Employing Sartre and Foucault's Accounts of Imagination, Human Existence and Freedom for Feminist Projects

by

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Abstract

In my thesis I am exploring links between imagination, human existence and freedom. While I am presenting Sartre's account to discuss the connection between imagination and metaphysical freedom, I am following Foucault's account to see the role specific political, geographic or corporeal factors play in the way we imagine. I am employing both of the accounts to discuss modern day feminist issues and to see how certain feminist projects can be developed.

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Introduction

Imagination has been playing a crucial role in human history as manifested in literature, arts, political and philosophical thoughts and science, where most creative minds like Galileo used the power of imagination to theorize about experiments, which could not have been conducted in his own time due to the lack of technological development. It is not, however, obvious in what specific ways imagination can be employed to help us live better lives since some ways in which we can use imagination can endanger our lives. For example, a person who has anorexia constantly imagines herself to be skinnier than she already is. As a result, she eats as little as possible so that her body becomes similar to the imagined one.

Since imagination can be both a source of creativity and a way of perpetuating oppression, I want to explore how one can practice the faculty of imagination most effectively, so that one can live a better and a freer life. My study, therefore, involves not only understanding what imagination is, but what a human subject should be like in order to imagine and what it means for her to live a free life. In addition to exploring the link between imagination and a human subject, it is important to discuss how imagination can play a role in attaining freedom. Lastly, I need to learn how the structure of the world determines different ways in which we employ imagination. Thus, my aim is not simply to talk about the concept of imagination, but to also see the connection between overall human existence and imagination.

Jean Paul-Sartre's works such as *The Psychology of Imagination*, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination* and *Being and Nothingness* build on the idea that it is through imagination that human freedom and existence become possible. I want to explore Sartre's notion of imagination and to what extent it can create possibilities for freedom and existence of a human subject. Since I am going to discuss only earlier of Sartre's

works, I will be focusing on the connection between imagination and metaphysical freedom, i.e., on one's ability to choose, and not deal with specific examples of political and historical limitations that affect the way we act out our choices. The discussion of the connection between imagination, human existence and freedom will be useful to analyze and criticize modern day feminist/LGBTIQ issues. In addition, the discussion will contribute to understanding how Sartre's account can help us employ imagination to develop projects of the mentioned movements.

Since I will only focus on the link between imagination and metaphysical freedom in Sartre's account and since I also consider it necessary to see how imagination can help one deal with specific political issues, I will introduce Foucault's account of subjectivity and freedom, which will help me fill in the gaps left by my discussion of Sartre's thought. Here, I will explore the relation of a human subject to the world and vice versa to see how imagination and freedom are influenced by historical, political, geographical, and corporeal dimensions. The discussion will lead me to contextualizing feminist ideas and projects within Foucault's thought to seeing how imagination can create possibilities freedom in specific oppressive systems.

To this end, in the first chapter of my thesis, I will show that for Sartre imagination is not just one of the attributes of consciousness, but a conscious subject cannot be without being able to imagine. In addition, I will show that imagination, compared to perception, is not only the central part of human consciousness, but it is the main source of human freedom. In this case our main question is what imaginative consciousness should be like in order for human freedom and existence to be possible. Next, I will show what Sartre considers to be an authentic life for a human subject and how imagination can play a role in it. Lastly, I will discuss the positive role of the world and other human beings in the existence of a human subject.

Exploring the structure of imagination and this link between imagination and freedom will be useful in criticizing current development of feminism, specifically LGBTIQ activism within feminist projects, which forgets to see the general picture of human condition. I will talk about how attaining legal rights for homosexuals to get married (which was celebrated in Ireland about a week ago) should not be desirable goal since it conforms to hetero/homonormative ideals. As a result, these activists are encouraged to hide their freedom from themselves and are not using their imaginative powers effectively. With the help of Sartre's account of imagination, human existence and metaphysical freedom, which can challenge homo/heteronormativity, I will show why LGBTIQ individuals should not be focusing on the fight for attaining marriage rights.

In the second chapter of my thesis, I will show that it is not only important to know what the imaginative consciousness should be like for human freedom to emerge, but how specific physical, historical and political dimensions of the world and a human subject can influence our imagination. I will turn to Foucault to explore this question since he does a painstaking genealogical, political and geographical study of power relations, a human subject and their possible connection to freedom. This exploration will help me to see how to work with current contexts in a way that our imagination is employed more effectively towards encouraging action and resistance. I will also bring examples of how the study of physical spaces and corporeality can be helpful to understand feminist thinkers such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Patricia Williams and Susan Bordo, who emphasize the importance of reimagining and challenging the feminine condition. In addition, I will use the example of the internet as a possible space in which one can reimagine oneself and create possibilities for resistance.

Lastly, I will point out feminist criticisms of both Sartre and Foucault's accounts as presented by Karen Green and Johanna Oksala. While I will say that these criticisms are justified to an extent, they can be answered by showing that Sartre and Foucault's ideas can

be complementary and together can help realizing feminist projects, which these critics themselves are aiming to follow.

Chapter 1 - Sartre's Account of Imagination, Human Existence and Freedom as a Criticism of the Gay Marriage Activism

Jean-Paul Sartre's works on imagination such as *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination* and *The Psychology of Imagination* provide the basis for his later works and ideas concerning questions like what it means to be human and how to live our lives. Sartre's exploration of imagination not only leads him to ask what imagination is, but also what human being must be in order to imagine.[1]

As we read in *The Imaginary*, imagining means to "create images in the absence of the object concerned, consciousness affects the negation of the real."[2] The negating act that is central to imaginative consciousness is also a necessary condition for the emergence of human freedom. According to Sartre, imagination "allows us to escape from the constraints of immediate reality and to regard it with a critical eye, that is, to transcend the *actual* and project ourselves into the *possible.*"[3] It is because of this very negation of the real that "I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the causes and motives of my act. I am condemned to be free."[4] It is because of the ability to imagine, i.e., the ability to distance myself from the world, that Sartre denies that human beings have an essence; rather, we always have possibilities for being something other than what we are in the present.

In this chapter my task is twofold. Firstly, I want to show that Sartre's theories of a human subject and freedom are inseparable from his theory of imagination. Secondly, I want

[1] Richard Kearney. *Poetics of Imagining Modern to Postmodern*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1998. 74.
[2] Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*. Edited by Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre. London, New York: Routledge, 2004. xii.
[3] Richard Kearney. *Poetics of Imagining Modern to Postmodern*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1998. 76.
[4] Jean-Paul Sartre, and Hazel E. Barnes. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Routledge Calssics, 2003. 462.

to show that Sartre's account can be useful in criticizing current forms of LGBTIQ activism that stresses the importance of attaining marriage rights.

To this end, first, I will show how Sartre modified the Cartesian account of consciousness. Next, I will give an account of Sartre's notion of imagination and show its central role both in the existence of a human subject and her freedom. Lastly, I will discuss the problems with gay marriage activism and suggest how LGBTIQ movement can improve its projects and goals.

1.1 Consciousness as Consciousness of

Before providing Sartre's account of imagination, we need to understand a more general term of consciousness that influenced the way Sartre developed his ideas about imagination. Sartre's account of consciousness is a modified version of the interior/consciousness-exterior/world dichotomy that has created many issues and questions since Descartes. In his Sixth Meditation, Descartes points out "the real distinction" between body and mind, which implies that they are separate substances and can exist without interdependence. Descartes claims, "on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it."[5] Descartes creates a gap between inner and outer worlds. Consciousness is distinct from the external world.

Imagination along with consciousness belongs to the inner realm; it is just one of the modes of it. Descartes explains, "I find in myself faculties for certain special modes of thinking, namely imagination and sensory perception. Now I can clearly and distinctly

[5] Rene Descartes. "Sixth Meditation." Translated by John Cottingham et al. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. 54.

understand myself as a whole without these faculties; but I cannot, conversely, understand these faculties without me, that is, without an intellectual substance to inhere in.'"[6] The claim emphasizing that I can understand consciousness without one of its faculties such as imagination or perception entails that consciousness is not built by all of these attributes together. For Descartes the mind is still a substance even when it is given without one of its special modes. The main problem, however, is to give an account of how these distinct substances relate. How can we know that the world exists if the only certainty we have is that of a thinking being?

For Sartre this problem does not arise since consciousness simply cannot exist without being consciousness of something 'outside' it and without having its faculties such as imagination. As Sartre asks in *The Psychology of Imagination*, "can we conceive of a consciousness which would never imagine and which would be completely absorbed in its intuitions of the real….as soon as we posit a consciousness, must it be posited as always being able to imagine?".[7] This question could imply that imagination isn't only just one of the faculties of consciousness, but also central to it. Let us follow Sartre account of consciousness and then that of imagination in order to see the answer to his questions.

It was phenomenological approach to consciousness that Sartre found very important and worth exploring. In his article, "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology", Sartre writes, "we have all believed that the spidery mind trapped things in its web, covered them with a white spit and slowly swallowed them, reducing them to its own substance".[8] In this case, mind is presented as independent and as different from the external world. Sartre sarcastically calls this a "digestive philosophy", i.e., the type of philosophy that implies that the mind can possess and consume objects. Sartre turns to Husserl who thinks

[6] Ibid., 78.
[7] Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Psychology of Imagination*. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991. 260.
[8] Jean-Paul Sartre. "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology". Translated by Joseph P. Fell, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, vol 1, no. 2 (1970-1): 4.

that consciousness is not a thing in itself, it is " nothing...but a movement of fleeting itself, a sliding beyond itself….all consciousness is consciousness *of* something".[9] This claim shows that consciousness is nothing without its relatedness to the world; it is this relation itself.

In addition, Sartre wants to go beyond epistemology when exploring consciousness. Descartes' famous doubt about how I know that I and the external world exist becomes not so problematic since knowledge is not the only way to discover the world. Sartre writes, "[k]nowledge, or pure 'representation', is only one of the possible forms of my consciousness 'of' this tree; I can also love it, fear it, hate it, and this surpassing of consciousness by itself that is called 'intentionality' finds itself again in gear, hatred, and love….[these] are merely ways of discovering the world."[10] In this case, consciousness is not limited to just knowledge, but has a spectrum of ways of relating to the world. Because consciousness can include notions such as love and fear, it is not simply a mental substance standing in contrast to the world. Consciousness and the world do not simply constitute the dualism of interior and exterior because of this redefined, expanded notion of consciousness.

However, in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre asks whether if getting rid of the dualism of exterior and interior means to overcome all kinds of dualisms. His answers is, no. Sartre claims that we "have converted [all kinds of dualisms] into a new dualism: that of finite and infinite".[11] This opposition becomes foundational in understanding the meaning of consciousness. While it is not strictly speaking an independent, interior substance that does not coincide with the exterior world, consciousness still is presented in terms of finite/infinite categories. Sartre explains,

> this new opposition, the 'finite and the infinite,' or better, 'the infinite in the finite,' replaces the dualism of being and appearance. What appears in fact is only an aspect of the object, and the object is altogether in that aspect and altogether outside of it. It is altogether within, in that it manifests itself in that aspect; it shows itself as the

[9] Ibid., 5.
[10] Ibid., 5.
[11] Sartre, Jean-Paul, and Hazel E. Barnes. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Routledge Calssics, 2003. 3.

> structure of the appearance, which is at the same time the principle of the series. It is altogether outside, for the series itself will never appear nor can it appear. Thus the outside is opposed in a new way to the inside, and the being which-does-not-appear, to the appearance. Similarly a certain 'potency' returns to inhabit the phenomenon and confer on it its very transcendence -a potency to be developed in a series of real or possible appearances.[12]

A conscious subject is different from the other objects in the world exactly because she never appears in its fullness; she possesses the quality of potency and can never simply be defined by her past or the present.

However, consciousness can never be simply infinite since, as mentioned, it is always relatedness to the world, which grounds it. Neither can it be fully present in the world since it never coincides with the reality it perceives. Sartre distinguishes between being-in-the-world and being-in-the-midst-of-the-world. The latter has to do with a simple spatio-temporal existence, which refers to an object placed among other objects that can be manipulated. On the other hand, being-in-the-world manifests the "infinite in the finite" since while a subject itself possesses concrete body and is perceived as instrumental by others, it is not simply placed in the world, but also possesses transcendence. Sartre explains the existence of transcendence by the fact that a subject is conscious of an object, but also knows that it is the consciousness *of* the object, *not* the object itself. In this way Sartre shows that consciousness has an intentional quality and exactly because of this has an ability to withdraw from an object of perception and negate it.[13] This dual quality of a conscious subject, i.e., being infinite in the finite, also helps us see the role imagination plays in this duality.

1.2 Imagination, Consciousness and Freedom

What is imagination and how is it different from other aspects of consciousness? Sartre starts out *The Psychology of Imagination* by explaining the function of imagination. He says, "[t]he word image can therefore only indicate the relation of consciousness to the

[12] Ibid., 3.
[13] Richard Kearney. *Poetics of Imagining Modern to Postmodern*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1998. 75.

object...it means a certain manner in which consciousness presents an object to itself….an image is nothing else than a relationship."[14] However, we need to ask what the special quality of imagination is. The main difference between perception and imagination is between their objects. The matter or the object of perception is a thing that I am encountering in the actual world. I perceive an apple while I am actually looking at it. This means that I am seeing it from a certain angle, from a distance that is between us, under certain lighting etc. On the other hand, in order to imagine an apple it need not be present at all. I can think of a blue apple or I can think of it from a bird's eye view.[15]

What exactly is the matter of imagination if it is not an actual object present in front of me? There is no one specific answer to this question. Depending on a situation, the object of our imagination can emerge in different ways. Sartre claims that the matter of the mental imagery consists of purely subjective feelings, knowledge, beliefs or one's opinions and circumstances about a certain object can animate different feelings in me.[16] For example, if I start imagining playing with my niece, it is because I have certain feelings of nostalgia. However, it could also happen because I see a child walking by who resembles my niece. In the same situation some other person might get reminded of her own childhood. In this case, the person and I are imagining because we encountered a child walking by, but we imagine different objects, I imagine my niece and the person her childhood, since our subjective feelings differ.

In addition, this example shows that while imagination can be triggered by an object or a person in the actual world, the object of the imagination is something absent or non-existent. I can imagine something existent and not present, such as what people in Nepal are doing right now. I can imagine unicorns, i.e., non-existent beings. And lastly, I can imagine

[14] Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Psychology of Imagination*. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991. 8.
[15] Ibid., 9.
[16] [16] Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*. Edited by Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre. London, New York: Routledge, 2004. xxii.

something without any commitment to their existence. For example, I can imagine a beach and a sunny day without caring whether the place actually exists somewhere. In all of these cases the object of my imagination is characterized as not present, or at least we are not directly looking at an object while imagining it.[17]

Despite the fact that the object of our imagination is not present, the purpose of imagining in some cases is to grasp or possess the unreal, to make it somehow present. In the example of me imagining playing with my niece, I am imagining it to overcome the sense of missing her; it is a way for me to soothe my longing. It is because of this aspect of imagination that it can also lead one to pathologies of imagination, i.e., in an extreme case it is not only that one presents a desire of possessing the unreal, but starts believing the truth and the reality of the imagined.

For example, Don Quixote is a literary character who presents the pathology very well. He is fighting with wind mills while imagining giants. He is constantly enacting battles in his mind while ignoring the reality of his situation. Don Quixote is an extreme case of the pathologies that imagination can lead us to, but there are mild, everyday examples of the danger as well. It manifests itself well in what Sartre calls "bad faith". Sartre's famous example of a waiter shows how the waiter tries to express his identity as a waiter in his moves, costume, way of talking etc. Here, he appropriates the way others see him. This means that the waiter is not using his imagination to think of possibilities of who he can become.

While imagination is not always a productive way to relate to the world, it still is the main source of human freedom. Since by imagining we negate the actual world, we have a chance to distance ourselves from the actual and imagine different possibilities for ourselves. Sartre does not deny the existence of social constraints, but he thinks that the world is the

[17]Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Psychology of Imagination*. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991. 16.

limit, but it also provides the ground that makes imagination possible since we need something to negate and transcend in order to imagine. While there might be constraints in enacting our possibilities, we are never in a situation, where we cannot choose. For Sartre "freedom is not defined by an ability to act",[18] it more has to do with an ability to choose. Sartre brings an example of Pierre who cannot decide whether or not to stay home and take care of his grandmother, who has no one else but him, or whether to be a patriot and join the French Resistance.[19] The decision is hard since both actions are equally important and crucial and they cannot both happen, i.e., staying with the grandmother excludes the possibility of joining the resistance and vice versa. Here, what is important for Sartre is that Pierre has choices, rather than what those choices are. We are "condemned to be free"[20] since we always have to choose. Even if Pierre avoids choosing one or the other duty, he is still choosing not to choose.

In addition, even if we conceive of the world as a limitation for one's actions, Sartre believes that the actual world to an extent is a result of our imagination as well. The world is always presented to me in some form, it includes my own aims and projects, and these involve imagination. For example, in *Being and Nothingness* there is an example of a traveler for whom a mountain is an obstacle only if he is attempting to go over to the other side of the mountain.[21] For Sartre, "this interplay of objective and subjective factors, and of the real and the imaginary, is…a 'situation'."[22] It is ecause imagination helps us to either negate and go beyond the reality or be in charge of the way we shape our situation that "[w]e are masters of our situations, not slaves to them."[23]

[18] Christian J. Onof. "Jean Paul Sartre: Existentialism." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed May 30, 2015.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Jean-Paul Sartre, and Hazel E. Barnes. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Routledge Calssics, 2003. 462.
[21] Ibid., 516.
[22] Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*. Edited by Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre. London, New York: Routledge, 2004. xxvi.
[23] Ibid., xxvi.

Now, we do need to answer why there is a necessary connection between consciousness and imagination. In the conclusion of *The Psychology of Imagination* Sartre claims that "if consciousness is a succession of determined psychical facts it is entirely impossible for it ever to produce anything but the real. For a consciousness to be able to imagine it must be able to escape from the world by its very nature, it must be able by its own efforts to withdraw from the world. In a word it must be free."[24] This claim is important since we can see that while consciousness is always consciousness *of* something, i.e., it exists by the virtue of reaching beyond itself to an external object[25], it needs to also know that there is an "I" that is perceiving.

Sartre points out this difficulty and claims that "[t]he immediate consciousness which I have of perceiving does not permit me either to judge or to will or to be ashamed. It does not know my perception, does not posit it; all that there is of intention in my actual consciousness is directed toward the outside, toward the world."[26] Since consciousness cannot be defined by its dimension of perceiving an object, it cannot simply be immediate consciousness. Sartre concludes that "every positional consciousness of an object is at the same time a non-positional consciousness of itself."[27] This is why non-positional quality of consciousness, which is central to it, is given by imagination since "if consciousness could not imagine, it would be 'engulfed in the existent and unable to grasp anything but the existent.'"[28]

In addition, Sartre makes a stronger claim by saying that "imagination is not an empirical and superadded power of consciousness, it is the whole of consciousness as it realizes its freedom….it is the appearance of the imaginary before consciousness which

[24] Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Psychology of Imagination*. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991. 267.
[25] Jean-Paul Sartre, and Hazel E. Barnes. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Routledge Calssics, 2003. 8.
[26] Ibid., 9.
[27] Ibid., 9.
[28] Jean-Paul Sartre. *The Psychology of Imagination*. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991. 271.

permits the grasping of the process of turning the world into nothingness as its essential condition and as its primary structure."[29] As we can see, Sartre does not conceive of human existence and consciousness without it being free and this freedom is given to it by imagination.

1.3 The Importance of the World and the "We-Subject"

While we saw that the freedom is given to humans because of the ability of imaginative consciousness to distance itself from the world, this should not be interpreted as saying that the world or others' existence does not play any role in the way we imagine and live our lives. While freedom for Sartre means to always have possible choices, i.e., we are never able not to choose, this account does not provide a full picture of how we can live better or rather authentic lives according to Sartre. There are two ways in which we can be deceiving ourselves. One is to embrace our given identities without imagining further possibilities. In this case we fix our identities to the past or the present. On the other hand we can be imagining that anything is possible for us.[30] I can very well imagine myself flying, but to believe that this is possible might lead me to getting injuries. This means that having the sense of the reality while imagining is also important. Thus, to live authentically means to find balance between facticity and transcendence, which is well described by the term, being-in-the-world, where being cannot be thought of if detached from the world.

It would not be fair either to say that Sartre's account about authenticity is completely individualistic and that "others" have only negative role of seeing a human subject as instrumental. In the third section of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre introduces the concept of the "We-subject". Sartre explains that

> if... transcendence projects its projects, whatever they are, in connection with other transcendences experienced as real presences similarly absorbed in projects identical with my projects, then I realize my project as one among thousands of identical

[29] Ibid., 270-1.
[30] Thomas Flynn. "Jean-Paul Sartre." Stanford University. April 22, 2004. Accessed May 30, 2015.

> projects projected by one and the same undifferentiated transcendence. Then I have the experience of a common transcendence directed toward a unique end of which I am only an ephemeral particularization; I insert myself into the great human stream.[31]

We can see that for Sartre, it is possible to exist along with others without being taken to be instrumental for others, by realizing that others, like us, can achieve transcendence and that there is a common project that unifies subjects. It is not only important to imagine individual possibilities, but there is also a way in which we need to think of shared possibilities since certain group members can have common projects and goals. However, as Sartre explains, "the experience of the We-subject is a pure psychological, subjective event in a single consciousness; it corresponds to an inner modification of the structure of this consciousness but does not appear on the foundation of a concrete ontological relation with others and does not realize any *Mitsein*. It is a question only of a way of feeling myself in the midst of others."[32] We can see that the idea of togetherness is still dependent on one's own imaginative consciousness, which is a precondition for the existence of the We-subject.

1.4 Dangers of the Gay Marriage Activism

In the previous discussion we learned that the faculty of imagination is not only the main source of human freedom, but it can also help one leave an authentic life. In addition, the imaginative faculty can be a precondition for the existence of the We-subject. Making all the threads between the mentioned concepts is important to know how to apply Sartre's ideas to our everyday lives. This is why, now, I will apply the discussion in the previous sections to the modern day issues.

The Feminist and LGBTIQ activism create intersectional movements that fight against dominant power structures such as patriarchy, homophobia, capitalism or imperialism. In addition, they intend to challenge definitions of what it means to be a human being, which have been traditionally given by men and which have become parts of dominant

[31] [31] Jean-Paul Sartre, and Hazel E. Barnes. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Routledge Calssics, 2003. 446,
[32] Ibid., 447.

narratives. While it is obvious that the attainment of political freedom is one of the central projects of these movements, we also need to understand why recognizing Sartre's claim that we are "condemned to be free"[33] could be important for the movement especially today.

About a week ago the world celebrated the legalization of the same sex marriage in Ireland. For many, this achievement emphasized the equality and freedom of LGBTIQ individuals. However, in some cases, attaining legal rights to gain access to certain practices, such as marriage, can be not freeing at all. Accessing this privilege could simply mean to immerse oneself in and accept the oppressive world, i.e., one becomes equal in gaining access to practicing normative traditions. Is the desire and attainment of the freedom to marry leading LGBTIQ movement to bad faith? Does it prevent imagining what it means to transcend the current oppressive practices?

As some queer activists, who are against making fighting for legalization of gay marriage as central to their activism, point out, gay liberation should not be "about gay people conforming, but rather about the whole world transforming."[34] We can say that gay marriage is a form of resistance as well since it opposes the heteronormative ideal of a family that is created by a man and a woman. However, some forms of gay liberation today have become not a form of imagining different ideals for LGBTIQ individuals. Usually gay marriage supporters are saying that we are just like heterosexual individuals and couples and therefore, we should be accepted and appreciated. David Thorstad points out the fact that today the message of gay liberation is that

> [w]e're loving couples just like you. Welcome us into your great society, your churches, your war machine, your phoney-baloney political fraud (one party with two right wings, as Gore Vidal has aptly described it), give us your stamp of state approval. We're not promiscuous hedonists like those gay men now dead of AIDS or perverts who have sex with youths. We're respectable, predictable, reliable, and conventional. We're patriotic; we can't wait to serve in your increasingly hated military. We are Fami-ly."[35]

[33] Ibid., 462.
[34] "Beyond Equality." The Guide. May 1, 1998. Accessed May 30, 2015.
[35] David Thorstad. "Balls & Chains." November 1, 2005. Accessed May 30, 2015.

What Thorstad wants to emphasize in his claim is that we need to think twice before fighting to gain access to institutions such as military or mainstream politics since we need to fight oppressive systems, rather than become a part of them.

Confronting the mainstream LGBTIQ and feminist movements and organizations is important since in many cases they emphasize taking pride in our identities, rather than challenging given identity ideals and for them, equality entails assimilation. Sartre's account of bad faith is an important one to consider for this case since it emphasizes how the lack of imagining possibilities leads us to embracing the idea that we have fixed identities and life goals. The fight for marriage equality has become the central part of the LGBTIQ activism, which encourages different communities to forget that this movement has much more important, multiple projects and goals. Susan Thompson also mentions that "the gay-marriage issue has become a kind of flagship issue, one which is perceived to mark the liberation of all gay peoples from oppression."[36] This is why many LGBTIQ activists and their allies become satisfied once the legal right to marry is attained. This means that not only political resistance is dying out, but some activists do not see a need of imagining what would a life beyond hetero/ homonormativity would be like.

An Irish journalist, Siobhan Fenton, recently wrote an article "Don't Be Blinded by the Yes Vote: Ireland is Still Oppressing Its LGBT Population". Fenton points out that teachers still can get fired from schools for being gay, gay men are not allowed to donate blood etc.[37] In this case celebrating and making the gay marriage legislation as a central issue of gay liberation movement is delusional and dangerous since most of the money and effort goes into a cause that makes invisible much more important projects that the movement needs to fight for.

[36] Susan Thomson. "Speak Now or Forever Hold Your Peace? Why We need Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage." *Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage*. Accessed May 30, 2015.
[37] Siobhan Fenton. "Don't Be Blinded by the Yes Vote: Ireland Is Still Oppressing Its LGBT Population." The *Independent*. May 26, 2015. Accessed May 30, 2015.

Understanding Sartre's account is important since it encourages us to be always alert. The necessary link between imagination and freedom showed that one always has multiple possibilities and choices and we should not get satisfied and forget about our freedom when reaching one of our goals. In addition, basic human freedom emerges through the ability of distancing oneself from the world, not immersing oneself with it. By remembering these important aspects of the human existence, LGBTIQ activists can become more careful about what their goals and projects are and how they approach their ideals.

1.5 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I showed that the structure of the imaginative consciousness is closely connected to and determines the emergence of human freedom. In addition, imagination, as the source of freedom, is one of the crucial parts of the authentic life. Understanding that imagination, freedom and authentic human existence are closely related helped me criticize the feminist and LGBTIQ movement that make gay marriage central to their activism. I showed that to focus just on the gay marriage activism means to ignore the ability to imagine multiple possibilities for the existence beyond hetero/homonormative ideals. In addition, these activists fail to distance themselves from the world by focusing on assimilation, rather than transformation, which again makes their projects directed to reiterating the present structures, rather than going beyond them.

In the next chapter, I will develop the idea of freedom and imagination into historical and political contexts with the help of Foucault's thought. My aim in the chapter will be to explore how the structure of the world determines the way we imagine and vice versa, how imagination can define the structure of the world.

Chapter 2 - Foucault's Account of a Subject, Freedom and Imagination

As we saw in the previous section, imagination, freedom and human existence are closely interrelated for Sartre. Since Sartre discusses the idea of metaphysical freedom, i.e. the ability to choose as a fundamental part of the human existence, his account does not necessarily imply the freedom to act. In addition, what Sartre means by imagination does not necessarily imply the actualization of imagined possibilities.

In order to find the connection between imagination and freedom to act we need to understand what limitations there are in the world that do not let us either to act or imagine freely. I will turn first to Foucault's theory about a human subject to show that unlike being metaphysically free, a subject is not always politically free and that is why imagination and its power cannot be discussed without talking about power relations. My aim with this discussion is to see how the results of the discussion can be used in today's contexts. It is important to learn how we can relate to the world through imagination by learning more about our place in the world.

In this chapter, with the help of Foucault's thought, my aim is to outline different dimensions that contribute to understanding a human subject and how she can imagine and actualize freedom in specific circumstances. To this end, first I will show that a human subject is constituted of power relations, which limit and at the same time give her possibilities for attaining freedom. Next, I will show how power relations are manifested in different physical spaces. Taking into consideration the definition of a human subject and specific circumstances in which she lives, I will discuss how imagination can be employed to challenge and shift existing power relations and create possibilities for a freer existence. I will discuss Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of borderlands to explain how imagination can be influenced by physical spaces and vice versa. I will also use Susan Bordo's discussion of

hysteria and anorexia to show that the existence of oppressed bodies not always means that oppression is perpetuated by their existence, but in some cases limitations imposed on one's body can create new knowledge and help one reimagine and challenge existing power relations. Lastly, I will point out how we can use internet as a space, where we can exercise freedom and imagine ourselves beyond oppressive systems.

2.1 A Subject and Power Relations

Foucault challenges the idea that a subject is not changing across history. However, he is not completely relativizing the idea of a subject. His account is complex and at times seems to be containing contradicting ideas. This is why first, I will explain what Foucault means by a subject to show that both imagination and freedom to act belong to a web of historical, power and spatial relationships that constitutes the subject. As Mark G. E. Kelly points out, for Foucault subject "has no universal content, but rather needs to constitute itself in specific ways at any given time."[38] Foucault himself writes,

> You do not have the same type of relationship to yourself when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes to vote or speaks at a meeting and when you are seeking to fulfill your desires in a sexual relationship. Undoubtedly there are relationships and inter-ferences between these different forms of the subject; but we are not dealing with the same type of subject. In each case, one plays, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself.[39]

Based on this claim, we can say that an imagining subject is not always the same. To imagine a green table involves a different kind of process and circumstances, than to imagine vandalizing anti-feminist posters in a public space. Why and how does this relation towards the self changes according to a social role? We need to understand how an imagining subject can vary historically and contextually.

There are two ways in which Foucault defines the subject: "subject to someone else by control and dependence, and subject tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-

[38] Mark G.E. Kelly. "Foucault, Subjectivity, and Technologies of the Self." In *A Companion to Foucault*, edited by Christopher Falzon. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 513.
[39] Foucault, Michel. *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth. The Essential Works of Michel Foucault*. Edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: New Press, 1997. 290.

knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to."[40] We can see that power, for Foucault, is both something that subjugates, but also it makes the subject possible. In many cases, when power is explored, it is through studying how those in higher power exercise their domination. However, for Foucault power has a different meaning; it does not simply belong to high officials, or is just one part of the human life. Foucault explains,

> rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects….Power only exists when it is exercised. Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application."[41]

In order to explain this idea, Thomas Flynn uses the analogy of games, which shows a subject's constitution through power very well. He compares the subject's role in power relations to Wittgenstein's games, where "practices are shaped by a preconceptual, anonymous, socially sanctioned body of rules that govern one's manner of perceiving, judging, imagining and acting."[42] Johanna Oksala uses this idea as well and claims that meanings of games cannot be "reducible to the intentions or acts of individual players, but [these intentions or acts] make them possible."[43] When talking about a subject who is imagining, we need to take into consideration this analogy. An individual player's action determines how a game proceeds and similarly, one's imagining or acting also makes the power relations possible, but at the same time imagination or action is constituted and determined by the rules of these relations as well.

This is why, we should not use the dichotomy between power and a subject; the one is not external to the latter. In *History of Sexuality* Foucault points out that power "constitutes

[40] Michel Foucault. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer, 1982), 781.
[41] Michel Foucault. "Two Lectures", in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Other Writing*, ed. Colin Gordon, Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980, 97-8.
[42] Johanna Oksala. *Foucault on Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 105.
[43] Ibid., 105.

the subject by providing the historically variable conditions for its emergence, the choice or decision of an individual subject."[44] Unlike Sartre, Foucault might be facing a difficulty here. When Sartre provides an account of imagination, the freedom for him is possible exactly because the imaginative consciousness is able to distance itself from the world and create further possibilities of one's existence. If "[p]ower is 'always already there,' one is never 'outside' it"[45] how then is it possible for an individual to imagine new possibilities for one's existence and fight for freedom? Being constituted of power relations and historicity is not to describe a subject as a passive body. Foucault also claims that "where there is power there is resistance."[46] In order to understand how this resistance comes about, we need to learn how power is exercised.

2.2 Technologies of Power and of a Subject

Foucault, by elaborating on power relations, tells us of different ways in which freedom can emerge based on how these relations are organized and where we belong in this web. For Foucault, "the individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces ."[47] There is no state of freedom that a subject can return to, i.e., freedom should emerge out of limitations that an individual is situated in. Foucault mentions that "[e]very power relationship implies, at least in potentia, a strategy of struggle."[48] The strategy of struggle emerges since a subject is never completely powerless and has a way of opposing the oppression. As Foucault asserts, if subjects of domination are completely powerless, power relations simply would reach their

[44] Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. 95.
[45] Michel Foucault. "Two Lectures", in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Other Writing*, ed. Colin Gordon, Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980, 141.
[46] Ibid., 95.
[47] Michel Foucault. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. Edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980. 73-4.
[48] Michel Foucault. *Power: Essential Works of Foucault.* Edited by James D. Faubion. New York: The New Press, 2000. 346.

limit.[49] Power can only be exercised when there are subjects to rule over. However, if subjects are completely impotent, ruling over them does not make sense. This is why revolutions, where rebels are ready to die, are the most dangerous for a ruler since one cannot rule over the dead; thus, the ruler has to compromise.

There is always a possibility of shifting power relations since there is no sense of absolute domination or subjugation. In addition, in *History and Sexuality*, Foucault claims that power relations are never ubiquitous.[50] Jon Simons in, "Power, Resistance, and Freedom", explains that "the same system of power relations does not fill the whole field of forces."[51] As mentioned in the section 2.1, a subject that is voting is not relating to oneself similarly when she engages in a sexual relationship. It is because power relations are not ubiquitous or not expressed in the same way in each realm of one's life, that one is able to react to it differently, find a space in one realm, while being limited in the other. For example, if we imagine one living in a ghetto, we can see limitations imposed on her lifestyle etc. However, a person living in a ghetto relates to those in power differently, than she relates to her friends. Friendships in this case could be a possibility to enter a space, where one behaves less restrained.

In addition, according to Foucault power is not simply forming our knowledge, but makes it possible. Foucault claims that power does not always work through repression. This idea is important because we do not see one sidedness of power relations and its effects on human beings. According to Foucault, power is strong because it can have effects on us on the level of our desire and knowledge. This effect on knowledge or desire is not always a negative attribute. For example, it was because of limitations on sexuality that the desire for exploring sexuality emerged. Foucault claims that the disciple of psychoanalysis was a

[49] Ibid., 347.
[50] Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. 94.
[51] Jon Simons. "Power, Resistance, and Freedom". In *A Companion to Foucault*, edited by Christopher Falzon. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 310.

reaction exactly to these limitations. The knowledge we gained about sexuality is an effect that power produced.

In addition, Foucault points out how in army soldiers' bodies are disciplined to achieve certain level of health or strength. We can certainly say that this discipline is a way to make these bodies instruments of the power and is in no way a sign of freedom. However, once these results are achieved, i.e., one is strong or healthy, the effects of the power on one's body can be used against this very power. Foucault claims, "[p]ower, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counterattack in that same body….power can retreat here, re-organize its forces, invest itself elsewhere . . . and so the battle continues."[52] We can see that within the power relations there is a continuum between oppression and freedom for a subject since there is a constant reorganization of these relations.

It is important to understand whether or not a subject is completely passive and limited in order to see if imagination can have any role in actualizing one's freedom. As we saw in this section, a subject is constituted by power relations, but she also has an ability to shift and reorganize these relations. In order to see in which specific ways creation of this shift is possible, we need to learn how the structure of the world can influence the subject and determine one's imagination.

2.3 Space, Power and Imagination

[T]he ship is a piece of floating space, a placeless place, that lives by its own devices, that is self-enclosed and at the same time, delivered over to boundless expanse of the ocean, and that goes from port to port, from watch to watch, from brothel to brothel, all the ways to the colonies, in search of the most the most precious treasures that lie waiting in their gardens.…the ship has been…the greatest reservoir of imagination....In civilizations without ships the dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police that of the corsairs.[53]

--Michel Foucault

[52] Michel Foucault. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. Edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980. 56.
[53] Michel Foucault. *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology.Essential Works of Foucault.* Edited by James D. Foubion. New York: The New Press, 1998. 185.

The most important part through which we can see how Foucault elaborates on possibilities of resistance and practices of imagination, is by looking at how power relations manifest itself in physical spaces. Foucault himself emphasizes that "it is somewhat arbitrary to try to dissociate the effective practice of freedom by people, the practice of social relations, and the spatial distributions in which they find themselves. If they are separated, they become impossible to understand."[54] In addition, in his *Force of Flight* Foucault brings an example of how certain dimensions of different spaces create or preclude possibilities for freer existence. He claims,

> In the world of prisons, as in the world of dogs ('lying down' and 'upright'), the vertical is not one of the dimensions of space, it is the dimension of power. It dominates, rises up, threatens and flattens; an enormous pyramid of buildings, above and below; orders barked out from up high and down low; you are forbidden to sleep by day, to be up at night, stood up straight in front of the guards, to attention in front of the governor; crumpled by blows in the dungeon, or strapped to the restraining bed for having not wanted to go to sleep in front of the warders; and finally, hanging oneself with a clear conscience, the only means of escaping the full length of one's enclosure, the only way of dying upright.[55]

In this example we can see that the space becomes a technology of power that disciplines a body, which does not only shape how one positions oneself physically, but it also becomes a way in which one can resist their situation. As Foucault claims "liberty is a practice"[56] and if our bodies are confined to prison-like spaces, then the practice of liberty takes different forms.

While the prison is an extreme example, we can think of how physical spaces affect us in our everyday lives. For example, in this school building tables or chairs take most of the space in the room, where let's say dancing or falling asleep would be difficult. In addition, chairs are positioned in a way that our gaze always reaches the whiteboard and a professor. This space is designed for a specific kind of learning: we are listening to a person sitting or

[54] Jeremy W. Crampton. Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007. 9.
[55] Ibid., 8.
[56] Ibid., 10.

standing by the whiteboard, our attention is not focused on how our bodies move simply because this arrangement does not allow much movement. However, if we are not having a colloquium, usually the chairs are placed in a circle so that we can also see each other and emphasize the importance of students' voices. In Soviet schools, on the other hand, the circular arrangement of desks was not present because the authority and the voice of the teacher were important for that system. It was not only that everyone could see the teacher, but the teacher could see everyone and thus, control students. In those spaces not submission to an authority still happened on different levels. For example, space was designed so that two students shared one table and usually there was an exchange of letters underneath the table and etc.

No matter how suppressive a space is to limit one's movements, there are gaps that could be used for resistance since those in power cannot dominate all the spaces absolutely. As Thomas L. Dumm interprets Foucault, "[t]hose spaces that fail to exhibit a certain openness, a certain ability to allow for contradictory juxtapositioning, will fail as well to provide a renewal of imagination without which no sense of freedom can thrive. In other words, the conditions of freedom themselves are spatial."[57] Foucault, by bringing the ship example, mentioned in the beginning of this section, both literally and metaphorically shows how mobility within a space, not being rooted at one particular location allows one to explore different possibilities and practice imagination. The ship is one of the examples of so called heterotopias, which Foucault thinks are spaces which create openness within our normal web of power relations. They are the spaces where both freer practice of imagination and action can become possible.

Foucault develops the idea of heterotopia, which is "is originally a medical term defined as 'tissue that develops at a place other than is usual. The tissue is not diseased or

[57] Thomas L. Dumm. *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1996. 38.

particularly dangerous, but merely placed elsewhere, a dislocation.'"[58] Foucault uses this term to refer to actual spaces in the world. However, they are to some extent either deviant spaces or create tension with normal social spaces that surround us. Heterotopias are to some extent connected to utopias. However, it is important to note that heterotopias need to be 'enacted' or practiced.[59] Foucault in *Different Spaces* uses the analogy of a mirror to explain both connection and difference between utopia and heterotopia,

> The mirror is a utopia after all, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror I see myself where I am not, in an unreal space that open up virtually behind the surface; I am over there where I am not, a kind of shadow that gives me my own visibility, that enables me to look at myself there where I am absent-a mirror utopia. But it is also heterotopia in that the mirror really exists, in that it has a sort of return effect on the place that I occupy. Due to the mirror, I discover myself absent at the place where I am, since I see myself over there. Starting from that gaze which to some extent is brought to bear on me, from the depths of that virtual space which is on the other side of the mirror, I turn back on myself, beginning to turn my eyes on myself and reconstitute myself where I am in reality. Hence the mirror functions as a heterotopia, since it makes the place that I occupy, whenever I look at myself in the glass, both absolutely real-it is in fact linked to all the surrounding space-and absolutely unreal, for in order to be perceived it has of necessity to pass that virtual point that is situated down there.[60]

We can see that heterotopias to some extent provide an example of embodied imagination, they are places that are not coincident with the world, but at the same time they are real. It is because of this quality that heterotopias, in some cases, could provide the space for transgression. As Foucault says, "the sailing vessel is the heterotopia par excellence"[61] and "heterotopias…. light upon imaginary spatial fields, a set of relations that are not separate from the dominant structures and ideology, but go against the grain and offer lines of

[58] Davis, Teresa. "Third Spaces or Heterotopias? Recreating and Negotiating Migrant Identity Using Online Spaces." *Sociology* 44, no. 4 (2010). 662.
[59] Ibid., 662.
[60] Michel Foucault. *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology.Essential Works of Foucault.* Edited by James D. Foubion. New York: The New Press, 1998. 179.
[61] Ibid., 185.

flight."[62] To understand in what way heterotopias exist as imaginary in the real, as floating vessels, let us look at specific example that Foucault provides.

There are six principles of heterotopia. The first principle of heterotopia is the crisis heterotopias that became heterotopia of deviation in the modernity. The example of crisis heterotopia would be when in the ancient times they would have a special place for menstruating women or for ritual rites. Today, as Foucault notes, crisis heterotopias are substituted by deviation heterotopias, like psychiatric hospitals, prisons and etc. These spaces usually exist within our societies, but they are ruled and constituted according to different rules than our everyday lives. The second principle of heterotopia is that a society can make the same heterotopia function very differently across the time. For example, cemeteries used to be in the heart of cities while nowadays they are usually outside of cities. This can emphasize the shift from the belief in having a soul to perceiving a dead body only as a trace of our existence, i.e., the space has been desacralized and shifted its location. The third principle of heterotopia is the juxtaposition of different seemingly incompatible emplacements. For example, in a theater the rectangular stage can contain manifestation of events and places that have nothing to do with the rectangularity of the stage. Similarly the two dimensional movie screen presents three the dimensional space.

The fourth principle of heterotopia is its connection with discontinuities of time. Places such as museums, libraries accumulate events across time. While for example, festivals present break in time to an extent. The fifth principle of heterotopia is its both opening and closing nature, which makes it penetrable and at the same time isolates one from the outside of the world. Either one is limited to enter the space like in prisons, or one enters with a certain permission like in religious purity baths. The last principle of heterotopia has to do with its relation to the remaining space. Foucault claims that heterotopias either "have the

[62] Davis, Teresa. "Third Spaces or Heterotopias? Recreating and Negotiating Migrant Identity Using Online Spaces." *Sociology* 44, no. 4 (2010). 663.

role of creating a space of illusion that denounces all real space, all real emplacements within which human life is partitioned off, as being even more illusory….Or, on the contrary, creating a different space, a different real space as perfect, as meticulous, as well-arranged as ours is disorganized, badly arranged, and muddled. This would be the heterotopia not of illusion but of compensation." [63]

We can ask to what extent heterotopias like prisons or psychiatric houses create resistance within power relations; don't they on the contrary manifest cases of power imbalance, where resistance is barely possible? By bringing different aspects of heterotopia, Foucault suggests that some heterotopic spaces have different functions and not all can be spaces for resistance or shift in power relations. Thomas Dumm suggests that

> [t]he spaces of heterotopias are informed by the transgressions of their boundaries, by enunciations they encourage and the contradictions they incite….We do not evade politics by trying to preserve a pure space of the apolitical. Indeed, the politics that proceed in such places are sometimes worse for it….with Foucault...there is no pure imagination that will release us from the constraints of our lives. We can be assured, however, that there are ways available to us to be free and that our freedom is not to be confined by the limits we have imposed upon it in the name of such pure ends, even though such freedom is to be defined by them.[64]

While prisons or psychiatric hospitals might be more repressive than spaces in our everyday lives, we can think of cinemas, where we have a chance to see and experience examples of lives and ideas that could be completely detached from our lives. In many cases, if we see a powerful movie, it becomes hard to walk out of the cinema space. We feel a certain sense of discomfort or start to question our lives. A cinema or a theatre provides an alternative space, where we are encouraged to distance ourselves from our own everydayness and imagine different existence for ourselves. These spaces can be transgressive because they do not completely negate the usual social places. Rather, they are taking us on a journey while also being placed in and defined by normative spaces.

[63] Michel Foucault. *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology.Essential Works of Foucault.* Edited by James D. Foubion. New York: The New Press, 1998. 184.
[64] Thomas L. Dumm. *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1996. 46.

The idea of transgression is an important one since it also reflects the condition of a subject, who is never outside of power. Foucault develops the notion in his *Preface to Transgression* and introduces the concept of nonpositive affirmation. Foucault points out that "the philosophy of nonpositive affirmation, in other words of the testing of the limit, is….the act that carries [existences and values] to their limits….to contest is to proceed until one reaches the empty core where being achieves its limit and where the limit defines being…..Transgression opens onto a scintillating and constantly affirmed world."[65] The gist of this claim implies that in order to challenge oppression we need to first affirm its existence. This was also a general idea of Sartre's insistence of balance between facticity and freedom, where we need to imagine different possibilities, but at the same time not lose the sense of the reality.

However, transgression has more political implications and that is why it will be useful to understand how it relates to imagination. In order to better understand how transgression happens and why heterotopias allow this, I want to look at how feminist theorists, Gloria Anzaldúa, Patricia Williams and Susan Bordo use the idea of affirmation of spatiality, and corporeality as a strategy to imagine, shift and challenge power relations in which women and people of color are oppressed.

2.4 Reimagining Life through Spatial and Corporeal Dimensions

In this section, firstly, I will focus on Gloria Anzaldúa's book, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, to show how heterotopias function as both to marginalize certain people from the normal social sphere and also as sites of imagining possibilities of our existence beyond the normativity. Next, I will point out how an affirmation of oppression is important to know how to act out one's possibilities within oppressive structures. Lastly, I will talk about how a

[65] Michel Foucault. *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology.Essential Works of Foucault.* Edited by James D. Foubion. New York: The New Press, 1998. 74-5.

body becomes a site of both oppression and resistance, and creates possibilities for reimagining one's condition.

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands: La Frontera* is a book that shows the intersections of physical and imaginary dimensions that both limit one and provide space for reimagination of one's condition. Anzaldúa suggests that "living in the borderlands creates a third space between cultures and social systems. The word 'borderlands' denotes that space in which antithetical elements mix, neither to obliterate each other nor to be subsumed by a larger whole, but rather to combine in unique and unexpected ways."[66] Living in borderlands is both metaphorical and physical. As an immigrant, Anzaldúa literally lived in between several cultures by U.S.-Mexico border. But her identity also manifested the intersections of different identities.

This fusion of different spaces is important since we do not see necessarily one space, one culture or world subsuming or destroying the other, but rather producing something like heterotopias, an extension of the normal space, a dimension of which is real, but exists in addition to the normal space. Anzaldúa explains why she is not simply choosing among different identities, but rather embracing them all. She writes about the new consciousness,

> the new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity….she has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode-nothing is thrust out, the good the bad the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. She can be jarred out of ambivalence by an intense, and often painful, emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence.[67]

Anzaldúa grew up in a marginalized/heterotopic space as a child, where she did not have an easy access to the dominant U.S. culture. While spaces where some immigrants live can be alienating and oppressive, they also provide possibilities to think differently from those people who are immersed in the normative spaces. Of course Anzaldúa studied at a U.S.

[66] Gloria Anzaldua. *Borderlands: The New Mestiza/La Frontera*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987. 6.
[67] Ibid., 101.

university and also became a part of the lifestyle there. However, she did not lose her identity as a Chicana Mexican. This means that physical spaces that are divergent from the dominant spaces can be internalized thus can provide a way of distancing oneself from different cultures. As a Chicana Mexican, Anzaldúa was able to be critical of the U.S. culture. Later, as a U.S. citizen, where Anzaldúa got educated, she was able to approach her own. Chicana and Mexican, cultures from a different perspective. Anzaldúa's imagination that went beyond existing power relations became possible because of the in-between spaces and cultures that she came to live in.

In addition to having an imaginative power of negating and overcoming one's conditions, we start to reimagine our conditions first by affirming it. For example, there has been a tendency for people to say in order to oppose racism that skin color does not matter. However, Patricia Williams in her book, *Seeing a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race*, points out that in the world where people are discriminated against based on their skin color, we cannot simply say, skin color does not matter, since that would mean to neglect that skin color does matter for the system in which we live. Teachers in Williams son's school started to emphasize that skin color does not matter exactly because they were encountering how kids were playing out 'good' and 'bad' guys according to their skin colors. Williams emphasizes that

> much is overlooked in the move to undo that which clearly and unfortunately matters just by labeling it that which 'makes no difference.' The dismissiveness, however unintentional, leaves those in my son's position pulled between the clarity of their own experience and the often alienating terms in which they must seek social acceptance....it is a dangerous...to imagine inclusiveness by imagining away any obstacles. It is in this way that the moral high ground of good intentions knows its limits. We must be careful not to allow our intentions to verge into outright projection by substituting a fantasy of global seamlessness that is blinding rather than just color-blind.[68]

[68] Patricia Williams. "Seeing a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race." *The Atlantic*. Accessed May 31, 2015.

We need to embrace the existence of racism in order to work within and overcome it. Therefore, in order for a black person to imagine themselves free, it is not enough to say, my skin color does not matter, but to first affirm the world that says otherwise and think about how to expand possibilities of oneself within that system. However, the problems is that in many cases oppression works in subtle ways and it is not easy to notice that certain practices are oppressive. This is why, it is important to explore how our bodies feel in certain spaces, with the presence of certain people, which could be reflecting oppressive practices which are soaked into our everydayness.

Susan Bordo in her article, *The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault*, points out the special importance of our bodies as a "powerful symbolic form, a surface on which central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body."[69] However, the reason why the body is not a mere reflection of the culture, is that it is also able to challenge very cultural norms by its presence in different cases.

Bordo brings an example of anorexia, hysteria and agoraphobia to show exactly what she means. Women who have been diagnosed with hysteria showed exaggerations of feminine ideals. In the nineteenth century women were supposed to be delicate, quiet, show sexual passivity, rather than dominance and be emotional. Hysterical women were carrying these traits out in an extreme way. They were too emotional, dramatic, asexual, egocentric and etc. While these symptoms presented oppressive systems that boxed women only into certain categories, the exaggerated forms of these categories, to some extent, made these women dysfunctional and not being able to carry out proper femininity. Hysteria, rather than being a disease, was to an extent a refusal to perform the feminine duties imposed on women.

[69] Susan Bordo. "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity:A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault,." In *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, edited by Alison M. Jaggar. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989. 13.

In this case, women and society's obsession with feminine ideals was carried out in an extreme way, which created a basis for the destruction of this ideals.

The fact that these diseases emerge later in woman's life is important as well. For example, it is harder for a person of color or marginalized community to create these disturbances in a society because they are already expected to be present outside of the 'normal.' However, if one is living a life of a 'proper' woman, as expected, and starts deviating from norms in later stages of her life, this can make people question the shift from normality to deviation.

This fact is very well shown in Charlotte Perkins' *The Yellow Wallpaper*, where it is not clear when exactly the main character transitions from being 'normal' to being 'mad' since the way her husband treats her is not that different in two conditions. She is not taken seriously even when being so to say sane; her propositions are met with disqualified laughter. As she says about her husband, "John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage."[70] At first look, this could imply that women are never taken seriously, even when being sane. While at first nothing changes outside, the main character starts to completely disconnect and not be able to relate to the world, which leads her to an extreme isolation. While women are expected to stay at home, extreme passivity makes them dysfunctional in the family realm, which becomes a form of resistance. The isolation of the character scares her husband. She locks herself in a room and refuses to follow her husband's commands titled under 'care'. In this case, the extreme form of carrying out femininity, i.e. one is expected to stay at home, but complete isolation is the extreme of this, made her husband not respond to her behavior with laughter, but fear.

[70] Charlotte Perkins Gilman. The Yellow *Wallpaper*. Champaign, Ill.: Project Gutenberg, 1999.

The story ends with an interesting exchange of roles, where the main character asks, "[n]ow why should that man have fainted? But he did."[71] Usually it is hysterical or overly emotional women who faint. In this case, the madness and isolation of the main character paralyzed her husband as well since he cannot function when the subjugated person becomes completely passive.

My aim is not to romanticize oppression or other extreme cases where bodies display oppressive ideals. However, with these examples I want to show that it is not always through distancing oneself from certain practices that creates possibility of freedom, but in many cases the affirmation (maybe extreme way of affirmation) of these practices creates possibilities as well and prepares grounds for reimagining oneself. We can say that the psychiatric hospitals not only have the purpose of disciplining or curing this very deviant bodies, but also they create an illusion of the normality in the society by isolating and making invisible bodies that are deviant.

When, for example, persons with anorexia keep living their daily lives in a normal society it transforms the space around us. One sees a body that tells a story of oppression. Maybe the person who suffers from anorexia herself is not reimagining oneself, but she is shifting the very power relations that constitute her and this is also a form of reimagination. In many cases it is hard to fight or prove that oppression is happening if it is happening in subtle ways. We can say that a government that imprisons its subject for free speech is oppressive. However, it might not be as obvious that beauty ideals oppress women. Many people deny this and say that it is simply a matter of personal preference to like slim women with fair skin. What is a matter of personal choice cannot be a form of the systematic oppression and we do not need to battle it. However, what the visibility of a person with anorexia does is that it shows how beauty ideals can literally lead one to poor health and

[71] Ibid.,

death. The existence of a disease that is mostly manifested in women, that happen undoubtedly because of beauty ideals that encourage women to be skinny and lose weight, makes it possible to talk about oppression, to say that it's not simply a matter of personal choices, but media, mainstream discourse and politics is soaked with the ideology that police women's bodies.

While undoubtedly women with anorexia are victims and in many cases they cannot be models of resistance, their existence creates a new discourse that battles beauty ideas and body policing. There was a Russian woman with anorexia who died about a year ago. She was actually perfectly aware of why this disease took over her. Even though she could not cure herself, she openly talked about her struggles and tried to talk to other women who struggled with same doubts about their bodies. If there is oppression, there are oppressed as well, but in many cases oppression becomes a part of our everyday lives to the extent that we cannot identify ourselves or others around us as oppressed. This is why in many cases our bodies become sites of expressing this very idea that we are oppressed. This leads one to rethinking one's condition and thinking about alternative possibilities of existence. In this case reimagining one's condition beyond beauty ideals became possible because of starting to be aware of one's body that suffered from not being skinny and beautiful enough. Anorexia is one of the reasons why the discourse about oppressiveness of beauty ideals became possible, and this created a form of knowledge not only about our psychology or bodies, but about the system that we live in.

Foucault points out that "[o]ne cannot care for self without knowledge. The care for self is of course knowledge of self-that is the Socratic-Platonic aspect-but it is also the knowledge of a certain number of rules of conduct or of principles which are at the same time

truths and regulations."[72] This is why self-care is associated with freedom for Foucault. In this case, understanding that one's body is suffering creates a demand to know why it is suffering. Knowing that anorexia is resulted partially from imagining oneself slim over and over, where imagination is practiced without being aware of one's body actually already being slim, we realize that we need to be careful with what we imagine. And by knowing how systematized beauty ideals can lead us to practicing imagination in certain ways, always thinking about how our bodies could look better, we are capable of distancing ourselves from these systems and creating a new discourse.

2.5 The Modern Context: Heterotopias in Online Spaces

One of the reasons Foucault's account is crucial is because we can understand how to create better conditions for and practice our imagination that can lead us to resistance in very specific circumstances. The way power relations are organized, how discipline works today is different from that of Foucault and Sartre's time. This is why we need to ask questions about freedom and imagination by taking into consideration our spaces and contexts. For example, video surveillance is nearly in every public space. Recent controversy about the U.S. government having access and control over people's private messages also shows that the surveillance is closer to our private lives than ever before. However, new technologies also create possibilities of resistance. I want to specifically talk about how online spaces are used today in order to create heterotopias, or spaces that do not follow the rules of everyday social practices and normality.

Nearly every day a transgender woman of color is murdered in the world. The physical appearance in public spaces is dangerous for people of color in places where white supremacy exists. In addition, immigrants or Romani people are usually excluded from socialization into public spaces. They either don't have access to the language of the culture

[72] Helmut Becker. "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview With Michele Foucault." *Philosophy of Social Criticism* 12:112 (1987). Accessed May 31, 2015. 116.

they live in, or they don't have necessary legal documents. While they are still parts of the power relations, they cannot be fully active since either their life is in danger or they become illegitimate bodies and thus, invisible. In this case, internet can play a crucial role in creating a space for action and expression of one's voice. Internet in general is not a safe space, there are hate comments or our private messages could be tracked. But people can choose where and how they express their ideas and they can reach communities in different countries or physical spaces. If they cannot speak their own language in the country they live, they can use internet to connect to people they relate to.

Of course these practices do not eventually become confined to internet only. Because once there is a visibility of certain 'deviant' or stigmatized bodies online, people create an alternative discourse of normality of these bodies. For example, if I saw a male wearing a skirt about five years ago, I would have a different reaction than now. This changed in me for different reasons, but partly because I have been exposed to many queer artists and activists online who make their bodies visible and challenge norms. While I still do not encounter genderqueer individuals that often in the streets, in rare cases when I do, I consider their appearance as normal.

A South African feminist, Sian Ferguson, points to the importance of internet spaces as well. She says,

> I come from South Africa. Up until recently, freedom of expression was not a right our citizens had. I know that it's an extremely important right, and I know why it is valuable. But consider this: Because most of the Internet is unmoderated, I have only a handful of places on the Internet where I know I can be my true self without being disrespected, silenced, or trolled. I need these spaces to remain safe for the sake of my emotional and psychological health.[73]

It is not only that internet can offer the safe space for people, but also it can take away the weight and pressure put on bodies in the actual world. In this case we are not simply leaving

[73] Sian Ferguson. "6 Reasons Why We Need Safe Spaces." *Everyday Feminism*. August 5, 2014. Accessed May 31, 2015.

the world in order to imagine ourselves free of certain constraints, but we are entering spaces that create a possibility to experience what the world would be like without the presence of let's say racists, sexists and etc. This creates a chance to put into practice more concretely one's desired ideals. It means to have a space where we can actualize our imaginings while the physical world is being oppressive and limiting. This is a circular process. The fact that we can, to some extent, actualize our imaginings helps to creating an alternative discourse and produces new knowledge, which in return influence the way we imagine our existence beyond oppressive practices.

Conclusion

Feminist Criticism of Sartre and Foucault/Concluding Remarks

My aim in this thesis was to show how Sartre and Foucault's account of imagination, human existence and freedom can be useful in criticizing and analyzing different feminist projects. However, before I point out the importance of this project, it is also important to address feminist criticisms of these thinkers.

For example, Karen Green in, "Sartre and De Beauvoir on Freedom and Oppression", emphasizes that "existentialism is taken to be a philosophy of radical freedom, feminism is centrally a critique of oppression….Sartre's ethic of responsibility and bad faith apparently ignores oppression."[74] Firstly, to address Green's worries, it is important to distinguish between metaphysical and political freedoms. Sartre's account does not focus on political freedom in *Being and Nothingless*, but, it does not exclude it either. Sartre is interested in freedom that stands for our ability to choose and its basic relation the human existence. Oppression cannot be discussed with the general idea that we always have choices, but only when we think about how we actualize our choices, which is a different question.

My second problem with this objection is that it claims that "feminism is centrally a critique of oppression." I do not completely agree with this claim since feminism is not just a criticism of oppression, but it is also something positive, i.e., its sole purpose is not to dismantle oppressive systems, but to also create and imagine new possibilities of existing beyond these systems. This is why Sartre's account is also useful. Sartre, by the end of *Being and Nothingness*, brings an example of the workers' revolution and says that while the revolution might be an important act, one also needs to know what to do with the freedom

[74] Karen Green. "Sartre and De Beauvoir on Freedom and Oppression." In Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Paul Sartre. Edited by Julien S. Murphy. University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1999. 175.

acquired after the revolution is over.[75] I agree with Sartre that it is not enough to oppose an oppressive system, but one also needs to know what to do and how to live after a fight has been won. Knowing that it is the fundamental structure of human consciousness to imagine new ways of living, can at times give us hope and make us responsible for using our imagination for thinking beyond the world that is given to us in the present.

I do, however, recognize that focusing on how to act against oppression is also an important mission for feminism and even though Sartre dealt with those questions later in his other works, I explored Foucault's account since it gave us a specific understanding of how to use the knowledge of geography, physical spaces and our bodies to battle oppression. However, Foucault's account cannot avoid feminist criticism either. For example, Johanna Oksala in, *Foucault on Freedom*, points out that the tension between feminist thinkers and Foucault emerges out of the definition of a subject, where feminists want to emphasize the autonomous nature of human subjectivity, while Foucault sees one constituted and a part of the web of power relations. [76] It is ironic that Sartre gets criticized exactly because of his individualistic approach to a human subject, which does not take into consideration oppression and limitations while Foucault is criticized for diverging from this autonomy. As I showed, Foucault is not presenting a subject as helpless or without an ability to act. Power, for Foucault, is not understood only in negative terms.

Because Sartre's account of imagination, human existence and freedom, puts emphasis on an individual subject and Foucault's account places the individual into social relations and takes oppression into account, it is crucial to juxtapose these two approaches. Feminists need both, to know that one is free, which will help one to imagine possibilities beyond oppression, and to know that there are actual limitations in the world, which will help us to think how to work within these limitations to transgress them. Johana Oksala presents a

[75] Jean-Paul Sartre, and Hazel E. Barnes. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Routledge Calssics, 2003. 457.
[76] Johanna Oksala. *Foucault on Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 5.

more balanced feminist view where "[t]he feminist task of rethinking female subjectivity is often understood as one of finding an in-between position: we must manage to argue for the culturally constituted status of female subjectivity without losing agency, singularity."[77] This in-between position is important since forgetting about the one or the other would make us lose either the sense of imaginative powers or the sense of reality. We need both in order to fight beyond oppression and at the same time imagine new ways of existence as showed both by Sartre and Foucault.

[77] Ibid., 5.

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