
Gender and Recognition

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The aim of this paper regards the concretization of Butler's notion of freedom by further developing it from mere awareness of the non-identical character of gender to the intersubjective recognition, not only of the personal but also the social and political sphere, as informed by Honneth's recognition theory. A part of the said project, however, is the reconstruction of Butler's deconstructed gender by proposing the binary category as *plaything* in order to provide a regulatory norm for social and political functioning. It is from this modified liberatory scheme as well as the reconstructed gender norm that lesbian liberation is anchored. This paper is divided into four parts. Part I discusses the different take on homosexual women, either as inferior or superior, although Butler smashes such an idea with her theory of performativity, which results in the demythologization of gender. Part II presents the deficiency in Butler's claim, and, thus, highlights what is needed in Butler's theory. Part III discusses and offers a reconstruction of gender via unity and difference embodied in the binary category stripped off of its ontological content, and branded as *playthings*. It is in such a model that the lesbian is regarded as a "feminine other" – an/other subject, an/other woman that is not necessarily inferior or superior than the recognized usual woman. Lastly, Part IV presents the feminine other in the context of society, particularly in Honneth's three spheres of recognition where she is granted love, rights and solidarity.

Keywords: Judith Butler, freedom, gender performativity, Axel Honneth, recognition, feminine other

Introduction

Demythologizing Gender

The recognition of homosexual women has resulted in misrecognition. Either people take their deviance as inferior or superior. The religious point of view regards lesbians as the former. This is evident in some articles such as that of Roselle Pineda's (2001) "Bridging Gaps, Marking a Struggle," where she shared a religious take on lesbians, particularly



Catholicism. She writes, “not only were they (lesbians) called witches and prostitutes, but they were also legally punished and executed in the name of pagan and unchaste practices against Catholicism...women with these practices were either burned at the stakes, or forever branded as freaks of society” (p.138). This religious claim becomes more believable when supported by science, particularly geneticists and psychologists. Karen Jordan and Robert Deluty (1995) offered an extensive discussion on lesbians approached in a clinical perspective. From their conducted survey on homosexuality among 139 clinical psychologists, results show that “the majority of respondents viewed an active gay or lesbian lifestyle as ‘a problem only due to societal intolerance’ (61.9%) or as ‘no problem whatsoever’ (25.9%). However, 12.9% stated that such a lifestyle is a ‘psychosexual disorder,’ and 5.0% claimed that it is a ‘personality disorder’” (p.451).

From the above figures, a majority still sees becoming a lesbian a problem (whether societal or clinical). In another article by Edward Alwood (1996), homosexuality was considered “a growing ‘disease’ and ‘social problem’; describing a homosexual as a ‘pervert’ or ‘deviate’ was objective news reporting. *Time* magazine in 1966 described homosexuality as “a pathetic little second-rate substitute for reality, a pitiable flight from life” (p.768). Nonetheless, the case of homosexuality was gradually excluded in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), declassifying it as a disease. During the 1900s, homosexuality was believed to be a congenital condition, which requires medical attention rather than legal persecution. In DSM I, homosexuality was listed as a “sociopathic personality disturbance,” which is

considered a serious mental illness. In the publication of DSM II, it was changed to the so-called “Sexual Orientation Disturbance” (SOD)¹, which is no longer a mental illness, but still a case of the DSM. Consequently, through a series of oppositions and criticisms, the homosexual problem was addressed in the DSM III, and from being an SOD, it was modified to “ego-dystonic homosexuality” (EDH)² until, in 1987, it was removed from the DSM III-R by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Committee.

On another note, whereas homosexuality is removed from the DSM, the transgender community persistently struggles for the same end. However, their (transpeople) case is still included by APA in DSM IV classified as “gender identity disorder,” which is most recently modified to “gender dysphoria” in DSM V, removing it from the mental illness list. Although same issues surround homosexuals and transgender people, the latter group’s case gets even worse, especially upon transition to another identity via sex change. For transsexuals, not only are they discriminated by heterosexual people but also by their fellow homosexuals. This is demonstrated by “women-only” and “natural-lesbian-only” spaces that exclude transsexuals.

The strictness that society infused in gender identity holds sexual reconfiguration not only stigmatic but unacceptable in such a way that even fellow deviants do not include. Although both homosexual and transgender conditions are improving over the years in terms of scientific and social acceptance, still they face the issue of moral disgrace.

On the other hand, some groups take homosexuality a point of liberation. Lesbian

feminists, in particular, take lesbians as superior than women. They dealt with the problem of lesbian oppression and struggled for the radical separation by embracing the name "lesbian" and creating a world not subjected to heteropatriarchy.³ This is evident in Sarah Lucia Hoagland's "Lesbian Ethics," where lesbians play an important role in developing a kind of ethics which challenges the social construction of women. Hoagland (1998) claims, "by looking to lesbian lives, we find values of female agency and community distinct from those promoted under heterosexualism where female agency is developed in terms of self-sacrifice, and where community is understood as hegemonic and difference a threat...from lesbian lives we can understand that agency is creative, not sacrificial" (p.405). This revolution entails a shift from the totalitarian grip of the heterosexual model to an all-embracing open-ended lesbian community.

Adrienne Rich exhibited that revolutionary ethics by criticizing the rigid and forced heterosexual model, which serves as a foothold of male domination. Lesbians do not subscribe to the soft and passive persona of a woman as defined by the heterosexual community. They, rather, choose to create a meaning outside the man-woman context. This behavior is a rebellion, which involves the central feature of lesbian existence, that is, the love of woman for woman (Rich, 1980, pp.652-653).

While Rich is mealy-mouthed on the woman-lesbian distinction, Monique Wittig (1980) is blunt in her claim that, "lesbians are not women" (p.110). It is the category of sex which binds women to the arms of men creating a master-slave bond in the form of the

male/female dichotomy. Wittig expresses her disgust to the sexual division as it operates as a power cell of heteropatriarchy. The primacy of difference (as exhibited by our physiological division) involves the "...thought of domination. Dominance provides women with a body of data, of givens, of a prioris... that affects everything, our thoughts, our gestures, our acts, our work, our feelings, our relationships" (Wittig, 1982, pp.65-66). To counter this spell of slavery and domination, Wittig campaigns the abolition of the sex category. The totalizing character of the category of sex, which shapes and manipulates our minds and bodies into executing its laws, must be destroyed if we even hope to exist (Wittig, 1982, p.68).

Hoagland, Rich, and Wittig offer a kind of separation from the common normative practice and tender a new-born category that runs against the male-defined woman. Apparently, this rebellion is enflamed by the overly-limiting and inferior image society has bestowed on women. In Simone de Beauvoir's (1974) words, "here is to be found the basic trait of woman: she is the Other in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another...woman has always been man's dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality" (pp.xxiii-xxiv). Thus, the assertion of lesbian practice is not really concerned with mere identity issue or recognition as one of the many, but rather, in a deeper goal, that is, a flight from the grip of heteropatriarchy. Lesbian existence becomes a way for despising the inferior image by performing acts outside the common feminine normative. In contrast with the claims of science and religion, lesbians have become emancipators rather than sinners and deviants; and their practice

has served as a political stand against both patriarchy and heterosexuality.

Two things are gathered from what is said above. For one, lesbian existence has disrupted patriarchal domination, resulting in the questioning of gender equality; on the other hand, it has disrupted heterosexism, exposing plurality and difference among the sexes. Apparently, it does not only perform a political task but also an epistemological one. This is also evident in Wendy Lee-Lampshire's (1999) words asserting that "lesbians are not only politically dangerous but also *ontologically* destabilizing...the potentially destabilizing ontological danger lesbians pose is also *epistemological*" (pp.3-4). Their existence, particularly, their experience of violence and disrespect, has given rise to what Butler calls "gender trouble," leading to a critical investigation of our conceptual frameworks. That despite violence, lesbians' choice to be as such creates a space of intention that confuses the common social norm. But "while transgression is punishable, it is also as transformative as is the dissolution of the real" (Lee-Lampshire, 1999, p.14). This leaves lesbians not simply as abject beings but as potential disruptors to our societal norms.

This could also be one reason why the lesbian issue has shifted from a political to an epistemological one. From lesbian feminists' political rebellion, the concern of lesbians nowadays becomes a struggle for recognition where the image of lesbian inferiority claimed by science and religion became the point of emphasis, and not anymore, male domination. This view on lesbians is evident until today. Now we see them as part of the LGBT community fighting for their rights, but not necessarily toppling down the patriarchal

society. Although not fully recognized by all, lesbianism has become more "tolerated"⁴ now than before. This, according to Bat-Ami Bar On, has contributed to the normalization of lesbian existence, thus, overlooking its political stance. She stressed:

The forgetfulness is the result of the normalization of both lesbian practice and lesbian-feminism. This normalization naturalized lesbian practice and robbed it of its symbolic value, thereby robbing it of its earlier political significance. It clipped the political wings of lesbian-feminism by validating lesbianism as one among a plurality of feminist perspectives...The poorer the symbolic value believed to be embodied in lesbian practice, and the less the practice is perceived as deeply political because of its fundamental opposition to male-dominated heterosexual society, the less compelling is the claim that lesbian-feminism, as conscious articulation of the politics of lesbian practice, provides a vanguard understanding of women's experience in male-dominated heterosexual society and the strategies needed to radically transform that society. Similarly, the less a radical feminist political promise is seen as special to lesbian-feminism, the less compelling is the claim that lesbian practice should be perceived as deeply political and rich in symbolic value (Bar On, 1992, pp.49-50).

It is observable from the above long passage that Bar On hangs onto lesbians' return to their symbolic image advanced by lesbian feminists. Thus, she ended her article with the following words, "if it is not too late, growth in the feminist critique of personal life, which means repoliticization, is essential to a reradicalization of feminism" (Bar On, 1992, p.56). These strong words suggest a coming back to the radical notion of lesbianism that aims to overthrow men from social control. This coming back involves the 19th century

view that “the personal is political” (Bar On, 1992, p.45); that lesbian practice is more than a desire for the same-sex. It is seen, rather, as a rebellion to the inferior image given by men to women, in a sense, not simply a private affair, but a public one. The way back is to remember this goal and to treat lesbian experience and the violence they encounter as moments that fire the desire for social and political revolution. Without a political symbol, lesbians will merely remain as one of the minority that simply aims for their personal recognition and not necessarily acting as agents who put forth political transformation.

However, this departure from women oppression via lesbian existence seems to suffer from certain issues. I, at least, find two points with regard to this matter; although both are connected to the problem of essentialism, each thrusts the issue distinctively. Firstly, this new-born category and practice created for heteropatriarchal disruption faces the problem of inclusion. Thus, we ask, who are those people who we consider as lesbians? If we merely refer to “biological women who love women,” then we are already excluding other gendered beings who identify themselves as feminine. For instance, the limited description of lesbians becomes problematic for those who are not able to fit their description. This is evident in Jacquelyn Zita’s (1992) “Male Lesbians and the Postmodernist Body” where “biological males who claim to be lesbians” (p.106) suffer from exclusion and disdain from the women-only-lesbian community. The very idea of a male declaring his lesbianism may be quite odd since he already is a “he”; and he, desiring a woman, in society’s eyes, will not render him abnormal, for this entails that he is simply displaying

heterosexual desire. However, for these male lesbians, it is not so much what meets the eye.

Their sexuality is informed not by heterosexual desire but by homosexual ones since they see themselves as women trapped in a male body, and by preferring woman partners, they exhibit homosexual practice. But more than mere preference, these biological males assume lesbianism in its political sense, which regards “a way of being in the world or relating to others, a way of seeing the world which is ‘woman-identified’ or ‘woman-seeing,’ a special way of loving, preferring or ‘sexing’ women – any number of political oppositional practices engaging or disengaging the domination of heteropatriarchy” (Zita, 1992, p.110-111).

But since lesbian identity refers to biological females, though politically parallel with the aim of female lesbians, male lesbians are nonetheless denied access to lesbian communities. Thus, while they fight for the suffocating image patriarchal society has created, these lesbian feminists offer a new brand of totalitarian identity that is both prescriptive and exclusionary.

This leads me to the second point of the lesbian problematic. Not only male lesbians are oppressed but also straight men and those females who do not partake in the lesbian liberation movement. What appeared in this lesbian struggle became an “us-against-them” fight, turning the cannon away from them and aiming it toward men and those women who stayed by their side. We get a glimpse of this oppressive tendency of the lesbian project in Lee-Lampshire’s article, “Decisions of Identity,” where, particularly, Hoagland’s stand is criticized, yet improved.

Apparently, Hoagland seems to display ambivalence toward her refusal to define lesbians since

More often than once Hoagland strays close to a violation of her refusal by engaging the heterosexual and ultimately binary language of “us-against-them,” a language that oversimplifies the complex roles played by culture, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality in lesbian life and decision-making, and thus underestimates the power of patriarchal institutions to thwart the creation of new value (Lee-Lampshire, 1995, p.35).

Hoagland’s rejection of a clear lesbian definition may be quite understandable since such separatist account may display a violent rift between lesbians and nonlesbians, but Hoagland seems to fall from the very pit she avoids. Lee-Lampshire (1995) attempts to aid this prejudiced bent by developing a concept of lesbian subjecthood engaged in an “instantiate resistance,” which does not evoke the essentialist logic of “us against them”(p.36). The so-called “autokoenonous” subject found in Hoagland’s discussion is further developed from simply recognition of self-in-community to a moral and political subject, which embraces “the moral/political responsibility that accompanies resistance not only to heterosexualism but also to any essentialist conception of a lesbian subject that tacitly demands the suppression of cultural identity” (Lee-Lampshire, 1995, p.43). Although Lee-Lampshire’s proposal only points to essentialism as regards lesbian identity, this contributes much to the present study. This refusal to essentialism may actually be stretched not only to lesbian ethics but also to an ethics of resistance that concerns all brands of essentialism and includes the issue on gender. Lee-Lampshire (1995) was insistent on

the idea that “any lesbian ethic grounded on resistance to oppression must recognize the multiplicity of sexualities within lesbianism in the same way that it must recognize the cultures, ethnicities, and religions that inform the perspectives of its community” (p.44). But on a more general note, this multiplicity of sexualities must be recognized not only in lesbianism but by and large, in gender identity as well. This creates discord to the rigid binary category, as sexuality is not limited to the heterosexual discourse. It also decenters the issue from heteropatriarchal domination to the problem of essentialism where a particular identity becomes stable.

Without this recognition, lesbian feminists’ liberatory scheme would remain to be an “us-against-them” fight, treating the doing of heterosexism as an offense to their project and the lesbian way as the only path to liberation, thus, heterosexism’s undoing. Lesbian liberation, therefore, becomes a “to do or not to do” question that determines your being with them or not. Apparently, this freedom is not for hetero- and even any other gendered beings, except for lesbians who perform the lesbian way. This perpetual war against the nonlesbians, I think, cannot be called freedom, but rather, a false one. Jacob Hale (1996) in his article, “Are Lesbians Women?,” expresses not exactly the same idea but, at the least, close to that, asserting that lesbians “are not entirely free from male control of their reproductive labor, even if this is not controlled by an individual man in the same way it may be within a heterosexual marriage” (p.49). He continues by quoting from Calhoun: “a lesbian may be barred from adopting children or be denied custody or visiting rights to her children, simply because she is a lesbian” (Hale, 1996, p.49). This only

shows that lesbians are still not free, for they are vulnerable to social and political violence, and even physical ones (e.g., rape). Simone de Beauvoir also displays lesbians' emancipated illusion. In the *Second Sex*, she states:

The lesbians play first at being a man; then even being a lesbian becomes a game; masculine clothing, at first a disguise, becomes a uniform; and under the pretext of escaping male oppression, woman becomes enslaved to the character she plays wishing not to be confined in woman's situation, she is imprisoned in that of the lesbian. Nothing gives a darker impression of narrow-mindedness and of mutilation than these groups of emancipated women" (Beauvoir, 1974, pp.472-473).

There seems to be an indirect compulsion transpiring here as these so-called emancipated lesbians are forced to take a position untouched by men. This male-control escape plan seems to mirror the same oppression that they attempt to escape. By favoring lesbians over the said-to-be male-defined women, those who do not fit their claimed emancipative category become excluded and oppressed. They simply turned the tables by proclaiming the superiority of lesbians over those soft and gentle women who remained faithful to the heterosexual model.

Although Judith Butler served as the voice of the minority, not only in terms of gender (e.g., LGBTQ) but also in other conditions which suffered oppressive marginalization (e.g. race, class, etc.), she tries to avoid this problem of essentialism by speaking the language of equality via her deconstruction of gender. In Butler's scope, lesbian feminists' issue on compulsory heteropatriarchy is decentralized. Gender oppression is not rooted in its constructed

imagery but in our treatment of these fabricated concepts. This involves our way of thinking, which draws out a hermeneutical understanding of nature (or body as expressed in the binary category) as expressed in the limits of our language. Our engagement in the activity of reification, whether conscious or not, resulted in the naturalization and stabilization of what was once an illusion. Thus, we end up forcing actual human beings to fit those favored concepts to satisfy the criteria, whether they are women or lesbians. Anyone who occupies such a position, playing the correspondence game, is susceptible to oppression, whether one is the oppressor or the oppressed, or even both.

The activity of oppression finds its expression in our firm treatment of concepts building on the picture that religion and science created. Reification of the gender binary comes from our reified notion of these fields of understanding human existence, creating an appearance of a clear line between man and woman. The binary category as promoted by society is further developed into a fixed state through the performativity of its members. Through the repetition of gender grounded on the idea that "anatomy is destiny," human beings become reduced to their chromosomal and physiological make-up to which gender follows. It is, thus, this so-called natural sexual difference that dictated the strict and tedious standard of femininity rendering gender and compatibility limited to the binary category.

It is Simone de Beauvoir (1974) and her banner that "one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman," (p.301) that breaks the originary myth of gender. The upshot of this groundbreaking claim is the distinction between sex and gender. "Sex is understood to

be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas gender is the cultural meaning and form that the body acquires, the variable modes of that body's acculturation" (Butler, 1990, p.35). This removes the "anatomy is destiny" idea from the picture, rendering the continuity between sex and gender questionable. Following this line, it is safe to say that "all gender is, by definition, unnatural" (Butler, 1990, p.35). It is also from this stance that lesbians, as well as other gendered beings, gained access to equality by taking gender as a socially-fabricated phenomenon. In the section, "The Lesbian," in Beauvoir's (1974) *The Second Sex*, she started by displaying the unfixed character of viriloid as well as heterosexual women by contending that,

We commonly think of the lesbian as a woman wearing a plain felt hat, short hair and a necktie; her mannish appearance would seem to indicate some abnormality of the hormones. Nothing could be more erroneous than this confounding of the invert with the 'viriloid' woman. There are many homosexuals among harem inmates, prostitutes, among most intentionally 'feminine' women; and conversely a great many 'masculine' women are heterosexual (pp.450-451).

Women's inclination toward a certain sexual orientation is a choice. According to Beauvoir, it is not determined by our hormones, though they can, in a way, contribute to lesbian leanings. Nonetheless, she makes it clear that anatomy, physiology, or biology is not the determining factor of femininity. One's turning to homosexuality involves certain reasons not limited to erotic preference. For instance, a virile woman may choose to be one in order to rebel from heteropatriarchy or even to feed her own

feminine vanity, and still other reasons of the like. As Beauvoir puts it, "homosexuality is no more a perversion deliberately indulged in than it is a curse of fate. It is an attitude chosen in a certain situation – that is, at once motivated and freely adopted. No one of the factors that mark the subject in connection with this choice – physiological conditions, psychological history, social circumstances – is the determining element, though they all contribute to its explanation" (Beauvoir, 1974, p.473). This does not only concern viriloid women put in an "either/or choice" of heterosexual and homosexual orientation. It is addressed to all women, whatever their reasons are for choosing so. The choice of masculinity, though, does not make less of a woman. Nonetheless, such a choice also has a danger in which one may be led to a make-believe existence.

Jacob Hale resounds this line of choice and constructs in gender in his article, "Are Lesbians Women?" He further reconstructed the concept of woman by presenting 13 defining characteristics as displayed by the dominant culture. None, however, is necessary or sufficient (Hale, 1996, p.52). These 13 characteristics are the following:

1. Absence of penis
2. Presence of breasts
3. Presence of female reproductive organs
4. Presence of estrogen and progesterone
5. Presence of xx and absence of y chromosome
6. Having a gender identity as a woman
7. Having an occupation considered acceptable for a woman
8. Leisure pursuits considered acceptable for a woman
9. Engaging at some point in one's life in

- some form of sexual/affectional relationship with a man
10. Achieving and maintaining a physical gender self-representation
 11. Behaving in ways that work together to produce the gender assignment "woman"
 12. Giving textual cues that work together to produce the gender assignment "woman"
 13. Having a history consistent with the gender assignment "woman" (Hale, 1996, pp.52-55)

Evidently, these 13 characteristics display the sex/gender distinction. The first five is grounded on sex, which regards our genetical and physiological make-up, and the rest pertains to our cultural underpinnings toward gender. Although sexual difference has been a strong ground for determining an individual's gender identity (following the traditional notion that gender follows from sex), the cultural stance has very much affected our treatment of such. And it is not only our society which has assigned our gender, but also ourselves. I find the same observation in Jacquelyn Zita's (1992) "Male Lesbians," where she discussed the two kinds of attribution theories: (1) self-to-other and (2) other-to-self (p.114). While the former is a "self-intending attribution" where one names their own gender identity, the latter, on the other hand, speaks of the other or others who ascribe a gender identity to the subject. "For the individual, the consolidation of gender and sex identity as a meaningful aspect of self is an achievement that requires this mutually reinforcing and consistent interaction between self and others" (Zita, 1992, p.115). And it is from this so-called interaction that conflict may arise between the gender assignment of the self and that of others, producing trouble to gender identity.

This trouble is the eye-opener that Judith Butler claims. The conflict, which arises from the noncorrespondence of the gender that the self and others attributed, creatively reveals gender's fabricated content. To Butler, gender is performative. Our practice of gender becomes a habitual pattern, which is internalized and naturalized by our social structures. "The subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures" (Wittig, 1982, p.4). Our actions and gestures produce certain effects that establish the idea of gender. These expressions create an impression of interiority, an illusion that there is an internal reality in gender, though Butler maintains that there is none. What is feminine and masculine are actually and merely regulatory fictions, which happen to maintain and even enforce heterosexuality. What is suggested here regards the "fluidity of identities," (Butler, 1990, p.338) fragmentation, and approximation of gender identity so that the illusion of a stable and fixed category is exposed. Thus, "when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one" (Butler, 1990, p.10).

Religion plays a large part in the formation of the gendered subject, taking its roots from the scriptures, the word of God, and then later supported by the advancement of science explaining homosexuality as a kind of hormonal imbalance, as well as a departure from the given sex, and is, therefore,

unnatural and abnormal. The same with Beauvoir, Butler (1990) as well breaks the illusory continuity of sex and gender, which further ruptures sex's connection to sexuality/desire. "Sex, (accordingly), conditions gender, and gender determines sexuality and desire... the view of sex, gender and desire that presupposes a metaphysics of substance suggests that gender and desire are understood as attributes that refer back to the substance of sex and make sense only as its reflection" (p.336). Butler claimed the noncontinuum of the three – that there is no link between them; and in short, sex does not cause gender and sexuality. Our gender expressions (feminine and masculine) – the way we walk, talk, look, dress, and the like – as well as our sexuality and our sexual preference, rest in an unstable plain, as opposed to the idea of what is natural and normal in being a woman or being a man.

Accordingly, the inferior-superior-lesbian debate seen in Butler's scope becomes a futile endeavor. The problem of homosexual oppression is actually a result of our naturalization and fixation of what is supposed to be plural and unstable. Thus, both anti- and pro-lesbians are valorizing their make-believed categories so much that they end up oppressing one another.

What is mostly gathered from Butler is her disclosure of gender fiction. It is not so much about the theory of performativity per se but the end that the subversive performance of the so-called other genders (those that do not fall within the heterosexual matrix) offer, that is, the demythologization of gender. Her presentation of the desexualized subject broadens the scope of categories exposing the socially-fabricated binary frame instead,

bringing to light the plural, multiple, and non-identical character of concepts. Lois McNay views such instability in its material character as grounded in history. This becomes our way to criticize the inferior regard on women. "It is by positing the essential instability of historical significations that Butler's thought discloses the potential to disrupt and challenge patriarchal systems of meaning" (McNay, 1999, p. 186). Yet, there is something more. More than a disruption of the patriarchal system, the heterosexual model is also put to question.

Butler's devaluation of biology shatters our valorized take on it. Its (biology) primacy has always determined one's behavior and sexuality, restricting us to the heterosexual model to which its constant practice in society garnered a naturalized state. Carrie Hull agrees with Butler's critique of scientists' hasty judgment on the field of normality, reducing everyone to the male and female binary. This is understood more in the process of sexing connected to the idea of naming, where the "...act of sexing a baby at the moment of birth on the basis of its observed genitalia...infer that there is something in nature called girlhood or boyhood" (Hull, 2006, p.57). Butler's revelation strikes a realization that these male and female categories as well as the said normal and abnormal genetic patterns are merely names and values assigned by geneticists.

We see here a rejection of the essentialist's claim to nature. And we are led to infer gender's unnecessary and unnatural hierarchy, particularly homosexual women in relation to heterosexual ones (the usual take on the former is inferior to the latter). This is the start of revolution that Butler offers, a deconstruction of the rigid existing norms of

recognition so as to broaden the very scope of recognition.

Butler's Deficient Social Theory

Nonetheless, we see in Butler an underdeveloped social theory, which displays too much abstraction resulting to an absolute individualism.⁵ Critiques of Butler claim the problematic recognition theory that she presents as it is inclined to anarchic rule. A number of feminist thinkers deems Butler's notion quite problematic. Geoff Boucher in "The Politics of Performativity: A Critique on Judith Butler" displays the limitations of Butler's individualism, while Brid Featherstone and Lorraine Green discusses the negative effect of such individualistic account. Still others such as the feminist thinker Nancy Fraser are wary of Butler's deconstruction of gender without offering any reconstruction of it; whereas Carrie Hull, as well as Martha Nussbaum, argues in support of the body, claiming the necessity of categories and social constructions. Nussbaum also argues against Butler's excessively abstract take on gender, which may be difficult or even impossible to be actualized in our social and political structures.

In "The Politics of Performativity: A Critique on Judith Butler," Geoff Boucher finds this fault in Butler's lack of sociopolitical impact. This is rationalized in the missing element in Butler's project, that is, its institutional grounding. Boucher (2006) explains that Butler's "ultra-ethical stance... negatively limits the formulation of moral maxims by prescribing that 'thou shall not kill,' but providing no concrete guidance on how to modify any concrete set of historical circumstances" (p.137). Thus, we are only told not to oppress lesbians and recognize them, but

the detail of non-oppression and recognition are left unclear. This move of ambiguity may garner confusion and a radical interpretation where everything can just be without any normative ground. This she owes to her ethics of alterity that venerates fluidity and change, and forgets the value of social norms. Boucher (2006) contends, "ultimately, for all her hostility to liberal political philosophy, her own alternative seems to be only another, somewhat more radical version of moral and political individualism" (p.137).

Boucher's accusation of anarchic liberalism in Butler is also found in Brid Featherstone and Lorraine Green's *Judith Butler* as they attempt to locate a sociopolitical import in Butler's philosophy. Yet, their attempt merely highlighted the problematic in Butler. They argue that categories' openness to resignification is welcome, yet problematic. On the one hand, the excluded ones, such as lesbians, gays, transgenders, and the like, are taken in as the categories are broadened. On the other, her proposal suffers a lack of recognition experienced by those who are economically weak and vulnerable (Featherstone & Green, 2012, p.70). Although she calls for recognition, her project is unable to touch the concrete oppression that lesbians experience in the social sphere, particularly in the field of work.

The reason behind Butler's defective recognition theory lies in its incompleteness. In more appropriate words in "False Antitheses," Nancy Fraser (1995) calls the Butlerian project as a mere "liberation from identity" (p.71). Feminists need to make normative claims and emancipatory projects, which serve as a kind of utopian hope for women liberation. Thus, it is not only destabilization of categories that are

needed but both deconstruction and reconstruction as well (Fraser, 1995, p.71). Boucher has already implied our need for a utopian hope, which is missing in Butler, whereas Featherstone and Fraser have explicitly articulated it.

Fraser's another article, "Pragmatism, Feminism, and the Linguistic Turn," further elaborates her suggestion of our need of both deconstruction and reconstruction. This is understood in another sense – as unity and difference. She seems to be aware of the danger and impossibility of accounting all differences and actualizing them in our social and political sphere. Thus, she clearly suggests the need of frameworks that are sensitive to difference and specificity but, at the same time, able to take hold of large matters of inquiry as the global economy. We need theoretical frameworks that both critique oppression and domination but, nevertheless, provide utopian hope for freedom (Fraser, 1995, p.159). Butler tries to avoid totalization yet seems to be going on circles as she totalizes difference.

This idea is supported by Carrie Hull's contention of the inherent relativism in Butler. The denial of category becomes a dilemma if one's goal is to be recognized beyond identity. "It may on occasion be desirable to refer to some sort of collective subject grounded in a category, even that of sex. In fact, it is necessary to use such categories if one is to gain political recognition within our current system" (Hull, 2006, p.77). What we find in Hull is the embodiment of unity and difference in the form of categories and norms – what we need in order to attain social and political recognition. Hence, we go back to Fraser's proposal of unity and difference expressed in the form of a category.

The need of categories lies not simply in our desire to be named and identified nor merely to be recognized for our given appellation; this identifying norms are as well needed as regulatory fictions, which are employed in social institutions. In "Heterosexism, Misrecognition, and Capitalism," Fraser points out that it is not only our identity that is subject for misrecognition. The experience of injustice is something that is more concrete, which we can find in the sphere of labor and rights. To be misrecognized does not only mean to be looked down or thought ill off or even devalued by others. It is also about being denied of respect and social worthiness such that one is being prevented to act as a full partner in social interaction as well as a participating being in society as deprived by institutionalized patterns of recognition (Fraser, 1997, p.280).

Apparently, Butler misses such a point. The deconstruction⁶ of gender does not presuppose societal liberation that concerns recognition of our rights and labor. Presently, homosexuality becomes more and more accepted by society, though only theoretically. Still, most countries do not legally recognize the rights of these other-gendered beings, at least not apart from the heterosexual people. Simply put, homosexuality yet exists in the sphere of rights. Nonetheless, homosexual people are still politically treated and forced as heterosexuals. And thus, homosexual acts, such as same-sex marriage, adoption, family-building, and the like, remain excluded by social laws. Without reconstructing gender, Butler's recognition theory becomes limited to the dilemma of identity. As Honneth (2014) points out, "individuals can only view

themselves as independent persons with their own individual will if they enjoy subjective rights guaranteed by the state, which grant them a space in which they can explore their preferences and intentions” (p.71).

Since social justice is attained by institutional recognition and not simply by recognition of the fluidity of gender, we find in Butler a lack of institutional viability. Lois McNay is not satisfied with what Butler’s said to be intersubjectivity. The said intersubjective element that Butler puts forth is limited on the awareness of the non-identical character of gender. McNay claims that such a kind of resistance is a narrow one. It is simply a “politics of the bedroom,” (McNay, 1999, p.190) which displays a private or, more so, an individualistic affair. In McNay’s perspective, the struggle for recognition is not seen as a private affair but a collective one where people suffer disesteem and disrespect. In this struggle, they hope for recognition beyond gender identity. As McNay (1999) puts it, “Butler needs to explain in more detail how symbolic norms relate to other social and political structures through which gender identities are also fashioned” (p.190). Aside from identity, these different others call for justice found in social interactions as well as institutions, particularly in the form of love, rights, and work.

From the above survey, it could be seen that Butler, for one, is in need of a concrete ground (categories) so as to extend her idea of liberation not only to the broadening of the norms of recognition but also to the social and political function that involves intersubjective recognition (involving institutions). Before we can put Butler’s social theory in practice, categories are very much

needed, and this is not offered in Butler, but rather, criticized.

Unity and Difference: The Binary Category as Playthings

It seems that Butler is trying to avoid committing the mistake of essentialism but, in doing so, ended up falling to relativism. This latter issue is mostly found in postmodernism. Jacquelyn Zita in “Male Lesbians” discusses this double-edged problem of essentialism and postmodernism, ending up with a criticism of both. While the former may result in conceptual exclusivity, the latter, on the other hand, creates a space for all to the point of conceptual impossibility. Consequently, postmodernism is not any better. Zita (1992) states,

One of the consequences of this travelling flesh as it bends in and out of categories is that there may be no such thing as lesbians. If men can become lesbians, if women who sleep with men can still be lesbians, if anybody can visit lesbian positionalities or transsex it with anybody else, then what would such a category really name? Postmodernism not only makes the ‘male lesbian’ possible; it may in addition make lesbianism, at least as we have known it, impossible (p.124).

Noncommitment to any content defeats the very purpose of naming since everyone can just be any name. The sense of categories then loses its meaning. This is also affirmed by Stephanie Adair (2012), saying that, “everyone is equally audible could mean in the end that no one can be heard, driving one to cancel out the other voices rather than affirm them” (p.848). She aided this problem by proposing the idea of unity and difference grounded on categories. In particular,

Identities must maneuver themselves between the Scylla and Charybdis of difference and unity. Organizing the individual's identity entirely under a single category limits one's possibilities. Conversely, allowing the individual only a very weak, tenuous relationship to her identity as a woman demolishes her identity as such – to be any gender in addition to the one destroys them both (Adair, 2012, p.849).

Although Adair is conscious of the danger in unifying differences, she as well insists on its significance, that without identities to hold on to, everything would just be chaotic, going to and fro different categories as one desires. Nonetheless, I did not find in Adair a direct proposal of what specific gender identities should be employed in our society, though the binary system was mentioned a lot of times, criticized as well as complimented. Although of importance is the process of unity where differences should not shrink to nonexistence, but still subsist in their unity. “If in unifying these elements they cease to be different from one another, however, then the whole is no longer a unity, as it no longer unifies anything – it is reduced instead to a simple singularity” (Adair, 2012, p.847). Adair seems to be wary of this kind of unity that totalizes difference, dissolving them by favoring a single notion. Yet, unlike Butler, she is also cautious of falling into relativism where no unity is present at all. Thus, her trick involves a loose treatment on concepts. “The relationship to our categories and identities needs to be looser than the dominant binary logic allows. And yet even if we accept that all ideas of the self will be elusive, we should at least give ourselves permission to take up solidified identities as our playthings” (Adair, 2012, p.855). Instead of abandoning categories, Adair suggests a playful take on them. This preserves

Butler's deconstructed notion of gender and, at the same time, reconstructs the pieces into a collage. But one must keep in mind that in order to perform such unity, one must take a serious yet playful posture toward gender identities, a way of thinking that recognizes its fabricated content as well as its import. Anyway as Adair (2012) asserts, “although an entirely polarized world of binary logic is unlivable and even untenable, we may still require the lie of gender identities, if only so as to have something with which to play” (p.858).

My proposal regards this suggestion of Zita and Adair that considers unity and difference, which is particularly grounded on the binary category, although it is not anymore taken as an ontological given, rather, what Adair suggests as *playthings*.

It is from this fluid notion of man and woman that I propose to maintain and supplement Butler's deficient social theory. It is my project to put form in Butler's Dionysian lesbian by proposing once again this binary category of man and woman – this time, stripped of its rigid, strict, and straight posture. The inherited names, unlike our old take on them, displays the fluidity of gender identity. However, I must make clear that I am not proposing any criteria to which man and woman should be recognized.⁷ But what is being pushed forth regards the notion of the feminine other grounded on the playful binary category.

Butler's deconstruction of gender identity is merely a starting point for a recognition theory that further advances lesbian liberation. Through this lens of non-identity, we recognize the lesbian in society

not anymore as an inferior individual who is unloved, oppressed, and discriminated but, as I put it, a feminine other. The idea of the feminine other springs from our need of categories. These categories of man and woman become the seat of Fraser's proposal of deconstruction and reconstruction, where we find as well the idea of unity and difference. These gender identities, unlike our old take on them, are plural and fluid so as to accommodate differences. With the new reconstructed model, we may recognize lesbians not anymore as abnormal, but simply a different woman who is not necessarily inferior or superior.

To make sense of the picture I am painting, the context within which the "other" is placed must first be established. Here, two feminist thinkers are worth noting— Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray — as much as these two philosophers provided distinct yet informative accounts of the other. On the one hand, Beauvoir's reading of "otherness" places women to an inferior stance. She writes, "for him she is sex — absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the Other," (Beauvoir, 1974, p. xix) that is, the second sex. On the other, Irigaray's version sets women in a distinct plane with men, generating a meaning irrelative to the masculine sense. She states, "instead of refusing to be the other gender (*l' autre genre*), the other sex, what I ask to be considered as actually an/ other woman (*uneautre*), irreducible to the masculine subject...my sex or my gender (*genre*) were in no way 'second', but that sexes or genders are two, without being first or second" (Irigaray, 1985, pp.9-10). Whereas the

former account exhibits an inferior other, the latter, alternatively, displays an/other subject. With regard to the meaning of the term "other," I would like to follow Irigaray's reading. Yet, one must take note that the context within which the other is construed by both thinkers mainly involves the man-woman coexistence. To qualify, the sense within which I take "the other woman" regards the feminine other. Her sense is not dictated by the prevailing feminine identity. She, like the typical woman, is a subject other. Here, the homosexual woman is no longer deemed to be a distorted specie; rather, as a feminine other, she is recognized simply as a woman, minus its inferior or superior appellation.

Conclusion: The Feminine Other in Society

The very problem in Butler stems from our difficulty to plot her liberatory project to our social and political structures. Mere recognition of plurality and difference without a standing unity and category is just a societal impossibility. In this concretization of her freedom project, we are led to a pragmatic use of the binary category. Nonetheless, this can fall into an emphasis of the system more than the life-world. Still, the normative basis for recognizing the feminine other is missing, a lack that even Butler's intellectual revolution is unable to fully satisfy. The consciousness of gender's pluralistic character, united in the binary category, may still become cruel and imposing in the people's eyes. The creation of a unified differences in the embodiment of a category (e.g., woman and man) merely addresses a theoretical issue, which here, is deemed in two possible social responses — from the dominant majority and from the oppressed minority. On the first response, the initial impression may perhaps be an unproblematic

one and, thus, not an issue. Since, presently, gender is already taken in the binary category, oppression hidden in the guise of a pure reduction to sameness, the favored concept of femininity, is unnoticed. This strict criterion, which is unsatisfied by some, results in a debilitating separation, an invitation to make their own category, yet an inferior one. But since the newly-proposed binary category serves only as a facilitating normative for social and political functioning, this leaves the hierarchy in gender null and void. On the other hand, the second response takes the opportunity for division, a rift which completely separates them from the feminine world. Unlike the dominant majority's proposal for inferiority, the oppressed minority struggles to be recognized as absolutely different with women, yet equal to them. As such, the issue of unity may seem uncomfortable to them, but with the pragmatic function of the uniting category, their call for equality is accommodated, while compromising their chosen category to the already existing normative, that is, "woman."

Despite this theoretical clarification, the ethical core for recognizing the oppressed minority is still missing. The search for such an ethical norm springs from the idea that institutions must make its members free, and not the other way around. "These systems of action must be termed 'relational' because the activities of individual members within them complement each other; they can be regarded as 'ethical' because they involve a form of obligation that does not have the contrariness of a mere 'ought', without, however, lacking moral considerateness" (Honneth, 2014, p.125). Without this basis, following the newly-proposed binary category will simply be another type of conformism. Honneth

emphasizes this in his critique of Foucault and Habermas. While the former forgot to provide a maintaining idea for subjectivity, the latter over-emphasizes the system more than the subject. What they fail to see is the subject's importance, particularly one's experience of injustice. Since such experience becomes the source of our desire for justice and freedom, we cannot turn our backs from the subject and resort to a mere conformity to our social rules. Following Honneth, freedom as an end, a vital component of living a good life is deeply-connected to identity-formation. This may perhaps be Butler's worry on recognition. The over-emphasis of institutions may lead to a force of control, which may leave individuality to a state of oblivion. Michael Foucault and Theodor Adorno display this worry of Butler in their critique of society. Whereas the former "understands the force of control which emanates from the ruling institutions as a force of corporal disciplining; the vital impulses of the human body are forcefully broken by perfect drilling and training, coerced into an habitual pattern and thereby disciplined" (Honneth, 1997, p.129). On the other hand, for Adorno, these fictions pave the way for our understanding of nature, dominating and making sense of it. Relative to Foucault, Adorno "understands the force of control which emanates from the centralised organizations of administration as a force of psychic influence. The basis of modern organisations of dominance is formed by the techniques of cultural manipulation in the mass media" (Honneth, 1997, p.129). But whether it is Foucault or Adorno, the point is that institutions can be oppressive.

Nonetheless, Honneth gave recognition a positive allusion. Picking up

from Hegel and Mead, the idea of sociality comes to light; it is a crucial ingredient to our goal of freedom. Contrary to an isolated freedom, Honneth's view of liberation works within social grounds, particularly through the so-called intersubjective recognition. Unlike a blind follower of the system, Honneth's proposal takes individuality a vital component of the social and political sphere. It is society that gives voice to their wishes yet pacified and tamed so as to attain peace, order, and most importantly, a good life. This notion of a good life is deeply connected to identity-formation molded either by our exercise or constraint of freedom. Honneth's desire to root society in intersubjectivity gives voice to our individual choices. Rather than thoughtless machines, the subjects become the very elements that make up the system.

Through Honneth, the gap that Butler was not able to fill is satisfied by providing a normative basis for treating the other ethically, not simply because of laws or rules but by the quasi-transcendental given, that is, respect, actualized by intersubjectively recognizing the other in society. This is best explained in Honneth's three spheres of recognition – love, rights, and solidarity. The first sphere regards “primary relationships insofar as they – on the model of friendships, parent-child relationships, as well as erotic relationships between lovers are constituted by strong emotional attachments among a small number of people” (Honneth, 1995, p.95). As the most primitive form of recognition, it informs the other spheres by extending love and care to our social peers not only theoretically but in a more concrete form as well. The warmth of love and care develops our self-confidence, boosting our ego toward a more independent being. The second sphere regards our legal relations where

we develop our self-respect, particularly through the recognition of our individual rights. Honneth (1995) asserts, “we can only come to understand ourselves as bearer of rights when we know, in turn, what various normative obligations we must keep vis-à-vis others. Only once we have taken the perspective of the ‘generalized other’, which teaches us to recognize the other members of the community as the bearers of rights, can we also understand ourselves to be legal persons, in the sense that we can be sure that certain of our claims will be met” (p.108). Hence, it does not merely pertain to possession of general rights but, moreover, legal consideration of my particular will (to use Rousseau's term). And lastly, the third sphere where we develop self-esteem, “is directed at the particular qualities that characterize people in their personal difference” (Honneth, 1995, p.122). It acknowledges that one is a contributing body that demonstrates their capacities and traits, serving as a participating individual to our social goals. It is from these three spheres that we come to know where one is being misrecognized or oppressed. And since, for Honneth, freedom is attained within the society, the desire for liberation moves unacknowledged bodies to a struggle for recognition. Picking up from Hegel's view on the primacy of sociality, as well as Mead's naturalistic transformation of it, the self is formed and molded by constant struggles for recognition. We come to assert our individuality as we integrate ourselves in the society. “The social integration of a political community can only fully succeed to the degree to which it is supported, on the part of members of society, by cultural customs that have to do with the way in which they deal with each other reciprocally” (Honneth, 1995,

pp.58-59).

It is via Honneth's emphasis on the normativity of recognition that we are able to attain liberation. "We need to reconstruct the spheres of action in which mutually complementary role obligations ensure that individuals can recognize each other's free activities as conditions for the realization of their own aims" (Honneth, 2014, p.127). In such a case, no ill-wills emerge on her relationship with her family, no disappointments nor shame for being what she is. This experience of love in the family transcends the bounds of gender identity. She is simply loved and cared for whatever sexuality she performs. This treatment toward the feminine other is extended to her relationship with her friends, neighbors, and even strangers as she is not anymore ridiculed and bashed. The normative openness is duplicated by her social peers. Like any other individuals, the feminine other receives love and care in the form of acceptance of her being. This social affection broadens as societal laws duplicate the love given to the feminine other in the form of legal recognition. Not only has she had the right to be loved but also to love and to choose her beloved without any impingement from laws. And as an able-bodied being, she is no longer discriminated at work. Thus, people appreciate her labor – these things that were before taken for granted. The feminine other is recognized as a human being contributing to the society. Hence, this hope of recognizing the feminine other is, I think, only possible through care, respect, and esteem. It is such a kind of liberation that my project aims to achieve, not outside, but within the social spheres.

So far, I have attempted to reconstruct the binary category to serve as a normative

ground of our social and political structures. Without this concretization, Butler's liberatory scheme will remain constrained on the intellectual level, though her deconstruction of gender has paved the way for a new way of thinking toward gendered beings. By taking gender identity as a fabricated content, Butler has touched the notion of equality not only on heterosexual people but also on other sexualities (e.g., straight, homo, trans, and the like). Thus, we do not necessarily stand on a hierarchy.

Our loosed take on the binary category serves as a theoretico-normative, which facilitates not only our thinking but also our social and political structures. Thus, we must be aware of the culturally-fabricated character of these categories as Butler reminds us; yet, we are, at the same time, bounded to these categories as a mere strategic unity for the workings of the social sphere. Through this Butler-Honneth marriage, life, particularly of the feminine other within the society, becomes livable, as people as well as our social and political institutions recognize the feminine other as one of our own, that is, an/other subject woman in a society.

Endnotes

1 "This is for individuals whose sexual interests are directed primarily toward people of the same sex and who are either disturbed by, in conflict with, or wish to change their sexual orientation. This diagnostic category is distinguished from homosexuality, which by itself does not constitute a psychiatric disorder. Homosexuality per se is one form of sexual behavior, and with other forms of sexual behavior which are not by themselves psychiatric disorders, are not listed in this

nomenclature” (The American Psychiatric Association, 1973, p.44).

2 This category is reserved for those homosexuals for whom changing sexual orientations is a persistent concern, and should be avoided in cases where the desire to change sexual orientations may be a brief, temporary manifestation of an individual's difficulty in adjusting to a new awareness of his or her homosexual impulses (The American Psychiatric Association, 1980, p.281).

3 This is not merely the rule of men but also of the heterosexual model.

4 The problem with this term regards its negative implication. Unlike the term acceptance, which regards recognition of a certain phenomenon, tolerance suggests lenience to the matter at hand.

5 Although this may connect well with Honneth's emphasis on autonomous will formation of identities, the over-valorization of individualism may lead to a pure deconstruction where categories and norms lose its meaning, resulting in an anarchic state.

6 Fraser displays a certain reservation on the idea of deconstruction. She does not absolutely look down on it, rather, she is wary of how Butler utilize it. According to Fraser, “at another level, however, I mean to endorse deconstruction. It represents an approach to the politics of recognition that is often superior in my view to standard identity politics. A deconstructive politics of recognition is transformative, not affirmative, of existing group identities and differentiations. In this respect, it has affinities with socialism, which I understand as a transformative, as opposed to

affirmative, approach to the politics of redistribution. Nevertheless, I do not find deconstruction useful at the level on which Butler invokes it here: namely, the level of social theory” (Fraser, 1997, p. 289).

7 This can be the subject of a future investigation.

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