

## EXAMINING THE FLOATING BODY IN THE HEGEMONIC OCEAN

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### ABSTRACT

The modern world of absurd culture is fashionably viewed through media which embarks the productivity of objectification. Millions of increasing social site users promotes the highly targeted gender ostensibly a 'female'. It begins with the differentiation of the gender, as the women are being objectified at every step they take. Constant struggle of female from being object to the journey of objectified could be visualized through the paralysis of the dark world governed by patriarchy. The body has always been seen through distinct functions or it is materially created, presented, colonized, dressed and inscribed as object. This understanding of the body is not unique as with patriarchy this was undertaken by the male right to the appropriation of women's body. The body has always been the tool, instrument and object for the society but by the entrance of feminist theories the body is refigured and contemplated in neo form. The feminist like Simon de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Mary Wollstonecraft and other feminists has tried to construct the body in particular nature or cycle of body first by specifying its functional parts like menstruation, pregnancy, maternity, lactification, etc, becomes the limitations for the women's access for the rights. But in every era the female body is being transformed and recreated due to enormous burden given by misogynist. Therefore, the paper tends to bridge the lacuna created through the body which has been the object for centuries.

**KEYWORDS:** Body, Objectification, Gender, Media Culture

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### INTRODUCTION

Body has been traced through different experiences in the structures of philosophy where the bodies of women are represented as objects through centuries. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary the meaning of Objectification is the act of treating people as if they are objects, without rights or feelings of their own. Helen Marshall in the article "Our Bodies, Ourselves: Why We Should Add Old fashioned Empirical Phenomenology to the New theories of the Body" (1999) explicates that the body as a concept which needs to be shaped with both the approaches. It explains that "The enterprise of theorizing the body tends to rely on the research 'external' approach or on speculative writing from the psychoanalytic version of the 'internal'. It makes disturbingly little reference to empirical work that comes from the tradition of phenomenology" (64). The problematic phenomena like objectification caters the need of feminism in new and great prospective. It's often that a woman comes from the world of Dionysian as being an emotional creature that should be admired for her ineffective strength to give birth but rather her journey starts with the instrumentality and ends with the silent apprehension. The portrayal of the female and male on social

websites are in different context which becomes problematic likewise J. Ringrose and L. Harvey in the article “Boobs, back-off, six packs and bits: Mediated body parts, gendered reward, and sexual shame in teens”(2015) states that

“Sexualized body parts claim different responses based on gender. Male abs are viewed as sexualized, yet strong, dominant, and desirable. Female breasts, on other hand, are viewed as sexualized, yet objectified and shameful” (205).

The comparison starts with the binary opposition knowingly about the traits of both the beings. Sex which is biologically defined as highly separated from the gender identity of a male or a female. Freedom was never achieved by a woman because the body never allowed to be free. For instance a woman on social websites enjoy her femininity and her own empowerment by posting her pictures, but by the attack of male gaze the pictures get transformed into hostile surveillance. Stefanie E. Davis in the article “Objectification, Sexualization, and Misrepresentation: Social Media and the College Experience”(2018) explicates that how the female college students on social media are the part of gaze and are being sexually exploited by being the objects for the public.

“The posts feature women from different colleges, but they are usually posed in similarly provocative ways with little or no clothing on. The women’s faces are rarely shown and many times the women’s backs are to the camera. By not naming the women, showing them without clothing, and focusing on their sexualized body parts rather than their faces, the women are viewed as objects of desire not as individuals” (4).

The dominant male gaze never cares about the women who they are, as they just need to fulfil their desire to make a female sexually fetishized. Reemphasizing that male has been judging a woman through the use-value, as if the woman is no more a human but an object of use for male.

The social interaction of a female is considered as the sexually objectified act, as if she is interested in male. Without even knowing any intention of a female, the male sexually objectifies her and comments on her. This opaque view of male sensitizes the issue of objectification in new form, as they see the female body just an object of pleasure and the use for themselves. The objectification moves towards the sexual objectification where a woman is merely a body that is for others use and for pleasure. The consequence of objectification leads toward the mental health and other disorders. A woman who suffers everyday in the school, college, work place and sometimes at home too, grows an unwanted fern in her which constantly affects her personality. Even Fredrickson and Roberts in the article “Objectification theory: Toward understanding women’s lived experiences and mental health risks” (1997) explains the two different paths of woman’s deteriorating health because of objectification. He says

“Objectification theory posits that SO of females is likely to contribute to mental health problems that disproportionately affect women (i.e., eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction) via two main paths. The first path is direct and overt and involves SO experiences. The second path is indirect and subtle and involves women’s internalization of SO experiences or self-objectification” (173).

Women in every era are appreciated through their looks which make them conscious and tend to be self objectified. Woman treats themselves as an object when they focus more on the evaluation on the basis of their appearances. Fredrickson and Roberts clearly states that the women often fall into the bowl filled with anxiety, depression and stress when they are concerned more about the physical appearance. The experience through social-cultural environment and the other subgroups of women creates different sexual orientation on the basis of race, class and ethnicity which helps to make their identities differently but the root remains in the appearance.

Media plays a major role to influence the women who might not be aware of her skin earlier, but through the portrayal of white woman advertising the beauty product to enhance skin, the woman gets swayed up. Self objectification evolves through the realization of internalized racism wherein idealizing the white woman promoted by media. The list of 'wish to do', increases from the straitening of the hair to the cosmetic products and surgeries of body shape, size etc. Dawn M. Szymanski, Lauren B. Moffitt and Erika R. Carr in the article "Sexual Objectification of Women: Advances to Theory and Research" (2011), explicates about the sexually objectifying environment which deepens and encourages the sexual objectification of females. "Drawing from feminist, vocational and organizational psychology, we assert that the core criteria for SOEs are ones in which (a) traditional gender roles exist, (b) a high probability of male contact exists (physically speaking, a male-dominated environment), (c) women typically hold less power than men in that environment, (d) a high degree of attention is drawn to sexual/physical attributes of women's bodies, and (e) there is the approval and acknowledgement of male gaze" (21). Apart from these criteria there are many more SOEs including encouragement of Sexualization through smiling and flirting and aftermath of boozing.

The gender policing is also one form under which a woman is being objectified by the other woman this term was used for the violence of transgender, but the comments, glances and other behaviours of one woman towards other is highly invalidation, derogatory and highly inhuman. To improve the scenario woman's worth is need to establish in this socio-cultural environment through which the sexually objectification of female body can be deduce and the worth of female body and functions can be felt. Martha Nussbaum in the article "Objectification" (1995) explains about the idea that how the human is being treated as an object of use.

- **Instrumentality:** The treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes;
- **Denial of Autonomy:** The treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination;
- **Inertness:** The treatment of a person as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity;
- **Fungibility:** The treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects;
- **Violability:** The treatment of a person as lacking in boundary-integrity
- **Ownership:** The treatment of a person as something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold);
- **Denial of Subjectivity:** The treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.

#### **Rae Langton Has Added Three More Features to Nussbaum's List**

- **Reduction to body:** the treatment of a person as identified with their body, or body parts;
- **Reduction to appearance:** the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses;
- **Silencing:** the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak.

By questioning the phenomena of objectification the thinkers are building a new sight for body as body metonymically sketches the cultural beam and also the individuality. The identity which one owns through the work is being turned according to the body. Women at any work place are being promoted or demoted not only by their standard of hard work but also categorized through their body. Immanuel Kant in the text *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

(1785) explains about the objectification and humanity. He explains that the humanity has sucked down to body and this reduction tends to be compared to objectification.

“The characteristic feature of humanity is an individual’s capacity for rationally setting and pursuing her own ends. A being with humanity is capable of deciding what is valuable, and of finding ways to realize and promote this value. Humanity is what is special about human beings. It distinguishes them from animals and inanimate objects” (42).

Humanity which is often turned into objectified being wherein a person is being sucked as sexually the person becomes an object of pleasure and use. Louis Infield in the text *Lectures of Ethics* (1963) expounds about the Kantian philosophy that how the degradation or dishonouring is exercised in the sexuality. “The loved person loses what is special to her as a human being, her humanity, and is reduced to a thing, a mere sexual instrument” (57). The treatment of the person is highly objectified, as it can both man and woman but women are mostly been the victim who are turned into the tool for the fulfilment of the purpose of the lover. Kant explains in *Lectures on Ethics* “... a man is not at his own disposal. He is not entitled to sell a limb, not even one of his teeth. But to allow one’s person for profit to be used for the satisfaction of sexual desire, to make of oneself an Object of demand, is to dispose over oneself as over a thing”(165). In this case prostitutes who are often being used as an appetite for the male. Females in order to satisfy male’s sexual desire compensated with profit earning women themselves become an object. In doing so, the women is being sucked whole just as lemon-squeezer, it’s a pitiable situation when the body is used as an instrument. Ronald Dworkin in the article “Liberty and Pornography” (1991) explains about the objectification by using Kantian phenomenon.

“Objectification occurs when a human being, through social means, is made less than human, turned into a thing or commodity, bought and sold. When objectification occurs, a person is depersonalized, so that no individuality or integrity is available socially or in what is an extremely circumscribed privacy. Objectification is an injury right at the heart of discrimination: those who can be used as if they are not fully human are no longer fully human in social terms; their humanity is hurt by being diminished” (30).

According to Dworkin the female becomes less of human when she is being treated as an object for other’s use. And in the way her humanity gets distort whenever she is being used as an object of desire. Parallel to this objectification is also described by Catharine Mackinnon in the text *Feminism Unmodified* (1987) she explores that “... A sex object is defined on the basis of its looks, in terms of its usability for sexual pleasure, such that both the looking- the quality of gaze, including its points of view- and the definition according to use become eroticized as part of the sex itself” (173).

According to Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (2014) by Simon Blackburn body is often contrasted with mind and in Christian, Pythagorean and the Indian tradition’s bodily residence is a kind of forfeit measured with the joy of pious spirituality. The body has always been seen as the entity of passion and desire which subverts the knowledge and truth. The change of emphasis can be seen, while considering the mind and the body as the binary of the philosophy of enlightenment. Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price in the essay “Opening on the Body: A Critical Introduction” (1999) expounds the body as the pole apart from mind as the mind has been the supreme element throughout the traditional realm of knowledge. “As, the intellectual traditions of Judeo-Christianity for example saw the body as the mundane path to a higher, valorized, spirituality, the post-Cartesian modernist period is marked by a rejection of the body as an obstacle to pure rational thought”(2). With this, the difference between *res cogitans* (the powers of intelligence and site of selfhood) and *res extensa* (the machine-like corporeal substance) which Descartes explains in the complex reality where mind/body splits and this has indeed mattered to the Complex phenomenon of feminism.

The female body has encompassed a different culture in the world of neoconservative and neoliberal, where the common structure of free market capitalism follows. 'Body' being the part of the post-modern epoch becomes the element of market use. Every product which capitalist want to sell or want to raise the consumer's need they use women's body on the product to attract more buyers. The body becomes the source to generate more income and the market value increases with the demand of the product. This demand is generated through the advertisement, popular culture, media, magazines and other sources. The reverberating effect of the female body is beyond the human constraints, as the more it gets strangulated the more it revolts through the line of neoconservatism and emerges in the liberated form. Alison Phipps in the text *The Politics of the Body* (2014) explicates about the female body that how it has been shown in the market which can be predicted as empowering or can be sexualizing at the same reference. Alison's discourse starts by sharing two anecdotes which talks about her impending delivery and an Iranian girl expressing her views on veiling which was seen as an oppressive act and referred as the patriarchal value system. These two anecdotes became an insight for the broader contextual framework on the female body in the politicized consumer driven period. She says "as any ethnographer knows, the arena of human feeling, thought and action will always be full of diversity, multiplicity and contradiction. However, as I began to follow different threads and piece together the web of discourses and power relations which constitute contemporary orthodoxies around the issues in question, a number of important common themes started to emerge" (2). Channelizing the prominent issues on female body sketched through the brush of neoliberal and neoconservative, making the consumer's culture driven by either sexualizing the body or empowering its nudity. Alison Phipps has raised the question that "how, in the same period, have left-wingers, academics and other political progressives simultaneously defended powerful men accused of sex crimes, been critiqued for ignoring honour killings and other 'culture-based' forms of gender violence, positioned topless tabloid pictures as empowering, and opposed these same pictures for sexualizing breasts and undermining the breastfeeding which is an essential part of 'natural motherhood'?"(3)

Neoliberal in which free market capitalism takes the reign and neoconservative where the equation follows the role of tradition and morals, but the common action of power has created the consumer's choice. Likewise, the upcoming companies has special role for the female body representation, as if the product is based on female. As Chris Shilling in the text *The Body and Social Theory* (1993) expounds that the female body has a particular requirements to be filled in order to follow the employer's choice. Body becomes the key site for the process to buy a product as the picture of female body on the product helps to consume that product. It becomes more of commercializing the desired body rather than the products use. The body on the product has demeaned both the symbolic value and the use value.

The greater ground of the female body lies in the arena of sex industry as plethora of debates by academicians, media and politicians has encountered the fact that the female has either demystified the reality showcased through different popular culture or being liberated by the excessive freedom of constructed choice. C. Harcourt and B. Donovan in the article "The many faces of sex"(2005) discusses an example exemplifying the varieties of business which started with the private illegitimate services and has increased by legalized assets.

"Wealthy consumers are able to purchase a 'girlfriend experience' - a personalized, intimate interaction with a paid escort which may include dinner and conversation, cuddling, kissing and foreplay- marketed as being akin to a 'real' relationship. Consumers at Dennis Hof's Bunny Ranch, the zenith of Nevada's legalized brothels, visit a sexual theme park open 24/7 which offers massages, lactation, vibrator shows, viagra parties, tantric sex, BDSM (bondage and discipline, sadism and masochism), 'two and three girls' parties, overnight stays and 'the porn star experience', and employs more than 500 'Bunny Babes'. This reflects the fact that commercial sex has been subject to the general trend for market

specialization, now including text, image and video pornography, live sex shows, strip and lap-dancing clubs, telephone and cyber-sex companies, escort agencies, independent sex workers and organized sex tourism".(201)

The contemporary culture in the globalized era has proliferate the fragments of sex which was taboo and co-existed with the conservative class, but on the other hand with the expanding time this has hegemonized the business even in the economy of the country. From the entertainment to the foregrounding of the sex industry has emerged like the ocean wave and is spreading via the popular social media. The culture in urban cities is most violating in the field of sex trading, availability of pornography and business among the powerful people. In the particular section of class mainly middle class women and men are working under the sex industry. Turning towards the sex industry has the reason for a livelihood which others enjoy and becomes the priority of upgraded lifestyle. Pierre Bourdieu in the text *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984) examines that for the contemporary bourgeois life the choice to trade the body has a rational response in the sex industry, as the women specially enjoys the high class cultural wherein she undertakes the incorporated fact of the vocabularies like harlots, slut and prostitute. But despite all the facts the voicing is for opinion that the workers under the sex industry have similar narratives as that of any discriminated class.

The paradigm shift in the sex industry has now entered the cultural changes with the choice of the female which actually isn't a choice but the necessity for the livelihood. The consumer's choice in the neoliberal world has been given the space for the expression and freedom for the sex worker. Being the women's choice to offer their bodies for sale, the consumer being the male faculty has given the right to purchase in the market set by the neoliberal capitalist.

The female body enters into web of labour where the body goes beyond the limitless pain and gives birth to other body. Ideology which has been fractured in the post modern world, the women are being treated as the birthing machine in the industrialized world ruled by neoliberal and neoconservative. The market has grabbed the signifier and the tradition changes into the consumer's world, where varieties of profit making imperatives are present which might be harmful for the body. Deborah Cameron in the article "Gender, language and the new biologism" (2010) explicates that "these developments have fused with the backlash against feminism and high- achieving women, economic pressures which have intensified competition in labour markets and general return to biologism in popular science and culture"(526). The essentialist part of the gender consciousness becomes important when the birthing becomes highly dependent on the woman.

## CONCLUSIONS

The body carries a notion which is never discussed alone with feminist perspective but contains the power and struggle for freedom. This discussion is not abstract as the premium discourse on body is highlighted in the book *The Second Sex* (2011). Simon de Beauvoir examines many experiences of different female which helped her to glimpse the body more minutely. The constitutive function of the body in acquiring knowledge was been debated and it's still in process. But the structure which modernists followed was top-down whereas, Simon de Beauvoir reframes the constructed form and denies the patriarchal power which indirectly hits the reciprocal change.

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