

THE SOMATIC SEX

Bodies in Simone de Beauvoir's Aesthetic Politics

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PREFACE

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"More than this: if man is ever to solve that problem of politics in practice he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through beauty that man makes his way to Freedom" – Friedrich Schiller, *The Aesthetic Education of Man*

In this thesis, I seek to complicate traditional readings of embodiment in the work of Simone de Beauvoir by positing an alternative reading that stresses somaticism. Positioning myself within the tradition of historical political thought I track Beauvoir's intellectual development to demonstrate that reading Beauvoirian bodies within the framework of phenomenological embodiment only discloses part of Beauvoir's theoretical interests. Whereas the traditional conception of Beauvoirian bodies largely derives from a phenomenological vernacular, primarily concentrated on the notion of embodied consciousness, I advance a complimentary but alternative reading located within contemporary somatic discourses. By reading Beauvoir's early interests as somatic I hope to disclose a Beauvoir concerned with the body experienced as de-systematized, sensorial, visceral, and corporeal. My first chapter examines some of the traditional readings of Beauvoir emanating from her own corpus and both applied and critical readings of her political theory. This analysis suggests that readings of the Beauvoirian body have been traditionally read as 'embodied situation.' Seeking to remove Beauvoir from this reading, I make a claim about an active and animate somatic body to be found in Beauvoir's aesthetic, namely literary theory and criticism.

To situate these claims as consonant with already existing somatic discourses, I investigate the theoretical link between Beauvoir and nineteenth century vitalist Henri Bergson, a thinker whose reputation as a somatic thinker is already well established. Through a comparative reading of Beauvoir's and Bergson's respective essays on physiologist Claude Bernard, I contend that Beauvoir exhibits an allied interest with Bergson towards theorizing somatic bodies. This early theoretical affinity between Beauvoir and Bergson opens a discourse to theorize a somatic impulse in Beauvoir's work, namely in the form of aesthetic political thinking. To this end, my second chapter entitled "Beauvoir's Political Imagination" examines the capacity for imagination as a radical sensorial disclosure. Positioning Beauvoir within contemporary debates over sensorial and aesthetic politics, this chapter examines the political potential of Beauvoir's characterization of the genre *metaphysical literature*. The contention is that Beauvoir's treatment of the active reader imagination, animated by the genre of *metaphysical literature*, offers to political theory a rich conception of political engagement that is receptive to immanence. Invoking the imagination of readers, Beauvoir makes a political appeal to readers not only to acknowledge, but also to engage with, worldly immanence and turns us toward a sensorial political experience.

The third chapter follows up on formal and aesthetic claims by placing Beauvoir into conversation with William Connolly on theories of filmic micropolitics, technique, and bodies. Drawing from William Connolly's work on film and technique, I argue that Beauvoir's time is a political technique by which to understand micro politics. I examine where Beauvoir's time diverges from Connolly's by way of a more specific focus on time as experienced by the somatic body. Examining the claim that film helps us to see

micropolitical phenomenon at work, I apply Beauvoir's time, experienced by the body as a lens to read Chantal Ackerman's (1975) *Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai Du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*. Staging the conversation between Ackerman and Beauvoir, I explore the shared aestheticopolitical technique of corporeally experienced time. In the last section of this paper, I examine how Beauvoir's theorizations may provide a filmic interpretation of time as a kind of ambiguity and micropolitics, one that is particularly useful in denoting how individuals establish and deny freedom through their dealings with time.

My final chapter "Beauvoir Minds Neuropolitics" considers how through her Bergsonian assessment of somatic experience Beauvoir offers something to the renewed interest in the potential of scientific discourse in affect theory taking place in contemporary political theory. In this final chapter I read the somatic Beauvoir alongside the more traditional reading of situational Beauvoirian embodiment to argue that Beauvoir's holistic reading of the body attends to the critiques of cognitive political theory as deterministic, ontological, and apolitical. I argue that reading the somatic as a modification on Beauvoir's model of situated political freedom, as posited in traditional readings of Beauvoir, offers to political theory a model of engaged political freedom that is attentive to the concerns of cognitive theories while still remaining concretely political and enmeshed in questions of subjectivity and structure. Looking to Beauvoir, we may be able to answer a question posed by critics of affect theory, what does it mean to be embodied?

1 | Theorizing the Beauvoirian Body: Aesthetics and Somatics

Bodies in Beauvoir: Breaking Embodiment and Alternative Approaches to Beauvoir's Corporeal Corpus

The term embodiment has come to define Simone de Beauvoir's corpus.

Embodiment has become canonized in Beauvoir's work through binate collaboration between Beauvoir herself and decades of scholarly interpretation. The profusion of scholarship that addresses embodiment is not disingenuous or illogical in light of Beauvoir's theoretical schema. Throughout her opera omnia, Beauvoir attends to questions of world/body relations, by concentrating on what it means to be enmeshed in the world through an embodied lens¹. Her 1949 tour de force *The Second Sex* queries about how women's embodied situation constructs lived experience. Similarly, her 1970 text *The Coming of Age* addresses the embodied realities of aging and its consequent social, political, and economic impact. Beauvoir is also active in ensuring that embodiment is not cordoned off into the realm of purely metaphysical inquiry, in 1960 Beauvoir wrote "In Defense of Djalmia Boupacha" an essay in *Le Monde* that sought to illuminate the expressly political nexus between embodiment and colonial torture². As a political thinker, Beauvoir's emphasis on the politics of embodiment radically reframes questions of situation, experience, violence, judgment, and structural oppression³.

Within political theory, Beauvoir's theorization of phenomenological embodiment is sustained by appreciable scholarly interest in this dimension of her corporeal approach. Such expositions have sought to theorize how embodied models of politics contribute to a reconfiguration of essential themes, ideas, and categories of political thought. Beauvoir has received the most attention from feminist political theorists who seek to contemplate women's political situation and advance a feminist politics.⁴ These approaches centralize

the role of the body as a locus of worldly interaction and stress that this orientation is underappreciated in political thought. By doing so, they call attention to the role of experience and situation as a means to undermine universalism, historicism, and idealism. Having said that, relatively few of these interpretations develop a theorization of the body beyond a material entrapment of self.⁵ Such discourses seldom engage with various elements to material facticity- sensation, perception, and other visceral corporeal phenomenon. Rather, they seek to establish the body as a point of physiological difference. Even when addressing the most explicit of bodily phenomenon, menstruation, sexual intercourse, puberty, the treatment Beauvoirian has received little inquiry beyond embodiment read as situational experience.

This sort of approach to Beauvoirian embodiment is best emphasized by Iris Marion Young's seminal *On Female Body Experience*. Deploying her own a phenomenological theorization of embodiment, Young's book presents 'embodied subjectivity' as a political category that develops the allied Beauvoirian goal of exploring the embodied factices of female lived experience. She describes Beauvoir's embodied contribution as debunking the essentialist and universalist claims through exposing the situational in lived experience.⁶ For Young, Beauvoir's embodiment is the first and foremost component of establishing a situated philosophical approach—in short, Young treats Beauvoir's embodiment as a spatial, temporal, and corporeal location. Placing Beauvoir's work contra Leo Strauss' articulation of a "mysterious "feminine essence,"" Young claims that Beauvoir's *Second Sex* show that, "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.”⁷

Yet, Young does not continue to make use of Beauvoir's embodied approach. Rather she critiques it for a lack of corporeal attention to immediate situation. According to Young, Beauvoirian embodiment, “fails to give a place to the status and orientation of woman's body as relating to its surroundings in living action.”⁸ Young takes up the phenomenological embodiment of Beauvoir's contemporary Maurice Merleau-Ponty as a formulation of embodiment more attentive to the conditions of immediate bodily movement. Merleau-Ponty, by Young's account, does not see the body as an object and is able to therefore convey embodiment as relatively action oriented.⁹ Through, her reading of Merleau-Ponty Young aims to rescue Beauvoir from a sort of physiological passivity, but in doing so, reads Beauvoir's primary contribution to embodiment as an acknowledgment of situation.

Not all theorists of Beauvoirian embodiment are as dismissive as Young, regarding the limited characterization of embodiment. Sonia Kruks' *Simone de Beauvoir and the Politics of Ambiguity* seeks establish a new reading of freedom through acknowledging embodied subjectivity's limitations. Kruks' reading of Beauvoirian embodiment states: “embodiment is the site of what Beauvoir calls the *facticities* of human existence: those contingent but inerasable facts about our lives that we do not choose and yet that profoundly shape our existence and actions.”¹⁰ Kruks makes use of this embodiment to evince Beauvoirian critique of abstract humanism and to orient our political attention towards “what mainly concerns Beauvoir...the kind of oppression that operates on and through such embodied, visible qualities” like sex, race, age, and class.¹¹ For Kruks,

Beauvoir's acknowledgement of limitations on experience makes it possible to focus on political freedom and build solidarity between individuals while accounting for the limitations imposed by difference in experience. Investigating the politics of Beauvoir's own situational privilege in writing an article in *Le Monde* addressing the torture of an Algerian woman by the French colonial military, Kruks makes a case for limited situational solidarity as an alternative to neo-kantian abstract universalism.¹²

Lori Marso's "Thinking Politically with the *Second Sex*" establishes the methodological stakes of theorizing embodiment.¹³ Claiming that Beauvoir's authority is garnered through a methodological emphasis not only on the facticity of embodiment as an abstract concept, but through her own embodied authorial voice, Marso exposes the active embodied author as a method of political prioritizing equality and enhancing freedom in situation. Marso writes that Beauvoir's embrace of embodiment allows her to undermine the universal voice dominant in political theory and to subsequently expose "the pernicious political meanings assigned to certain bodies" and invalidates the "master/slave confrontation, as well as the reductive theories of human existence that give priority to either sovereign selves or the movement of history."¹⁴ Marso's attentiveness to the active dimensions of embodiment allays the objections raised by Young regarding the abstract physiological nature of Beauvoir's embodiment and therefore facilitates a reading of embodiment as more than situation. Although Marso's reading exposes the rarely explored active dimensions of embodiment her reading of embodiment is consistent readings that stress situation. Freedom is embodied, situated, and constrained, in Marso's analysis of the *Second Sex*, and anatomical experiences are contextualized through situation, "the meaning

Beauvoir derives from this multitude points to what she will theorize as women's
"situation."¹⁵

The use of embodiment (read as situational) as a definitive characteristic of Beauvoir's corporeal approach is not solely codified by those who seek to establish a politics through engagement with her work, Beauvoir's embodiment has also been ingrained as a site of criticism by both feminist theorists of sexual difference and those who critique certain bodily passivity in Beauvoir's work. Most notably, Judith Butler critiques the Beauvoirian body's approach to sexual politics by noting an 'ambiguity' in the work that reduces gender to a cultural construct. Butler theorizes that the body is not endowed with a sense of resistance against voluntarism, she writes,

To *become* a woman is a purposive and appropriative set of acts, the acquisition of a skill a 'project', to use Sartrean terms, to assume a certain corporeal style and significance. When 'become' is taken to mean 'purposefully assume of embody', it seems that Simone de Beauvoir is appealing to a voluntaristic account of gender. If genders are in some sense chosen, then what do we make of gender as a received cultural construction?... Does this system unilaterally inscribe gender upon the body, in which case the body would be a purely passive medium and the subject, utterly subjected?¹⁶

Elizabeth Grosz detects a similar definitional absence in Beauvoir's embodiment but locates it on the level of materiality. Grosz claims in *Volatile Bodies* that Beauvoir's conception of the embodiment constitutes an entrapment wherein conceptions of equality can only be accomplished through an antagonistic relationship to one's body, an ethos of overcoming that enforces dualism.¹⁷ In her essay "Feminism Materiality and Freedom" Grosz expands upon the political implications of Beauvoir's materialization via embodiment, "concepts of autonomy, agency, and freedom—the central terms by which subjectivity has been understood in the twentieth century and beyond—have been central to feminist politics since its theoretical reeruption in the writings of Simone de Beauvoir.

While these concepts are continually evoked in feminist theory, however, they have been rarely defined, explained, or analyzed. Instead they have functions as a kind of mantra of liberation.”¹⁸ Both of these critiques of Beauvoir set forth a tantamount case that there is something that seems unexcavated in Beauvoir’s theorization of embodiment, despite the terms endeavor to highlight the body as a fundamental certitude of our being-in-the-world, for these theorists Beauvorian body politics often fails to think beyond ways that move past situation.

Although all of these works make radically different use of Beauvoir’s theory of embodiment, they are fundamentally united by an emphasis on situation as the definitive body characteristic. Through embodiment, the role of facticity comes to define Beauvoir’s contributions to theorizing the body. Work conducted in contemporary political theory has produced a reading of Beauvoir that stresses embodied positionality as an integral component of understanding political concepts such as subjectivity, structural oppression, judgment, and freedom. However, it has inadvertently produced archetype of Beauvoir’s corporeal approach. I worry that by continually producing readings of ‘situation’ as what Beauvoir intends by embodiment, we have concurrently demarcated a structure that occludes alternative explorations of the body politics embraced by Beauvoir. More fundamentally, giving priority to embodiment impedes our ability to ask what sorts of other active bodies does Beauvoir have in mind? It should be said that my intent is not to admonish the work conducted by previous political theorists. In more ways than one, I am indebted to these theorists whose attention to Beauvoir and close readings of her texts have made possible my b-side exploration of Beauvoir’s corporeal intentions. In many ways, this reading cuts against Beauvoir’s own philosophical presumptions. This thesis

challenges the predominant reading of Beauvoir to inquire about what sorts of supplementary conjectures about bodies surface when embodiment is not adopted as the primary lens by which to understand anatomical modes of being-in-the-world.

Despite Beauvoir's recognition as theorist of embodied lived experience her theorization of the body is scarcely considered beyond those aforementioned terms.¹⁹ Through my reading of Beauvoir, I expose some alternative potential avenues of bodily political thinking active and animate in Beauvoir's corpus (pun intended!). By doing so, I hope to expose a Beauvoir concerned with corporeal immediacy, namely sensation. This responds to Young's estimation of a lack of concern with bodies that live, move, act, and occupy space in active animate ways. My contention is that a second reading of Beauvoir exposes different more corporeal investments and that Beauvoir offers alternative ontological and political understandings of the body that exist somewhat independently of her phenomenological ontologies. Much, although not all, of Beauvoir scholarship locates the foundational thinking on embodiment by means of "becoming" woman as it is articulated in the Introductory Chapter of the *Second Sex*. Beauvoir's strong statement, which propounds an essential corporeal fact of situation and a subsequent conditioning based on that fact, establishes a paradigm of theorizing the body via embodiment in Beauvoir. I query whether this is the only bodily question animate in Beauvoir's work? Or whether this forcible bodily claim in Beauvoir ought to overshadow more subtle questions about active and perceptible bodily phenomenon.

The aim of this introduction is to outline what methods, means, and approaches motivate this shift in thinking about Beauvoir. In rejecting these conceptions of embodied politics, I advance a counter reading of somatic bodies in Beauvoir's political thought.

Section two introduces the concept of somaticism as an approach to political theory. Building upon that, section three addresses Beauvoirian somatic and its manifestation in aesthetic methodological inquiries. Section four details the assets afforded to contemporary political theory by paying attention to the somatic in Beauvoirian bodies. Lastly, section five maps out the course of the thesis and the respective theoretical arguments contribute to understanding Beauvoir's somatic impulse.

Somaticism in Political Thought

Somatic approaches to political theory fall into the category of models, techniques, and approaches that portend to formulate notions of political bodies. For the sake of understanding Beauvoir as a contributor to this tradition, we ought to understand somatic theory's ontological intents and questions as kin to those posited by phenomenologists. The two discourses share several concomitant claims, intents, and principles regarding the body as a locus of political action and a commitment to theorizing experience. It is no surprise that many contemporary theories of the somaticism draw from phenomenological thinkers such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.²⁰ Importantly, both renounce Cartesian dualism and other ideological accounts of mental primacy as distinct from physical entrapment. By contrast with phenomenological inquiry, somatic discourses are less invested in the notion of lived bodies as consciousness, subjectively embodied entities, or images of a subjective-self posited in oppositional relationship to objects. Somatic discourse extends into several less-phenomenological discourses particularly regarding questions of materiality as active, immediate sensory phenomenon as structurally imbued, and the relationship between cultural and linguistic practices on the material, vital, and pre-conscious registers of the body. While it may be unlikely to hear a phenomenological

argument about the precariousness of the subject in relation to materiality it is not far off from the somatic litany. We could anticipate the somatic as raising comparable claims to Judith Butler's central inquiry in *Bodies that Matter*, wherein Butler asks, "is there a way to link the question of the materiality of the body to the performativity of gender?"²¹

Somaticism as a theoretical method proceeds from the somatic, derived from the Greek work soma (*sōmatikos* or σωματικός) meaning of, or related to, or affecting the body.²² It is distinguished from psyche and soul as a corporeal, fleshy, and immediate definition of the body. Somatic discourse is also a response to hostility or somatophobia in the tradition of western political theory. Elizabeth Grosz writes, "since the inception of philosophy as a separate and self-contained discipline in ancient Greece, philosophy has established itself on the foundations of profound somatophobia... the body has been regarded as a source of interference in, and a danger to, the operations of reason."²³ That being said, somatic impulses can be approximated throughout the history of western political thought- discrepant thinkers such as Alfred Whitehead North, Lucretius, Henri Bergson, William James, J.L. Austin, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. However, as a separate division of theoretical inquiry, the concept of political somaticism is a fairly recent development. Contemporary somatic theory has been catalyzed by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio's somatic marker theory, which contends that emotions read as changes both body and brain to stimuli can alter and bias decision making, particularly our conception of reason. By studying who were considered "rational in the way they ran their lives up to the time when, as a result of neurological damaging in specific sites of their brains, they lost a certain class of emotions and, in a momentous parallel development, lost their ability to make rational decisions."²⁴ Damasio's research claims, "that the delicate mechanism of

reasoning is no longer affected, nonconsciously and on occasion even consciously, by signals hailing from the neural machinery that underlies emotion.”²⁵ Damasio’s discovery of emotive affect in the process of reasonable decision making attracted attention to the idea of revisiting the body’s visceral role in ontological being. Embracing the body as a vital, complex, and contingent factors in philosophical research and political life, somatic theorizing prioritizes the bodies movements as telling for social, cultural, economic, aesthetic, and political ontologies. Appropriating Damasio’s orientation to the body for social and political theory contemporary somatic theorists such as William Connolly, Edward Slingerland, John Protevi, Elizabeth Grosz, and Douglas Robinson apply the corporeal orientation to their respective projects.

Consistent with their initial attraction to Damasio’s scientific findings, somatic discourses draw their inspiration and intellectual fodder from multiple cross-disciplinary sources, contemporary theorizations of the humanities, performance studies art criticism, neurological and cognitive science, and social, economic, political, cultural, and economic inquiries²⁶. While somatic theorization lacks a uniform definition certain overarching themes and principles can be more broadly applied. First off, somatic theorization rejects the Cartesian split between mind and body. Consequently agency cannot be located with a conscious subject, “consciousness now becomes a more modest power than it is in the Cartesian and (though less so) Kantian and neo-Kantian traditions.”²⁷ Second, somatic theorists privilege the immediacy of action as an ontological category instead of theorizing reason as an idealistic or realistic epistemological form of knowledge.²⁸ Third, theorizing bodies with ontological immediacy allows somatic theory to consider the role of sensation and affect on bodies as active materially oriented components of experience. Because

somatic theorizations of the body are action oriented, they are unconstrained by both ideological and epistolary methods of inquiry. Visceral and kinesthetic experiences are not mollified by their intuitive and anatomical influence but are the grounds for metaphysical and ontological inquiry. Fourth and finally, bodies in somatic theories dismiss the bifurcation of bodies as subject and object. Claiming that this binary approach to thinking about bodies affects an orientation towards reading physiology as objective, innate, and ergo passive, somatic theorization advances a notion of the body's material and conscious dimensions active and action-oriented. This approach to bodies emphasizes a fundamental mechanistic materiality of the body as an assemblage of flesh, bones, chemicals, tissues, and cells and acknowledges, serves as the foundation for complicated corporeal phenomenon. Segregating the brain from consciousness enforces arbitrary distinctions that obscure our notion of self and are potentially deleterious.²⁹

A somatic shift in political thinking orients us toward an active conception of bodies not only as subjective selves, but also as animate, sensory, and immediate. Contrary to thinkers that claim a somatic orientation to political bodies establishes deterministic limits and accounts for a rejection of human responsibility by locating things on a biological, ontological, or ethical level, a somatic account of politics does not disavow ideological pretensions of self, but helps us to understand their limits, operations, and affective properties. By seeing the affective, sensorial, and animate qualities of bodies we understand not only their limits, but what sorts of positive action oriented possibilities attainable, public, and employable. Such an account does not seek to reconcile the paradox multifarious components of self as subject, object, flesh, soul, and neurological mechanisms, but mines them to create an entangled and contingent depiction of the zoetic

body. Somatic politics discloses the political potential of affect, not as a means to explain away subjective phenomenon, but to better theorize the body's diverse operations, not just those available on conscious and subjective levels. Foremost, somatic orientations to politics furnish an account of bodies in an active and immediate relationship to the world's structures. For example, Brian Massumi's attempt to relate the body with virtual mediums provides a new account of sensation and becoming beyond traditional semiotic and rhetorical models.³⁰ Similarly, John Protevi's presentation of bodies as political organisms helps to identify embodiment an embedded "cognitivist subject."³¹ "The adherents of the embodied-embedded school define cognition as the direction of the situate action of the organism in its world" opening new conceptual framework Protevi applies to robotics, oncology, bacterial infection, and ecology.³² Somaticism plumbs the account of embodiment rendered as situation to provide further nuance about the affective, sensory, and preconscious factices of being-in-the-world.

I see somatic theorization of the body as closely related to the contemporary work of theorists such as Lars Tonder and Davide Panagia, who seek to understand the role of sensation in structuring political experience. Theorizing the affective dimensions of sensation orient us towards new and somatically allied political bodies. Panagia's *The Political Life of Sensation* treats aesthetic claims about the sensible as political to illustrate that sensation is actively embroiled in not only our ontological constitution but also our politics. Interruptions that subvert our sense of continuity "exceed the limits that structure our daily living," and become ethical moments that compel us to reconsider "how we can give value to an object when we lack confidence in our bannisters of judgment."³³ Invoking Jacques Rancière "partitions of the sensible," Panagia locates the politics of

sensation on a somatic level in relation to touch. Our sense of skin as a boundary is interrupted by the sensation of touch, Panagia writes,

to touch as Erin Manning has recently suggested, “is to conceive of a simultaneity that requires the courage to face the in-between.” There is no impermeable boundary that our skin might guarantee, and yet we insist on perceiving skin as a containment vessel. Gender, race, sex, desire, beauty, weight, and height are signifiers that correspond to the experience of skin as a determinate organ of perception. So it is that with skin we have a partition of the sensible that guarantees a series of other equivalences like recognition, impermeability, unity, and cohesiveness that are transcribed onto our political conceptions of individuality, identity, and subjectivity and work to overcome the skin’s fluidity and porosity.³⁴

Lars Tønder’s *Tolerance A Sensorial Orientation to Politics* establishes the stakes of a sensorial shift on bodies more explicitly than Panagia. Arguing that our understanding of political tolerance has been limited in democratic theory to either a depiction of restraint or benevolence, Tønder relocates tolerance as a visceral and sensorial political action. A sensorial orientation to politics is a descendent to “various efforts in twentieth-century Continental philosophy, especially those inspired by Husserl’s phenomenological investigations and further developed in discussions of embodiment, sexuality, desire, psychology, new media, and techniques of the self.”³⁵ A sensorial orientation to politics rejects mind-body dualism to “generate a more nuanced conception of how sentient beings participate in the production of regimes of discourse and sensation.”³⁶ Tønder’s account of sensorial bodies acknowledges the limits of particular bodies to understand the “relations of power and difference,” which these bodies are always posited in constant contingent relationship with.³⁷

Aesthetic Method and Beauvoir's Somatic Bodies

Although Beauvoir is primarily known for her philosophical and literary texts, I turn to the opusculé collection of literary theory and aesthetic criticism to advance my reading of somatic bodies in Beauvoir. Rather than treat this turn to Beauvoir's lesser-known work as evidence that Beauvoir's somatic theorizations are scant and thus require far out esoteric evidence, I claim that Beauvoir's shift from the production of philosophy to aesthetics is consistent with her methodological claims about the relationship between systematization and experience. In doing so, I argue that tracing this methodological concern with experience to her aesthetic criticism makes not only a claim about the forms by which political theory is undertaken, but also why at the convergence of Beauvoir's methodological propensities and thematic concerns a new and innovative reading of bodies as somatic is rendered. It beseems me to comment on why Beauvoir's literary theory and criticism is a more advantageous source of somatic theory than Beauvoir's own novels, memoirs, and plays. While Beauvoir's literature often posits the subject in tenuous relationship to embodied experience, her criticism most clearly introduces the stakes, goals, benefits, and operations of aesthetic method. These essays, often delivered in the context of lectures/speeches or published as brief articles in the phenomenologist supported literary journal *Les Temps Modernes*, are Beauvoir's most coherent expression of the formal possibilities put into effect through aesthetic method. In turning to literary form, Beauvoir exculpates the positive and political accounts of bodies in a radically different way than what is invoked in her philosophical contributions. While Beauvoir is not traditionally seen as an aesthetic political thinker, her tendency to put forth aesthetic claims as sensorial models of bodies firmly casts her within this tradition of investigating

political experience as sensory and perceptive. This reading of Beauvoir allies itself with Panagia's claim that "the first political act is also an aesthetic one, a partitioning of sensation that divide the body and its organs of sense perception and assigns them corresponding capacities for making of sense."³⁸

Aesthetic theory and criticism are central to Beauvoir's account of somatic bodies. In the following pages I bring to bear some locations of somatic concern in Beauvoir, these moments, I argue are located clandestinely in her literary theory and criticism. Following upon Beauvoir's own stated preference to write literature over the production of philosophy, I suggest that Beauvoir's interest in real and lived experience orients her toward aesthetic methods where bodies, ideas, world, contingencies, and interruptions can be felt with in concord with the tense and contested *agon* of worldly experience. The feeling of experience is imperative to understanding Beauvoir's somatic theorizations of the body. By contrast with her philosophical discourses that portend to produce accounts of lived experience, Beauvoir's aesthetic turn proffers a feeling of experience, a more fluid, complex, and ambiguous presentation of experience, concepts, ideas, and actions. The opacity of Beauvoir's aesthetic feeling establishes groundwork to consider somatic bodily experiences of sensation, immediacy, and interruptions of consciousness. Through Beauvoir's literary theory, I expose a Beauvoir concerned with the role of affect, sensation, movement, space, and time on bodies and not specifically on conscious selves.

The formalist shift in Beauvoir's work from philosophical essay to literature resonates with Beauvoir's thematic concerns regarding systematization and the primacy of experience. Throughout Beauvoir's oeuvre, questions regarding the relationship between systematization and experience dominate. The ability of systems such as ideologies,

economies, political structures, filial association, and cultural and social practices to shape the experience of individuals resurfaces constantly in Beauvoir's work. A system's capacity to obscure experience is linked by Beauvoir with a constraint or denial of freedom. Her rejection of philosophical method ultimately reflects her disapproval of systems. Claiming that philosophy imposes ready-made values, limits, and ideas that detract from a metaphysics that prioritizes experience, Beauvoir switches to aesthetics to convey more accurately the immanence, precarity, and fragility of experience. By expressing a preference for what is felt over what is known, Beauvoir's literary criticism emphasizes action-oriented perception over knowledge-based approaches. Appealing to sensation allows immanence and contingency to disrupt, interrupt, modify, and recalibrate her account of experience. Such altercations bespeak Beauvoir's concerns about the precarity and fragility of experience and the mendacity of systems that universalize, idealize, and deny freedom.

Throughout this thesis, I advance that this methodological concern with experience as immediately lived, fragile, action-oriented, and contingent as having not benefited from being read in total consanguinity with phenomenological concern. Using Beauvoir's aesthetic theory as a guide I claim that this methodological rejection of systems as ontologically distorting echoes an earlier Bergsonian impulse in Beauvoir's work. Bergson's interest in perception as an action-oriented phenomenon and not as a form of epistemological knowledge resounds in Beauvoir's aesthetic accounts of sensation, reading, and imagination in *metaphysical literature*. Both Bergson and Beauvoir's apprehension regarding the relationship between systems and experience motivates a methodological orientation towards the immediate, contingent, and sensible. I will also

contend that this aesthetic interest in experience read as such leads her to produce a somatic account of political bodies that renders a contrary depiction of the relationship between embodied experience, subjectivity, and political structure.

Beauvoir's Somatic Bodies Re-Thinking Becoming

Aside from providing a rejoinder to theorists who critique Beauvoir for a lack of attention to the physiology of the body as more than situation, examining Beauvoir as a somatic political thinker provides a unique perspective on her theoretical contribution. Stressing the somatic in Beauvoir's orientation to bodies divulges a new Beauvoir accompanied with distinct, in some cases antithetic, bodily priorities. In some cases, her queries, skepticism, and ethical commitments are analogous to those stressed in traditional readings of Beauvoirian bodies. In other cases, a somatic approach better attends to axioms and methodological imperatives of Beauvoir's thoughts.

My reading of somaticism in Beauvoir emphasizes four interrelated somatic concerns. 1) There is no distinction between mind and body. Dualism does not account for the nebulous and corporeal experience of the body. 2) A somatic approach to political bodies embraces the immediacy and corporeal dimensions of action. It does not seek to depict action as a mediated and contemplative operation emanating solely from one's mental faculties or sense of self. In doing so action is read through the all-important Beauvoirian lens of experience. 3) Beauvoir's somatic approach places a premium on perception as an action oriented experience that acclimatizes and adjusts our senses of the world. This breaks with theorists who endeavor to know the world through perceiving it. 4) Somaticism seeks to engage in the world as a nebulous and desystematized assemblage. It challenges the conception that any uniform dictum on experience can be applied to

understanding the world. This includes but is not limited to deterministic, historicized, essentialized, and idealistic accounts of being.

All of these somatic precepts are tied together through a concern with contingent, interrupted, and fluid conceptions of politics. They iterate Beauvoir's enduring concern with experience and systematization, in all of its forms, ability to dictate experience, provide false senses of continuity, and deny the ambiguous components of lived experience. A somatic Beauvoir is attentive to sensorial and perceptory moments that interrupt images of experience as continuous and uninterrupted. In this way the somatic body poses a challenge to ideologized, historicized, deterministic, and universalized models of politics. Embodiment as it is traditionally read in Beauvoir, is not always consistent with the dystematized, immediate, and sensory presentation of bodies in Beauvoir's work. Phenomenological approaches to Beauvoir that have been rendered as situation, although highly critical of Cartesian dualism and a separation of self from body, nonetheless ascribe certain privileges on a consciousness that formulates a hierarchical relationship between the self and the body and the self and the world. For this reason, many critics of Beauvoir have noticed the tension between her total rejection of systems and her application of the phenomenological system of self/other, subject/object, one/other, immanence/transcendence onto all dimensions of experience.

Foremost, what is at stake in reading bodies somatically is a sense of what it means to be embodied beyond being located in a particular corpus. Somatic reading of Beauvoir turn to her most fundamental question on 'becoming' and reanimate this experiential discourse with notions of movement, immediacy, flesh, perception, and sensation. By doing so, they venture to establish immediate sensory phenomenon as tactile, kinesthetic,

and most importantly, integral to the composition of the world. In some instances, I show that the somatic better attends to an account of Beauvoir's ambiguity and that at the least, attending to a somatic Beauvoir enhances our understanding of the multifarious parts that constitute Beauvoir's politics of ambiguity, challenging the conception that bodies in Beauvoir's ambiguity are not merely subjects embodied by situation.³⁹

Toward a Theory of Somatic Bodies in Beauvoir's Aesthetics

In keeping with Beauvoir's own interdisciplinary theoretical approach, this thesis employs an assortment of cross-disciplinary literature and engages in theoretical conversation with a variety of forms, mediums, and genres. Pulling from the cognitive sciences, aesthetic criticism, film theory, and political theory I mobilize a theory of active somatic bodies in the Beauvoir, and consider how this conception provides a new outlook of bodies for contemporary political theory. The ambition of the next four chapters is to illustrate the intimate link between Beauvoir's overarching methodological concerns, her aesthetic criticism, and her account of somatic bodies.

In chapter 2, I place Beauvoir in conversation with her early philosophical interlocutor Henri Bergson. This chapter entitled "Beauvoir and Bergson: knowledge, bodies, and somatic approaches to politics" contends that Beauvoir's interconnected exploration of experience, science, and philosophy contains a deeper Bergsonian claim about somatic political experience. A comparative reading of Henri Bergson and Simone de Beauvoir's respective analyses of mid-nineteenth century French physiologist Claude Bernard discloses methodological similarities between the two thinkers by way of a shared critique of idealized and realistic knowledge as systematizing approaches. I argue that in both their assessments of Bernard's philosophy a rejection of systematization and a

preference for philosophy of experience excavates a somatic and sensorial model of political action. Linking this postulation with some of Bergson's claims in *Matter and Memory* reveals an active somaticism Beauvoir's thought, often obscured by what is wrongly assumed as a dogmatic emphasis on the idea of consciousness. Examining Bergson's theories of the body as a center for action and perception as a bodily action, offers a new theoretical paradigm to consider the somatic in Beauvoir's bodies. This mutual theorization of the limits of knowledge and systems, I argue, provides the groundwork for a theoretical transition toward the aestheticopolitical in Beauvoir's literary criticism. This chapter also reevaluates the portrayal of Bergson's philosophical influence on Beauvoir. Rather than read Bergson as a figure who modifies Beauvoir's later-formed phenomenological outlook on the self, I want to explore the ways in which Beauvoir submits an analogous reading of the body, one that hinges on the precariousness of the subject and body.

Picking up on the limits of knowledge and perception as a bodily phenomenon, I consider Beauvoir's literary criticism a wellspring for somaticism. Positioning Beauvoir within contemporary debates over sensorial and aesthetic politics, chapter 3, "Beauvoir's Political Imagination" examines the political potential of Beauvoir's characterization of the genre *metaphysical literature*. The contention is that Beauvoir's treatment of the active reader imagination, animated by the genre of *metaphysical literature*, offers to political theory a rich conception of political engagement that is receptive to immanence. Metaphysical literature potentially provides a model for political life as it draws the reader into an imaginary world wherein she experiences the multiple temporalities, ambiguities, disruptions and contingencies that characterize life, and does so through the engagement of

her own imaginary capacity. Invoking the imagination of readers, Beauvoir makes a political appeal to readers not only to acknowledge, but also to engage with, worldly immanence and turns us toward a sensorial political experience. Imagination draws our attention to the perceptory action involved in making sense and serves to highlight the impermanence and vicissitudes of our experience as readerly subjects. When employing our imaginations, we open ourselves to affects and interruptions that threaten the certitude of ourselves. To make the claim that Beauvoir's imagination articulates a sensory and somatic model of politics, I contrast it with Sartre's reading of detotalized totality and the imagination. I also consult contemporary theorists of the imagination such as Linda Zerilli, Jason Frank, and Martha Nussbaum, to situate Beauvoir's imaginary contributions within the larger debate on the imagination as a political apparatus and action.

Two major features distinguish part one (chapters 2, 3) from part two (chapters 4, 5). First, a methodological turn occurs between historical analyses to contemporary utilization. Having located and articulated the domain of somaticism and somatic concerns in Beauvoir's earlier work, Chapters 4 and 5 switch from the conduct of historical political inquiry to the application of Beauvoir's somatic outlook in some pressing debates in contemporary political theory. Second, chapters 4 and 5, however ambitiously, attempt an integration of Beauvoir's somatic concerns alongside her more ethically oriented embodied situation. Noting that in Beauvoir's actual work, the distinction between these two approaches is often unclear and that more often than not she strives to integrate them, chapters 3 and 4 aim to read both approaches together while at the same time. The contention is that reading both versions together results in a reading more accurate to

Beauvoir's multidimensional style, one more useful for political and theoretical commitments.

Chapter 4, entitled "Using *The Second Sex* for Film Analysis: Corporeal Time, Technique, and Ambiguity," continues with Beauvoir's reading of somaticism in aesthetic mediums by considering time experienced somatically as a filmic technique. This chapter stages two conversations. The first dialogue occurs between Beauvoir and contemporary political theorists working on film. Attending to the lack of specific attention given to animate bodies in political film theory, the chapter places Beauvoir's technical reading of bodies that experience time into conversation with the recent endeavors in film and political theory that interpret the relationship between the technical components of filmmaking and micropolitics. I argue that Beauvoir's somatic account of time experienced and sensed by the body challenges conventional readings of time. Additionally, Beauvoir makes a contribution to this affective model of theorizing filmic micropolitics through her analysis corporeal experience as micropolitical phenomenon. At the same time, Beauvoir points to the immanent components of time refusing a definition of time that is understandable or rational. Drawing from William Connolly's work on film and technique, I argue that Beauvoir's time is a political technique by which to understand micropolitics. In the last section of this paper, I will examine how Beauvoir's theorizations may provide a filmic interpretation of time as a kind of ambiguity and micropolitics, one that is particularly useful in denoting how individuals establish and deny freedom through their dealings with time. To do so, I will consider how Beauvoir's political time operates as a technique in Chantal Ackerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai de Commerce 1080 Bruxelles*. The second conversation takes place between the somatic reading of Beauvoir expounded

in previous chapters and the Beauvoir's phenomenological magnum opus, *The Second Sex*. In this chapter, I revisit the *Second Sex*'s traditional interpretation of the exposition on embodiment and undertake a reading of the *Second Sex* that is more sympathetic to a somatic Beauvoir.

Returning to the scientific inquiries that inaugurated an examination of Beauvoir as a somatic political thinker, "Beauvoir Minds Neuroscience" examines what contributions both critical and positive Beauvoir has to make by way of not only her immediate, sensorial, action-oriented somaticism but also her traditional theorization of embodiment as situated freedom. Contemporizing Beauvoir, I place her into the current debate over affect theory's, particularly the strain that employs cognitive and neurological science, utility in creating new theories of politics and political bodies. Engaging with the neuropolitical theorists and their critics, I conclude not by advancing the somatic Beauvoir over the Beauvoir that makes use of situated view of bodies, but by combining both readings. Amalgamating these two conceptions of the body, we gain a more holistic sense of Beauvoir's corporeal politics. Furthermore, reading these Beauvoirs in cooperation offers a rejoinder to critics of affect theory who deride its determinism, desituatedness, or apolitical turn to ontology while still producing a positive account of somaticism in the concept of situated political freedom.

2 | Beauvoir and Bergson: knowledge, bodies, and somatic approaches to politics

“In no age has science considered itself as partial and lacunary; without believing itself to be definitive, it has however, always wanted to be a total expression of the world, and it is in its totality that in each age it again raises the question of its own validity”- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

Introduction

In her *Memoirs*, Beauvoir famously rejects the philosophical methodology of Bergson in favor of literature as terrain for metaphysical inquiry and politics. She writes: “I toyed with the idea of writing; I preferred literature to philosophy, and I wouldn’t have been pleased at all if someone had prophesized that I would become a kind of female Bergson; I didn’t want to speak with that abstract voice which, whenever I heard it, failed to move me⁴⁰”. Although Beauvoir’s claim seems like a total repudiation of philosophy, Beauvoir never ceased to partake in philosophical discourse. In this claim, Beauvoir exposes her affinities for a philosophical method that restrains from the use of abstraction but not from the practice of philosophy at large. In the sentence that follows Beauvoir claims that she “wanted to communicate my experience” (MDD, Beauvoir, 208). In this chapter I will draw out Beauvoir’s skepticism on philosophical abstraction and claim that Beauvoir’s agnosticism toward philosophy and Bergson ironically discloses methodological similarities between the two thinkers. By examining the influence Bergson’s empirical methodological disquisition had on Beauvoir, I wish to suggest that Beauvoir’s rejection of idealistic and realistic models of knowledge, read here as abstract, contribute to her emphasis on the body as a singularly perceptive agent and not solely a traditional exemplification of phenomenological consciousness.

To establish the methodological similarities between Bergson and Beauvoir, I turn to their respective writings on French physiologist Claude Bernard.⁴¹ Bernard's interventions into debates on vitalism and scientific method garnered attention from both Beauvoir and Bergson for their receptiveness to an experiential metaphysical outlook, their rejection of mind/body dualism, and a methodological affinity for lived reality. While the intellectual association between Bernard and Bergson is well established, Beauvoir's theoretical relationship to the sensorial scientific approach has been under evaluated. As thinkers invested in the relationship between bodies and experience, both Beauvoir and Bergson offer insight into the active dimensions of bodily politics. I want to suggest that the primacy of experience and the acknowledgement of experienced limits lead Beauvoir and Bergson to not only make comparable claims about the methods by which philosophy is conducted, but to practice philosophy themselves with methodological similarities. These two parts of Bernard's philosophical outlook are shepherding principles that move Bergson and Beauvoir from the abstract towards a bodily politics.

This chapter is driven by two interrelated theoretical ambitions. The first is a historical claim that establishes the relationship between Bergson and Beauvoir beyond that of an early philosophical influence. Through examining the mutual points made by Beauvoir and Bergson related to Bernard, I claim that Beauvoir's methodological turn to immediate experience echoes Bergson's notion of experiential perception. Demonstrating these relationships I posit a somatic-political claim about the use of bodies as a shared methodological approach born out of the rejection of abstract disembodied notions of knowledge and being. This holds political significance, I'll argue, because it diversifies Beauvoir's use of the body to portend to phenomenological experience and gestures us

towards a somatic reading of Beauvoirian politics. As I demonstrated in the introductory chapter, Beauvoir's potential to theorize the body as an active, perceptive, and fluid component of political life has been under utilized.

In what follows, I place Beauvoir and Bergson into conversation on the notion of a somatic political experience. The first section theorizes the importance of immediacy and experience as a critique of abstract knowledge through an examination of Bernard. Section two examines Beauvoir's philosophical method in light of Bergson's critique of realist and idealist models of perception in his seminal *Matter and Memory*. Drawing from Bergson's claim that these paradigms are united by a reduction of perception and knowledge and not action based, I venture that this similarity not only alters how Beauvoir's Bergsonian influence has been traditionally understood, but also opens the possibility of a critique of Beauvoir's notion of phenomenological consciousness. Consequently, this allows for a consideration of the active body in Beauvoirian politics. In the final portion of this paper, I will consider how Beauvoir through her Bergsonian assessment of somatic experience in Bernard offers something to the renewed interest in an action-oriented model of political bodies. Looking to Beauvoir, we may be able to answer a question posed by critics of affect theory and the neuro-bio-logical, what does it mean to be embodied?⁴²

The Somatic: Between Knowledge and Bodies

Beauvoir has become a prominent thinker on bodies for feminist theorists looking to centralize the body as a component of gender and sexual politics. Beauvoir has been both denigrated and celebrated for her analysis of the female body. Particularly feminists who desire to read the body outside of its biological objectivism have adopted her phenomenological approach. Iris Marion Young, for example, looks to Beauvoir to

exculpate the body as a subjective corporeal consciousness that is in constant relation to the conditioning of situation, primarily, class, race, and gender. At the same time Beauvoir has been criticized for what is assumed to be an antithetical position toward sexual difference ensconced in female body. In spite of abundant attention given to Beauvoir as a theorist of embodiment, an ironic lack of examination has been done to define precisely what is meant by Beauvoir's theorization of the body. This chapter is an attempt to rectify the dearth of serious investigation of Beauvoirian body-politics. These contrasting interpretations are united in their neglect of the creative and vital elements of the Beauvoir's description of the body.

Thus, this chapter posits a question as to whether Beauvoir's articulation of the body as a component of a subjective embodied consciousness is undermined, if only momentarily, by alternative theorizations of bodily action, movement, and perception. If it is challenged in particular instances by a more vital and material articulation, which I will argue it in fact is, what sorts of political configurations of the body are now accessible to us through Beauvoir's analysis? Part of this chapter's intention is to challenge the underlying presumption that Beauvoir is not invested in somatic philosophical discourses. By suggesting that her concentration on the body supersedes the orthodox phenomenological definition of bodies, I want to render a new idea of perception as a somatic experience in Beauvoir.

The complexity of Beauvoir's corporeal politics is evidenced by a strong somatic impulse in her work. I use the term somatic to express a model of bodily politics that fundamentally rejects mind/body dualism. In doing so it considers embodiment to be an immediate phenomenon, it refuses an understanding of the body as an *a priori* to consciousness. Drawing from affect theory, it portends that kinesthetic experience affects both the body and mind in a visceral and simultaneous manner. Somatic markers, studied by neuroscientist Antonio Damasio and political theorist William Connolly, suggest that a loss of affective and sensorial indicators, such as olfactory, visual, and audible, dramatically alters our sense of being, in spite of fully functional analytical reasoning.⁴³ This follows on Edward Slingerland's implementation of somatic theory into cognitive linguistics, which portends-- "the primary purpose of achieving human scale is not to help us *apprehend* a situation, but rather to help us to know how to *feel* about it."⁴⁴ Connolly defines the somatic marker's political definition as "a culturally mobilized, corporeal disposition through which affect-imbued, preliminary orientations to perception and judgment scale down the material factored into cost-benefit analyses, principled judgments, and reflective experiments."⁴⁵ By turning away from rationalism and knowledge, perception is complicated in Beauvoir by attention to proto-conscious bodily phenomenon.⁴⁶ This ought not be read as an apolitical claim about determinacy or an excuse of responsibility, but as Connolly suggests as a reminder of inter-subjective limitation and a factor that begets inclusion into our thinking about political phenomenon.

Once somatic markers are added to your ledger, both rational-choice theory and the reduction of culture to an underplayed set of intersubjective concepts and beliefs are thrown into jeopardy. Culturally preorganized charges shape perception and judgment in ways that exceed the picture of the world supported by the models of calculative reason, intersubjective culture, and deliberative democracy. They show us how linguistically

complex brain regions respond not only to events in the world but also, proprioceptively, to cultural habits, skills, memory traces, and affects mixed into our muscles, skin, gut, and cruder brain regions⁴⁷

Much work has already been conducted to establish the link between Bergsonianism and affective somatic discourses.⁴⁸ This chapter's intent is not to further prove Bergson's preemptive relation to somaticism, but to consider how Beauvoir's somatic moments are motivated by Bergsonian methodological affinity for thinking about immediacy and experience as philosophical and political. For Beauvoir, the question of somaticism is intimately related to knowledge as experiential, a contention that heavily resembles Bergson.

Returning to Beauvoir's statement illustrating a preference for literature and aesthetic politics, the question arises, why turn to an early writing of Beauvoir's on Bernard's physiology. By comparing Beauvoir's appraisal of Bernard with that of Bergson's, the contention is that Beauvoir's receptiveness to experience, sensation, and affect is an instance where Bergson's initial philosophical footprint is visible in Beauvoir's later aesthetic work. The question of seeing and feeling experience, intangible and unavailable to a philosophical discourse, translates into her aesthetic works and consequently remains a central component of her politics. Following Margaret Simons' claim that "the essay on Claude Bernard provides unique evidence of one of Beauvoir's early philosophical awakenings, while also shedding light, as we shall argue, on the development of her philosophical methodology, subjects that receive a cursory and sometimes misleading treatment in her *Memoirs*."⁴⁹ In what follows, I suggest Bergson's and Beauvoir's criticism of abstract intelligence and shared methodological approach underlies a somatic approach to experience in both thinkers.⁵⁰

Methodological Inquiry as Experience

Bergson writes, “What philosophy owes above all to Claude Bernard is the theory of experimental method.⁵¹” One important point that unites Beauvoir’s and Bergson’s attempts to extract philosophical value from Bernard’s writings is a shared concentration on the role and content of methodology. Bergson’s and Beauvoir’s interest in Bernard’s methodology is twofold. Both thinkers are concerned with the significance of Bernard’s methodological approach to studying the body through experiment. In addition, they are intrigued by Bernard’s choice to treat experimentation as a question of methodology. Throughout Beauvoir’s and Bergson’s respective essays both appraise and situate the philosophical contributions of Bernard through his advocacy of a new scientific methodology of experimentation. The anti-teleological and non-abstracted orientation to philosophy, which becomes shared cite of endorsement for Beauvoir and Bergson, is derived from a methodological shift toward experience in Bernard’s experimental method. My claim is that Beauvoir’s and Bergson’s focus on Bernard’s methodology as an expository theoretical tool is intentional and is indicative of their agnate claims about philosophical experience.

Bernard’s introduction to *An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* lays out the reasoning behind his decision to concentrate on experimentation as a method. According to Bernard, concentration on method exculpates both the philosophical and empirical dimensions of scientific experiment. It rejects a realist claim that experimentation is founded in tangible component of reason, but also exhibits hostility towards treating methodology as an entirely philosophical question. The central claim of Bernard’s decision to examine experimentation as a methodology is the acknowledgment

of situation, contingency, and experience as critical variables. Because Bernard places the study of experimental method as an alternative to procedural realistic scientific experiment and to philosophical experimentation, it exists in a space of experiential phenomenon.

Bernard writes,

scientific medicine, like the other science can be established only by experimental means, i.e., by direct and rigorous application of reasoning to the facts furnished by observation and experiment. Consider in itself, the experimental method is nothing but reasoning by those whose help we methodically submit our ideas to experience,-- the experience of facts...experimentation is undeniably harder in medicine than in any other science; but for that reason it was never so necessary, and indeed so indispensable...but before going into general considerations and special descriptions of the operative procedure proper to each of this division, I deem it useful to give a few explanations in this introduction in relation to the theoretic and philosophic side of the method which this book, after all, treats merely on its practical side⁵²

Bernard's investigation into methodology ought not be read as a rejection of philosophical inquiry nor as an endorsement for a quantitative and realist based approach to science.

Bernard claims that his "single aim is, and has always been, to make the well-known principles of the experimental method pervade medical science" (Bernard SEM 3). In fact, Bernard's claims of experimentation intend to situate experimental method in-between realism and idealism as equally abstract methods.

What Beauvoir and Bergson both seize upon is a notion of methodology that is rooted in experience rather than idealistic or realistic abstraction. In Bergson's closing remarks regarding Bernard's method he celebrates the renunciation of systematization by quoting one of the final paragraphs of *Introduction to Experimental Medicine*,

One of the greatest obstacles encountered in this general and free progression of human knowledges is the tendency which leads the various forms of knowledge to become individualized into systems...systems tend to enslave the human mind...we must try to break free from the fetters of philosophical and scientific systems...philosophy and science should not be systematic (HB quoting CB in SEM)

Bringing methodology into question, Bernard is able to expose the epistolary and metaphysical claims that underwrite scientific endeavor, while remaining considerate to the “precautions to be taken in their [experimental methods] application, because of the very special complexity of the phenomena of life” (Bernard SEM 3). Consider Beauvoir and Bergson’s confirmation of Bernard’s foundational consideration on methodology. Bergson writes that the principle contribution of Bernard’s was to “show us *how* the fact and idea collaborate in experimental research” (Bergson PCB 171, my emphasis). Bergson mirrors this claim by insisting that when he “speaks of the philosophy of Claude Bernard, I am not alluding to that metaphysics of life people thought they found in his writings and which was perhaps quite far from his thought,” rather Bergson locates Bernard’s philosophical claim with a “conception of truth” revealed through the methodology of his “creative and organizing idea” of scientific experimental method (HB PCB 172-173). Bernard “seeks less to define life than to define the science of life” (HB PCB 127). Following upon Bernard’s insistence that methodological experimentation exists in an experiential realm, Bergson calls Bernard’s analysis a “happy combination of spontaneity and reflection, of science and philosophy” (Bergson PCB 171). Beauvoir echoes Bergson, by using Bernard’s quote “in relation to the theoretic and philosophic sides of the method” as the place where Bernard defines his work⁵³.

Why for Beauvoir and Bergson is scientific methodology important for metaphysical inquiry? In this piece I suggest that this blurring of genre and form in method represents a larger commitment on both Beauvoir's and Bergson's part to situate all metaphysical inquiry on the level of experience and to thusly reject systematized approaches to study which dislocate it into abstract situations. Here Beauvoir and Bergson recall the skepticism of Bernard's regarding the limits of knowledge located outside of experience as an embodied, contingent, and lived practice. All three thinkers aim at divorcing a conception of philosophy as abstraction and of philosophy as systematizing.

It is not incidental that Beauvoir and Bergson pick up on Bernard as a methodologist specifically. In their respective oeuvre both Beauvoir and Bergson deconstruct, modify, and relocate their work to actualize a methodological practice that places priority on theorizing experience. In the next section, I will argue that Bernard's methodological approach appeals to Beauvoir and Bergson for two reasons. First, Bernard's theorization of experimental knowledge as experience-based becomes the site for a shared critique by Beauvoir and Bergson about the limits of abstract philosophy and systematization. Employing a methodological critique both thinkers bring into view how particular methodologies that defy the primacy of experience, misrepresent phenomenon in potentially deleterious ways. Second, because Bernard's method is positioned on the level of lived experience, it creates a positive account for immediacy, limitation, and the sensorial useful for somatic political thinking. This claim challenges the traditional theorization of Beauvoir and Bergson as thinkers who fail to produce positive accounts of political life.

Beauvoir and Bergson on Bernard's *An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*

Beauvoir and Bergson both share a commitment to a philosophy conducted on the grounds of experience. Although they differ on what experience is constituted by or how precisely it is lived, their mutual affinity for lived reality as the grounds for philosophical methods augurs a shift towards somaticism. However, such a claim only scratches the surface of common philosophical prerogatives held by Bergson and Beauvoir. Operating on the level of methodological analysis, I aim to show how a similar methodological approach towards knowledge, bodies, and perception, discloses the positive resources for a somatic politics.

Beauvoir's attraction to Bernard as a theoretician lies in his attempts to analyze the lived practices of experimental method. In her introduction to the study, Beauvoir claims that Bernard's major contribution to "considering the difficulties of experimental reasoning" is an "attempt to "study the role played by observation and experimentation, and then the importance of preconceived ideas and doubt" (SCB 23). What Beauvoir chooses to stress in Bernard is telling for her own philosophical development. Rather than attend to questions of ideology, material, or structure directly, she concerns herself with how particular situational factors complicate experimentation and phenomenon—while these complications are located on ideological, material, and structural levels, they are in and of themselves in a constant and contingent relationship with experience.

Beauvoir's and Bernard's refusal to establish an intractable boundary between observation and experimentation evidences a critique of abstract knowledge. In assessing the respective roles played by observation and experimentation in experimental method Beauvoir acknowledges, like Bernard, that the two terms operate as separate and distinct phenomenon. Beauvoir writes, "Observation and experimentation are the only means that man possesses for gaining knowledge of phenomena. The first reveals their existence, and the second uncovers their signification" (SB SCB 24). This follows upon Bernard claim that "observation shows, and experiment teaches" (SEM CB 5). However, both thinkers reject the dualistic relationship between experimentation and observation and posit such a relationship as an "arbitrary distinction" that encumbers the study of phenomenon (SB SCB 24). Beauvoir maintains that, "Bernard shows by examples that this separation, which is so clear in theory, is difficult or impossible in practice" (SB SCB 24). When the terminology of experimentation is lived the categories are porous; what is assumed to be passive may take on active dimensions.

Beauvoir stresses that randomness and contingency as lived factors bollix activity and passivity in the definition of observation and experiment. Challenging the work of pyhsiologists Zimmerman and Cuvier who define "the observer...to be passive in the production of phenomena while the experimenter is said to take an active part in it," Beauvoir reifies that systematized definitions cannot abrogate the multiple variables intrinsic to lived experience (SB SCB 24). "There are active as well as passive observations," Beauvoir writes, "since some are made randomly and others are made in order to verify the accuracy of what has been hypothesized. Likewise, certain experiments are passive; the activity of the experimenter does not always intervene" (SB SCB 24).

When experienced in reality, “observation and experiment cannot be distinguished” within scientific investigation as both are “merely facts brought to light by investigation” (SB SCB 24). If scientific method is to attempt to explain phenomena as it occurs, it cannot operate by establishing an ends of abstract experimental knowledge.

Beauvoir’s assessment of Bernardian critique of observation and experiment suggests a rejection of abstract and systematized approaches to knowledge. Ultimately, both Beauvoir and Bernard reject these categories entirely. Beauvoir’s claim that these “definitions are false because of the meaning of the two words “observation” and “experiment” are too restricted” mirrors Bernard’s objection to the terms as narrow words that serve as “two opposite extremes of experimental reasoning” (SB SCB 24 and CB SEM 10). The extremities of the terms do not reflect the ambiguity and permeability of the terms as lived. Beauvoir’s dismissal of observation and experiment as dyadic categories resonates with her preference for experiential epistemological and ontological methods. Like Bernard, Beauvoir maintains that epistemological action cannot occur in the abstract. Knowledge cannot be de-ontological, as it is always subject to the contingencies of situation and experience, as well as the spontaneity of chance. The narrowness of the terms, according to Beauvoir, leaves no opportunity for change. Beyond that, it perniciously removes experimentation from reality. Beyond falsifying experience, Beauvoir’s later work attends to the ways abstract epistemological methods can obscure and misrepresent lived experience to edify institutions, structures, concepts, and ideas. “Experience” Beauvoir remarks is the “instruction given by life” (SB SCB 24). Margaret Simons argues that Beauvoir’s essay picks up on a “rejection of “scholasticism,”

“immutable truths,” and “philosophical system building”” evident in her later work (Simons 18).

Challenging the methodology of his predecessors, the experimental method developed by Bernard stresses the difference between gaining experience and a relying on observation from the making of one’s own experiments and observations.⁵⁴ The critical difference between the former, which are Bernard’s criterion for experimentation, and the latter, advocated by Bernard’s contemporaries, is that gaining experience and relying on observation demand an emphasis on the contingency of experience. What is observable in the moment of experimentation supersedes the authority of theories. Experimentation is in essence observable experience, not the practice of observing a hypothesis.⁵⁵ Bernard defines experience as “knowledge gained in the practice of life” (CB 11 SEM). Scientific methodology occurs in situated moments and thus must be treated as a measure of experience. Bernard writes,

In experimental medicine, we shall use the word experience in the same general sense in which it is still everywhere used. Men of science learn every day from experience; by experience they constantly correct their scientific ideas, their theories; rectify them, bring them into harmony...by the experimental method, we simply make a judgment on the facts around us, by help of a criterion which is itself just another fact so arranged as to control the judgment and to afford experience. Taken in this general sense, experience is the one source of human knowledge (SEM CB 12).

Making observations and experiments, by contrast, necessitates abandoning experience as the foreground of experimentation and ergo, eradicating doubt from the experimental method. By situating knowledge on the level of abstract truths one is able to make observations and experiments.

Beauvoir's analysis of Bernard emphasizes the prominence of doubt and epistemological limitation in the experimental method. Because the experimental method is rooted in experience, it acknowledges and is constrained by certain situated and empirical limitations. Most prominently, Beauvoir establishes the role of doubt in the work of experimentation. "The experimental method adds nothing to this idea; it only can direct and develop the idea, which is the basis of science... a fact or discovery has value only insofar as it suggests an idea...in order to attain this result, the scientist must conserve a great freedom of mind founded in philosophic doubt" (SB SCB 26). Certainty in any form of knowledge or reason produces a closed result—"when the starting point of a reasoning is absolute, one must accept its conclusions, but here the starting point is always doubtful" (SB SCB 26). Beauvoir makes an ironic argument by implying that the acknowledgement of doubt as an epistolar feature of experience allows for more interpretive freedom. This is because Beauvoir does not equate doubt with skepticism. By contrast with skepticism, which caulks what is available to us by way of philosophical analysis, doubt accepts our limitations, as a means to theorize without the possibility of constructing systems that reciprocally limit the extent of our inquiry.

Introducing Bergson's writing on Bernard complicates our reading of Beauvoir's understanding of philosophical method. Despite her definitive rejection of Bergsonian vitalism and philosophy, as a totalizing ontological system, the resemblance Bergson's and Beauvoir's analysis of Bernard suggests a shared outlook on the conduct of philosophical experimentation. Bergson's exploration of Bernard's philosophical import broaches analogous subjects to that of Beauvoir. His attention to the situation of knowledge and the primacy of experience posited in Bernard's work complicates our understanding of the

depths of Beauvoir's and Bergson's methodological disagreements. Furthermore, Beauvoir's and Bergson's shared methodological evaluation discloses the same conclusion regarding why an experiential method is best for philosophy. Bergson's partiality towards experiential forms of knowledge that do not endorse or organize systematic epistolar, ontological, and political regimes anticipates Beauvoir's identical conclusion. This is the very conclusion that leads her to reject philosophy as a disembodied positivistic systematizing method and form. Ergo, we may anticipate Beauvoir's turn from philosophy as a Bergsonian movement.

Rejecting the relocating of experimental and observational knowledge to abstract levels, Bergson extols Bernard's ability to locate the purpose of scientific work on level of experience. Bergson first attempts to locate Bernard's contributions within the "creative and organizing" disciplines of physiology, philosophy, chemistry, and physics (HB PCB 174). Discussing Bernard's rejection of vitalism, his assertion that physiology is a rigorous science, and his defense for a different methodological criterion for physiology from the other physical sciences, Bergson locates Bernard's contribution as more philosophically consequential than the empirical compilation of "determining the conditions of experimental physiology" (HB PCB 174). Bergson writes, "if Claude Bernard did not give us and did not wish to give us a metaphysics of life, there is, present in the whole of his work, a certain general philosophy whose influence will probably be more lasting and more profound than that of any particularly theory could have been" (HB PCB 174).

What Bergson speaks of is a restructuring of the ambitions of philosophical discourse. Bergson describes the traditional ambitions of philosophical inquiry and method as the ‘reconstruction of thought’ by “resources of reasoning alone” (HB PCB 174). Knowledge is an objective of idea to be possessed in the service of constructed systems, ideals, and ways of being. Under this understanding, “nature would thus be a collection of laws inserted one into the other according to the principles of human logic; and these laws would be there, ready-made, internal to things” (HB PCB 175). This renunciation of an abstract knowledge echoes Beauvoir’s concerns about the abstract knowledge’s inability to speak to lived experience.⁵⁶ Bergson anticipates Beauvoir by suggesting that theoretical models of knowledge, ideal or realistic, construe experience to correspond with an ideal.

By bringing experimental inquiry to the level of experiential observation Bernard has offered a methodology that “is a protest against [the] conception of facts and laws” (HB PCB 175). Bernard reorients us away from abstract knowledge and toward experience by suggesting an employment of “observation and experiment to our assistance” (HB PCB 175). When we transcend our emphasis on abstract reason as the aim of philosophy we are inclined to theorize experience with limitation and doubt. Bernard writes,

What is absurd in our eyes is not necessarily so in the eyes of nature: let us try the experiment and if the hypothesis I verified it will of necessity become clearer and more intelligible the more the facts constrain us to become familiar with it. But let us also remember that an idea, no matter how flexible we may have made it, will never have the same flexibility as a thing (HB PCB 175).

Like Beauvoir, Bergson’s primary valuation of what Bernard brings to bear on philosophical method is an acknowledgement of the fragility and doubt philosophical method must account for-- the impermanence of theories, the inflexibility of ideas, and an eye towards not only rejecting systematization but also the importance of the aim of de-

systematizing. Bergson concludes his assessment of a Bernardian influenced philosophical method as one that can only benefit from active desystematization: “as a philosophy is developed, capable of following concrete reality in all its sinuosities. We shall no longer witness a succession of doctrines each one of which, to be chosen or discarded at will, claims to embrace the totality of things in simple formulas” (HB PCB 176). Bergson’s choice to describe philosophy as ‘following’ the sinuosity of reality is telling. Rather than claim knowledge as a mental possession altering the world, he implies a more reciprocal relationship between knowledge and external experience.

Because both thinkers seek to escape theoretical dualism by locating their respective methods on the level of experience, Beauvoir and Bergson respectively anticipate the turn to active and affective bodies stressed by somatic political discourse. More generally, these two seemingly different theorists are focused on scientific experimentation conducted through a focus on the body as somatic. Scientific method, by avoiding prior assumption, does not discount the observation’s embodied bias, which provides a limited knowledge; it embraces a turn that is crucial for somatic political action. Thus, knowledge can never be pure, objective, abstract, de-ontological, etc. The somatic impulse in experimentation does not, however, discredit its contribution as a creative world-affirming endeavor.

Bergsonian Leanings in Beauvoir: Matter and Memory

Building upon the claim that Beauvoir’s treatment of Bernard echoes a Bergsonian evaluation of philosophical method, here I suggest that Bergson’s skepticism about knowledge as an epistemology resonates in Beauvoir’s reading of bodies. Bergson’s seminal *Matter and Memory* that undertakes the function of memory in associational life is

also rich with ontological fodder about the relationship between knowledge and the body. To establish the claims Bergson will make later in the text, he first attends to the reception of knowledge by our bodies. Bergson offers a critique of both idealized and realistic models of knowledge that echoes the prior concerns expressed in this chapter about systematized knowledge. By reading Bergson's account of bodily participation in knowledge as an anti-systematic ontology, we may get a sense of what sort of role the body plays in an experiential politics.

Bergson claims that the dualistic relationship between mind and body is an artificial consequence of realistic and idealistic epistemologies. Between idealistic and realistic epistemological paradigms, the relationship between mind and matter is constituted by a dyadic relationship between brain and body. Idealistic models that claim the mind is superior and that the world exists in our head, it cannot supersede our internal representations. This is the position best epitomized by the idealism of Kant. By contrast, realistic models stress that our knowledge is a function, "perception occurs as function of our brains and the body's neuro-chemical circuitry, which responds to elements of the empirical world" (Guerlac 107). Bergson depicts the realistic model of perception as starting "from the universe, that is to say from an aggregate of images governed, as to their mutual relations, by fixed laws, in which effects are in strict proportion to their causes, and of which the character is an absence of center" (HB MM 14). Our insistence to prioritize body or mind is a function of an epistemological imperative in both models. Both models, as Bergson sees them "share the assumption: that perception occurs in the service of truth or knowledge about the empirical world" (Guerlac 107). "If we look closely at the two doctrines," Bergson writes, "we shall discover in them a common postulate which we may

formulate thus: *perception has a wholly speculative interest; it is pure knowledge*” (HB MM17). Bergson maintains that epistemological models goad us toward both mind/body dualism and the evaluation of being as contained by a particular system. Bergson scholar Suzanne Guerlac claims, Bergson, “is not committed to the mind/body dualism *per se*; that is he is not interested in choosing one term to dominate the other. He is interested in exploring the *relation* between the two terms, as the subtitle of the book indicates: “Essay on the Relation of the Body to Mind” (Guerlac 107).

Examining *Matter and Memory* alongside Bergson’s theorization of Bernard proposes one potential avenue for the application of Bergson and Beauvoir’s theorization about a philosophical methodology attentive to doubt, de-sytematization, and experience. Considering action as the primary intention of perception reorients our opinions on the body to constitute a new image of somatic politics, one that includes both mind and body cooperating simultaneously characterized by a non-hierarchical relationship. By turning toward action, knowledge as a systematized regime no longer determines experience. Additionally, sensation, affect, and sensorial data are introduced to the register of experience, and are recognized as definitive subjects open for philosophical inquiry.

Somatic Impulses in Beauvoir and Bergson

Margaret Simons’ work on Beauvoir’s early philosophical writings concentrates on locating the phenomenological themes, questions, and approaches that structure and define her later work. Simons’ articles seek to connect the philosophical work of Bergson and Beauvoir by stressing mutual affinities for consciousness and the immediacy of experience. In doing so they depict Beauvoir’s phenomenological approach as indebted to certain Bergsonian traditions. Similarly, Simons’ introduction to Beauvoir’s analysis of

Bernard suggests that doubt, anti-systematization, and the “value of discovering the external world” are themes in Beauvoir’s early thought that remain prominent throughout Beauvoir’s phenomenological oeuvre⁵⁷. Simons articulates that Beauvoir’s analysis of Bernard identifies constitutive elements of Beauvoir’s later phenomenological approach to philosophy writing, “Beauvoir’s attempt to integrate science and phenomenology, an attempt assisted by her earlier familiarity with Bernard’s account of the subjective elements in scientific discovery, is more evident in her post-World War II writings on racism and feminism⁵⁸.” In one example, Simons’ claims that “Bernard’s account of scientific discovery, where he argues that discovers are not engendered by reason...anticipates [Beauvoir’s] phenomenological focus on embodiment and the subjective element in the disclosure of the world⁵⁹.”

Here I wish to offer a contrary, but complimentary, reading wherein I suggest that Beauvoir’s theorization of Bernard is not an indication of her earlier phenomenological approach, but in fact an exposition of the limits of phenomenological method which prioritizes consciousness within structural orderings. Simons’ rightly identifies the themes that course through Beauvoir’s body of work, however, identifying them within the phenomenological tradition may in fact undermine the extent to which Beauvoir was able to deconstruct particular systems. Similarly, locating Beauvoir’s theorizations of the body within the domain of phenomenological tradition invites a specific understanding of embodiment that Beauvoir herself is constantly challenging, deconstructing, and attempting to locate and understand in light of particular systems. This speaks to a tension raised by many Beauvoir scholars about Beauvoir’s cultivation of particular systems dyads

within the phenomenological tradition (self/other, immanence/transcendence, different categories of men in the EoA) and her methodological intent to deconstruct systems.

My intent is not to claim that Beauvoir is not a phenomenologist or that she has mis-categorized the tenure of her work. Alternatively, I wish to suspend our focus on categorization within tradition and in place of this consider Beauvoir's contributions to a somatic discourse through her reading of Bernard. Beauvoir's reading of Bernard exposes a different concern one influenced by Bergsonian philosophies interest in experiential and somatic political experience. By doing so, I claim that Beauvoir's early interest in de-systematization is not best served through her phenomenological reading of the body, but rather by the somatic reading evinced in her Bergsonian evaluation of Bernard.

Furthermore, the reduction of Beauvoirian body to solely the conscious mind, may endorse a dualistic vision of mind/body relations that Beauvoir was skeptical of at points.

Beauvoir's analysis of Bernard offers to us an opportunity to theorize Beauvoir with some critical distance from the phenomenological category and conversely to locate somatic concerns in her early work that may resurface throughout her theoretical endeavors. Her focus on methodological theorization of bodies, perception, and action reveals a Beauvoir uninvolved with consciousness or phenomenological theorizations of self whilst still theorizing the detriment of systematizing thought and the centrality of bodies and experience.

Consider Beauvoir's depiction of doubt in Bernard, which attends to the importance of a subject's perception sans immersion in phenomenological nomenclature or onomastic categories. A closer look at Beauvoir's writings reveals an absence of

phenomenological framework consistent with her skepticism of philosophical systems, Beauvoir writes,

one must believe in science, which is the absolute and necessary relation of things, yet be convinced that we have only an imperfect knowledge of this relation. When the starting point of reason is absolute, one must accept its conclusions but here the starting point is always doubtful, and consequently reasoning guides us but does not impose its consequences on us. If we discover a new fact, we must never reject it under the pretext that it contradicts it (SB SCB 26)

The absence of categories of self, consciousnesses, and other in her analysis of experimental doubt emphasize experience and desystematization. Moreover, Beauvoir's early work exposes a foundation by which to theorize Beauvoir's phenomenological embodiment as only a partial reading of the body's classification in Beauvoir.

This passage illustrates the somatic potential for Beauvoir's politics because of its appreciation of the limits of perception as type of knowledge. Beauvoir's somatic account of doubt coincides with the somatic accounts of the body in Bergson's assessment of Bernard and *Matter and Memory*. Beauvoirian doubt, by insisting we must approach experimentation from the vantage of "imperfect knowledge," concedes to the action oriented aims of experimentation and perception that transcend the mind/body pretensions of idealism and realism. To that end, Beauvoir establishes the same conclusions as Bergson regarding the location of action-oriented doubt in philosophical method. Bergson's extrapolated lesson from Bernard also concerns the necessarily application of somatic doubt in philosophical endeavors,

We shall no longer say, "nature is one, and we are going to seek to among the ideas we already possess the one into which we can put it." We shall say, "Nature is what it is, and as our intelligence, which is a part of it, is less vast than nature, it is doubtful whether any one of our present ideas is large enough to embrace it. Let us work to expand our thought: let us strain our understanding: break, if need be, all our frameworks; but let us not claim to

shrink reality to the measure of our ideas, when it is for our ideas, as they grow larger; to mold themselves upon reality” (HB PCB 176).

Unearthing the somatic sympathies in Beauvoir not only offers new understanding of the intricacies of perception and knowledge, but also a unique interpretation of the body politic. Through a somatic reading of Beauvoirian bodies we come to understand corporeal entrapment not only as a material residence for consciousness, but also as an active, affective, sensorial actor indivisible from mental agency. Conversely, we come to understand consciousness not as a solipsistic mental phenomenon, but one ontological component of our entire bodily politics. That is to say, focusing on the somatic experience in Beauvoir’s writing may detract from our attention to the experience of embodiment, which enforces a mind-body problem and instead, shifts our ontological attention toward an immediate body as a holistic and center of action. This follow upon Bergson’s claim that the body is “centere of action,” which occupies a exclusive role in our experience although not a hierarchical role.

Role of Bodies in Bergson and Beauvoir Re-Thought

If Beauvoir is a somatic thinker because of her methodological turn to Bergsonian experience, then the categories of self, one, subject, and transcendence that have come to define Beauvoirian theorization of lived experience are recast in relationship to Beauvoir’s political claims about the body. Our tendency to posit Beauvoir’s jargon (self, one, subject) as singular notions contra the world at large is problematized by an unfixed view of the body as the center of action. Ergo, the role of the body in experience is transformed. It no longer serves as just a home for the aforementioned concepts. While it continues to be a location for notions of subjectivity, it is also buoyant with its own dynamic agency. This Gordian reconfiguration of about bodies as an animate component of the self is the grounds

for considering a Beauvoirian embodiment that locates not the self, but the body as the center of action. Bergson articulates such a view of the body adducing that,

Situated between the matter which influences it and that on which it had influence, my body is a centre of action, the place where the impressions received choose intelligently the path they follow to transform themselves into movements accomplished. Thus it indeed represents the actual state of my becoming, that part of my duration which is in process of growth. More generally, in that continuity of becoming which is reality itself, the present moment is constituted by the quasi-instantaneous section effected by our perception in the following mass; and this section is precisely that which we call the material world. Our body occupies its center; it is, in the material world (HB MM 178).

If we adopt that this reading of the body is given an allotment in Beauvoir's embodied politics, then the relationship between the physiological body and sense of self transcends the paradigm of consciousness ascribed with Beauvoir's ontological perspective.

What role does perception play in sussing out Beauvoirian lived experience if perception is not conducted by a singular self in relation to the world? A reduced emphasis on orthodox readings of consciousness is replaced with an understanding of the body as the center of action. All of a sudden, the modes of being that are presented as attempts to understand or confirm a theory of lived experience are recomposed as questions regarding how particular modes of being have an affect on us. The question of experience is no longer a knowledge-based claim seeking to confer a theory of consciousness, but a query on the affect of certain actions.⁶⁰ Then our bodies are no longer just the sites of oppression, but the active action-oriented beings embroiled in systems. When bodies no longer accommodate ideas, ethics, systems, and types of knowledge, but are the active stuff and substance of a Beauvoirian politics, we are able to further desystemize the methodology we apply to considering lived experiences.

When perception and observation are reconstructed as actions, the political stakes of our being and our freedom heightened. Reading the body as dynamically active, not only heightens our awareness to relationships between the body and systems, but the micropolitical episodes of being. Sensations and perceptions are revalued not only as the foundation of political being, but the active stuff of politics. Sensory bodily experience is treated as actions that inform and constitute politics. Furthermore, the body is recognized for its unique position as an arbiter between world and self, without the ascribed importance of systemized doctrines that would appraise these relations with hierarchical privilege. This is what Bergson denotes as the body as a “center of action” (HB MM 14). We come to see the body’s political role as interfacial action and not only knowledge, Bergson writes,

I see clearly how the external images influence the image I call my body. They transmit movement to it. And I see how this body influences the other images: it returns this image that acts like all the other images, with this small difference, perhaps, that my body is able to chose, to a certain extent, the way in which it returns the energy or notion it has received (HB MM 14 [19])

Through such an evaluation, need attention is demanded to the politics of movement, perception, and time, not as idea but as empirical forces that affect the senses not only as action. Guerlac notes that the body’s sensory features treated actively resist the definition of determinism and are posited in active relationship to the world,

Since my body moves, acts, and changes its environment, perception cannot correspond exactly to the universe of images that make up the exterior world independently of us...the brain is not a center of knowledge that gives us a true picture of the world when it functions well... The brain does not give us a picture at all, because it does not produce representations. It merely transmits movements and causes delay. And then the body interacts with the world (Guerlac 114).

The question of defining experience is rewritten, not as mental knowledge in sole relationship to the world, but is redrafted to incorporate an active sensorial body as the grounds for methodological inquiry into experience.

Such a consideration of the body in Beauvoir demands a re-shifted focus on the micropolitical as a constitutive factor of Beauvoirian politics and ethics. Renewed attention to the sensations and perceptions that do cent politics on a localized level urges a reconsideration of how and where politics are positioned in Beauvoir. A refocused attention to micropolitics would draw attention to the “organized combinations of sound, gesture, word, movement and posture through which affectively imbued dispositions, desires and judgments become synthesized.”⁶¹ Moreover, Beauvoir’s meticulous attention to the body in situation may not be read as edifying a larger political argument but as examples of politics themselves. Under such a reading, the body becomes the center of micropolitica action and inquiry.

By attending to the micropolitical and somatic body in Beauvoir, we can better understand the complex tensions of immanence and transcendence that play out in the ethics of ambiguity not just on knowledge based ideological, systemic, and other such macro analyses but also on the body itself. Through such a reading of Beauvoir, we are not only exposed to the self posited as transcendence against the world and others as immanence. The self is remunerated as a complex aggregation of material, idea, flesh, perception and concept. It is materially limited but also limited by the conditions of situation and the application of ideologies, procedures, and norms that act on the somatic body. The fusion of these immanent and transcendent components reminds us that the

body as a center of action is never understood as complete transcendence even when experienced as such.⁶²

Traditionally, Beauvoirian ambiguity is understood as understanding situation as immanent and transcendent in a world with others posited in the same relational ambiguity. Turning to a somatic reading of the body, a politics of ambiguity is enhanced through a reading that stresses doubt, immanence, and contingency as perceptible action oriented bodily micropolitics. Kruks explains the role of the body in Beauvoirian ambiguity as a point of interaction- the language of point suggests ambiguity be understood as a question of situation. Beauvoir, Kruks writes, “examines the body as our point of inherence in the world, thus at once material and cultural, at once the site of both freedom and constraint.”⁶³ A Beauvoir inspired by a somatic Bergsonianism, adds that this point is contingent and contiguous with all worldly interactions. It is not simply and exclusively the point of interaction, but the center of all actions. Furthermore, it heightens our awareness to the body’s functions that do not manifest high cognitive functions such as judgment, reason, and reflexivity. This does not serve to admonish higher cognitive functions in the name of realism, but to further complicate the notion that our embodied experience is felt without interruption. Such a reading of the body opens us up to the material immanences that at once enhance and problematize readings that claim the Beauvoirian conscious self as the arbitrator of self and world.

Conclusion

Reading Beauvoir and Bergson in conversation over Bernard’s method of examining the body demonstrates a methodological affinity between the two thinkers. Both Bergson and Beauvoir suggest that the philosophical value of experimentation must be extracted by

looking at experience as dystematized. By doing so, both thinkers include space in their analyses for the randomness, precarity, and discontinuity of lived experience. Through their shared methodological critique of knowledge as an ends for experimentation, and perception more broadly, I have suggested that Beauvoir may find herself in agreement with the claims surrounding realist and idealist models of perception in Bergson's *Matter and Memory*. In the final portion of the chapter, I have shown that placing Beauvoir and Bergson into conversation on the role of experience and bodies may help to enhance our account of Beauvoirian ambiguity to account for the immanence, contingencies, and intercorporeal phenomenon that Beauvoir admires in Bernard. In the chapters that follow, I will examine how this grounds for an affective and visceral body as the center of action rallies us around a new vision of somatic political action in Beauvoir's work.

3| Beauvoir's Political Imagination

“So is it with any activity; failure and success are two aspects of reality which at the start are not perceptible. That is what makes criticism so easy and art so difficult: the critic is always in a good position to show the limits that every artist gives himself in choosing himself; painting is not given completely either in Giotto or Titian or Cezanne; it is sought through the centuries and is never finished; a painting in which all pictorial problems are resolved is really inconceivable; painting itself is this movement toward its own reality; it is not the vain displacement of a millstone turning in the void; it concretizes itself on each canvas as an absolute existence.”- Simone de Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*

Introduction

Some recent work in political theory has concentrated on how to engage and act in a world replete with immanence. At the same time, a concurrent strand of political theory has sought to investigate how aesthetic mediums and forms intimate new methodologies by which to understand political action. In Simone de Beauvoir's work, the two explorations are intimately related as she evinces the importance of lived experience as the grounds for philosophical (namely metaphysical) and political inquiry. Nothing better exemplifies this perspective than Beauvoir's notion of the reader's imagination, which transgresses the boundaries between subject and object, transcendence and immanence, real and unreal to offer a model of sensory political engagement receptive to the world's immanence. To explore the nature of engagement, aesthetics, sensation, and immanence, Beauvoir makes an unlikely turn to form for answers. Consistent with the phenomenological approach, Beauvoir is interested in our lived experiences as a metaphysical and ontological reality. Beauvoir's inquiries on the role of form to understand metaphysics have implications on two levels. Foremost, there is a comparative theoretical claim about what sorts of forms best disclose lived experience. Second, and more importantly, are what Davide Panagia calls “aesthetico-political implications”

(Panagia 2009, p. 23). Lived experience, explored through the senses as Beauvoir demonstrates, exposes the contingencies, immanence, fragilities, and vicissitudes of the political.

Although multiple readings suggest that Beauvoir's literary criticism on form is constrained by ideological existential thinking, I want to advance a different reading that stresses Beauvoir's formal aesthetic claims. Principally, theorizing Beauvoir's aesthetic comments on form entices us into a sensible world in ways not allotted by her philosophical texts. In a 1965 interview for the *Paris Review*, Simone de Beauvoir was asked to remark on her preference for either memoir or fiction. She responded by saying that memoirs jeopardize that ability to convey "certain depths, certain kinds of myth and meaning that one disregards" (Paris Review). By contrast, "in the novel...one can express these horizons, these overtones of daily life, but there's an element of fabrication that is nevertheless disturbing. One should aim at inventing without fabricating" (Paris Review).

Beauvoir's comments in the *Paris Review* are far from the first time she undertook to explain the issue of literary forms and their affective features. Throughout Beauvoir's oeuvre the questions of form, particularly in fiction, play a prominent albeit unexcavated role. Despite Beauvoir's renown as an author of novels, memoirs, and philosophical disquisitions, a surprising lack of attention has been given to Beauvoir's scholarship on aesthetic forms and affect. Though a small community of political theorists have paid attention to Beauvoir's writings as telling for questions of freedom, judgment, embodiment, and otherness few have considered what Beauvoir's writings on form and fiction specifically offer to political theory.⁶⁴

In what follows, I explore Beauvoir's engagement with literary criticism, namely her essays "Literature and Metaphysics" and "What Can Literature Do?," as instruments of sensorial disclosure.⁶⁵ Sharon Mussett writes that Beauvoir's relatively unexcavated work on literature is an attempt "to defend Existentialism on *artistic* grounds" as a way to both propose an alternative understanding 'between philosophy and literature' and "comprehend philosophy *as* literature" (Musset 2013, p. 17). While such readings remain true to Beauvoir's own wariness about the extent form bleeds into politics, I want to explore the capacity of Beauvoir's investigation of imagination, fiction, and affect already ingrained in her aesthetic scholarship. In doing so, I will suggest that the question of political significance in Beauvoir's work is already discernable within the form.

I begin by discussing Beauvoir's critique of the limits of the philosophical essay as a literary form incapable of stimulating the reader's imaginary capacity, and therefore incapable of presenting the immanent components of lived experience. Following Beauvoir's phenomenological claim that metaphysics cannot be rendered solely in philosophical argument, because philosophy fails to engage the reader in a sensory disclosure of lived experience, I contrast Beauvoir's account of the limits of the philosophical essay with her writings that depict metaphysical literature as a genre that discloses the radical immanence of lived experience.

What do novels do that philosophy cannot? According to Beauvoir, metaphysical literature depicts a singular temporal experience replete with disruption, unfamiliarity, and encounters that reveal our non-sovereignty, inter-subjectivity and radical exposure to others, all features prominent in our daily lives, as well as our political lives, but that fail to register on our consciousness as immanence. Instead of recognizing these features as the

immanent components of lived existence, they are narrated via life stories and political ideologies as knowledge, autonomy, and fantasies of sovereignty. What novels can do, according to Beauvoir, is expose the limits of these narratives and reveal features of immanence that are otherwise obscured. This is to some extent an ironic claim given that Beauvoir is herself invested in narrative in novels and defends metaphysical literature against the “new” novel.⁶⁶ It is the activation of the imagination that via particular forms of narrative, however, that reveal these features of/as immanence, revealing the very conditions of lived (and political) experience.

Beauvoir complicates our understanding of engagement by challenging the assumption of the transcendent reader-subject. She does so by initiating a turn toward somatic and sensorial imagination.⁶⁷ In doing so, Beauvoir challenges the ways imagination is traditionally understood—as a subjective apparatus, controlled by a reader. The imagination, for Beauvoir, presents not a new opportunity to narrativize, but as close a replica as possible for imitating the moments of our lived experiences when we engage with immanence—the moments in which we sense but are fundamentally indescribable. Beauvoir does not reproduce the imaginative reader as a transcendental subject. Instead she offers sensorial model of imagination where the reader subject is active, embodied, and engaged in experiencing immanence.

Limits of the Philosophical Essay

Beauvoir’s skepticism about the philosophical essay as a conveyor of metaphysics emanates from her belief that the essay as a genre obscures, abstracts, and selectively misrepresents lived experience. Our grasping of metaphysical reality is not done onto the world, but exists embroiled in our ontological factices, our modes of being in the world,

our pasts, presents, and futures—“to be” metaphysical” is how we do metaphysics.⁶⁸ As “every human event” exists within these dimensions, it is understood to have “metaphysical significance” beyond the “social and psychological” elements afforded to them in our subjective analyses (*LM* 273). A form that totalizes or systematizes experience rejects the immanence implicit in our worldly disposition. The philosophical treatise does this by discounting the immanent components of lived experience, namely by removing our attachment to the immanence of spatial-temporal realities; “the theoretician draws out and systematizes these significations on an abstract plane” (*LM* 273). Beauvoir’s critique is located on this level: the philosophical essay fails to depict the multifarious dimensions of immanence in our lived metaphysical realities—the indefinite properties of others and objects, the presence of multiple temporalities, the inevitable singularity of embodied perception, the vicissitudes of chance, and the fragility and ambiguity of experience—as a result our ability to experience immanence and engage with the world presented in the philosophical text are limited to a disembodied intellectual absorption.

There are two deficiencies in form (philosophical essay) that make the metaphysics it presents inimical to accurately representing lived experience. First, the essay fails to depict the multiple immanences that constitute the world and our experiences of immanence as a constitutive part of ontological reality. The philosophical essay seeks to establish the world as a system and in doing so paves over the contingencies, fragilities, and multiple temporalities that when experienced as immanence complicate and rupture the singularity of experience. In laying out a carefully articulated set of arguments, the essay introduces ideas, objectivism, and rationality to redefine the immanent components of experience. This is, in part, a result of the philosophical essay’s attempt to present

argument in the absence of spatial-temporal reality.⁶⁹ Consequently, the philosophical essay directs us away from perceptible and sensorial political life. Beauvoir's second point is acutely related to her first. If the immanence of lived experience is reduced or systematized, the participation of the reader is limited.⁷⁰ The theoretical engagement proffered to the reader is restricted to consumption. Beauvoir contends that the espousal of arguments allows for the reader's engagement only so far as they intake the information offered by the text. Beyond this, Beauvoir notes that this intake occurs on an intellectual level that eschews the sensorial dimensions of engagement in lived experience.

According to Beauvoir, the systematization of the world exhibited in the work of Leibniz, Aristotle, and Spinoza, for example, is aimed at reducing the nonviable immanence that constitutes experience. As everything receives a definition and a specific function within the system, the properties, agency, and vitality of being are limited to definition. Beauvoir writes, "The theoretician wants to compel us to adhere to the ideas that the thing and event suggest to him" (*LM* 270). Such an ascription is not only hostile to immanence: it employs definition to actively transgress it.⁷¹ The opacity and fragility of things is reduced to the world of the theoretician, in a way that undermines the lived experience of objects: "in the real world, the meaning of the object is not a concept graspable by pure understanding" (*LM* 270). The notion of reality and objectivity is only partially representative. Borrowing from her earlier philosophical influence Henri Bergson, Beauvoir holds that, "the question" of metaphysical truth "is posed very poorly; put this way does not allow for a response because reality is not a fixed being it is a becoming. It is, I repeat, a swirling of experiences that envelop each other while remaining separate. So

it is impossible for a writer to reduce reality to a fixed completed spectacle that he might show in its totality.”⁷²

The abstraction of philosophical thought induces a systemization of the world and reduces immanence to descriptions, functions, and roles within the system. The “philosopher and essayist give the reader an intellectual reconstruction of their experience,” but such a definition is limited (270LM). Beauvoir acknowledges the value of elucidating metaphysics’ “universal meaning in abstract language,” devising metaphysical theories as “described, and more or less systematized in their essential character” renders them “as timeless and objective” (LM 273). However such a definition of the subjective system omits the immanent, subjective, horizontal, multi-temporal, and discontinuous and also “excludes any other manifestation of truth” (LM 274). An essayist who imposes rationalizations, formula, and *a priori* definitions, rebukes the notion that many components of experience are indescribable utilizing the aforementioned methods. Empirical, sensory, and somatic realities, such as time and space, are admonished in order to cultivate systems. Shannon Mussett considers Beauvoir’s critique of the philosophical system a binary: “first, she takes issue with the position of the philosopher as depersonalized, universalized, and unbiased mouthpiece of truth, and second, she disparages the promotion of unified systems of reality accessible to intellectual abstraction alone” (Mussett 2013, p.19). What these two criticisms of systemic argument are united by is a disregard for the immanent components of lived experience.

Systemic analysis not only reduces the ability to depict immanence, it also obscures our true relationship to the world, by depicting it as objective information, hindering our opportunities for engagement. Here Beauvoir anticipates the work of John Protevi, who

suggests that models of politics that fail to incorporate bodily experience disadvantage us by obscuring our sense of self and world. Protevi's describes that "the individual as rational cognitive subject"...

gathers sensory information in order to learn about the features of the world...[and] calculates the best course of action in the world given the relation of those represented features of the world and the desires it has (whether the subject is thought to be able to change those desires given the features of the world it has represented to itself (Protevi 2009, p. 3)

When a system of ideas is presented in a theoretical essay, our engagement with it is limited to the representations as told in the timeless and objective system. Beauvoir claims that when objects, events, and ideas are presented as pure definition "many minds find such intellectual docility repugnant" (*LM* 270). If philosophy is limited to a closed set of arguments, rationales, and ideologies, it fails to confirm the freedom of the reader as an ambiguous subject with a creative and imaginative agency. Readers, Beauvoir writes, "want to retain their freedom of thoughts...they instead like a story that imitates life's opacity, ambiguity, and impartiality" (*LM* 270).

Beauvoir's claim that minimizing or eliminating immanence leaves readers bored suggests another failure on the part of the philosophical essay, namely, its inability to produce engagement contiguous with how it is experienced within our spatial-temporal dimensions on earth. For Beauvoir, this means that the philosophical form abandons a model of engagement that is embodied, active, subjective, and most importantly, sensorial. Beauvoir notes that metaphysical realities are best conveyed through a communication where the reader reconciles with a world offered up its totality—including but not limited to its immanences, ideologies, emotions, affects, ruptures, systems, objects, and swirls. Beauvoir suggests that when the essayist proffers a "timeless heaven," or system, the reader has no capacity to engage with the world as a subject. The engagement always

exists on an intellectual level that is removed from body and situation. When one reads an essay, Beauvoir maintains, they accept the world being put forth from a disengaged stance. Notice the passivity in Beauvoir's language when she describes the experience of reading the philosophical text, "a philosophical treatise would carry me beyond the terrestrial appearances into the serenity of a timeless heaven" (*LM* 269).

Argument and Limits of Sensation

For Beauvoir, then, the question of form is perhaps indirectly a question about location, and which locations are best able to enact a "metaphysical attitude" and to imitate the conditions by which we recognize our selves in the world. Beauvoir begins her piece with a question that links location (both spatial and multi-temporal) and experience, questioning if truth, understood as lived experience, is to be found "on earth or in eternity" (*LM* 269). Assuming the position of the reader, Beauvoir mentions that when reading an essay by Spinoza or Kant she experienced a sort of removal from earthly realities and spatial-temporal limits, into "timeless heaven" (*LM* 269). To an extent, this heavenly universe offers an escape from the dimensions of lived experience that encumbers us, and presents those dimensions, which are essential to the novel as "frivolous" (*LM* 269). Conversely, Beauvoir writes that having read the work of Julien Sorel or Tess d'Uberville she sensed it was "useless [vain] to waste one's time fabricating systems" that bring little to bear on the lived realities that we experience on a perceptible, sensual, and somatic level. Beauvoir concludes that in spite of this tension, our metaphysical discourses exist in "only one reality...in the midst of the world that we think the world through" (*LM* 270). Beauvoir's understanding of the importance of the earthly world as a location for the conduct of metaphysics is linked to its ability to represent our lived experience more

genuinely. It is fair to say that Beauvoir opts for the tangible earthly world of experiences and rejects the lack of subjectivity, immanence, and temporality in the philosophical heaven. I want to suggest that what ties her two theoretical critiques on immanence and engagement together is a commitment to a sensorial politics.

A sensorial politics is vital for Beauvoir. What we sense is critical to disclosing our metaphysical realities, and sensation is consequently a fundamental ontological feature of lived experience. A failure to invoke sensorial moments, rejects a notion of being in the world central to Beauvoir's phenomenological tradition. When we reject the immanence of the world and disallow engagement, we are denying our ability to enact a sensorial politics. Margaret Simons argues, "Beauvoir describes the goal of philosophy as a "disclosure of metaphysical reality" but "because the metaphysical meaning of human events and objects cannot be grasped by pure understanding, but can only be disclosed within an overall relation of action and emotion, philosophers must reject the system building and turn to the novel."⁷³ Consider Beauvoir's treatment of Plato, when she writes,

thus, as long as Plato asserts the supreme reality of the Forms, which this world only mirrors in a deceptive, debased way, he has no use for poets; he banishes them from his republic. But, when he described the dialectical movement that carries man toward the Forms, when he integrates man and the *sensible world into reality*, then Plato feels the need to make himself a poet (*LM* 274, my italics).

In the failure to depict immanence, and the consequential inability to appeal to our imaginations, Beauvoir cites a detrimental shift away from a sensorial politics. Issuing of ideas and arguments and interaction with them on an intellectual level has two fold implications in undermining the sensory dimensions of politics—it fails to present the immanence of our world and consequently, leaves the reader unable to sense and cultivate a relationship to immanence. Because a form's philosophical potential is related to its

ability to best convey lived experience, the shift to arguments, which discerns a disembodied reader, removes our opportunities to sense and engage with immanence. To remedy the absence of sensation in our political and metaphysical experiences, Beauvoir turns to the genre of metaphysical literature.

Following Beauvoir's notion of sensorial and somatic experience as integral to understanding lived experience, Beauvoir would agree with what Lars Tønder calls 'a sensorial orientation in politics.' According to Tønder in "a sensorial orientation, human bodies "act and react" because their senses presuppose an opening to the world" (Tønder 2013, p.16). A sensorial orientation to politics by Tønder's description is thus to not intellectualize experience by cultivating a "mind-body dualism," but to "rethink political practices from within the world in which they appear, and therefore to problematize any pregiven separation of both mind and body *and* culture and nature" (Tønder 2013, p.16). Tønder's claim that a "sensorial orientation to politics...shows how reorientation implies major epistemological upheavals, not only for the intellectualism of contemporary democratic theory" echoes Beauvoir's notion of a sensory imagination animated by metaphysical literature that is capable of exposing immanence, multi-temporal life, and becoming through an appeal to the sensory dimensions of experience.

Metaphysical Literature

Beauvoir seeks a form for metaphysical expression and representation that mimics "the real world" (*LM* 270). A world constituted by innumerable representations and perceptions, where "the meaning of an object is not a concept graspable by pure understanding" (*LM* 270). To recreate a more realistic experience, Beauvoir turns to the form of the novel, and more specifically the invented genre of metaphysical literature, to

disclose the immanence of objects and stimulate engagement between reader and world. Beauvoir's understanding of how metaphysics is conducted precipitates a change in form. Emphasizing the importance of politics as lived, Beauvoir writes, "Why construct a fictional apparatus around ideas that one could express more economically and clearly in direct language? The novel is justified only if it is a mode of communication irreducible to any other" (*LM* 270).

Metaphysical literature is Beauvoir's point of compromise between the philosophical treatise and the novel. It is a genre propitious for cultivating a more realistically empirical terrain for metaphysical inquiry, precisely because it is able to imitate the conditions of lived political experience. By introducing the reader to the instantaneous sensations of 'one singular, concrete, temporal world,' it opens the reader up to the pre-judgmental, the visceral, perceptible, and somatic. It prompts thinking about the world as comprised of multiple temporalities, because it rejects an image of the world that is a unitary "fully constituted-self sufficient system" (*LM* 272). Beauvoir writes,

a metaphysical novel...provides a disclosure of existence in a way unequaled by any other mode of expression. Far from being, as has sometimes been claimed, a dangerous deviation from the novelistic genre, it seems to me, on the contrary, to be an accomplishment of the highest level, since, insofar as it is successful, it strives to grasp man and human events in relation to the totality of the world, and since it alone can succeed where pure literature and pure philosophy fail, i.e., in evoking in its living unity and its fundamental living ambiguity, this destiny that is ours and that is inscribed in both time and in eternity (*LM* 271).

It is no wonder then that, Beauvoir maintains, that metaphysics are attempted in the existential tradition from both a theoretic and literary approach: like metaphysical literature, the existentialist project is one that seeks to "reconcile the objective and subjective, the absolute and relative, the timeless and historical" (*LM* 274). Through the

disclosure of a fictional world in metaphysical literature, the novel redresses the major problem of systematized disclosure put forth in the philosophical essay.

Beauvoir does not offer a very specific description of what styles, issues, plots, narratives, or perspectives compose metaphysical literature; in contrast, she lays out the simple end of creating tangible although unreal opportunities for communication, action, and experience. It strives to create a sense of “being-in-the-world” for the reader that is denied in the disengaged systems advanced by theoreticians (*LM* 273). A metaphysical novel succeeds if it can produce engagement between the reader and fictional world that facilitates the discovery of one’s “presence in the world, his abandonment [*delaissement*], his freedom, the opacity of things, and the resistance of the foreign consciousnesses” (*LM* 273). Stressing the relevance of sensation in our experience of reality’s composition, Beauvoir notes the affective practices of literature produces a more profound experience of our metaphysical realities “Through his joys, sorrows, resignations, revolts, fears, and hopes, each man realizes a certain metaphysical situation” (*LM* 273 *LM*). As Toril Moi notes, “For Beauvoir, a philosophical essay doesn’t draw the reader in the same way, doesn’t produce the sense of experience that literature offers.”⁷⁴

Because metaphysical literature is one singular temporal world, it can probe the more evasive components of lived experience, namely for Beauvoir immanence. The novel is able to present the immanence of objects, temporalities, and other consciousnesses, because it discloses the world as an “imaginary plane this experience itself as it appears prior to any elucidation” (*LM* 270). On an imaginary plane, the meaning of the object is presented with an authentic complexity and ambiguity as the real world. When reading a novel, we expect to be immersed in the “flesh and blood presence” of the

world “whose complexity and singular infinite richness exceed any subjective interpretation” (*LM* 270). Beauvoir gives us an example of metaphysical immanence depicted in Kafka...

thus the novel is the sole form of communication possible for Kafka, since he wishes to portray the drama of a man confined in immanence. To speak of the transcendent, if only to say that it is inaccessible, would already be to claim having some access to it. An imaginary account, on the other hand, allows us to respect this silence that is alone appropriate to our ignorance (*LM* 274)

Similarly, Beauvoir shows that when the novelist rejects systemization, they are able to convey the complexity of immanent ideas more thoroughly. Thus, Beauvoir concludes that as “Ribot’s disciple Proust bores us; he teaches us nothing...but as an authentic novelist, Proust discovers truths for which no theoretician of his time proposed an abstract equivalent” (*LM* 273).

The novel favors the immanent components of life because its form rejects systemization and objectivity. According to Laura Hengehold, Beauvoir believes “literature is better equipped to present the qualitative complexity, ambiguity, and multisidedness of being than many forms of philosophical argumentation, especially the categorical, systemic, and idealistic” (Hengehold 2011, p. 191). Literature is endowed with the facility to challenge the totalizing of ideological regimes because it depicts the discontinuous, singular, and isolated spatial-temporal realities of a fictional world. Metaphysical literature succeeds “where pure literature and pure philosophy fail” in displaying the “fundamental living ambiguity” of experience (*LM* 276). It is able to show the moments of disruption that challenge the challenge the totalizing of abstract philosophies, “technocracies, bureaucracy, and their temptation to deny ambiguity” through the administration of ready-made transcendent values (Hengehold 2011, p.15).

To attempt to recreate metaphysical experience, Beauvoir says, the reader must be brought into this world of immanence via engagement. Rejecting the “intellectual docility” that is offered to the reader by the theoretician reconstruction of experience on the level of ideas, Beauvoir proposes that the affective components of the novel that solicit our perceptual and visceral reactions are what provide a novel with a more successful (genuine) metaphysical experience. A novel succeeds in Beauvoir’s opinion if it can offer us a model of communication, with the world, others, and objects. Literature becomes a mode of communication, by advancing opportunities of engagement between the world disclosed by the author and the judgments, perceptions, affects, and sensations of the reader. Between ourselves and others, as well as ourselves and the world, but this can only be accomplished when we are “taken in...and carried off” into the fictive world offered by metaphysical literature (*LM* 271). “Literature finds its justification and meaning” through communicating between worlds, “each situation is open onto all others and it is open onto the world, which is nothing other than swirling [*tournoiement*] of all these situations that envelope each other” (*LD* 199).

In literary theorist Toril Moi’s reading of Beauvoir sharing the experience of others constitutes adventure. “A good novel for Beauvoir,” Moi writes, “is an invitation to the reader to share the author’s sense of exploration [*recherche*] and discovery, to join her on an “authentic adventure of the mind” (Moi 2011, p. 134). Moi joins Beauvoir’s point about the sensory and communication with the experience of an other, “reading a novel enables Beauvoir to feel that she, for a moment, genuinely becomes other without ceasing to be herself” (Moi 2011, p. 134). Moi’s point about sense and engagement is well taken, but her insistence that Beauvoir prizes the knowledge or experience of the other is only a narrow

fragment of the opportunity proffered by engagement. Beyond that, the vertiginous state induced by the world of fiction itself opens the possibility of engagement through our senses, and privileges the immanence of not knowing ‘the other’ as a means to point out the subjective hubris that endures in our lived realities, and is bolstered by narrative and systematization. To accept entirely the world of an other, as suggested by Moi, rejects Beauvoir’s desire to posit us in a relationship to engagement with the sensation of immanence.

Martha Nussbaum seizes on a comparable point to Moi’s. Establishing a link between the subversiveness of the literary form and the capacity of the imagination, Nussbaum argues that the ‘value’ of the literary form is indebted to its ability to stimulate a subversive imaginary faculty in its readers (Nussbaum 1991, p. 880). In Nussbaum’s reading of Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times*, the most distinguishing characteristic of novelistic communication and the imaginary, which address’ Moi’s concern, is “the capacity to see one thing as an other” (Nussbaum 1991, p. 895). Through the imaginary, we are able to ‘know’ what morally and politically evades us in lived political life (Nussbaum 1991, p. 898). Principally, for Nussbaum, we are able to know the experiences of an other through imaging them, the novel

forges a complex relationship to its reader in which, on the one hand, the reader is urged to care about concrete features of circumstance and history...but... on the other hand, urged always to recognize that human beings in different spheres do have common passions, hopes, and fears (Nussbaum 1991, p. 903).

Nussbaum concludes her point about shared desires, solidarities, and passions brought to light by readerly imagination to suggest their moralistic value for developmental political economy. Simon Stow considers Nussbaum’s imagination as “an expansion of our moral

imaginations which enables us to empathize with all sorts of different people whilst rationally evaluating their position” (Stow 2006, p. 410). Through our moralistically diverse experience, proffered by imagination, we can begin to understand political economy from what she terms the “novelistic paradigm,” which would posit that we “consider our fellow citizens, our fellow human beings with the wonder and generosity that this imagination promotes” (Nussbaum 1991, p. 97). Communication that seeks to translate imagination into value undermines what Beauvoir notes as the fundamental and terminal exercise of imagining immanence.

Therefore, Beauvoir may partially agree with the readings advanced by Moi and Nussbaum, but the imaginary, and our imaginary capacity, is the site of a more intrinsic sensorial communication than either thinker accentuates. What “gives a good novel its value,” Beauvoir maintains, is the ability for a subject (reader) to accept, believe, and occupy a world before one is able to judge, rationalize, or experience it (*LM* 270). If a novel activates our imaginary capaciousness, it has done precisely that. “It allows one to undergo imaginary experience that are as complete and disturbing as lived experience” (*LM* 270). Moi’s concern with communication as ‘adventure’ and Nussbaum’s moralistic investment in ‘value’ surpass, and consequently disregard, a more intrinsic a sensorial claim about experience.

The imagination annexes the otherworld, but “implicitly enveloping world does not mean that one knows it but that one reflects,” it only offers a taste of something that is self aware that it is a “partial truth” (*LD* 200-201). Beauvoir writes, because “reality is not a fixed being; it is a becoming” when we imagine, we enter this “a fixed and completed

spectacle that he [the writer] might show in its totality” but it is foremost an imaginary world (*LD 200*). Providing the example of Balzac’s *Le Pere Goriot*, Beauvoir says, “I know very well that I am not walking through Paris such as it was in Balzac’s time; I am walking through a novel by Balzac in the universe of Balzac” (*LD 201*). For a moment literature engages and enchants us into entering the heart of another world, “Kafka and Balzac...invite me and convince me to settle down, at least for a moment, in the heart of another world” (*LD 201*). Far from only communicating ideas through text, the text becomes a world assembled—a total world disclosed—the reader’s imagination compels us into a world.

Engagement for Beauvoir is a form of experiencing our freedom. She writes that many minds “want to retain their freedom of thought,” the freedom to engage, which exists only if the novel can accomplish the two aforementioned principles of metaphysical literature (*LM 270*). It must first disclose a world full of ambiguity, immanence, and opacity, and then it must provide and invoke the reader into engagement with these immanent forces. It is within moments of engagement when a world is sensed by the subject that freedom is not possessed, but experienced. The result, by Beauvoir’s account, is that we can engage with a non-sovereign ambiguous form of freedom, a freedom that acknowledges the conditions of immanence and transcendence- a lived freedom grounded in the perceptual framework of the individual situated embodied subject. In what follows, I will consider how Beauvoir’s theorization of the imaginary offers to political theory a model of engagement with immanence that bolsters the conditions of non-sovereign/ambiguous freedom articulated by Beauvoir.

Beauvoir and Political Imagination

As we have seen, Beauvoir creates the genre of *metaphysical literature* to enhance our sense of sense in form. In this next section I wish to examine how her use of the imaginary as a model of engagement, offers to political theory a better model of engagement with immanence, because it shifts our notion of reality towards a sensorial politics and by doing so modifies our political relationship to immanence. I will argue that Beauvoir's version of the imaginary modifies our perceptual experience and distinguishes her amongst phenomenologists because her outlook includes immanence as a constitutive factor of our own situated perspectives. The nascent work in imaginative models of political thought, such as those advocated by Jason Frank, Linda Zerilli, and Martha Nussbaum, have concentrated on the role of imagination animating and affecting certain mental activities and dispositions.⁷⁵ Drawing from David Hume's *Treatises*, Frank's analysis of the political imagination in Federalist documents attends to various ways imagination can be syphoned, mobilized, and constructed for political propositions, both within and without the deliberative and realist frameworks. Equivalently, Zerilli's reading of Hannah Arendt's imagination contributes an aesthetic judgment as a means to representative thinking. While all the aforementioned authors articulate an imagination with the capacity to divest the uncontested authority of realist and rationalist models of political thought, the sparse literature on the political imagination has not yet considered the explicitly somatic dimensions of the imaginary.⁷⁶ Beauvoir's corporeal emphasis adds to the literature by fleshing out a distinct relationship between sensation and immanence. In addition, Beauvoir furnishes our notion of the imagination with an explicit understanding of the body's involvement, by stressing the somatic qualities of imagining.

It may seem that Beauvoir's imaginary is confirming the standard existential belief of a dyadic experience of freedom between transcendence/immanence, and that her principle criticism of the ideological novel and philosophical essay is that it defers all subjectivity to the author and rebukes the reader's subjectivity. She does after all critique the role of the author as having the capacity to undermine the imaginary by not "hiding his presence" to allow for magical component of the imagination (*LM* 270). Similarly, Beauvoir does suggest, borrowing from the Sartrean framework of detotalized totality that metaphysics are conducted when one "is to realize in oneself the metaphysical attitude, which consists in positing oneself in one's totality before the totality of the world" (*LM* 273). However, I suggest that a closer reading of the imaginary suggests that Beauvoir is actually critical of this model of subjectivity as pure sovereign freedom. Through our imaginary, she adds to the Sartrean understanding of detotalized totality a dose of immanence. The Beauvoirian imaginary challenges the claims of freedom made by sovereign models of freedom by appealing to our immanence in situations and in our own perceptive judgments.

In her various speeches on the nature of literature, Beauvoir echoes the Sartrean notion of detotalized totality where the configuration of the reader as subject is posited as a totality before the detotalized illustration of the world.⁷⁷ Describing detotalized totality at a gathering of authors, literary theorists, and literary critics, Beauvoir theorizes that detotalized totality "means that, on the one hand, there is a world that is indeed the same for us all, but on the other hand we are all in situation in relation to it. This situation involves our past, our class, our condition, our projects, basically the entire ensemble of what makes up our individuality" (*LD* 198). It also means that our singular temporal

consciousness is completely totalized from the experiences of others, “each situation envelops the entire world in one way or another...for example, I am unaware of what is happening...in a certain city in India today, and that is part of my condition as a French woman living in Paris in the condition in which I live” (*LD* 199). We may understand this admission of ignorance as an acknowledgement of immanence, that the world is composed of more temporalities, or a type of pluralism, than we can possibly comprehend in a singular moment. Although Beauvoir proclaims to adhere this traditional existential understanding of detotalized totality, I wish to suggest the Beauvoirian imagination and its appeals to a sensorial politics usher in a much more nuanced understanding of immanence in a still embodied and political context.

Sartre’s reading of the imagination derives from his theorization of detotalized totality. Opposing the readings of imagination offered by Hume, Leibniz, Descartes, and Bergson, Sartre aligns his own imagination with the template offered by Husserl. To begin, Sartre ignores the sensory by claiming that imagination is not a perception-oriented action. Sartre interprets the production of the image as a conscious thought that transcends the metaphysical experience of image conjuring and relocates it to a conscious psychological register. Sartre writes: “in spite of metaphysics there is between image and perception a difference in nature.”⁷⁸ As we know now, Beauvoir refuses to separate these states taxonomically and prefers to see them as integrated sensorial phenomenon.

It is clear how Sartre’s imagination diverges from the somatic and sensorial version offered by Beauvoir when examining where Sartre finds fault with Bergson’s analysis. Much of what Sartre finds problematic about Bergson echoes the claims of immanence, contingency, and sensation in Beauvoir.⁷⁹ By contrast with Beauvoir who revels in the

materiality of the text, Sartre criticizes Bergson for leaving “nature its materiality and the image its character as image.”⁸⁰ Bergson’s account of imagination is unsuccessful by Sartrean standards, because it fails to give an account of active consciousness, or in Sartre’s language provide for the opportunity to experience oneself as totality. The Bergsonian experience of imagination is imbued with too much uncertainty, visceral effectiveness, and interruption. Sartre writes, “if consciousness is defined by Bergson in a vitalist manner as an actuality resulting from corporeal attitude, it also represents for him the margin that separates the action from the acting being, the power to escape from the present and from the body, memory.”⁸¹ Yet, it is this sort of visceral and to again approximate the Sartrean dialect detotalization of sense, perception, and self that Beauvoir cites as the location for imaginary politics.

The imaginary is juxtaposed to the intake of information, because the orderings and operations of the imaginary are immanent in and of themselves. Beauvoir’s stresses that our imaginations are uncertain, disorganized, nebulous, and indefinable. “In the novel... there are no perceptible givens other than the form of words printed in black and white...nothing supports the imagination of the reader.”⁸² This affect reflects similar propulsion of faculties noted by Jason Frank in the work of David Hume, who stresses one dimension of the imagination as “transformative malleability” (Frank 2009, p. 78). Beauvoir offers this model to stress that our actions, perceptions, and judgments are never “reduced to formulas” nor can they be retold or recreated. They always exist in singular situated temporal moments. This is critical in reproducing the immediate authenticity of our lived experience.

Beauvoir offers this model of imaginary perception to stress the immanence of our modes of being in the world. The use of the imagination highlights the immediacy of lived experience and thus, the individual's imaginary engagements are foremost, sensorial, perceptive, and somatic. The imagination is capable of enchanting the reader through the experiences as overwhelming, fragmented, and disorienting. Hengehold elaborates that for Beauvoir, the "original grasp" of reality by every human consciousness is temporal and has qualitative, subjective tone betrayed and belied by the universal and systemic pretensions of philosophical writing" (Hengehold 2011, p.192). By contrast, the imaginary in Beauvoir is essentially qualitative, the absurdity of the imagination enchants the reader by turning what is in reality an assemblage of words into a temporal world of objects, and compilation of swirling temporalities. "Bewitched by the tale he is told" the reader "reacts as if faced with lived events" (*LM* 270).

Imaginary experience clues us into bodily sensation and affect. This follows upon John Protevi's notion that "the concept of bodies politic is meant to capture the emergent—that is, the embodiment and the embedded—character of subjectivity: the production, bypassing, and surpassing of subjectivity in the imbrications of the somatic and social systems" (Protevi 2009, xvi). The imaginary proffers to us the embodied experience of bypassing, a taste of the world sensed before it is oriented, placed, perceived, and judged. For example, her insistence that "there is a unique taste to each life," which literature provides a glimpse into, strengthens her claim that we somatically experience the world, our bodies serving as an active and integral element (*LD* 201). Beauvoir's notion of the epistolary separation included in detotalized totality is modified by her insistence that we navigate and experience imagination in a way that rejects mind-body dualism.

Emphasizing her Bergsonian notion of worldly immanence, Beauvoir's imagination, again challenges the notion of detotalized totality, by accentuating the confines of external, or sensory, oriented perception for navigating experience as sensed.⁸³ In the reader's imagination, everything is established to represent the feeling of subjectivity noted by Protevi, a limited and sensory experience felt by the body and packed with immanence. Beauvoir notes that because this experience of enchantment, vertigo, and bypass is experienced as imaginary bodily sensation, it becomes a mode of "expressing the world," but not is not "made explicit to reveal a truth to us" (*LD* 203).

The imagination is critical in relocating the conception of perspective away from the notion of transcendence and toward immanence, by emphasizing its sensorial and visceral composition. Our imagination plays to affective and immanent components of reality before subjective action can be experienced. When faced with an imaginary world, the reader is "moved, he approves, he becomes indignant, responding with a movement of his entire body before formulating judgments that he draws from himself that are not presumptuously dictated to him" (*LM* 270). Beauvoir's literary intent, as Margaret Simons writes, is to help us recognize immanence "since the metaphysical meaning of human events and objects in the real world cannot be grasped by the pure understanding, but can only be disclosed within an overall relation of action and emotion" (Simons 2004, p. 265). Through our perspective, we can only understand so much about the object's existence, the meaning of the object is only brought to bear through our engagement with it. Beauvoir writes, "although made of words, it [the object] exists as objects in the world do, which exceed anything that can be said about them in words" (*LM* 270).

Conclusion

Beauvoir's theorization of the literary imagination offers us a bodily entrance in to discourses on sensation, aesthetics, and affect. Disassembling the boundary between aesthetic and political theoretical dialogues, Beauvoir illustrates the ample political substance of the genre *metaphysical literature*. Conversely, her assessments of the limits of the philosophical essay modify what is considered principle in metaphysical exploration to include readership, disclosure, immanence, and engagement. Through a redirected emphasis on the roles, actions, bodies, and responsibilities of the reader the sensorial dimensions of politics are brought to our attention and open a new juncture by which to theorize engagement. In this manner, Beauvoir's rejection of the systematization of thought reframes metaphysical questions in the realm of sensed spatial-temporal realities. Beauvoir's insistence on lived experience as grounds for metaphysical analysis establishes the sensual and somatic stakes of political engagement. The sensorial imagination offers to political theory a notion of immanent sensation as active engagement. Encouraging us to divest ourselves of the notion of real as rational, ideological, or objective, the unreal imagination implores us to sense the world's ambiguous composition. To imagine for Beauvoir is to see and feel a world of immanence evoked with its 'flesh and blood complexity' (*LM* 270).

4 | Using *The Second Sex* for Film Analysis: Time, Technique, and Ambiguity

Introduction

Pointing out the limits of narrative and story for political theory, contemporary political theorists such as William Connolly and Davide Panagia have utilized film as a medium that disinters new political questions, models, and dialogues by situating their research beyond plots, narratives, characters, and parables that constitute traditional paradigms of political film theory. Looking to the film's materials and composition, these theorists have exposed the utility of thinking about "stochastic serialization" and "technique" to establish a relationship between film and the political.⁸⁴ Following this tradition, I wish to examine how Simone de Beauvoir's political thought on the body's experience of time produces a creative new lens to understand film as expository political phenomenon. Beauvoir's reading uniquely accounts for the situated, embodied, and contingent character of lived reality, thereby prompting an integral shift in our ontological and political thinking. In doing so, Beauvoir expands technical accounts of film by merging discourses on somatic bodies and filmic technique thereby expanding our ability to locate techniques operation in both film and micropolitics.

Borrowing from Connolly's language of technique, I aim to show that Beauvoir's somatic outlook on time thinks technique in the way Connolly advocates. In so far as Beauvoir's time provides a lens as to how time operates affectively and exposes new readings of interruption, immanence, fragility, and becoming.⁸⁵ Approximating Connolly, she does not reduce time to a narrative component of a situation. This paper seeks to join Beauvoir's reading of time with her thinking on bodies, embodiment, and ambiguity in

order to affirm time as a technique in Beauvoir's political thinking. Positioning Beauvoir within the discourse of affect, technique, and micropolitics not only makes an analytical point about the tenure of Beauvoir's treatment as a scholar of bodies. This chapter also contends that Beauvoir makes a positivist contribution to theorizing technical time by way of relating its experience to the human body.

Beauvoir appends the traditional dialogue on technique by attending to its relative lack of attention on how technique operates on the body. Beauvoir reads the body's experience of time binately. She proffers both an affective and somatic reading of bodies that experience time, as well as an account of time as embodied within individual actants. By reading time's affect in conglomerate ways she assembles a more nuanced account of technical time that does not diminish the role of individual agents, who may experience time as narrative, in affirming or denying freedom.⁸⁶ Beauvoir exposes us not just to the experiences of time affectively onto bodies, but time's embodied relationship to discourses of political structure. Because Beauvoir's technical time still includes, and focuses on the individual actor's experience (read as both traditional subjective and as action-oriented and sensory), it offers a uniquely political reading of time as related to freedom. Beauvoir's time provides an understanding of micropolitics in both film and political events precisely because it emphasizes the agent's relationship to time, while at the same time offering a critique of rational ontologies as restrictive for analyzing micropolitics.

The first portion of this paper turns to Connolly's critique of narrative and Lacanian film theory (first published in an exchange on film with Slavoj Žižek in *Theory and Event*, 2002) to explore the advantages offered to film and political theory through technique. Adopting Connolly's language of technique, I will argue that Beauvoir's reading of time

can be understood as technique because of its affective/sensory and embodied/situated character, which bolsters our understanding of micropolitics and identifies the limits of rationalism for theorizing politics.

Turning to the *Second Sex* as an analytical film tool, the next portion of this analysis considers how Beauvoir's two readings of timely bodies offer us something unique. Building off of the somatic reading of bodies formulated in previous chapters, I read the *Second Sex*, a text predominantly associated with an orthodox reading of Beauvoiran bodies as a discussion attentive to the sensational, affective, and sensory experiences of time. Identifying somatic affect in the text complicates Beauvoir's theorization of temporality, dislocating it from its existential proclivities. I catalogue this time as, *somatic time*. Then I return to a reading in agreement with her larger existential project wherein Beauvoir argues that time is an ambiguity that is neither natural (completely immanent) nor constructed (rational). Most importantly, by depicting ambiguous time as experiential and embodied, Beauvoir equips us with an understanding of how individuals affirm or deny the structures of time. By way of contrast, I note this experience of time as *situated time*. Although the distinction between these two readings of bodies and time is much more collaborative and integrated, I draw the distinction to locate where Beauvoir fits within the larger project of technical film discourse and where her account deviates to educe a new reading. Here I wish to suggest that Beauvoir's understanding of time as a component of ambiguity has some similarities to Connolly's theorization of time as becoming, although it is uniquely equipped to decipher how individuals interact with time.

Utilizing Beauvoir's reading of timely bodies, I will examine Chantal Ackerman's (1975), *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai de Commerce 1080 Bruxelles* as an example of cinema allied with Beauvoirian bodies and time. The affinities between Beauvoir's account of timed bodies in the *Second Sex* with Ackerman's technical exploration of the same concepts evinces help us to see bodily time disclosed as micropolitics through technique. Considering bodily time's application in Beauvoir's housework section of the *Second Sex* alongside Ackerman's *Jeanne Dielman* heightens our awareness to technical operations of time, micropolitics, and freedom as intimately related to both the affective somatic and situated structural bodies.

Technique and Micropolitics in Connolly

In "Film Technique and Micropolitics" William Connolly argues that narrative, storytelling, and rationalism have become overemphasized in our methodologies used to theorize film⁸⁷. Connolly challenges the near hegemonic position that Lacanian and other Freudian-based methodologies have enjoyed in contemporary political film theory. Pointing to the dogged emphasis that rationalism receives in these dominant theoretical paradigms Connolly stresses that insufficient attention has been given to the micropolitical experiences of film. For Connolly, Lacanian analysis prioritizes the role of "symbolic interpretation" and removes its relationship to technique.⁸⁸ The privilege rationalism and narrative receive in film theory obscures our ability to recognize the many benefits offered by an analysis that is attentive to technique. By trivializing the role of technique in film, he says, we are ill equipped to theorize micropolitics.

By a film's *technique* Connolly refers to the very stuff that converges to constitute it. We may think of technique as a discontinuous assemblage of a film's many components: the sounds, rhythms, images, words, lighting, angles, and shots that merge to compose a film. In contrast with thinkers such as film theorist Stanley Cavell, who maintains that technique is a formal apparatus of film no different than "a number motivated in an opera or musical comedy," technique for Connolly comprise all of the compositional elements of film.⁸⁹ Filmic technique's sites of operation are different than those of symbolic interpretation. Animating our sensual and perceptive faculties, filmic techniques are the functional components that "work on the visceral register of human sensibility."⁹⁰ Technique appeals the materials in film, and operates through the momentary perception identified by nineteenth century empiricist Henri Bergson.⁹¹

Connolly aims to accentuate the role of micropolitics through an awareness of filmic technique. Only through observing the synthesis of the psychoanalytic and narrative based forms of analysis with technique are we able to see "how immersed we are in the sea of micropolitics."⁹² Technique parallels micropolitics because both are an amalgamation of "sound, gesture, word, movement, and posture through which affectively imbued disposition, desires, and judgments become synthesized."⁹³ Arguing that narrative-based analysis of film lends itself to become a rational analysis, Connolly contends that our preoccupation with narrative prevents us from thinking about how micropolitical experience forms the foundation for the larger macropolitical questions we ascertain through a more capacious technical analysis. Solely concentrating on narrative renders us unable to sense, experience, and perceive the events of a story on the visceral level evoked by the film's storytelling technique.⁹⁴ They invoke the initial somatic and chaotic actions

that orient us in the world. Technique is what conveys and emphasizes perceptual moments of intake.

Connolly's emphasis on the fragmented techniques of film converging, rather than being absolute, ontologically re-situates time's operation in film. Micropolitics as an experience of discontinuous techniques allows us to discern a non-linear reading of time. In contrast with narrative and more rational forms of theorizing film, technique draws our attention to time as becoming. One may think of the converging aspects of film's techniques as establishing time as evolutionary. Connolly expands upon the theme of *becoming* introduced in his exchange with Žižek in *A World of Becoming* (2011). His subsequent theorizations establish becoming as a sort of discontinuous time marked by a "disjunction of moments," namely, "the reverberations back and forth between past and present, with each folding into the other and both surging toward the future."⁹⁵ Drawing from Bergson, Lucretius, and Nietzsche, Connolly shows how filmic analysis of time as becoming is more suited to theorizing the summation of technique's components into micro- and macropolitical phenomena. Connolly writes:

Let's turn to another issue and another film. Thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze suggest that modern conceptions of linear and teleological time support unwarranted hubris in explanation and interpretation while often supporting punitive conceptions of political morality. But, according to these very thinkers, everyday perception itself does not secrete the nonlinear image. The question becomes: How to expose oneself viscerally to a nonlinear image of time? Gilles Deleuze, in *Cinema II, The Time Image*, reviews a series of films that vividly convey time as "out of joint" (2002)

Connolly's time anticipates the synthesis of micro- and macropolitical events. By forcing us to read time as composed by multiple heterogeneous force fields that transcend the two registers of temporal experience (action-oriented perception and durational becoming), the assemblage of micropolitical images that create time become less narrative and more

incidental to us.⁹⁶ Reading Connolly's time as incidental reveals some of the more existential components of time.⁹⁷ As Connolly reminds us: "to amplify the experience of becoming is one affirmative way to belong to time today."⁹⁸ We are compelled to think about what evades us in our understanding of time, and in doing so we submit to time's irrational if not somewhat immanent nature.⁹⁹ Such a reading of time is better for understanding micropolitics as a combination of transcendent and immanent forces, as both stories and techniques.

Connolly appeals to technique in order to bolster notions of immanence in our readings of time, and in doing so renovates how we parse the relationship between time and freedom. In part, filmic time is linear and guided by our transcendent interpretations, but much like micropolitics it is also a compilation or assemblage of incidental partially immanent impulses. Time portrayed as fragments or as becoming invites a different reading of freedom. As Connolly writes, "you may begin to connect freedom more closely to becoming, as that strange activity by which the new surges into being from a threshold below the reach of perceptions, theories and stories already available to us."¹⁰⁰ To act in accordance with Connolly's theory of becoming is to "move from salient experiences of time as duration, the very experience that must be pushed to the background when the dictates of action are strong, to reflections in several zones of life, and then push back again, moving back and forth until we reach a reflective equilibrium that carries a certain degree of plausibility."¹⁰¹ It is, in other words, to cede to momentary indulgences in a Proustian and Bergsonian duration, where our "life's indispensable richness" and complexity are beyond rationalization.¹⁰² In exchange for checking our protean hubris at the door, we are better able to assess our freedom and agency (and its boundaries), and

how we are situated in the world of simultaneously occurring zones, forces, and moments.¹⁰³

Moreover, Connolly's time prompts us to use synthesis of technique and narrative to address questions more existentially.¹⁰⁴ Attention to time as a technique is one way to highlight micropolitics, but when this method is combined with narrative forms of analysis Connolly asserts that we have more ability to discern the existential questions important for politics and film.¹⁰⁵ "By recalling how contestable such experiences of time and ethics will be in a culture saturated with secular concepts of linear causality and Christian ideas of eschatology," we may begin, he says,

To cultivate agonistic respect for different orientations to time and morality. For the question of time persists as an existential question, while a definitive resolution of it acceptable to all seems unlikely. It is like Lacanian and Nietzschean philosophies in those respects" (Connolly 2002)

Thinking about time in film, Connolly suggests that the ruptures and irrational cuts in film ontologically reorient our thinking about time and its relationship to our ontological experiences.

To be infected by the image of a rift in time is not only to suggest modifications in one's experience of meaning and freedom. You also see more clearly why an ethic that plays up the importance of cultivation, sensibility, ethos and critical responsiveness to the new may possess some advantages over a morality grounded in transcendental commands or fixed contracts. For each time a fork or turn occurs it becomes timely to reassess established interpretations of the universal that grow up like underbrush in and around us. Eventually, rather than treating the rift as a crisis in the fabric of causality, meaning, morality and freedom, you may modify each idea in relation to the others. Such modifications, if they take, sink into your subliminal sensibility as well as rising into the higher intellect. For being is layered. These modifications involve experimental intersections between thinking, technique and sensibility (Connolly 2002).

To think about time in film is to think about the existential ethic of becoming. Technique and time becomes embodied as it “repetitively and experimentally” allows “a *mixture* of images, gestures, postures, rhythms, memories, arguments, and ethical concerns to be folded into your sensibility. You [the viewer] stimulate the techniques by which film already acts upon us.”¹⁰⁶ It calls on us to ignore any imposed narrative of time, meaning, or ideology that could be presented as linear, forthright, or providential. It recodes experience and analysis from what is first experienced as “intellectual themes” to a “series of experimental techniques to recode sensibility.”¹⁰⁷

In *Neuropolitics*, Connolly shows how the experience of time can be interrupted to cultivate new affective experiences for the viewer. Drawing from Bergson’s claim that “in every day perception the image is set in linear time; the virtual memories it folds into perception are assembled to fast to surface as explicit recognitions.”¹⁰⁸ Connolly shows how when the right combination of techniques is applied “in conjunction with the story lines they portray,” “occasionally such techniques.... Overwhelm the experience of linear time.”¹⁰⁹

Here Connolly’s emphasis on the senses provides us with a more affect-imbued version of embodied time that is experienced by the individual in situation. Technique and micropolitics challenge rationalism as the uncontested motive and knowledge-claim that informs film. Actions, judgments, bonds, schemes, and motives are presented not as the rational choices of individuals but as the summation of fragmented techniques, which converge in a series of filmic moments. Connolly extends his analysis to configure a critique on how we assess politics as the motives and actions of individuals. Connolly critiques the psychoanalytic tradition’s overdependence on rationalism as a means to

interpret action. The perils of such a method place “the theorist in the role of master,” an imposing figure, “always ready to fit our lives into an authoritative narrative in which we are unwittingly caught.”¹¹⁰ Relying too heavily on psychoanalytic lens “diverts attention from multi-media techniques that pull viewers into a story line they might otherwise resist. It is through attention to such techniques that we learn how micropolitics regularly proceeds.”¹¹¹ In narrative-inflicted methods, we forget about how time operates as becoming and focus on the rational decisions of story lines – the logics, decisions, fantasies, paradoxes, and symbolisms of film. Time becomes linear because, as Connolly puts it, “*The story is the thing.*”¹¹²

Connolly and Beauvoir: Between Ambiguity and Technique

Connolly’s insights on becoming are valuable because they call attention to the consequences of our reluctance to think about time as incidental, interruptive, non-rational, and part of a non-linear experience. But his analysis falls short of producing a complete portrayal of experiential time. He is right to identify the limits of rationalism for film analysis and the temptation of theorists to play the role of the Lacanian analyst, or, more generally, the “theorist as master.”¹¹³ The theory of becoming is a welcome attempt to categorize the techniques that illustrate time, many of which elude our analysis altogether and are fated to always be in some measure obscure. However, I worry that Connolly’s ontological resituating of time as becoming encourages us to depoliticize time: to render time practically immanent and thereby underplay its relationship to embodied human actions. Connolly’s reading of Bergson, Deleuze, and Lucretius accentuates the incidental techniques of time, but does not account for how these techniques are intimately related in spatial-temporal relation to the body. I am concerned that Connolly’s very well intentioned

and necessary aim to help individuals “come to terms with the force-fields of multiple types with different degrees of agency moving and different speeds,” and to “negotiate...relations between the human estate and the larger world,” may yet conceal particular themes of embodiment.¹¹⁴ Becoming may promise a modification to rational reading of time, but it is foremost an ethical claim.

In Connolly’s theory of becoming, the critical relationship between body and time is vague. Connolly intentionally leaves open multiple possibilities to depict the various locations for bodies to be affected by time. Drawing from complexity theory in the physical sciences, Connolly asserts that by strictly adhering to rationalism, pockets of self-conducting agency transpire with little propulsion from human agents:

A world of becoming—consisting of multiple temporal layers, many of which interact, each with its own degree of agency—is a world in which changes in some systems periodically make a difference to the efficacy and direction of others. Moreover, since human beings themselves are composed of multiple micro-agents collaborating and conflicting with one another, it is wise to think of both individual and collective human agency as a complex assemblage of heterogeneous elements bound loosely together.¹¹⁵

On the one hand, this model encourages us to consider the immanent components of our bodies, the very flesh and blood that materialize us and compose our agency. On the other, it demands a sort of reliance on incidental components of agency, a world “replete with loose and partial connections” that may reduce the relationship the embodied individual has toward affecting time.¹¹⁶ Connolly theorizes that agents in a world of becoming must give in to the “surprising turns in time, uncanny experiences, and the possibility of human participation to some degree in larger processes of creativity that both include and surpass the human estate.”¹¹⁷ Micropolitical experience evaluated by the individual may seem embodied on some initial level, but time may be experienced as too wholly immanent,

complex, and beyond the perceptible actions Connolly himself argues are integral to the human world's relationship to time as becoming.

Here, I think Beauvoir may help. Considering the fissures of micropolitics through a completely technical lens may provoke inaction and an overreliance on becoming as an incidental and totally immanent process. How then are we to fully break with the rationalism in the analysis of film and/or micropolitics? I contend that turning to Beauvoir may help us formulate more accurate readings of bodies and time.

There are several points of overlap between Connolly and Beauvoir that would allow us to consider Beauvoir's analysis of time as technique. First, Beauvoir, like Connolly, uses time as a technique that is active in micropolitical situations. *The Second Sex* (2011) employs time as an affective hermeneutical technique to denote the lack for freedom afforded to women and patriarchy's diverse systemic operations. Second, in keeping with Connolly, Beauvoir uses time as a technique that undermines the importance placed on rationalism, relocating political phenomenon on a micropolitical and experiential register.¹¹⁸ For Beauvoir, freedom and politics are not established by any claims to a possessive sovereignty and are comparable to the macropolitical experiences of becoming that are explained by Connolly.¹¹⁹ Time is not purely idea and its operations are far from linear. On the contrary, for Beauvoir, time is a technique and a concept deeply embedded in our embodied experiences and phenomenological perceptions, situations, and realities.

Situated Time in Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*

In Beauvoir's situated time, a relationship between temporality, bodies, and phenomenon is expressed through an acknowledgement realities occur within time and space. In *The Second Sex* it becomes clear that experience is not grounded, but embedded in time. Consistent with her phenomenological methodology time is a fluid component of *being-in-the-world*-- universally contextualizing lived experience. Not only does her emphasis on lived experience prioritize embodied realities as the foundation for politics, but it also attends to time's relationship to embodied experiences: situations for Beauvoir exist within a time and space. According to Beauvoir, experience is always embodied and mediated by both time and situation. Denying either's influence distorts experience:

Limited in time and space, possessing only one body and one finite life, man is but one individual in the middle of a foreign Nature and History. Limited like him, similarly by the spirit, woman belongs to Nature: she is traversed by the infinite current of Life, she thus appears as the mediator between the individual and the cosmos¹²⁰

Beauvoir employs the language of time and space to establish that time neither exists as an *a priori* to an event or action, or serves as the backdrop for events to occur.

As we have already noted, Beauvoir's time is situated in and influenced by lived realities but also is depicted as partially immanent and un-mastered. Time is at once something individuals assert some ascendancy over (transcendent) and at the same time evades our rational analysis (immanence). Beauvoir's phenomenological inclination stresses that our lived realities are contextualized by our experiences with time. Subsequently, through Beauvoir's lens, consideration is given to the way actions can position others and ourselves in relation to time. When Beauvoir calls into question the ways in which individuals act in relation to time, she illustrates how we either affirm or violate time as a form of ambiguity. By trying to place oneself beyond time or attempting

to undermine its immanent and embodied characteristics, we violate our own ambiguity and the ambiguity of others. Beauvoir warns of the temptation to establish oneself as beyond time's intercession in our lives. Men in the *Second Sex* constantly violate this ethos by presenting themselves as pure transcendence; they fail to recognize the ways in which they are "limited in time and space" (Beauvoir, 2011, p.190).

Although Beauvoir illustrates that time is controlled by our actions, she opposes a time that is defined by rationalism. Ascribing time to rationalism is one way in which time's ambiguity is violated. She is quick to identify the limits of rationalism and its tendency to deny embodiment, time, immanence and other constitutive parts of our ontological foundations.¹²¹ In her discussion of myths, Beauvoir urges against establishing ourselves as pure idea as a means to transcend time's influence. Men revolt against time by exhibiting themselves as pure idea:

he would like himself to be as necessary as pure Idea, as One, All, absolute Spirit; and he finds himself enclosed in a limited body, in a place and time he did not choose, to which he was not called, useless, awkward, absurd (Beauvoir, 2011, p.164).

Beauvoir does not limit this analysis to men. Women, she contends, violate time's immanence through false claims to freedom where they too apply rationalism to claim themselves beyond time. In her discussion of independent women who seek to surpass the immanent roles assigned to them, Beauvoir affirms that denying time is a form of bad faith where one posits oneself as sovereign. The mirror is one such object that falsely affirms rationalism and sovereignty to time and immanence. When women look in the mirror, "the whole future is concentrated in this rectangle of light...every woman drowned in her reflections reigns over space and time, alone, sovereign, she has total rights over men,

fortune, glory, sensual pleasure” (Beauvoir, 2011, p.669). Time is an explicitly political concept connected with womanly narcissism and false claims to sovereignty and freedom.

Situated Time in Housework

Beauvoir’s theorization of housework attends to this reading of situated time by noting how situation delimits women’s opportunities to experience freedom. Housework is depicted as structural oppression intently adjoined to women through situation. Time is read as part of condition of being rendered immanent. One way women are oppressively situated by time is through turning to the home to gain a sense of false-freedom Beauvoir depicts housework as the ability to “realize herself as an activity” (SS 471). Acquainting the housework with the interminable experience of Sisyphus or as an “endlessly recurrent fatigue in battle that never leads to victory,” Beauvoir posits continual repetition as “the sad futility of an activity the stubbornly resists time” (SS 475). Time does not affect the woman in the same integrated somatic way, it determines situation. “Washing, ironing, sweeping, routing our tufts of dusting in the dark places behind the wardrobe...for in one moment time is created and destroyed: the housewife only grasps the negative aspects of it” (SS 476).

The experience of situated time in housework is imbricated with questions of repetition and structure. For some Beauvoir scholars, such as Penelope Deutscher, equate these structural experiences of oppression with the experience of a transcendent self being reduced to immanence. Deutscher writes,

in identifying women, like all humans, with transcendence, the question arises of how that transcendence is to be located in forms of repetition as they are lived by women, as compared to its expression in the progressive projects that might provide alternatives for, or new meanings to, repetitive lives.¹²²

Applying this question of repetitive housework Deutscher maintains that Beauvoir articulates multiple forms of repetitive structural oppression. In a Marxian analysis, “Women- particularly those who are not paid workers—seem to be considered by Beauvoir “out of time”: not part of a historical or dialectical process.”¹²³

I will argue that in Beauvoir’s account of situated housework and the structural conditions of repetition, she does not posit the question of freedom and free time solely in terms of transcendent self. By contrast my reading of women’s lived situation is enhanced by an account of an affective and somatic time in Beauvoir. The question of which bodies are free and under what conditions is both a question of situation and material, of both position and affect. In doing so, the concept of freedom being accessible to the self only through transcending structural conditions is problematized by are reading of the micropolitical bodily affects that Beauvoir divulges in her recitation of housework.

Affective Somatic Time in Beauvoir’s Second Sex

Beauvoir also considers time’s active and affective role on bodies. Beyond denoting situation, time is presented as an active component of sensation and perception. Here we may think in terms of Connolly’s language, that time is not only part of narrative, but also a fluid, affective, and active technique in becoming or the micropolitical phenomenon which beckons answering questions more existentially. Although Beauvoir places her examination of housework within the Lived Experience Volume and more specifically in the category of “Situation,” caveats of a somatic and affective interaction with time are presented within Beauvoir’s description. Beauvoir creates a perceptive and sensory experience of time that is commensurate with Connolly’s conception of technique in filmic micropolitics. For example, in the immanent moments of time experienced as

interruption; Beauvoir clearly identifies affective anxiety, hope, despondence, rage, routinization, and objectification (SS 477). She is attune to how specific experiences of loss time, timeless, and the overwhelming affect of multiple temporalities operate anatomically as visceral and sensory as well as psychologically (read as operating on the brain) and pathologically. These moments are best understood as how time operates on the body. They are in keeping with the somatic, felt as action-oriented perception.

Acknowledging the confinement of women to the home as affecting boredom in homemakers, Beauvoir acknowledges how and excess of time evolves into an investment in the home as time-consuming project and edifying meaning.¹²⁴ The home Beauvoir writes, becomes “her earthly lot, the expression of social worth, and her intimate truth. Because she *does* nothing, she avidly seek herself in what she *has*” (SS 471). The investment of her time into specific home projects is imbued with sensory and affective dimensions. In attempts to compensate for other sorts of somatic pleasures, Beauvoir notes that housework produces sensorial pleasure in women. “In *A la recherche de Marie (Marie)*, Madeleine Bourdouxhe describes her heroine’s pleasure in spreading cleaing paste on her stove. In her fingertips she feels the freedom and power that the brilliant image from scrubbed cast iron reflects back to her” (SS 472).

Beauvoir’s most compelling citation of affective somatic time is manifest in her reading of sensations of uncleanliness. Having infixed pride and control into time spent on housework “every moment [that] threatens her with more thankless work” must be actively rejected. It form is manifest, not entirely form of an existential retraction from being. Its affects are felt on the body both corporeally and mentally. It changes perceptual orientations and associations, “a child’s somersault is a tear to sew up” (SS 476).

Anatomical transitions occur, “her eyes sharpen, her face looks preoccupied and serious, always on guard; she protects herself through prudence and avarice” (SS 476). Dust poses a material threat to her time and affects changes in action, “in the provinces, some bourgeois women have been known to put on white gloves to make sure no invisible dust remains on the furniture” (SS 477).

Technique and Narrative: Blending Embodied Time and Somatic Time Towards Theory of Freedom

Investigating both of the somatic and the situated body, Beauvoir’s theorization of housework encapsulates both transcendent and immanent components of time—it is at once incidental technique and a construct made up of the actions of subjective individuals. By reading bodily time as an amalgamation of technique and narrative, she offers an alternative to rational disembodied theories of time without reducing our own subjective capacities to interact with time.¹²⁵ Bringing together Beauvoir’s two readings of bodily time encourages a new reading of the synthesis of narrative and technique, one that does not admonish the role of narrative but examines its active role in formulating conceptions of time. Beauvoir’s situated time exculpates an account of time experienced narratively, while somatic time calls our attention to the affective, preconscious, and nonlinear interruptions that sensorially and viscerally orient us.

Integrating the two readings of body, Beauvoir often intimates the complex entangling of structure, situation, and affect in concocting narrative’s of time. Beauvoir distances herself from Connolly in the sense that examining narrative does not amount to an attempt to violate an untouchable or sacrosanct in the *immanent naturalism* evoked in Connolly’s Bergson, Nietzsche, Lucretius, and Deleuze.¹²⁶ Beauvoir’s housework chapter attends to this fact by examining how affects of timelessness or anxiety are experienced in

relationship to the body and consequently produces new narrative accounts of situation. All the while, these experiences are structured around political questions of structure that do not admonish the interruptive, affective, sensory experiences of time but occur in contingent fluid relationship to them. Through her emphasis on situation, Beauvoir prompts us to think about time as a different sort of becoming: one that is centrally located within the confines of individuals and their lived realities. Beauvoir distances herself from Connolly in the sense that her time is not untouchable or sacrosanct in the *immanent naturalism* evoked in Connolly's Bergson, Nietzsche, Lucretius, and Deleuze.¹²⁷

Beauvoir's analysis is particularly useful in establishing a relationship between time and freedom. By drawing attention to the central relationship between bodies and time, she is able to detail ways in which time can be used to reproduce oppression and deny freedom. Here, I think Beauvoir makes the most promising contribution to theorizing our micropolitical experiences in the ways that we affirm and violate freedom through our diverse and multifarious relations with time. At the heart of Connolly and Beauvoir's arguments is skepticism about rationalism as a model to guide our interactions with time. Both reject that interacting with time through ascribing it rational import can result in freedom. Time operates in Beauvoir's work as an ambiguous component of the world. We perceive and act in relation to time as both totality (narrative) and as a radical existential immanence (affective technique). While Connolly's interpretation precipitates our thinking about the visceral techniques and shifted ontological situations of freedom as becoming, it may adversely encourage us to think about time as immanent, incidental, and beyond human ascription. In opposition to this, Beauvoir manages to present time as a partially

immanent affective technique while still clarifying the human relationship to time as impactful for how we may affirm and violate the freedom of others and ourselves.

Ackerman's Jeanne Dielman and Beauvoir's *Second Sex*

Reading corporeal time in Beauvoir's *Second Sex* provides us with an embodied time as a lens for analyzing filmic technique, in so far as it offers a venue to think about the synthesis of somatic and situational time. Most importantly for our thinking about the nexus between Beauvoir's time and film is how we may think about time as a technique that informs micropolitical experience. Beauvoir's time operates as a technique because it analyzes the impossibility of experiencing time and the very materialized and embodied realities of micropolitics. Throughout *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir reminds us the woman's destiny is negotiated by time in ways that reduce her to pure immanence, or to an other. Part of her argument is that women are denied the moments of synthesis or ambiguity that are the ability to establish oneself as both immanence and transcendence. Beauvoir explains how domestic quotidian routines are designed to provide these compounded moments to men, but only by ascribing women to pure immanence:

Woman is destined to maintain the species and care for the home, which is to say, to immanence. In truth, all human existence is transcendence and immanence at the same time; to go beyond itself, it must maintain itself; to thrust itself toward the future, it must integrate the past into self; and while relating to others, it must confirm itself. These two moments are implied in every living moment: for *man*, marriage provides the perfect synthesis of them: in his work and political life, he finds change and progress: he experiences his dispersion through time and the universe; and when he tires of this wandering, he establishes a home, he settles down, anchors himself in the world (SS 443)

Here, Beauvoir posits that our experiences are limited by a time that is constructed, by a time women are unable to control. Beauvoir's ontological considerations on time take on a decidedly political character because of their ability to identify oppression, in this case that

of women homemakers, as situational and embedded within a time and space and as affective, sensorial, and perceptory.

Chantal Ackerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* profiles a single mother and homemaker, Jeanne Dielman, who must attend to the traditional functions demanded by motherhood. The film's hyperrealist style conveys the extended and tedious nature of housework and childcare. The housework is conducted in excessive and overstated routine. For the most part, Dielman's routine is familiar, if not innate, to the viewer; the unexpected component of Dielman's routine comes in the form of her once a week occupation as a prostitute to male client. Ackerman's film, much like Beauvoir's *Second Sex*, was instantly valorized for its feminist ideals and statements. Congruous with the *Second Sex*, the film has received positively a variety of interpretations and canonization. Also analogous, to the Beauvoir's magnum opus, it has been ascribed what seems like a hegemonically imposed meaning and a reputation that tends to eclipse other intentions animate in the work.¹²⁸

Reading film on the level of narrative, moral, and narrative representation, as is traditionally done in political theory's use of film, Ackerman's plot confirms Beauvoir's theories of time as a denial of situated freedom. Arguments can easily be rendered that Ackerman's character manifests many of the symptoms, pathologies, and neurosis of a mother and homemaker identified by Beauvoir. Her obsession with meticulous cleaning, her boredom, her alienation to and fetishization of particular household objects, her inability to recuperate from the loss of her husband, and her investment in her son as an affirmation of subject are all apparent in the film's plot. Read on the level of plot, the film seems to epitomize Beauvoir's ethical disposition. Emily Wang plainly notes, "The trouble

with writing about Jeanne Dielman, and why such a large body of critical work has accrued around it, is that is so easy to impute a particular politics to it through a structuralist-feminist lens.”¹²⁹ Ackerman rejects this reading of the film as reductionist. In one interview she responded to the claim that her film makes a contained structural statement about women’s situation by saying, “To name something is a way to possess it. I think it makes the film smaller. And O.K., maybe they are right, but they are never right enough.”¹³⁰

Beauvoir and Ackerman both reject a systematized interpretation of their project. Recognizing the congruency between Ackerman’s rejection of her film as solely evincing a structural claim about women’s situation and Beauvoir’s own interpretive structural limitations, I suggest that placing Beauvoir’s reading corporeal time is helpful towards understanding the synthesized role of narrative and technique in Ackerman’s *Jean Dielman*. Through Beauvoir’s reading of time as dually somatic and situational an affective and structural politics is discernable in Ackerman’s film. By first considering the somatic experience of time in Beauvoir’s work, I’ll argue that Ackerman by way of her structuralist filmmaking and heightened attention to technique reads technical and narrative time in a synthesized manner consistent with Beauvoir.¹³¹

Like Beauvoir, Ackerman’s film is posited in tense relation to narrative or other systematizing modes of interpretation. Reflecting on her experiences viewing the avant-garde film of structuralist filmmaker Michael Snow, Ackerman acknowledged that she felt as affected by the non-narrative sequences of Snow’s (1971) *La Region Central* as much as any of the plot driven auteur film of Godard. Locating this experience on an affective register Ackerman writes, “I didn’t need any story to feel...you didn’t need stories to feel suspense.”¹³² By the time Ackerman returns to Paris to write the script for *Jeanne Dielman*

she tentatively returns to the narrative style.¹³³ She writes in the spirit of the *Nouveau roman*, a genre apprehensive of the film's conventional features like narrative, plot, and arc.¹³⁴ Ackerman's choice to expose the affective and technical in concert with the narrative evinces a Beauvoirian claim about somatic and situated bodies.¹³⁵ Film theorist Ivone Margulies contends that time operates as a "structural strategy" to expose gendered oppression through a "series of real-time, nondramatic shots."¹³⁶

Time in *Jeanne Dielman* operates as visual technique. The film's highly visual and sensory exploration of time accomplishes precisely what Connolly details as technique—it operates on our senses to expose the monotony of domestic structural economies and gendered oppression. In fact, Dielman's use of particular technical elements forces us toward readerly fatigue. The fixed camera, indicative of structuralist filmmaking, focuses us on Dielman's mundane life. The shots of Dielman from behind are unexciting, when Dielman is facing the stove or sink she becomes a literal material and corporeal barrier to the action. The closet-like assemblage of hallways, small doors, passages, and cluttered furniture that compose the film's *mis-en-scene*, obfuscate anything attention-grabbing or entertaining in the background shots. Furthermore, we may be conditioned by the repetitive technique in Ackerman to preempt and anticipate the camera. "On the second day, as she stands in her kitchen wearing her apron and hears the doorbell" writes Marsha Kinder, "we recognize that this is an exact repetition of the opening scene. She moves at the same pace; and predictably the camera is in the same position."¹³⁷ Margulies's exposition of Ackerman, perhaps aptly titled as *Nothing Ever Happens*, she writes, "The fixed focus and extended duration of Ackerman's shots create a relatively stable texture that allows one to perceive the disjunctions between body and character, speech and script. The

predictability of her methods of framing and cutting forces one to attend instead to her mis-en-scene.”¹³⁸

Much like Beauvoir, Ackerman’s structuralist film making blurs the rigorous line



Jeanne Dielman (1975): Jeanne Dielman prepares potatoes for son’s meal (l) and Jeanne Dielman watches neighbor’s infant son (r)

drawn by Connolly between affect and technique, explicating examples of affective boredom as advanced by the films pacing, plot, and acting simultaneously. Viewing the film produces a somatic experience of time for both the viewer and Dielman. Margulies notes that Ackerman’s drawn-out pacing induces a familiar fatigue on its viewers.

Margulies notes,

Akerman’s film simultaneously allows viewers to experience the materiality of cinema, its literal duration, and gives concrete meaning to a woman’s work. We watch, for three hours and twenty-one minutes, as Jeanne cooks, takes a bath, has dinner with her adolescent son, shops for groceries, and looks for a missing button. Each gesture and sound becomes imprinted in our mind, and as we are lulled by familiar rhythms and expected behavior, we become complicit with Jeanne’s desire for order. (Margulies 2009)

Dielman experiences the immediate and somatic experience of boredom and fatigue as well. In some instances this affective boredom is brought on narratively by sequences not dominated by a chore. When not preoccupied knitting sweaters, making beds, combing her hair, or preparing food, Dielman frequently shown slumping down in her living room chair or looking impassively while eating lunch in the kitchen.



Time is important to the narrative of the film. Much of the film is imbued with Dielman's relationship to routine and time management. Tension builds throughout the film, as Dielman is unable to exercise complete sovereignty over her routine. As viewers we are invited to Dielman's anxiety over disruptions in the rhythms and routines of housework: lost buttons, imperfect meals, and an inconsolable infant. Dielman's psychosis peaks at the end of the film when she experiences orgasm for the first time and in immediate aftermath stabs her client with a pair of scissors. One way in which this scene may be read is that the stabbing is the culmination of anxiety experienced by Dielman as a result of managing her routine and rhythm. Beauvoir emphasizes that women often seek to formulate some form of false sovereignty through managing time and routine in

housework¹³⁹. Beauvoir is also acutely attuned to the time sensitive nature of domestic labor:

Done every day, this work becomes monotonous and mechanical; it is laden with waiting: waiting for the water to boil, for the roast to be cooked just right, for the laundry to dry; even if different tasks are well organized, there are long moments of passivity and emptiness; most of the time, they are accomplished in boredom; between present life and the life for tomorrow, they are but an inessential intermediary (Beauvoir 480)

Dielman's inability to control her routine and rhythm is associated with an attempt to posit herself beyond the immanence of time. Dielman acts in bad faith by trying to ascribe time a rational and purely constructed meaning; she does this by investing in the predictability of her routine.

Conclusion

Beauvoir's embodied and ambiguous time provides a useful synthesis of the narrative and technical components of time in cinema. By locating her analysis of time within the realm of situation and somatics, Beauvoir is able to expose the embodied components of time that give it the becoming aspects appraised by Connolly. As we have seen, Beauvoir's use of time as a technical strategy in the *Second Sex* is useful for developing the relationship between experience and micropolitics. Beauvoir is a useful resource to film and political theory and in keeping with the tradition of thinkers who aim to expose the limits of rationalism for understanding opaque concepts such as time. However, Beauvoir offers a distinctive interpretation where the agent is not lost or eroded to the larger composition of incidences and interrupt, rather she embraces interruption as somatic and situated experience. Foremost, Beauvoir's ambiguous time provides us with a lens to understand how we interact on a micropolitical level with time. By establishing time as an affective ambiguity, she is able to articulate the ways in which individuals

violate and affirm freedom through our dealings with time. In Ackerman's *Jeanne Dielman*, time can best be understood through Beauvoir's framework because it attends to the immutable immanent aspect of time while still presenting individuals as responsive and affective agents.

5| Beauvoir Minds Neuropolitics

“Rejecting any a priori doctrine, any implausible theory, we find ourselves before a fact that has neither ontological nor empirical basis and whose impact cannot a priori be understood. By examining it in its concrete reality, we can hope to extract its significance: thus perhaps the content of the word “female” will come to light.”- Simone de Beauvoir, “Biological Data,” *The Second Sex*

Are Beauvoir and Scientific Method Inimical?

At first, Beauvoir may seem a logical collaborator with contemporary critics of the neurocognitive turn in political theory. When we think about the application and presentation of science in Beauvoir’s we are not initially flooded with approbatory images. Take for example her indignation of the scientist as a denier of ambiguous freedom in her seminal *Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir writes, “For a scientist who would aspire to know everything about a phenomenon would dissolve it within the totality.”¹⁴⁰ In addition, scientists of all sorts including but not limited to physicians, psychoanalysts, chemists, biologists, and physiologists, receive caviling analysis in Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*. Often, they are portrayed as the unapologetic accomplices of universalism, systematization, and doctrines. With all this in mind, Beauvoir may be an unlikely choice to explain the political merit of cognitive and neurological in theorizing the body.

Furthermore, the propensity in Beauvoir’s work for her to challenge scientific research’s claim to objectivity implies that she may concur with critics of neurological influenced affect theory. Beauvoir exhibits skepticism throughout her work that scientific methods create the purely objective outcomes they have come to extol in their modern representations. Moreover she is sensitive to the ways in which this narrative of pure objectivity is manufactured through a problematic realist philosophical method. She is quick to suggest the inherent subjective biases and structural prejudices that doctor the

objectivity of fact and myth alike. To the claim that science's objectivity provides a critical distance from worldly structure and prejudices, Beauvoir establishes the clearly political proportions of scientific discourse by disclosing their involvement in denying forms of freedom and agency. Nowhere is this account more prominent than in Beauvoir's "Biological Data" chapter of the *Second Sex*. Located under the "Destiny" section, perhaps ironically, Beauvoir dismantles the coupling of patriarchal essentialist narrative from biological data in what can be at times a disoriented blend of philosophy of science, inter-species analysis, ecological research, and rhetorical deconstruction of political thinkers, physiologists, and cognitive scientists alike. Her perfunctory political aim is to dispel the determinism that arises from scientific discourse on 'women's nature'—exposing how superficially objective science is inculcated in the reproduction of patriarchal narrative and the refutation of women's ambiguity and freedom. The claims of realism animate in science are in reality attempts to "find a justification in biology" for a "disquieting hostility women triggers" in men (SS 21).

At the same time, as this thesis suggests, Beauvoir herself is open to the tenants of an empirical methodology that stresses immediacy, desystematized experience, action-oriented perception, sensorial politics, and somatically aligned bodies. A Bernardian and Bergsonian Beauvoir who recognized the ontological and political significance of an action-oriented methodological experimentation, which precedes a metaphysical description, is also recognizable, albeit less commented on, in "Biological Data". While claiming to take no stance "proposing a philosophy of life or to take sides too hastily in the quarrel between finalism and mechanism," Beauvoir notes that contemporary science is not in and of itself deterministic, rather it is the coupling premade observation, idea, or

thought that leads to oppressive politics of pseudo-objective scientific method—“it is noteworthy that physiologists all use a more or less finalistic language merely because the *ascribe meaning* to vital phenomena” (SS 26).

Although a reading where Beauvoir totally abates the claims of biological fact and method is possible, I will argue that more accurately, Beauvoir educes a critique of a philosophy of science that claims objectivity whilst imposing *a priori* idea/knowledge onto an experimentation. This claim echoes her Bergsonian evaluation of scientific experimentation as perceptory action and their mutual critique of the epistolar aims of perception as inimical to theorizing an active and somatic body. Beauvoir does not abandon the vocabulary but employs it through adapted methodological approach congruent with the experimental method in Bernard. Much like her positive evaluation of Bernard, Beauvoir is not hostile to science but contrarily sees creative possibility in experimentation when undertaken with sensitivity to the aforementioned somatic concepts. For that reason, Beauvoir does not discard science from her methodological register. By contrast, she extrapolates its creative and positive potential as an interpretive apparatus to dismantle totalizing values, ideas, and practices. Beauvoir explains her decision to “use their [scientists] vocabulary,” by celebrating the interpretive possibilities of science undertaken, “without coming to any conclusion about life and consciousness,” whence undertaken as such, Beauvoir writes, “we can affirm that any living fact indicates transcendence, and that a project is in the making in every function” (SS 26). Consistent with her Bernardian experimental skepticism she follows this sentence by stating the empirical vitalism of these “descriptions do not suggest more than this” (SS 26).

Finally, scientists are not as clearly admonished in Beauvoir's corpus as their reputation implies. While much work has been done establishing the philosophical and political implications of Beauvoir's veneration of the artist's aesthetic contributions, the role of the scientist as a creator and arbiter of a sensory and aesthetic politics is both seldom and incomplete. However, in much of Beauvoir's work the scientist is represented with the same venerable potential for creative, affective, and somatic politics. The concluding portion of Beauvoir's account of ambiguity, "The Positive Aspects of Ambiguity," provides a positivist account of how art is enhance freedom through acknowledging its own limitations and intents.¹⁴¹ Much scholarship has been written to this end, which joins her writing on the ethical propensities of the artist with her own aesthetic criticism and literature. This is at the expense of the account vibrant philosophy of science its own creative potentia.

While Beauvoir devotes more philosophical attention to the ethical capaciousness of the material artist (Cezanne, Ponge, Barres, and Giotto to name a few), her account is also furnished with a substantial account of the scientific method as imbued with the potential to recognize ambiguity and enhance freedom. Foremost, Beauvoir recognizes the shared action-oriented experiential aim in science and art that make them, when undertaken in the character of ambiguity, able to wage a critique of knowledge as an end and to operate under an experiential lens. Beauvoir writes,

Science, technics, art, and philosophy are indefinite conquests of existence over being; it is by assuming themselves as such that they take on their genuine aspect; it is in the light of this assumption that the word progress finds its veridical meaning. It is not a matter of approaching a fixed limit: absolute Knowledge or the happiness of man or the perfection of beauty; all human effort would then be doomed to failure, for with each step forward the horizon recedes a step; for man it is a matter of pursuing the expansion of his existence and of retrieving this very effort as an absolute.

Important for Beauvoir's ambiguous philosophical method, science does not portend to establish universals, but attends to the world's concrete facticity and onto-political contingencies.¹⁴² Intrigued by the ability to draw a comparison between a work of art and a scientific theory, Beauvoir remarks on their mutual capacity to create through acknowledging the limits and contingencies of lived experience, Beauvoir argues ...

But likewise just as the physicist finds it profitable to reflect on the conditions of scientific invention and the artist on those of artistic creation without expecting any ready-made solutions to come from these reflections, it is useful for the man of action to find out under what conditions his undertakings are valid. We are going to see that on this basis new perspectives are disclosed (EA 74).

Beauvoir scholars are right to acknowledge a certain antipathy towards science, however, I argue this critique is slightly dislocated. It is true that Beauvoir recognizes and critiques scientific method for systematizing, claiming false objectivity, and denying its situation in a subjective and contingent universe. However, aim to show that this is only in attempt to attempt to salvage its creative ambiguous capacity. Beauvoir establishes the premise of ethics as an ambiguous entity by pointing to science and art's capacity to create without producing 'recipes' of ready-made values and ethics. "Ethics does not furnish recipes any more than do science and art. One can merely propose methods" (EA). In science, Beauvoir writes, "the fundamental problem is to make the idea adequate to its content and the law adequate to the facts; the logician finds that in the case where the pressure of the given fact bursts the concept which serves to comprehend it, one is obliged to invent another concept; but he can not define *a priori* the moment of invention, still less foresee it" (EA 75). Beauvoir is quick to point out that science fails to live up to its ambiguous potential when it defies ambiguity to establish objective truths.

Science condemns itself to failure when, yielding to the infatuation of the serious, it aspires to attain being, to contain it, and to possess it; but it finds its truth if it considers itself as a free engagement of thought in the given, aiming, at each discovery, not at fusion with the thing, but at the possibility of new discoveries; what the mind then projects is the concrete accomplishment of its freedom. The attempt is sometimes made to find an objective justification of science in technics (EA 74).

Because both science and art are united by experience, observation, and the project of creation they fall under the same category of freedom enhancing enterprises.

It is on this point of methodological sympathy between the aesthetic political potential of the scientific experimental method in Beauvoir that I undertake my exploration of the contemporary neurocognitive political turn. Beauvoir's own inconstant relationship to scientific research as a source of theoretical fodder finds its compliment in the contemporary debates surrounding what Linda Zerilli calls "the turn toward the ontology of affect and neuroscience... in political theory."¹⁴³ With the notion in mind that science, when conducted with the intent to understand the transcendence of ontological things, discloses a creative and freedom enhancing politics, I turn to contemporary debates surrounding the benefits of *scientism* on devising theories of the body and body politics. At the lacuna between critics and supporters of this affective ontological political theory, I interject Beauvoir as a moderator whose own apprehensive but ultimately sympathetic view of scientism provides a somatic theory of bodies responsive to observations that this discourse is potentially deterministic and apolitical.

Taking up this analysis, I pose a rejoinder to theorists who have suggested that Beauvoir is incompatible with the neurocognitive scientism of contemporary political theories, as well as those who suggest that Beauvoir would reject these methods for their determinism, systematization, and intellectual reductionism. Sonia Kruks argues that on

the question of judgment neuroscientific political theory and Beauvoir diverge, because the former reduces the experience of judgment to a deterministic set of non-conscious functions. Kruks writes,

There is another strand of recent scholarship that also challenges rationalist accounts of judgment. Beauvoir's insistent rejection of mind-body dualism and her argument that subjectivity is always embodied might, at first sight, seem to anticipate recent studies that draw on neuroscience in order to account for judgment primarily in nonconscious terms. However, much of this literature tends toward a reductions that is not Beauvoir's goal.¹⁴⁴

Kruks presents Beauvoir as more open to a theory of deliberative judgment, which eschews determinism by accounting for the radically singular agentic subject. By contrast, the neuroscientific notion of the 'self' "is conceived here as but a particular composite of neural pathways, wherein prior experiences have become encoded in "brain maps" that, in turn, structure our future preconscious responses."¹⁴⁵ Because Beauvoir is such a vehement critique of deterministic ontologies, Kruks reasons that Beauvoir would not endorse the this account of judgment. The self, for Beauvoir, is not "a collection of "brain maps" laid down in synaptic pathways, as Thiele and others suggest."¹⁴⁶ Kruks returns to a reading of the embodied subject to reject the anatomical and materially reductionist reading proffered by Theile,

To return to Beauvoir's example in *The Mandarins*, the disagreements between Dureuilh and Henri are in no way *reducible* to their differing "brain maps." Rather, we have to say, with Beauvoir, that the entire *existence* of each—each an embodied subject, each ambiguously free and constrained—is present in their respective judgments¹⁴⁷

Kruks returns things to the level of embodiment to offer a retort to what she feels is affect theory's over materialization of experience to the level of incidental.

Operating under the belief that the recent cognitive-neurological turn in political theory has benefited holistic thinking about the political body, this chapter considers what contributions, both positive and critical, Simone de Beauvoir holds for contemporary debates on the role of cogno-neuropolitical theories of the body. Evaluating both the merits and critiques of this discourse, I argue that Beauvoir's somatic body offers something to both the contingents of patrons and critics. Addressing the claims made by critics of affective neurocognitive approaches that cognitive political theory is deterministic, apolitical, and methodologically lax, I explore how Beauvoir's commitment to political freedom separates her from the battery of theorists who are subject to such a critique. Using her account of situated freedom, I demonstrate that Beauvoirian embodiment addresses many of the concerns raised by critics of the neurocognitive approach.

To see where Beauvoir makes her most critical intervention in the neurocognitive theoretical study of bodies some familiarity with the already existing literature of its proponents and objectors. The first portion of this chapter explores the benefits of turning to neurological research for theorizing a somatic body. Engaging in some contemporary reception studies, the second portion of this paper examines the fallibility of presenting bodies as political in the neurocognitive approach. Drawing from responses Linda Zerilli, Ruth Leys, John Gunnell, and Sharon Krause to the neurocognitive valuation of the body as deterministic, apolitical, and methodologically lax, I use the chasm created by their criticism to explore in the third section how Beauvoir's methodological assessment of scientism excavated in the second chapter allows for a somatic body advertent to political conditions such as freedom, contingency, and action. By mobilizing a somatic reading of bodies in Beauvoir's "Biological Data" chapter of I show a somatic body is discernable

through scientific method that can still attend to first order political dilemmas of embodiment, freedom, and situation.

Somatics and the Neurocognitive Approach to Political Theory

The movement to use neurocognitive research as a fabric for political theory responds to treatment of the body by other approaches that enforce mind-body dualism.¹⁴⁸ Through examining scientific information about our body's material, anatomical, and technical actions we come to understand a new and complex relationship between the two categories body and mind dualistically constructed.¹⁴⁹ When this information confers the somatic skepticism that the mind is fully autonomous in its processes of judgment, reason, and action, the body and mind as distinct categories are recast in a complex relation that stresses immanence, desystematization, and de-hierarchical experience. As advocates of this methodology such as William Connolly suggest, analysis of neuroscience experiment confers the "radical immanence" of mind-body relations.¹⁵⁰ Connolly explains,

mind and body are intrinsically connected, through the experimental knowledge and experiential capacities of human beings are not fully commensurable. It is through this creative movement back and forth among experience, reflection upon it, experimental observation, reflexive awareness of such experiments, and the cautious application of specific techniques to individuals and groups that most promising and dangerous possibilities emerge.¹⁵¹

This approach heightens our attention to the ways in which the mind is susceptible to the condition of material immanence. Denying this sort of corporeal facticity holds implications for conduct of politics. If we take seriously that lived experience is the grounds for politics than ignoring the "neuroscientist's ability... to establish correlations between observed body/brain states and the quality of lived experience," then we obstruct our own ability not only to observe phenomenon but to formulate an

understanding of the multiple ways our own experience is categorized and constructed.¹⁵²

This is not a call for the embrace of determinism, but rather to acknowledge the body's corporeal limitations posed by its functional capacities, mechanics, and anatomical facts. To think the bodies promises and limitations beyond position is to acknowledge as John Hibbing puts it that, "biology does not determine human behavior but it does touch and shape it. Changeable but inertial biologically-instantiated predispositions of defaults affect the probability than an individuals will behave in a certain fashion when faced with a certain situation...people's choices are biologically encumbered and mainstream social science has failed to absorb this reality."¹⁵³ Contrarily to what we think, an embrace of neuroscience in political theorizing does not determine our agentic capacity, but opens the dialogue of bodily movement, sensation, and function to think more animatedly and experientially. Suddenly the bodies "emergent qualities" are introduces as a grounds for political inquiry and an affective component on thinking through pre-existing political questions.¹⁵⁴

Beyond demystifying the primacy of the mind in the history of political thinking as an autonomous subjective concept, neurocognitive theory portends to understand how these pseudo-immanent body functions affect politics. The indispensable activeness of bodies is reinforced by neuro-scientific research.¹⁵⁵ This weighs most heavily discussions of perception as an influence on political actions such as judgment, reason, opinion formation, representation, and recognition. Neuroscientific research establishes that these perceptory functions, both pre-conscious and consciously undertaken, happen through a multitude of neural and corporeal systems.¹⁵⁶ Broadly understood, this discourse aims at

introducing bodily affects into economies of politics. Our body's anatomical processes are always part of our being the world. Even the most basic actions occur through the body's operational movement, sensation, and perception.¹⁵⁷ Eschewing that these anatomical practices are not enmeshed in the political functions of the world or ascribing them passivity because they are not undertaken with total subjectivity is neglectful to their legitimate influence on lived experience. Through such an understanding of the body as animate, the most basic and complex political procedures alike are shown to be inculcated and affected by the variety of neurocognitive influences and processes. The body's most fundamental movements play an active role in conditioning and constructing politics even though this may occur in ways that fail to register with us on a day to day level. Connolly writes, theorist critical of neuropolitical theorizing, "lapse into a reductionism that ignores how biology is mixed into thinking and culture and how other aspects of nature are folded into both."¹⁵⁸

The political potential of such a bodily orientation is best represented by Connolly's seminal *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*, which is widely considered the first book in political theory to adapt and seriously engage with neuroscientific research. Connolly's book posits that the complexities of brain/body relations evince his large project of engaging in and with a tradition of political pluralism.¹⁵⁹ Where neuroscience brings to bear a new model of thinking politics is through the various components of neurological functioning that help to orient our bodies in the world and contribute to our understanding of and participating in politics. Up until this point, Connolly suggests, political theory had only paid attention to the highest functions of neural activity, giving "singular priority to the highest and conceptually most sophisticated

brain nodules in thinking and judgment may encourage those invested in these theories to underestimate the importance of body image, unconscious motor memory, and thought-imbued affect.”¹⁶⁰ Blending cultural analysis of film, contemporary legal theory, cultural theory, scientific research, and texts and essays from canonical and marginal political thinkers such as Stuart Hampshire, William James, Lucretius, and Friedrich Nietzsche, Connolly shows the neuroscientific research is sustains claims about the body made by prior political philosophers and that contemporary scientific experiment when analyzed in congress with cultural theory enriches our account of phenomenologically lived bodies.

Anne Jaap Jacobson and Robyn Bluhm’s *Neurofeminism: Issues at the Intersection of Feminist Theory and Cognitive Science* illustrates that the brains cognitive functions play an critical role in animating a mobile and somatic body not just in its individuated experience, but also for structural and cultural questions, in this case those concerning feminist theorists. Influenced by an approach the weds neuroscienftic research with feminist questions about power, oppression, structure, and agency Jaap Jacobson and Bluhm portend to show that some of the sex/ gender distinctions that situate sex with the domain of biology and gender with culture may be inimical to advancing a feminist politics. By denying the intermixed nature of biological practice with cultural, social, and political condition, we situate biological fact in an objective role that disregards scientism’s embroilment in the world. Additionally, by relegating sex to a biological function we render the bodies anatomy to a pre-political state injurious to feminist politics and susceptible to claims of determinism. Jaap Jacobson and Bluhm write,

Associating biology with sex differences is problematic. Biological characteristics are thought to be innate and unchangeable. If this is true, then biological differences between men and women must also be innate and immutable. So if behavioral differences can be associated with biological differences, they, too, become natural and immutable.¹⁶¹

With this information in mind the relationship between cognitive functions and biological functions that define women's embodied relationship to the world are complicated. The interplay between sex, gender, and biology is more ambiguous open to the politics of creative movement, social and cultural construction, and the immanences and contingencies of lived experience.¹⁶²

Determinism in Neurocognitive Political Theory

Critics of the neurocognitive turn in political theory point out than the exculpation of affect also instantiates an apolitical and deterministic model of bodies (and to larger extent knowledge). Suggesting that underwriting politics with a biological framework prioritizes the determined ontological conditions of experience and reduces lived subjective action to “nonsignifying, nonconscious “intensity” disconnected from the subjective, signifying, functional-meaning axis.”¹⁶³ By asserting that a biological realism underlies all actions, neurocognitive theory fundamentally advocates a determined view of politics. Even what seems contingency, random, and discontinuous is predicated on a framework that reduces the political stakes of self, judgment, and freedom. Although critiques of affective and neuroscientific approaches to theorizing bodies vary on the specifics of argument they are united by a return to the theme of determinism. Claims regarding the objectivism, methodological remissness, unconsciousness, or apoliticality all to some measure suggest a concern about enabling determinism and thus reducing some sort of agentic capacity in the self.

Ruth Leys identifies this determinism as a belief in a politics of automation or the coupling of action with a theory of neurological determinism. Analyzing Brian Massumi and William Connolly's respective turns to neuroscience to support a theory of affect, Leys argues that "affects are "inhuman," "pre-subjective," and "visceral" forces and intensities that influence our thinking and judgment but are separate from these" these "affects must be noncognitive, corporeal processes or states."¹⁶⁴ Leys equates this nonconscious turn in thinking about political affects with Connolly and Massumi's choice of reliance on neuroscientific research. For Leys neuroscientific research for the past twenty years has been dominated by a belief that "affective processes occur independently of intention or meaning."¹⁶⁵ Because affective draw from this fountainhead of research their work invariably suffers from the same conviction that "our basic emotions do not involve cognitions or beliefs about the objects in the world" and are wholly "rapid, phylogenetically old, automatic responses of the organism that have evolved for survival purposes and lack the cognitive characteristic of the higher-order mental processes."¹⁶⁶ Leys suggest that even if these thinkers such as Connolly intend to articulate a more nuanced understanding that incorporates more visceral affects such as taste and 'higher-order mental processes' such as reason under the horizontal roofing of somaticism, their reliance on a orthodoxly deterministic neuroscientific paradigm makes such nuance impossible.¹⁶⁷

Linda Zerilli expresses a similar concern that transposing neuroscientific research onto political will cultivate an objective and determined understanding politics. Zerilli expresses concern that "although rightly critical of over rationalist and cognitive models, the neurobiological turn casts action and judgment as the mere effects of already primed

dispositions, for which the giving of reasons is little more than window-dressing on what was going to happen in any case.”¹⁶⁸ The work of neuroscientists and biologists such as Richard Lewontin, Evan Balaban, Anne Fausto-Sterling, and Evelyn Fox Keller all champion a deterministic vision of biological action, even if unintentionally. Zerilli takes to this expressly by showing how neurocognitive theorists’ aims to challenge rationalism and subsequently endorse a vision of politics premised on a humble acknowledgment of biological limitation re-ensconce theoretical method in “a familiar recrimination game of scientism, where the inductive methods of the natural sciences are heralded as the only reliable source of factual knowledge and anyone who says otherwise doesn’t know what she is talking about (i.e. has no knowledge.”¹⁶⁹ For Zerilli, the question of determinist method and claims of objective knowledge are intimately related to questions of determined bodies and conditions of freedom. To this end, Zerilli claims that if we want to “refigure the place of the body in political life” we must “contest the excessively cognitivist models” which do not portend to refigure the body but ensure an “epistemological regrounding.”¹⁷⁰

If Zerilli is concerned with method as telling for political questions, John Gunnell’s critique of cognitive political theory conversely compliments Zerilli’s wariness about determinism in scientism by attending to the problems of the method in and of itself. Gunnell maintains that the method by which political theorists apply neuroscience is determinist, not because the cognitive approach is inherently determinist but, because of the “highly selective and conceptual problematical” manner that political theorists apply the aforementioned research.¹⁷¹ Gunnell remarks that social scientists that implement this research do so with “an insufficient critical understanding of the claims and controversies

in these fields.”¹⁷² In short, our inadequate comprehension forecasts an insurmountable paradox between claiming scientific authority through objectivism and willful reductionism. Many of these neurocognitive approaches aim to dismantle mind/body dualism, but in confusing the vocabulary of brain and subjective self thinkers such as Connolly and Damasio have problematized precisely what they are rebelling against.¹⁷³ Foremost, if pressed further to adopt the mission and methodology of neuroscientists such as Damasio and Churchland, Gunnell claims most theorists who disagree with complete determinism of their notion of not just brain but self. These disciplinary projects are in actuality at fundamental odds—a social scientist that seeks to examine the contingencies of social experience “would probably not find the whole meal palatable once they were familiar with all the ingredients. Connectionism is a distinctly reductionist position which calls into question the theoretical autonomy of social phenomena and the identity of social scientific inquiry.”¹⁷⁴

Leys, Zerilli, and Gunnell mobilize convincing points about the apolitical debility of somatic bodies rendered through neuroscientific research. If we understand agency and autonomy to be the central components of political action then a deterministic framework of the body’s movements, actions, reactions, and sensations facilitates an apolitical notion of self. Critiques of affect theory note the limited opportunities for political engagement that does not seem automated. Therefore, the body offered up by neuroscience cannot be somatic. It entraps the body in the same essentialism that affect theorists chide in more ideological views of the body by supplants the limitations that are imposed by an idea of the body with the limitations imposed by the bodies materialism.

What sorts of body politics can be rendered through such neuroscience, while still heeding attention to the body's agentic capacity? Responding to the new materialism paradigm in political theory, which conceptualizes the agentic possibility of matter, including but not limited to anatomical matter, Sharon Krause's "Bodies in Action: Corporeal Agency and Democratic Politics" offers insight into locations where democratic politics and material traditions of the body coalesce and enhance each other. Krause argues that to combat the ebbing of "personal responsibility that is so crucial to political obligation and democratic citizenship" that is possibly capacitated by material discourses (one being the neurocognitive turn), political theorists must centralize to role of "reflexivity," both of our notion of self and our conditions in our material, ideological, and normative capacities.¹⁷⁵ To rectify the disruptions of a notion of self, Krause argues we need to "recognize the ways that individual agency is corporeal and distributed by also make room for responsibility and normativity...we need to sustain the close connection between agency and sense of selfhood that is individuated, reflexive, and responsive to norms."¹⁷⁶ Krause suggests that we treat the neural and material processes as part of our sense of a non-sovereign, but subjective self. We ought to treat our corporeal "force of physical carriage" as evidence of our "creativity of human agency."¹⁷⁷

Neuroscientific Ambiguity: Supporter or Skeptic

Where Beauvoir may differ with Krause is in her understanding of how scientific discourses operate. Beauvoir does not synthesize the contributions of science with procedural political vocabulary to authorize scientific research's aptness to theorize political bodies. Where Krause seeks to understand the research coming from neuroscience as promising when understood through political terminology, framework, and practice of

subjective reflexivity and agency, Beauvoir stations political theories of the body within the research itself. Instead of transposing scientific research onto political theory, she offers us a new and unusual lens, which when employed, alters the ways by which we interpret scientific intent and research. By changing our exegetical relationship to the work itself, Beauvoir is able to account for the aporetic limitations and drawbacks of the neurocognitive body. As we had established in chapter two, Beauvoir's theorization of scientific experimentation stresses experience, doubt, perception, and hesitancy towards knowledge as an end. Like Bernard and Bergson, she does not seek to place a metaphysical framework onto experimentation.

Thus, it should be said that Beauvoir's 'lens' by which to understand science is not as concrete and universal formula, thesis, or theory of science. Beauvoir's understanding of scientism is best understood as a modification to the methods, strategies, approaches, and analytical skills in our toolbox. Replacing, revising, and disregarding particular tools instill scientific research with new aims and questions. Using the "Biological Data" chapter of *The Second Sex*, I aim to show that Beauvoir provides a framework to understand the role of political bodies that incorporates the criteria and tenets of neurocognitive bodies whilst remaining committed to first order political concerns of freedom.

First, I will claim that Beauvoir's proclivity to read scientific data as political theory aligns her with contemporary theorists and "the turn toward an ontology of affect and neuroscience."¹⁷⁸ Because Beauvoir theorizes science and politics in the junction between science and culture, nature and society, and idea her location is methodologically akin with the contemporary neurocognitive school. Next I will look at how Beauvoir's approach of theorizing at the morass of biology, other societal forces, and ontological

realities addresses the problems introduced by critics of affect. Where Beauvoir diverges from contemporary theorist using scientific text as foment for politics is through her explicit situation of the question of political freedom. While both Beauvoir and contemporary theorists of affect mobilize a creative vision scientific bodies, Beauvoir's account offers a unique rejoinder by locating what seem like ontological concerns with questions of bodily political freedom. Lastly, I will inquire about how Beauvoir's account of the body rendered through this method of reading biological data offers a hybrid of the animate, vital, and somatic claims rendered by theorists of affect and neuropolitics and questions of political structure, idea, and action alleged to be missing in their account by critics of affect.

Foremost, it is important to establish Beauvoir's opinion on the composition, authority, and character of biological data. Beauvoir rejects that scientism is rooted within the context of realism and objectivism. Beauvoir recalls the skepticism and "doubt" exhibited in her earlier claims about realism in the Bernardian scientific method in the "Biological Data" by systematically exposing the construction of scientific facts to fortify patriarchal oppression. Within the first lines of the chapter she dispels that scientism, even if analyzing realistic and empirical phenomena manifests in objective data. Beauvoir writes,

he wants to find a justification in biology for this feeling. The word "female evokes a saraband of images: an enormous round egg snatching and castrating the agile sperm; monstrous and stuffed, the queen termite reigning over the servile males; the praying mantis and the spider gorged on love, crushing their partners and gobbling them up...man projects all females at once onto woman. (SS 21)

Here Beauvoir offers an additional critique of scientism, one wherein, she suggests that when science's end is to establish knowledge it disregards the creative contingencies it portends to examine. Harkening back to Bernard's preference for experimental method, Beauvoir is more concerned with the experience of biology (experience) than the verification of hypothesis (knowledge). Elevating this claim to a political claim, Beauvoir suggests that knowledge based claims produce essentialist ideologies and narratives, which sustain a politics of patriarchy.

On Beauvoir's account biological data is never the objective, contained, empirical, and abstract universal facts that they are presented as because they are always tangled in human interpretation, culture, and the ontological facticities of situation. In her justification for utilizing biological data as a text, Beauvoir outright denies the authority of data to claim objectivity by debunking its sole ability to substantiate patriarchy. These facts "do not suffice to constitute the basis for a sexual hierarch; they do not explain why woman is the Other; they do not condemn her forever to this subjugated role" (SS 44). At the same time, ignoring material facticities of experience that can be rendered through biological data is another way of denying the conditions of lived experience. By denying material and corporeal conditions we abstract and systematize experience at the opposite extreme and equally unattractive option to Beauvoir.

The question for Beauvoir is thus, what can help to make sense of material data while eschewing objectivist readings of data? For Beauvoir what settles the question of objectivism and abstraction is the incorporation of data into other texts also produced in lived situation. To suss out biological data's implications on lived experience, Beauvoir not only treats scientific research as non-objective, but employs a litany of subjective texts to

be read in conversation with data. By demanding that data be read as in conversation with and influenced by contingent and subjective texts such as philosophy, history of science, sociology, and cultural theory. Beauvoir's view of lived data poses a rejoinder to Zerilli's claim that when science is introduced to our phenomenological analysis, 'we find our selves recriminated' in a "game of scientism, where the inductive methods...are heralded as the only reliable source of factual knowledge."¹⁷⁹

In seeking to bring scientific data into conversation with lived experience Beauvoir exhibits a posture similar to neurocognitive theorists. Both acknowledge the potential for political theory when scientific research is read with and against cultural theory. We are inclined to see Beauvoir's attempts to deconstruct the patriarchal implications of physiological studies of Fouillee, Binet, Roger, and Vignes with cultural theory, scientific data, and reception studies as aligned with the work of contemporary cultural theorists who do not use scientific research to prove their argumentation, but employ it as another text in conversation with social and cultural theory.

Beauvoir's central claim in the chapter is that data does not translate to political subordination; in the impasse between data and women's oppression cultural, systemic, and rhetorical application are at play. It is precisely in this impasse where disciplines, ideas, facts, and materials converge that both Beauvoir and contemporary affect theorists using neuroscience are conducting the bulk of their work. This is not an epistemological terrain but an ontological domain mobilized by questions of lived experience. "Thus we will clarify the biological data by examining them in the light of ontological, economic, and psychological contexts" (SS 48). This is further evidenced in her broader social framework. Beauvoir situates her analysis as diagnostic for politics or what she calls "second nature,"

and consequently rejects the seductiveness of abstraction and objectivism. “Society is not a species,” Beauvoir explains, “the species realizes itself as existence in a society; it transcends itself toward the world and the future; its customs cannot be deduced from biology; individuals are never left to their nature; they obey this second nature, that is, customs in which the desires and fears that express their ontological attitude are reflected” (SS 47).

In one case study of early twentieth-century physiology, Beauvoir rejects that data presented as realistic empirical data is a knowledge claim, but is in fact an observation that whence admixed with cultural patriarchy is instantiated into a narrative of female inferiority. In the study Beauvoir analyzes male and female brains were weighed to get a sense of which brain was larger and to use this data to support an argument of superior male intellectual development (SS 45). To further her point about cultural reception, Beauvoir argues that this research is worth dissecting despite having been “philosophically and scientifically ruined,” because “it still haunts a large number of minds” (SS 45).

To show this structural assembling of cultural and biology, Beauvoir must examine the data. “Materialist scholars have claimed” Beauvoir writes, “to posit the problem in a purely static way...they imagined that these measurements directly defined their functional ability” (SS 44). Beauvoir uses an amalgamation of methodological argument and cultural theory of the body to dissect and divest this merit biological data. To do so she solicits the bodily theory of Merleau-Ponty, who claims like Beauvoir, that empiricism is of little theoretical value without human interpretation always mired in contingency, randomness, and fallibility. Beauvoir writes, “only within a human perspective can the female and male be compared in the human species. But the definition of man is that he is a being who is not

given, who makes himself what he is. As Merleau-Ponty rightly said, man is not a natural species: he is a historical idea. Woman is not a fixed reality but a becoming” (SS 45).

These two concepts undermine the data’s claim to objective authority.

The pernicious reception scientific research as objective and the subsequent application of it to sustain patriarchal ideologies is not reason enough for Beauvoir to abandon biological discourse as grounds for political theory. Acknowledging that our bodies’ material existence is unavoidable and thus must be engaged with to produce a comprehensive account mirrors Connolly’s claim that political theorist must be attentive to both the high and low corporeal functions.¹⁸⁰ Beauvoir engages with science to understand its place is culturally and politically orienting us. Discussing her application of physiological research Beauvoir writes,

These biological data are of extreme importance: they play an all important role and are an essential element of woman’s situation: we will be referring to them in all further accounts. Because the body is the instrument of our hold on the world, the world appears different to us depending on how it is grasped, which explains why we have studied these data so deeply; they are one of the keys that enable us to understand woman. (SS 44)

Simply put, “physiology cannot ground values; rather, biological data take on those values the existent confers on them” (SS 47).

Like neurocognitive affect theorists Beauvoir exhibits profound interest in the body’s functions beyond mental capacity. Her interest in the most basic anatomical and corporeal functions and procedures as expository for broader cultural theorization displays is analogous with the contemporary project of theorizing animate places in constant and contingent relationship to other social, economic, cultural, ontological, and political contexts. Beauvoir’s interest theorizing at the intersection creative biology and lived

experience, employing philosophy, sociological research, and scientific data, produces an animate body agnate to those produced by contemporary turns to neuroscientific research. By acknowledging that biological data is not sacrosanct objective knowledge, Beauvoir is able to analyze the political implications and politics implicit in data as text.

As we know from chapter 2, Beauvoir's Bergsonian strategy of reading science stresses perceptory action, and not the end of knowledge. In the biological data chapter, Beauvoir is invested in deflating science as an abstract knowledge claim. Beauvoir articulates bluntly by saying, "Many of these characteristics are due to woman's subordination to the species" not because of an essential knowledge proven by biology (SS 46). Beauvoir shows that defenses of biological essentialism cannot be understood as objectivist or "factual knowledge," because they are in conversation or influenced by antecedent hypothesizes, desires, philosophies, methods of thought, and socio-cultural norms. It is not the data itself that is deterministic, but the biological data admixed with other worldly forces.

Beauvoir's investment in using biology whilst resisting Zerilli's "game of scientism" is manifest in her staging of conversation between philosophical argument and physiological data. Here methodological choice to place these two disciplines together implies the inherent subjectivism of research and a commitment to stressing the fallibility of both of these abstract forms of discourse on bringing to bear a model of lived experience. In one example where Beauvoir punctures a physiologist's claim of objectivity she examines the scientific claim that heterogenetic gametes produce different sexes by deploying an unusual choice secondary literature-- canonical philosophers ranging from Plato, St. Thomas Aquinas, Hegel, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger. "Most philosophies have

taken sexual differentiation for granted without trying to explain it,” Beauvoir writes, illustrating the extent to which different philosophies have interceded into the cultural reception of science.¹⁸¹

By contrast with critiques of the alloying of biology and political science that claim biology is a deterministic discourse, Beauvoir utilizes her non-objectivistic account to mobilize an account of biology as fluid, creative, and characterized by contingent and random movements. Throughout the chapter Beauvoir employs a language of randomness and dystematization. Her description of biological data is not static, contrarily she utilizes the language of violence, movement, and rupture to allay a description of biological processes as inert. While Beauvoir describes biological processes as both determined “maintenance” and incidental “creation,” both of features are sustained by contingency and are therefore never completely determined qua the descriptions afforded to them by critics of neurocognitive political theory (SS 38). Disclosing her affinity for the ontological approach of Bergson, Beauvoir describes biological process as a “becoming.” Beauvoir describes becoming as contestation between maintaining as a “means of denying the dispersion of instants, thereby affirming continuity in the course of their outpouring” and creating as an “exploding” of “irreducible and separate present within a temporal unit” (SS 38). All of these processes are also subject to extreme contingency, assessing the animal kingdom, Beauvoir writes that “in nature nothing is ever completely clear” the sex of animals is not always clear and physical characteristics such as color and coat are always “absolutely contingent” (SS 38)

Consistent with her larger political project, Beauvoir establishes a body politics out of biological data that centralizes the role of situated political freedom. Beauvoir's concern with the body constructed, narrativized, and mystified by the intersection of biological data and cultural reception is related to her attempts to dismantle doctrines that constrain and deny women's freedom. Beauvoir is able through sustained engagement with biological data to expose the disparity and complex negotiation between women's corporeal and material limitations, being confined to an animate body, and the suppositions, postulations, and hypothesis of scientific data that affect women's bodies and lived experiences by confining them to immanence.

Beauvoir notes that the reception of scientific data is acutely related to how women experience their own freedom in relation to their bodies. When discussing menstruation, a corporeal process, she denotes how the narrative surrounding menstruation alienates women from their bodies, not the determined biological process in and of itself. Women's blood, although part of a specific anatomical practice becomes animated by social conception and thus, "every month a child is prepared to be born and is aborted in the flow of the crimson tide; woman *is* her body and man *is* his, but her body is something other than her" (SS 41). Beauvoir furthers this point to discuss the biological process as constraining to women's experience not only in terms of practical agency, but also in terms of the freedom to exert autonomy over one's body. Female bodies, although biologically determined are denied freedom through the ability to alienate and isolate women's freedom to define relationships to their corporeal and anatomical processes.

At the end of “Biological Data” Beauvoir attempts to oriented us toward what sort of body is rendered through this disquisition. As we have seen, throughout this chapter, the Beauvoirian body is multidimensional to say the least. Through the application of biological text, women’s bodies are presented somewhat objectively. The female body is presented as active and animate material. Beauvoir employs biological fact to also suggest that these animate corporeal practices are to some extent, although full of person-to-person variance, contrained by particular realisms—“the woman’s body is one of the essential elements that define her” (SS 48). Materialistic corporeality in all of its processes are a constitutive ontological principle- on average women’s pelvises are wider (SS 43). Just because biological processes are automated does not imbue them with meaning—women during gestation will retain fat in the connective tissues in their breasts (SS 43). At the same time, we cannot occlude them from our account of what composes lived experience or render them as passive because they are automated. Nor can we treat this corporeal actions as dissociated from the other factors of lived experience. This would further serve to objectivify corporeal movement.

At the same time, Beauvoir rejects a completely materialistic account of the body. “In the position I adopt...that the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and the outline for our projects” (SS 46). She experiences herself as subject despite the objective corporeality she is confined to. Borrowing from Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir cites a from *Phenomenology of Perception*, “I am thus my body, at least inasmuch as I have experience, and reciprocally, my body is like a natural subject, like a tentative draft of my total being.”¹⁸² Woman is body, but is also a subject with a sense of situation acutely related to projects of political freedom. Her situation as a subject, not just as a material

body, situates her in relation to the world. The political contours of situation centralize freedom as a bodily enterprise that supersedes a material body.

Beauvoir often presents these two notions of body as not only in conflict with the world, but also in conflict with one another. Women's bodies experience determined processes, but they are by no means confined to them. At the same time our sense of self, situation, and our "grasp on the world" are mitigated by a set of vital and dynamic processes that happen without every registering on the conscious level of self. This is what Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir note as the tentative draft of self. The tension between the animate processes of the body and its situation are a manifestation of ambiguous conflict occurring on the level of the body, subject, and conscious simultaneously. This tension, Beauvoir points out becomes inexorably more complicated and political, when we realize that these contestations are happening within and through a world of systems, immanences, ideas, contingencies, disruptions, and others constantly enduring the same contestation.

Conclusion

To see where Beauvoir enhances an account of political freedom and situation neurocognitive theories of bodies, I return to the debate between Connolly and Leys. Leys analyzes Connolly's use of neurologist Itzhak Fried's study of laughter to show that Connolly makes an apolitical argument about the state of affect.¹⁸³ Fried's study concerns a sixteen-year-old young woman with epilepsy. At the time, the young woman was undergoing an examination before surgery wherein intracranial electrodes were stimulated in various parts of her brain. The neurologists found that when a part of the left quadrant of the frontal lobe was stimulated the patient laughed, yet was unable to provide a reason for the stimulation.¹⁸⁴ Connolly uses this study to sustain a model of "thought- imbued affects"

and other visceral affects that inform our political bodies. However, Leys writes that this reading of bodies incites an apolitical and abstracted view of bodily process,

he is implicitly arguing,” Leys writes, “that far from being a complex, social-cognitive phenomenon, laughter as an expression of amusement can be conceptualized as an automatic response to stimuli without regard to the meaning those stimuli might have for us, since they are intrinsically capable of triggering a laugh reflex.”¹⁸⁵

Connolly responds to Leys, by acknowledging the intertwinedness of emotion produced in complex social situation and the visceral affects that happen on a biological level.

Emotion and affect are essentially interinvolved, and neither is entirely reducible to the other. (Few theorists in this field accept the straitjacket imposed by the analytic/synthetic dichotomy upon which early analytic philosophy was founded, and we appreciate how this shift weakens the ability to attribute “performative contradictions” to intellectual adversaries.) Each layer of the body/brain system enters into bumpy communications with others through a rapid series of crossings and feedback loops.¹⁸⁶

To Leys claim that acknowledging complexity is not inherently political, Connolly assumes a position consistent with that articulated by Beauvoir. Also referencing Merleau-Ponty, Connolly writes that the political stakes of neuroscientific research such as that conducted by Giacomo Rizzolatti is “how cultural practice becomes encoded into the human sensorium.”¹⁸⁷

Beauvoir helps us to connect Connolly’s claims about cultural implications of sensorial processes with Leys’ unease of abstraction from politics by establishing the political stakes of freedom within discourse about cultural and biology. By emphasizing that beyond and within discussions about corporeal and anatomical processes are larger structural but also ontological inquests about freedom, Beauvoir invests politics into biological science. Beauvoir makes explicit the question of situated political freedom in the questions raised by Connolly, Jaap Jacobson, and Massumi. In analyzing Fried’s research

Beauvoir may ask not only what the research tells about pre-epistolary experiences of laughter, but may also focus more explicitly on how this account of affective body movement and reaction enriches our cultural understanding of laughter. Perhaps Beauvoir would look at the research and ask how the production of such data diversifies our account of spontaneous action. Ever concerned with the political implications she may ask how experiences that precede rationalism complicate our experience of bodily freedom and the sense that our movements are autonomous.

6 | Afterward

“Presence in the world vigorously implies the positioning of a body that is both a thing of the world and a point of view on this world: but this body need not possess this or that particular structure”-Simone de Beauvoir, *Second Sex*

Having spent much of this thesis observing and considering Beauvoir's various takes on method, either as literary form, affect, or experiment, I will conclude with analysis of where my method emanates from and collides with Beauvoir's. What I have attempted to show is that corporeality has been read somewhat hegemonically in Beauvoir's work in defiance of her commitment to a methodological multiplicity and a non-hierarchical, non-sovereign, desystemized outlook on experience. Viewing body politics in one way, as positionality and situation, as I have suggested, and subsequently extending and applying this view to her oeuvre operates in defiance of Beauvoir's methodological commitments and anti-universalism. Somaticism, as a theoretical paradigm of bodies, matches the contours of Beauvoir's discursive and sometimes bewilderingly nebulous approach. It is precisely that reason that somaticism is best excavated through her aesthetic politics, which most prominently exhibit a commitment to desystematization.

It should be noted that the Beauvoir presented in this thesis, if presented to Beauvoir, might be unrecognizable and certainly susceptible to much of her own existential criticism. However it is precisely the mix of creativity and critique that approximates Beauvoir's aesthetic politics. The point of form, method, and desystematization of bodies, which I have emphasized in this thesis, is very much indebted to Beauvoir's work and her methodology. By pulling Beauvoir's diverse texts that range from the canonical *Second Sex* to her less politically-read literary criticism, and even her orphic catalog of student essays, public lectures, and writings on the philosophy of science

and cognition, I hope to show that a dystematized assembling of fractals is consistent with if not Beauvoir's normative reputation than certainly her political methodology.

In an attempt to not reconcile but embrace the controversies and contradictions in Beauvoir's bodily legacy, this thesis is an intervention into both history of political thought and contemporary political theory. With reverence to the ambiguity of trying to understand situation and contingency as simultaneous components of the body but also as a method, I have attempted to account for both a Beauvoir concerned with the conditions of situated political freedom and one observant of the various immanences and contingencies that interrupt a sense of situation. This scholarly approach of paradoxical embrace is a reminder of the importance to continue involving and accepting paradox, rupture, and discontinuity as vital political ingredients. Although Beauvoir was not invested in theorizing the dimensions of a democratic politics, Beauvoir's embrace of contestable ideas, modes of being, and facities, is commensurable with Bonnie Honig's theory of agonistic politics. Honig maintains that interruption, contestation, and conflict are integral components of democratic politics. Beauvoir's embrace of inexorable bodily contestation, namely in the form of desystematized powers of the body continually interrupting one another, posits her work as a valuable and under-utilized resource to the those who wish understand the bodies as mired in agon.¹⁸⁸ Foremost, Beauvoir's work shows that corporeality is in immutable conflict.

Finally, this research is motivated by Beauvoir's insistence that ontology does not precede but is enmeshed in politics. To that extent, I believe Beauvoir aesthetic politics as a method for somatic inquiry helps us to challenge the relevance of the questions many political theorists dread being asked—"this seems more like an ethics than a politics" or "

but what are the political implications of this work.” Beauvoir’s theorization of somatic bodies shows how the constant condition of ambiguity and the ambiguities of somaticism are already part of an ontological politics of rupture, contingency, discontinuity, and material.

ENDNOTES

Chapter 1:

¹ See L. Marso “Thinking Politically with Simone de Beauvoir in the Second Sex” *theory and event*, vol. 15. No.2 (2012).

² M. Moskowitz “” *Dialectics*.

³ Marso (2012).

⁴ See, Zerilli, Young, Dietz, Ferguson, and Marso.

⁵ “Young develops this insight in a discussion of Toril Moi's suggestion that we should replace categories of both sex and gender with the category of the lived body. Moi (1999) suggests that the category of the lived body can *capture the way material features of our bodies play a role in our subjective sense of self*, without giving a reductionist, biological account of such embodiment. For the body as lived is always a body in a situation, a body always subjected to culture.” T. Moi, (1999). *What is a Woman? And Other Essays*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶ I. Young *On Female Body Experience “Throwing like a Girl” and Other Essays*, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 28.

⁷ I. Young, 2005, p. 29.

⁸ Young (2005), p. 29. Young furthers this claim to writing that Beauvoir depicts embodied reality as a type of burden, “by 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 at least in part determine her unfree status” (29).

⁹ Young (2005), p. 36-39.

¹⁰ S. Kruks *Simone de Beauvoir and the Politics of Ambiguity*, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 34.

¹¹ S. Kruks (2013), p. 38-39.

¹² See Kruks (2013) see chapter three “*Confronting Privilege*”

¹³ Marso (2012).

¹⁴ Marso (2012).

¹⁵ Marso (2012).

¹⁶ J. Butler, “Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s Second Sex” *Yale French Studies*, No. 72. Simone de Beauvoir: Witness to a Century, (1986), pp. 35-49.

¹⁷ E. Grosz *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, pp. 15-16.

¹⁸ E. Grosz “Feminism, Materialism, and Freedom” in *New Materialism: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, edited by Samantha Frost and Diana Coole, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010

¹⁹ For more open readings of Beauvoir’s theory of embodiment see Kruks “Simone de Beauvoir: Engaging Discrepant Materialisms” in *New Materialism: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, edited by Samantha Frost and Diana Coole, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010 where she claims that diverse claims about materiality can be seen as interrelated through a diverse reading of Beauvoirian theory. Kruks treats Beauvoir’s materialism as emanating

from multiple traditions of material theory phenomenology, Marxist-inflected, and ‘culturally oriented structuralist materialism’ (260).

²⁰ See Felman, Shoshana. (1980/2003). *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan With J.L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

²¹ J. Butler, *Bodies the Matter*, NY: Routledge, 1993, p, 27.

²² “Somatic” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, online edition. Accessed: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/somatic>

²³ E. Grosz (1994), p. 5. For a more detailed explanation of the history of somatophobia in philosophy consult chapter 1 “Refiguring Bodies” in E. Grosz *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*.

²⁴ A. Damasio, *The Feeling of what Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, NY: First Harvest Edition (1999), pp. 40-41.

²⁵ Ibid. (1999), pp. 40-41.

²⁶ Although it is not in the purview of this paper, somaticism has an allied inquiry in feminist discourses that seek to produce comprehensive accounts of female bodies as tangible and incarnate. Such thinkers may include Luce Irigaray, Helen Cixous, and Julia Kristeva. Many of these discourses, it is worth mentioning, criticize the Beauvoirian view of the body as hostile to a anatomical, biological, and material sexual difference, and aim to excavate a feminist politics through embracing corporeal facticity as politically meaningful. One such example would be Irigaray’s discussion of lips as symbolic, affective, and implicated in patriarchal oppression. See, Irigaray, Luce, (1985a). *Speculum Of the Other Women*, trans. G. C. Gill, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, Kristeva, Julia, (1980). *Desire in Language, a semiotic approach to literature and art*, Trans. Thomas Gorz, Alice Jardine, Leon S Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, and Cixous, Hélène. “The Laugh of the Medusa.” in: *Signs*. Vol. 1, No. 4, Cixous, Hélène. p. 875-893, Summer 1976. (English).

²⁷ W. Connolly “Complexity of Intention” *Critical Inquiries*, University of Chicago Press, Summer (2011), pp. 791-798.

²⁸ Realistic epistemology holds that, that which the body perceives is what we know and informs a mental conception. By contrast, idealistic epistemology claims that everything perceived through our mental faculties and this orients our body toward the world. See, “Scientific Realism,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Pub. Wed, April 27, 2011, Online, Accessed: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific-realism/>

²⁹ Connolly’s theorization of protean hubris

³⁰ B. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

³¹ Protevi, J, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009, p. 28

³² It is this sort of corporeal account that Connolly will adapt through technique in the fourth chapter to explicate the micropolitical dimensions of a somatic orientation. Protevi (2009), p.28.

³³ D. Panagia *The Political Life of Sensation*, NC: Duke University Press, 2009, p. 3-5.

³⁴ Panagia 2009, p. 7.

³⁵ L. Tonder *Tolerance A Sensorial Orientation to Politics*, 2013, Oxford University Press, p. 14.

³⁶ Tonder, 2013, p. 15.

³⁷ Tonder, 2013, p.15. Tonder further claims that “A sensorial orientation to politics thus argues that sentient beings are generative, not only because their bodies are socially constructed but also because their sense communicate with a natural world always-already open to intervention and change”

³⁸ Panagia 2009, p. 9.

³⁹ L. Marso. “Simone de Beauvoir and Hannah Arendt: Judgments in Dark Times.” *Political Theory* 40 (2012): 165-193. Marso describes ambiguity as “us as inherently confined by our own subjectivity” the language of confinement evincing a reading of bodies as situations and not animate organisms like readings proffered by somatic thinkers Marso (2012), p. 177.

Chapter 2:

⁴⁰ S. Beauvoir. *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, (1958) p.208. Hereinafter cited MDD in text.

⁴¹ Who is Bernard do a footnote

⁴² Dumm, Thomas. “Predicament, Prediction, Predication: Connolly’s Voice, Revisited—in his *A World of Becoming*.” *Theory & Event*. Vol. 16. Issue 1. (2013).

⁴³ William Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 33.

⁴⁴ Edward Slingerland, “Conceptual Blending and Normativity”

⁴⁵ W. Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, p. 34.

⁴⁶ W. Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, p. 34.

⁴⁷ W. Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, p. 35. In a later chapter I will to revisit the somatic relationship between culture, sensation, and somatic affect to suggest that Beauvoir’s sensorial aesthetics enact somaticism and read this aesthetic model against the conscious oriented biological depictions in her later *Second Sex*.

⁴⁸ See, Everything Connolly 2002 and Massumi 2002.

⁴⁹ M. Simons and H. N. Peters, “Introduction Analysis of Claude Bernard’s *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*” in *Simone de Beauvoir Philosophical Writings* ed. by Margaret Simons, University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 2004, p. 17.

⁵⁰ Beyond this, I want to intervene in the conversation regarding Bergson’s and Beauvoir’s intellectual relationship. While most consider Bergson an early philosophical mentor rejected by Beauvoir in her later turn to phenomenology, I aim to present Beauvoir’s concerns with the somatic body as not only influenced by Bergson, but also distinct from her phenomenological bodily concerns. They constitute do not constitute a transgression from the Bergsonian approach but a relocation of them into aesthetics.

⁵¹ H. Bergson “The Philosophy of Claude Bernard” in *The Creative Mind: An Introduction into Metaphysics* trans. by Dover Publications, Mineola: NY, 2007, p.170, Here in after cited in text as PCB.

⁵² C. Bernard, *An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*, p. 2-3. Hereinafter cited as *SEM* in text.

⁵³ S. Beauvoir, "Analysis of Claude Bernard's Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine" in *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings, Writings* ed. by Margaret Simons, University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 2004, p. 23. Hereinafter cited in text as ACB.

⁵⁴ Bernard's slight modifications not only complicate making distinctions between the two terms but also suggest the difficulty in doing.

⁵⁵ This is precisely why Bernard speaks about the permeability of facts. "When we meet a fact which contradicts a prevailing theory, we must accept the fact and abandon the theory, even when the theory is supported by great names and generally accepted." (SEM 164)

⁵⁶ Beauvoir furthers this analysis throughout her philosophical work. In the *Ethics of Ambiguity* she articulates a similar critique of the relationship between science and knowledge in the production of freedom constraining ideologies and modes of being. She writes, "Science condemns itself to failure when, yielding to the infatuation of the serious, it aspires to attain being, to contain it, and to possess it; but it finds its truth if it considers itself as a free engagement of thought in the given, aiming, at each discovery, not at fusion with the thing, but at the possibility of new discoveries; what the mind then projects is the concrete accomplishment of its freedom. The attempt is sometimes made to find an objective justification of science in technics; but ordinarily the mathematician is concerned with mathematics and the physicist with physics, and not with their applications. And, furthermore, technics itself is not objectively justified; if it sets up as absolute goals the saving of time and work which it enables us to realize and the comfort and luxury which it enables us to have access to, then it appears useless and absurd, for the time that one gains can not be accumulated in a store house; it is contradictory to want to save up existence, which, the fact is, exists only by being spent, and there is a good case for showing that airplanes, machines, the telephone, and the radio do not make men of today happier than those of former times" (EA 46)

⁵⁷ M. Simons and H. N. Peters, "Introduction Analysis of Claude Bernard's *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine*" in *Simone de Beauvoir Philosophical Writings* ed. by Margaret Simons, University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 2004, p. 18-19.

⁵⁸ M. Simons, "Introduction." P. 19.

⁵⁹ M. Simons, "Introduction." P. 19.

⁶⁰ I argue that adopting this theorization of Beauvoir's political intent places us in different relationship to her intellectual ambitions in the *Second Sex*. As they have traditionally been read, Beauvoir's examination of lived experience in the *Second Sex* attempts to unearth an account of women's experience as a knowledge claim that debunks the ideological and systemic operations that sustain patriarchy. This turn to the role of an existential ethics and a debunking of ideology shifts attention from the animate and affective bodies articulated by Beauvoir in the *Second Sex*. I return to this point in chapter four, where I consider the *Second Sex* as a somatic Beauvoirian text that looks at the body as affective, somatic, and Bergsonian.

⁶¹ William Connolly, "Film and Micropolitics" *Theory and Event*, vol. 6, issue 1, 2002.

⁶² Although Beauvoir holds this to be true in her work and stresses that the experience of a fully transcendent self is constantly undermined by others viewing us as other, I claim that a heightened attention to somaticism and the Bergsonian body helps to keep this point in focus, while Beauvoir herself dilutes it through a binary reading of the self and other as in dialectical opposition.

⁶³ Kruks, 2013, p.5.

Chapter 3:

⁶⁴ See, Mary Dietz, “Debating de Beauvoir,” in *Turning Operations: Feminism, Arendt, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), Linda Zerilli, “Feminist Theory without Solace,” *Theory & Event* 15 (2012), Lori Marso, “Thinking Politically with Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*,” *Theory & Event* 15 (2012), and Sonia Kruks, *Simone de Beauvoir and the Politics of Ambiguity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁶⁵ Beauvoir’s essays “Literature and Metaphysics” and “What Can Literature Do?” are her two most sustained examples of literary criticism, and situate her with in the realm of post-war French literary theory. Both texts are born out of engagements with literary theorists, critics, and authors of the post-war French Left. Beauvoir’s engagement with the political context of her writing evinces the deeper importance of contextual and embodied politics that run throughout her political, literary, and philosophical work. Her first venture, “Literature and Metaphysics” was originally a lecture given to defend existentialist literature in February 1945 to Gabriel Marcel’s class. Sharon Musset claims that this piece is an attempt “to defend Existentialism on *artistic* grounds” (Mussett 2013, p. 17). The lecture was later transformed into a journal article published in the 1946 issue of the popular left journal *Les Temps Modernes*, which she was a founding editor of alongside Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. More research on historical context of Beauvoir’s literary criticism can be found in Deirdre Blair’s *Simone de Beauvoir: A Biography*. New York: Summit Books, 1990; Laura Hengehold’s “Introduction to What Can Literature Do” in *Simone de Beauvoir: “The Useless Mouths” and Other Literary Writings*, ed. Margaret A. Simons (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2011); and Margaret Simons “Introduction to Literature and Metaphysics.” In *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*, edited by Margaret A. Simons, translated by Marybeth Timmerman and Mary Beth Mader, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), and Toril Moi’s “What Can Literature Do? Simone de Beauvoir as a Literary Theorist,” *The Modern Language Society of America* (2009): 189-198.

⁶⁶ The “new novel,” of *nouveau roman* was developed to challenge the conventions of traditional literature in the 1920s, but extended into the 1950s and 1960s as a method to challenge the hegemony of classical style. Beauvoir was connected with several prominent figures of the *nouveau roman*, such as Claude Simon and Alain Robbe-Grillet. Beauvoir references the feasibility of narrative in the new novel in her essay “What Can Literature Do?” arguing that it provides more opportunity for the transformation, enchantment and other-worldliness than the traditional novel. See, Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965).

⁶⁷ I use the word somatic here to highlight both the materialized aspects of embodiment alongside the more psychological and ideological components. Beauvoir’s understanding of politicized bodies and embodied politics attend to both the anatomical and ideological components of phenomenological embodiment. For a closer treatment of political somaticism in Beauvoir see the biology chapter of *The Second Sex*, translated by Constance Borde and Shelia Malovany-Chevalier, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

⁶⁸ Simone de Beauvoir, "Literature and Metaphysics" in *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*, ed. Margaret A. Simons (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 273, hereinafter *LM*

⁶⁹ "Spatial-temporal" realities refer to Beauvoir's claim that lived experience takes place in both time and space. I use the hyphen to suggest Beauvoir's own notion that our experience and perception of both space and time are conditional onto one another. For a more throughout treatment of spatiotemporal reality in Beauvoir, see S. Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, ed. B.

Frechtman, New York: Citadel Press, 1976, pp. 7-25.

⁷⁰ Throughout Beauvoir's oeuvre systematization as a denial of existential freedom is a prominent theme. Beauvoir's understanding of systematization extends into several interrelated discourses in science, literature, politics and philosophy. See N. Bauer. *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, and Feminism*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), L. Marso "Thinking Politically with Simone de Beauvoir in the Second Sex." *Theory & Event* 15 vol 2. (2012)

⁷¹ Margaret Simons suggests that "working in both the Bergsonian and phenomenological traditions, Beauvoir describes the goal of philosophy as "disclosure" of metaphysical reality, which she describes in Heideggerian terms as grasping one's "being-in-the-world," that is one's experience of embodied resistance of foreign consciousness" (Simons 2004, p. 265), and S. Beauvoir. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. (New York: Citadel Press, 1976) chapters two and three

⁷² Simone de Beauvoir, "What Can Literature Do?" in *Simone de Beauvoir: "The Useless Mouths" and Other Literary Writings*, ed. Margaret A. Simons (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2011), 200, hereinafter *LD*. Margaret Simons argues that Henri Bergson has a large influence on Beauvoir's literary theories of time, space, and experience, particularly his *Essai sur les donnees immediates de la conscience (Time and Free Will)*, which Beauvoir quotes at length in her student diaries. Simons notes that Beauvoir is attracted to Bergson's celebration of "novelist as able to disclose reality in its fundamental temporality, an "absurd" reality of changing impressions that is distorted by the intellectual understanding" (Simons 2004, p. 264). For more on Beauvoir's intellectual relationship to Bergson see M. Simons. "Beauvoir and Bergson: A Question of Influence." In *Beauvoir and Western Thought from Plato to Butler*, ed. by Shannon M. Mussett, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013), 153-170.

⁷³ Simons, M. "Introduction to Literature and Metaphysics." In *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*, edited by Margaret A. Simons, translated by Marybeth Timmerman and Mary Beth Mader, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 261-266.

⁷⁴ Moi, T. "The Adventure of Reading: Literature and Philosophy, Cavell and Beauvoir." *Literature & Theology* 25 (2011): 125-140, 133.

⁷⁵ Arendt's understanding is that the imagination can be utilized to go visiting or use representational thinking. See, L. Zerilli. "'WE FEEL OUR FREEDOM' Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt." *Political Theory* (33): 158-188.

⁷⁶ Lori Marso argues against Arendt and her notion of thinking in her judgment essay to illustrate the ways in which, Beauvoir respects only the potential freedom of others without "knowing" anything about them or their situations. This can be understood as an acknowledgment of the immanence and opacity of actions. See L. Marso. "Simone de

Beauvoir and Hannah Arendt: Judgments in Dark Times.” *Political Theory* 40 (2012): 165-193.

⁷⁷ Beauvoir adopts the term “detotalized totality” from Jean-Paul Sartre who uses it to explain the for-it-self notion of the subject experiences the world as a detotalized totality in the present. By this, Sartre means to suggest that our experience while experienced at unified, is open to the multiple totalities that we can never experience from the vantage of “perpetual incompleteness” (180). See J. Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953).

⁷⁸ J. Sartre *The Imagination*, trans. by Kenneth Williford and David Rudrauf, New York: Routledge, 2012, p.83.

⁷⁹ This point also cedes the Beauvoir’s aesthetic politics is indebted to a strong Bergsonian influence.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 2012, p.43.

⁸¹ Ibid. 2012, p. 49-50.

⁸² Simone de Beauvoir, “Theater and the Novel” in *Simone de Beauvoir: “Useless Mouths” and Other Literary Writings*, ed. Margaret A. Simons, (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2011), 105.

⁸³ Building on Margaret Simons reading of Bergsonian influence in Beauvoir, I want to suggest that Bergson and Beauvoir pick up on the same sensorial dimension of limited experience, particularly as it relates to an imaginary capacity. Consider Bergson’s treatment of the imagination as a component of habitual-perceptive-experience, in *Matter and Memory* Bergson writes, “You will obtain a vision of matter that is perhaps fatiguing for your imagination, but pure and stripped of what the requirements of life make you add to it in external perception. Reestablish now my consciousness, and with it, the requirements of life: farther and farther, and by crossing over each time enormous periods of the internal history of things, quasi-instantaneous views are going to be taken, views this time pictorial, of which the most vivid colors condense an infinity of repetitions and elementary changes. In just the same way the thousands of successive positions of a runner are contracted into one sole symbolic attitude, which our eye perceives, which art reproduces, and which becomes for everyone the image of a man who runs” (Bergson 2007, pp.208–209).

Chapter 4:

⁸⁴ Connolly 2002 and Panagia 2013, p3

⁸⁵ Beauvoir here is contributing to a much larger discussion regarding how we may think time politically. I argue, that Beauvoir has positioned herself within a unique tradition, which expresses time as experienced. In doing so, she provides a new category for thinking about time politically, one that refutes time's ascription as something completely natural or constructed. Previous discourses on political time, such as Sheldon Wolin's, "What Time is it?" (Wolin, 1997) express a political time as it relates to a constructed history. Therefore, time occupies the space of background for larger claims about actions and publics that occur in the 'right time'. Wolin writes, "Political time is conditioned by the presence of differences and the attempt to negotiate them" (Wolin 1997).

⁸⁶ Later in the essay we will see that Connolly connects freedom with a notion of becoming to accentuate micro-political phenomenon. I will later argue that Beauvoir's phenomenologically influenced time that prioritizes the embodied agent still emphasizes micropolitics while not reducing the role individuals have in affirming freedom. Beauvoir's theorizations also illuminate how time can be experience by situated individuals in certain representations of time. For further examples see, *The Second Sex* (2011), parts two and three of the "Lived Experience" section, take on the intersection of narrative and experience in women's lived experience (p. 283-709).

⁸⁷ Lars Tønder notes that "fundamental to Connolly's view is the idea that politics and ethics cannot be reduced to the level of text and narration" (Tønder 2002). We will see later in the essay that Beauvoir agrees with Connolly and establishes a similar skepticism of narration that is consistent with other phenomenological theories of the body.

⁸⁸ Connolly 2002

⁸⁹ Cavell, 1979, p.137

⁹⁰ Connolly 2002

⁹¹ Bergson's concept of idealized and realistic perception looms large in Connolly's work. The notion that perception involves a two-fold process of initial contact and then orientation through previous experience, Bergson writes in *Matter and Memory* (2011), "amorphous space, atoms jostling against each other, are only our tactile perceptions made objective, set apart from all our other perceptions on account of the special importance which we attribute to them and made independent realities—thus contrasting with other sensations which are then supposed to be only symbols of these" (p. 288)

⁹² Connolly 2002

⁹³ Ibid. 2002.

⁹⁴ Technique provokes thinking about film on an embodied register; by contrast, Connolly maintains that narrative may invite us to forget the role technique has propelling a film. Connolly offers this insight through an engagement with Freud (more specifically in *Moses and Monotheism*) and subsequently, with psychoanalytic film theory proffered by Žižek. Connolly locates the beginning of hostility to technique in the Freudian privileging of "intellect" as "engaged to control the lower instincts" and "corporeal tactics or gymnastics such as ceremony, ritual, hypnosis, image, and magic are avoided or minimized" (Connolly 2002). According to Connolly, this precedent carries onward into our thinking about film. Using the example of Žižek's interpretation of Alfred Hitchcock *Vertigo*,

Connolly evaluates that the psychoanalytic explanation offered by Žižek that, an “impossible relationship between the fantasy and figure of ‘empirical’ woman” drives Scottie’s obsessive behavior, orients the viewer towards an assumption that this fantastic obsession motivates the entire film. “The more inevitability you subtract from the narrative the more attention you bestow upon the techniques that help to carry it forward” (Connolly 2002). Connolly explains how certain corporeal techniques are emboldened in Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* when we lower the attention placed on narrative. For example, “we were agitated, too, by the intensity of the drama, accentuated by the harsh musical score accompanying it” (Connolly 2002).

⁹⁵ Connolly, 2011, p. 4

⁹⁶ Connolly, 2011, p.5

⁹⁷ This is true insofar as reading time as incidental or becoming undermines any attempts to use human categories (science, biology, function, and causality) to define time’s operations. Reading Connolly’s time may highlight ways time cannot be governed by any notions of authenticity. Connolly’s time, strongly influenced by becoming is also towards existentialism in its appraisal of the experience.

⁹⁸ Connolly, 2011, p.8

⁹⁹ Connolly contends in *World of Becoming* that such an appreciation of time “encourages us to embrace the world as we act and intervene resolutely in it, even though it is replete with neither divine providence nor ready susceptibility to human mastery” (Connolly, 2011, p. 6).

¹⁰⁰ Connolly 2002

¹⁰¹ Connolly, 2011, p.10

¹⁰² Connolly, 2011, p.5

¹⁰³ Connolly, 2011, p.15

¹⁰⁴ For Connolly, micropolitics is the culmination of technique and narrative, the “organized combinations of sound, gesture, word, movement, and postrure through which affectively imbued dispositions, desires, and judgments become synthesized” (Connolly 2002).

¹⁰⁵ Connolly show’s how the irrational cuts as a technique in film configure our understanding of how time operates. In Jim Jarmusch’s film *Stranger Than Paradise*, Connolly examines the technique of irrational cuts as a mechanism to “The fork is unrepresentable because between scenes things happen at a virtual level that engender effects but are unamenable to close self-reflection or third person observation” (Connolly 2002). The irrationality of the cuts, Connolly argues is in some ways mimetic to our own lived experiences and our inability to provide explanation of everything. Connolly’s technique maintains that “exposure to the repetition of such irrational cuts may work upon one’s subliminal experience of time” (Connolly 2002). As a result “It will now appear hubristic to think you could capture all these elements in the detail and depth needed in the course of living. Some may indeed lack a shape to be amenable in principle to intellectual capture,” Connolly 2002. T&E

¹⁰⁶ Connolly 2002

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.* 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, 2002, p. 96.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Connolly, 2002. T &E

¹¹⁴ Connolly 2011, p.15

¹¹⁵ Connolly, 2011, p. 27

¹¹⁶ Connolly maintains that part of a world of becoming is the incorporation of radical immanence, “a philosophy of radical immanence” is one “open, first, to an eternity of time whose scope exceeds every specific force-field, second, to exploration of different degrees of agency, feeling and creativity in several non-human force fields, third, to exploring two registers of temporal experience within the human estate, and, fourth, to the idea that a modicum of mystery is apt to accompany some key assumptions in the perspective as well as others” (Connolly 2011, 28)

¹¹⁷ Connolly, 2011, p.70

¹¹⁸ For Beauvoir endeavors to prescribe a rationalism to time and more broadly to experience is incompatible with existential ethics and is indicative of particular modes of systemic oppression which seek to dictate experience through particular ready-made values. For examples see *Ethics of Ambiguity* (1976), chapter four “The Present and the Future,” which offers readers an analysis of rationalized models of states and institutions which deny freedom through the application of rationalized ideologies.

¹¹⁹ For examples of Beauvoir’s opinions on theories of freedom and agency see, Marso (2012) “Thinking Politically with Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*” *Theory & Event* Volume 15 Issue 2; Zerilli (2012) “Feminist Theory without Solace” *Theory & Event* Volume 15 Issue 2; Marso (2012) “Simone de Beauvoir and Hannah Arendt: Judgments in Dark Times” *Political Theory*. Vol. 40, No. 2.

¹²⁰ Beauvoir, 2011, p.190, herein cited in text as SS

¹²¹ Beauvoir not only wrote on those who deny time’s ambiguity through claims of rationalism and sovereignty, those who evade time all together are also claim sovereignty through denying time as a central attribute of becoming. She explores the relationship between time and interactions between individuals. Part of her technical or hermeneutical use of time in the *Second Sex*, is an exploration into how men’s privileged position as *one* allows them to deny women the ability to transcend time. Beauvoir writes, “only a free subject, asserting himself beyond time, can foil destruction; this supreme recourse is forbidden to the woman. It is mainly because she never experienced the powers of liberty that she does not believe in liberation: the world to her seems governed by an obscure density against which it is presumptuous to react” (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 643). Contrarily, Beauvoir shows how women may try to establish false freedom through manipulating time’s immanent components. Beauvoir explores how women employ lateness as a means to keep their husbands waiting and assert some brief and false ascendancy over time: “we have seen that the woman often cheats on her husband by defiance and not for pleasure; she will be absentminded and spendthrift on purpose because he is methodical and careful. Misogynists who accuse woman of “always being late” think she lacks “the sense of excititude.” In truth, we have seen how docilely she adapts to the demands of time” (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 649).

¹²² P. Deutscher, *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Ambiguity, Conversation, Resistance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 96.

¹²³ Ibid. 2008, p. 99.

¹²⁵ Beauvoir may assist Connolly in his calls for film theory to understand micropolitics through the synthesis of technique and narrative. While Connolly maintains that micropolitics is a synthesized combination of narrative and technique, his hostility towards narrative as a “always ready to fit our lives” system or “authoritative narrative” suggests a deeper skepticism than Beauvoir (Connolly 2002). Because Beauvoir’s time is a composition of narrative and technical impulses, it provides insight into the synthesis of narrative and technique that occurs in micropolitical events.

¹²⁶ Connolly expands upon the theory of immanent naturalism as a partial component of becoming, Connolly contends that immanent naturalist thinkers such as Lucretius, Spinoza, and Deleuze pre-empt thinkers of a world of becoming in their ability to not extend rationalism into discourses on time and to cede that certain components of experience are beyond human understanding. For a further treatment of time as becoming see Connolly’s *World of Becoming* (2011), particularly the Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 3.

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¹²⁸ Emily Wang, “Whose Boredom?” *n+1*, February 9, 2014. Online.

<http://nplusonemag.com/whose-boredom>

¹²⁹ Ibid. 2014

¹³⁰ Dennis Lim, “Then as Now, the Terrors of Routine,” *New York Times*, January 16, 2009, Online. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/18/movies/18lim.html>

¹³¹ By structuralist film making, I do not mean the film as it relates to political structure (ie. the way structuralist feminist claims have been advanced by many readers of Ackerman’s film) I mean the style of structural film making advanced by P. Adams Sitney. For more on structural film making see, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-1978*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1979.

¹³² “Chantal Ackerman: On Jeanne Dielman” *Criterion Collection*. Hulu Plus. Online. Accessed: March 5, 2014. <http://www.hulu.com/watch/296546>

¹³³ Ibid. Hulu Plus.

¹³⁴ Dennis Lim, *New York Times*, January 16, 2009, Online.

¹³⁵ I note a consistency between Beauvoir’s reading of narrative in and the new novel in her literary theory as allied with Ackerman’s attempt to re-think the filmic narrative. See Chapter 3, Beauvoir’s literary imagination

¹³⁶ Margulies, I. (2009) A Matter of Time: Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce 1080 Bruxelles. *The Criterion Collection*. Retrieved from <http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1215-a-matter-of-time-jeanne-dielman-23-quai-du-commerce-1080-bruxelles>

¹³⁷ Marsha Kinder "Reflections on Jeanne Dielman" *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Special Book Issue (Summer, 1977), pp. 2-8

¹³⁸ I. Margaulies, *Nothing Ever Happens: Akerman's Hyperrealist Everyday*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1996, p. 44.

¹³⁹ For example, objects become means to a false transcendence, Beauvoir writes in her housework chapter that "just as one covers furniture with loose covers, she would like to withdraw from men, the world, time" (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 578)

Chapter 5:

¹⁴⁰ Beauvoir, 1949, *Ethics of Ambiguity* hereinafter cited in text as EA.

¹⁴¹ Who does this and "Now, we know that neither science nor art ever leaves it up to the future to justify its present existence. In no age does art consider itself as something which is paving the way for Art: so-called archaic art prepares for classicism only in the eyes of archaeologists; the sculptor who fashioned the Korai of Athens rightfully thought that he was producing a finished work of art; in no age has science considered itself as partial and lacunary; without believing itself to be definitive, it has however, always wanted to be a total expression of the world, and it is in its totality that in each age it again raises the question of its own validity. There we have an example of how man must, in any event, assume his finiteness: not by treating his existence as transitory or relative but by reflecting the infinite within it, that is, by treating it as absolute."

¹⁴² Beauvoir is apt to point out the ways in which political ideologies can shape scientific attitude and thusly problematize the creative intent of science by supplanting it with universalism. To this end she associates the serious-man in her philosophy with Hegel's attempt to understand science as in the service of universalized historical movements. She writes, "In *The Phenomenology of Mind* he [Hegel] has shown that the sub-man plays the part of inessential in the face of the object which is considered as the essential. He suppresses himself to the advantage of the Thing, which, sanctified by respect, appears in the form of a Cause, science, philosophy, revolution, etc" (EA 46).

¹⁴³ L. Zerilli "Embodied Knowing, Judgment, and the Limits of Neurobiology," *Perspectives on Politics*, vol.11, no. 2, 2013, p. 513.

¹⁴⁴ S. Kruks, *Politics of Ambiguity*, 2013, p. 148.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 2013, p.148

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 2013, p. 149

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 2013, p. 149

¹⁴⁸ Some traditions in mind that treat the mind and body as separate and consequential articulate dualities within the embodied human condition include, structural, deliberative, rational, normative models of political thought. It should be said that all of their views on the body vary drastically and all of discourses and the thinkers which comprise them vary greatly on the extent to which they enforces dualism and disembodiment.

¹⁴⁹ In addition to understanding how the mind is part of the body and holds complex and immanent components that hardly resemble the unified subjective agent in contemporary political thought. What Connolly calls, "the idea that thinking is a complex, layered activity with each layer contributing something to an ensemble of dissonant relays and feedback loops between numerous centers. These loops include many different bodily sites

sending signals about the state of the body to the brain” W. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p. 9.

¹⁵⁰ Explain Connolly’s radical immanence and also W. Connolly, “Experience & Experiment.” *Daedalus*. Vol. 135, No. 3, 2006, p. 72.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 2006, p. 72

¹⁵² Ibid. 2006, p. 73.

¹⁵³ J. Hibbing, “Neurobiology and Politics: A Response to Commentators” *Perspectives on Politics*, June 2013, p. 520

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 2013, p. 521

¹⁵⁵ See, Antonio R. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, NY: Harcourt, Brace, 2000. V.S. Ramachandran, *Phantoms in the Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind*, NY: William Morrow, 1998. Ilya Prigogine and Isabella Stengers, *The End of Certainty: Time, Chaos, and the New Laws of Nature*, NY: Free Press, 1997.

¹⁵⁶ Antonio R. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, 2000.

¹⁵⁷ See Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*, 2002, in this book Connolly dissects the ways that neural systems affect our modes of political being on micro and macro political level and Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

¹⁵⁸ W. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 2002, p. xiii.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 2002, p. 9.

¹⁶¹ R. Bluhm, A. Jaap Jacobson, and H. L. Maibom, “Introduction,” in *Neurofeminism: Issues at the Intersection of Feminist Theory and Cognitive Science*, NY, *Palgrave Macmillan*, 2012: p.4.

¹⁶² Jaap Jacobson expands upon this in her article “New Souls for Old,” showing the permeability of scientific fact to strip it of its objective character. Examining the problem of scientific interpretation in the work of autism researcher Simon Baron-Cohen whose claim that the “autistic mind is really the male mind taken to an extreme. He argues that the fascination with systematizing and forming hierarchies that characterizes many autists is in a lesser form a primary characteristic of the male mind.” Jaap Jacobson and Bluhm argue that such a description fails to take into account how, “his speculations on how binary brain types have evolved over the eons, which have the male brain co-opting traits like power and leadership, leaving the female brain with gossip and motherhood, may ruffle a few feathers.” A. Jaap Jacobson, “New Souls for Old,” *Perspectives on Politics*, June 2013, p. 518.

¹⁶³ R. Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2011, p. 441.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 2011, p. 437.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 2011, p.437.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 2011, p.437.

¹⁶⁷ For a discussion of how Leys sees the neuroscientific research employed by Connolly as upending his somatic intent see “The Turn to Affect: A Critique” (2011) pages 459-463

where Leys discusses the complications of Connolly's use Damasio's somatic marker hypothesis research to discuss political sensation.

¹⁶⁸ Zerilli, 2003, p. 512.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 2003, p. 513.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 2003, p. 135 and S. Frost, 2012. "Body, Cause, Politics: Considering the Turn to Biology in Feminist Theory." Unpublished manuscript.

¹⁷¹ J. Gunnell, "Are We Losing Our Minds? Cognitive Science and the Study of Politics," *Political Theory*, Vol. 35, No. 6, 2007 p. 704.

¹⁷² Ibid. 2007, p. 705.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 2007, p. 716.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 2007, p. 717.

¹⁷⁵ S. Krause, "Bodies in Action: Corporeal Agency and Democratic Politics," *Political Theory*, Vol. 39, No.3, 2011, p. 299.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 2011, pp. 300-301.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 2011, p. 304 and p. 307.

¹⁷⁸ Zerilli, 2013, p. 513.

¹⁷⁹ Zerilli, 2013, p. 513.

¹⁸⁰ Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, 2002, p.7

¹⁸¹ Beauvoir additionally comments on the precarity of both philosophical and scientific endeavor by equating Hegel's logic and reason understood as idealist with the fallible logic of scientific realism. The abstraction of both discourses represents a sort of system building and knowledge claims that Beauvoir rejects.

¹⁸² Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, 2011, p. 41. Ft. No. 7.

¹⁸³ W. Connolly, "Brain Waves, Transcendental Fields, and Techniques of Thought," *Radical Philosophy*, no.94, 1999. Fried's study a sixteen-year-old woman with epilepsy, was undergoing an examination before surgery wherein intracranial electrodes were stimulated in various parts of the young woman's brain. Neurologist found that when a part of the frontal lobe was stimulated the patient laughed, yet was unable to provide a reason for the stimulation. Connolly uses this study to sustain a model of "thought- imbued affects" and other visceral affects that inform our political bodies.

¹⁸⁴ Itzhak Fried et al., "Electric Current Stimulates Laughter," *Nature*, Feb 12, 1998, p. 650.

¹⁸⁵ Leys, 2011, p. 462.

¹⁸⁶ W. Connolly, "The Complexity of Intention," *Critical Inquiry*, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2011, p. 794.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 2011, p. 796.

Chapter 6:

¹⁸⁸ B. Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, p.5

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