RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Body and Gender Identity: Arena of the Feminist Freedom Struggle

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Abstract

This study seeks, as far as possible and in its way, to provide a theoretical analysis of the idea that the body constitutes a fundamental site for the exercise of power, which is exploited by patriarchal authority (the state and society) to control it, particularly the female body. The body, by its nature, is an individual and intimate entity, not merely an anonymous display to be accepted as it is. It is shaped, influenced, and controlled by external forces that limit its capacity for action and resistance. The findings indicate that liberating the body from patriarchal constraints and recognising the diversity of gender identities are not marginal demands within feminist thought; instead, they represent an ongoing struggle affirming feminism's pursuit of a world in which women and all individuals with oppressed bodies and gender identities assert their existence and value in society. In light of these findings, the study recommends deepening critical academic research alongside fostering societal dialogue, particularly in the current era of digitalisation.

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1. Introduction

Feminism has been shaped by numerous movements and intellectual contributions that have sought to challenge gender inequality. It encompasses every theoretical or practical effort aimed at revising, questioning, criticising, or reforming a prevailing system within the social structure to affirm the presence of women and their active participation in the renewal and transformation of society.

Within the context of the global feminist movement, the question of the body constitutes a central and dynamic axis across various feminist waves. This evolution has generated critical inquiries into the intersection of bodily politics and cultural representation. Scholars in feminist discourse concur that the body is a primary site for the exercise of power and that experiences associated with the body are both personal and political. Feminism seeks to liberate women's bodies from societal and cultural constraints, enabling them to reclaim autonomy over their bodies and their lives.

The global feminist movement has witnessed, across four main waves, significant progress that has facilitated the broadening of its scope to encompass a diverse range of issues affecting women and society at large. These waves can be outlined as follows:

First wave: This wave focused on women's rights to education, employment, and political participation. Implicitly, it also challenged the patriarchal authority exerting control over women's bodies. This period laid the foundation for subsequent waves by questioning societal norms that restricted women's roles and autonomy.

Second wave: This wave brought reproductive rights to the forefront, witnessing the emergence of issues such as family planning and abortion as part of the feminist struggle. This highlights the existence of constraints on women's autonomy and their ability to control their bodies within a system that embodies and idealises their physical forms for male consumption.

Third wave: The third wave expanded its focus to address female genital mutilation, sexual violence, and the challenge to traditional notions of femininity and beauty. It emphasises the need to dismantle societal norms that define and control women's bodies, advocating for a broader understanding of sex and identity.

Fourth wave: This wave broadened the discourse to include gender identity issues, the rights of transgender individuals, and the emphasis on resisting sexism and promoting inclusivity. It employs bodily politics as a tool for protest and empowerment.

Throughout history, feminists have confronted challenges and issues related to their bodies, regardless of whether these concerns were explicitly articulated. The body stands at the core of feminist theorising, functioning as a site of resistance and self-expression. It is not politically neutral but is deeply implicated in politics, shaped by diffuse and often unseen power relations, which complicates efforts to resist or redefine gender roles and identities. Consequently, bodily experiences are worthy of study and analysis.

Feminism seeks to understand the mechanisms of measuring and perceiving the body, independent of societal constraints and deeply entrenched norms that often define and interpret women's bodies primarily through biological processes. Such perspectives risk producing a narrow and reductionist view of femininity that overlooks the complexity of women's experiences and identities. This raises the question of how gender discourse seeks to achieve dominance over the human body. This aim is realised through granting gender an absolute authority over biological sex. By emphasising the freedom to act upon the body, including options for transformation, substitution, and fluctuation in attributes and appearances, this represents the first step in a sequence of measures adopted by this approach to achieve its desired outcome of challenging any predetermined definition of the body. The subsequent step lies in ensuring the availability of the resources necessary to accomplish this aim, namely, the erasure of structural distinctions between masculinity and femininity. In this way, the capacity to act independently upon the body transcends the mere will to challenge the body's constraints, extending beyond the individual's own physical and cultural limitations to include the social and moral demands imposed upon them.

Some contend that there is an immediate and automatic transition from the initial inclination (the deification tendency) towards the academic and professional pursuits made possible by surgical clinics and medical laboratories. This reflects a profound reliance on medical advancements in the fields of pregnancy and reproduction, which constitute an existential concern for gender discourse. This transition is characterised by the ability to regulate bodily changes, governed by an individual's psychological and physiological responses.

Thus, the objective of gender liberation movements is to secure recognition and publicity for this cause, in addition to establishing an academic and cultural presence. This raises the following questions: To what extent can the body be considered a tool for resistance and self-expression, and how does gender hegemony manifest in the context of debates on the body from a feminist perspective?

An analytical method has been adopted to examine the strategies employed by feminists to promote equality and provide support to marginalised groups within societies affected by gender discrimination, as well as to understand the processes involved in the formation of social identity.

2. The Body: Identity Struggle and Freedom of Expression

The body, as an entity encompassing both pleasure and suffering, has consistently been a subject of human interest and has undergone extensive scientific research and analysis. It serves as a domain of desires, a stage for violence and conflict, and the nucleus of numerous contentious debates. The discourse surrounding bodily autonomy constitutes one of the most controversial topics within both the Arab and Western intellectual spheres, where moral, social, and religious dimensions intersect. The dialogue among scholars and intellectuals

oscillates between adhering to cultural and religious traditions and embracing contemporary concepts of individual autonomy.

In the Arab context, the discourse among intellectuals continues regarding the extent to which bodily autonomy can be viewed as a novel concept rooted in Western ideologies or as being compatible with religious, social, and cultural principles. Many authors associate the body with the principles of honour and religious sanctity. Mohamed Arkoun posits that, within Arab civilisation, the body is regulated by religious and societal forces, asserting that any attempt to liberate it constitutes a declaration of cultural and religious conflict. Conversely, Nawal El Saadawi emphasises the necessity of liberating the body, particularly in the context of women's rights, criticising the patriarchal hegemony that imposes strict constraints on women's physical existence.

Similarly, Taha Abderrahmane contends that the call for bodily liberation in the Arab world reflects the importation of Western concepts that conflict with Islamic principles. In contrast, the Western world has witnessed a significant transformation in the concept of bodily autonomy over the centuries, beginning with Enlightenment philosophies that defended the individual's authority over their own body and culminating in postmodern thought, which addressed issues of sexual rights and gender identity. Michel Foucault provided an advanced analysis of how power interacts with physical existence, indicating that liberating the body goes beyond merely easing societal restrictions to include emancipation from various forms of power exerted by different institutions. Furthermore, Simone de Beauvoir articulated a progressive perspective on the liberation of the female body, affirming that it is the victim of the entrenched patriarchal authority that has sought to exert control over it.

With the modern trends that have taken root since the 1990s, recognising sexual rights as an integral part of human rights and with the growing emphasis on the protection of the body, reinforced by international law, the principles of international organisations, and human rights committees, the body once again raises fundamental questions about our relationship with it and the framework within which we govern this relationship.

Today, it is impossible to address the issue of the body without recalling the struggles of the feminist movement, which strives to liberate women's bodies from domination and violence. Nor can one overlook the sexual revolution experienced by free societies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which transformed the concept of the body and led to the development of legislation and laws guaranteeing equality in rights regardless of sex or sexual orientation. This, in turn, altered the concept of the family and enhanced the position of the individual within society.

Nevertheless, this liberation did not justify violating the body or undermining its dignity; rather, alongside these laws, ethical frameworks aimed at safeguarding the body from assault and humiliation emerged. Thus, the body remains a concept in continuous evolution and renewal across various feminist movements.

Its consideration is not confined to the context of explicit demands; rather, it is regarded as a question in its own right, one of intrinsic importance even in the absence of overt claims. This is reflected in theories that view the body as a primary site for the exercise of power. In other words, the body is seen as a fundamental tool employed by patriarchal authority, whether represented by the state or by society, to exert control over citizens, particularly women.

The exercise of power over the body manifests in multiple forms, such as physical punishments such as imprisonment, the reinforcement of specific socially accepted models of female and male bodies, the penalisation of nonconforming bodies, and the perpetration of physical and sexual violence against women, whether for "political" or gender-based reasons. Feminists seek to dismantle the power dynamics that perpetuate patriarchal control over women's bodies. They struggle for full recognition of the female body, challenge the societal stigma surrounding women's biological processes, and promote the freedom to express themselves and identity autonomously.

This approach focuses on material experiences and individual differences to broaden the definition of identity, support freedom of self-expression, and dismantle essentialist views of sex and subjectivity, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of these concepts.

Feminism critiques patriarchal binary models of gender identity that marginalise women as a challenge to stereotypical cultural perceptions of women's bodies and identities. It calls for women's autonomy and the freedom to express their diverse experiences, which transcend traditional gender roles, by employing innovative forms of protest that embed feminist bodily politics in transforming oppressive practices related to sex and gender. These include engaging in nude protests, confronting gender-based violence, and promoting identity and freedom of expression through the body as tools for protest, bringing it into public discourse and challenging established norms. These strategies have contributed to dismantling traditional narratives and fostering a more inclusive understanding of women's experiences and rights. *See Table 1.*

Table 1

Core Approaches in Feminist Bodily Politics

Key Perspectives	Description	Strategy
Feminists view women's bodies as arenas subjected to patriarchal authority, where reducing women to mere bodies serves as a primary tool to keep them under control. In this context, the act of feminist activists undressing can be understood as a form of rebellion against such reductionism.	Using feminist nudity as a weapon against male hegemony and as a means of self-empowerment	Nude protests
Feminist performance practices employ the body as a central tool to express political issues and reject forms of oppression. This approach emphasises translating theoretical ideas into tangible sensory experiences through movement, sound, colour, and texture. By drawing upon historical archives of resistance to colonialism and oppression, these works affirm the enduring power of creative expression and illustrate how performance art can convey and amplify feminist messages powerfully and tangibly.	The resistant body as a force of political expression through performance	Performance art
The use of information and communication technologies to dismantle entrenched patriarchal systems and promote gender equality, while actively engaging in the political sphere. This creates a vibrant feminist digital space that supports women's empowerment. Such active engagement enables the redefinition of female identities and the strengthening of their political presence in digital realms, influencing embodied media practices and addressing core issues such as bodily autonomy and queer social life, ultimately enriching the complex landscape of feminist activism.	The digital woman: building vision, enhancing communication, achieving empowerment	Digital activism
The intersectional vision in feminism illustrates how various forms of oppression, such as race, gender, sexuality, and ability, intersect to shape women's experiences within feminist movements. This perspective underscores the need for multifaceted practices to address these disparities and the forms of resistance encountered by marginalised women in opposition to such comprehensive oppression.	Recognising what lies beyond a single category of identity and exploring the dimensions of oppression faced by women	Intersectionality

3. Gender and Identity: From Stereotypical Roles to Free Expression

The concept of gender has received considerable scholarly attention, and most feminist studies over the past several decades have revolved around it. According to Megan Al-Ruwaili and Saad Al-Yazee, it originates as a linguistic term referring to an implicit division in grammatical structure, derived from the Latin word *genus*,

meaning type, origin, or sex (Baali, 2013, p. 153). Robert Schuler coined the term to distinguish gender as a social construct from sex as a biological attribute:"Gender does not mean the biological human sex but rather a social and cultural construct. Gender refers to the differences determined by societies for both men and women, as a cultural and political category concerned with cultural structure" (Allah, 2004, p. 35).

Although the term lacks a definitive description, its essence may be approximated as the set of principles that dictate societal expectations for individuals' roles on the basis of their assigned sex, whether male or female. In other words, do men, identified as males, possess fixed and expected social roles, whereas women, identified as females, bear corresponding responsibilities?

The initial conception of gender in scholarly discourse emerged after the First World War. Anthropologist Margaret Mead conducted one of the pioneering studies in this field in her seminal work, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, published in 1928. She investigated differences in child-rearing practices between American society and those prevalent in Samoa. Mead highlighted behaviours in which males might engage, even though such actions were classified as feminine within the context of other cultural societies (Smith, 2020).

Similarly, the 1939 study by psychoanalyst Joan Riviere, entitled *Womanliness as a Masquerade*, was pioneering in asserting that gender is constructed according to social rules, whereby the self becomes masculine or feminine through a process of imitation (Fouca, 2002, pp. 99–100).

This was followed, in the 1950s, by the use of the term *gender role* as opposed to *sex role* (Hausman, 2020). The concept of the gender role refers to the establishment of behavioural standards associated with role expectations, emphasising that these standards are not inherently linked to biological sex but rather depend on an individual's sense of belonging to a particular gender.

However, it is necessary to pause and consider an important observation regarding the feminist interpretation of the concept of gender, despite its limited connection to the term's traditional application. This point was made clear by Simone de Beauvoir in her celebrated 1949 work *The Second Sex*: *"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."* This statement became the foundation upon which second-wave feminists and those who followed built numerous developments in both perspectives and demands.

Simone de Beauvoir, the existentialist philosopher, was a prominent figure in the history of the twentieth-century feminist liberation movement. She spearheaded the most significant feminist movement of her time, with her name becoming synonymous with the defence of women's rights. *The second sex*, often described as the feminist "bible," marked her as the first to pass the torch to this liberationist feminist movement.

While denying that a woman is born a woman, Simone de Beauvoir acknowledged and indeed emphasised that she is born female, just as a man is born male. She explained that gender is not merely a set of biological characteristics determined at birth but rather the product of an individual's interaction with society. Gender, therefore, is a social construct shaped and developed according to the expectations and roles imposed upon individuals within a given community.

De Beauvoir's perspective on the body was that it is a means by which we engage with the world and that biological data constitute one of the keys to understanding women. However, they do not ultimately determine a woman's destiny. Grounded also in an existentialist view of the body, she argued that biological differences alone cannot fully explain meaning, nor do they confer primacy upon either sex within the human species.

Physiological data, she argued, acquire the value that the individual ascribes to them, and the authority of differences changes according to those values. For this reason, she stated,

The body of the woman is one of the essential elements of her situation in the world, but it is not sufficient on its own to define her; it has no existential reality except through consciousness and through her action within society" (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 2008, pp. 16–17).

Here, she affirms the existentialist principle that existence precedes essence, holding that it is society that makes woman "the Other," a view influenced by the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist notion that existence precedes essence.

Nevertheless, she defended the feminine nature of women, considering its preservation to be part of maintaining their being, paralleled by a man's preservation of his masculinity. Without it, she argued that a woman would become an incomplete being, lacking the wholeness possessed by man. In this regard, she wrote,*"Man is a human being with his sex, and woman can only be an equally complete individual to man if she is a human being with her sex; to renounce her femininity is to renounce part of her humanity"* (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 2008, p. 222). She even defended this idea in an especially unusual case, that of the lesbian woman. De Beauvoir rejected the notion that a lesbian woman should be described as coarse or less feminine than a heterosexual woman: *"A large number of lesbians possess a rare femininity"* (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 2008, p. 108). She regarded the imitation of men in such cases as merely a secondary phenomenon, arguing instead that the primary motivation was the rebellion of a sovereign individual, by which she meant the lesbian who adopted the male role against becoming a physical prey.

De Beauvoir was not the only feminist pioneer to emphasise the importance of achieving femininity. Betty Friedan believed that feminine allure lies in the idea that *"the highest value and only commitment in a woman's life is to achieve her femininity"* (Gamble, *Feminism and Postfeminism*, 2002, p. 67). However, Friedan did not view the attainment of femininity as coming through imitation of the male model but rather through acceptance of a woman's nature as it is.

Notably, Simone de Beauvoir perceived women as a category parallel to men, thereby reducing women's problems to a single issue: the dominance and control of men over them. She saw only one solution to strive for complete equality with men while largely overlooking the diversity of women's circumstances and the multiplicity of their problems. This stance had a significant influence on the aims of feminists, who followed her. In the wake of De Beauvoir's statements, many sought full equality with men but did not necessarily uphold the appreciative view of men that De Beauvoir consistently maintained. A radical feminist current emerged, aiming to abolish discrimination by positioning men as adversaries rather than as models to be emulated.

Their demands were not limited to the right to education or equal pay; for example, the 1970 Ruskin College conference called for the establishment of 24-hour childcare facilities, as well as the freedom to use contraceptives and access to abortion, as Laura Mulvey observed:*"Suddenly, a new perspective for seeing the world emerged, one that gave women a place from which to speak. It became necessary to speak, not from the standpoint of choice, but from that of political necessity"* (Gamble, *Feminism and Postfeminism*, 2002, p. 76).

Radical feminism was not the only current; multiple feminist strands emerged, including liberal feminism, socialist and Marxist feminism, and non–male–hostile feminism. A detailed discussion of these movements falls beyond the scope of this work. However, another direction emerged, shaped by postmodernism and poststructuralism, known as *post-feminism*.

This latter approach is particularly significant to our subject, as it plays a decisive role in establishing gender theory. Postmodernism provides a foundation for critiquing grand narratives for the ideas and perspectives they may have suppressed. At the same time, poststructuralism underpins the rejection of binaries and hierarchies, embracing a deconstructionist view and fluidity of identity. Postfeminism draws on these theories in precisely the same way within the feminist sphere. It is regarded as a collection of male-centred narratives that must be critically examined, rejects the man–woman binary, and views the concept of *woman* as fluid and changeable. According to this perspective, there is neither a universal or essential woman nor a unified and homogeneous femininity (Watkins, 1970, p. 141).

Postfeminism also takes into account women of colour, black women, marginalised and colonised cultures, and diasporic identities. It advocates plurality over duality and diversity over consensus (Gamble, *Feminism and Postfeminism*, 2002, p. 86).

The feminist and renowned deconstructionist philosopher Gayatri Spivak argues that women differ from one another. Likewise, men should not be grouped under a single umbrella term that ignores the differences among them. She further emphasises that women should not assume that they have the right to speak on behalf of other women on the basis of a shared identity.

Although this pluralistic view may suggest a more tolerant approach, it represents a destabilisation of the foundations of any system. This perspective highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of collective identity, one that is grounded not only in shared characteristics but also in diverse and intersecting social practices.

This is particularly evident in the decoupling of an individual's gender from their biological sex because such a connection, along with the constraints it imposes, is a social and cultural construct rather than an inevitable reality. This conceptual framework is what is known as gender theory.

The issue here is not that a woman must prove her competence by performing the work of a man, but through the lens of fluid identity, that concepts such as *woman* and *man* are merely cultural constructs that do not, in themselves, represent an inherent reality. As Éric Zemmour remarked, *"Gender theory, about* The Second Sex, *is like the internet to Minitel… refinement ad infinitum!"* (Al-Marrakchi, 2020, p. 86).

This notion is reflected in the work of three of the most prominent American scholars of the late twentieth century: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who proposed new frameworks for classifying gender and sexual identity and contributed to theorising queer or nonnormative identities; Donna J. Haraway, who coined the concept of the *cyborg*, an entity not confined within the boundaries of organic sexual classification; and the most renowned, Judith Butler, an American philosopher and leading figure in gender and queer theory, who serves as Professor of Comparative Literature and Rhetoric at the University of California.

Butler's thought does not adhere to a single methodological approach; instead, she draws upon multiple theories and traditions, notably the critical theory tradition and poststructuralism. Her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) is considered a foundational text in gender theory. In this work, and its subsequent refinements, she developed her vision of gender and sexuality, focusing particularly on her contributions to gender theory, including her views on gender as performance and her critiques of authoritarianism in gender politics.

Butler sought to dismantle the gender binary, undermining any discourse that claims the authority to legitimise or delegitimise particular gendered or sexual practices. One of her most widely known ideas is her denial of the fixity of sex itself (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 2016, p. 26). To clarify Butler's perspective, it is helpful to recall that an individual's identity is shaped by three axes: gender, sex, and sexual orientation. Her view of gender is grounded in her theory of *performativity*, which posits that gender consists of a series of performances. Drawing on theories of action, speech act theory, and phenomenology, she suggests a more radical use of constructivist doctrines in which the social actor is positioned as the object of the act rather than its subject.

Butler argues that the acts through which gender is constituted are similar to performative acts in theatrical context. However, these acts are not preceded by the existence of the self; instead, they constitute the self and are constituted through it. Accordingly, she maintains that sex is not an inherent identity but rather a series of socially constructed acts and performances repeated over time. In this way, terms such as *man* or *woman* become, for Butler, highly ambiguous, not as fixed states to be attained but as positions continuously formed in an ongoing process.

The butler's view of sex branches from her understanding of the body. In this regard, she drew specific insights from Michel Foucault. Foucault argued for the centrality of the self in the social sphere, as opposed to the emphasis on individualism advanced by Max Weber and Émile Durkheim. He considered subjectivity to play a key role in liberating individuals and groups from both individualism and collectivism, thereby shaping the modern consciousness of society in general and the collective mind in particular.

For Foucault, the existence of the self requires its developmental progression to what he termed the Kierkegaardian self, a stage involving conscious detachment from the real world, yet necessarily surpassing this stage to reach a self integrated into society, possessing characteristics that combine both individual and

collective elements. In psychological terms, this self involves both introverted and extroverted aspects of personality and temperament.

Foucault also stressed the material reality of the body, viewing it as the direct target and product of power. In doing so, he dismantled the distinction between sex and gender, where the former is considered natural and the latter is considered cultural, so that, according to his view, both become unintelligible outside their cultural significance. Butler adopts this same idea but rejects the notion of the body as passive matter. As she explains,*"The body is not passively scripted with cultural codes, as if it were a lifeless recipient of wholly predetermined cultural relations. However, embodied subjects are also not prior in their existence to the cultural norms that essentially signify through the body"* (Butler, *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*, 2018, p. 36).

She writes:

The body is not a materiality that is self-identical or merely a fact; it is a materiality that bears meaning, at least, and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic. By 'dramatic,' I mean that the body is not only a realised materiality, but a continual materialising of possibilities" (Butler, *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*, 2018, p. 130).

Suppose the body is a material, physical project and a set of possibilities that are constantly being realised while also constituting a precondition for performance. In that case, terms such as *male* or *female* become empty of the fixed meaning assigned to them by convention and culture. Although the body is indeed governed by its possibilities, how these possibilities are realised may differ such that they cannot be directly predicted. There is always both a referential dimension and a dramatic dimension. Just as the stage and the script are spaces for theatrical performance that do not preclude variation and diversity in the playing of roles, so too is the corporeal space for gender performance. The significant difference, however, is that in actual performance, the self does not preexist its constitution; instead, everything the space contains, produces, or results from the performance is, in essence, part of an ongoing process of self-formation.

With respect to sexual orientation, given that Butler deconstructed the male–female binary as outlined above and concluded that masculinity and femininity are forms of cultural and social fiction, she sharply criticised in *Gender Trouble* the treatment of heterosexual orientations as a natural fact. Drawing on the deconstructive rejection of hierarchy pioneered by deconstruction's leading figure, Jacques Derrida, Butler's constructivist approach to sexual identity is politically potent. However, risks fall into deconstructive illusions by treating the material reality of sexual identity as merely an ideological construct. This perspective neglects the inherent biological and material aspects of sexual identity, which cannot be fully explained through language or social norms alone.

She discusses her theories of gender and sex with a focus on the complex nature of identities and a critique of heteronormative standards, which presupposes a direct relationship between biological sex and social gender, thereby failing to account fully for the diverse experiences and identities existing outside this binary.

Butler distinguished between gender and sexuality [orientation] in two ways: first, heterosexual normativity should not regulate gender and that such regulation must be opposed; second, the performative dimension of subverting gender does not necessarily indicate anything about sexual practice.

Following Foucault, Butler viewed the pairing of a "natural" sex with a corresponding gender and "natural" attraction as an unnatural coupling of cultural constructs designed to serve reproductive interests. Her approach to gender theory risks being reductionist by maintaining the binary distinction between sex and gender. This distinction has historically been a central tenet of feminist theory, particularly with respect to the use of hormones and the complexities of transgender identities.

Following this brief clarification, it becomes evident that there are numerous points of divergence between Judith Butler's conclusions and the earlier ideas of Simone de Beauvoir, even though the latter was the one who first ignited the spark. In sum, Butler removes *women* from the centre both as an all-encompassing category and as one inherently defined by oppression or in constant need of support.

With respect to gender, Butler does not view it as a state or condition into which the embodied sex transitions; instead, she conceives it as an ongoing construction or project. Furthermore, gender is not confined to that of man or woman; instead, the door remains open to the creation of other genders, insofar as these are made possible by the body's capacities for ways of living.

4. Conclusion

The body has always been a central focus in feminist discourse, both material and social. It is not merely a biological vessel but a space in which power, culture, and history converge to shape women's realities and restrict their freedoms. At the heart of this struggle lies the concept of gender identity, which transcends the traditional male–female binary and has become a vital arena for feminist struggles for liberation and recognition.

Feminism views the patriarchal system as one that controls women, their bodies, and their ways of being in line with their interests and preserving male dominance, thereby perpetuating women's subordination. This is enacted through various mechanisms, beginning with socialisation processes that impose rigid gender roles, followed by the regulation of reproductive and sexual choices. In addition, physical and symbolic violence is aimed at subjugating women. Within this context, reclaiming and exercising control over women's bodies becomes a first and decisive step towards liberation.

Moreover, as feminist thought itself has evolved, the importance of gender identity has crystallised as a fundamental dimension of feminist struggle. Feminist movements have recognised that defining *women* solely on a biological basis overlooks a wide range of lived realities and excludes women who do not conform to traditional gender binaries. This formulation excludes the experiences of transgender women, nonbinary individuals, and those who are gender nonconforming. Consequently, the fight for recognition of diverse gender identities has become an integral part of the feminist liberation project.

Thus, the challenge of gender identity directly impacts and constitutes a challenge to patriarchal structures that seek to impose a coercive and violent gender binary. Efforts are not limited to demanding legal rights but also encompass changing cultural perceptions and dismantling stereotypes that confine individuals on the basis of their sex.

There is no doubt that the arena of struggle is challenging, as it faces resistance from reactionary forces seeking to maintain the status quo. This is manifested in the existence of discriminatory laws, hate speech, and violence against women and individuals with nonnormative gender identities. Nevertheless, feminist movements continue to advance with determination, employing various forms of peaceful protest, media campaigns, alliance-building, and legal action to secure a more just and equal society.

In conclusion, the body and gender identity are central sites of struggle in the feminist pursuit of freedom. Liberating the body from patriarchal constraints and recognising the diversity of gender identities are not marginal demands within feminism but rather the very foundation upon which the claim to self-determination for all rests. This is an ongoing battle that affirms feminism's endeavor to create a world in which women and all individuals with oppressed bodies and gender identities assert their existence and value within society.

However, it is important to note that the current situation has not yet reached a stage in which the actions of all parties concerned are characterised by complete transparency. This shortfall may lead individuals into predetermined paths.

The subject of the body and gender identity constitute a rich and complex field that intersects with issues of feminist liberation. By exploring this topic, we can arrive at a set of core concepts and important conclusions, as well as theoretical frameworks that enhance our understanding of these dynamics:

1. **Personal liberation** refers to the idea that the body is a medium for expressing individual identity, through which people can challenge the social norms imposed upon them. Feminist critique, both historically and in contemporary contexts, has addressed women's issues and worked to correct the image of women in the male imagination.

2. **Diversity and difference in the body**: Bodily diversity encompasses expressions that go beyond traditional gender identity, including experiences such as nonbinary identity, transgender identity, and other varied forms. As such, the influence of feminist critique by postmodern thought, deconstructionist philosophy, and psychoanalysis aims to dissect the texts and laws that govern these identities, exposing their hidden and unspoken dimensions.

3. **Exposure to violence and discrimination**: Understanding how the body is subjected to violence and discrimination, particularly with respect to women and marginalised groups, is essential. This highlights the importance of advancing human rights issues within this framework.

4. **Cultural and artistic production**: It is important to acknowledge that cultural and artistic production offers a rich domain for creative and cultural expression. Artistic works addressing the subject of the body and gender identity can reflect diverse feminist experiences. This subject thus provides fertile ground for reflection and critical engagement with questions of identity, the body, and empowerment.

5. **The digital age**: In the era of digitalisation, interaction with technology has become an integral part of daily life. This interaction increasingly intersects with gender identity, as social media platforms and modern technologies provide new spaces for expressing identity and challenging traditional norms. This development raises important questions about how identity is shaped within an ever-evolving digital environment.

6. **Feminist unity in diversity**: Despite the differing references and varying concerns of feminist movements, it is important to emphasise the complementary nature of feminist efforts in the West, particularly in shared aims such as defending women's rights, rejecting male dominance, and dismantling the patriarchal system.

Undoubtedly, the subject of the body and gender identity offers a rich arena for critical and significant discussions within the framework of the feminist struggle for freedom, necessitating the deepening of critical academic research alongside the activation of societal dialogue.

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