic interlocutors. In the next

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[371] Lloyd, 2007, p. 65.

chapter, I will illustrate why the feminist politics of discursive embodiment is an agonistic democratic project.

CHAPTER FOUR

Political Womanhood: an Agonistic Feminist Politics

The third chapter has shown that the performative practice of reiteration and reconfiguration bridges the individual lived body and the gendered world, and allows individuals to cultivate their diverse gender embodiments. To pursue further the performative power of corporeality, this chapter looks into the politicization of individuals' lived experiences within gender seriality, with the intention of articulating a feminist politics of discursive embodiments. I will concentrate on the elements of politicization and political ethos in my articulation of the feminist politics of discursive embodiments. More specifically, I will draw on MWBC's feminist depiction of the 'symbolic mother' to elucidate how the live body's capability to reiterate and reconfigure stimulates a moment of politics. Furthermore, the exemplification of such political moment can be understood as a historical-congealed political practice of corporeality. The individual politicisations of discursive embodiments, understood in connection with the feminist idea of the 'symbolic mother', provides figurative reaffirmation to the contestability and the iterability of gender at the same time. Such emblematic reaffirmation of the power of corporeality to (re)iterate gender, as I will contend further, contributes to the authoritative foundation of the 'symbolic mother' practice, which indicates an agonistic ethos for different contestations, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, underlines the existential retrospective circulation between individual women and women as a social collective. I shall explain these statements in a holistic and detailed manner below, in order to refine the political conceptualization of women's bodies in gender seriality hitherto articulated.

Focusing on the elucidations of politicization and political ethos, I intend to illustrate an existential serial framework between individuals, social collectives, and the (political) world; or, to be more precise, individual women, gender seriality, and feminist politics in the current context. While elucidating how the politicization of discursive embodiments consolidates the authority of the 'symbolic mother', it will also shed light on how individuals as corporeal temporalities pertain to the collective progression of gender seriality. For the purpose of clarity, I will present here the conceptual structure of the feminist politics of discursive embodiments by elaborating the following relationships in turn: individuals and gender seriality; individuals' politicization and the feminist practice of the 'symbolic mother'; and finally, the historicity of gender seriality as the legitimate ground for future contestations. The brief elaborations are used to, on the one hand, summarize what has been discussed about the lived body and its corporeal performances in the context of gender seriality, and the body's capability to contest as a form of political practice from previous chapters. On the other hand, they are used to indicate what has not yet been sketched out, namely around what the political implications are about conceptualizing women's bodies as lived, with the embodied power to reiterate and reconfigure, and enabled as well as constrained by gender seriality. In what ways does such situatedness of women democratize feminist politics by drawing on their diverse discursive embodiments? These topics around politicization will then complete the final picture of the relation between individuals and the (political) world, which shows that the corporeal temporalities orientate and fashion feminist politics and vice versa.

To answer the question about how to conceptualize 'women' in contemporary pluralist society, I have joined together Young's gender seriality and Merleau-Ponty's

phenomenological lived body in the previous chapters to depict the existential correlation between the corporeality and gender structures. Conceiving the gendering process as a form of training, the gendered world enables the lived body with certain sets of skills and conventions, in a way that exhibiting disciplinary force to make the body conforms to reproduce hegemonic practices of gender. 'Our body,' however, Merleau-Ponty declares, 'to the extent that it moves itself about, that is, to the extent that it is inseparable from a view of the world and is that view itself brought into existence, is the condition of possibility, not only of the geometrical synthesis, but of all expressive operations and all acquired views which constitute the cultural world.'[372] While the body is endowed with gender conventionality, the initial mastery that is presumed in its liveliness - i.e. motility and senses, and the fundamental iterability of gender hegemony - initiate the development of subjectivity and activeness of the corporeality. Meanwhile, I have drawn on Butler's understanding of gender performativity and have employed the terminology of 'reiteration and reconfiguration' to specify the construction of an existential relation between the lived body and the gendered world. That is, in reiterating the trained gender performances, the lived body articulates its discursive embodiment of being-in-the-world, by utilizing the learned contents with subjective adjustments, which insert reconfigurations into the gender paradigm and stimulate moments of politics.

Following on from the above, discursive embodiments become an individual record about the way that the lived body expressively reiterates and reconfigures different possibilities of the perceived world. And the politicization of such embodied experiences, which is energized upon the liveliness of the corporeality, nurtures the

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[372] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 388.

existential connection between the corporeality and the world. The moment of politics in the occurrence of gender performances, as I will argue in this chapter, provides an alternative source of authority to counterbalance the existed gender hegemony by (re)affirming the power of corporeality to (re)iterate and the contestability of gender at the same time. I will introduce MWBC's consideration of the feminist practice of the 'symbolic mother' to explicate the notion of the alternative insertion of authority from individual performances of gender. That is, the individual reiteration of gender as a reconfiguring force denotes a symbolic authority to contest the rigidity of gender hegemony and subsequently deposits itself as a historical sediment of the 'symbolic mother' and is available for future applications. Noteworthy is that such figurative credit of authority from individual actions is conceived as transpired upon the historical-congealed authority of the 'symbolic mother'. The existential connection between individual actions and the 'symbolic mother' is thus reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's declaration: 'it is from the world of perception that I borrow the notion of essence'.[373] Within which, the current reiteration of authority constitutes itself as the transitional temporality that bridges the serial structure between the past and the future of women.

Nevertheless, how should this feminist practice of 'symbolic mother', as a figurative representation of female authority, be conceived in the context of the feminist politics of discursive embodiments? How could the invocation of such authoritative motherhood occur without threatening the diversity of women in contemporary pluralist society? Connecting individual politicizations with the feminist practice of the 'symbolic mother', in what way does it fashion gender seriality? To answer these

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[373] Ibid.

questions, I will introduce William Connolly's articulation of agonistic ethos to assist the differentiation of the authority of the 'symbolic mother' from the patriarchal power system. In contrast with the patriarchal system, which is conventionally associated with asymmetrical power relations, the female authority of the 'symbolic mother' is conceived as one woman authenticates another woman's performative power to re-signify the world as well as her respected position to validate other women's claim. This feminist conceptualization of authority places empowerment and contestability, rather than assimilation and monopolization, at its core and develops an agonistic ethos in its exemplifications. For the feminist politics of discursive embodiments to prosper, an agonistic ethos facilitates diverse contestations and resignifications by perceiving every politicization of discursive embodiments as, to borrow Merleau-Ponty's words, 'merely a brief resting-place in the unending process of expression, another thought which is struggling to establish itself, and succeeds only by bending the resources of constituted language to some fresh usage.'[374] The invocation of the 'symbolic mother', then, confirms the equality among women rather than a hierarchy.

As the previous chapters explore how individual lived bodies acquire their different ways of being-in-the-world of gender, this chapter looks into the political dimension of those personal experiences, echoing Carol Hanisch's proclamation of 'the personal is political'. In finalizing the conceptual architecture of the feminist politics of discursive embodiments, as hinted earlier, I will first present MWBC's understanding of the 'symbolic mother' as a feminist political practice of freedom. Following this, I will discern the connection between this idea of female authority and the performative interplay between reiteration and reconfiguration, which provides another significant

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[374] Ibid, p. 389.

trajectory into the conceptualizations of gender iterability and seriality, from which I will draw on Connolly to elucidate how the feminist practice of the 'symbolic mother' construes every politicization as a democratic deliberation among agonistic interlocutors. With the political dimension in its place, the feminist politics of discursive embodiments will contribute to our understanding about how temporal corporeal existences interact with the general historicity of gender, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, how those existential temporalities contribute to the pluralisation of feminist politics in the long term.

1. A FEMINIST PRACTICE OF FEMALE AUTHORISATION: MILAN WOMEN'S BOOKSTORE COLLECTIVE'S 'THE Symbolic Mother'

1a. A Home Without the Mother

Between the encounter of the lived body and gender seriality, as depicted earlier, a political moment can be detected upon the reiterating and reconfiguring gendered performance by the corporeality with presumed mastery. This political moment is crucial in understanding the historical progression of women as a social collective, as it demonstrates how a corporeal temporality performs gender differently under the structural constraints of gender hegemony. Within the political struggle between individual women and the gender hegemony, I will suggest in this section that every political contestation can be conceived as invoking a collective female authority to counterbalance and disrupt the dominating power that is exercised by gender hegemony. I will use the feminist figure of the 'symbolic mother' to show how these politicizations are validated and empowered by the existential world and, in turn,

contribute to the development of that authoritative symbol of women. In particular, what is being 'authorized' by the 'symbolic mother' is women's capability to contest and the (re)iterability of gender, in which they can translate their diverse embodiments into the configuration of the gendered world. The existential interaction between temporal politicizations and the collective female authority then reveals the historical-congealed structure of seriality and female authority that can connect women across generations and places.

The feminist figure of the 'symbolic mother' is firstly advocated by the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective (MWBC) as a new social contract among women, and later is drawn on by Zerilli to develop her feminist project of freedom.[375] This female personage, according to Zerilli, is a feminist response to 'the absence of authoritative interlocutors' among women under the patriarchal establishment.[376] As the patriarchal system places male power as the foundation of the society, women are habitually excluded from the decision-making positions in social structures, like marriage and family systems, and this subsequently obstructs women's opportunities to develop close bonds among them both publicly and privately. For instance, the patrilineal inheritance system situates female members of a family as permanently dependant on the economic mercy of their male relatives, and marriages then become the only prosperity in their life. The housewife character, Mrs. Bennet, in Jane Austen's renowned 'Pride and Prejudice' is a comical but accurate illustration of such situation: her devotion to matchmaking one of her daughters to marry Mr. Bennet's clergyman cousin and heir to his estate, in order to ensure the daughters and her would not be homeless after the death of her husband. However, the loss of maiden name in the

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[375] See Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, 1990, and Zerilli, 2005.
[376] Zerilli, 2005, p. 115.

event of marriage also indirectly represents another deprivation of a woman's personal connections, for example, to her birthparents and siblings. And, moreover, the "giving away" of the bride from father to groom in a traditional wedding ceremony signifies symbolically the handover of male power from one man to the other.

The recent controversy around gender equality rating for films instituted in Sweden also helps to expose the structural void of social connection among women in relation to the contemporary cinematic depiction of gender relations. The so-called 'Bechdel Test' effectively reveals that female characters in mainstream Hollywood films are often sidelined as a passive supporting role to leading actors, and their social conversations are mainly developed around men in their life, rather than personal concerns.[377] The scarcity of social interactions between female roles in popular movies echoes MWBC's claim about the social linkage between sexual difference and public representation: 'society does not hold women responsible for collective life; that some want to be responsible, and want to participate in it, is absurdly assigned to the category of what they have a right to.'[378] The excluding of women from social responsibility restraints women's capability of 'I-can': that is, their intentions and desires to contribute to the public life are being denied on the grounds of their sexual difference from men. And such rejection from male authority, which constitutes the continuity of women's life in patriarchal society, constructs women as an inert,

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[377] See Charlie Lyne, 'Hollywood plotlines are still sideling women', *The Guardian* <02/11/2013, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/nov/02/don-jon-no-real-women-in-hollywood>; Caitlin Dewey, 'Sweden's plan to bring gender equality to the movies,' *The Washington Post* <06/11/2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/11/06/swedens-plan-to-bring-gender-equality-to-the-movies/>; and Felicity Morse, 'Swedish cinemas to stamp out sexism with Bechdel test rating on movies,' *The Independent* <06/11/2013, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/swedish-cinemas-to-stamp-out-sexism-with-bechdel-test-rating-on-movies-8924758.html>.

[378] Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, 1990, p. 138.

passive body that requires and can only be active under careful supervision. The act of excluding women from collective life itself reveals the male suspicion of women's inability to rise above the burden of materiality, and therefore a parental-style of caring and guidance should be paid by male guardians to protected females.

An electronic monitoring policy that was implemented in Saudi Arabia can helpfully illustrate how the idea of 'parental-control' over women is taken up and exercised by governmental power. In 2012, the Saudi Arabia government announced a national policy to inform male guardians automatically if their female family members attempted to travel abroad.[379] Saudi Arabia also bans women from driving on all public roads, due to the concern over their ability to travel without male relatives, which is seen to undermine public morality and female virtues.[380] Recalling MWBC's claim of women's exclusion from social responsibility, both of Saudi Arabia's policies can be interpreted as an actualization of such exclusion at a national level, in which women are confined to the private domain, i.e. family house and home country in above cases, via restricting their freedom of movement. These government measures also exemplify how the social connection among women is being drained off and is replaced with male authority as an exclusive justification for women's corporeality. A woman's capability of realizing 'I-can', thus, is problematically restrained, since her own intentionality does not have priority under a strict hierarchy between the sexes that is operated through the norms of day-to-day life. Within which,

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[379] See BBC News, 'Uproar over Saudi women's 'SMS tracking', *BBC News* (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20469486, 23/11/2012); and Mohammed Jamhoom, 'Saudi Arabia's unsolicited monitoring of women's travels draws activists' outrage,' *CNN* (http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/25/world/meast/saudi-arabia-women/index.html, 26/11/2012).

[380] See Ahmed Abdel-Raheem, 'Word to the west: many Saudi women oppose lifting the driving ban,' *the Guardian* <02/11/2013, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/02/saudi-protest-driving-ban-not-popular>; Angus McDowall, 'Saudi authorities warn of punishment for women drivers,' *Reuters* <24/10/2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/24/saudi-womendriving-idUSL5N0IE3BC20131024>; and Sebastian Usher, '"End of virginity" if women drive, Saudi cleric warns,' *BBC News* <02/12/2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16011926>.

to draw on Beauvoir's terminology, women are positioned as the subordinated Other, who anchor themselves to the male needs and are subject to men's inspection gaze.

Furthermore, insufficient ground is provided for women to cultivate social relations among them as either authoritative interlocutors or as equal agents. It is because, through the above examples, the communications or interactions between women are forcefully relied on male mediators, rather than allowing women to speak to each other face to face. One may also argue that such systematic social disruption might interfere with women's self-positioning in the world, in relation to the faculty of 'I-can'. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Young provides a phenomenological angle to tackle the existential connection between women's corporeal performance of throwing and their worldly situation depicted by de Beauvoir. She argues that the phenomena of ambiguous transcendence and inhibited intentionality can be detected a women's bodily performances, owing to their subjective position as 'I' being pressurized by the historical-congealed patriarchal surrounding as 'the Other'.[381] The MWBC's argument of the absent female authority can help to strengthen Young's theorisation of women's enclosed body space by arguing that the necessity of male authorization implies that a woman's own intentionality in her making of being-in-the-world is subject to patriarchal interventions, which is alien to her subjective intentions and has the power to overwrite her own decisions. Such external interference then can be perceived as constructing an existential barrier that impedes her intentionality, as well as her subsequent actions, in which she cannot effectively transcend her body without being inhibited by the controlling male gaze.

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[381] See Young, 1980.

In addition, Young's theorization of inhibited intentionality and ambiguous transcendence is constructive in providing insights into the possible existential characteristics of women in the Saudi Arabic cases. To employ Young's phenomenological articulation of body posture and spatiality, one may argue that the institutionalized governmental constraints on women's freedom of movement project immanence and inhibition on women's bodies in a way that their corporeality is situated as rooted in place and is involuntarily to remain as partially immobile, due to the daily dependency on exterior authority.[382] The existential discontinuity between a woman initiating her own choice of action to its realization might yield further social consequences if we consider the existential reciprocity between the constitution of individuals' being-in-the-world and the world itself. That is, as indicated above in relation to the MWBC's diagnosis, the driving ban or the travel monitoring system may obstruct the contingent accumulation of social relations among women that occurs every day, or, more precisely, in the social relations that individuals articulate through causal interactions and daily conversations, in which they exchange life experiences and opinions that help them to identify commonalities and differences, while creating a sense of belonging.

'Women', under these policies with the consolidation of male control in their very nature, is not conceived as a self-sufficient social collective with unique historicity, and the members are thus unable to claim a public space of their own in the society. 'Men know that male individuals are sufficient and necessary to the contract needed to sustain social life; women are superfluous. On their part, women know that men's society needs their presence but not their freedom', as the MWBC indicates why

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[382] Ibid.

women are being sidelined in public arena. [383] This mere presence as a silent companion of men abruptly blocks the continuity of the social-historical chain of interlocution among women, which leaves a figurative vacuum in female sociality: while a mother can convey her experiences and knowledge to her daughter, for instance, they may find it difficult to relate those personal moments constructively with other women, given the absence of collective interlocution space. This estrangement in female sociality, then, can be understood as build up on the occurrence of, to put it radically, no socio-historical connection as legitimately viable for me to identify who the others are, and accordingly, I can neither learn from the past nor envisage the future of my fellow women. Recognizing the social problem about the empowering correlation between collective authority and individual freedom, the MWBC argues that a new social contract should be developed among women in order to nurture a social relation that is different from 'the one traditionally established for a woman through the few male individuals who, as bearers of their own personal interests, effectively ensured that she conformed with the interest of all men.'[384] What is being proposed by the MWBC is a feminist practice of 'the symbolic mother', as revealed in the beginning of this section, and I will dissect such proposal with regard to Zerilli's employment of it below.

1b. Women's Collective Authority: 'The Symbolic Mother'

To reconfigure the socio-historical connection, or, say, the absence of such a relationship among women, the MWBC advocates the feminist practice of 'the symbolic mother' as a new social form of empowerment. In the following, I will first lay out the Collective's vision of 'the symbolic mother', especially how the MWBC

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[383] Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, 1990, p. 139.
[384] Ibid.

proposes to re-envisage sexual differences and female freedom via such an authoritative mother figure and, more importantly, their intent to introduce 'that [sexual] difference into a system of social relations that bases its universality on the insignificance of female difference'.[385] This emphasis on the unimportance of female difference, as I will argue, implies that the feminist idea of the mother figure does not intend to establish a hierarchical relationship between the sexes, nor does it intend to establish a hierarchy among women, which clearly distinguishes it from the patriarchal image of the father. Rather, the symbolic authority of the mother is, in effect, constructed through the equality among women by (re)affirming their capabilities to reiterate and reconfigure. Additionally, the MWBC's proposal has been picked up by Zerilli in developing her freedom-centred feminist project, in which she continues the theme of 'the symbolic mother' as a 'doing', while being attentive to the rhetorical value of making claims. The feminist practice of claim-making and 'doing', via the authority of 'the symbolic mother', produces the exemplarity effect to dislocate 'the old' and demand 'the new', when the current system cannot cope with particular incidences.[386] I will then recount her employment of the MWBC's proposal and sketch out how the authoritative mother empowers the feminist politics of discursive embodiments.

As pointed out in the previous section, the MWBC pinpoints the absence of female authority as the crucial reason that women are unable to transcend their corporeality which, as a result, restricts their freedom of interpretation. That is, in 'the social order thought up by men, a woman only shares a natural relationship with another woman greater than herself and such a female social relation is 'variously overlaid with affect

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[385] Ibid, p. 140.
[386] See Aletta Norval, 'A Democratic Politics of Acknowledgement: Political Judgement, Imagination, and Exemparity,' *Diacritics*, 2008:38(4).

and loaded with emotions, but without symbolic translation, that is to say, without figures or rules.'[387] The way that the Collective ascribes individual creativity, namely the capability of 'symbolic translation', to the social existence of someone greater than a self, resembles the phenomenological idea of training the lived body. To recall the existential connection between the body and the world, the social hegemony in the world provides direction to individuals, in a way that not only in conditioning the body to reproduce specific behaviours and practices, but also enabling it with skills and capabilities. However, what concerns the MWBC is not the natural relationship that the body develops with the world, but how women can rise above this individual performance and enter the realm of the collective. 'Female experience appeared to be a mute body swathed in a cloud of fantasies', as the MWBC argues; 'a real body in lively, perceptual contact with the real world, but almost altogether lacking the means of symbolic reproduction of itself in relation to that world'.[388] Thus, it is not the bodily function of speaking, for instance, at stake here, as far as the Collective concerns, but whether women can use this corporeal capability to 'communicate' with the world.

Following on from the above, the MWBC begins a feminist pursuit for symbolic authority to counterbalance the social relationship between women thought up by men, with the objective that women can eventually 'succeed in saying by ourselves what we want, think, desire within ourselves, and not in imitation of, or in reaction to, what others say.'[389] Women's capability of speaking from the point of 'I' than 'the Other', to consider the phenomenological understanding of training, then needs to be activated by an authoritative female exemplar who can equip and enable another

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[387] Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, 1990, p. 127.
[388] Ibid, p. 52.
[389] Ibid.

woman to actualize her initiations. A maternal power is thus being advocated and this idea of 'symbolic mother' is thought to be 'the source of social legitimacy for female difference, as concretely embodied for a woman by those women who validate her desire and support it in the face of the world.'[390] In essence, the MWBC intends to utilize the feminist practice of 'the symbolic mother' not only to re-envisage a new social contract among women, but also to re-invest the existential relationship between women and the world. 'The mother is the symbolic figure of gendered mediation that puts women in relation with the world, opening up a vital circuit between the self and the other-than-self in their experience,' as the MWBC points out, 'which otherwise remains divided between unspeakable intimacy and an extraneous exterior.[391] That is, 'the symbolic mother' reconciles the tension of being an 'I' and 'the Other' in women's construction of the self, by acquainting her with and affirming the potential of 'I-can' in the public arena. Specifically, the maternal role helps to bring the muted female body out from the private domain and provides a public channel for the others to hear the symbolic translation of a woman's personal experiences.

Accordingly, the new social contract among women is constituted through a process where 'a woman offers to another woman the measure of what she can do and what in her wants to come into existence'.[392] Here, I should particularize the different aspects that are contained in the idea of 'the symbolic mother', in order to elucidate how such feminist practice substantiates the sense of collectiveness among women: as the political goal of the MWBC's initiation of 'the symbolic mother' is to achieve female freedom, the maternal representative herself is then a performer, or more precisely, an exemplar of the liberating transgression. To suggest this female figure is a exemplar

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[390] Ibid, p. 107.
[391] Ibid, p. 127.
[392] Ibid, p. 121.

is to say that, using Aletta Norval's conception, her action 'proceeds not only through verbal argumentation but also, perhaps more importantly, through struggle and through a symbolic manifestation of a way of doing things that differs from the dominant or accepted way of acting.'[393] I will use the MWBC's words to contextualize such understanding further: the authority of 'the symbolic mother' is evoked to free women 'from the obligation of justifying their difference, with all the forms of social servitude that obligation entails and which have been well illustrated throughout human.'[394] In order to demonstrate such female freedom, a 'woman must take her experience as a measure of the world, her interests as a criterion for judging it, her desires as a motive for changing it, so that the world may then become her own responsibility.'[395]

Two major components can be underlined from the MWBC's articulation of the characteristics of 'the symbolic mother': first of all, the maternal role exemplifies that she can recognize and exercise her capability of 'I-can' in a way that translates performatively her natural encounters with the world into a transcendental relationship. As discussed earlier, the MWBC argues that women are a 'material but wordless presence' in the social order thought up by men and, within which, the female sex stumbles upon 'the separateness of a woman's experience and the division she experiences on entering social life'[396] Such separation and division, as Young might argue, constructs a existential boundary on women and renders a woman's transcendence ambiguous: that is, 'she cannot be in unity with herself but must take a distance from and exist in discontinuity with her body', since she 'lives her body as

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[393] Norval, 2008, p. 70.
[394] Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, 1990, p. 126.
[395] Ibid.
[396] Ibid, p. 36.

object as well as subject.'[397] The idea of 'the symbolic mother', then, is regarded as a woman who exemplifies female transcendence in her way of being-in-the-world, by projecting her knowledge and desires into the worldly situation, as well as willing to take up her responsibility in social relations, which is the second component. Taking responsibility in social relations is a significant aspect of this feminist practice if we remember how woman are 'sheltered' from social accountability via, for instance, a masculine claim of protecting purity and morality in a patriarchal society. Such guardianship protection, in some measure, contributes to the isolation of women from the world that is mentioned above. It is because of this that she cannot reach other women without the mediation or, more accurately, interruption of her male protectors.

Noticing the arbitrary exclusion from social obligations, the MWBC urges that all women, 'in flesh and blood, have to take the place of the missing guarantee, of the justice still to be done, of the truth still to be learned.'[398] This feminist calling of taking up responsibility can be understood in terms of women bringing forward their bodies and lived experiences as political resources to (re)enter the public forum and as a way of paying off a symbolic debt that is generated by their sexual difference and to (re)invest in their collective life as women. The 'symbolic debt' is, according to the Collective, something that 'each woman has toward other women, i.e., toward the symbolic mother' and thus it is 'the price of female freedom'.[399] To put it differently, when 'the symbolic mother' is the legitimate ground for a woman to exercise her autonomy, i.e., she does not need to justify her sexual difference before materializing her actions, that woman cannot simply do whatever she prefers without acknowledging and, therefore, paying tribute to that figurative female authority. In a

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[397] Young, 1980 in Young, 2005, p. 44.
[398] Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, 1990, p. 126.
[399] Ibid, p. 12.

rather paradoxical way, the existence of 'the symbolic mother' is a justification for female difference by underlying the unimportance of such sexual difference. Taking women's battle over equal rights as an example: while highlighting her sexual difference is the major reason for gender discrimination in rights, she claims that the eligibility of rights should not be founded upon such difference. Following this, a symbolic debt is attributed to the implementation of female freedom, which can be perceived as maintained by the authority of 'the symbolic mother'. More specifically, female freedom is coming 'from that elementary negotiation in which a woman exchanges with other women the recognition of her own existence for signified acceptance of their mutual belonging to the female sex.'[400]

From the above, one can sense how the social relations among women are being (re)invested via paying a symbolic debt to the maternal authority, namely they take up their responsibility and occupy a social position in building collective life by exchanging recognition and acceptance among them. Through this figurative gesture of exchange, a possible interlocution among women may transpire, and 'the symbolic mother' as an interlocutor is the other aspect that I will address here. As stated before, the MWBC perceives 'the symbolic mother' as a way to (re)articulate social connections among women: on the one hand, for the maternal power to become an exemplar of female freedom, there must be other women to acknowledge the epitomizing effect of her actions. On the other hand, for a woman to be liberated from her sexual difference, i.e. to 'go ahead' without providing 'a raison d'être for the female sex and for female freedom', she needs to recognize what has been done for women by 'the symbolic mother' and pay her share of the symbolic debt. [401]

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[400] Ibid, p. 139.
[401] Zerilli, 2005, p.113-4.

Authorization, moreover, is evidently not a one-woman act, but requires a person who is in the position to authorize and another person who is receiving it in order to be effective. Between this giving and receiving, a woman can find a way to relate herself to another woman and begin the interactive cultivation of their social connections. Both women start to communicate, as the MWBC argues, by utilizing their 'human possibility and [her] social plus' to translate 'what she suffers from reality into a knowledge of reality.'[402]

Assembled on the authoritative ground of female freedom, women (re)invest their social relations by entering into a horizontal/vertical interlocution with each other, in which they talk freely about the symbolic translation of their different discursive embodiments and to discover what draws them together and what separates them apart. Noteworthy is that 'the symbolic mother', as an authoritative interlocutor, constitutes no elemental moral criteria for what collective/individual actions are considered as right/wrong-doings. From the MWBC's perspective, '[T]he value of female difference' does not require anything 'to be done so that it will exist appear with a guarantee that it is the right thing to do.'[403] The female authority thus should not be understood as a moral universality or a power imperative that seeks to assimilate and monopolize temporalities. 'She', as a symbolic representative of great maternal power, is not being designated to replicate the Hegelian situation of master and slave, or distinguishing the superiority of pure mind from the inferiority of material body as in the Cartesian dualism. Rather than setting up a rule to follow, 'she' invites every woman to an un-foreclosed interlocution to 'understand, evaluate, and appropriate the reason behind the irregular behaviour of her fellow women who so

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[402] Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, 1990, p. 141.
[403] Ibid, p. 126.

not conform to the rules prescribed by society, and on that reason may base her behaviour in the world'.[404] A sense of equality in the reiteration of the authority of 'the symbolic mother' can thus be detected, and I will elucidate this point further.

To put it differently, the reiteration of the female authority is equally open to every woman who renounces her belonging to the female sex, regardless of her actions or claims is an abnormality to mainstream morality or not. As for the matter concerning whether her contention or performance can hold or not, it is left to the participated interlocutors to make judgements. Take the confrontation between the protest groups 'FEMEN' and 'Muslim Women Against FEMEN' (MWAF) for example: FEMEN is known for staging topless protests and its Tunisian member, Amina Tyler, sparked a fierce debate in 2013 when she posted some half naked photos online, with slogans like 'my body belongs to me, and is not the source of anyone's honour' and 'Fuck your morals' written in Arabic on her bare chest.[405] Her message was intended to challenge the Islamic rhetoric around women's body and religious clothing like the burka/niqab. Later on, when Tyler was arrested over the accusation of contempt, the activist group orchestrated forceful protests in Europe with stronger political messages, such as 'Long live the topless jihad against infidels!' and 'Our tits are deadlier than your

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[404] Ibid, p. 140.

[405] After the photo controversy, Amina Tyler was arrested in May for writing 'Femen' on a wall near Kairouan's major mosque, and was being accused of 'attacking the city and insulting Islam.' She was then jailed and her detention had ignited FEMEN's 'Topless Jihad Day' protests across Europe. In August, Tyler was finally being released but she later announced that she decided to quit FEMEN, on the grounds of the group's 'Islamophobia and lack of financial transparency.' Regardless of her leaving FEMEN, she still post topless photos as a method of protest. For her reasons for quitting FEMEN, see the interview conducted by Huffington Post, 'Amina Sboui Quits FEMEN: "I do not want my name to be associated with an Islamophobic organization,"' 08/20/2013 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/20/amina-sboui-quits-femen_n_3785724.html>. For her protest and arrest, see Eline Gordts, 'Amina Tyler, Topless Tunisian FEMEN Activist, Sparks Massive Controversy,' *Huffington Post*, 26/03/2013 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/25/amina-tyler-femen_n_2949376.html>; and BBC News, 'FEMEN member Amina Tyler on trial in Tunisia,' *BBC News*, 30/05/2013 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-22714130>.

stones!' against the Muslim religion and demanding the release of Tyler. [406]

Nevertheless, FEMEN's specific aim at the Muslim religion and its protest strategy caused strong reactions from Islamic women. Particularly, MWAF was formed under these circumstances and issued an open letter to FEMEN via social media, in which it charges FEMEN as imperialist and white supremacist when claiming to fight for women's liberation. [407] This anti-FEMEN objective was also backed by a French female union, 'Les Antigones', who claimed in its manifesto that the wholeness of women is completed by men and the integrity of a society relies on such balance. [408]

This particular rhetorical confrontation between different female collectives demonstrates, as the MWBC may argue, women's capability of symbolic translation. That is, women are capable of translating the 'blind endurance of one's own difference from which no woman can entirely escape' into their respective knowledge of reality: 'consciousness of self and competence vis-à-vis one's given reality, competence to judge it and to change it.'[409] Such capability is utilized upon, as one may perceive it, the reiteration of female freedom that is legitimized by the authoritative symbolic mother. With the figurative authorization from the maternal power, every women can

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[406] See Michael Walsh, 'Amina Tyler's FEMEN supporters declare Topless Jihad Day after death-by-stoning threats for topless pics,' *New York Daily News*, 28/03/2013; Sara C Nelson, 'Topless Jihad Day: FEMEN Declare War On Islam In Wake of Amina Tyler Storm, Warning 'Our Tits Are Deadlier Than Your stones,' *Huffington Post UK*, 03/04/2013 <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/04/03/topless-jihad-day-femen-war-islam-warning-tits-deadlier-amina-tyler-stones_n_3006735.html>; and Associated Press, 'FEMEN topless protest targets Tunisia's justice ministry,' *the Guardian*, 29/05/2013 < http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/29/tunisia-femen-protest-amina-tyler>.

[407] See Sara C Nelson, 'Muslim Women Against FEMEN: Facebook Group Takes On Group In Wake of Topless Jihad (Pictures),' *Huffington Post UK*, 05/04/2013 <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/04/05/muslim-women-against-feme_n_3021495.html>; and Eline Gordts, 'Muslim Women Against FEMEN,' *Huffington Post*, 04/05/2013 < http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/05/muslim-women-against-femen_n_3023052.html>.

[408] See Georges Buscemi, 'Meet the Antigones: an antidote to breast-baring "terrorist" group FEMEN,' *LifeSiteNews.com*, 10/06/2013 < http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/meet-the-antigones-an-antidote-to-breast-baring-terrorist-group-femen>; and Daphne Leprince-Ringuet, 'Antigones: The French Group Unites in Opposition to FEMEN,' *Huffington Post the Blog*, 14/08/2013 < http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daphne-leprinceringuet/antigones-the-french-grou_b_3756438.html>. Les Antigones have made a short video that is specifically addressed to FEMEN and the English subtitled version can be seen on YouTube website: http://youtu.be/4DpzFoTvxC8.

[409] Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, 1990, p. 141.

enter a interlocution and make political claims freely, in a way that translates her embodied experiences and, from which, to articulate her social connection or disconnection with other women. To reflect on the above example, one can see how an individual protest act for the autonomy of female body proliferates into a grand-scale debate about, to put it roughly, the significations of the female body under secular and the spiritual discourses and, within which, different women from different continents and cultures project diverse experiences and opinions on an equal footing. That is, while Amina Tyler makes her protest under the banner of female liberation, other women are also empowered to choose how she would like to connect herself with that particular interpretation of liberated women: Tyler draws her connection with FEMEN via her protesting method and claims, which, in a sense, one may argue that the activist group is her 'symbolic mother' who legitimizes her contentious application of nudity. Such symbolic connection then is promoted further by other members of FEMEN and supporters when they stand out against the Tunisian officials regarding the arrest of Tyler.

Nevertheless, Tyler and her fellow supporters do not monopolize the content of female freedom, and their actions certainly provoke other possibilities of articulating women's relationship: for instance, MWAF disconnects itself with certain women, but not the category of 'women' itself, by repudiating FEMEN's proclamation of the conflict between the Muslim religion and women's liberation. Following that, one can see how different women, e.g. Tyler and members of MWAF here, are being conscious of their given reality, e.g. living in Islamic culture(s), and transform their embodied relationship with the same religion into different judgements of the reality drastically. Furthermore, MWAF's disconnection from FEMEN provides an entry

point for Les Antigones, another female collective, to come into the open dialogue and cultivate a social relation with another union of women. By materializing the principal differences or similarities into words or practices, the current case demonstrates 'how those fragments can combine among themselves and with the world in an unheard-of yet sensible form; this would connect an apparently meaningless transgression ... to the reasons of the woman who transgresses consciously.'[410] A thread of deliberative interlocution thus begins and expands with regard to the miscellaneous combinations of 'fragments'. For example, FEMEN also have staged protests against the driving ban in Saudi Arabia.[411] However, whether the Islamic activists in that country would relate themselves to such support or not, or how they would envisage the female relationship between FEMEN and themselves, it is up to those Muslim protesters to make their political judgements.

The above instances illustrate only fractions of how women can contemplate and politicize their discursive embodiments in the history of women, while there are numerous other exemplars that are also featured in that historical construction. In these politicizations, 'women' as a general term is being reiterated and/or reconfigured continuously by different orators, who demonstrate how political judgements can be made upon the collectively-constructed ground of female freedom. Such freedom of political judgement, to recall Butler's articulation of gender performativity and Merleau-Ponty's construction of presumed mastery, can be perceived as assured by and performing through the iterability of gender itself. That is to say, under the

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[410] Ibid.

[411] FEMEN have organized several protests against the driving ban in Saudi Arabia, and the group's statement can be found here: http://femen-france.tumblr.com/post/65348864725/femen-expresses-solidarity-with-women-imprisoned. Also see Umberto Bacchi, 'Femen Topless Activists Back Saudi Women Drive Ban Protests [Photos],' *International Business Times*, 28/10/2013 <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/femen-topless-saudi-arabia-women-driving-ban-517644>.

disciplinary power of the historical-congealed milieu and paradigmatic practices of gender, women are 'liberated' by the authority of 'the symbolic mother' and empowered by the iterability of gender, in the sense that a woman can manifest her capabilities and intentions freely and publicly, so as to convey knowledge and invite reflections on what has been done, could be done, or will happen. In return, her manifestations of gender provide symbolic reaffirmation of, so as to legitimize, the iterability of gender practices. More specifically, the reassured (re)iterability retains the contingent occurrence of interlocution and the continuity of women's historicity in the way that other women can make individual assessments and judgements of the above-mentioned manifestations. The interdependency between the iterability of gender, the individual capability to make political judgements, and female freedom thus can be identified. Zerilli's feminist freedom project can help to illustrate this interdependency and the exemplar effect of 'the symbolic mother, and, from which, I will argue that an agonistic ethos is crucial in ensuring the activeness of such relationship with the progression of democratic society.

2. FEMALE AUTHORISATION: A FREEDOM BUILDING EXERCISE

The MWBC's construction of the authoritative symbolic mother, as presented above, is a figurative representation of female power to counterbalance the patriarchal hegemony and to substantiate the missing social connection among women. However, '[A]ll women are not alike, not only because they are members of different social groups that divide them from each other', as Zerilli asserts, 'but also because they have different likes and dislikes, which, though related in some way, are not

exhausted by their membership in any particular social group whatsoever.'[412] The inescapable interconnection between sexual differences and other social memberships indicates another layer of disparity that the symbolic female authority also sets out to resolve: that is, the unequal relationship among women, which is somehow being suppressed and silent in the feminist fight for gender equality. In other words, the disparity issue is 'about the simple fact that women are not equals even among themselves, and about the possible social interpretation of this fact by women themselves.'[413] Acknowledging the diversity among women and the problem of disparity, Zerilli argues that the concept of political judgement should be re-envisaged in relation to female freedom. Within this, the disparity among women is offset by the authority of 'the symbolic mother', and women can freely put forward their significant differences, rather than seeking a unified objective of political pursuit. Making political judgements thus becomes a crucial feature in substantiating women's social connections and in transforming the given reality. I will revisit Zerilli's work to elaborate how the joint force of 'the symbolic mother', political judgement, and female freedom can unsettle the disparity among women and progressing contemporary feminist politics.

In her reading of the MWBC proposal, Zerilli conceives that 'equality' as a 'relational concept' as well as a 'political principle', which 'takes them [differences] for granted as things that must be brought into a certain kind of relation with each other for specific purposes.'[414] Such a political principle of equality withstands the temptation to propound 'equality as sameness' as 'a universalizing function that illuminates

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[412] Zerilli, 2005, p. 109.
[413] Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, 1990, p. 108.
[414] Ibid, p. 111.

particulars by subsuming them under concepts to produce a total critique.'[415] Instead, it provides a figurative commonplace for strong conflicts or disagreements to be manifested and, subsequently, for a genuine politics to take place. With the 'location' in hand, Zerilli shifts her focus to the potential participants within, given that it is them who put forward their differences and desires and who contest the general/specific claims that are being made. She suggests that 'the subjects making the comparison, their capacity for reflection (that is, thinking the particular in the absence of a universal) and the sociohistorical context of their judgements' should be the core considerations in the feminist pursuit for equality.[416] The political skills to compare, reflect, and contextualize without demanding a universal judgement indicates the need to rework our understanding of political judgement. With the advocacy to take standpoints and background factors into consideration, a political judgement that is made upon the political principle of equality does not intend to pose itself as a universal truth claim or an objective standard. Rather, making judgements should be a political practice 'for which plurality itself would be the basis for apprehending and understanding new objects and events in their freedom', and presents itself as an aesthetic judgement.[417]

Calling an aesthetic judgement as judgements of taste, Immanuel Kant places the validity of such judgement on subjectivity rather than knowledge or truth.[418] The subjective validity of an aesthetic judgement, as Zerilli perceives it, is acquired through 'making reference to others', in a way that 'each judging subject makes a

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[415] Zerilli, 2005, p. 35.

[416] Ibid, p. 111. For her other works on making political judgement, see '"We Feel Our Freedom": Imagination and Judgement in the Thought of Hannah Arendt,' *Political Theory*, 33:2005; and 'Value Pluralism and the Problem of Judgement: Farewell to Public Reason,' *Political Theory*, 40:2012.

[417] Ibid, p. 133.

[418] See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, (trans.) Werner S. Pluhar (Hackett, 1987).

claim that posits the agreement of others and, if necessary, attempts to persuade others of her view.'[419] Or, as stated by Kant, it is 'a subjective necessity that we present as objective by presupposing a common sense'.[420] How, then, can the political principle of equality be achieved on the subjectively presupposed common ground? Furthermore, could different aesthetic judgements carry the same weight when there are implicit disparities among the judging subjects? With regard to those worries, Zerilli appeals to 'the symbolic mother' as a protective 'third term', who enables women via their repayments of the symbolic debts that they own to each other. A woman repaying the symbolic debt, as indicated before, is an act of recognition about her natural belonging to the female sex and her social relationship with fellow women, without the necessity to justify her sexual difference. The gesture of paying back is also a figurative deposit to female freedom, which authorizes her political actions in the first place. As Zerilli puts it, a woman hears 'Go ahead' and decides to '*act publicly* in accordance with that phrase, is to take leave of feminism's injury identity, its politics of victimization, without denying one's membership in a group called women.'[421] From which, female freedom is no longer an empty concept but a political practice of doing; or, to consider the notion of plurality, a political realization of different doings.

Integrating the authority of 'the symbolic mother' with political judgement, the problem of disparity among women can be mitigated and, expectantly, would gradually be resolved by the political principle of equality. That is, every woman can translate her experiences of disparity or other differences into aesthetic judgements freely, after paying tributes publicly to the authority of 'the symbolic mother'. In the

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[419] Zerilli, 2005, p. 134.
[420] Kant, 1987, p. 89.
[421] Zerilli, 2005, p. 116.

meantime, her political judgement is legitimized by the subjective validity and her capability to present judgements, which substantiate female freedom. 'Our ability to come to terms with what is given ... in a way that affirms a non-sovereign human freedom (that is, freedom that is based in the I-can, not the I-will; freedom that begins in political community, not outside it) can only be achieved through a critical practice of judgement', as Zerilli puts it. [422] The direct association of making a political judgement as a political practice of freedom, following her statement, indicates that the critical purchase on aesthetic judgements, to a degree, is relational and communicative, rather than an isolated and individual matter. Political judgements are relational due to the fact that what an aesthetic judgement that a woman offers is her differences or similarities with other women. As pointed out before, she does not claim a universal truth in her political judgement, but 'to give an account-not to prove, but to be able to say how one came to an opinion, and for what reasons one formed it.' [423] Therefore, she gradually 'become[s] aware of the existence of significant differences among women', and such awareness 'positions others to become genuine interlocutors', while constructing her aesthetic judgement. [424]

The open invitation to other political participants then allows other women to come forward as the authoritative speaker of their own lived experiences and perspectives, which demonstrates 'the many ways in which female humanity tries to signify its need for free existence'. [425] Such occurrences of contingent interlocution not only facilitate the cultivation of social connections among women, but also characterize the exercise of political judgements as a feminist practice of world-building. As indicated in the

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[422] Ibid, p. 128.
[423] Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, (ed.) Ronald Beiner (University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 41.
[424] Ibid, p. 110.
[425] Ibid, p. 140.

earlier section on 'the symbolic mother', the female transgression relies on women to obtain the ability of social translation. It refers to the skill of transforming the lived experiences and suffering that the given reality imposes on individuals into a unique knowledge of reality. Without developing such political skill, i.e. the ability to make the social translation of female difference, the situation of women would 'equal letting women stay in the place where society puts them.'[426] Although the MWBC uses the term, 'knowledge of reality', the ability of social translation resembles Zerilli's re-conceptualization of political judgement. It is implausible and contradictory to consider a woman's 'knowledge of reality' as universal, while agreeing her example legitimizes others in the same way as the others can authenticate her action. The feminist attempt to deviate from universal claim-making indicates that individual women only provide a version of knowledge of reality when making aesthetic judgements. Therefore, one can understand 'world-building' via political judgement in this way: 'the truth of the world' is gradually revealed through different significations of free social existence that women projected, in relation to their respective discursive embodiments.

Apart from putting pieces of 'reality' together, making political judgement as world-building can also be understood as creating something anew from the old. As mentioned earlier, the judging subjects will grow a sense of awareness of the differences between themselves during the process of formulating political judgement, or, to put it shortly, one is "able to 'think in the place of everybody else'".[427] While acknowledging the existing difference between oneself and others, the political aspect of making judgement necessitates the judging subjects to do something about the

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[426] Milan Women's Bookshop Collective, 1990, p. 141.

[427] Hannah Arendt, 'Crisis in Culture,' in (ed.) Jerome Kohn, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (Penguin, 2006), p. 220. Also see Zerilli, 2012.

existence of plurality. It is a form of political thinking and a call for political imagination, to help one to 'stand in other people's shoes'. As elaborated by Zerilli, political thinking means that 'we *count* the different standpoints and opinions ('it-seems-to-me')… as the condition of an expansive notion of objectivity or worldly reality, and this may well involve challenges to, and changes in, our criteria.'[428] In other words, the consideration of plurality and the possibility of being contested are not a conceptual equivalence of giving in one's position or opinion. Rather, as Zerilli derives from Arendt, the political combination of plurality and contestability provides a 'peculiar kind of objectivity that Arendt associates with the political sphere, namely, the objectivity or sense of reality that works on seeing an object or event from as many sides as possible.'[429] Such 'peculiar objectivity' thus can authenticate the subjective validity of aesthetic arguments, when such judgements exhibit a political attempt to seek an inter-subjective agreement on the issues at hand.

But how can a woman who intends to manifest her differences into an aesthetic judgement take plurality into consideration, and consecutively create a space of intersubjectivity? Or, to put it differently, how do the judging subjects consider the notion of plurality when one is preoccupied with subjective experiences? These concerns can be answered by the trait of 'imagination' that characterizes political judgements. Connecting freedom with creative imagination, Kant argues that 'we feel our freedom' when we exercise our capability of association, '(which attaches to the empirical [i.e., reproductive]) uses of the imagination; for although it is under that law [of association] that nature lends us material, yet we can process that material into

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[428] Zerilli, 2005, p. 145.
[429] Zerilli, 2012, p. 178.

something quite different'.[430] In short, imagination is an ability to transform the given and/or to create something anew from it. The empirical attachment of imagination suggests that a phenomenological route can be detected in the development of such capability. According to Merleau-Ponty, one can acquire the ability to associate/imagine through past phenomenological encounters with the world, in which 'all disclosure of the implicit and all cross-checking performed by analytic perception are included, and all the norms of actual perception vindicated-in short, a realm of truth, a world.'[431] In our essential exercise of perceptions, 'the foundations of, or inaugurate, knowledge' are laid for future invocations. Owing to the past cultivation of knowledge of the world, one is therefore able to distinguish 'indissolubly fused' objects, 'based on the foreshadowing of an imminent order which is about to spring upon us a reply to questions merely latent in the landscape.'[432]

Merleau-Ponty's account of imagination, or as Kant calls it, the law of association is conjuring up the idea of the trained body with presumed mastery. The lived body is trained, in the sense that the deployment and utilization of bodily functions and skills are resulted from a series of corporeal learning, in which the body incorporates the cultural matrix of the world and develops its subjectivity alongside. However, as indicated in Chapter 3, it is far-fetched to think that one can be fully trained to deal with every possible situation before, metaphorically speaking, stepping into 'the reality', and this is where the notion of presumed mastery comes into play. The function of presumed mastery allows subjectification to take place at the same time as the body is being equipped with essential corporeal skills and preliminary knowledge of the world. Within this, one develops an ability to translate strangeness into

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[430] Kant, 1987, p. 182. Also see Zerilli, 2005.
[431] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 17.
[432] Ibid.

something familiar, and this is a lively demonstration of creative imagination. 'By placing them [i.e. the strangeness and something familiar] on the same footing, that of the unique object,' as Merleau-Ponty claims, 'synopsis makes continuity and resemblance between them possible.'[433] Utilizing the trained skills, one can compare, reflect, and contextualize new encounters in relation to old experiences, and therefore makes them able to identify similarities and dissimilarities between them, by drawing imaginary, either in a figurative or literal sense, relationships/existential connections between different temporalities. One can thus see that imagination functions in a relational manner, as a result of its necessity to make references, in retrospection of previous deeds, with creativity to fashion out something anew. The variety of shapes, materials, and functions of chairs can be a straightforward example about how different designers put their creative imaginations into concrete artefacts. Deriving from the phenomenological analysis, the skill of imagination can certainly be transferred to the realm of political thinking, where a space of intersubjectivity is required for the existence of plurality. With the perceptual skill of imagination in mind, I now return to the issue of political judgement as a feminist practice of world-building.

Broadly speaking, the function of imagination in the political arena is assisting the judging subjects to see plurality on its own merits, to cross one's own boundary and come to appreciate differences, and to create new bonds from the supposed separations. Specifically, imagination in the exercise of political judgements is a means of mediation, as well as a manifestation of representative thinking, to constitute an intersubjective sphere, or as Arendt terms it, a 'subjective-in-between'.[434]

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[433] Ibid.
[434] Arendt, 1998, p. 183.

Diverging from universal and objective truth claims, imagination 'moves neither above perspectives, as if they were something to transcend in the name of pure objectivity, nor at the same level as those perspectives, as if they were identities in need of our recognition.'[435] An aesthetic judgement is justified on the grounds of subjective validity and it is the social difference and the judging capability that should be recognized on the grounds of the political principle of equality. Moreover, what is being mediated via imagination is not a simple acknowledgement of the existence of other people, but to picture in mind a representation of their standpoints and difference. That is, as Arendt argues, 'being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not.'[436] By understanding other perspectives that are different from mine, I am being informed about what challenges or questions that I may be confronted with when putting forward my aesthetic judgements. But, more importantly, I am enabled to see the potential similarity and dissimilarity between others and me, and, with the effort of actual communication, may be able to find proximity between us.

The imaginative element of political judgements thus equips the judging subjects with the power of world-building by allowing them 'to see and articulate relations between things that have none (in any necessary, logical sense), to create relations that are external to their terms.'[437] However, as Arendt and Zerilli both notice, imagination cannot fundamentally replace the role of physical interlocution, a face-to-face communication to other judging subjects. This is because the corporeal encounter can help to 'update' one's skill of imagination with first-hand materials of embodiment. The necessity of actual interlocution thus raises questions about the political relation between the judging subjects: granting the political skill to signify free social

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[435] Zerilli, 2005, p. 149.
[436] Hannah Arendt, 'Truth and Politics,' in *Between Past and Future*, p. 241.
[437] Zerilli, 2005, p. 162.

existence, what is the political relation between the competing interlocutors? Or, to put it differently, what political ethos is being cultivated when the judging subjects project their differences in the feminist practice of world-building? Also, in what ways can these political judgements transform world-building in correspondence with the change of social scenarios, rather than foreclosing interlocutions? Developing from the above discussion on political judgement and imagination, I will concentrate on elucidating the conceptual relationship between interlocution and political ethos in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Agonistic Feminist Politics of Discursive Embodiment

1. PLURALITY AND POLITICISATION IN FEMINIST

POLITICS

In opposition to the Cartesian hierarchical prioritisation of mind over body, a feminist politics of discursive embodiment grants primacy to corporeality as the existential medium of the world and the Self, in which gendered embodiment is manifested through the interchange of gender milieus and bodily practices. Contextualising in gender seriality, on the one hand, discursive embodiment encapsulates the enablement and constraint of the gender matrix on the body and, on the other hand, it entails the individualisation of gender differences. That is to say, the gender matrix has an imperative power to categorise individual bodies and discipline them to perform in certain manners that are correspond to their categorisations. Yet, the members of a particular cataloguing are situated in a serial and fluid, as opposed to an identical and deterministic, relationship with each other, owing to the corporeal power to develop individual praxis under general constraints. Instead of reproducing corporeal acts mechanically, the body can reiterate trained behaviours with the assistance of individual subjectivity to react and adjust itself in response to the situations and surroundings, which constitute individual discursive embodiments of the world. Following that, the plural essence of 'women', which provides a conceptual reference to differentiate bodies and make certain actions intelligible, acquires its existential substances from the diverse interpretations and enactments of criss-crossed social differences by individual female bodies. The corporeal capability to (re)signify the

gendered world, as articulated via previous chapters, makes present the historically absent and inferior female body as the primary locus of world-building and opens a door to conceive it as an existential site of political struggles.

Elaborating on the notions of the symbolic mother and political imagination, this chapter seeks to sketch out a democratic ethos that can come to terms with the contingent and contestable nature of politicising the existential plurality of women. The re-conceptualisation of the female body as lived construes individual corporeality as always encultured and its existence and comprehension of the world are produced through the inter-involvement of the material and the discursive. That is to say that 'the imbrications between embodiment, language, disposition, perception, and mood are always in operation' from the very moment of a body is born into a social world.[438] From which, the discursive translation of corporeal embodiments has the body as its bedrock and the 'expressive value' of the sensory 'is the ground of the antepredicative unity of the perceived world, and, through it, of verbal expression (*Darstellung*) and intellectual significance (*Bedeutung*).'[439] The phenomenological understanding of the lived body is therefore advantageous to problematising the historically congealed discursive constituents of a gendered corporeality, as well as identifying crucial deeds for political pluralism. While the idea of the symbolic mother figuratively authorises the previously absent female body a place of its own in gendered society, women are considered as empowered and liberated through their ability to demonstrate their experiential comprehensions of sexual difference in public and in recognition of each other. Complicated by human relations and social networks, an existential female body becomes a political female body in a way that she finds

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[438] William Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Duke University Press, 2011), p.47.
[439] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 235.

resemblance, as well as distinction, between herself and other women. Standing in a serial relationship, she can experience intersubjectivity with another woman, for example, when she hears a man pronounce 'You women...' to other woman on the one hand. On the other hand, she can differentiate herself from that woman whom the speaker addresses to, by opposing the declared definition of their relationship and offering alternative visions, if wants to.

As the exertion of political judgement and political imagination by individual women is affirmed by the symbolic mother, this raises concerns regarding how a democratic feminist politics can deal with the contradictory implementations of those political skills, since those involved share a legitimised equality. By paying with the symbolic debt of their freedom, women are assembled under the same social category, which entails a disciplinary force to instruct, rather than decide, the serialised member relations. In acknowledging the structural effects of 'women' on individual identity, each woman is legitimised with the freedom to put forward their comprehensions of the gendered world in words or actions. Women's corporeality becomes the preliminary site of politicisation in that 'gendering' is 'first of all an event which grips my body, and this grip circumscribes the area of significance to which it has reference' before being verbalised as an experience or a concept.[440] From that, female subjects find their bodies as a general medium to register back and forth the material and the discursive, to articulate or disrupt their political connections in response to a change in situation. How does feminist politics embrace such individual freedom to (re)signify the relationships among women and with the world, while asserting a collective voice? The political power of imaging something 'new' or 'different' allows

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[440] Ibid.

women to renovate the old rhetoric of social injustice, or to develop previously neglected dimensions of socio-historical scars for public judgement. While new politicisations can energise democracy and prevent its ossification, how does the visibility and differing interpretations of a past injury call for remediating and relieving grievance and anger, than antagonising the existing social relations? To put the point another way, how does a feminist politics of discursive embodiment come to terms with the constituted tension inherent in the translation of women's existential plurality into a political plurality?

2. A CONTESTABLE DEMOCRATIC ETHOS

A feminist politics of discursive embodiment, developed cumulatively throughout the chapters of this thesis, depicts the plurality of women and its politicisation by integrating gender seriality, which provides a disciplinary yet non-deterministic social structure, with the lived body, which is able to cultivate a subjective intention under the general regulative effects of social difference. As a result, the constituted tension is embedded in their existential interactions, in a sense that the female body comprehends its 'new sense-giving intentions' of sexual difference 'only by donning already available meanings' from the existing gender structures.[441] Meanwhile, the 'available meanings suddenly link up in accordance with an unknown law' when the female body brings to bear its individual-praxis, 'and once and for all a fresh cultural entity has taken on an existence.'[442] Under such circumstances, the regulative force of gender seriality always risks being counterbalanced, or even being overridden, by the corporeal power to re-signify. The individualised comprehensions of the world then manifest into different opinions and perspectives of individuals on the same subject

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[441] Ibid, p. 183.
[442] Ibid.

matter, and may feed back into 'the available meanings' of the existential surrounding. From the unremitting to and fro registering between the discursive and the material, the different projections of individual intentions by means of corporeality intensify the constituted tension, and subsequently invigorate the contestability of existing gender matrix. Recognising the possible collision of female existences in relation to their equal standings, the last picture of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment tackles the issue of political contestation. It will focus on establishing a political ethos that can renovate the antagonistic clash of different politicisations of female embodiment, than looking into political institutions or political actions. In short, politicisation can manifest into diverse shapes and take place at different levels, as those examples drawn on in the thesis exhibit.

Furthermore, political institutions and systems are relatively inert and passive in responding to the rapid rise and fade of socio-political events and often are difficult to dismantle, partially because they are signs of stability of a society. In contrast, the general public are more up-to-date with socio-political issues, and their responses are crucial to the survival of those topics in popular discussion. In such a context, political ethos is therefore critical, in the sense that it is not only important to have appropriate institutional mechanisms and accesses in place to ensure the efficient function of democracy, but also decisive to have a broad understanding and acceptance of democratic values among the public. To put it differently, the endurance or dismantling of a democracy is fundamentally down to the general beliefs and ideas of the public, particularly how the people perceive their relations with each other, when strong emotions shake up their daily life or when current institutions or systems fail to react.

To recall the instance of the admission of Breivik into the University of Oslo, the open letter from Ottersen, the head of the University can be construed as an act of facilitating democratic ethos through politicising embodiments. On the one hand, as part of the injured Norwegian society, Ottersen incurs the strong emotions from the atrocity as his fellowmen. On the other hand, his professional position embodies him with certain social and intellectual status, as well as symbolises particular institutional authority, which may differentiate him from the general public. His open letter then can be considered as translating his plural identities and personal emotions into a political judgement, in an attempt to open up a dialogue between the Norwegian society that provoked by Breivik's cruelty and the established rules and regulations that the decision of admission based upon. Apart from the institutions and principles that Ottersen represented and the general public, the political process of speaking to and back also takes place between Breivik and the Norwegian population. Regardless the access is limited, granting Breivik his right to education may be able to assist him to re-train him to see plurality on its own merit, re-evaluate his prior judgements, and to re-imagine his relationship with a democratic society. Through the lateral integration of different interlocutors in public forum, the cultivation of a contestable political ethos and public forbearance become possible and such a facilitation, in turn, solidifies the mechanisms of democratic systems.

What I therefore aim to articulate in this chapter is a feasible democratic ethos that instigates and cultivates a positive attitude of the people toward the unremittingly socio-political disturbances in a democracy. In a democratic society, the institutionalisation of a democratic framework is not the 'end-of-the story'. Contemporary civil societies are facing greater and broader challenges than ever from

both domestic and international levels: countries are wrestling between economic globalisation and localisation; the 'public space' is redefined by the invention of the internet and its accessibility is expanded by the briskly evolved digital technology; the people can connected with each other across geographical boundaries, yet the distinction it makes between users is somewhat harsher with injurious consequences. We can see nations suffer violent or social disturbances like terrorists attacks or union strikes, but autonomous, cross-continental collaborations between different people for common causes can also be observed, such as in the cases of SlutWalk, the imprisonment of Pussy Riot members, and Pride Parade for LGBT community. These events, as well as many others, point to a society is a intersecting and multifaceted organisation and full of 'hybrid identities, experimentation, and deconstructive discourses', which are interweaved with historical-congealed social structures and power relations.[443] As the possibility of new socio-political challenges cannot be eradicated, a healthy democracy requires corresponding mechanisms and political ethos to accommodate and reconcile political conflicts under the collision of political judgements. To alleviate the aggression and resentment caused by differences and disagreements, democracy must be receptive to the providing public spaces for new vocabulary and (re)imaginations to emerge, a chance for them to articulate, be deliberated and to be judged, than simply attempt to subsume political confrontations under established imperatives.

In terms of the plurality of female discursive embodiments and contemporary feminist politics, it is clear that women are starting to form different alliances across spaces on various issues and to stand in opposition towards the same goal. Aligned in

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[443] Wayne Gabardi, *Negotiating Postmodernism* (University of Minnesota press, 2001), p. 109.

a serialised relationship, women have equal power to put into effect their corporeal capabilities in imaging and judging their relations with each other and with the world, via the mediation of the lived body. The idea of 'equal' here refers to both the democratic principle of equality, as well as the symbolic authorisation of 'being different' in recognition of sexual difference. Women can politicise their lived experiences and use language to make rhetorical representations of previous adverse injustice, with the intention that such social scars can be attended to and remedied. To put the point differently, politicising discursive embodiments is not merely about story-telling or making remarks about a life event, but also about being responded to. Between the political practice of talking back and forth, the participants can come to see the 'opposition' as equals who experience the world in another way like themselves and, from which, arises the possibility of understanding each other's reasons behind 'being different'. Subsequently, the contrasting political claims can be conceived as informing and pluralising the equally shared public space, which can progress the relatively inert, institutionalised political systems, than the irreconcilable deconstructive forces of difference. The tolerance and willingness to hear and talk to 'someone who is different' reaffirm a general ethos of equality and recognition in the lived experiences of the society members and, furthermore, encourage future politicisations of discursive embodiments.

3. JUDGING POLITICALLY: AN AGONISM

Appreciating the progressive characteristics of inexorable contestability and power play in structuring human relations, I will advocate that an agonistic political ethos can help those involved in a feminist politics of discursive embodiment to construe different political judgements and imaginations of women as a pluralist practice of

democracy. An agonistic version of democratic ethos can recognise the reciprocity between the lived body and the world around it, in a way that it 'locate[s] the political in the existential struggle to form identities and advance different ways of life in an environment of contingency, plurality, and power.'[444] Specifically, an agonistic account of political ethos accepts neither that political arena and interlocutions can be free from power relations, nor political decisions can be attained without in-/direct interferences from the existing non-/official institutions or practices. Such an understanding resonates with the phenomenological conceptualisation of training in Chapter 2 and 3. Here, the lived body is 'being-in-the-world' in a sense that it materialises the enablement and inhibitions of the world, via an indefinite training process, which inscribes corporeality with established culture matrixes and essential skills. Even within the embedded corporeal mastery to adopt and (re)create, it is argued that individual innovations or reconfigurations continue to draw their intelligibility from practiced knowledge and reference networks, to varying degrees. As a result, the politicisation of discursive embodiment and manifestation of political skills are construed as always shadowed by power structures and hegemonic practices. Such an acknowledgment of existing imperatives then underscores the potential exclusions and negligence that accompanied those political actions.

Following the above, an agonistic ethos turns away from an emphasis on the principle of political impartiality and universal rationality, which, for instance, are characterised in liberal democracy. Such a shift of focus does not mean that, for instance, the neutrality of public services, providing a fair and open access to participate, or offering reasons for political claims is no longer important in the

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[444] Ibid.

agonistic version of democratic framework. Rather, it calls the articulatory practices that ground the claims of neutrality or rational consensus into question, by underlining the impossibility to fully realise an ideal political deliberation, given that the participants are contextualised in a power-infused surrounding and cannot propose political claims without referring back to their particularities. Furthermore, as the Foucauldian 'power/knowledge' system argues, '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.'[445] In conjuncture with the phenomenological lived body, political claims derived from lived experience have always existed within dominant structures of knowledge. 'We live in a world where speech is an *institution*,' as Merleau-Ponty avows.[446] With 'understanding words and expressions' gradually turns into a rather effortless task, people 'become unaware of the contingent element in expression and communication,...in short, in all who transform a certain kind of silence into speech.'[447] The accustomed 'silence' can refer to the unreflective association between the spoken word and the object or event it represents. For example, I do not need to recall my own experiences, form an image in my head, or witness the actual event, when I hear my friend says that a mutual acquaintance is 'upset' today. There is no clear deductive process or comparison of different emotions involved to achieve my comprehension of the sentence.

On the other hand, the un-introspective 'silence' in the exchange of language can also be understood as an unquestioned reaffirmation of authority or belief, if recalling the Foucauldian relationship of power and knowledge. For example, the same diagnosis of symptoms may carry different weights or credibility depending on whether it is

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[445] Foucault, 1977, p. 27.
[446] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 184.
[447] Ibid.

uttered by a medical doctor or not. Similarly, soldiers normally would not question the orders from their superiors, similar to the relation between employees and employers. These cases underline how different social settings may have patent impacts on the effect of the same spoken words. For example, consider the announcement 'you are under arrest' made by a police officer and by a friend: generally speaking, the different courses of action by the hearer in response to the declaration, i.e. obeying or defying the 'arrest', are not the result of a change in comprehension of the literal meaning of those spoken words. Rather, the respective 'understandings' of the very same sentence and subsequent actions by some means precede 'the intellectual working out and clarification of the meaning'.[448] In the case of the speaker being a police officer, the conformance of the hearer can be read as displaying a blind recognition toward the existing social order and a hierarchal relationship that the identity, 'police officer', represents, which ground the validity and effectiveness of that proclamation. In contrast, it is the lack of institutionalised authority being implicitly identified, when the words are declared by a friend of the hearer. Such a comparison elucidates the veiled espousal of linguistic practices and socio-cultural matrix in daily encounters, in which corporeality is the principle medium to deliver and demonstrate the effects of differentiation and structuring in its bodily actions.

From the above, the individual encounter with a socio-cultural authoritative relationship is not 'founded on the recognition of some law, but on the experience of a bodily presence.'[449] In particular, the enculturation of the corporeality points to the difficulty of claiming neutrality and universality, seeing that 'I become involved in

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[448] Ibid, p. 185.
[449] Ibid.

things with my body, they co-exist with me as an incarnate subject, and this life among things has nothing in common with the elaboration of scientifically conceived subject.'[450] Differentiating the perceived world from scientific assessments, the phenomenological understanding of the body-in-the-world underlines the potential risk of mistaking our perceptions of the social world, which result from an ongoing disciplinary process of normalisation, as produced under objective and natural conditions. Furthermore, as the contrast between a police officer and a friend announcing 'you are under arrest' reveals, individual mastery has the ability to project individual-praxis, i.e. to transform the common structure into personal use occasionally, under the institutionalised socio-cultural structures, while relying on the same scheme for the intelligibility of individual purpose. If the intention of a friend is to make a joke by uttering 'you are under arrest', for instance, the successfulness of the gag requires the listener to have prior knowledge of particular social settings, such as the general functions and consequences of 'arrest'. With the background understanding of 'how the arrest should happen' in mind, the hearer then is equipped with the essential socio-cultural awareness to distinguish the common way of behaving from the deviation, and thus grasps the mockery. This illustration stresses the relational and contextual aspects of language practices, in which corporeality finds a place for individual subjectivity to navigate itself towards particular goals.

Acknowledging the coded articulatory practices behind language games and human behaviours, an agonistic ethos, as Chantal Mouffe argues, construes each politicisation as 'a contingent and temporary hegemonic articulation of 'the people' through a particular regime of inclusion-exclusion.'[451] Following that, political

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[450] Ibid.
[451] Mouffe, 2000, p. 49.

enactments are provisional and reliant in a sense that they 'are revisable, settlements can be re-examined afresh, re-argued, and re-negotiated in the light of new circumstances, empirical or scientific evidence, or new normative or political claims.'[452] Let's recall the controversy around FEMEN's topless protestation to elucidate the point: the activist group construes the female body as the concrete materialisation of patriarchal oppressions and the naked breast as the signature approach of the group, in contrast with clothing the female body, signifies the transformation of women's bodies from possessed by men into a site of female liberation. Such an articulation of the female body as a political subject has its particularity, in connection with the patriarchal milieu of male gaze and control over women in both normative and material senses. That is, FEMEN highlights the dimensions of objectification and commoditisation in the historical oppressions against women and, upon which, develops a focused reading on the exposure of nude breast as a critical ─and somehow the only─ weapon to combat all forms of male domination. A patent political frontier of us/them is thus emerged from the specific rhetoric, namely women and men. However, as the reaction from MWAF indicates, another political front can also be drawn within the 'us', i.e. women, that FEMEN aims to represent: the provocative protesting method marks Muslim women who wear religious clothes like hijab and burqa, which are designed to cover rather than reveal, as a clear Other within the constructed regime of Us.

Although FEMEN members have staged protests against the Christian church as well as Saudi Arabia's driving ban against women, MWAF steps in from the perspective of cultural differences and casts FEMEN as cultural imperialists, by contesting their

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[452] Barry, 2012, p. 269.

definition of the incompatibility between Islamic clothing practice and the liberation of women. The disagreement between FEMEN and MWAF on what does or does not signify the liberation of women, as Mouffe may argues, 'is a political one, and for that reason it should remain contestable.'[453] Similarly, just as FEMEN cannot represent a universal reading of women's body and sexual liberation, the discursive attacks on the ideology and approach of FEMEN by MWAF also do not impart the supreme truth in the ways of life of Muslim women. While MWAF is devoted to disassociating female Islamic clothing from the connotation of female oppression, there are counter-voices trying to argue otherwise by highlighting the correlation between state controls and wearing the headscarf in certain countries, such as Iran, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia.[454] The arguments and counter-arguments displayed in public forums shows a clear political intention by women to try to define an equal relationship by appealing to their intersected social differences. As Hannah Arendt points out, 'we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.'[455] Feminist politics thus consists of dealing with the different sides of female transgression, in which 'women' should be construed as an inherently changeable and relational political subject. However, as MWBC asks, in order for a socially authoritative female origin to make connections between women, how can an agonistic ethos help feminist politics resist the ambivalence of each (re)signification, in turn monopolising speech? Furthermore, if each politicisation entails a hegemonic regime of exclusion-inclusion, how does an agonistic ethos

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[453] Ibid.

[454] See Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Iranian women post pictures of themselves without hijabs on Facebook," *the Guardian*, 12/05/2014, < http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/12/iran-women-hijab-facebook-pictures-alinejad>; Rawand Issa, "Rebellious women who decided to discard their veils," (trans.) Kamal Fayad, AL-Monitor.com, 17/01/2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/culture/2014/01/rebellious-women-discard-headscarf-hijab.html#>; and John Blake, "Muslim women uncover myths about the hijab," *CNN*, 12/08/2009, < http://edition.cnn.com/2009/US/08/12/generation.islam.hijab/>.

[455] Arendt, 1998, p. 8.

facilitate the possibility of contestation without the aggregation of hostility, since the power struggle is deemed ineradicable?

4. GATHERING UNDER THE UNIVERSAL, SIGNIFYING THE PARTICULAR(S)

In dealing with the disparity among women under generally asymmetric gender relations, MWBC captivatingly suggests the idea of a symbolic female authority to legitimise the practices of female freedom. Meanwhile, those practices of female transgression confirm the authenticity of the symbolic mother. For MWBC, what is being practiced under the banner of women's liberation is women's political skills to manifest their desires and to judge, in connection with sexual difference. Specifically, as female social relations are historically under-represented in public space, 'women judging women' signifies a feminist attempt to move beyond the male-dominated system of knowledge/power. It is not to say that MWBC tries to overthrow the established cultural matrix and develop a brand-new set of universal imperatives designated for women. Instead, the practice of judgement is advocated by a group of women to show their fellow women the possibility of an alternative interpretation of sexual difference, than one that is mediated by male guardians. In particular, the political practice demonstrates an understanding of 'I-can', which was previously undermined by the fact of 'I am a woman', and substantiating the empty social relationship among women by highlighting the possibility of 'being different'. That is, 'I' am a woman and can manifest desires or make judgements without a male guarantor, whose assurance is simply resulted from his identity as 'man'. Furthermore, the 'I-can' as a woman not only denotes individual capabilities, but also projects and, to a degree, requires a sense of reciprocity among women. That is to say that the

repudiation of another women's ability to perform 'I-can' will consecutively cast doubt on my own realisation of 'I-can'.

Nonetheless, it is not an entirely harmonious atmosphere that characterises the general reciprocity among women, under the political practice of female freedom. In contrast, a disagreeable and argumentative ambience among women is often sensed in complex socio-cultural issues, such as the different perceptions of Islamic clothing that mentioned earlier, the pro-life vs. pro-choice debate of abortion, and the suitability of female bishop in the Church of England.[456] What the practice of political judgement brings forward under the claim of female liberation, to borrow Mouffe's phrases, is a feminist issue of communicating 'the political' to 'the politics'. According to Mouffe, 'the political' signals the antagonistic social relationship 'that is inherent in human relations'; as for 'politics', it 'indicates the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and organize human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of 'the political'.'[457] Feminist politics is then considered as an ordered space of 'politics' and sets to resolve the potential antagonism of 'the political', which groups the existential plurality of women and their irreducible individual-praxis under the common-praxis of 'women' as a social category. Transiting from 'the political' to 'politics', women find themselves in an empowered position to explore and judge their sexual difference and disparity, as well as to compare and contrast different arguments and approaches. The conceptual

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[456] For female church members' concern over female bishops, see Lizzy Davies, "Almost half the lay members who voted against female bishops were women," *the Guardian*, 26/11/2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/26/church-radical-strategy-female-bishops-memo>; and Riazat Butt, "The women who oppose female bishops," *the Guardian*, 27/02/2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/27/women-oppose-women-bishops>.

[457] Mouffe, 2000, p. 101. Also see her 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?', *Social Research*, 1999:66(3).

collaboration between an agonistic ethos and the symbolic mother then helps to underline the power-infused contexts and contingent conditions behind the respective exercises of political judgement. Following that, women are being diverted from 'an ideal of neutral, genderless justice, and cleared our minds of the image of this kind of justice as well as the guilt feelings and the resentment that this neutral authority introduced into our relations.'[458]

On the one hand, the theoretical departure from justice-as-neutrality under an agonistic ethos draws attention to the universal claim posited by the political. On the other hand, this sheds a positive light on the politicised existential divergences of women as a path of pluralisation for feminist politics. To be exact, the symbolic gathering of women in the same public space bridges the social connection between them, and also turns both affable fellowship and antagonistic disagreement into flesh-and-blood friends and foes. Through direct encounters with other fellow female participants and without the trouble of assembling sexual difference with claims of neutrality, they will be able to share honest personal experiences and upfront opinions, in a way that offering an alternative rhetoric of world events and not being distorted by (male) mediators. By doing so, women can focus on engaging in deeper conversations with disagreeing parties and to uncover, then reconcile, the strong emotions camouflaged by rational arguments. Expectedly, such concentration will induce women to examine closely the political construction of us/them, i.e. to deliberate the applicability of what separate or draw them together. In investigating the complicity of female existence, women remove 'the easy arguments with which the lack of valorising relations between women is usually explained away, and we

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[458] Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, 1990, p. 111.

were able to reach that level where social matter intersects its symbolic organization.'[459] Therefore, the public declaration of 'we are the same (as women)' is considered as a political statement, than a factual description of female relations, which treats each definition of 'we' and 'the same' as a contestable articulation in relation to respective politicisations of female embodiment.

To further elucidate the characteristic of 'contestable articulation' between the general categorisation of women and the individual projection of the category, I will draw on Ernesto Laclau's reading of Wittgenstein's 'rule-following' in language games. In contemplating the individual ability to follow language rules, Laclau argues that the language system 'is being constantly constructed and reconstructed [by the individualised practices of language], between an abstract rule and the instance of its use in a particular context, it is not a relationship of application that occurs, but a relationship of articulation.'[460] From which, it can be noted that the distinction between articulation and application is hinged upon the possibility of 'being constantly constructed and reconstructed'. Constructions and reconstructions in individual practices of a general language rule then indicate a contingent and reciprocal relation between universal imperatives and particular instances. Within which, the power of totalising and conditioning, which is exercised by linguistic imperatives, is recognised. Such recognition of regulating effects constitute the threads of resemblance between individual practices of those language rules. Nonetheless, the boundary of a general rule is 'penetrated by a basic instability and precariousness', in a way that the regulative imperative of language cannot prevent individual intentions from entering into the process of articulating the relationship

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[459] Ibid, p. 126
[460] Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (Routledge, 1990), p. 208-9.

between general language rules and individual utterances.[461] The reconstruction of a vocabulary can often be seen in commercial branding, such as 'Lotus' and 'Jaguar', which represent a specific class of car manufacturers, than mere references to particular types of flower and animals. The resignification of the two words clearly did not overthrow their original significations of natural life forms, but the border of such connotations is being expanded when the reference groups are being symbolised, in corresponding to the intent of the brand founders.

A similar tentativeness of boundaries in individual articulations of general linguistic rules is also seen in the way that social identity demarcates individual bodies. That is, the constitution of a social identity relies on privileging certain characteristics from 'a whole field of differences, and made to embody this totalizing function', which essentially is a 'representation of an impossible whole'.[462] 'The externalization of auto-negativity and its 'embodiment' in the other is an exclusionary limit structuring the political terrain and the articulation within it,' as Torben Bech Dyrberg elaborates, 'thus fixing the identity of both self and other.'[463] From which, the articulatory practice comes into play in privileging what the identity is by consolidating what it is not. The articulation of the exterior and interior of an identity indicates that a political frontier is being established and a sense of antagonism is being invoked, given that the act of privileging signifies a necessary exclusion, as well as limitation, of certain differences. 'Without limits through which a (non-dialectical) negativity is constructed we would have an indefinite dispersion of differences whose absence of systematic limits would make any differential identity impossible. But this very

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[461] ibid, p. 109.
[462] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (Verso, 2005), p. 81.
[463] Torben Bech Dyrberg, 'The political and politics in discourse analysis,' in Simon Critchley and Oliver Marchart (ed.), *Laclau: A Critical Reader* (Routledge, 2004), p. 246.

function of constituting differential identities through antagonistic limits is what,' as Laclau claims, 'at the same time, destabilizes and subverts those differences.'[464] A radical contestability is thus featured in the equation of identity articulation: Through the methods of privileging and excluding, the particular difference(s) of a social identity is articulated as a universal picture to the marginalisation of other forms of difference. Owing to the asymmetrical status between the dominant and the discounted differences, the articulated general frontier is prone to inherent antagonism, which may cause critical challenges and call for re-articulations of the present political boundary, when the objective circumstances and conditions change.

The essence of an agonistic ethos, as pointed out before, is hinged on its deep-seated acknowledgement of the inescapable inclusion/exclusion that is drawn by every political construction. 'There are always other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated', as Mouffe argues, the contingent distinction of us/them through articulatory practices 'is susceptible of being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices, i.e. practices which will attempt to disarticulate the existing order so as to install another form of hegemony.'[465] Following that, the concentration of an agonistic ethos of political conflict can be paraphrased as concerning the likelihood of reactivating previously repressed possibilities under the established scheme. In discussing the function of political reconciliation in a divided society, Andrew Schaap suggests the cultivation of 'agonistic respect' or 'resonableness' is central to its success and, as Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker suggest, reconciling adversaries is 'about breaking with the violence of the past and initiating political arrangements that will secure such reasonability and reflection', instead of

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[464] Ernesto Laclau, *Empancipation(s)* (Verso, 1996), p. 52-3.
[465] Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (Routledge, 2005), p. 18.

'settling accounts'.[466] The above accounts all point to the possibility of disarticulating the current hegemonic installation which is fundamental in keeping political competitors on agonistic terms. Owing to this, the transitional sphere between the plurality of actions and the objective of pluralism is urgently in need of conceptual elaboration, as the alteration of political scenery relies on the dis/articulation of political conflict. As the enactment of agonistic ethos does not predict or presume a specific formation of pluralism, the thesis will not dwell on the objective of pluralism, but embark upon a conceptual enquiry about pluralisation in this section.

To contextualise this in terms of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment, the theoretical prioritisation of pluralisation over pluralism can be reformulated as follows: the conceptual integration of gender seriality and the phenomenological lived body effectively provides a possible way to envisage the diversification of female embodiments under the general category of 'women'. An existential reciprocity is thus articulated from corporeal embodiments and the constitution of gender seriality: that is, the disciplinary imperative of gender matrix is casted, on the one hand, as both constraining and enabling corporeality to a varying extent. On the other hand, these variations of gender performances become historically congealed constituents of gender structures, in such a way that corporeal demonstrations reiterate and/or reconfigure gender hegemony, and so figuratively ground and promise future bodily practices of gender. Such symbolic 'grounding' and 'promising' from corporeal performances suggests a conceptual seriality that not only connects women across generations but also among contemporaries. In particular, individual women are standing in a serial position with each other in a sense that, to draw on Connolly's

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[466] See Andrew Schaap, *Political Reconciliation* (Routledge, 2006); and Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker, 'Emotional Reconciliation: Reconstituting Identity and Community after Trauma,' *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2008:11, p. 398.

understanding of William James, the formation of corporeal experience 'comes replete with connections' and 'discloses a flux in which elements from the past fold into the present and both of those into future anticipation.'[467] That is to say that women, as existential registers of the gendered world, 'draw[s] on a latent history and reworks that history in the moment of its representing. ... Representation becomes the mode of projecting an implicit past, and instating it as part of present.'[468] The progression of the gendered world therefore hinges upon the development of corporeal capabilities and experiences.

The relentless injections of individual-praxis into the gendered world indicate the indeterminacy and contingency of the formation of feminist politics, given that, as Sartre argues, the female body as 'lived cannot be named without being reinvented. One will be changed by the Other, discourse and lived experience.'[469] The reinvention and interconnection of women in feminist politics can be sensed when we look into how affirmative actions, like gender quotas, are adopted in addition to the demand for gender equality; or the well-being of one gender cannot be advanced independent of the other gender, as in the case of paternity leave and pay for both mothers and fathers. These examples demonstrate that the figurative encounters between female bodies, discursive imperatives, and other materiality would always invite reflections on the existing practices and systems. Within which, forces of contestation can be accumulated in due course and calling the established cultural matrix into question, as to, for instance, re-signify the conception of 'gender equality' and its practicality in

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[467] William Connolly, 'A World of Becoming,' in Alan Finlayson (ed.*), Democracy and Pluralism: the Political Thought of William E. Connolly* (Routledge, 2010), p. 232. Also see William James, *A Pluralist Universe* (Biblio Bazaar, 1909).

[468] Butler, 1987, p. 172.

[469] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert, 1821-1857*, Volume 1, (trans.) Carol Cosman (The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 28.

corresponding to the situation in question. The intensity and complexity of human relations and engagements with the world and each other, as illustrated above via different scenarios, brings to light that 'women', as a historically congealed social category, continues to exist in an open-ended process of becoming. 'In a world of becoming,' as Connolly articulates, 'the emergence of new formations is irreducible to patterns of efficient causality, purposive time, simple probability, or long cycles of recurrence.'[470] The contrast between the contemporary cases of the SlutWalk and the controversy around the wearing of the Islamic Burka effectively demonstrates how the understanding of sexual liberation, as one of the core themes in feminist movements, is a phenomenon of becoming: both cases can be read as targeting the relation between women and their ways of clothing, implicitly or explicitly, in connection with the issue of 'male gaze'. However, the upholding of sexual liberation does not and cannot provide a decisive answer or unifying consensus to that specific relation, considering the different backgrounds of each story. Instead, the interconnectivities that embodied in those cases generate respective-yet-relevant arguments to reconfigure the substance of sexual liberation, while inviting future corporeal registers to dismantle the current (re)construction, as the idea of the symbolic mother suggests.

Acknowledging the serial interconnectivity and the notion of 'becoming', the democratisation of feminist politics hinges upon political measures which acclimatise the plurality of discursive embodiments and reconcile their occasionally contradictory existences. That is, a democratic feminist politics must be aware of the antagonistic dimension of each politicisation, which is developed upon past injuries,

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[470] Connolly, 2010, p. 225.

disagreements or unresolved injustices, alongside its rational arguments and rhetoric. For instance, Emily Davison, a British militant activist who thrown herself in front of King George V's horse at the Epsom Derby to campaign for women's suffrage; the outrage and reflections on 'rape myth' across India after the death of a young female photojournalist, Jyoti Singh, being violently and sexually assaulted in New Delhi; and Gulnaz, an rape victim whose excruciating experience is conceived as an act of adultery in Afghan and can only avoid jail sentence by marrying her attacker, simply to name a few.[471] Considering the interconnectivity in human relations, people can draw connections and similarities between their individual experiences and those sufferings and, subsequently, finding causes and forming reasons to act on those sufferers' behalf, as well as theirs. Under such circumstances, the political action and argument have strong poignant attachments and can be construed as aspire to disrupt and reconfigure the institutionalized cultural imperatives or asymmetric social relations. Furthermore, the political relationships that women developed from their personal experiences with the same exemplary case (or, the symbolic mother) can be greatly diverged in corresponds to individual-praxis. The confrontational and pluralist aspects of politicisation denote different types of unjustifiable afflictions, which the sufferers are fighting to expose, or different understandings of issues, which the bearers are struggling to voice them to the world.

Following on from the above, the remitting politicisations, with contingency and indeterminacy at the core of action, cannot be easily subsumed by the appeal to

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[471] See Sally Nancarrow, 'Emily Davison: Votes for women's Derby Day 'martyr',' *BBC News*, 01/06/2013 < http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-22725094>; Tim Castle, "'We want the world to know her real name": Father names India gang rape victim,' *National Post*, 05/01/2013 < http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/01/05/we-want-the-world-to-know-her-real-name-father-names-india-gang-rape-victim/>; and Nick Paton Walsh and Masoud Popalza, 'Afghan woman's choice: 12 years in jail or marry her rapist and risk death,' *CNN*, 22/11/2011 <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/11/22/world/asia/afghanistan-rape/>.

rationality or the installation of universal consensus. The political attempt to locate universal agreement would potentially deny the access to possible changes and reconfigurations in the future and, accordingly, the realisation of pluralism. That is to say, as the political image of an issue in question is fixated on rationality and universality, the capability of political imagination will gradually become repressed by that single objective, than being practiced as a way to discover the otherness within the self. Moreover, the emphasis on consensual agreement will easily wither the political energy on pursuing a somewhat unsustainable goal, which would aggravate the resentment and aggression between the oppositional parties, instead of tackling and responding to the specific issue in hand. Take the example of paternity leave/pay: the patriarchal division of labour places the childcare duty primarily in the hand of mother and thus provides a rather constricted interpretation of the parents-children relationship, such as the conventional image of 'working father, caring mother' and 'housewife'. Although many countries, like Britain, Sweden, and Canada, allow both mother and father to share paternity leaves, the social stigma and career concerns continue to affect general perceptions and imaginations about gender roles.[472] It is not a universal consensus about the ideal gender division of labour or the parental archetype in an age of sexual liberation that fathers, who wish to be the caregiver, and mothers, who choose to return to workplaces, intend to contend or defend, when they politicise their discursive embodiments. Instead, those parents are fighting for a way to project their alternative choices into the public's imagination of

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[472] See Emily Dugan and Susie Mesure, 'Dads fear social stigma of staying at home,' The Independent, 06/01/2013 < http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/dads-fear-the-social-stigma-of-staying-at-home-8439821.html>; Martin Williams, '40% of fathers do not take paternity leave,' The Guardian, 07/01/2013 < http://careers.theguardian.com/fathers-choose-not-to-take-paternity-leave>. For researches in the listed countries, see Vanessa Long, 'Statutory Parental Leave and Pay in the UK: Stereotypes and Discrimination, *The Equal Rights Review*, 2012:9; Anders Chronholm. 'Fathers' Experience of Shared Parental Leave in Sweden,' *Rechrches sociologiques et anthropologiques*, 2007:38(2); Katherine Marshall, 'Fathers' use of paid parental leave,' *Perspective on Labour and Income*, 2008:9(6).

contemporary family life, and are looking for socio-political mechanisms, which can enable their projections than marginalize their choice. In short, they are trying to be part of a socio-political imagination than the definition of it.

The agonistic pluralism, which is articulated by Connolly, can be effective and illustrative in capturing the perpetuated inter-connective and contingent political resistance that is embedded in the progression of democracy. 'We inhabit in a world of becoming composed of heterogeneous force-fields; and we also participate in two registers of temporal experience, each of which can help us to get bearings in such a world', as he claims.[473] Such statement indicates that the making of our existence is neither a one-person job nor a linear creation in the world. Rather, the heterogeneous materiality, discourses and human interactions indicate a continuation of otherness in the constitution of self, as the lived body must go through series trainings to understand the operation of initial corporeal motions and capabilities, which discussed in the previous chapter. The engagement with other existential forces in the mobilisation of the self inserts a horizontal dimension of interaction to the outwardly linear events of time. 'We participate, rather, in a world of becoming in a universe set on multiple zones of temporality, with each temporal force-field periodically encountering others as outside forces,' as Connolly continue to point out, 'and the whole universe open to an uncertain degree.'[474] On the one hand, as we move in and out of other temporal existences in our daily activities, a certain degree of friction can be anticipated to rise in the co-development and co-existence of the Self and the Other. On the other hand, the relational boundary of the Self may be putted through reflection and restructuring, while individuals are navigating themselves through the

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[473] Connolly, 2011, p. 5.
[474] Ibid, p. 7.

dissonance between, for example, the old and the new, the past and the future, and the collective and the individual.

The character of 'otherness inside individuality', which is depicted above, pervades not only the construction of the individual self but also the development of collective life. The political arena, as a significant tier of their collective life, receives its force of becoming from the different perceptions and relations of the communal structures, practices, and visions that individuals, who live in the same community, have. That is, the institutionalised social and material settings like gender, urban/rural, and classes put individuals in different subject positions, in which the available options and resources are varied from one person to the other. Subsequently, the discrepant social ranks and accesses among individuals provide distinct standpoints to sense and consider the same object/issue from different, and sometimes conflictual, angles. For instance, a Christian and a secularist may have contrary opinions regarding the importance of religious education in schools. By putting forward their respective perceptions and claims in public and to the governing body, they intentionally defy the hegemonic common-praxis that their shared life experiences are built upon. Additionally, the possibility of politicisation can emerge from the interactions between different force-fields of the existential world. In the practice of surrogacy, for example, the material advance of medical technology has been causing legal debates challenging the traditional moral codes and social discourses. Cultivated from the shared (and sometimes accidental) interactions between human estate and nonhuman processes, each individual/party in above examples project respective visions and understandings of their communal life and articulate political frontiers to bolster their political imaginations of the community.

Each articulatory practice of communal imagination, from a discursive perspective, implies a political endeavour to install a hegemonic closure, which is constructed upon varying degree of particularity and exclusion. The hegemony here, to draw on Ernesto Laclau, refers to when that 'one difference, without ceasing to be a particular difference, assumes the representation of an incommensurable totality. In that way, its body is split between the particularity which it still is and the more universal signification of which it is the bearer.'[475] The discrepancy between the posed totality and its innate particularity provides a crucial ground for other articulatory practices to come in and reconfigure the political frontier that current hegemonic closure has constructed, via the utilisation of differential and equivalential logics. Since no political frontier is fundamentally decisive in defining the communal imagination, democracy needs a political ethos that is attentive to the built-in power struggle and political mechanisms that can reconcile the accompanied antagonism between different articulatory practices. In particular, the unremitting politicisation of different discursive embodiments denotes a notion of critique, which demands the members and institutions of political community to reflect on the existing practices and possibilities available to them. If such a political collection of individuals is committed to democracy, its 'institutional conditions must be devised that highlight the contingently hegemonic character of the rules, procedures, and power of these institutions in order to encourage conflict over the basis of social order, while also providing sufficient commonality that these conflicts do not destroy the conditions necessary to exert democratic influence over our ongoing and contingent constitution as subject.'[476] The substantiation of democracy, therefore, necessitates a deep-seated

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[475] Laclau, 2005, p. 70.
[476] Ed Wingenbach, *Institutionalizing Agonistic democracy: Post-Foundationalism and Political Liberalism* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), p. 35.

collaboration between institutional commitments and political actions, to avoid the ossification of political arena.

To acknowledge the indeterminate and contingent process of 'becoming' in democracy, Connolly depicts an agonistic pluralist ethos that prioritises pluralisation over pluralism. He suspects the emphasis on pluralism itself will lead to a hegemonic closure of democratic imagination, which endangers the foundation of democracy as such concluding installation may 'help to conceal or marginalize injuries and limits in need of political engagement.'[477] Such potential hegemonic closure in conventional imagination of pluralism is because that, according to Connolly, it habitually construes pluralism 'as an achievement to be protected, while the eruption of new drives to *pluralization* are often represented as perils to this achievement.'[478] To put it differently, the concern over political eruptions in conventional pluralism paradoxically calls a halt to further pluralisation. As such, the pluralist imagination conceives the established framework of conflict resolution constituted from past struggles as a paradigm and prefers further epidemics to be dealt with within that. Such a notion of pluralism will gradually metamorphose the public arena into a conservative inertia, in which new configurations of differential and equivalential logics cannot be mobilised in response to new discursive experiences. From which, 'the process of subject formation of citizens', as Wingenbach points out, becomes a 'locus of conflict' because of 'the failure to respect those manifestations of difference that conflict with one's own identity' on the one hand; and on the other hand, 'a refusal to permit the emergence of new identities that disrupt the arrangement of stable

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[477] Connolly, 1995, p. xiii.
[478] Ibid, p. xiv.

tolerance that allows peaceful pluralism to persist.'[479] The probable ossification of a democratic agenda implied in conventional pluralism thus calls forward reflections on how to 'refashion the pluralist imagination itself'.[480]

The prioritisation of pluralisation, from Connolly's perspective, offers a way to envisage a democratic ethos that can evaluate 'the desirability of governance through democratic means with a corollary politics of democratic disturbance through which any particular pattern of previous settlements might tossed up for grabs again.'[481] In contrast with the conventional perception of pluralism, his reading of democratic pluralism stipulates a specific attendance to the locus of conflicts that caused by the variety of existential differences, namely the process of pluralisation, than focus on the objective fact of the existences of different value systems and practices in the world. From which, pluralisation becomes the crucial mechanism in connecting politicised disturbance and the pluralist imagination, in which active engagements in power struggles within public forum are encouraged and preconceived resolutions are dismissed, under the general frame of democratic governance. His repudiation of existing settlements is a scholarly endeavour to preserve contestability within political systems, in order to apprehend the rapid material and visceral developments of contemporary democracy. That is, the established arrangements from previous contestations should not impose themselves as a paradigmatic answer, in a way that either monopolises the formats of future solutions for the recurring political disturbances, or suppresses the recurrence itself. It is not saying that precedents are completely abandoned when new political disturbances happen, or no boundary whatsoever is pitted upon the direction of political platform. Rather, political

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[479] Wingenbach, 2011, p. 64.
[480] Connolly, 1995, p. xiii.
[481] Ibid, p. 154.

disturbances are valued as a democratic indication in the process of pluralisation, in a sense that they aim to redress certain socio-political issues, which are not yet being attended to in previous settlements, or to voice new visions while 'supporting the civic conditions of common governance.'[482]

Following the above, political disturbances can democratise the pluralist imagination of a society, in a way that any concerned civic registers are welcome to enrol in the political platform, as to project new perspectives or contest existing political frontiers, than abiding by the conformity of existing definitions of pluralism. The openness and indeterminacy that embraced here 'increase[s] the number of positive identities and changes the tone of contention and collaboration between constituencies', by disrupting dogmatic identities and rejecting hegemonic political closures.[483] However, the democratic pluralisation from political disturbances, as signalled by Connolly's words above, cannot operate effectively without civic desire of democratic governance. While allowing the contending social differences to manifest their diverse visions in the political realm, what is the potential adhesive that attaches them to the civic practice of common governance? As the politics of becoming 'emerges out of historically specific suffering, previously untapped energies, and emerging lines of possibility eluding the attention of dominant constituencies,' what political relationship can be cultivated between the established registers and under-represented, or even, unrecognised voices within democratic framework? With visceral attachments to political disturbances, what mechanisms can forestall a feeling of resentment being incited in the politicisation of discursive embodiments? Or, in short, under what civic conditions that the political forum is a existential space for agonistic

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[482] William Connolly, *Pluralism* (Duke University Press, 2005), p. 65.
[483] Connolly, 1995, p. 98.

interlocutors, than for antagonistic adversaries? Taking the uncertainty of pluralist imagination and the interconnectivity of human relations into account, a democracy with deep pluralism that envisaged by Connolly should have political devices of 'critical responsiveness', 'agonistic respect', and obliquely alluding to, rhizomatic assemblages in place. It is an agonistic engagement in democratic contestations being advocated here. I will explore the listed political mechanisms that Connolly has articulated for the democratic installation of pluralisation and cultivation of an agonistic ethos in the next section.

5. AGONISTIC PLURALISATION OF FEMINIST POLITICS

In articulating a pluralist imagination, Connolly underpins the interconnectivity and active tension of different politicisations as the core strengths of agonistic democratic ethos. In particular, he argues that the 'generosity and forbearance between interdependent and contending identities is not anchored in the fictive ground of a transcendental command or universal reason', but 'from the care for the protean diversity of life and from critical responsiveness to new drives to pluralization.'[484] Such claims can be understood as an upfront renouncement to political neutrality and universality, in a way that the sustainability of political pluralisation is relied on the active participation in the ongoing constructions of political frontiers, than distancing from any power plays. That is, to understand how lived bodies engage in the existential world or how discursive embodiments influence respective subject positions. The ethics of a pluralist imagination does not need to orientate itself from a universal figure of morality or a transcendental imperative, as if to obtain a sense of purity or sanctity for our political claims or decisions. Furthermore, the fixation with

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[484] Ibid, p. 93.

'morality and normality weigh in heavily on the side of being, stasis, and stability without acknowledging how moral scales are tipped.'[485] As moral scales or political transcendence continue to remain unquestioned and undisturbed, the deep-seated differences between the parties in question cannot be deliberated or even be detected, which may seriously undermine the existing democratic framework. To avert the silencing of old fears or suppressed differences, Connolly suggests critical responsiveness and agonistic respect, with assistance from the rhizomatic forms of assemblage, are the vital mechanisms for a democratic ethos to cultivate appreciation, generosity and forbearance between agonistic interlocutors.

In an initial comparison, Connolly indicates that 'critical responsiveness' can be construed as 'an ethical relation a privileged constituency establishes with culturally devalued constituencies striving to enact new identities'; and meanwhile, 'agonistic respect' is conceived by him as 'a relation between two contending constituencies, each of which has gained a fair amount of recognition and power in the existing order.'[486] A certain degree of hierarchy may be discerned between these two distinctive-yet-connected political mechanisms: as both devices are aim to facilitate agonistic pluralism, it can be argued that agonistic respect targets the political relationship between competing interlocutors, while critical responsiveness constitutes the general atmosphere of political forum. More specifically, agonistic respect can be cultivated, when an established democracy recognises the equal weight of each politicisation and provides open access for individuals to issue their respective voices. In other words, the contending parties in question can move away

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[485] William Connolly, 'Suffering, Justice, and the Politics of Becoming,' in David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro (ed.), *Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 137.
[486] Connolly, 1995, p. 235, note 40.

from the desire of mutual destruction to develop a reciprocated understanding, given that their differences are legitimised and appropriate channels to common resources are granted. Under such circumstances, democratic participants 'absorb the agony of having elements of their own faith called into question by others, and they fold agonistic contestation of others into the respect that they convey toward them.'[487] In the meantime, agonistic respect demonstrates a institutional commitment, as Wingenbach points out, to 'call attention to this impulse [of labelling difference as otherness] and directs it away from antagonism and toward adversarial esteem.'[488]

Derived from the agonistic respect between individuals, a general role of critical responsiveness 'pertains to the ethical attitude of an entrenched constituency towards oppressed, undervalued, or unrecognized constituencies (i.e., constituencies currently under the threshold of legitimate recognition).'[489] That is to say, instead of concentrating on human relations, critical responsiveness focuses on the interaction between human estates and nonhuman processes, in a sense that it intends to unearth the systematic injustice/suppression that is embedded in present set of political structures and practices. The differentiation of human and ethical relations, which demarcates agonistic respect and critical responsiveness, may be illustrated by the example of feminist politics: it can be suggested that a sense of agonistic respect between women, who have, for instance, different identities, sexual orientations, and nationalities, is being cultivated in accordance with the progression of several waves of feminist movements. Through the extensive and difficult fights for justice and rights, individual women gradually come to apprehend the equal evaluation of their

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[487] Connolly, 2005, p. 123.
[488] Wingenbach, 2011, p. 66.
[489] Kristen Deede Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism: Beyond Tolerance and Difference* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 105.

differences and opinions and, subsequently, develop a reciprocal appreciation towards the choices that each others made. Such positive reception, in my opinion, can be perceived as manifested in the idea of the symbolic mother, whose figurative authority is anchored in the collection of symbolic debt that each woman has equally paid as a token of womanhood. As agonistic respect steadily feedbacks to the existential world, the practice of critical responsiveness in feminist politics may become increasingly evident, as women do not need to justify their sexual difference and can move across wider discursive spectrum to formulate new alliances and address previously untold stories.

Following on from the above, a rhizomatic style of political engagement may be more effective in exploring the multifarious lines of temporal coalition, as to consolidate the democratic practice of critical responsiveness. 'A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power and circumstances relative to the arts, science and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural and cognitive', as in the imagery helpfully depicted by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.[490] In connection with social interconnectivity and contingency, such forms of assemblage, as Connolly argues, 'would not take the form of a general consensus, in which each constituency supports the programs in question for the same reasons as the others. Nor would it reflect the will of a nation, organized around a unified language, ethnicity, race, or religion. Nor would it amount to a simple coalition of interests.'[491] Instead, rhizomatic assemblages are an overlapping, multifaceted network, in which different individuals can find themselves to stand in

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[490] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (trans.) Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 6-7. Also see Connolly, 1995.
[491] Connolly, 1995, p. 95.

separation and unity with the others at the same time, without the necessity of subscribing themselves to a single entity. Following that, reciprocal generosity and forbearance are made possible with the cultivation of agonistic respect and critical responsiveness.

CONCLUSION

A Possible Imagination of Political Womanhood

'I would have asked: Who's going to help her?
Who's going to fight for what she's too frightened to fight for on her own?
How does a woman stand up and find her voice?'

- Grace Middleton, 'the Village', BBC

This is a quote that spoken by a fictional character of farmer's wife, Grace Middleton, in the BBC period drama, 'the Village', which sets in the early twentieth century, when she was asked by a male politician what questions would she have putted forward in front of the public in his election campaign meeting, if she had the courage to stand up and speak out. The 'she' in the quote that Grace Middleton intends to speak for is a female villager, Agnes, who was dismissed by the management level of a sweatshop factory, after mentioning that the poor working conditions may worsen her already-ill health. Regardless the contextual specification, the above lines can be generalised as concerning female empowerment and authority, the politicisation of female experiences, and political sisterhood. I believe those concerns are still valuable and pressing for continuous reflections in contemporary democratic societies, when sexual differences remain to be a disreputable source of social bias and injustice and manifesting themselves, sometimes violently and disruptively, across public and private spheres. Meanwhile, with gender discrimination and inequality can take on different formats in daily practices and discourses throughout human history , it is crucial for feminist politics, as a collective and public forum for challenging the asymmetric power relation between the sexes, to be attentive and open to the existential plurality that connoted in the term, 'women'.

In the introductory chapter, I pointed out the heterogeneity among women makes the conceptual articulation of 'women' a political project. Such a conceptual project is worthy of exploration because the continuing existence of sexual discriminations and the unbalanced power relationship of gender hierarchy. In other words, a systematic theorisation of gender is required to make sexual injustices and marginalisation intelligible. To theorise the reciprocal relationship between the understanding of 'women' and the pluralisation of feminist politics, this thesis looked into the conceptions of gender seriality, phenomenological lived body, reiterations and reconfigurations between female corporeality and gender sturctures, politicising female embodiments, and agonistic ethos respectively in each chapter. Here, I will focus on how those individual constituents combine to give an overall account of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment and how such a specific understanding contribute to Young's scholarship and to feminist literatures on the theorisation of feminist politics.

To disconnect the construction of 'women' from a essentialist gender identity, Chapter One introduced Iris M. Young's preliminary development of gender seriality. She drawn on Jean-Paul Sartre's differentiation between social group and social series and positions 'gender' as a form of serial relationship between individuals, in which members are unified passively by the objects their actions are oriented around and/or by the objectified results of the material effects of the actions of the others. Following this, the term 'women' signifies a collection of individuals who are similarly situated in a structural relation to material objects as they have been produced and organised by a prior history, which carries the material necessities of past experiences and discursive practices. The interaction between social structures and the materiality

subsequently raises questions about the role of female corporeality. The traditional Cartesian mind/body dualism is inadequate in capturing how historically-congealed materiality constraints human actions and how social structures embedded discursive imprints of personal projects, as the hierarchical relationship constructed in the dualism disconnects the body from the environment it is in. Therefore, Chapter Two argued a phenomenological concept of the lived body is suitable for the task in hand.

Drawing on Maurice Meleau-Ponty, the corporeality is conceived as our way of being-in-the-world, which is a metaphorical carrier encultured with the discursive meanings of the world. Our bodily features have certain feeling capacities and functions to make us capable of strengths movements in relation to the specific environment around us. In other words, there is a presumed mastery equipped in the lived body. Owing to this capability, the body can thus be trained in a way that the individual body is enabled and constrained at the same time by learning a set of already-there skills to (re)enact particular actions under demonstrated circumstances. The training of the body entails a process of repetition and the development of subjectivity. In the context of gendering, each gender reiteration is essentially an imitation, rather than a perfect performance of original authorship. Under such circumstances, the passiveness (imitation) and activeness (subjectification) both come into play and the possibility of transgressing hegemonic gender practices becomes possible. The examination of the relational interplay in the reiteration and reconfiguration of gender is then the core of Chapter Three.

The abilities to be trained and to retrain of a lived body pinpoint the notion of indeterminacy in gender performances. As gender training cannot prepare the

individuals for every scenarios, individual agency reveals its significance in such a situation: it helps the individuals to be able to respond to the unexpected or to translate strangeness into something familiar. In short, it is a demonstration and awareness of individual ability of 'I-can'. The existence of individual agency thus poses as an element of uncertainty to hegemonic gender practices, as those gender reiterations would always risk the emergence of contingent resistance and the potential resignification in the re-enactments. From this, it provides insights into why the female body is a site of politics and it is the objective of Chapter Four and Five to explore the politicisation of women's embodiments.

In Chapter Four, I suggested the individual politicisations of female corporeality can help to revalue the currency of female authority and, more importantly, to cultivate the historically underappreciated public relationship between women. The development of female bond, in turn, figuratively legitimises and facilitates the future actions of individual women and thus the progression of feminist politics. The idea of the symbolic mother, which proposed by Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, is integrated in the politicisation of female embodiments. The cultivation of the authority of such a figurative maternal symbol is considered as a feminist practice to rework and substantiate female relationship via free practices of political judgement and imagination. By integrating the idea of the symbolic mother with agonistic ethos, a feminist politics of discursive embodiment is completed as a political operation prioritises the exposure of hegemonic articulation over the search of rationality or consensus. The function of agonistic ethos is it recognise the impossibility to terminate political conflicts or to eliminate power relations from democratic framework. As feminist politics is willing to place significance on political

contestation, the free practices of female authority can be a form of pluralisation and to investigate the disparity among women. Under such circumstances, women's social connections are substantiated, by enhancing the different experiences of constituency, heightening awareness of the relational characters of female identity, and folding agonistic respect into the conflicts between contending politicisation of womanhood.

Of course, there are plenty literatures tackles the question of 'what constitutes the concept of "women"' or enriching the intellectual understanding of feminist politics. However, it is seldom to see an academic literature devoted to sketch out the intertwined relationship between those two issues and to develop a profound model from such exploration. In particular, the reciprocal relationship between the conceptualisation of women as an intelligible collective and the (expected) function of feminist politics is not often intensively discussed. It is this weak link in feminist works that the feminist politics of discursive embodiment that putted forth in this thesis can provide certain insights into. The following sections provide more detailed reviews the arguments made in each chapter and explore possible future directions of the research.

1. From a Embodied Woman to a Discursive Womanhood

1a. Female Bodies as Lived in Gender Seriality

Identifying the underdeveloped connection between the constitution of women and feminist politics, the thesis began the articulation of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment by introducing Iris M. Young's initial development of gender seriality. As indicated in Chapter One, Young drawn on Jean-Paul Sartre's distinction of social series and social group to reconceptualise the notion of gender, in order to avoid the

pitfalls of biological determinism and gender essentialism. Instead of marked by a self-conscious grouping and joined objectives that define the member relationship of a social group, a social series is characterised passively by the existing practical-inert reality and the anonymous membership, as the relationship between the social existences within a series is originated from the unintentional convergence of individual actions and objects around those engagements. Under such circumstances, 'women' is construed not as a social group that defined by a logic of commonality or a shared identity, but signifies a cluster of individuals who happen to be situated in a series of similar positions in gender structures.

Following above, the theoretical reconfiguration of gender as a form of social seriality helpfully shifts the intellectual pursue from locating the fixed identity or definite features of gender, to recognise the ambiguous boundary of womanhood. To be precise, the 'ambiguity' of women here denotes the idea that the construction of women is in a constitutive tension between openness and closure and hence should be a recurrent issue of feminist politics. As the advocators of the politics of difference clearly devoted to argue, the development of individual identity is not entirely controlled by a single factor, but resulted from the interaction of various social factors and diversified personal conditions, such as sexual orientation, social class, and professional occupations. The same situation also applies to the formation of women. With such understanding, it is foreseeable and reasonable that different, and sometimes conflicting, definitions of womanhood and plural trajectories toward gender issues would pervade the public forum of feminist politics, since individual women cultivate their gender subjectivity and experiences variously. Those politicisations may be conceived as putting forward a (temporal) closure to the issue

in question, however, such closing is always subject to further challenges, i.e. to be re-opened, due to the indeterminate and passivity of gender seriality.

Once the conceptualisation of 'women' is departed from the intellectual chase of defined commonalities, it opens up a space to imagine 'women' in a different light and directs attention to how 'women' are being practiced in heterogeneous forms. As pointed out in Chapter One, Young considers the female body as a significant constituent in the establishment of gender seriality, as it manifests the effects of gender imperatives. Nevertheless, she did not give a meticulous account of how such manifestation takes place or what is the function of the body in connection with the operation of gender hegemony. Also, in the same chapter, I have noted that Young discussed the contribution of the phenomenological conceptualisation of the body as lived in capturing how the corporeality and body modalities incorporate their situatedness in her later feminist works. In particular, she has done a series of phenomenological study on the presentations of female body figures and movements and intimate experiences like pregnancy, which inspire many contemporary scholarly analyses on female corporeality and its situated surroundings. Acknowledging Young's specific investigation into bodily performances in her later intellectual pursue and the absence of such examination of women's body in her conceptualisation of gender seriality, I then dedicated Chapter Two to sketch out the functions of a female body in the progression of the gendered world, by introducing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological representation of the body as lived.

As indicated before, the Cartesian mind/body dualism has been historically dominating the philosophical thinking in Western societies, in which the common

associations of the mind as the symbol of the reason and the corporeality as the representation of emotion-laden materiality are established. Such attribution of different characteristics facilitates a hierarchical relationship between the mind and the body and, consequentially, leads to the significant dismissal of corporeality in the development of Western philosophy. Furthermore, the mind/body dualism contributes to the articulation of gender dimorphism, in which men are groped with the superiority of the mind and women are assigned to the passive body. Such ignorance of corporeality and the contingent ascription of power relations between two sexes have prompted criticisms from contemporary feminists. To understand the full picture of the operation of gender hegemony, it is argued that we not only should pay attention to what have individuals verbalised, but also observe how did each body put forward those verbal utterance as well as what did not presented in bodily acts. "We can only understand the discursive scene of subject constitution in light of these problems of embodiment, social norms and visual signification, and within the temporal modalities of anticipation, desire, fear and the spatial modalities of constraint, support and incitement", as Butler argues.[492]

Recognising the underdevelopment of the role of body in the constitution of gender seriality, I then drawn on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological conception of the lived body to deepen Young's primary account of gender structures. As pointed out in Chapter Two, Merleau-Ponty conceives phenomenological approach as providing an alternative perspective to rise above the binary tension between realism and idealism in Western philosophy. He argues the construction of the objective world in individual bodies cannot be completely separated from lived experiences of the world,

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[492] Judith Butler, 'Response,' Troubling Identities: Reflections on Judith Butler's Philosophy for the Sociology of Education, *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 27:4 (2006), p. 533-534. (529-534)

which obtained through the senses.[493] The body as lived thus indicates an essential sensual structure of its own which the exact context always exceeds and transcends the uses of language and concepts. Under such circumstances, the corporeal body disclose itself as the primary medium and its abilities and senses are the crucial methods to our world-building. In short, our body is our 'being-in-the-world'.

The phenomenological understanding of the body as lived provides significant insights into how does a corporeality become gendered and how does gender imperatives being integrated into a person's existence. I tackled these questions by reflecting on Foucault's depiction of power play in the naturalisation of a gendered body. Departing from a singular depiction of power as dominance and repression, Foucault argues power 'produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.'[494] As the implicit connection between the operation of power and the establishment of knowledge being sketched out, it becomes clear that 'gender' is a hegemonic construction and its normative dictation on the body is contingent. Connecting the productivity of power and the lived body as the materialisation of our being-in-the-world, Young observes the corporeal integration of gender imperatives situates the female body in a state of inhibited contradiction in a series of study of female experiences and bodily comportments. While individuals possess the ability to instantiate transcendence, she argues the collaboration between superiority of men in patriarchal society, the historical denouncement of the female body, and the

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[493] See Merleau-Ponty, 1962.
[494] Foucault, 1991, p. 194.

enculturated male gaze confines women to a immanent situation, in which their capability to create, act, and transcend is restrained.[495]

1b. A Feminist Politics of Discursive Embodiment

However, Merleau-Ponty points out the notion of presumed mastery in the lived body and, from which, I contended the possibility for individual women to politicise their lived corporeal experiences in the last three chapters of the thesis. The existence of the presumed mastery, according to Merleau-Ponty, is located in the senses and ability to move of a body. More specifically, the idea of the 'mastery' refers to the initial abilities of the body which enable it to experience the physical situations around it. Without such primary mastery, it is impossible for the body to acquire sensual experiences or to be able to understand and therefore incorporate moral imperatives and social conventions into individual subjectivity. I coined the process of gendering as a form of training, in which the presumed mastery of the lived body enables the individual subject to become gendered. 'Training' is a term that I borrowed from Merleau-Ponty and it is a constant practice of imitation and reiteration, in which the lived body is instructed to re-enact specific modes of physical/social activity, by recognising the resemblance between past and current situations. Such procedure echoes what Foucault construes as the productivity of power, as the disciplinary force of dominant practices regulates the body to learn to reproduce those hegemonic acts.

On the other hand, the notion of presumed mastery in the lived body also enables individuals to develop their skills and subjectivity. While the body can be trained to

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[495] See Young, 2005.

reiterate similar performances across resembled situations, as I argued in Chapter Three, it is also noted that such reproduction of the same act can vary (to a certain degree) in each recurrence. That is, a gendered individual, who is trained by gender hegemony to develop necessary capabilities and understandings to reiterate gender performances, can utilise those knowledge and skills to improvise. As the corporeal reiteration of gender power can be performed differently within constrained range, the lived body can politicise itself as a corporeal resistance to existed gender apparatus. More importantly, to recall the historical-congealed inhabitation that Young observes in female existences, the individual mastery, which enabled via the process of training, allows women to come to see the possibility of re-negotiating the boundary of 'I-can' and 'I-cannot'. In particular, I argued each variation of gender reiteration in public space can be broadly conceived as invoking the indeterminism and contingency of gender apparatus. To put it differently, the discursive reconfiguration of gender performances from individual women demonstrate how can a woman differentiate herself from the other women, by showing them what 'I-can'.

1c. Agonistic Interlocutors in the Political Forum

As the capability of politicisation in the lived body is outlined, I used Chapter Four and Five to argue the collaboration between a renovated understanding of female authority and an agonistic ethos can facilitate democratic participation and pluralise contemporary feminist politics. In Chapter Four, I introduced Milan Women's Bookstore Collective and its idea of 'the symbolic mother'. The Italian feminist group argues the collective and public absence of female connections in human history. That is: in connection with the typical separation of public/private spheres and the traditional division of labour between men and women (e.g. men are breadwinners

and women are homemakers), women are somewhat invisible in human history and female interactions are missing from the public eye, since a woman's social existence cannot be constructed without the mediation of men. What is being identified in the undervaluation of female bodily experiences and the absence of female connections, as previous chapters have demonstrated, is an asymmetric power relation between the different sexes. Such acknowledgement prompts MWBC to reflect on the role of authority in feminist politics and an idea of 'the symbolic mother' is proposed, to counterbalance the patriarchal system.

The idea of the symbolic mother signifies a feminist political practice of individual freedom, and the authority of such maternal figure is cultivated from both the individual and collective efforts. On the one hand, the realisation of female freedom relies on individual women to willingly put forward her desire/intention/difference in front of the public eye. Without individual participation, the term, 'female freedom', would simply be an empty phrase. On the other hand, while any women can be authorised to speak up for womanhood, she must recognise that her legitimacy and capability of exercising her freedom is not a mere demonstration of individual courage, but a result of collective investments. As history is a long continuum, there are women before me, whose actions and words are exemplary and constituting free platform for future generations to stand upon, and there will be other women who may call upon my practices of 'I-can' as an authorisation of their politicisations.

In an ideal situation, the different exercises of female freedom, which authorised by the symbolic mother, would stand on an equal footing, in a sense that my way of being a woman is neither superior nor inferior to other women's, as our freedom is

guaranteed by the same source of female authority. Nevertheless, such sameness of women can be undermined by ineradicable factors and posing obstructions to the development of female connections. Such disparity inevitably taints the politicisation of different types of female transgression and implicitly reveals the existence of an inherent power struggle, which cannot be completely eradicated by democratic procedures or rational deliberations. If that's the case, how a woman's practices of female freedom cab avoid becoming a hegemonic construction? What political relationship can be envisaged under the Symbolic Mother? I argued an agonistic one in this thesis.

Instead of focus on rationality or consensus, an agonistic political ethos prioritise the exposure of hegemonic articulation, since such political ethos recognises that it is impossible to put an end to political conflicts, or to exclude power relations from democratic politics. It is not to say that rational deliberation no longer important, but drawing attentions to the significance of political disturbance and disruption. For the feminist practice of freedom to be an operative consensus among women, feminist politics shouldn't be contented with a stabilised politicisation, since the present political construction may be articulated with cost of other voices. As feminist politics is willing to place significance on political contestation, the free practice of female authority can finally be a form of pluralisation and to investigate the disparity among women, whose social connections are substantiated, by enhancing the different experiences of constituency, heightening awareness of the relational characters of female identity, and folding agonistic respect into conflicts between contending politicisations of womanhood.

2. Reflections and Looking Ahead

The objective of this thesis is to contribute to the political understanding of the plurality of women in the context of politics of difference. In contemporary democratic society, the gender issue has became rather fragmented and incidental, in corresponds to the problematisation of an essentialist depiction of 'women' and the rapid change of general social/political/economic situation between different social groups. However, the notions of 'gender' and 'women' continue to be the crucial concepts for us to understand social disparity and injustice. Meanwhile, with the helps of social media, an individual transformation of gender act or a local feminist movement can become globalised in a short period of time. Such immediacy and global response can also challenge the adequacy and tolerance of those particular constructions of political womanhood. These phenomena indicate the need for a model of feminist politics that can take the heterogeneity of its members into account and allows and facilitates the divergent debates between divergent interlocutors.

The theoretical articulation of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment that developed in this thesis is an exact response to the above concern. And, it provides a consistent reflection from individual female corporeality, the social collective of women, and political practices of womanhood. Since the main focus of this thesis is theoretical, it will be worth to apply the model of a feminist politics of discursive embodiment in future research to examine contemporary feminist political practices in different contexts. The application of such mode of feminist politics, on the one hand, may offer a refreshing perspective into the potential dilemma that feminist activists faced. On the other hand, the explanatory power of this conceptual analysis can be examined.

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