LITERARY DE-CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY CATEGORIES: A READING
OF THE QUEER CROSSINGS IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S FICTION FROM
A BUTLERIAN PERSPECTIVE OF PARODIC CONTEST

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MAHSASADAT SHOJAEI

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———————————————

Prof. Dr. Tülin Gençöz
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

———————————————

Prof. Dr. Ayşe Saktanber
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

———————————————   ———————————————
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nurten Birlik   Asst. Prof. Dr. Aret Karademir
Co-Supervisor   Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Asst. Prof. Dr. Nil Korkut Naykı (METU, FLE)   ———————————————

Asst. Prof. Dr. Aret Karademir   (METU, PHIL)   ———————————————

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nurten Birlik   (METU, FLE)   ———————————————

Asst. Prof. Dr. Kuğu Tekin   (Atılım U., IDE)   ———————————————

Asst. Prof. Dr. Selen Aktari Sevgi (Başkent U., AMER)———————————————

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Name, Last name : Mahsasadat Shojaei

Signature   :

ABSTRACT

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Shojaei, Mahsasadat

M.S., Department of Gender and Women's Studies

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Aret Karademir

Co-Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nurten Birlik

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This thesis aims at re-reading the selected texts of Jeanette Winterson with a Butlerian approach to identity which brings to light the complexities of sex, gender, and desire, as well as the ambivalence of agency and subversion which are often neglected in the academic reception of these texts. With a focus on the de-constructive deployment of parody in these texts, I will explore the "subversive confusions" in *Written on the Body*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Passion* and the way these confusions trouble the heteronormative categories of sex, gender, and desire as well as the myth of continuity and coherence. I will also explore the paradoxical relationship between agency and subordination in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *The Stone God* and the way these texts reveal agency irreducible to the free will-determinism binarism.

Keywords: Body, Gender/Sexual Identity, Parody, Performativity, Performative Subversions.

ÖZ

KİMLİK KATEGORİLERİNİN EDEBİYATTA YAPISIZLAŞTIRMASI: JEANETTE WINTERSON'UN ROMANLARINI BÜLERCİ PARODİK YARIŞMASININ PERSPEKTİFİNDEN BIR OKUMA

Shojaei, Mahsasadat

Yüksek Lisans, Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Aret Karademir

Ortak Tez Yöneticisi: Doç Dr. Nurten Birlik

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Bu tez, Jeanette Winterson'ın seçilen metinlerinde, cins, cinsiyet ve arzunun karmaşıklığını ortaya çıkaran kimliğe bir Butler yaklaşımı ile aynı zamanda akademik resepsiyonda genellikle göz ardı edilen ajansın ve sapıklığun kararsızlığını yeniden okumayı amaçlıyor. Bu metinlerde parodinin yapısızlaştırılması üzerine odaklanarak, *Vücut Üzerine Yazılmış*, *Kirazı Cinslendirmek* ve *Tutku* da bu karışıklıkların cins, cinsiyet ve arzunun heteronormatif kategorilerini sorgulama biçimindeki "yıkıcı karışıklıkları" analiz edeceğim. Hem de *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir* ve *Taş Tanrılar* da ajansla itaat arasındaki çelişkili ilişkiyi de analiz edeceğim ve bu ajansın irade-i determimizim bicarismine indirgenemez olduğunu iddia edeceğim.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Vücut, Cinsiyet/Cinsel Kimlik, Parodi, Performativite, Performatif Subversiyonlar.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AO   *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*

BTM   *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*

CF   "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of

          'Postmodernism' "

ES   *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*

GP   "Gender as Performance"

GT   *Gender Trouble*

IGI   "Imitation and Gender Insubordination"

O   *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

P   *The Passion*

PAGC   "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in

          Phenomenology and Feminist Theory"

PLP   *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*

SC   *Sexing the Cherry*

SG   *The Stone Gods*

UG   *Undoing Gender*

WB   *Written on the Body*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> *Fantasy is not the opposite of reality; it is what reality forecloses, and, as a result, it defines the limits of reality, constituting it as its constitutive outside. The critical promise of fantasy, when and where it exists is to challenge the contingent limits of what will and will not be called reality. Fantasy is what allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise; it establishes the possible in excess of the real; it points elsewhere, and when it is embodied, it brings the elsewhere home*. (Butler, *UG* 29; emphasis added)

Jeanette Winterson's texts push the limits of reality; by de-sedimenting the ossified notions of sex, gender, and sexuality, they oblige the reader to re-think the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality beyond binarism. In other words, they oblige the reader to re-think the possible. Winterson's characters are hybrid, gender-troubled, in-between binary categories, that is, at the crossroads of multiple identifications and desires; they cannot be easily defined; they cannot be easily pinned down to the binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality. In other words, they are uncategorisable, and it is by this defiance against categorisation that they de-stabilise the binary categories of male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, and heterosexual/homosexual.

Gender is constantly parodied in Winterson's texts by foregrounding dissonance. Winterson's characters do not conform to the norms of their gender. Jeanette and Louie in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, Henri and Villanelle in *The Passion*, the Dog-Woman and Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry*, the unnameable narrator in *Written on the Body*, and Billie in *The Stone Gods* cannot be easily

pinned down to the binary categories of gender. Hence, they reveal these categories to be limited, exclusive, and, as such, problematic; they de-sediment and problematise the reader's perception of femininity and masculinity. The unnamability of the narrator of *Written on the Body*, her/his being stereotypically feminine and stereotyipically masculine at the same time, her/his refusal to be categorised as a woman or a man, that is, her/his refusal to be pigeonholed, as well as Villanelle and Jordan's cross-dressing, especially Villanelle's confusion over her "true gender," reveal gender to be a performative accomplishment rather than a psychic reality.

Although Winterson's texts render gender a cultural myth, they do not proffer the binary perception of natural sex/constructed gender that conventional feminism is entrapped in. Rather, they play with this binarism, as well; they interrogate the taken-for-granted notions of the "natural" and the "material," inviting the reader to re-think the "natural" as cultural and the "material" as linguistic. They bring to the reader's attention the role of multiple discourses in the construction of the "body;" they remind the reader that the "body" is only perceived through multiple discourses. Hence, it is not a biological fact, but rather a cultural notion. Furthermore, the unintelligible bodies in Winterson's texts—Villanelle, the Dog-Woman, and the inhabitants of Wreck City's, for instance—call attention to the violence of sexual/morphological norms. They bring to the fore the fact that the "body" is not a coherent whole and the category of sex is not homogenious; that the assumption of sexual/morphological homogeneity costs the erasure of other bodies. What Winterson's texts demand is the inclusion of these abjected, excluded, and erased bodies.

Alongside the demand for the inclusion of unintelligible gender identities and bodies into "the cultural matrix," Winterson's texts demand the inclusion of unsanctioned and tabooised desires and sexual practices. Her texts violate the taboos about sexuality such as "homosexuality" and "incest," among other "deviant" sexual practices; they de-sediment the reader's notion of these taboos by re-contextualising them. In other words, by re-writing the illegitimate into legitimacy, the texts re-signify the legitimate. Furthermore, alongside the de-

construction of the binary categories of gender and sex, Winterson's texts de-construct the hetero/homo binarism. They reveal the limitations of the categories of "straight" sand "gay;" they oblige the reader to re-think both these categories as social constructs.

By capturing the "moments of discontinuity," that is, by revealing the fissures within the binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, Winterson's texts parody and de-construct them. These texts queer the notions of the body, sex, gender, identity, desire, sexuality, family bond, incest, and even the human; they de-sediment these uncritically accepted notions, obliging the reader to think otherwise. They do so by drawing attention to the margins of the dominant discourses, and foreground the fact that it is *only* at the expense of the "unreal" and the "unnatural" that the "real," "natural" sex, gender, and desires are constituted. By pointing out this "unreal" outside, and by re-writing the "unreal" into reality, Winterson's texts unsettle "the matrix of cultural intelligibility;" they demand the recognition of the "unreal," the inclusion of the excluded and the erased, the legitimisation of the "illegitimate," that is, they demand a re-signification of the "real" and the "natural."

Winterson's texts are characterised by multiplicity—multiplicity of the narrative voice, multiplicity of identity, multiplicity of space and time, and multiplicity of genre. By foregrounding multiplicity and fluidity, they interrogate fixity, certainty, unity, and coherence. They do not trust totalising, centralising, and normalising discourses, that is, "meta-narratives." Rather, they defy totalisation, centralisation, and normalisation. Rather than establishing a singular discourse of truth, they invite the reader to celebrate the plurality of truth by deferring meaning and avoiding closure.

The notions of storytelling and history are central to Winterson's texts. Her texts are abounded with stories; they are an amalgamation of realistic/fantastic, sacred/profane, and historical/non-historical stories that cannot be disentangled. This entanglement confuses the boundaries between reality and fantasy, between the sacred and the profane, and, above all, between history and storytelling, that is, between, fact and fiction. What is brought to the fore in Winterson's texts is the

fact history is not objective; rather, it is a subjective selection and omission of events; that hierarchising the texts serves to authorise certain narratives and disempower other ones. In other words, "official" history emerges to silence "non-official" histories. The use of metafictional devices in Winterson's texts, not only do draw attention to the fictionality of the texts themselves, but they also trouble the distinction between fact and fiction, rendering all texts, regardless of their authority or sacredness, fictions. In other words, the texts are de-hierarchised; they are *all* deprived of their authority. The distinction between the reliable narratives and the unreliable ones, that is, the authoritative and non-authoritative ones, are troubled, as a result of which the reader is invited to re-think *all* narratives as unreliable. *All* texts are releaved to be unreliable narratives, as a result of which they can *all* be re-written. Winterson's texts re-write history, religion, and literature, among other "meta-narratives." By parodically bringing the margins of these discourses to the centre, by allowing them to speak, they re-signify the centre and the margins, in which lies the subversive potential of Winterson's texts.

Nevertheless, this subversive potential that lies in Winterson's texts is neglected by a large number of critics who often reduce her texts either to her life or to the modernist discourses that rule out paradox, complexity, and ambivalence. Against the grains of the reductive reception of Winterson's texts, this thesis aims at bringing to light the *complexities* of sex, gender, and desire, and also the *ambivalence* of agency and subversion in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, *The Passion*, *Sexing the Cherry*, *Written on the Body*, and *The Stone Gods* by reading them from a Butlerian perspective which is open to ambivalence.

1.1 The Academic Reception of Winterson's Texts and Interpretive Foreclosure

1.1.1 The Reduction of the Text to the Author

> In any discussion of art and the artist, heterosexuality is backgrounded, whilst homosexuality is foregrounded. What you fuck is much more important than how you write. This may be

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because the word 'sex' is more exciting than the word 'book'. . . .
No one asks Iris Murdoch about her sex life. Every interviewer I
meet asks me about mine and what they do not ask they invent. I am
a writer who happens to love women. I am not a lesbian who
happens to write. (Winterson, *AO* 104)

Forcing a work back into autobiography is a way of trying to contain
it, of making what has become unlike anything else into what is just
like everything else. . . . [I]t is more comfortable to turn the critical
gaze away from a fully realised piece of work. It is always easier to
focus on sex. The sexuality of the writer is a wonderful *diversion*.
(106; emphasis added)

There has been a tendency among critics to pin Jeanette Winterson's sexual identity
on her texts, that is, to pin her down as a "lesbian writer," and her texts as "lesbian
texts." However, I suggest that both the category of lesbian writer and the category
of lesbian text are problematic, because these categorisations neglect the
complexities of the text and foreclose other interpretations.

Roland Barthes takes issue with this persisting attitude among critics to
reduce the text to the author. He maintains that "[t]o give a text an author is to
impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing"
(*DA* 149). This approach, according to Barthes, "suits criticism very well" (ibid.),
because all the complexities are simplified, all the ambiguities are removed, and all
the gaps are filled; everything is pinned "on the author, his person, his life, his
tastes, his passions" (147). In other words, "when the Author has been found, the
text is 'explained'," which is, according to Barthes a "victory to the critic." Thus,
"the reign of the Author has also been that of the Critic" (150). Giving Winterson's
texts an author—a lesbian author—simplifies the process of reading; her sexual
identity "is a wonderful *diversion*," as she herself points; it removes all the
unsettling ambiguities and gaps in her texts and takes interpretations under control.
As Michel Foucault argues, the author's name demarcates the boundaries of what
we can interpret; it "allows a limitation of the *cancerous and dangerous*
proliferation of significations within a world where one is thrifty not only with
one's resources and riches, but also with one's discourses and their significations"
(*WA* 186). In other words, the author, according to Foucault, "is the principle of

thrift in the proliferation of the meaning" (ibid.; emphasis added). Thus, "the author does not precede the works, he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one *limits, excludes, and chooses*; in short, by which one *impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction*" (ibid.; emphasis added). Winterson's name hinders the "proliferation of signification;" that is, it serves to freeze the "floating signifiers" which unsettle the readers and critics, assigning a meaning to them.

I suggest that even if we assumed Winterson were a "lesbian writer" with the "intention" of creating "lesbian fiction," it still would not be possible to safely assume that her texts could be reduced to "lesbian fiction." That is, it would not at all mean that they could not be read otherwise. This is not only because the writer writes with a language that simultaneously writes her/him, but also because the writer is not fully in control of the text. In other words, as Derrida asserts, "there is no subject who is agent, author, and master of differance" (*P* 28). This means that the writer's intention is never fully present in the text, because language is subject to *différeace*, to which there is no end. Derrida claims that "the signified concept is never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself. Essentially and lawfully, *every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts*" (D 30; emphasis added). This "free play of signifiers," the ongoing deferral of meaning, which never comes to an end, is what he calls *différance*. Due to being subject to *différance*, a text cannot be said to be "a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins." Quite the contrary, it "overruns all the limits assigned to it," because it is "a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces" (LO 84). Thus, far from being bounded by the intention of the writer, a text can speak against its writer; it can take on meanings that the author never meant.

Winterson's texts are each "*a galaxy of signifiers*, not a structure of signifieds" (*SZ* 5), which Barthes associates with "writerly text[1]." Unlike a

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[1] Or: "scriptable text"

"readerly text[2]," which tries to impose a single ideological perspective on the reader, a "writerly text" involves the reader in the process of interpretation. In other words, "the reader [is] no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text" (4). The interpretation of a text, according to Barthes, is not tantamount to "giv[ing] it a meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate[ing] what *plural* constitutes it" (5). What Barthes calls "writerly text," is a text that can be re-written by the readers in multiple ways, that is, "we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one" (ibid.). Barthes writes,

> To rewrite the writerly text would consist only in disseminating it, in dispersing it within the field of infinite difference. The writerly text is a perpetual present, upon which no *consequent* language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed; the writerly text is ourselves *writing,* before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the *plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages*. (5; 1st emphasis original)

This "infinity of language" is what one faces while reading Winterson's texts. Winterson's reader is confronted by a "galaxy of signifiers" and their free play. Her texts are, thus, beset with ambiguity and uncertainty, which, I assert, cannot be foreclosed. Accordingly, my argument will insist against the reduction of Winterson's fiction to autobiography.

1.1.2 The Question of Subversion

Apart from the reduction of Winterson's texts to autobiography, a large number of their criticism is bound up in the binary understanding of subversion, according to which a text is *either* radically subversive *or* conventional, that is, either it goes beyond the norms or perpetuates them. Accordingly, the texts that I will study are surrounded by a great controversy about whether they are subversive or conventional, whether their characters can transcend the norms or not. For instance, it has been argued that *Written on the Body* is an "unoriginal love triangle" (Maioli

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[2] Or: "lisible text"

145), only "a gimmick" (Rubinson 219, Makinen 110), which is bound up in "heterosexual clichés" and gender stereotypes, and, therefore, "remains 'disappointingly conventional' " (Makinen 123, 110). In other words, the text has been seen as merely a "regurgitat[ion of] old conventions," and not much different from conventional adultery fiction (Makinen 110). On the other hand, it has also been claimed that the text "reinvent[s] the language of romance, jettisioning the tired clichés and formulaic plots of the mainstream romance industry" (Andermahr 80). Similarly, it has been claimed that the Dog-Woman in *Sexing the Cherry* is not a "successful post-feminist woman figure" (Makinen 101); that she is not a "revolutionary . . . figure" because of her conservative advocacy of monarchy (87); and that "[n]either the Dog Woman nor Jordan ever manage to transcend their genders" (88). Jeanette and Louie in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* have both been claimed to be bound up in binarism. It has been argued that the text cannot eliminate binarism despite revealing them (10). Furthermore, Louie is claimed to be a conventional woman, that is, "a staunch defender of the patriarchal hierarchy" (Simpson 53). I suggest that such interpretations arise from literal readings of Winterson's text; they are rooted in what Linda Hutcheon calls "modernism's dogmatic reductionism, its inability to deal with *ambiguity* and *irony*" (*PP* 30; emphasis added). My claim is that these interpretations neglect not only the complexity of identity construction, identity itself, and the subversion of it, but also the complexity of the text, its entanglement with multiple discourses and its simultaneous power to subvert these discourses. Although Winterson's texts conserve the past by "*use* of the canon" they subvert them by "ironic *abuse* of" them, which Hutcheon charactersises as the subversive potential of parody (130). The fact that the unnameable narrator of *Witten on the Body* is entrapped in clichés does not at all rule out the possibility of her/his abuse of the clichés. Similarly, the Dog-Woman and Louie's conventionality does not rule out the possibility of their abuse of the conventions.

Understanding the subversive potential of Winterson's texts entails an understanding of parody and its hybridity, that is, its doubleness, and understanding the subversive potential of parody entails an understanding of the function of its

irony, that is, its "ironic 'trans-contextualization' " (*TP* 12). Parody does not simply mean ridicule or "ridiculing imitation" (29). Parody, according to Hutcheon, "is a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by *ironic inversion*;" it is, in other words, "*repetition with critical distance*, which marks *difference* rather than similarity" (6; emphasis added). Hutcheon sees parody not as "a mode of discontinuity," but rather as "a method of inscribing continuity while permitting critical distance" (20). That is to say, although parody maintains the past, it plays with it and its conventions in an ironic way (7). In other words, despite maintaining the past, parody "is . . . capable of transformative power in creating new syntheses" (20). Hence, parody adopts a "productive-creative approach to tradition" and to the past (7); it gives "a new and often ironic context" to the past and the tradition (5). Accordingly, parody's relation to the past and to the tradition is an ambivalent one and this "ambivalence stems from the *dual* drives of *conservative* and *revolutionary* forces that are inherent in its nature as authorized transgression" (26; emphasis added).

The subversive power of parody lies in its ability to re-signify the centre and the margins. By calling attention to the margins, parody de-stabilises the centre, and opens it up for re-signification. As Hutcheon notes, "[t]he 'ex-centric'—as both off-centre and de-centred—gets attention" in parody (*PP* 130). Differenences, which are erased, otherised, or assimilated by homogenising and imperialist discourses, are re-valued and brought to the centre in parody. Hence, Hutcheon believes that parody is "the mode of . . . the 'ex-centric,' of those who are marginalized by a dominant discourse" (35). This is because it allows "paradoxical incorporation of the past" which reveals the "ideological contexts," in which the centre and the margins are established (126). By doing so, parody reveals the fact that meaning is established in "the 'world' of discourses, the 'world' of texts and intertexts" (125). Furthermore, it draws attention to the "plurality of texts" and "the irreducib[ility of this] plurality" (126). Hence, interrogating "closure and single, centralized meaning," parody demands the continuous expansion of the "intertextual network" of meaning (127, 129). Accordingly, my argument will insist on the ambivalence of parody which is deployed in Wintersoon's texts.

1.1.3 The Question of Politics

In addition to the controversy over subversiveness, most of Winterson's texts have aroused controversy concerning their politicalness. Interestingly, some critics who label Winterson's texts' as "lesbian texts," claim that these texts are not politically lesbian. Lynne Pearce, for instance, argues that neither *The Passion*, nor *Sexing the Cherry* is "politically lesbian" Makinen (56, 86-87). She finds both texts as "disappointment[s] for lesbian readers looking for specificity and difference to be accorded to women's same-sex desire" (86). She thinks the texts' refusal to name is "detrimental to a serious political agenda" (87). She is concerned that "Winterson has left behind the question of what is to be a woman/or a lesbian in any more material sense" (87). *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* has faced similar charges. Like *The Passion*, and *Sexing the Cherry*, it has been criticised for being politically ineffective due to its loss of "the certainty and engaged commitment that feminist lesbianism used to celebrate" (27-28). I will argue that these accusations arise from a superficial understanding of politics. If "Winterson has left behind the question of what is to be a woman/or a lesbian in any more material sense," as it has been claimed, her critics have never asked: What is a woman? What is a lesbian? And what is politics? Accordingly, I believe that reading Winterson from a Butlerian perspective brings to light not only the complexities of sex, gender, and desire depicted in them, but also the ambivalence of agency which is neglected by the interpretations rooted in identity politics. Hence, I will touch on Judith Butler and her issue with identity politics.

It was in the 1980s that the premises of identity politics, which presupposes "common identity" as basis of politics, were shaken, giving rise to controversial questions such as:

> *'Who or what is a woman*?*'* Is it Woman, the singular noun with a capitalized 'W', a shorthand term for the idea that all women share an essential connection with one another through the fact of being female? Or is it women, the plural noun with a lower-case 'w', a descriptive sociological category referring to real historical women in all their variety? (Lloyd, *JB* 5; emphasis added)

It was becoming more and more difficult to give account of *differences*, not only among women, but also among gays and lesbians [3] (ibid.). In other words, "identity was becoming a problem" (9). The categories of man/woman and straight/gay faced a serious crisis, failing to sustain their fictitious homogeneity. Above that, the post-structuralist notion of subject-in-process had rattled the coherent and unitary subject, including the "unified feminist subject" (6). Therefore, identity could no longer be viewed as essential; rather, it was claimed to be socially constructed, and, as such, contingent (9). It was against this background that Butler's account of subjectivity, which was based on performativity, was introduced (7). Butler puts the taken-for-granted notion of common identity into question, and advocates instead a genealogical approach to identity categories and the notion of identity itself. What Butler's "account of performativity requires [is a shift] away from identity politics, based on sameness and commonality, to a politics of identity, which takes more account of the exclusions on which any particular identity is based" (Jaggar 15). Called by Sandra Lee Bartky "[t]he most authoritative attack to the date on the 'naturalness' of gender" (qtd. in Butler, *GT* i), and by Slavoj Žižek "the anti-identarian turn of queer politics" (qtd. in Lloyd, *JB* 1), "*Gender Trouble* rocked the foundations of feminist theory" (2). Butler not only challenges the binary gender, but also the notion of the binary sex. She also challenges the hetero/homo binary, and, more importantly, the rigid binary notions of interiority/exteriority, natural/cultural, material/linguistic, free will/determinism etc., which most feminists still cling to. As Jaggar puts it, Butler "reconceptualiz[es these notions] beyond the binary frame" (86) .

Butler is in line with post-structuralism which is "more of an interrogative than normative mode of inquiry, challenging and contesting received ideas and norms rather than attempting to resolve problems and prescribe solutions" (Lloyd, *JB*11). A significant feature of her texts is leaving open the questions she raises. This lack of closure, far from being a drawback as taken by some critics, is a democratic openendedness; it is "part of [Butler's] political project" (Salih 140). Resolution, from Butler's perspective, is "dangerously anti-democratic," because it

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[3] See Lloyd, *Judith Butler: From Norms to Politics* (1-12).

rules out alternative interpretations. Resolution, according to her, serves the interests of various discourses and omissions of those discourses; it serves the ideological interests of institutions, which is exclusion and erasure. Accordingly, what concerns Butler is "the relation between recognition and social normativity" (Lloyd JB 143), because the terms that allow recognition of subjects, however, do not include *all* subjects. Butler insists that the notions of the real, the human, the natural sex/gender/desire, are produced and stabilised by the production of the notions of the unreal, the "non-human," the "less-than-human," the unnatural sex/gender/desire as their "constitutive outsides." In order to fix and secure the boundaries of the "real," there has to be an "unreal" outside. Norms circumscribe "the sphere of the humanly intelligible." In other words, while certain identities are naturalised, certain others are pathologised. Thus, there is great violence at work, which "emerges from a profound desire to keep the order of binary gender natural or necessary" (Butler, *UG* 36, 35).

What Butler strongly defies is "*easy categorization*" (Salih 2; emphasis added). Unlike most feminists, who take heteronormative categories for granted, Butler "enquire[s] into the conditions of emergence" of those categories. In other words, she enquires into the mechanisms through which these "subject-effect[s]" are produced (10). By revealing "the limitations, contingencies, and instabilities of existing norms" and the categories of subjectivity, she calls them into question (140). In a Foucaldian-Derridean way, Butler is engaged in what Lynne Pearce calls "*queer deconstructionism*" (Lloyd, *JB* 23; emphasis added). Effectively, she twists and "transfigure[s] the meaning to suit her own end" (24). She re-deploys the concepts in a way that they break with their prior contexts; in other words, she re-contextualises them beyond their normative and exclusive frame.

There is great controversy among feminists over de-construction. Anti-poststructuralists, for instance, consider de-construction as a danger for feminist politics, accusing Butler of "neglect[ing] . . . the political[4]." They accuse her of "quietism" and "nihilism," which is deemed to be the consequence of " 'killing off' the subject" (Salih 11). These critics, however, completely miss the point of de-

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[4] See Benhabib *et al.*, *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical exchange*.

construction. The assumption that a unified subject is the cornerstone of politics, and that its de-construction leads to de-politicisation of feminism, and leaves a "void at the heart of politics" (148), neglects the "*political value of contingency*" (149; emphasis added), that is, "the potential for political subversion in . . . deconstruct[ion]" and displacement of identity categories (11). The basic point that this standpoint misses is that identity is *discursively* produced, and, as such, it "is *intrinsically political*" (67; emphasis added). Thus, "the subversion of identity," its de-construction, is a "political project" that leads to "the displacement of the discursive" (Jaggar 18). As Spivak puts it:

> [D]econstruction is not an exposure of error, certainly not other people's error. The critique in deconstruction, the most serious critique in *deconstruction, is* the *critique of something that is extremely useful, something without which we cannot do anything.* (qtd. in *BTM* 3; emphasis added)

De-construction does not mean destruction, but rather, it means "enquiring into the processes of . . . construction" (Salih 143), and an investigation of "operations of exclusion, erasure, foreclosure and abjection" within this process of construction (81). Therefore, de-constructing the pre-existing essential subject, and revealing its constructedness, far from leading to quietism, opens up possibilities for "*re*construction [of the subject] in ways that challenge and subvert existing power structures" (11). De-construction, in other words, is a powerful political resistance that enables agency.

The critics of de-construction not only miss the point of de-construction, but also that of politics. They fail to realise "that their own account of the subject . . . may itself be a political construction." Ironically, their "awareness of the *political* contouring of subjectivity," has not led to awareness of their own "politically invested" subject (Lloyd, *BIP* 4). This is a naive perception of politics that mistakenly assumes it as what enables autonomous subjects. These anti-poststructuralist feminists, who are against the post-structuralist notion of "subject as an effect of politics" (6), are, in fact, set in their univocal way of understanding of what politics is. Lloyd states that:

> It makes no sense in this context to ask 'what is politics?' if by this a metaphysical response is expected. There is no stable discourse of politics enabling us to say 'this is what politics or the political are.' Instead *any answer to that question is itself . . . always already political;* it is an attempt to determine where the boundaries between the political and the apolitical are to be set. Politics, in this sense, may well 'tenaciously resist definition'. (6-7; emphasis added)

According to Lloyd, thus, what feminism stands in exigent need for is not a "stable unitary subject," but rather "a deeper understanding of [politics and] the political nature of subjectivity" (11).

These "(quasi-)Kantian" notions of subject and agency, which are prevailing in the discourses of feminism, wrongly assume that individuals, "independent of socio-political world around them," have absolute autonomy to shape their history. "[C]ollective political action," according to them, guarantees "social transformation" (Lloyd *JB* 57). These problematic notions of subject and agency arise from "the problematic metaphysics of presence,[5]" which is, as Derrida points out, the pillar of Western philosophy and culture. The metaphysics of presence creates the illusion of the rational, autonomous, unitary, and stable subject whose perception of the world and the self is unmediated and unproblematic. It also induces the logic of non-contradiction, which privileges "*identity* and *certainty* . . . through the suppression of *difference* and *ambiguity*." What de-construction, on the other hand, attempts at doing is to show the "impossibility of presence," the impossibility of the self-knowing autonomous subject, and the impossibility of unmediated knowledge, and also to reveal the exclusions by which "the illusion of presence" is sustained (Jaggar 30; emphasis added). Within post-structural discourse, the subject, agency, power, and subversion are understood in a much

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[5] What Derrida calls "metaphysics of presence" is his "poststructuralist development of Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysics of substance" (Jaggar 3). Metaphysics of presence refers to "the illusion of presence." Derrida questions "everything that is thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language, every being, and in particular the substance or subject" (D 13). For Derrida, the possibility of a "transcendental signified" is an illusion. According to him, "the signified concept is never present" (30). Derrida argues that "language is not the governable instrument of a speaking being (or subject)" (qtd. in Royle 36). It is, rather, what produces the illusion of that subject (ibid.). "Subjectivity, like objectivity, is an effect of differance" (*P* 28). In other words, there is no presence, no stable meaning; there is only difference—the constant deferral of the meaning.

more complicated way. Agency, from Butler's perspective, is "an effect of signification and re-signification," and, as such, not dissociable from language and discourse. In other words, Butler's account of agency refers to " 'discursive' or 'linguistic' agency" (8). Agency, according to her, must be re-thought as "the possibility of producing 'alternative domains of cultural intelligibility' " which breaks with heteronormativity (Lloyd, *JB* 54). Feminists who "adhere to one side of the free will-determinism binary," however, find Butler's account of agency meaningless (60). They adhere to the very binary logic that Butler seeks to move beyond. That is why feminism stands in need of "rethinking the meaning of social construction beyond that implied in essentialism versus constructionism dichotomy" (Jaggar 4).

Butler is also widely criticised for "neglect[ing] . . . the material[6]" (Salih 11). However, the notion of the matter, according to her, is deeply mired in "Cartesian understanding of human being and the metaphysics of substance and presence" (Jaggar 61). She calls the taken-for-granted notions of natural sex, sexual difference, and inherent sexuality into question. She raises doubts about the notion of pre-cultural sex and sexual difference, arguing that the distinction between male and female is itself a cultural practice. She insists that "material means to materialize" (*BTM* 7). Matter, according to her, is always produced discursively and performatively through interpellation. She insists that "[f]ar from being objective, and neutral, ontologies are political, locked into the power relations that order 'reality' " (Lloyd, *JB* 69). The body, for Butler, is a "linguistic effect," " 'a set of boundaries' . . . constituted and regulated by power/discourse" (70). This, however, does not mean that the body is merely linguistic, but rather, it means that we can access the body *only* through language (71). Butler admits that "there is a limit to constructedness, but just what that limit is remains *unspecifiable*" (Butler qtd. in Jaggar 81; emphasis added). Any specification of this limit, from Butler's perspective, would be a violent foreclosure.

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[6] By many critics such as Barbara Epstein, Terry Lovell, Toril Moi, Carrie Hall, Jay Prosser, Lois McNay, Nancy Fraster, Martha Nussbaum, Carole Bigwood, Suson Bodro, Lynne Pearce, Leanne Segal, Biddy Martin, Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimons, Kathleen Lennon, etc..

Butler argues that the de-construction of the matter is not a repudiation of materiality, but rather "an examination of the exclusions involved in the process of materialization" (Jaggar 62). As Elizabeth Grosz observes, for Butler, "[b]eing 'important', having significance, hav[ing] a place, *mattering*, is more important than *matter*, substance or materiality" (qtd. in Lloyd, *JB* 76; emphasis added). Butler's purpose of "deconstruct[ing] the notions of the body and materiality" is chiefly to demonstrate "the material violence" at work, and to break these exclusionary notions from their oppressive contexts and re-contextualise them in a non-oppressive way, opening up a more democratic, that is, more inclusive future (Jaggar 59-60).

Accordingly, reading Winterson's texts from Butler's perspective will dig up the complexities often neglected. Approaching the un-gendered narrator of *Written on the Body*, the Dog-Woman and Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry*, Villanelle and Henri in *The Passion*, Jeanette and Louie in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, and Billie in *The Stone Gods* with a Butlerian understanding of subjectivity and agency reveals the complexities of their identity and the ambivalence that their agency is fraught with, the ambivalence which is reduced to free-will/determinism binary. The unnamable narrator, the Dog-Woman, Jordan, Villanelle, Henri, Jeanette, Louie, and Billie all have become individuals within different networks of power-knowledge; they are all inevitably entangled in "power relations." As subjects of discourse, they cannot transcend it, but they can pose fatal ruptures within it. In other words, their agency lies in the ability to re-employ and re-direct the subjectivating norms of the discourse. Those who claim that Louie and the Dog-Woman are conventional characters not only neglect the complexity of identity, but also fail to realise the significance of their subversive re-deployment of the norms.

Furthermore, the Butlerian perspective will offer a deeper understanding of politics. I will argue that those critics who claim that "Winterson has left behind the question of what is to be a woman/or a lesbian in any more material sense" (Makinen 87), or those who accuse Winterson of "los[ing] the certainty and engaged commitment that feminist lesbianism used to celebrate" (27-28), fail to recognise the fact that the certainty that they demand has a cost. The stability of the

categories of "Woman" and "Lesbian" entails excluding and erasing instabilities. These categories are naturalised only at the expense of the "unnatural." As Butler points out, all these categories have their "constitutive outside;" that is, they set their boundaries by the violent foreclosure of this outside. In other words, the boundary of the "real" is set by its "unreal" outside. Hence, those who require certainty for the sake of political action must not forget that these certain and stable categories are themselves discursively constructed; that is, they are "intrinsically political." Hence, their de-stabilisation carries political significance. Accordingly, de-construction can be said to be a "political project" that leads to "the displacement of the discursive" (Jaggar 18). I will claim that Winterson's texts are subversive in the sense that they displace the discursively constructed categories of sex, gender, and sexuality; by calling attention to the margins, by bringing the margins to the centre, they de-stabilise and de-centre the discursively established centre, which is a significant political act. By de-sedimentation of the binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, that is, by queer de-construction of them, these texts open them to re-signification; they demand the "democratic openendedness" that Butler advocates. In short, if we take the political significance of contingency into consideration, it can be argued that far from being "detrimental to a serious political agenda" (Makinen 87), the refusal to name, in Winterson's texts is a significant political resistance.

1.2 The Trajectory of This Thesis

Chapter 2 will touch on Butler's account of the constitution and de-constitution of the subject, that is, her enquiry into "the grid of cultural intelligibility," within which both viable and unviable subject positions are constructed and de-constructed. I will discuss her notion of gender performativity and elaborate on her example of drag as a parodic disclosure of this performativity, which is often misinterpreted. Later, I will discuss her interrogation of the uncritically accepted notion of materiality. The focus of the chapter will be on the way Butler makes an

attempt to open up the exclusionary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality to a more inclusive and less violent future.

Chapter 3 will explore the boundary confusion in *Written on the Body*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Passion.* It will look at the ambiguities that the narrator of *Written on the Body*, the Dog-Woman and Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry*, and Villanelle and Henri in *The Passion* create. I will argue that these characters, who live on the borderlines, that is, in-between the heteronormative categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, trouble the heteronormative categories of sex, gender, and desire, parodyingly de-constructing the myth of continuity and coherence. They reveal the boundaries not to be fixed and firm, but rather porous and permeable. Although *Written on the Body*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Passion* have been mostly received as "lesbian texts," I will argue that all the binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, including this hetero/homo binary, go bankrupt within these texts, all of which queer these uncritically accepted notions. I will analyse the way these texts oblige the reader to re-think the boundaries. Later, I will analyse the role of the unreliable narrator in these texts and the way it blurs the boundary between fact and fiction, heightening the confusion already created.

Chapter 4 will explore the ambivalence of agency which is depicted in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *The Stone Gods*. I will argue that both texts demonstrate the failure of interpellation and the possible subversion of identity. I will analyse the complexities of identity and will try to bring to light the ambivalence of subjectivity and agency. I will argue that although neither Jeanette and Louie in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, nor Billie in *The Stone Gods* can be said to be independent of the network of power, and although they are entangled with "power relations," they are able to re-employ and re-direct the norms of power. I will analyse the way they re-employ and re-direct these subjectivating norms. The chapter will also explore the de-constructive deployment of parody, through which the ruptures within the heteronormative discourses, in the context of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, and the technonormative discourses, in the context of *The Stone Gods*, are exposed.

In chapter 5 I will conclude that reading *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, *The Passion*, *Sexing the Cherry*, *Written on the Body*, and *The Stone Gods* from a Butlerian perspective offers a deeper understanding of the constitution of identity and the subversion of it which is dealt with in these texts.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: JUDITH BUTLER'S ACCOUNT OF PERFORMATIVE SUBVERSION

This chapter aims at clarifying Butler's account of the constitution and de-constitution of the subject, under the light of which I will read Winterson's texts. It will discuss Butler's issue with identity politics and their exclusionary identity categories, her account of "the grid of cultural intelligibility," the performative constitution of identity and the possibility of performative subversions and re-signification of intelligibility, her interrogation of the uncritically accepted notion of materiality, and the possibility of re-signification of materiality.

2.1 Troubling the Feminist Assumption of "We"

Gender Trouble, Butler's first major book, emerged against the background of the 1980s, when the heterosexual assumption was prevalent among feminists. What concerned Butler was the narrow and confined meaning of gender. As she saw it, the restriction of the meaning of gender to certain idealised notions of masculinity and femininity had established "exclusionary gender norms within feminism" which carried homophobic implications. What Butler sought to do was "to undermine any and all effort to wield a *discourse of truth* to delegitimate minority gendered and sexual practices." In other words, her text was an attempt "to open up the field of possibility for gender without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized" (*GT* viii; emphasis added).

As I have discussed in chapter 1, Butler makes a vigorous attack on the assumption of the stability of the "female" and the "woman," which, according to

her, are "troubled significations". She is strongly against the taken-for-granted notion of homogeneity of women and the ensuing presumption of a common identity (xxxi-xxxii). She takes issue with feminists who maintain that a common identity is fundamental for political representation. Butler points out the fact that the notions of politics and representation are themselves highly problematic, and, therefore, must be re-thought. She argues that the "subject" which feminists claim to deploy against the political system is itself discursively produced within the very same political system (2-3), and, as such, "politically invested" (Lloyd, *BIP* 2). In other words, "the category of 'women,' the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought" (Butler, *GT* 4).

Most importantly, Butler calls attention to the "exclusionary aims" of identity politics, and the "exclusionary practices" through which the singular and stable notion of identity is established (3-8). She constantly warns feminists against their exclusionary framework which turns a blind eye to racial, sexual, cultural, and myriads of other multiplicities. She views this "colonizing [the differences] under the sign of the same" as "epistemological imperialism" (18). "Unity," as she emphasises, is achieved through exclusions and erasures, that is, the sense of solidarity among women, the tremendous sense of the "common," is constructed through exclusion of abjects (*UG* 206). From Butler's perspective, "the [unitary] category of women . . . [is] a limit on [feminist] politics," rather than the key to its empowerment (Lloyd *JB* 45). Therefore, she advocates the permanent openness and incompleteness of the category of women, which enables the contestation of multiple meanings (*GT* 21). According to Butler, feminism stands in need of a genealogical approach to the category of women (8). She constantly underscores the fact that de-constructing the category of women does not render it useless, but rather it wards off *reification* (*BTM* 5).

Butler's major concern is "the heteronormative construction of bodies, sexes, genders, and sexualities" (Lloyd, *JB* 72), the naturalisation and pathologisation of certain bodies, identifications, and desires, and, above all, "*the violence of the foreclosed life*" (Butler, *GT* xxi; emphasis added). The objective behind her texts is

"to contest what counts as a thinkable or liveable subject/body." Accordingly, "she is a deconstructionist," who enquires into "the constitutive force of exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection, and its disruptive return" (Lloyd, *JB* 72).

2.2 The Grid of Cultural Intelligibility and Its Constitutive Outside

For Butler, the subject is constructed within the boundaries of what she calls "the grid of cultural intelligibility." "The grid of cultural intelligibility" refers to "a normative framework that conditions who can be recognized as a legitimate subject" and who cannot (33). It is within this matrix that viable/unviable subject positions, and livable/unlivable lives are defined. Within this matrix, certain bodies, identifications, and desires are legitimated, while certain others are de-legitimated. Legitimisation and de-legitimisation work through the discursive production of "truth." Butler shares Foucault's opinion that "truth" is discursively produced within the network of "power-knowledge" and that knowledge and power are deeply entangled, and, therefore, dissociable. As Foucault states,

> [P]ower produces knowledge. . . . [T]here is no power relation without correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.
>
> There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. (*PK* 93)

The Foucauldian subject emerges from this network of knowledge-power, and it is, therefore, entangled in "power relations." Rather than being the products of the self-expression of the subject, knowledge and discourses, according to Foucault, are what produce the conditions of the subject's emergence (48). Thus, the subject, for Foucault, is "an effect rather than an essence" (Mills 82); it is "an effect of discourses and power relations" (98); it is "an effect of, to some extent, subjection," which "refers to particular, historically located, disciplinary processes and concepts" through which one becomes to think of himself or herself as an

individual. In other words, it is by going through the process of subjection that the subject is able to "tell the truth about itself" (Foucault, PPC 38). The subject can only tell the truth about itself by being "constituted as a subject across a number of power relations which are exerted over [him or her] and which [he or she] exert[s] over others." In other words, the subject is compelled to "produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function" (*PK* 93). Thus, the subject is "an object of discourse, an object of power/knowledge" (Mills 73).

Subject production and its regulation are both enforced by what Foucault calls "disciplinary power." The notion of the individual is the result of the internalisation of "discipline." Discipline, according to Foucault, is a sort of "self-regulation," and "self-control" imposed by institutions and their "disciplinary techniques" (Mills 43). Thus, the individual is entangled in "mechanisms of control, discourses of truth, and systems of knowledge" (MacQueen 79). As Foucault puts it, "it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals" (*PK* 98). In short, "one effect of the power-knowledge-subjectivity triad," as MacQueen observes, "is that the subject and its identity has been normalised, naturalised and essentialised, especially through humanist and scientific discourses that seek to identify the universal Truth of man" (82-83).

In line with Foucault, Butler argues that power is not merely what constitutes the subject, but also what the subject's existence is hinged upon. The subjects "harbour and preserve [power] in the beings that [they] are." The terms of power that are internalised become the very conditions on which the subject's existence depends. Paradoxically, however, it is due to this "fundamental dependency on a discourse" that agency is enabled and retained. In other words, through subjection, one is not only subordinated by power, but, at the same time, becomes a subject. Butler claims that "[w]hether by interpellation, in Althusser's sense, or by discursive productivity, in Foucault's, the subject is initiated through a primary submission to power," which is enquired into neither by Althusser, nor by Foucault, both of whom are reticent about the psychic life of power (*PLP* 2).

The constitution of the subject, according to Butler, is enabled by one's "desire for recognition." To illustrate, "socially viable beings", according to Butler, are constituted through being recognised (*UG* 2). Accordingly, "everyone is struggling to be recognised, that is, *to be conceived as [a person]*" (32; emphasis added). However, in order to become a meaningful recognisable subject, one has to submit to power. One, according to Butler, prefers to "exist in subordination than not exist" (*PLP* 7). Thus, one "is passionately attached to his or her own subordination," without which one cannot have socially meaningful and culturally recognisable existence (6). In other words, recognition entails desiring the terms by which one is subordinated (9), that is to say by "desir[ing] precisely what would foreclose desire" (79).

Although Butler agrees with Althusser that one is interpellated by the turn to the call of the law, she argues that this interpellation is not possible without one's prior "readiness to turn." The turn is, thus, not merely determined by the addressor, but also impelled by the addressee. In other words, unlike being unilateral as Althusser claims, it "take[s] place, perhaps, in a strange sort of 'middle voice' " (107). The reason of the one's turn, or put in better words, the reason of this "prior desire for the law," this "passionate complicity with law," is that the turn "promises identity" (108); it allows recognition. That means social identity is accomplished only through subjection (Salih 119), that is by being subjected to and defined by the terms, norms, and identity categories of "the grid of cultural intelligibility" that determines what is recognisable and what is not. Thus, "the subject is the *effect* of a prior power" (120).

Butler argues that gender/sexual identity is performatively produced through interpellation, through internalisation of "knowledge," the internalisation of the "truths" of multiple discourses, such as medico-legal discourse. Butler dissents from Austin's disctinction between the "constative utterances" and "performative utterances[7]." Unlike Austin, Butler holds that "the constative claim is always to

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[7] Austin differentiates between "constative utterances" and "performative utterances." The former, he claims, only describes a state while the latter performs the action which is referred to. For instance, when you say 'I am at home', your utterance is a "constative utterance" which describes a state. But when you say 'I promise' your utterance is a "performative utterance" because you do not

some degree performative" (*BTM* xix). Like gender, sex is, as Butler insists, always performatively constructed. It is, in other words, the performative effect of language. "[B]odies," according to Butler, "are never merely described, they are always constituted in the act of description" (Salih 88-89). For example, the infant is interpellated by the medical discourse which "shifts 'it' to a 'she' or a 'he'." In order to enter the domain of the human, the infant must be interpellated and assigned with a sex/gender (Butler, *BTM* xvii). In other words, it must "[embody] the norms of . . . power" (167). This means that "social regulation works through the 'psychic incorporation' of norms" and "the production of 'passionate attachment' to identity categories" (Jaggar 5).

Although Butler admits that it is not possible "to offer an account of how [sex, gender, and] sexuality [are] formed without psychoanalysis", she is aware of the fact that "psychoanalytic sciences are part of the forming of [sex, gender, and] sexuality, and have become more and more part of that forming." Aligned with Foucault, she insists that these sciences "don't simply report on the life of the infant, they've become part of the *crafting* of that life" (GP 117-118; emphasis added). One's "sense of being male [or female]," according to Butler, is "implement[ed by] the norm, and the instituitionalization of that power of implementation" (*UG* 68).

Psychoanalysis, as Butler argues, "inculcat[es] . . . the heterosexual matrix" (*BTM* xxii). It constructs "the story of origin," which is, according to Butler, "a strategic tactic within a narrative that, by telling a single, authoritative account about an irrecoverable past, makes the constitution of the law appear as a historical inevitability." It constructs the sex/gender ontology, the essentiality of male/female, masculine/feminine binaries, through which the masculinist power reifies itself (*GT* 48). Having to maintain the myth of ontology and to foreclose the possibility of destruction, the discourse of legitimacy has to conceal its temporality and historicity (106).

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describe a state but rather "perform the act of promising." It is a performance which can be neither true nor false but rather "appropriate" or "inappropriate" according to a situation in which it is performed (Culler 94).

The medico-legal discourse constitutes a psychic identity by constructing and naturalising the binary sex, and "coherent" binary gender, which, according to Butler, serves the interests of heterosexual hegemony (*GT* xii). It also produces a fictive correlation between sex, gender, and desire, according to which one with a female anatomy is expected to identify herself as a woman, display feminine traits, and desire a man. Similarly, a person with male anatomy is supposed to identify himself as a man, display masculine traits, and desire a woman. When heterosexuality and the binary sex/gender claim naturalness, other forms of embodiment, identification, expression, and desire are de-naturalised, and, as such, pathologised. That is, any subversion of the norms is foreclosed as traumatic and psychotic. Thus, in order for the subject to gain intelligibility and keep his or her place within this intelligible zone, coherence between one's sex, gender, and desire must be achieved and maintained.

Butler brings attention to the fact that this so-called coherence of the subject is produced only by the repudiation of the abject (*BTM* 79). This means that it is by constant repudiation of the abject that "the subject installs its boundary and constructs claim to its 'integrity' " (76). Thus, "identification is implicated in what it excludes" (80) "[I]dentification is," as Butler asserts, "always an ambivalent process." It is always a process of approximation and this approximation is only accomplished by constant repudiation of the abject. Hence, "there is a cost to every identification, the loss of some other set of identifications," as a consequence of which "being a man" and "being a woman" are *fraught with ambivalence and instability*. Thus, the insecure boundaries of heterosexuality have to be heavily fortified in order to ward off "the invasion of queerness" (86; emphasis added). For that reason, the heterosexual economy has to produce "sanctioned fantasies" (89) that frame realness, and unsanctioned fantasies that are left outside of the framework of realness, and it has to oblige the "*phantasmatic pursuit [of this realness]*," through which subjects are constituted (90; emphasis added). In other words, "a region of abjected identifications" is produced to secure the boundaries of heterosexuality (74).

Social existence, thus, is achieved "only by the production and maintenance of those socially dead" (*PLP* 27). Identity politics grants recognition only to subjects with particular identities and refuses the recognition of others (100). Butler is particularly concerned about these exclusionary practices, abjections, and erasures, through which the notion of the "human" comes into being. Continually, she stresses the fact that there is a cost to any construction, including the construction of the category of human. The human, according to her, achieves "humanness" *only* at the expense of the "non-human" and the "less-than-human." In other words, the category of human is produced differentially. While some are conferred with humanness, others are deprived of it. Butler argues that "[t]he human is understood differentially depending on its race, the legibility of that race, its morphology, the recognisability of that morphology, its sex, the perceptual verifiability of that sex, its ethnicity, the categorical understanding of that ethnicity" (*UG* 2). Consequently, *not all* humans are recognised as humans. There are always those who fail to conform to the norms of humanness, and, therefore, left outside of this exclusionary framework, bearing unlivable lives. As Butler points out, "schemes of recognition . . . 'undo' the person by conferring recognition , or 'undo' the person by withholding recognition," as a result of which "recognition becomes a site of power by which human is differentially produced" (ibid.).

In order to attain intelligibility, one is obliged to have a coherent morphology, accomplish a coherent gender identity, display typical gender traits, have heterosexual desire, and express continuity between one's sex, gender, and desire. In other words, "naturalness" of one's sex, gender, and desire, as well as the "coherence" and "continuity" between them are the criteria of humanness. Thus, those who do not possess natural and coherent sex, gender, or desire, are left outside the zone of intelligibility. The medico-legal discourse, thus, produces not only the matrix of intelligibility, but also matrices of unintelligibility, and unthinkability, that is, the zone of uninhabitability. Normalisation and pathologisation always go hand in hand. The standards of naturalness and coherence pathologise what diverges from them. Those who are uncategorisable,

those who live on the borders, those who are "nameless," as Butler puts it, are put into question as human. They are labelled as aberrant or freak (69-70). What Butler tries to call attention to is the normative violence at work, the dispossession, and the social or literal deaths that are brought about by pathologisation.

By the truth claims that it makes, diagnosis is internalised by the subject. By producing the "standard[s] of psychological normality," [diagnosis] "install[s] a sense of mental disorder" on those who fail to maintain these standards (83). Butler sees such diagnosis as a "form of social violence" which "seek[s] to produce adaptation to existing norms" (99). People who do not embody gender norms properly, that is, those who are not "properly masculine" or "properly feminine," that is, those who fall outside the matrix of intelligible masculinity and intelligible femininity, those who fail to achieve a coherent gender identity, are all pathologised as suffering gender identity disorder. This diagnosis is, as Butler points up, dispossessing, because "it has been given to people against their will, and it is a diagnosis that has effectively broken the will of many people, especially queer and trans youth" (77), whose identification cannot be easily pinned down to either/or binary. And more importantly, it is a diagnosis that subjects many to coercive "correction" which entails normative violence.

Furthermore, in most cases, people who are pathologised as diasphoric are considered as homosexuals. This view assumes homosexuality to be "inverted heterosexuality," which follows as a result of inverted gender. In other words, it presumes wrongly that there is a correlation between gender and desire (81). This "exclusive heterosexual matrix," not only pathologises homosexuality, but also turns a blind eye to bisexuality, and "queer crossings in heterosexuality," reducing them all to hetero/homo binary (79-80).

Intersex, transgendered, transsexual, and bisexual people, and all others who fall outside intelligible categories, are marginalised into "the sphere of mental pathology" (83). Moreover, by demarcating legitimate and illegitimate zones, the discourse of legitimacy reduce legitimate kinship bonds, intimacy, and sexuality to marriage so that they cannot be thought out of it. Marriage is, hence, rendered "as a

purchase on legitimacy." (106) Divergent forms of kinship relations, thus, remain "unrecognized," "unviable" (5), and "psychosis inducing" (158).

Butler's interesting re-reading of psychoanalysis queers and troubles the uncritically accepted notions of body, identification, desire, intimacy, family bond, and also incest. She seriously challenges the totalising claims of psychoanalysis and vigorously rattles their foundations, revealing their non-essentiality. She unsettles the heteronormative framework of psychoanalysis, and de-constructs the Oedipal Drama and the Symbolic which are its cornerstones. What she puts into question is the status of the symbolic as "primordial law" (212), which is deemed to be unassailable and irrefutable. She maintains that this incontestable status is given to the symbolic in order to rule out the possibility of doubt over the symbolic father and the notion of the phallus as a privileged signifier, rendering them beyond question (46). She argues that "the symbolic does not precede the social." Nor is it detachable from it (129). She argues further that "the symbolic itself is the sedimentation of social practices" (44). The so-called "symbolic Mother and Father," as Butler demonstrates, are not essential and unalterable positions, but merely "the idealization and ossification of contingent cultural norms" (158). As Butler underlines, "the incontestability of the symbolic law is itself an exercise of that symbolic law" (46), which reproduces and perpetuates it. Hence, for Butler, just like socially intelligible subjectivity, the context of intelligibility and its laws and norms are performative constructions.

"The symbolic" or "the Law", according to Butler, "emerges to put an end to" the "variable laws," which "[open] up an anxiety-producing field of gendered [and sexual] possibilities" (47). By bringing the symbolic into question, however, Butler does not attempt at restoring the problematic notions of freedom and free will. Rather, she attempts at revealing the instability, inconsistency, contingency, and mutability of the symbolic law, that is, its "open[ness] to a displacement and subversion from within" (ibid.), its potential exposure to "deidealization and divestiture" (48). Butler argues that it is no longer possible to reduce kinship relations to reproductive heterosexuality. Accordingly, she demands a new understanding of culture within which multiple forms of kinship and sexuality can

be thinkable. In other words, psychoanalysis, according to Butler, should "rethink its own uncritically accepted notions of culture," kinship, and sexuality (128). A radical re-signification, as Butler underlines, obliges a "new psychic topography" (14), "a queer poststructuralism of the psyche" (44).

Unlike the rigid Lacanian notion of the symbolic, and the rigid Althusserian notion of ideology, what Butler calls the matrix of intelligibility is subject to change. This is because what is performatively constituted can be de-constituted and re-constituted by performative practices. Butler is in concurrence with Foucault who believes that "schematically speaking, we have perpetual mobility, essential fragility or rather the complex interplay between what replicates the same process and what transforms it" (qtd. in *UG* 216). Understanding Butler's notion of transformation, however, requires an understanding of her account of the subject and agency. The subject is, for Butler, "a linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation" (*PLP* 10). It is "the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency" (11). The subject cannot come into being unless by being subjected to power and going through subjectivation (ibid.), that is, by repeatedly performing the norms of "the grid of intelligibility" and its gendered practices, expressions, and also by abjecting what is unintelligible and socially unrecognisable. In other words, subjects are enacted into being only by being acted on by power (13). Subjection, on the one hand, is a self-inflicted subordination; on the other hand, it is what proffers a range of possibilities for resistance. Far from being continuous, power takes on different modalities through this process of subjection. The power on which the subject's agency was conditioned becomes the very same agency that makes possible the re-constitution of "the grid of intelligibility" via subjective performance. (13-14). That means "agency is implicated in subordination," which is *not a contradiction, but a paradox* (17). Butler writes,

> [W]hat is enacted by the subject is enabled but not finally constrained by the prior working of power. *Agency exceeds the power by which it is enabled*. One might say that the purposes of power are not always the purposes of agency. To the extent that the latter diverge from the former, agency is the assumption of a

purpose *unintended* by power, one that could not have been derived logically or historically, that operates in a relation of contingency and reversal to the power that makes it possible, to which it nevertheless belongs. This is, as it were, the *ambivalent scene of agency*, constrained by no teleological necessity. (15; the second emphasis is original)

The constitution of the subject, as Butler argues, is an *ongoing process*, and therefore, is *never completed*. This is because the subject acquires its subjectivity through the process of performative action, interpellation, and abjection; that is repeated norm-citation, repeated being-called a name, and repeated repudiation of what is regarded as unintelligible. This means that "[t]he . . . subject is never fully constituted in subjection . . . ; it is *repeatedly* constituted in subjection," and therefore, there is always "the possibility of a repetition that repeats against its origin," and it is this possibility of diversion that enables the subject (94; emphasis added). The subject is both constituted and de-constituted within discourse, that is, the very discourse in which the subject is constituted enables its de-constitution (99). Interpellation, for example, is not necessarily successful. Quite the contrary, it is always in danger of failure, which means that it is always in danger of misrecognition: "The one who is hailed may fail to hear, misread the call, turn the other way, answer to another name, insist on not being addressed in that way" (95).

It is only through repetition that the subject maintains its coherence, and it is through this "dependency of the subject on repetition" that subversion becomes possible. "This repetition or, better, iterability thus becomes the non-place of subversion, the possibility of a re-employing of the subjectivating norm that can redirect its normativity" (99). Identity markers are not fixed and frozen, but rather malleable; terms, even the most injurious ones, could be re-appropriated; interpellation, no matter how injurious, could paradoxically give rise to the conditions that make possible divergence from the hegemonic understanding of norms, that is re-direction and re-signification (104).

From Butler's perspective, being less than intelligible is not necessarily disadvantageous. This distance, she maintains, enables a critical vision and a

critical agency. That is, "minority version of sustaining the law[8]," according to her, could be enabling. Although one's existence is conditional on doing and that doing is conditional on what is done to one, there is a possibility of persistence, which, according to Butler, is the ability "to do something with what is done with [someone]." She asserts that "agency does not consist in denying this condition of [one's] constitution." Rather, she argues that "agency . . . is opened up by the fact that [one is] constituted by a social world [he or she] never choose[s]." She writes, "That my *agency is riven with paradox* does not mean it is impossible. It means only that *paradox is the condition of its possibility*" (*UG* 3; emphasis added)

Butler refers to Nietzsche's notion of the sign chain according to which "the uses to which a given sign is originally put are 'worlds apart' from the uses to which it then becomes available." According to Nietzsche, "[t]his temporal gap between usages produces the possibility of a reversal of signification, but also opens the way for an inauguration of signifying possibilities that exceed those to which the term has been previously bounded" (qtd. in *PLP* 94). Similarly, she refers to Derrida who asserts that " 'the essential iterability of [a] sign' which cannot be contained or enclosed by any context, convention or authorial intension," makes it vulnerable to re-iteration and re-signification. All signs, being vulnerable to re-citation, could break with their contexts and be re-located through the practice of recitation. That means they "can be transplanted into unforeseen contexts and cited in unexpected ways" (Salih 91). Derrida calls this displacement of the sign and its re-contextualization "*citational grafting*" (ibid.; emphasis added). This strategy, which is deployed and advocated by Butler, is "a queer strategy of converting the abjection and exclusion of non-sanctioned sexed and gendered identities into political agency" (ibid.). Derrida writes,

> Deconstruction does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as a non-conceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated. For example, writing as a classical concept carries with it predicates which have been subordinated, excluded or held in

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[8] For example butch/femme homosexuals, bisexuals, and transsexuals that will be discussed in section 2.4.

reserve by forces and according to necessities to be analyzed. It is these predicates (I have mentioned some) whose force of generality, generalization, and generativity find themselves liberated, grafted onto a 'new' concept of writing which also corresponds to whatever has resisted the former organization of forces, which has constituted the remainder irreducible to the dominant force which organized the – to say it quickly – logocentric hierarchy. (D 329-330)

Butler points out the fact that the boundaries of the human are not firm, but rather *porous* and *permeable*. Those who live on the borders, or as Butler puts it, "in the interstices of ... binary relation[s]," reveal the fact that the binary "is not exhaustive" (*UG* 65). According to Butler, "there are middle regions, hybrid regions of legitimacy and illegitimacy that have no clear names, and where nomination itself falls into a crisis." These places are, as Butler calls, "nonplaces" where "recognition, including self-recognition, proves precarious if not elusive, in spite of one's best efforts to be a subject in some recognizable sense" (108). Butler asserts that even though "the 'human' has been crafted and consolidated over time," its "history . . . is not over" (13). The key moment for re-articulation, according to Butler, is when *"the excluded speak,"* that is, *"when the unreal lays claim to reality"* (13, 27; emphasis added). Far from being assimilatory, this claim is what threatens the stability of the settled knowledge, cracks the assumed coherence of the system, revealing its dissonances, ruptures, and gaps which can be re-deployed (27-28), insofar as the stability of the settled knowledge and the coherence of the system acquire their stability and coherence by the repeated abjection of the "unreal."

Butler, therefore, insists that the normative structure is best troubled "from within its most cherished terms" (209). In other words, it is best de-constructed from within its "essentials." It is the limits of these essential categories—which paradoxically endow them with a bounded identity—, their "moments of discontinuities," their failure to realise that discloses the incoherence, contingency, malleability, and transformability of these categories (216). These discontinuities, as Butler highlights, can open up the categories to a different future, a more inclusive future which is not fraught with violence, a future in which *"rethinking*

the world as something other than natural or necessary" is possible (34; emphasis added). Butler insists that "[t]o be political does not merely mean to take a single and enduring stand" (109) Rather, "[t]he conception of politics," for Butler, "is centrally concerned with the question of survival;" it is attempting to "create a world in which those who understand their gender and their desire to be nonnormative can live and thrive not only without the threat of violence from the outside but without the pervasive sense of their own unreality" (219).

What a nonviolent future requires is, as Butler asserts, "openness and unknowingness," as well as ongoing "antagonism and contestation" (226). Politics, according to her, would not be democratic without any contestation at work. She insists that "*[d]emocracy does not speak in unison*; its tunes are dissonant, and necessarily so. It is not a predictable process; it must be undergone" (39 and 226; emphasis added). Butler's point is simply that any definition of the "human" is a violent foreclosure of myriads of other possibilities of being considered as human. Therefore, she demands that the category must be left permanently "open to future articulations" (222). That is, it must be continuously "expanded to become more inclusive to the full range of cultural populations." By going through cultural translation, it must be constantly re-contexualised and re-territorised (224). The question of politics, according to her, must be "the question of what maximizes the possibilities for a liveable life, what minimizes the possibility of unbearable life, or, indeed, social or literal death" (8).

2.3 Performativity of Gender, Parody, and the Question of Drag

Butler is mostly known for her theorisation of gender as performative. In her earlier texts such as "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," and *Gender Trouble*, she argues that gender is performative or, in other words, a "performance which is performative" (PAGC 528). To elaborate on her notion of performativity in her later texts, however, she adopts the Derridean notion of citationality/iterability. Countering the expressive model of gender, Butler asserts that "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expression of gender." She claims, contrarily, that "identity is

performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (*GT* 34). In other words, gender identity is performatively accomplished, that is, it is accomplished by the "stylized repetition of acts" through time. "[T]he illusion of an abiding gendered self," according to Butler, is constituted by "the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds" are repeatedly cited (PAGC 519-520). Concealing this performative constitution, gender is rendered as an expression of an essence, an internal and psychic reality. The "discourse of primary and stable identity" produces truth-effects which render some genders true and others false. In order for gender discontinuities to be effectively concealed, the illusion of gender coherence, which serves the interests of compulsory heterosexuality, is necessitated (*GT* 185-186).

In order for gender reality to be maintained, one must *repeatedly perform* it, which means that gender "*is real only to the extent that it is performed*" (PAGC 527; emphasis added). Thus, gender cannot be a noun, but, rather, it is a *doing*. However, this does not mean that there is a pre-existing sovereign subject which is solely responsible for such repetition (*GT* 34). As Butler puts it,

> The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again.
>
> Actors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance. Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives. (PAGC 526)

In short, "[p]erformativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-representation" (*BTM* 59). Performativity cannot be reduced to performance either. It "is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization" (*GT* xv). Butler goes to argue that performativity can only be understood as this "process of iterability," by which she means "a regularized and constrained repetition of norms." By "constrained repetition" she

means a repetition "under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production" (*BTM* 60). In other words, performative acts are improvised within restriction because "[o]ne is always 'doing' with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary." That is to say, one's gender is constituted by the terms that are never one's own (*UG* 1).

This, however, does not at all suggest that the subject is determined. The subject is not determined because "installation [of the subject]," according to Butler, is always "incomplete" (42). She states that

> [w]hen the subject is said to be constituted, that means simply that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity. The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; 'agency,' then is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. . . . [T]he rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility. . . . (*GT* 198)

Thus, the possibility for subversion is opened up within the very same citational process which produces not only coherent gender, but also "a variety of incoherent configuration," which are its "necessary failures" (199).

Referring to Derrida, Butler argues that performative acts succeed due to their constitutive history. This means that through the repetition of an act, the prior actions are echoed and the force of authority is accumulated. Accordingly, performative acts work as long as they can re-invoke this history and simultaneously conceal it (*BTM* 172). Thus, performativity cannot be merely a practice by which gender norms are produced and reproduced, but it is also a practice by which these norms can be called into question, de-naturalised, de-territorialised and re-territorialised. The crucial moment is when "performativity begins its citational practice." Although the norms that are cited pre-exist the one who cites them, they are likely to be altered through the practice of citation (*UG*

218). There is always a "possibility of a failure to repeat, a deformity, or a parodic repetition" (*GT* 192) through which norms could be transformed.

Butler gives the example of drag to elaborate on her notion of parodic repetition/parodic re-citation. Drag, she argues, mocks the notion of true gender and unsettles the dichotomous notion of interiority/exteriority. Not only does it question the established categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, but it also reveals the fact that there is no natural coherence between anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance and sexual practice. It displays the fact that gender is a mere imitation. However, this does not mean that there is an original which is being imitated (186-188). "*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency.*" Drag is an imitation of imitation, "a fantasy of fantasy" (187, 188). Thus, gender parody dispels the illusion of the original. It reveals the fact that the performance itself is performative (IGI 315). Butler writes,

> Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their *parodic recontextualization*. As imitations which effectively displace the meaning of the original, they imitate *the myth of originality* itself. In the place of an original identification which serves as a determining cause, gender identity might be reconceived as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations and which, jointly, construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self *parody the mechanism of that construction*. (*GT* 188; emphasis added)

Parodic imitation of gender problematises the distinction between gender core and marginal genders which are excluded from the territory of this core, that is from the territory of the "real" or "natural" gender. It reveals that the original, the authentic, and the real are themselves effects. In doing so, parodic practices mock and undermine the essential, coherent, and stable notion of gender "depriving the naturalizing narratives of compulsory heterosexuality of their central protagonists: 'man' and 'woman'," as a consequence of which, identities are rendered as unstable and fluid, which makes their future re-signification possible. Butler's point here is

that "gender is an act . . . that is open to splitting, self-parody, self-criticism," and re-signification (200).

Butler's notion of drag reveals the fact that "real life and theatrical performances are indistinguishable in terms of citationality. The 'real' woman and the man performing femininity are *both* reciting the same conventions" (Lloyd, *BIP* 137). In other words, it reveals the fact that femininity/masculinity are constructed within the heterosexual matrix. As Diana Fuss puts it, "to be excessively excessive, to flaunt one's performance as performance, is to unmask all identity as drag," and, as such, parodic (qtd. in Lloyd, *BIP* 138). Parody de-constructs the exclusionary categories of heterosexual regime, which, far from being destructive, leads to the proliferation of these categories beyond binary categories (*JB* 50). This is what Butler means by "the political potential of parody" (*BIP* 138).

However, Butler is aware of the fact that gender parody does not necessarily destabilize the norms of sexuality and sexual practice. It can blur the boundaries of gender, but not necessarily those of sexuality. In other words, de-naturalising normative gender does not always lead to the de-naturalisation of heteronormative sexuality. It can function to maintain normative sexuality by containing or deflecting non-normative sexual practice. That is to say, there is no necessary link between drag or transgender and sexuality. Nor is there a link between re-distribution of gender and re-distribution of sexuality or sexual practice. Drag and transgender can indicate nothing about homosexuality, bisexuality, and transsexuality[9] (Butler, *GT* xiv-xv). Moreover, "subversive performances" can lose

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[9] For example, a woman in drag reveals the performativity of masculinity and femininity and, as such, their unnaturalness. She reveals the fact that one with female anatomy can practice masculinity and not necessarily femininity. In other words, drag questions the taken-for-granted correlation between sex and gender. In terms of sexuality, however, it cannot be said to be necessarily interrogating. It is important to note that drag is practiced by both homosexuals and heterosexuals. In the case of a heterosexual woman who practices drag, the correlation between gender and sexuality is called into question because identifying with the other gender or the expression of the other gender's traits are conventionally associated with desiring the same sex. In the case of a homosexual woman, however, drag goes without questioning the assumptions about sexuality and the presumed correspondence between gender and sexuality because drags are already stereotypically taken to be homosexual. Thus, drag might be read quite stereotypically. Supposing that a woman in drag is "homosexual" is tantamount to presupposing a correlation between masculinity and desiring femininity, that is, a correlation between gender and sexuality, which is still thinking within the heteronormative categories of gender and desire.

their subversive quality "through repetition within commodity culture where 'subversion' carries market value" (xxiii). Performatives can be subversive only as long as they "work to reveal [the] contingency, instability and citationality" of heterosexual norms. "[P]erformatives which consolidate the heterosexual norm," cannot be said to be subversive (Salih 95).

Butler's notion of drag is usually misinterpreted as either synonymous with parody or the paradigm of subversion. It must be noted that drag means neither parody nor subversion. It is, rather, only an example of parody. Butler constantly stresses the fact that drag is only an example of subversive repetition, not "paradigm of subversive action." It is only an example of parodic repetition that reveals the performativity of gender (Butler, *GT* xxiii). Her point is simply that the presence of ruptures within gender such as "gender trouble," "gender blending," "transgender," "cross-gender" demonstrates the possibility of "moving beyond that naturalized binary" (*UG* 43). In other words, "[gender] ontology . . . is . . . put into crisis by [these subversive] performance[s] of gender in such a way that . . . judgements are undermined or become impossible to make" (214). As Salih observes, "parody and drag are [both] modes of queer performance that subversively 'allegorize' . . . heterosexual [identity]," and by doing so, "[reveal] the allegorical nature of *all* sexual identities" (96). As Lloyd puts it, "[they compel] us to question what is real" (*JB* 56). She argues that what Butler advocates is not "a politics of parody; rather . . . a politics of subversion focused on contesting the norms that sustain heteronormativity" (*JB* 49). Nor does Butler think that parody is the only way to contest social norms. She says in an interview, "The Foucaldian in me says there is *no one site* from which to struggle effectively. There have to be *many*, and they don't need to be reconciled with one another" (GP 123; emphasis added).

2.4 Body, Sex, Sexuality, and the Question of Materiality

Sex is another taken-for-granted notion in feminism which Butler attempts at de-constructing. She asks: "[W]hat is 'sex' . . . ?" and "Does sex have a history? Does

each sex have a different history, or histories?" (*GT* 9). She effectively challenges the dichotomous presumption of natural sex / constructed gender. She advocates a genealogical approach to the category of sex. She asserts that the presupposition of a pre-discursive "natural sex," is itself discursively produced. That is, the unconstructedness of sex is itself constructed (9-10). It is within the discourse itself that the notions of pre-discursivity and extra-discursivity are produced. It is only within language that the notions of pre-linguistic and extra-linguistic become possible. In other words, there is no language-free perspective, that is, it is impossible to talk about language without using language. Despite being necessary, metalanguage is not possible. "We cannot do without it, but there is no metalanguage as a discrete language: it is both part of and not part of its so-called object language" (Royle 58).

"The story of origin," according to Butler, is "a strategic tactic within a narrative that, by telling a single, authoritative account about an irrecoverable past, makes the constitution of the law appear as a historical inevitability" (*GT* 48). She strongly argues that any notion of the past is constructed, and this construction serves the interests of present and future. Butler argues further that the story of origin within feminist discourse, serves to reify the problematic notion of the pre-discursive authentic feminine, which brings about exclusionary practices (49), erasing other possible forms of femininity. Moreover, being essentialised, sex "becomes ontologically immunized from power relations and its own historicity" (129).

By claiming that sex "was always already gender" (9), Butler means that sex is a highly gendered notion, a gendered and a political category (*GT* 10 and GP 113). Contrary to what has been interpreted[10], Butler does not deny these biological differences, but rather, asks the question of *how* biological differences come to be attributed to sex (*GP* 113).

> [T]his sex posited as prior to construction will, by virtue of being posited, become the effect of that very positing, *the construction of construction*. If gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this 'sex' except by means of its construction, then it

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[10] See Salih, *Judith Butler* (143-144).

appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that 'sex' becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access. (*BTM* xv; emphasis added)

To make a distinction between "what is 'materially true', and what is 'culturally' true" is impossible for Butler. Hence, sex is not a reality but *a question* that must be left "*open, troubling, unresolved, propitious*" (*UG* 192; emphasis added).

As I discussed in chapter 1, Butler has been criticized by a large number of feminists for neglecting the materiality of the body. She is constantly asked: "What about the materiality of the body?" This question, as Butler puts it aptly, rises from "*the ruins of the logos*" (*BTM* viii; emphasis added). What the critics miss is Butler's de-constructive objective, the important fact that she tries to avoid the trap of logocentrism. As Spivak puts it, "deconstruction is not an exposure of error. . . . The critique in deconstruction . . . is the critique of something that is extremely useful, something without which we cannot do anything" (qtd. in *BTM* 3). What Butler opposes, thus, is not materiality but affirming materiality which involves normative violence. She writes,

> [T]he undeniability of . . . "materialities" in no way implies what it means to affirm them, indeed, what interpretive matrices condition, enable and limit that necessary affirmation. That each of those categories have a *history* and a *historicity*, that each of them is constituted through the boundary lines that distinguish them and, hence, by what they exclude, that relations of discourse and power produce hierarchies and overlappings among them and challenge those boundaries, implies that these are *both* persistent and contested regions. (36; the last emphasis is original)

Butler states over and over that sex is embedded in discourse so that the two are not dissociable (xi); it is also performative. That is, sex is materialised "through a ritualised repetition of norms," through a citational process "by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (ix, xii). The materiality of the body is thinkable only within the already materialized regulatory norms. "[T]he effect of boundary, fixity, and surface [that] we call matter" is produced by "a process of materialization [that] stabilizes over time" (xviii).

Butler does not see any contradiction between constructedness and materiality. Nor does she assume that the two are mutually exclusive. Sex, according to her, is *neither completely material, nor completely constructed, "but partially both"* (*UG* 186; emphasis added). She insists that, being interimplicated, both notions of materiality and constructedness are produced within the matrix of power. Materiality is always "bound up with signification." The notion of a pre-linguistic body is signified within language. It is actually as an effect of this signification that this pre-cultural, pre-linguistic, unconstructed body is constructed and its boundaries are set. Butler shares Derrida's suspicion about "the absolute exterior." She holds that "[t]o posit by way of language a materiality outside of language is still to posit that materiality, and the materiality so posited will retain that positing as its constitutive condition." Thus, the notion of "prior to signification is an effect of signification." (*BTM* 4-6). In other words, "[t]here is no nature, only the effect of nature: denaturalization or naturalization" (Derrida qtd. in *BTM* xi).

Butler's major concern is that the materialisation of sex serves the exclusionary purposes of heterosexual hegemony. Sex materialises only at the expense of the unmaterialisable. In order for a sexed identification to be achieved, other identifications must be foreclosed. This means that the uninhabitable zone functions as the "constitutive outside" without which the subject cannot come into being. In short, "the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection." This "abjected outside," according to Butler, is " 'inside' the subject as its own founding repudiation" (xiii). As Elizabeth Grosz puts it, "in Butler's work, . . . *mattering*, is more important than *matter*" (qtd. in Lloyd, JB 76; emphasis added). What Butler is concerned about is "the heteronormative construction of bodies" (72), that is, the mechanisms of valuation and de-valuation, through which some bodies come to matter and some do not (76). Her "purpose of interrogating materialism is to open up 'new possibilities, *new ways for bodies to matter'* " (72; emphasis added).

"[M]aterialization is," as Butler underlines, "never quite complete." Existence of discontinuities shows that the norms that materialise bodies are not

strictly complied with. These instabilities are significant for Butler because they provide the means for re-materialisation (Butler, *BTM* xii). The key moment for Butler is when "one's staid and usual cultural perceptions fail." In other words, when the body one sees is not easily readable, that is, when it does not easily fit to binary categories of man/woman. This "vacillation between the categories," as Butler asserts, put "the body in question" (*GT* xxiv). The intersex, for instance, generate significant ambiguity. They bring the exclusionary categories of sex and the "strategies of sexual categorization" into question (130). By revealing the inexhaustibility of sex, they de-construct rigid binary categories, "redistribute[ing] the constitutive elements of those categories" (136).

Butler's criticism of the "matter" is extended to sexuality as well. Borrowing Foucault's anti-repressive hypothesis, Butler criticises the notion of pre-discursive sexuality that is said to be repressed by the law. She objects to any theorisation of sexuality before the law or outside the law. She shares Foucault's opinion that "sexuality and power are coextensive." Power is not repressive, but rather productive. It does not repress, but rather produces the polymorphous sexuality before the law. In other words, the notions of the before and the outside, according to her, are themselves discursively produced (39-40). Butler calls this construction, "metaphysical reification of multiplicitous sexuality" (133). She constantly reminds us that materiality does not precede signification; quite the contrary, it is the effect of signification (*BTM* 6), that is, the effect of "discourses on sex and sexuality" (5).

However, this does not mean that sexuality is fully determined by these discourses. Butler maintains that "the norm fails to determine us completely" (86). She writes,

> [S]exuality is never fully captured by any regulations. . . . [I]t can exceed regulation, take on new forms in response to regulation, even turn around and make it sexy. In this sense, sexuality is never fully reducible to the "effect" of this or that operation of regulatory power. this is not the same as saying that sexuality is, by nature, free and wild. On the contrary, it emerges precisely as an improvisational possibility within a field of constraints. Sexuality, though, is not found to be "in" those constraints as something might be "in" a container: it is extinguished by constraints, but also mobilized and

incited by constraints, even sometimes requiring them to be produced again and again. (*UG* 15)

Butler repeatedly states that "sexuality is not easily summarized or unified through categorization" (7). She opposes the rigid distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality which reduces sexual practice to straight/gay binary (*GT* 165), erasing bisexuality and other queer practices of sexuality (*BTM* 74). She asserts not only that heterosexuality and homosexuality are not mutually exclusive (ibid.), but also that there are queer forms of sexuality that cannot be pinned to these binary categories. It is this uncategorisability, that is, the internal dissonances within heterosexual matrix that debunk the myth of coherence, rendering heterosexuality as "an inevitable comedy," "a constant parody." By revealing the fissures within heterosexuality, this self-parody reveals the fact that the ideal positions produced by heterosexuality cannot be fully embodied (*GT* 166). Consequently, heterosexuality "is consistently haunted by the domain of sexual possibility" (*BTM* 85). Butler asserts that this weakness within heterosexual regime can be re-deployed against itself (181).

Butler argues that butch/femme identities within homosexuality cannot be read as assimilation into heterosexual masculinity/femininity. Quite the contrary, they parody and destabilise the assumed originality of heterosexual masculinity/femininity. The existence of butch and femme, according to Butler, calls the ontology of heterosexual masculinity and heterosexual femininity into question, revealing their non-essentiality, that is, their contingency (*UG* 209). Butler states that "the object [and clearly, there is not just one] of lesbian-femme desire is neither some decontextualized female body nor a discrete yet superimposed masculine identity, but the destabilization of both terms as they come into erotic interplay" (*GT* 167).

When multifarious passions coincide, and make "simultaneous and dissonant claims on truth," the so-called coherent categories are called into question. These queer convergences, which are "moments of productive undecidability," cannot be reduced to hetero/homo binary. In other words, these queer moments cannot be captured by rigid and reductive psychoanalytic categories (*UG* 141, 142). For

instance, in the case of transsexuals who have not yet undergone sex-reassignment surgery, the distinction between heterosexual and homosexual becomes more complicated. When one, despite having female anatomy, identifies as a man[11], and sleeps with a woman, the question "[is] this straight or is this gay?" cannot be easily answered according to Butler. As Butler states, "[t]here might be what [s/he] says. There might be what [his or her] lover says. There might also be a certain cultural reading that is possible that would take into account what they say but would not be completely wedded to what they say" (CS 756). In other words, s/he cannot easily be reduced to straight/gay binary. This moment, that is, the moment when categorisation fails, is, for Butler, the moment when binary categories are questioned, unsettled, and, as such, de-constructed

Even more unsettling is the existence of bisexuals. Bisexuality cannot be captured by categories of desire. Neither can it be explained by psychoanalytic theories. It "can't be reducible to two heterosexual desires[12], understood as a feminine side wanting a masculine object, or a masculine side wanting a feminine one" (*UG* 80). Thus, it is not only that the binary straight/gay categories go bankrupt, but that "the correlation between gender identity and sexual orientation are [rendered] murky." That is, one's gender is proved not to be the determiner of "what direction(s) of desire he or she will ultimately entertain and pursue" (79).

These "persisting inconceivability[ies]" (64), the uncategorisable, that Butler refers to as "uncertain ontologies" (108), not only put essentialist and naturalist ontologies into question, but also open up possibilities for expanding the domain of sexual possibilities. The abject, the unthinkable, the unspeakable, the unrepresentable sexuality, according to Butler, "can figure the sublime within the contemporary field of sexuality, a site of pure resistance, a site unco-opted by normativity" (106).

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[11] Butler gives example of Brandon Teena in *Boys Don't Cry.*

[12] Freud reduces bisexuality to "*two heterosexual desires within a single psyche*" (*GT* 82).

CHAPTER 3

PERSISTING INCONCEIVABILITY: GENDER/SEXUAL AMBIGUITY AND BOUNDARY CONFUSION IN *WRITTEN ON THE BODY*, *SEXING THE CHERRY*, AND *THE PASSION*

What *Written on the Body*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Passion* have in common is the way they blur the boundaries, not only between the binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, but also between fact and fiction, which serves to heighten the confusion they already create. Much like the narrator of *Written on the Body*, the Dog-Woman and Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry*, and Villanelle and Henri in *The Passion* cannot be pinned down to heteronormative categories. Living on the borderlines, that is, in-between the heteronormative categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, they trouble these categories, de-constructing the myth of continuity and coherence. They reveal the boundaries not to be fixed and firm, but rather porous and permeable. Furthermore, they highlight the fact that there is no correlation between anatomical sex, gender identity, gender performance, and sexual practice. Thus, although *Written on the Body*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Passion* have been mostly received as "lesbian texts," I will argue that all the binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, including this hetero/homo binary, go bankrupt within these texts, all of which queer these uncritically accepted notions. All the three, I suggest, oblige the reader to re-think the boundaries.

3.1 Boundary Confusion in *Written on the Body*

Written on the Body is a "love story" told by an un-gendered autodiegetic narrator. The narrator recounts numerous affairs, most of which s/he has had with "happily

married women." S/he remembers, in flashbacks, her/his affairs with Bathsheba (*WB* 16), Jacqueling (24), Catherine (59), Inge (21), Judith (75), Estelle (77), Frank (92), Carlo (143), Gail (142), Bruno (152), among others whose names are not mentioned. The most part of the narrative, however, is about Louise, one of her/his lovers with whom s/he is obsessed. The narrator had a five-month relationship with Louise, after which s/he left her in an agreement with Louise's oncologist husband Elgin to send Louise to Switzerland to undergo treatment for her newly diagnosed cancer. Louise, however, leaves both her husband and the narrator. Haunted by a sense of guilt and regret, the narrator ends up (re-)writing Louise and their love affair.

The fact that the narrator is into liaisons with married women and her/his promiscuousness induces the (hetero)sexist assumption that the narrator is a Don-Juanesque man. Some readers who are familiar with the writer and her life, on the other hand, take the narrator to be a lesbian woman, reducing the text to the Author. Both assumptions, however, are questioned by half of the novel, when the narrator starts giving an account of her/his boyfriends: "I had a boyfriend once called Crazy Frank" (92), and later, when s/he refers to Carlo, and Bruno. This ambiguity comes as a disappointment to the readers and the critics. Thus, despite the androgyny of the narrator, the fact that s/he practices sex with both women and men, and the absence of her/his body, some critics not only have tried to assign her/him a sex and a gender, but they have also attempted at pigeonholing her/him as a "lesbian." To this end, they have tried to resolve ambiguities by digging out gender signifiers in the text, and by establishing a correlation between these signifiers and lesbian sexuality. I will briefly touch on these easy categorisations and later discuss the significance of the gender/sexual ambiguity in the text.

3.1.1 Gender Markers and Easy Categorisations

The hunt for gender signifiers within the text is a vain attempt because there is no fixed and frozen identity, but rather multiple, clashing identifications. The narrator likens her/himself to numerous male and female figures such as Alice in

Wonderland (10), Socrates (13), Adam (18), Lothario [13] (20), Wordsworth, Napoleon (37), Lauren Bacall [14] (41), the girl in the story of Rumpelstiltskin (44), Christopher Robin[15] (61), Robert the Bruce [16] (71), Mussolini (101), Mark Twain (108), and Jonah (120). The narrator reads both *Playboy* (36) and women's magazines (74). S/he uses other male/female metaphors for her/himself such as "a sailor [who] run[s] a wife" (40), "an unbroken colt" (81), a schoolgirl (82), and a street yob (94). S/he says s/he "feel[s] like a convent virgin" (94). Hetero/homo identifications are also blurred in the text. The narrator compares her/himself and her girlfriends—Louise and Catherine respectively—to "virgin and a roue" (81), Dr Watson and Sherlock Holmes (60). S/he likens her/himself and Louise to homosexuals: "We're dancing together tightly sealed like a pair of 50s homosexuals" (73). Somewhere else s/he says, "Louise is a Pre-Raphaelite beauty but that doesn't make me a mediaeval knight" (159).

There are other signifiers in the text that lead to both gender and sexual ambiguity, such as the idealisation of women's bodies, particularly the idealisation of Louise's body during her menstruation (136), the narrator's emphasis on sameness rather than difference when describing Louise [17], the word L which appears three times throughout the text (40, 88, 118), wimpish depiction of male characters, the narrator's complicity in a terrorist attack on men's toilets organised by her/his girlfriend Inge, who believes that urinals are "a symbol of patriarchy and must be destroyed" (22), the fact that the narrator wears "Inge's stockings over [her/his] head" in order not to draw attention in men's toilets, the reference to

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[13] A male character *in Don Quixote* who seduces women.

[14] A female actress and singer.

[15] A male character in *Winnie-the-Pooh*.

[16] A Scottish King.

[17] "I thought difference was rated to be the largest part of sexual attraction but there are so many things about us that are the same" (*WB* 129).

womb trauma (24)[18], Elgin's indifference when he sees the narrator in the kitchen (35), using erotic body oil (36), the narrator's sympathising with women in Clap Clinic (46), the reference to Army (47)[19], the narrator's resemblance to Boy Scouts (58),[20] being Judith's Bottom,[21] the use of adjective beautiful to refer to the narrator (84, 85)[22], the word " 'PERVERT' that [is] written on [the narrator's] NHS file" (112), the fight scene with Elgin (170)[23], being scared of the paper-snake (41), and so forth. The text is, thus, an amalgam of floating stereotypical gender signifiers. There is no frozen identity, but rather a series of confusing, anxiety-producing, hybrid, and ambivalent identifications; there is no fixed signified meaning, but rather signifiers which are continuously replaced by other signifiers in an endless play of language. In other words, there is no presence, but rather *différance*, which, according to Derrida, "calls for a kind of thinking that is 'uneasy and uncomfortable' " (D 12).

This ambiguity has been interpreted in different ways. It has been seen as a blockage, due to which the text fails to challenge the stereotypical understanding of gender. That means rather than subverting the stereotypes, the text has been claimed to be bound up in stereotypical and binary conception of gender (Weder 9). It has also been argued that "the genderless narrator turns out to be everything but a feminist device as it speaks with a definitely male voice" (Maioli 144). The text, from this perspective, "shows that there can be no such thing as 'genderless'

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[18] "I had idealised them [Inge's breasts] simply and unequivocally, not as a mother substitute nor a womb trauma, but for themselves. Freud didn't always get it right" (24).

[19] "I was nothing, a weak piece of shit. . . . Self-respect. They're supposed to teach you that in the Army. Perhaps I should enlist" (46).

[20] "I was wearing baggy shorts which in such weather looked like a recruitment campaign for the Boy Scouts. But I'm not a Boy Scout and never was" (58).

[21] "It's a comforting thought, slightly better than being a sucker . . . Judith's bottom" (76).

[22] Louise says: "When I saw you two years ago I thought you were the most beautiful creature male or female I had ever seen" (84). Later the narrator thinks: "I don't lack self-confidence but I'm not beautiful" (85).

[23] "I've never had any boxing lessons so I had to fight on instinct and cram his windpipe into his larynx" (170).

narrator, since 'ungendered' ends up coinciding with the 'universal', and, in western culture, it [the universal] stands for 'male' " (ibid.).

Some other critics have tried to free the text of its ambivalence. The easiest way of removing the ambiguities and filling the gaps, as Barthes indicates, is "[t]o give a text an Author." This, he believes, serves the interests of the critics because it limits and closes the text (*DA* 149). "[W]hen the Author has been found, the text is 'explained' [which is] victory to the critic" (150). The name of the author, as Foucault puts it, "allows a limitation of the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations" (*WA* 186). Thus, to resolve the ambiguities, most critics have tried to pin the identity of the writer on the narrator. Cath Stowers, Ute Kauer, Lisa Moore, Patricia Duncker, Marilyn Farewell, Paige Van De Winkle, among other critics, have come to the conclusion that the narrator is a "lesbian" woman; they claim that the narrator "fulfils distinctly lesbian aims" despite not being depicted as a lesbian (Stowers 91). The text, thus, is seen as an attempt at lesbianising "heterosexual metaphors and symbols" (93).

To prove this assumption, critics mostly refer to the fact that the narrator sympathises with women in the Clap Clinic (Kauer 48), to the idealisation of Louise's body even during menstruation which is stereotypically considered atypical of a man (De Winkle 12). In addition, the fact that the narrator uses the pronoun we[24] when s/he talks about Japanese virgin substitute has been interpreted as a reference to European women, and not all European; this is, thus, taken as "a feeling of solidarity" (Kauer 49). They also refer to the distance of the narrator when s/he gives an account of her/his boyfriends, which is claimed to be "an ironical distance" (ibid.). Apart from these, most critics refer to the fact that the narrator tries not to draw attention in men's toilet (50), the emphasis on "sameness," which has taken to be as an indication of the same sex (Rubbinsin 219), the narrator's complicity with Inge in the terrorist attack on men's toilets and

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[24] "In Europe we have always preferred a half lemon" (*WB* 77).

the distance from men[25] (Makinen 112), the label pervert (ibid.), the word L (116), and so on.

None of these, however, can be indicative of gender. Taking a closer look at the text, they are revealed to be merely ossified gender stereotypes that are parodied in the text and are put into question. For instance, the commonly made claim that the narrator's complicity with Inge in the terrorist attack on men's toilets is indicative of her/his gender is problematic. This complicity has been read as the "construction of men as the Other," which she associates with "feminist reaction to men" (112). The text has also been associated with radical feminism, claiming that Winterson is involved in a similar project (122). However, I would argue that reading this attack scene as otherising men would be totally neglecting the narrator's obvious distance: "She said I wasn't fit to be an assistant in the fight towards a new matriarchy because I had QUALMS" (*WB* 22). The fact that the word qualms is capitalised is quite telling. The narrator's involvement in the attack does not at all mean that s/he approves it. The distance of the narrator from radical feminism becomes quite clear when s/he says, "I don't feel a great deal about the Women's Institute" (23). Moreover, the scene of terrorist attack is quite comic. If we take Inge as symbolising radical feminism and this attack as symbolising its policies, it is possible to read this scene as parodying the separatist policies of radical feminism and their inefficacy. Although a sense of distance from men can be inferred when the narrator asks, "Why do men like doing things together?" (22), it must not lead us to neglect the narrator's distance from Inge and Women's Institute. Furthermore, the distance of the narrator from men can be neither a gesture of solidarity with women, nor indicative of being a woman.

The letter L that appears three times in the text has mostly led to lesbian interpretations as well:

> What does it say in the tea-leaves? Nothing but a capital L. (40)

> [T]he first letter [was] a huge L. The L woven into shapes of birds and angels that slid between the pen lines. The letter was a maze. On

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[25] "Why do men like doing things together?" (*WB* 22).

the outside, at the top of the L, stood a pilgrim in hat and habit. At the heart of the letter, which had been formed to make a rectangle out of the double of itself, was the Lamb of God. How would the pilgrim try through the maze, the maze so simple to angels and birds? I tried to fathom the path for a long time but I was caught at dead ends beaming serpents. I gave up and shut the book, forgetting that the first L had been love. (88)

[T]he L that tattoos me on the inside is not visible to the naked eye. (118)

According to some critics, this L stands not only for Louise and love, but also for "Lesbian" (Makinen 116). Similarly, critics have taken the word "PERVERT" as an implication of lesbianism (Makinen 112). It is true that the narrator is considered a pervert in her/his society: " 'You know, love is a very beautiful thing but there are clinics for people like you.' Now, it's a serious matter to have 'PERVERT' written on your NHS file and some identities are just a romance too far" (20). I suggest, however, neither the letter "L," nor the word "PERVERT" can easily be taken as implications of "lesbianism." The fact that the letter L is referred to as a "*maze*" cautions us against its simplification and reduction of it to a rigid category. As for the word pervert on the file, which pathologises the narrator, it can be inferred that her/his desire is not intelligible within the cultural matrix. However, this does not necessarily indicate that she is a "lesbian," because lesbian desire is not the only unintelligible form of desire.

These interpretations ensue from the desire to categorise, the desire to name and foreclose the text, to fill the gaps and eliminate the uncertainties, and to rid the text of the haze. Readers and critics desire the "pleasure" (in Barthes' terms) that a "writerly text" cannot afford. Barthes draws a distinction between "pleasure" (*plaisir*) and "bliss" (*jouissance*):

> Text of pleasure; the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading. Text of bliss; the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that *discomforts* . . . , unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language. (*PT* 14; 2nd emphasis added)

Unlike an ideological work, which aims at reifying a certain discourse, a text, in Barthesian sense, does not prefer a discourse over another; "the text does not give names—or it removes existing ones" (45), that is, it "*undoes nomination*, and it is this defection which approaches bliss" (ibid.). An example of a "writerly text," *Written on the Body*, does not prefer the lesbian discourse to the compulsory heterosexuality; it is a text that does not name and does not let the reader name. Not only does it resist naming, it also problematises the act of naming itself. Hence, it approaches the Barthesian bliss; it does not provide euphoria, because it does not satisfy the reader; it is, rather, discomforting; it upsets and questions the reader's taken-for-granted "truths." It de-sediments the reader's heteronormative assumptions about sex, gender, and desire, compelling the reader to re-think these uncritically accepted notions. Therefore, rather than attempting to reduce it to names, I assert, more weight must be given to its namelessness and the function of this namelessness.

3.1.2 Parody of Gender and Sexual Identity

As I have discussed, the narrator of *Written on the Body* vacillates between the binary categories, such as male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, and straight/gay. The narrator's fluid identity, thus, obscures these categories. However, as I have mentioned previously, some critics have tried to free the text of this obscurity by pigeonholing the narrator. Even those who agree that gender is parodied in the text are trapped in stereotypical reading of this parody. For instance, Ute Kauer argues that the text attempts to dispel the myth around women rather than men. Hence, she does not see the possibility of a man putting on a feminine disguise, likening himself to a "convent virgin." On the contrary, it makes more sense to her that a woman disguises herself as Lothario. Thus, she takes the narrator as a woman who "cross-dress[es] as a man." According to her, "stereotypes about masculinity are mocked and employed as a means to undermine the traditional concept of female behaviour" (Kauer 46). She asserts that "Only the male

identifications appear as masks, and masks are usually used to hide the real identity" (47). Kauer's distinction between masks and non-masks, I suggest, are made based on the very stereotypes that the text attempts to de-construct. This reading is deeply ingrained in the expressive model of gender and essentialist understanding of identity. In order to make a distinction between masks and non-masks, one must presuppose a prior distinction between "original" femininity/masculinity and "copied" femininity/masculinity. In other words, on must presuppose an essence, an authentic identity which is hidden under the mask, that is, fake identity. Kauer presupposes an essential feminine identity that is hidden under a masculine mask. In other words, the masculinity of the narrator is not an "original" masculinity, but only a "copy" of the original.

In my reading, however, the narrator is stereotypically feminine on some occasions, yet stereotypically masculine on other occasions. S/he cannot be pinned on one side of the binary matrix of gender. S/he fluctuates between femininity and masculinity, defying categorization. By not allowing the reader to categorise the narrator, the text plays with binarism; it calls into question not only the easy distinction between femininity and masculinity, but also renders them as limited categories that must be re-thought.

By performing stereotypes of femininity and masculinity excessively, e.g. playing a convent virgin or a Lothario, the narrator reveals their theatricality and fictionality. That is because "to be excessively excessive, to flaunt one's performance as performance, is to unmask all identity as drag," and, as such, parodic (Fuss qtd. in Lloyd, *BIP* 138). By wearing the mask of the convent virgin, the narrator parodies and de-sediments the traditional perception of femininity, and by wearing the mask of Lothario s/he parodies and de-sediments the traditional perception of masculinity. Lothario and the convent virgin, among other stereotypes, are revealed to be only drags behind which there is no fixed identity. In short, the narrator's excessively stereotypical performances reveal the fact that the performance itself is performative. The narrator is doing masculinity as well as femininity. Thus, gender is shown not to be fixed and frozen, but rather fluid. In other words, gender is a continuous doing rather than being a noun. This idea of

gender as a continuous doing brings to one's mind Butler's assertion that gender "is real only to the extent that it is performed" (PAGC 527).

By wearing multiple masks, feminine and masculine, the narrator unsettles the boundary not only between femininity and masculinity, but, more importantly, between the very notions of interiority and exteriority, that is, between the psychic reality and the bodily expressions of gender. By parodying both masculinity and femininity, s/he reveals the fact that gender is only an imitation, a mask rather than an essence. The narrator reminds us of Butler's argument on drag. Like drag, the narrator's imitation "*implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*" (*GT* 187). The text draws attention to the fact that there is no original gender which is imitated by the narrator. Rather, it is the imitation itself that is imitated and parodied within the text. The text, thus, problematises the distinction between original and copy; it de-constructs the notion of "origin" and "original," rendering the original itself a copy. In other words, it de-constructs the "myth of originality." By demonstrating the fact that there is no original, authentic, or real woman/man, the text, in Butler's words, deprives the heteronormative regimes "of their central protagonists: 'man' and 'woman' " (200).

Accordingly, what the critics miss is the complexity of identity and identification which the text highlights. As Butler puts it, "being a man" and "being a woman" are fraught with ambivalence and instability, because "identification is always an ambivalent process" (*BTM* 86). One cannot be said *to be* a "woman" or a "man," but rather one is in an *ongoing process of approximating* these ideals. Moreover, identifying oneself with women does not at all rule out the possibility of identifying oneself with men. Rather than being mutually exclusive, masculine and feminine identifications co-exist within the text. On top of this ambiguity which defers gender categorization, the fact that the narrator practices sex with both women and men, defers sexual categorization. In other words, the binary categories of sex, gender, and desire are dissolved within the play.

To put it in Butler's terminology, encountering these "persisting inconceivability[ies]" (*UG* 64), the reader's "staid and usual cultural perceptions fail" (*GT* xxiv). These moments are, from Butler's perspective, "moments of

productive undecidability," (*UG* 142). The text "troubles [the] binary divide and arguably proliferates it to the point where it no longer makes sense" (Nunn qtd. in Andermahr 78). As Butler claims, this "parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender [and sexual] identities" (*GT* 188). When categorisation fails, binary categories, such as male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, and straight/gay are obscured and de-constructed. Thus, identity is revealed to be fluid and unstable rather than fixed and frozen.

3.1.3 De-construction of the Body

The title of the text, *Written on the Body*, opens it to different possible interpretations. Firstly, it reminds us of the claim that gender is written on the body. Looking deeper, however, it becomes difficult to make such a claim. If gender is written on the body, what is this body that gender is written on? Despite the title of the text and the idealisation of the body by the narrator, there is no "body" in the text. The fact that there is so much talk about the body without there being a body makes it possible to read the title ironically. It brings to mind Butler's claim that body is nothing more than the discourses on the body. Put it better, the body is not dissociable from the discourses in which it is embedded (*BTM* xi). Furthermore, the fact that the narrator's body is kept a secret suggests that "such information is or should be irrelevant. Confirmation of the narrator's sex would merely reinforce gender stereotypes rooted in male-constructed, 'scientific' knowledge about sexed bodies" (Rubinson 220). In other words, the narrator's sexual/gender ambiguity "challenges the naturalized status of positivist-influenced biological essentialism" (ibid.), and at the same time the reader's gendered and sexualised concepts.

The narrator makes an effort to understand Louise's body, and her/his desire for her body. Ironically, however, there is nothing at her/his disposal but medical discourse and medical language. That points out the fact that the body is accessible and intelligible *only* through medical discourse:

I went to the medical books. I became obsessed with anatomy. . . .
Within the clinical language, through the dispassionate view of the
sucking, sweating, greedy defecating self, I found a love-poem to
Louise. I would go on knowing her, more intimately than the skin,
hair and voice that I craved. I would have her plasma, her spleen, her
synovial fluid. (*WB* 111)

Rather than using medical language, however, the narrator gives the reader a
"description of the body as a poetic amalgam of reversals, puns and metaphors"
(Makinen 116). By doing so, I would suggest, s/he parodies the scientific language
and scientific discourses, which are "supposed to link the reader directly to
'universal truth' about nature" (Rubinson 224). By blurring the boundaries between
scientific language and poetic language, the text blurs the boundaries between
science and fiction, depriving the scientific discourses of their authority.

The text raises the same question that Butler does: "[W]hat is 'sex' . . . ?"
(*GT* 9). As Butler points out, if gender is a "fiction" about "real" sex, and if we
understand this real sex only through the fictive gender, then it is not possible to
claim that sex is less fictive than gender (*BTM* xv). Thus, this distinction between
the "real" and "fiction" is itself rendered as fiction. That means "gender is not [a
fiction simply] written on the body" (*GT* 199) which is real. The text demonstrates
the fact that body itself is a *story* which has a *history*. As Butler argues, bodies are
constructed within a heteronormative framework. Unity and wholeness of the body
is fiction constructed by discourses on the body. "[T]he effect of boundary, fixity,
and surface [that] we call matter" is produced by "a process of materialization
[that] stabilizes over time" (xviii). To put it in other words, the *matter* itself is
materialized (7), which means that there is no pre-linguistic body; rather, the notion
of the pre-linguistic, real body is itself a linguistic construct.

The following sections of the text—"THE CELLS, TISSUES, SYSTEMS
AND CAVITIES OF THE BODY, THE SKIN, THE SKELETON, THE SPECIAL
SENSES"—in which the narrator dissects Louise's body, highlights the fact that
body is not a "whole." Rather, it is merely composed of fragmented parts that are
put together within medical discourse. This means that the " 'unity' [that is]
imposed upon the body" is fictional (Butler, *GT* 156). Rather than "creat[ing] a

body without a past," as it has been claimed by some critics (Makinen 126), the text de-constructs the "body" by enquiring into the mechanisms of its construction. It demonstrates the fact that

> [t]hese numerous features [i.e., physical features] gain social meaning and unification through their articulation within the category of sex. In other words, "sex" imposes an artificial unity on an otherwise discontinuous set of attributes. As both discursive and perceptual, "sex" denotes an historically contingent epistemic regime, a language that forms perception by forcibly shaping the interrelations through which physical bodies are perceived. (Butler, *GT* 155)

The text attracts the attention to Butler's assertion that ontologies are not neutral. "The story of origin," the notion of pre-cultural body, alongside any other notion of the past is constructed to serve the ideological interests of the present and the future. Elgin symbolises this manipulative construction. The fact that he plays "computer game[s] called HOSPITAL" (*WB* 29), and "LABORATORY" (104), alludes to the manipulatory strategies of scientific institutions. Elgin "wants to make the big discovery [and g]et the Nobel Prize" (67). It can be inferred that he is manipulating Louise in order to achieve this goal: "Elgin was to be in the honours list this year [and] Louise cost him that" (167). Hence, it is not even clear if Louise's cancer is real or one of the games played by Elgin; this remains one of the gaps in the text, inviting the reader to re-think not only the notions of "nature" and "natural," but also that of "science" through which we access this so-called nature. The text, in other words, compels the reader "to see scientific discourses not as 'natural' but as *a set of stories*, as *constructed* and *constructing* as any other genre of story" (Rubinson 225; emphasis added).

3.1.4 De-construction of the Discourses on Desire

Written on the Body has an ambivalent approach to clichés. The criticism of it, however, is bound up in the either/or binarism, neglecting this ambivalence. It has been argued that *Written on the Body* is an "unoriginal love triangle" (Maioli 145), only "a gimmick" (Rubinson 219, Makinen 110), which is bound up in

"heterosexual clichés" and gender stereotypes, and, therefore, "remains 'disappointingly conventional' " (Makinen 123, 110). In other words, the text has been seen as merely a "regurgitat[ion of] old conventions," and not much different from conventional adultery fiction (Makinen 110). On the other hand, it has also been claimed that the text "reinvent[s] the language of romance, jettisoning the tired clichés and formulaic plots of the mainstream romance industry" (Andermahr 80). The criticism of *Written on the Body* is, thus, bound up in the binary logic which follows that a text is *either* radically subversive *or* it is conventional. This, I would argue, is a superficial understanding of subversion. In my reading, *Written on the Body* neither "reinvent[s] the language of romance, jettisoning the tired clichés and formulaic plots of the mainstream romance industry," as Andermahr claims (80), nor does it "[result in] a conventional text," as claimed by Miner and Jones (Makinen 111). There might be some sense in Marlyn Farwell's claim that the narrator is "trapped within a story which is fraught with clichés," and that her/his "conception of love . . . comes to her/him through cultural traditions" (115), but the point missed in this reading is that the conception of love cannot come from somewhere outside "cultural traditions." She also ignores the fact that although the text is "fraught with clichés," it does not simply solidify these clichés. By foregrounding the conventionality of love, the text reveals the constructedness of it and the fact that all discourses on love, alongside the concept of love itself are clichés. Rather than totally subverting the clichés, which is not possible, the text parodies them. Far from repeating the clichés loyally, the text repeats them subversively; it plays with these clichés, calling them into question. In other words, the text de-mythologises love, de-constructs the discourses on love, and de-sediments the reader's conception of love. The text demands the readers to re-think their conceptions of desire which is reduced to the discourse of love.

If we understand the subject in a Butlerian way as "a linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation" (*PLP* 10), it makes sense that the narrator, as a linguistic category, cannot move, once and for all, beyond the language within which s/he is trapped. It is through language that s/he strives to express her/his "genuine emotion."   Ironically, however, s/he "use[s] . . . a language that

simultaneously uses" her/him (Bertens 127). Thus, s/he has no outside perspective on love and on language. In other words, there is no metalanguage. As Barthes states,

> As a creature of language, the writer is always caught up in the war of fictions (jargons), but *he is never anything but a plaything in it*, since the language that constitutes him (writing) is always outside-of-place (atopic); . . . The writer is always on the blind spot of system, adrift; he is . . . necessary to the meaning (the battle), but himself deprived of fixed meaning. (*PT* 34; emphasis added)

The narrator is "a creature of language," "a language that is already speaking," a language which "is already saturated with norms" (Butler, *UG* 69). Being a linguistic being, thus, the narrator is embedded in multiple discourses. Like all subjects, the narrator and her/his subjectivity is the effect of subjectivation. Since no subject can gain subjectivity without being subjected to power, that is, "embodying the norms of . . . power" (167), the narrator's subjectivity has been performatively achieved through being interpellated by the discourses of power, as a result of which s/he is entangled in "power relations." Thus, her/ his perception of love is the performative effect of these discourses from which it cannot be detached. As a linguistic being, s/he has no norm-free perspective on language and love in order to be able to shrug off the clichés and re-invent a "genuine language" for love.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the narrator is a finalized subject, because "the installation [of the subject] is . . . [always] incomplete" (42). Although it is through interpellation that subjectivity is achieved, interpellation is, from Butler's perspective, always in danger of failure. Since the subject "is repeatedly constituted in subjection" rather than being "fully constituted in subjection," there is always "the possibility of a repetition that repeats against its origin" (*PLP* 94), which means that "[t]he one who is hailed may fail to hear, misread the call, turn the other way, answer to another name, insist on not being addressed in that way" (95). Moreover, "signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition," and "all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; 'agency,' then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that

repetition" (*GT* 198). In other words, one is compelled to repeat the norms of power which paradoxically makes divergent repetitions of them possible. That is, through repetition, it is always possible to diverge from the hegemonic understanding of norms. It is possible to re-direct and re-signify the norms. Even though the narrator's subjectivity has been performatively achieved through interpellation, and even though his perception of love is the performative effect of these discourses, s/he is not simply trapped within cultural traditions and their clicheic love stories as it has been claimed (Makinen 115). Rather than passive reception of the clichés, s/he re-cites these clicheic stories differently. In short, the text is not a "regurgitation of old conventions;" rather, it is a subversive repetition of them.

The fact that the narrator attempts at writing a "love story," I would suggest, can be read as a "desire for recognition." As a pervert, s/he is not recognised as a legitimate subject and, therefore, desires legitimacy. This, however, does not mean that the narrator is "outside culture" as it has been claimed (MacAvan 439). As a linguistic subject, s/he cannot be "outside culture." Rather, s/he is on the margins of a culture that pathologises her/him as a pervert. The guilt that s/he feels is nothing but the effect of the interpellative voice that calls her/him a "PERVERT." S/he says, "[s]ex can feel like love or maybe *it's guilt that makes me call sex love*" (*WB* 94; emphasis added). Therefore, it can be inferred that in order to achieve a socially meaningful and culturally recognisable existence, the narrator embarks on re-writing her/his affair with Louise. In other words, longing for a viable subject position, s/he tries to re-write her/his desire in a way that is intelligible and sanctioned within the "grid of cultural intelligibility." This attempt, however, fails, resulting in a parody.

The discursiveness of love can be inferred from the early pages of the novel which opens with the narrator's scattered thoughts on love:

> 'I love you.' *Why is it that the most unoriginal thing we can say to one another is still the thing we long to hear? 'I love you' is always a quotation.* You did not say it first and neither did I, yet when you say it and when I say it we speak like savages who have found *three words* and worship them. (9; emphasis added)

The narrator seeks to "express" her/his "love" for Louise, but finds nothing other than clichés: "*It's the clichés that cause the trouble. A precise emotion seeks a precise expression*" (10; emphasis added). This statement, I believe, is quite ironic; however, it has often been read too literally. Most critics such as Kauer (45), and De Winkle (18) agree that this sentence implies that "clichés are not precise" and, thus, cannot explain love, and that the narrator is in search of a precise language to express her/his love (Kauer 45). Such an interpretation, I suggest, is not only literal, but also reductive, because it totally neglects the narrator's cryptic question that follows: "A precise emotion seeks a precise expression. *If what I feel is not precise then should I call it love?*" (*WB* 10; emphasis added). I would argue that the following question indicates the ambivalence of the narrator's "love," its imprecision rather than precision. The imprecision of her/his desire is also indicated by the confusion s/he is plunged in: "I don't like to think of myself as an insincere person but if I say I love you and I don't mean it then what else am I? . . . And *if love is not those things then what things?*" (11-12; emphasis added). Thus, it can be argued that it is this imprecision of desire that unsettles the narrator. Despite admitting that "[i]t's the clichés that cause the trouble," (10, 71, 155, 189), s/he seeks solace in clichés:

> I am desperately looking the other way so that love won't see me. I want the diluted version, the sloppy language, the insignificant gestures. The saggy armchair of clichés. It's alright, millions of bottoms have sat here before me. . . . I don't have to be frightened, look, my grandma and granddad did it, . . . my parents did it, now I will do it won't I. . . . How happy we will be. How happy everyone will be. And they all lived happily ever after. (10)

S/he also refers to the comfort of clichés when s/he talks about Jacqueline: "I was tired of balancing blindfold on a slender beam, one slip and into the unplumbed sea. I wanted the clichés, the armchair" (26). Hence, it can be argued that it is the clichés that s/he finds precise, and, as such, comforting; and it is desire, on the other hand, that seems imprecise and queer to her/him:

> *No-one knows what forces draw two people together.* There are plenty of theories; astrology, chemistry, mutual need, biological

drive. Magazines and manuals worldwide will tell you how to pick the perfect partner. Dating agencies stress the science of their approach although having a computer does not make one a scientist. The old music of romance is played out in modern digital ways. Why leave yourself to chance when you could leave yourself to science? (96; emphasis added)

By alluding to the multiplicity of the discourses on desire—scientific discourses, psychoanalytic discourses, etc.—the text foregrounds and parodies the mechanisms of the discursive construction of love: If we perceive the pre-discursive "love" *only* through these discourses, that is, if we can understand this pre-linguistic "feeling" *only* through language, the *pre-linguistic itself is rendered linguistic*. In other words, the text draws the reader's attention to the fact that "love" acquires meaning only within language, that is, love is not something transcendental, but rather discursive, and, as such, contingent: "How can you stick at the game when the rules keep changing?" (10).

Despite the fact that the narrator is entangled in the clichés and conventions, I suggest, the text interrogates these clichés; it repeatedly parodies these conventional notions of love; it de-familiarises and de-mythologises these notions:

> . . . 'Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love.' Shakespeare was wrong, I was living proof of that.
>
> 'You ought to be dead proof,' I said to myself. 'If you're living proof he was right.' (95)

The text plays with the notions of love, fidelity, and adultery, dissolves the boundaries between them, and queers them:

> Odd that marriage, a public display and free to all, gives way to that most secret of liaisons, an adulterous affair. (16)
>
> In the late twentieth century we still look to ancient daemons to explain our commonest action. Adultery is very common. It has no rarity value and yet at an individual level it is explained away again and again as a UFO. (39)

Marriage and fidelity are shown to be subject to self-parody. Marriage is constantly parodied in the text, being rendered as "the flimsiest weapon against desire" (78), and fidelity is shown to be an ideal that cannot be attained: "Telling the truth . . .

was a luxury we could not afford and so lying became a virtue, an economy we had to practice" (16). Accordingly, by de-sacredising and de-mythologising both love and marriage, the text sheds light on the fact that these discourses on desire merely serve to ward off the possibility of *imprecise* forms of desire. By de-constructing these discourses, thus, the text opens up possibilities for *imprecise* desires that are not sanctioned by the discourses of love and marriage.

Nevertheless, some readers resist the de-constructive challenge proffered by the text, resolving the ambivalences and uncertainties by resort to the sedimented discourses of "maturity" and "true love," reducing the narrator to a protagonist of a conventional bildungsroman. For example, it has been argued that "the narrator's understanding of love blossoms and matures" (Mendez 46), that s/he goes through a journey from "jaded view of love . . . [to] a greater sensitivity through which s/he hopes to become a more committed and faithful lover" (44). Louise is associated with true love (41) and it is claimed that the narrator gains "a better understanding of the nature of true love" by the end of the novel (57), "[c]asting her/his previous affairs aside, the narrator comes to realize the strength of love" (Yakut 101).

In my reading, however, a text that puts so much emphasis on the fact that "it is the clichés that cause the trouble" cannot still be read with resort to the clichés. Thus, the text cannot be a discourse on maturity as it has been seen by some readers. I would argue that Louise cannot be read in a different way from Bathsheba Jacqueline, Catherine Inge, Judith, Estelle, Gail Right, Frank, Carlo, Bruno, and others. When the narrator remembers "Louise's words 'I will never let you go'," s/he says, "This is what I have been afraid of, what I've avoided through so many shaky liaisons. I'm addicted to the first six months" (*WB* 76). The narrator is "addicted to the first six months," and s/he left Louise after five months, not much different from her/his previous affairs.

The experience of déjà vu can also be said to be symbolising this banality: "The odd thing about Louise, being with Louise, was déjà vu. I couldn't know her well and yet I did know her well. . . . I had always been with Louise, we were familiar" (82). This indicates that there is nothing different about Louise. Louise is the effect of the discourses on love, in the same way as the others were. Louise is

the effect of the very same clichés that the narrator tries to go beyond. By likening Louise to "a Victorian heroine . . . from a Gothic novel" (49) the narrator blurs the boundary between fact and fiction, giving rise to questions around the factuality of Louise. Factuality of Louise is also called into question when the narrator says: "I couldn't find her. I couldn't even get near finding her. It's as if Louise never existed, like a character in a book." The narrator asks: "*Did I invent her*?" (189; emphasis added). Furthermore, the ending of the novel casts doubts on the whole story. The novel ends with a gap. It is not clear whether Louise's return is real or imaginary and the narrator says: "This is where the story starts" (190) which gives rise to questions. If we take this return as imaginary, does it mean that the story starts in the narrator's imagination? If so, does this suggest that the whole story is imaginary as this moment?

3.2 Boundary Confusion in *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion*

Sexing the Cherry is set partly in the seventeenth century London, afflicted with the conflict between the royalists and the parliamentarians resulting in the English civil war, and partly in the twentieth century. *The Passion*, on the other hand, is set in the Napoleonic period. In both *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion* the narrative voice is hybrid. *Sexing the Cherry* is narrated by a larger-than-life woman called the Dog-Woman and her son Jordan. The shifts in the narrator are marked by the banana and the pineapple which stand for the Dog-Woman and Jordan respectively. The Dog-Woman gives an account of her hatred for Puritans, their execution of King Charles I, and her revenge on them, which was the Great Fire of London. Jordan recounts his journeys and his desperate search for Fortunata, a dancer whom he falls in love with. In the last section of the novel, two other voices are also incorporated into the text, an ecologist woman and Nicolas Jordan, both of whom live in the twentieth century. The ecologist woman is represented by a split banana and Nicolas Jordan by a split pineapple. In *The Passion*, however, the shift in the narrator is not always easily realised. "The Emperor," i.e., the first section of the novel which is set in Napoleon's army, is narrated by a soldier named Henri who is

disappointed with war. The second section, "The Queen of Spades," is narrated by Villanelle, a Venetian girl, who gives an account of her life in the Casino and her love for a married woman she calls the Queen of Spades. In the last two sections of the text, "The Zero Winter" and "The Rock," the narrative voices are merged, shifting between Henri and Villanelle. The Zero Winter recounts Henri's disgust with war and his decision to leave with Villanelle and Patrick, a priest on the camp. The Rock is set in Venice, where Henri ends up in a madhouse.

Both *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion* trouble the binary categories of the heterosexual regime: male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, and straight/gay. Neither the Dog-Woman and Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry* nor Villanelle and Henri in *The Passion* can be easily pinned down to binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality. Villanelle's body cannot be put into male/female categories of sex, remaining vaguely in-between. As for the Dog-Woman, her huge body does not even fit into the norms human body. Thus, she occupies the space between the human and the monster. All the four characters are gender fluid, vacillating between femininity and masculinity, blurring the boundary between them. The hetero/homo binary is also de-stabilised by Villanelle who practices sexuality with both women and men. Moreover, in both texts, sexuality is rendered ambiguous mostly due to Jordan and Villanelle's cross-dressing. Thus, by defying categorisations, both bring to the fore the limits of categories and categorisation. Nevertheless, most critics read *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion* as "lesbian texts," despite their disagreement on whether these texts are successful lesbian texts or not. While Villanelle has been read as a "lesbian protagonist" (Makinen 58) and "a signifier for lesbianism" (70), the Dog-Woman has been read as a "quasi lesbian" character (86), "a metaphorical[ly] lesbian character" (96), or a character "stand[ing] symbolically for the lesbian figure and the lesbian discourse" due to her "lesbian body" (97). Apart from these so-called lesbian figures, "ridiculing of phallic power" (86), and the metaphor of grafting in *Sexing the Cherry* (91), Villanelle's rejection of Henri (73) and the deployment of *l' écriture féminine* 'feminine writing' in *The Passion* (59), alongside the feminisation of male figures in both texts, have been attributed to "lesbianism." Against the grain of their

lesbian reception, however, I will argue that neither *Sexing the Cherry*, nor *The Passion* can be named and pigeonholed. Like *Written on the Body*, both texts defy naming; rather than reduce and categorise, they de-construct categories and proliferate possibilities.

3.2.1 Bodies in Question: The Dog-Woman and Villanelle's Bodies

In both *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion* the normative boundaries of the "natural body" are problematised. The Dog-Woman's body in *Sexing the Cherry* and Villanelle's body in *The Passion* bring attention to the violence of the norm. Both bodies symbolise the abject, the "constitutive outside" of the "natural." The Dog-Woman's body does not fit into the norms of the human body. She is depicted as a monstrous human. She is as big as an elephant (*SC* 24). When she was a child, she broke his father's legs when he "swung [her] up to his knees to tell a story" (25). People find her frightening because she "stand[s] taller than any of them" (ibid.). She is so huge that she is compared to "a mountain range" (ibid.). She says "When Jordan was new [she] sat him on the palm of [her] hand" (ibid.), and when "Jordan was nineteen[, he] stood as tall as [her] chest" (64). Nor does the Dog-Woman fit into the norms of feminine beauty; she looks ugly and hideous:

> How hideous am I?
>
> My nose is flat, my eyebrows are heavy. I have only a few teeth and those are a poor show, being black and broken. I had smallpox when I was a girl and the caves in my face are home enough for fleas. But I have fine blue eyes that see in the dark. (24)

Apart from being unfeminine and ugly, she is a filthy person: "I haven't had that dress off in five years" (12). Being unfeminine, ugly, and filthy, the Dog-Woman emerges as a freak character. It is due to her freakishness that her father decided to exhibit her when she was a child. Not wanting to be exhibited, however, the Dog-Woman murdered him; "This was my first murder," she says (107).

The Dog-Woman is not allowed to the church choir due to her size: "Singing is my pleasure, but not in church, for the parson said the gargoyles must remain on

the outside, nor seek room in the choir stalls. So I sing inside the mountain of my flesh, and my voice is as slender as a reed and my voice as no lard in it" (14). The Dog-Woman's exclusion from the choir is suggestive of her marginalisation within the wider society. The Dog-Woman symbolises the aberrant, the freak, the abject, whose voice is silenced. She says she "had a name but [she has] forgotten it" (11) "They call [her] the Dog-Woman" and she says "it will do" (ibid.). The fact that she does not have a name indicates her unintelligibility as well. The Dog-Woman is left outside the zone of intelligibility, belonging to the zone of unintelligibility. Thus, she stands for the "non-human" and the "less-than-human," at the expense of which the category of human is produced. Thus, the text draws attention to Butler's assertion that the category of human is produced differentially, that is, through exclusionary practices, abjections, and erasures. The very norms by which "humanness" is conferred, render the Dog-Woman as a monster, that is, "less-than-human," and, as such, socially dead.

Nevertheless, as Butler argues, even though "the 'human' has been crafted and consolidated over time," its "history . . . is not over" (*UG* 13). The boundaries of the human are not fixed, but rather *porous* and *permeable*. This means that the boundaries of the human can be extended and re-drawn. In other words, the "human" can be re-articulated. The key moment for re-articulation, as Butler highlights, is when "*the excluded speak,*" that is, "*when the unreal lays claim to reality*" (13, 27; emphasis added). In *Sexing the Cherry*, the unreal Dog-Woman, the gargoyle, "lays claim to reality." The Dog-Woman is granted a voice, and, as such, power, that is she can speak for herself. She does not mind being called the gargoyle. Nor does she mind being as big as an elephant and looking like a monster. Moreover, despite being ostracised, she does not feel being ostracised. Although she does not have any company other than Jordan and her dogs, she does not feel the need for people and their company. Jordan envies her for being self-sufficient: "I want to be like my rip-roaring mother who cares nothing for how she looks, only for what she does. She has never been in love, no, and never wanted to be either" (101).

Thus, far from being injured by the names she is called, the Dog-Woman re-appropriates them. As Butler argues, injurious words are not bound to be injurious. Rather, they can be a site for "linguistic agency." The injurious speech, according to Butler, can break from its context, "open[ing] up the possibility for a counter-speech, a kind of talking back" (*ES* 15). She asserts that offensive words can "become disjoined from their power to injure and recontextualized in more affirmative modes" (ibid.), which she calls "counter-appropriation" (14). The Dog-Woman counter-appropriates the monstrosity attributed to her to ridicule phallic power. For example, she says she cannot get pregnant due to the fact that men's sexual organs are too small for her: "I would have liked to pour out a child from my body but you have to have a man for that and there's no man who's a match for me" (*SC* 11). She makes derisive remarks about the men with whom she had intercourse: "there's no man who's a match for me" (11). People are afraid of approaching her: "I am too huge for love. No one, male or female, has ever dared to approach me. They are afraid to scale mountains" (34). She recounts the story of a man who could not reach her mouth to kiss her: "I swept him from his feet and said, 'Kiss me now,'" and closed my eyes for the delight". When she opens her eyes: "[she] saw that he had fainted dead away" (36). When she asks him whether it is "love for [her] that effects [him] so?", he says "No, . . . It is terror" (36). During another sexual intercourse, she accidently bites off a man's penis which she later gives to one of her dogs (41). She mockingly recounts another sexual experience:

> I did mate with a man, but cannot say that I felt anything at all, though I had him jammed up to the hilt. As for him, spread on top of me with his face buried beneath my breasts, he complained that he could not find the sides of my cunt and felt like a tadpole in a pot. He . . . urged me to try and squeeze in my muscles, and so perhaps bring me closer to his prong. I took a great breath and squeezed with all my might and heard something like a rush of air through a tunnel, and when I strained up on my elbows and looked down I saw I had pulled him in, balls and everything. He was stuck. . . . He was a gallant gentleman and offered a different way of pleasuring me, since I was the first woman he said he had failed. (106-107)

> When he had gone I squatted backwards on a pillow and parted my bush of hair to see what it was that had confounded him so. It

seemed all in proportion to me. These gentlemen are very timid.
(107)

Thus, rather than accept otherness, and be silenced by the label monster, the Dog-Woman talks back. She re-appropriates her monstrosity which "opens up the possibility for a counter-speech" (Butler *ES* 15). The fact that her body "seem[s] all in proportion to [her]," and the bodies "in proportion" seem ridiculously out of proportion to her, interrogates the notion of "human" proportion. The text, thus, re-signifies the "human" body.

In the same way that the Dog-Woman's body does not fit into the norms of the human body, Villanelle's body does not fit into the norms of female body. Villanelle's morphological incoherence generates a great confusion. She is from Venice, where people can "walk on water," because "their feet are webbed. Not all feet, but the feet of the boat*men* whose trade is hereditary" (*P* 49; emphasis added). Although "[t]here never was a girl whose feet were webbed in the entire history of boatmen" (51), Villanelle was born with webbed feet:

> The midwife tried to make an incision in the translucent triangle between my first two toes but her knife sprang from the skin leaving no mark. She tried again and again in between all the toes on each foot. She bent the point of the knife, but that was all.
>
> 'It's the Virgin's will,' she said at last. . . . 'There's no knife can get through that.' (52)

Villanelle has to wear shoes so that no one can see her webbed feet (ibid.). She cannot become a dancer due to her webbed feet. She cannot work the boats either: "what I would have most liked to have done, worked the boats, was closed to me on account of my sex" (53).

Bringing to the reader's mind the intersex or the transsexual, Villanelle's ambiguous morphology not only does call attention to the inexhaustibility of sex, it also ridicules the exclusionary norms that set its boundaries. It is not possible to decide whether Villanelle's body is female or male. In other words, Villanelle's body is not easily readable. Interestingly, however, this unreadability is due to her webbed feet rather than her sexual organ, which is quite parodic. In this insignificant difference, I suggest, lies a great significance. That is, far from being

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insignificant, this absurd norm reveals not only the absurdity, but also the contingency and precariousness of the norms according to which sex is categorised. The text, thus, by parodying morphological norms, obliges the reader to re-think the notion of "natural sex" as well as the "materiality" of the "body." The text demonstrates Butler's claim that the materiality of the body is thinkable only within *the already materialized regulatory norms*; that is, the matter is materialised. As Butler asserts, "the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface [that] we call matter" is produced by "a process of materialization [that] stabilizes over time" (*BTM* xviii).

Like the intersex and the transsexual, Villanelle's body defies categorisation, remaining in-between the binary categories of sex; hence, it unsettles the coherence of these categories, exposing their ruptures. As Butler argues, when the body one sees is not easily readable, that is, when it does not easily fit to binary categories of male/female, like Villanelle's body, "one's staid and usual cultural perceptions fail" (*GT* xxiv). This failure, she argues is the key moment. She asserts that the existence of discontinuities shows that the norms that materialise bodies are not strictly complied with. These instabilities are significant for Butler because they provide the means for re-materialisation (*BTM* xii). Thus, by revealing the inexhaustibility of sex, Villanelle's body—which symbolises the intersex, the transsexual, and all those with unintelligible morphologies—parodically interrogates the materiality of the body, and, by doing so, it "open[s] up 'new possibilities, *new ways for bodies to matter',* " using Lloyd's words (*JB* 72; emphasis added). In other words, by re-writing the "unreal" bodies of the intersex and the transsexual alongside all other "unreal" bodies into "reality," Villanelle's body brings the notions of the "real" and the "unreal," that is, the "natural" and the "unnatural," into question; it reveals that sex is not a *reality*, but *a question* that must be left "*open, troubling, unresolved, propitious*" (*UG* 192; emphasis added).

The Dog-Woman and Villanelle's body demonstrate the fact that materialisation serves the exclusionary purposes of heterosexual hegemony. The matter materialises only at the expense of the unmaterialisable; that is, the "natural" comes to being only at the expense of the "unnatural," the abject. However, a subversive power lies in these abject bodies. Villanelle and the Dog-Woman's

abject bodies, by bringing the normative and exclusionary categories into question, point out the fact that the boundaries of the human and the human body are not firm, but rather *porous* and *permeable*. Those who live on the borders, or as Butler puts it, "in the interstices of ... binary relation[s]," reveal the fact that *the binary* "*is not exhaustive*" (*UG* 65; emphasis added). The Dog-Woman and Villanelle both belong to the region that Butler calls "*middle regions, hybrid regions of legitimacy and illegitimacy that have no clear names, and where nomination itself falls into a crisis*" (108). The Dog-Woman lives on the borders of the human and the monster, being a hybrid of both. Similarly, Villanelle lives on the borders of the binary categories sex, being a hybrid of female and male. These discontinuities, that is, the ruptures exposed by the Dog-Woman in *Sexing the Cherry* and Villanelle in *The Passion,* as Butler highlights, can open up the categories to a different future, a more inclusive future which is not fraught with the violence of non-recognition, a future in which "*rethinking the [body] as something other than natural*" (34; emphasis added) is possible. In other words, these exposed ruptures within the matrix of cultural intelligibility demand the reader to re-think the "human" and the "natural body."

Apart from the hybrid bodies of the Dog-Woman and Villanelle, the metaphor of grafting in *Sexing the Cherry* alongside the title of the novel invites us to re-think sex and the body "*as something other than natural*." The metaphor of grafting foregrounds the fact that *the "natural" is naturalised.*

> Grafting is the means whereby a plant, perhaps tender or uncertain, is fused into a hardier member of its strain, and so the two take advantage of each other and produce a third kind, without seed or parent. In this way fruits have been made resistant to disease and certain plants have learned to grow where previously they could not.
>
> There are many in the Church who condemn this practice as *unnatural*, holding that the Lord who made the world made its flora as he wished and in no other way. (*SC* 78; emphasis added)

Jordan learns grafting from Tradescant who has grafted the cherry (78). Upon seeing the grafted cherry, the Dog-Woman asks Jordan "Of what sex is that monster you are making?" (79). Jordan explains that "the tree would still be female

although it had not been born from seed" (ibid.). The Dog-Woman, however, believes that "such things *ha[ve] no gender* and [are] a *confusion* to themselves" (ibid.; emphasis added); she insists that they "[l]et the world mate of its own accord" (ibid.). Like the members of the church, she finds grafting "unnatural" and the grafted cherry monstrous. She does not think a cherry can be sexed, but Jordan says, "the Cherry grew, and *we have sexed it* and it is female" (79; emphasis added).

Laura Doan finds the metaphor of grafting "a lesbian strategy" which, according to her, implies "procreation beyond heterosexuality" (Makinen 91). Similarly, Lisa Moore reads the grafting of the cherry, which is condemned as unnatural, alongside the Dog-Woman's unnatural birth as lesbian signifiers (93). I would, however, suggest that grafting, that is, sexing the cherry metaphorises the naturalisation of sex. The fact that Jordan uses a *verb* rather than a *noun* indicates that the cherry does not have a sex, but rather it is given a sex. This does not at all mean that the "natural" cherries from which the sexed cherry is grafted have "natural sexes". Rather, it brings attention to the fact that cherries, whether the "natural" ones or the grafted ones, do not have sexes, but rather they are *sexed*; that is, sex is performative, in the sense that it does not exist apart from "sexing" norms and practices, as Butler points out. In other words, the grafting metaphor calls attention to the cultural process of *sexing*; the grafted cherry metaphorises the fact that *sexing*, whether sexing the cherry or sexing the body, is cultural rather than natural. To put it better, the *"natural" itself is revealed to be cultural*; the unconstructedness of sex itself is revealed to be constructed. This metaphor brings to light the fact that the notion of the pre-discursive, pre-linguistic body is itself discursively produced; that is, the notion of sex, like that of gender, is embedded in discourse, and, as such, is a linguistic category.

Far from being a lesbian strategy, I suggest, the metaphor of grafting alongside the ambiguous origins of the Dog-Woman and Jordan, interrogates "the story of origin." The Dog-Woman found Jordan by a river (*SC* 10), and her own origin is not less ambiguous. Jordan says, "I think she may have been found herself, long before she found me. I imagine her on the bank, in a bottle" (79). Hence, like

Fevvers in Angela Carter's *Night at the Circus*, who is not born, but hatched, the mythical origins of the Dog-Woman and Jordan metaphorise the mythicality of all origins, that is, the mythicality of all discourse on the body; this mythical origin reminds the reader that *ontologies are not neutral*, that any notion of the past is an ideological construction that serves the interests of the present and the future.

3.2.2 Cross-dressing and Gender Parody

Alongside the androgyny of the main characters in *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion*, the confusion created by Jordan and Villanelle's cross-dressing is of great significance. In *Sexing the Cherry*, Jordan, while looking for Fortunata, appears in the disguise of a woman, looking like an attractive woman: "They praised my outfit and made me blush by stroking my cheek and commenting on its smoothness" (*SC* 30). While under disguise, Jordan "[meets] a number of people who, anxious to be free of the burdens of their gender, have dressed themselves men as women and women as men" (31). Jordan himself decides to "continue as a woman for a time," which allows him to get "a job on a fish stall" (31). In another scene, Jordan and Tradescant appear in the disguise of a prostitute: "Tradescant and Jordan dressed themselves as drabs. With painted faces and scarlet lips and dresses that looked as though they'd been pawed over by every infantryman in the capital. Jordan had a fine mincing walk and a leer that got him a good few offers of a bed for the night" (68). Similarly, in *The Passion*, Villanelle cross-dresses when she starts working in a Casino: "I dressed as a boy because that's what the visitors liked to see. It was part of the game, trying to decide which sex was hidden behind tight breeches and extravagant face-paste" (*P* 54). Villanelle is easily taken as a boy due to her physical appearance: "My breasts are small, so there's no cleavage to give me away, and I'm tall for a girl, especially a Venetian" (56). Apart from Villanelle, there are other people in Venice who appear in disguise: "*There are women of every kind and not all of them are women*" (58; emphasis added). Like Orlando in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, thus, these people free themselves from the burden of both genders when needed.

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The feminine disguises that Jordan and Tradescant put on, alongside Villanelle's masculine disguise, parodies the binary categories of gender, rendering femininity and masculinity as nothing more than disguises. However, this does not mean that Jordan and Tradescant's masculinity is more real than the femininity they perform or that Villanelle's femininity is more real than the masculinity she performs. Rather, it means that men as well as women can perform femininity. Jordan's mincing walk, for instance, is not less provocative than a woman's. In the same way, masculinity can be performed not only by men but also by women. In other words, all genders are disguises. Gender, as Butler argues, is "a performance which is performative" (PAGC 528). Drag, according to Butler, reveals this performativity. Butler asserts that "*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency.*" Drag, according to her, is an imitation of imitation, "a fantasy of fantasy" (*GT* 187, 188). Thus, gender parody dispels the illusion of the original. It reveals the fact that there is no such thing as the original, the authentic, and the real, that *the original itself is a copy*. Which means the performance itself is performative (IGI 315).

By parodying femininity and masculinity both texts unsettle not only the dichotomous notion of gender, but also that of interiority/exteriority. They demonstrate the fact that gender is not an expression of an essence, and that there is no natural coherence between anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. Both texts, in other words, undermine the essential, coherent, and stable notion of gender, with the aim of "depriving the naturalizing narratives of compulsory heterosexuality of their central protagonists: 'man' and 'woman,' " (Butler, *GT* 200). In both texts "gender identities are rendered as unstable and fluid," using Butler's words (*GT* 200).

The distinction between the mask and the "real" gender is blurred even more when Villanelle starts working double shifts "dressing as a woman in the afternoon and as a young man in the evening" (*P* 62). One morning, Villanelle puts on her male clothes when she was supposed to be a woman: "She thought I was a young man. I was not. Should I go to see her as myself and joke about the mistake and leave gracefully? My heart shrivelled at this thought. To lose her again as soon.

And what was myself? Was this breeches and boots self any less real than my garters? What was it about me that interested her?" (65-66;emphasis added). Villanelle assumes that the woman mistakes her for a man who wears as a woman. Villanelle feels extremely confused; she does not know whether the woman is attracted to her femininity or masculinity. Nor does she know which gender really belongs to her and which is a mask. Through the process of performing masculinity, she has come to doubt her "real gender." At this point, when Villanelle asks herself "*And what was myself? Was this breeches and boots self any less real than my garters?*," the distinction between the real and the mask is unsettled, that is, the distinction between the copy and the original fails. Villanelle's gender revealed to be *a doing* rather than *a frozen noun*, that is, it "is real only to the extent that it is performed" (Butler PAGC 527). Therefore, gender, in both *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion*, is revealed to be a disguise, *a copy without an original.*

3.2.3 Queering Sexuality

Villanelle and Jordan's cross-dressing and their looks, especially Jordan's feminine looks, are not only a source of gender confusion, but they also result in considerable confusion in terms of sexuality. Villanelle's sexual intercourses with her husband and with the Queen of Spades, and Jordan's intercourse with Zillah, cannot be said to be unproblematically "heterosexual" or "homosexual." This is because in order to be unproblematically heterosexual, sexual intercourse must occur between one with a *female anatomy* who *identifies herself as a woman*, *displays feminine traits*, *desires men*, and *repudiates women*, and a person with *male anatomy* who *identifies himself as a man*, *displays masculine traits*, *desires women*, and *repudiates men*.

Due to her cross-dressing, Villanelle's sexual intercourses with her husband and with the Queen of Spades are complicated. When her husband asks Villanelle to marry him, he wants her to dress as a man: "He has promised to keep me in luxury and all kinds of fancy goods, provided I go on dressing as a young man in the comfort of our own home. He likes that. He says he'll get my moustaches and

codpieces especially made" (*P* 63). The fact that her husband desires a "man" with a "female" body is extremely confusing. This desire is not intelligible within the confines of the heterosexual matrix within which the masculine must desire the feminine. Thus, this desire cannot be considered unproblematically heterosexual. It is, rather, a "queer crossing" within heterosexuality that reveals its ruptures, obliging the reader to ask *what exactly sets the boundary between heterosexual desire and homosexual desire?* Is his desire heterosexual because he desires the opposite sex or homosexual because he desires the same gender? As Butler points out, heterosexuality "is consistently haunted by the domain of *sexual possibility*," that is, it is always in danger of queer proliferation (*BTM* 85; emphasis added). Butler writes,

> [H]eterosexuality offers normative sexual positions that are *intrinsically impossible to embody*, and the persistent failure to identify fully and without incoherence with these positions reveals heterosexuality itself not only as a compulsory law, but as an *inevitable comedy*. Indeed I would offer this insight into *heterosexuality as both a compulsory system and an intrinsic comedy, a constant parody of itself, as an alternative gay/lesbian perspective.* (*GT* 166; emphasis added).

In another scene, when the Queen of Spades is attracted to Villanelle in disguise, Villanelle is confused: "What was it about me that interested her?" (*P* 66). She does not know if the woman is attracted to Villanelle as a woman or Villanelle as a man. "I'm a woman," says Villanelle, "lifting [her] shirt and risking the catarrh" (71). The woman says that she knows (ibid.). Thus, like Villanelle's husband, the woman is attracted to a man with a female body. Here, too, the straight/gay binary is problematised, leading to similar questions: to what extent can this sexual desire be considered homosexual? Is it unproblematically homosexual? Thus, the reader is obliged to re-think the boundary between the categories of gay and straight. However, in order to be able to set the boundary between heterosexuality and homosexuality it must be possible to set the boundaries between the binary categories of sex and gender. In other words, it must be possible to define clearly what a "woman" and what a "man" is. This not being

possible, the clear-cut distinction between heterosexual and homosexual desire is rendered impossible as well.

Even more confusing is Zillah and Jordan's sexual intercourse. Zillah mistakes Jordan for a woman although Jordan is not under disguise. She thinks that Jordan is "the sister she [has] prayed for" (*SC* 33) and invites him "to bed with her, where [Jordan] pass[es] the night in some *confusion*" (ibid.; emphasis added). One cannot read this scene through binary categories; that is, it is not possible to pin down the sexual attraction between Zillah and Jordan to hetero/homo categories of sexuality, because from the point of view of the Zillah, who assumes Jordan to be a woman, this attraction is considered homosexual, but from Jordan's view it is not. Thus, hetero/homo binary goes bankrupt here, too.

In both *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion* heterosexuality is revealed not to be a coherent, unproblematic system. Rather, it is a highly problematic system, which conceals its ruptures by constructing the "myth of coherence." Villanelle's sexual intercourses with her husband and with the Queen of Spades, and Jordan's intercourse with Zillah, are not easily categorisable. As Butler asserts, when multifarious passions coincide and make "simultaneous and dissonant claims on truth," the so-called coherent categories are called into question. These queer convergences, which are "moments of productive undecidability," cannot be reduced to hetero/homo binary. In other words, these queer moments cannot be captured by rigid and reductive psychoanalytic categories (*UG* 141, 142). These moments when categorisation fails are, for Butler, the moments when the binary categories are questioned, unsettled, and de-sedimented; that is, when the binary categories are de-constructed. These "persisting inconceivability[ies]" (64), i.e., the uncategorisables, which Butler refers to as "uncertain ontologies" (108), not only put essentialist and naturalist ontologies into question, but also open up possibilities for expanding the *domain of sexual possibilities*. The abject, unthinkable, unspeakable and unrepresentable sexuality, according to Butler, "can figure the sublime within the contemporary field of sexuality, a site of pure resistance, a site unco-opted by normativity" (106).

Apart from queering heterosexuality and homosexuality, both *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion* de-sediment the reader's notion of incest, violating the taboo against it. Zillah's sexual intercourse with her sister, her desire for Jordan, and the twelve dancing princesses in *Sexing the Cherry*, as well as Villanelle's love for Henri in *The Passion*, are all incestuous. Zillah's desire for Jordan is incestuous, because she assumes Jordan not only to be a girl, but also to be her sister. Zillah tells Jordan that "she had been locked in this tower since her birth" (*SC* 36). Jordan does not believe her, because what he had seen was not a tower, but a house. Looking down, however, he realises he is "at the top of a sheer-built tower" (37). Later he realises that "the room had no door" (ibid.). Zillah reminds us of the girl referred to earlier in the text:

> A young girl caught incestuously with her sister was condemned to build her own death tower. To prolong her life she built it as high as she could, winding round and round with the stones in an endless stairway. When there were no stones left she sealed the room and the village, driven mad by her death cries, evacuated to a far-off spot *where no one could hear her*. (38; emphasis added)

It is not clear whether Zillah and the girl who built her own death tower are the same person or not; whether they are the same person or not, they represent the socially dead, the unthinkable, all those whose lives are considered unlivable.

Apart from Zillah's incestuous desire for Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry*, the twelve dancing princesses[26] engage in incest. Having been told that the twelve dancing princesses are still living, Jordan decides to give them a visit with the hope of getting some information about Fortunata, who is a dancer as well. Listening to their stories, Jordan finds out that unlike the original story of "The Twelve Dancing Princesses,"[27] in which the twelve princesses are cursed, these princesses "lived happily ever after . . . , *but not with [their] husbands*" (48; emphasis added). The

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[26] "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" is a German fairy tale.

[27] In the original story, twelve beautiful princesses are locked in by their father every night. However, in the morning their dancing shoes are found worn out. Feeling bewildered, the father declares that anyone who uncovers the mystery can marry one of his daughters. Many try and fail to reveal the princess' secret. Finally, a soldier finds out that they escaped from a door which is on the floor of their room, and they get onto the boats with twelve princes who row to a castle where they dance the whole night. Revealing the secret to the king, the soldier marries the oldest princess.

oldest sister tells Jordan, "For some years I did not hear from my sisters, and then, by a strange eventuality, I discovered that we had all, in one way or another, parted from the glorious princes and were living scattered, *according to our tastes*" (48; emphasis added). The stories they tell Jordan about themselves diverge from the original version of the fairy tale. One of the princesses says she fell in love with a mermaid and ran away (48); another princess' husband turned into a frog when she kissed him (52); another's husband turned out to be a woman (54); and all others either killed their husbands or somehow ran away. Finally, the twelve dancing princesses found each other and have lived together ever since, apart from the missing sister, Fortunata, who is probably the dancer Jordan has been looking for. She was "the best dancer" of all the twelve. She flew away on her wedding day and they do not know where she is. (60)

By recounting the story of Zillah and the twelve dancing princesses, the text calls attention to *omissions* and *erasures* of the history that Jordan alludes to:

> For the Greeks, the hidden life demanded *invisible ink*. They wrote an ordinary letter and in between the lines set out another letter, written in milk. *The document looked innocent* enough . . . . What the letter had been no longer mattered; what mattered was the life flaring up undetected. . .
>
> till now.
>
> I discovered that my own life was written *invisible*, was squashed between the *facts*, was flying without me like The Twelve Dancing Princesses. . . . (10; emphasis added)

The text, however, writes the invisible lives with visible pen. It re-writes the story of "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" by empowering these princesses and by allowing them to speak, to tell their own stories. It also allows the silenced and imprisoned Zillah to speak. In other words, not only does the text shed light on the omissions and erasures of history, it also re-writes these omissions and erasures into history. In other words, it brings the abject into legitimacy.

Furthermore, Zillah's incestuous desire for Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry* and Villanelle's incestuous desire for Henri in *The Passion* queers the notion of incest. Jordan and Zillah are not "real" sisters as Zillah assumes. Henri is not Villanelle's

"real" brother either; however, she says he loves Henri in a brotherly way, "but in a brotherly incestuous way" (*P* 146). Thus, both Zillah and Villanelle's desires are incestuous despite there being no blood ties between them. It is here that the reader is impelled to ask if Zillah and Villanelle's incestuous desires are fictions or whether the incest itself is a fiction.

3.3 The function of the Unreliability of the Narrators in *Written on the Body*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Passion*

The device of the unreliable narrator plays an important role in *Written on the Body*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Passion*; it casts considerable doubt on the reliability of the narratives narrated by them. To start with, the narrator of *Written on the Body* is obviously an unreliable narrator; s/he directly refers to her/his own unreliability: "I can tell by now that you are wondering whether I can be trusted as a narrator" (*WB* 24); s/he says that s/he "can't be relied upon to describe Elgin properly" (92). Apart from her/his own self-reflexive comments, Inge and Catherine claim that s/he is making up stories:

> 'Don't you know that Renoir claimed he painted with his penis?'
>
> 'Don't worry,' I said. 'He did. When he died they found nothing between his balls but an old brush.'
>
> '*You're making it up*.'
>
> *Am I*? (22; emphasis added)

The same motif recurs when s/he is talking with Chaterine:

> 'Do you know why Henry Miller said "I write with my prick"?'
>
> 'Because he did. When he died they found nothing between his legs but a ball-point pen.'
>
> '*You're making it up*,' she said.
>
> *Am I*? (60; emphasis added)

"Am I?" is a question addressed to the reader rather than Inge and Chaterine. More importantly, since the narrator uses the present tense instead of the past tense, the question does not refer to the stories s/he made up about Renoir and Henry Miller, but rather to the story s/he is writing. This, therefore, reminds the reader that what they are reading is fiction. Apart from this implied fictionality, the narrator directly points out to the fact that s/he the narrator of the story, and, more importantly, to the fact that s/he is writing a fiction: "I don't know if it is a happy ending but here we are let loose in open fields" (190). There are other allusions to the fact that s/he is a character in a story. Gail Right tells the narrator, "The trouble with you . . . is that you want to live in a novel" (160). Louise is also likened to "a Victorian heroine . . . from a Gothic novel" (49). Furthermore, s/he is not sure if Louise is real or only her/his invention: "*Did I invent her*?" s/he asks (189).

Failure of memory accentuates the unreliability of the narrator too. S/he fails to remember things correctly: "There are no ripe plums in August," s/he wonders, "Have I got it wrong, this hesitant chronology?" (17). Thinking back on her/his relationship with Louise, s/he says, "Now here am I *making up my own memories* of good times. When we were together the weather was better, the days were longer. Even the rain was warm. *That's right, isn't it*?" (161; emphasis added). It can also be inferred that s/he remembers things differently: "Those days have a *crystalline clearness* to me now. Whichever way I hold them up to the light they refract *different colour*" (99; emphasis added). This paradox reveals not only the instability of the narrator's memories, but also the unstable nature of memory itself. The narrator says, "the power of memory is such that it can lift reality for a time. Or is memory the more real place?" (61). Here, s/he blurs the boundary between memory and facts. This comment makes it difficult to decide whether events are facts or the power of her/his memory. S/he also refers to her/himself as mad: "I had been half mad, if madness is to be on the fringes of the real world" (156), "Am I stark mad?" (190). On top of all this, the narrator clearly lies; despite numerous references to literary figures, s/he claims that s/he never reads novels (160), and in spite of claiming to be a vegetarian (185), she eats Spaghetti Carbonara at Magie Pete's (158) which is not a vegetarian restaurant.

The device of the unreliable narrator is also deployed both in *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion.* Neither the Dog-Woman and Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry* nor Villanelle and Henri in *The Passion* are reliable narrators. Jordan admits the fact that his memory fails; despite claiming to have seen Fortunata, Jordan is not sure whether she exists or not: "I am searching for a dancer who may or may not exist" (*SC* 80). When her mother asks him about the necklace he has, he tells her that "[i]t was given to [him] by *a woman who does not exist*. Her name is Fortunata" (130; emphasis added). He further comments on the unreliability of memory: "*Everyone remembers things which never happened. And it is common knowledge that people often forget things which did*. Either *we are all fantasists and liars or the past has nothing definite in it.* I have heard people say we are shaped by our childhood. But which one?" (92; emphasis added). Thinking back to his childhood, he wonders if it happened: "Did my childhood happen? I must believe it did, but I don't have any proof. My mother says it did, but *she is a fantasist*, *a liar* and a murderer, though none of that would stop me loving her. I remember things, but *I too am a fantasist and a liar*, though I have not killed anyone yet" (92; emphasis added). Referring to himself and the Dog-Woman as *liars* and *fantasists,* Jordan renders the story that they narrate as *a lie*, a *fantasy*. However, this does not mean that other versions of the story would be more real: "When we get home, men and women will crowd round us and ask us what happened and *every version we tell will be a little more fanciful*. *But it will be real*, whereas if I begin to tell my story about where I've been or where I think I've been, who will believe me?" (102). By posing this paradox, the text foregrounds the unreliability of all narratives.

"*I'm telling you stories. Trust me*," is one of the refrains in *The Passion*, repeated by both Henri (*P* 5, 13, 40, 160; emphasis added) and Villanelle (69). Not only does Henri admit telling a story, he also refers to his unreliability; He tells Domino that he "do[es]n't care about facts, that he only "care[s] about how [he] feel[s]" (29). Elsewhere he says, "*I made up stories* about mine. They were whatever I wanted them to be depending on my mood" (11; emphasis added). Like Jordan, Henri refers to himself as a liar: "*I embroidered and invented and even lied*.

Why not? It made them happy. I didn't talk about the men who have married mermaids" (30; emphasis added). Henri says, "Stories were all we had" (107), and when he is in the madhouse he says he "go[es] on writing so that [he] will always have something to read" (159). He also refers to his inability to write properly: "I lose all sense of day or night, I lose all sense of my work, writing this story, trying to convey to you what really happened. *Trying not to make up too much*" (103; emphasis added). Above all this, Henri's losing his mind renders him a highly unreliable narrator. He says that he hears voices, that Villanelle's husband, whom he has murdered, tries to strangle him (142). Villanelle, on the other hand, says that "there are no voices," that Henri is "sometimes choked from self-strangling" (147). Thus, the reader is left with uncertainty whether to believe Henri or not.

Villanelle cannot be said to be more reliable than Henri. Henri says that Villanelle loves telling stories (104). Villanelle herself implies her unreliability: "I began to feel like Sarpi, that Venetian priest and diplomat, who said he never told a lie but didn't tell the truth to everyone" (70). She does not say much about the mysterious woman whom she calls the Queen of Spades. Furthermore, one night, when Villanelle rows to her house and the woman is not there, she says, "She was not visible, but I could imagine her" (75). This brings a question to the readers mind: Has Villanelle already been imagining the Queen of Spades?

The unreliability of the narrators in *Written on the Body, Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Passion*, occupies a central role within these texts; it dissolves the boundaries between the binary notions of fact/fiction, reality/imagination, and truth/lie, as a result of which the hierarchy among the texts is dissolved as well. In *Written on the Body*, this unreliability foregrounds the fact that all texts, regardless of their genres, are narratives, and all narratives are unreliable. Hence, Louise, her body, the medical books through which the narrator tries to find Louise, the notion of love, fidelity, and adultery, as well as the clichés through which the narrator perceives all these notions are not less fictional than the "love story" s/he is writing. Similarly, in *Sexing the Cherry and The Passion*, the unreliability of Jordan, The Dog-Woman, Henri, and Villanelle accentuates the unreliability of all narratives, regardless of their genres. Thus, not only do these texts call attention to their own

fictionality, but they also reveal the fictionality of love. The mystery surrounding Fortunata, the Queen of Spades, and even Villanelle herself, much like the mystery surrounding Louise, foregrounds the fact that love is a narrative. The reader can never decide how much of Fortunata, the Queen of Spades, and even Villanelle is embroided by the narrators. Furthermore, both *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion* focus attention on the notion of history, which is rendered a narrative, and, as such, unreliable. Both texts interrogate the distinction between storytelling and history. As stated in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, "People like to separate *storytelling* which is *not fact* from *history* which is *fact*. They do this so that they know what to believe and what not to believe" (93). History is re-arrangement of the events so that "it looks the way you think it should. We are all historians in our own way" (94). This means that history is not objective; rather, it is a subjective *selection* and *omission* of events that serves the ideological purposes of the present and the future.

By way of conclusion, *Written on the Body*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Passion* blur the boundaries between the rigid binary categories of male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, and heterosexual/homosexual. The un-gendered narrator of *Written on the Body*, the Dog-Woman, Jordan, Villanelle, and Henri bring the discourses of continuity and coherence into question; by occupying "hybrid regions," that is, by vacillating between the binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, they reveal these boundaries to be porous. The confusion they cause is a "subversive confusion" that invites the reader to re-think these uncritically accepted boundaries. What confounds this confusion even more is the metafictional device of the unreliable narrator. This metafictional device not only highlights the fictionality of the texts, but also troubles the distinction between fact and fiction, that is, between the reliable narratives and the unreliable ones. It casts doubt on the discourses which construct the myth of origin and the myth of coherence, depriving these discourses of their authority. Accordingly, the discourses which construct sanctioned/unsanctioned bodies, identities, and desires, that is, the discourses which define viable/unviable subject positions, and, therefore, livable/unlivable lives are rendered as unreliable as the narrative

embroided or made up by these unreliable narrators. In short, the texts foreground the fact that "[w]e . . . understand ourselves through an *endless series of stories told to ourselves by ourselves and others. The so-called facts of our individual worlds are highly coloured and arbitrary, *facts that fit whatever fiction we have chosen to believe in*" (Winterson, *AO* 59; emphasis added).

CHAPTER 4

MISRECOGNITION OF INTERPELLATION IN *ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT* AND *THE STONE GODS*

Despite depicting two distinctly different *epistemes*[28], both *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *The Stone Gods* demonstrate the failure of interpellation, and the possible subversion of identity. However, both texts have an ambivalent approach to the subject and agency. They do not treat the subject as the self-knowing, autonomous subject of humanism, but rather as a Foucauldian subject that emerges from the network of "power-knowledge," and is, therefore, entangled in "power relations." Neither Jeanette and Louie in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, nor Billie in *The Stone Gods* can be said to be independent of the network of power. On the contrary, they have acquired their identity by undergoing interpellation and by internalisation of the truths of multiple discourses. In other words, their agency is enabled by power. Jeanette, Louie, and Billie are constituted and de-constituted within discourse. Although their identity is dependent on the discourse and on the repetition of the subjectivating norms, they re-employ and re-direct these norms. By demonstrating these subversive repetitions, mostly through the deployment of parody, both texts expose the ruptures within the dominant discourses. I will discuss these parodic re-deployments and the Butlerian ambivalence of agency and subversion depicted in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *The Stone Gods*.

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[28] Instead of totalizing terms such as "the spirit of a century," Foucault offers the notion of *episteme*. By "*episteme* of a period" he means "the relations of [a period's] various scientific discourses; the *episteme* is not *a sort of grand underlying theory*, it is a space of dispersion, it is an *open and doubtless indefinitely describable field of relationships. . . . [T]he episteme is not a slice of history* common to all sciences; *it is a simultaneous play of specific remanences*" (PSD 55).

4.1 Misrecognition of Interpellation in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit is an autobiographical account of Jeanette's life. The text incorporates biblical paratexts, such as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. These biblical paratexts play an important thematic role in each chapter, and in the text in general. Each chapter deals with a similar *yet* different story from that of the Bible. In "Genesis"[29] Jeanette tells the story of her adoption and her early life before her mother had to send her to school. Jeanette was adopted by Louie and Jack because Louie wanted to be a Virgin Mary. Louie, an evangelist herself, wants Jeanette to become a missionary, a Jesus figure. In "Exodus"[30] Jeanette recounts the problems she faces at school and her confusion over the contradiction between the discourse of her Evangelist Church and that of her school. "Leviticus"[31] tells the story of Jeanette and the Church, or to put it better, Jeanette's growing disagreements with the Church. "Numbers"[32] deals with Jeanette's preoccupation with oppressiveness of patriarchal marriages and her falling for Melanie who has just been converted. "Deuteronomy"[33] is a metatextual chapter where either Jeanette, the autodiegetic narrator of the story, or another heterodiegetic narrator ponders on the notions of storytelling and history. In "Joshua"[34] Jeanette faces the Church. Unlike Melanie, she refuses to repent of her sin, which is loving a woman. After being exorcized, however, she has to pretend to have repented. Later in the chapter she develops a

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[29] The main theme of The Book of Genesis is creation.

[30] The Book of Exodus tells the story of the Israelites and the problems they face after leaving Egypt.

[31] In The Book of Leviticus, Moses delivers the messages of God to the Israelites. It contains the fundamental Jewish laws.

[32] The book of Numbers tells the story of wandering Israelites. The main themes of this book are faith and holiness.

[33] The Book of Deuteronomy is the second book of law, including Mose's speeches.

[34] The Book of Joshua is about the return of the Israelites and their triumph.

relationship with another converted girl named Katy. "Judges"[35] deals with the ongoing tension between Jeanette and her mother and the Church, as a consequence of which she has to leave the church and home. In the final chapter, "Ruth,"[36] Jeanette decides to give a visit to her mother at Christmas. Although Jeanette says she is going to stay only for two weeks, the text leaves the reader in uncertainty as to whether she stays with her mother or goes back. The text, thus, refuses closure.

4.1.1 The Dominant Discourses of Jeanette's Childhood

As a young child, Jeanette is imbued with the rigid discourses of her mother and the Evangelist Church. Early pages of the novel introduce the reader to the rigidity of the context in which Jeanette is brought up. Jeanette says that her mother "ha[s] never heard of *mixed feelings*" (*O* 3; emphasis added). On the contrary, "she [only] love[s] and she hate[s]" (6); that is, she regards people as *either* friends *or* enemies:

> Enemies were: The Devil (in his many forms)
>
> Next Door
>
> Sex (in its many forms)
>
> Slugs
>
> Friends were: God
>
> Our dog
>
> Auntie Madge
>
> The Novels of Charlotte Brontë
>
> Slug pellets
>
> And me, at first. (3)

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[35] The Book of judges tells the story of the oppressive rulers of Israel.

[36] The main theme of the Book of Ruth is exile and return.

Enemies are *the others* whom she is set to fight against. She also wants Jeanette to join her in this mission that is likened by Jeanette to a wrestling match: "I had been brought in to join her in a tag match against *the Rest of the World*" (3; emphasis added). The fact that the narrative proceeds with binaries calls attention to the binarism of the discourses Jeanette is imbued with. There is nothing mixed in Jeanette's community, that is, there is no room for in-betweenness. "Uncertainty" is, according to Jeanette's Church, "what the Heathen fe[el]" (100). Jeanette is taught that "everything in the natural world [is] a symbol of the Great Struggle between *good* and *evil*" (16; emphasis added). This dualism foreshadows Jeanette's mother and the Church's later objection to Jeanette's mixed feelings.

Biblical allusions also become explicit in the opening pages of the novel, which starts with the story of Jeanette's adoption, alluding to the story of Virgin Mary and Jesus. Jeanette's mother, Louie, adopts Jeanette in order to eschew sexual intercourse; she desires to be a Virgin Mary: "She had a mysterious attitude towards the begetting of children; it wasn't that she couldn't do it, more that she didn't want to do it. She was very bitter about the Virgin Mary getting there first. So she did the next best thing and arranged for a foundling. That was me" (3). Not only does Louie want to be a Virgin Mary figure, she wants Jeanette to be a Jesus figure; she wants Jeanette to "change the world" which "is full of sin" (10). Hence,

She would get a child, train it, build it, dedicate it to the Lord:

a missionary child,

a servant of God,

a blessing (ibid.).

Despite allusions to the story of Mary and Jesus, Jeanette's story considerably diverges from it; it is a repetition with difference of the myth of revelation. First of all, the fact that Jeanette's mother adopts a girl not a boy, that the Jesus figure is a woman rather than a man, not only parodies, but effectively interrogates the male-centred myth of revelation, because throughout the history of revelation, there has never been a significant woman prophet, that is, women have always been excluded from the discourse of revelation:

Father and Son, Father and Son.

It has always been this way, nothing can intrude.

Father Son and Holy Ghost. (89)

The text, thus, by depicting Jeanette as a Jesus figure, that is, a Jesus with difference, not only parodies Jesus, but also re-writes women into the patriarchal history of revelation. Moreover, the text de-constructs the "predominantly male image of creation found in . . . Biblical texts by removing any significant male figures from [the] birth narrative" (Bollinger 365). There is no Father in Jeannette's story. "The power of creation rests with Jeanette's mother" rather than "an omnipotent Father" (ibid.). Jeanette's father, Jack, is an unimportant character like Joseph. He does not play any role in her adoption, her bringing up, and her life. He is also depicted as a weak figure: "My father liked to watch the wrestling, my mother liked to wrestle; it didn't matter what" (*O* 3). "Poor Dad, he was never quite good enough" (11). Other men in the text are not any stronger: "We had no wise men because she didn't believe there were any wise men, but we had sheep" (3). Thus, by ridiculing male figures, and depriving them of their positions of authority, the text undermines and subverts male supremacy and male dominance.

Unlike a conventional family in which women occupy passive roles, Jeanette's mother is a dominant and manipulative woman; she is the only one in the family who has the last word on everything: "She was the only person in our house who could tell a saucepan from a piano. She was wrong, as far as we were concerned, but right as far as she was concerned, and really that's what mattered" (5). Jeanette likens her mother to "Bonaparte [who] always gave orders from his horse" (4), which is suggestive of her absolutism and authoritarianism. Jeanette's father is, on the other hand, as Bollinger puts it, only "a victim of his wife's evangelism" (365). Thus, it can be argued that by reversing the conventional roles of father and mother, the text parodies the "Father" and the "Mother," revealing their constructedness, that is, their contingency and trasformability. By de-centring the Father, the text de-centres the Phallus as a privileged signifier and de-constructs the myth of "the Symbolic," revealing the fact that the symbolic is itself *social*,

and, as such, not unassailable. This is evocative of Butler's point that "there is no symbolic position of Mother and Father that is not precisely the idealization and ossification of contingent cultural norms" (*UG* 158).

Jeanette's childhood is plagued with discourses on sin, evil, and the Devil/Demon. She is brought up in a context where "[t]he Heathen [are] a daily household preoccupation. [Her] mother [finds] them everywhere, particularly Next Door" (*O* 53). Jeanette's mother, alongside the other members of their Evangelist Church, is preoccupied with holiness and salvation. Even the "family life of snails . . . [is] an Abomination" according to Jeanette's mother[37] (21). However, the notion of holiness as well as the notions of sin and evil are treated with ridicule and irony in the text. The text parodies these notions through the ironic effect brought about by Jeanette's naivety. Jeanette keeps thinking about the snails, not being able to make sense of their difference. Similarly, when her mother calls the gypsies "fornicators" (6), and elsewhere when she tells Jeanette Next Door are "fornicating" (54), Jeanette does not understand what fornication means, but she knows that it is a sin (54). She thinks to herself: "But why was it so noisy? Most sins you did quietly so as not to get caught" (54). Jeanette's naivety leads to other comic and ironic situations as well. When Louie forbids Jeanette from going to the paper shop due to May and Ida's "unnatural passions" (7), Jeanette is confused because she does not understand what the expression "unnatural passions" means: "I thought she meant they put chemicals in their sweets" (7). These comic and ironic effects brought about by Jeanette's naivety interrogate the meaning of the sin, the unnatural, and the unholy. For instance, Jeanette's naive attempt to understand why her mother calls the family life of snails "Abomination," and the fact that such an insignificant thing fills her mother with disgust, invites the reader to consider the absurdity of these notions. The same effect is achieved when Jeanette tries to figure out how it is possible for sins to be noisy. Furthermore, the fact that Jeanette associates the "unnatural passions" with chemicals mocks and

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[37] This is because snails have different reproductive habits and most of them have ambiguous morphologies; that is, they do not fit into the binary categories of male and female.

parodies not only the notions of "sin" and the "unnatural," but also that of the "natural;" it invites the reader to re-think these uncritically accepted notions.

Morals against sin and temptation prevail in Jeanette's community. This is pointed out in Pastor Finch's sermon "on how easy it is to become demon-possessed" (11). Pastor Finch, who is "expert in demons" (11), constantly cautions people against the Devil: "It has been known for the most holy men to be suddenly filled with evil" (12). He thinks women and children are more likely to be filled with evil: "And how much more a woman, and how much more a child[38]" (ibid.). He cautions parents to "watch [their] children for the signs," and cautions "[h]usbands [to] watch [their] wives. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (ibid.). He even points to Jeanette, saying, "This little lily could herself be a house of demons" (ibid.). Apart from Pastor Finch, Jeanette's mother tells her "about the lives of the saints, how they were really wicked, and given to *nameless desires*. Not fit for worship; this was yet another heresy of the Catholic Church and I was not to be misled by the smooth tongues of priests" (15). She cautions Jeanette not only against priests, but allusively against *nameless desires*. Jeanette, however, says that "[she] never see[s] any priests" (ibid.). Despite the fact that Jeanette is not a Catholic and does not see priests, her mother persists that "A girl's motto is BE PREPARED" (ibid.). Also, Jeanette refers to *Yield Not to Temptation* as their favourite hymn (16). I suggest that these warnings against *sin* and temptation, as well as cautions against *demon*, both of which, in the context of the novel, stand for "*nameless desires*," bring to light the fact that the boundaries of "holy" desire are not secure enough and, therefore, must be heavily fortified. In order to maintain the coherence of sanctioned desires, as Butler argues, the unsanctioned desires must be warded off. Thus, in order to stabilise its centre and fortify its own discourse and maintain its fictive coherence, the Church has to ward off "*nameless desires*." In other words, the abundance of morals against sin subjects the discourse of the Church to self-parody. If it is so easy to become 'demon possessed', if even the most holy people could not turn away from evil and if even the saints could not

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[38] This also shows the hierarchal discourse of the Church.

resist "*nameless desires*," and if it is necessary to sing hymns to overcome temptation, then the boundaries of "holiness" are not firm. Accordingly, these constant cautions against "*nameless desires*" suggest the possibility of diversion, that is, the possibility of the invasion of "*nameless desires.*"

4.1.2 Jeanette's Failure to Be Jesus

Although Jeanette is imbued with the discourses of her mother and the Church, she is not determined by them. Nor is she independent of these institutions of family and the Church. Jeanette's identity cannot be read outside her culture, her family, and her evangelist church; her subjectivity cannot be understood outside "power relations" either. Like all subjects she has gained subjectivity by being subjected to power. Thus, like all subjects she is entangled in "power relations." Jeanette's subjectivity has been acquired by being interpellated by the discourse of the church and that of her mother. However, as Butler argues, interpellation is not a unilateral process (*PLP* 107). Although subjectivity is achieved only by being interpellated, this interpellation is always in danger of failure. There is always "the possibility of a repetition that repeats against its origin" (94). According to her, "all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; 'agency,' then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. . . . the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility" (*GT* 198). In other words, "it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible" (199). It is within the practice of repetition that Jeanette is able to repeat differently. Thus, Jeanette is *not totally detached* from the discourse of the Church and the Family, but rather *diverges* from them. Her stories are divergent repetitions of the biblical stories proffered by the Church and her mother.

As Butler points out, "[t]he one who is hailed may fail to hear, mishear the call, turn the other way, answer to another name, insist on not being addressed in that way" (*PLP* 95). Butler sees this failure as a "constitutive failure" (*GT* 200).

This constitutive failure is metaphorised in Jeanette's going deaf. Jeanette says she "always had sore ears" and "once [she goes] deaf for three months," without anyone realizing it. When she cannot respond, her mother thinks "It is the Lord" and that she was "in a state of rupture" (*O* 23). This ironic scene can be read as a parody of revelation. The fact that Jeanette goes deaf could be read as a metaphor for mishearing the voice of interpellation. Thus, Jeanette is a Jesus figure who mishears the revelation. Thus, she becomes a Jesus, but in a parodic way. She repeats the role of Jesus with difference, becoming a failed Jesus, an "unholy" Jesus.

As a young child, Jeanette is steeped in biblical stories. It is with these stories that the world around her becomes intelligible to her. However, Jeanette is not a passive recipient of these stories. Rather, she repeats them differently in a way that they break with their original context. There are several scenes hinting at this divergence. For instance, when Jeanette plays with a detachable chimpanzee in Elsie's collage of Noah's Ark, she drowns the chimpanzee: "I had all kinds of variations, but usually I drowned it" (24). This is against the biblical story of Noah's Ark where God saves them. Similarly, when she plays with Fuzzy Felt at the Sunday School, she fails to make biblical scenes according to the Bible. Furthermore, Jeanette "enjoy[s] a *rewrite* of Daniel in the lions' den" (13; emphasis added). In the original version Daniel escapes, whereas in Jeanette's version "lions are swallowing him" (ibid.). Upon seeing Jeanette's re-writing the story, Pastor Finch gets angry and reshapes the Fuzzy Felt in a way that fits the biblical story. This not only suggests the rigidity of the discourse of the Church and the foreclosure of other possible stories, but also indicates the danger that lies in subversive repetition. The Fuzzy Felt and the collage metaphorise the malleability of all stories. The Fuzzy Felt has "deconstructive implications" pointing out the fact that "the pieces (and the narrative they represent) can come apart and do not have to be put back together in the same way" (Reisman 15). The biblical stories not only *act on* Jeanette, but *enact* her with power—using Butler's words—to write stories; Jeanette takes over the narrative of the Church, becoming a manipulative narrator.

The way Jeanette treats oranges also plays a significant role in the text. Orange symbolism[39] emerges early in the novel. For Jeanette's mother "Oranges are the only fruit" (*O* 29); they represent her singular discourse. She inundates Jeanette with oranges especially when Jeanette is caught in dilemmas and plunged in confusions. Oranges, thus, function to clear up confusions and to ward off diversions. However, Jeanette is not a passive recipient of her mother's discourse. In the same way that she manipulates the Church's narrative, she manipulates that of her mother. The igloo that Jeanette makes out of orange peels is indicative of this manipulation. When she is at hospital, Jeanette peels an orange and makes an igloo out of it. "I didn't have an eskimo to put in it, so I had to *invent* a story about 'How Eskimo Got Eaten', ... It's always the same with diversions; you get *involved*" (27; emphasis added). This suggests not only the constructedness and subjectivity of all stories, but also their malleability. By peeling the orange, which symbolises her mother's narrative, Jeanette assumes the position of a narrator with omnipotence. In other words, she takes over her mother's narrative. The fact that "[t]he nurse . . . throw[s her] igloo in the bin" (27), on the other hand, symbolises the foreclosure of Jeanette's stories, that is, the unintelligibility of her stories. However, she hides the orange peel and continues "working on [her] orange peel igloo for weeks" (30). This implies the fact that Jeanette resists unintelligibility, persisting on bringing her stories into intelligibility.

The malleability of oranges and their vulnerability to manipulation is further symbolised in the way Jeanette and Elsie Norris eat them. Jeanette shares an orange with Elsie every day during her stay at hospital. Elsie "suck[s] and champ[s]" because she has no teeth and Jeanette "drop[s her] pieces like oysters, far back into the throat" (29). This unusual way of eating oranges which draws people's attention at hospital[40] symbolises the possibility of variation on the orange, that is, a variation on her mother's narrative. It suggests that all narratives are malleable, that they can

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[39] Orange symbolism will be discussed in detail.

[40] "People used to watch us, but we didn't mind" (29).

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be manipulated and distorted. This distorted image of the orange foreshadows Jeanette's de-construction of the discourse it represents.

Jeanette's dreams as well as the embedded stories can also be read as subversive repetitions of the stories imposed on her. The story of the prince who is in search of a perfect woman (61-67), which appears immediately after Pastor's sermon on perfection (60), is clearly a counter-narrative to this sermon. According to the pastor, "[p]erfection . . . is flawlessness" (60); the embedded story, however, reveals the fact that nobody is flawless (64). The story of the "perfect" girl, thus, not only parodies the discourse of perfection by rendering it impossible, but also parodies common fairy tale motifs. Unlike conventional fairy tales, the "perfect" girl refuses to marry the prince (63-64). She says, "It's not something [she's] very interested in" (64). Far from conventional fairy tales, the girl "reject[s] traditional roles and refuse[s] the deceptive option of the romantic 'happy ever after' marriage" (Simpson 66). By rejecting this foreclosure, thus, the text parodyingly interrogates the "happy ever after" myth.

The myth of "happy ever after" is also parodied in several other parts within the text. Early in the novel, Jeanette remembers the gipsy woman who told her she was never going to get married; she says, "I hadn't thought about getting married anyway" (7). Jeanette remembers this gipsy's prophecy again when she thinks about how horrible Pastor Finch is and how Mrs Finch lives with him (13). She becomes increasingly preoccupied with oppressiveness of patriarchal marriage. Jeanette's nightmare about getting married can be taken as a counter-discourse to the discourse of marriage: "I was about to get married. My dress was pure white and I had a golden crown. As I walked up the aisle the crown got heavier and heavier and the dress more and more difficult to walk in" (71). The heaviness of the dress and the crown can be taken as a metaphor for the confines of marriage which she does not want to be held in. In her nightmare, Jeanette was about to marry a pig, which reminds her of the woman in their neighbourhood who said, "she had married a pig" (71). She thinks about the men she knows and doesn't find them any better. When she reads "Beauty and the Beast" at the library and once more thinks about the woman who married a pig:

There are women in the world.

There are men in the world.

And there are beasts.

What do you do if you marry a beast?

Kissing them didn't always help. (72)

Jeannette becomes preoccupied with the pig/beast. When she asks her aunt "Why are so many men really beasts?" she tells Jeanette that "[she]'ll get used to it". She says, "When [she] married, [she] laughed for a week, cried for a month, and settled down for life" (73). She believes that "[t]here's what we want . . . and there's what we get" (74). It is *only* through the repetition of these fairy tales and clichés that the discourse of marriage maintains its fictive coherence and the myth of "happy ever after." Nevertheless, as Butler asserts, there is always "the possibility of a repetition that repeats against its origin" (*PLP* 94). Unlike her aunt, Jeanette refuses to accept the victim role assigned to women. Quite the contrary, she believes that all walls are bound to fall. Far from being a passive recipient, Jeanette re-appropriates these patriarchal fairy tales and clichés; she repeats them in a way that they break from their origin, creating ruptures within the discourse of marriage. Not only does Jeanette parody the "happy ever after" myth by re-writing the ending of "Beauty and the Beast," she insists on not being a victim. In Butler's words, she "insist[s] on not being addressed in that way" (95). Far from being a victim of these myths, Jeanette re-deploys them; she acts on the stories that act on her. Thus, in a Butlerian sense, Jeanette's agency lies in the ability "to do something with what is done with [her]" (*UG* 3).

Jeanette not only challenges the discourse of marriage but also the heteronormative discourse according to which "love [is] reserved for man and [his] wife" (105). Although Jeanette's Church defines love within the bounds of heterosexual marriage, Jeanette does not see anything wrong with loving a woman. Nevertheless, Jeanette's love for Melanie and Katy is not at all tantamount to rejection of the Church and the Lord. She tells Melanie, "*I love you almost as much as I love the Lord*" (104; emphasis added). She does not see a contradiction

between her love for Melanie and her love for the Lord. Thus, her "*mixed feelings*" shatter the binary between the sacred and the profane. Although Jeanette's desire is not approved by the Church, it is entangled with it. She says that "each Monday . . . [she] went round to Melanie's and [they] read the Bible together, and usually spent half an hour in prayer [, which made her feel] delighted" (86). Ironically, thus, it is the Church and Jeanette's mission that bring them together: "We read the Bible as usual, and then told each other how glad we were that *the Lord brought us together*" (88; emphasis added). When Jeanette is at the church, she feels great pleasure. This pleasure, however, is not "holy"; it is, rather, a "*mixed feeling*," an ambivalent mixture of the "holy" and the "unholy": "There was nowhere I'd rather be. When the hymn was over I squeezed a bit closer to Melanie and tried to concentrate on the Lord. 'Still,' I thought, 'Melanie is *a gift from the Lord*, and it would be ungrateful not to appreciate her.' " (104; emphasis added). She feels the same ambivalence about Katy: "I took care never to look at her when I preached. . . . We did have a genuinely spiritual dimension. I taught her a lot, and she put all her efforts into the Church, quite apart from me. It was good time. *To the pure all things are pure*" (123; emphasis added). Accordingly, not only does Jeanette profanise Jesus' mission by sexualising it, she also profanises and problematises the biblical verse by re-deploying it. The text, thus, not only blurs the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, but also parodies Jesus and his mission. Jeanette is a failed Jesus, an unholy Jesus whose mission diverges from the discourse of the Lord.

According to Pastor Finch, Jeanette cannot "love this woman [Melanie] with a love reserved for man and wife" (105), but Jeanette does not think love is something reserved. Pastor Finch calls this "unnatural passions and the mark of *demon*," but Jeanette does not accept this label. She "insists on not being addressed in that way." Ironically, she re-appropriates the biblical verse to defend herself: " '*To the pure all things are pure*,' I yelled at him. 'It's you not us.' " (105; emphasis added). Unlike Melanie, Jeanette refuses to repent.

> 'I love her.'

> 'Then you do not love the Lord.'

'Yes, *I love both of them.*'

'You cannot.'

'I do, I do, ... (105)

By re-deploying the biblical verse, Jeanette not only reveals the ruptures of the discourse of the Church, but also exposes it to self-parody. Moreover, by rejecting "the either/or scenario" of the Church, Jeanette disrupts binarism. By persistently claiming the love of the Lord and the love of Melanie, she re-claims the Bible and the Lord. Far from admitting the "unholiness" of her love, she insists that the Church recognises her desire. In other words, she refuses to be otherised.

Upon refusing to repent, Jeanette is exorcised by Pastor Finch, and finally has to pretend to have repented. Ironically, however, the exorcism, fails. The orange demon can be taken as a symbol of this failure. The orange demon tells Jeanette that "[e]veryone has a demon like cats have fleas" (108). Jeanette thinks "[d]emons are evil", but the orange demon tells her that "they're just *different*, and *difficult*" (108; emphasis added), and if she keeps it "[she]'ll have a *difficult*, *different* time*" (109; emphasis added). The orange demon symbolises "*nameless desires*;" it can be taken as a symbol of the abject, the unintelligible other of the heterosexual discourse of Jeanette's Church. The orange demon says, "the demon you get depends on the colour of your aura. Yours is orange which is why you've got me" (108). This is suggestive of the fact that every discourse has its "constitutive outside;" that is, every discourse establishes its centre only by *demonising* and excluding the *others* of it. The demon, in the context of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, symbolises the "constitutive outside" of the discourse of the Church. Thus, the meaning of "demon" is not something fixed, but rather changes within different discourses, that is, it does not have any meaning independent of discourse.

The role that the orange demon plays in the novel is as significant as the orange itself. The fact that Jeanette decides to keep her demon occupies a central role in the text. Jeanette's decision to keep the orange demon has been read as "remaining true to [the] lesbian self" (Makinen 8)*, or "her discovery of her lesbian

orientation" (Rusk 108), as if there were a "lesbian self" or a "lesbian orientation" to be discovered, to be accepted or rejected. These interpretations, thus, assume a lesbian essence, a psychic reality, which is too problematic. Moreover, it is mostly argued that this "acceptance of . . . lesbianism" is tantamount to Jeanette's "rejection of both community and religion" (Makinen 5). Thus, not only are these interpretations bounded with essentialist discourses on sexuality, but they also presume that the subject can be totally independent of the community, ignoring the ambivalent entanglement of the two.

I suggest, however, that Jeanette's decision to keep the orange demon parodically symbolises the failure of exorcism. Not only does exorcism fail to cast the demon out of Jeanette, it brings them together. Moreover, I would argue that Jeanette does not reject religion, but rather re-claims it. Although by the end of the story she comes to doubt the existence of God, she still believes in God when she leaves home: "I loved God and I loved the church, but I began to see that as more and more complicated" (*O* 128). When her mother asks her to leave the house she feels in trouble and picks her Bible (127); and when she leaves home after her mother finds out about her relationship with Katy, she takes her Bible: "I took my books and my instruments in a tea chest, *with my Bible on top*" (137; emphasis added). As Rusk puts it, "Jeanette plays fast and loose with scripture, telling her own tale not its, yet her allusions bespeak a mind imbued with Biblical lore" (Rusk 106). By "unconventionally us[ing] conventional sources" (Rusk 108), that is, by repeating them with difference, she breaks with the biblical stories and Christian conventions from their rigid contexts and re-contextualises them. Thus, rather than a simple rejection of religion, the text, by deploying parody, reveals the ruptures within the discourse of religion; that is, the text de-constructs religion from within.

Orange demon gives Jeanette "a rough brown pebble" (*O* 114). This pebble, which plays a significant role in the text, helps Jeanette in "*difficult*, *different* time" that the decision to keep the demon brings about. Hence, it can be argued that the demon/Satan is re-appropriated in the text. The demon/Satan, who is an abject figure in Abrahamic religions, appears to help Jeanette by giving her the pebble. Thus, through "*citational crafting*," the meaning of demon breaks with its context,

that is, with Abrahamic tradition, and acquires a different meaning. The text, thus, subverts the demon/Satan by re-contextulaising it. In other words, the text re-claims the demon/Satan, re-writes the abjected other of Abrahamic tradition into legitimacy, collapsing the God/Satan binarism, and de-constructing the demon myth.

Jeanette becomes a prophet, but a *demonized prophet*. "The prophet," according to Jeanette, "has no book. The prophet has a voice that cries in the wilderness, full of *sounds that do not always set into meaning*. The prophets cry out because they are *troubled by demons*" (*O* 161). Jeanette is a prophet who is "*troubled by demons*". This is foreshadowed at the beginning of the novel when Jeanette cries for "seven days and seven nights" until her mother "stable[s] the *demons*" (10). The demons, however, do not leave her: "If the demons lie within they travel with you" (161). Thus, Jeanette diverges from the "holy" Jesus in the Bible; "unlike the Biblical story of Jesus, Jeanette does not sacrifice herself to wash away her sins" (Al-Shara 241). Rather, by re-appropriating the "sin", the "evil", the "demon", she shatters the boundaries between the demon and the prophet, the "unholy" and the "holy," the outside and inside.

The symbols and metaphors in the text—such as, oranges, stones and walls, orange demon and ravens, and the rough brown pebble—play a significant role in reading it [41] . There are multiple ways of interpreting these symbols, as a consequence of which multiple meanings arise. I would argue that these symbols are interdependent in the same way that the embedded stories are interconnected. Oranges are the most recurring and the most ambiguous symbol in the text. They take on multiple meanings and serve multiple functions. For Jeanette's mother, "Oranges are the only fruit" (*O* 29); they symbolise her singular and unilateral discourse that she imposes on Jeanette:

> 'The only fruit,' she always said.
>
> Fruit salad, fruit pie, fruit for fools, fruited punch. Demon fruit, passion fruit, rotten fruit, fruit on Sunday. (ibid.)

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[41] I admit that it is not possible to reduce these ambiguous symbols and metaphors; quite often, they resist "meaning," reminding us of Barthes' "impossible text."

Far from an indication of a change, the fact that she has replaced oranges with pineapples upon Jeanette's return, highlights her singularity even more: "for the length of the mission, everyone had to eat gammon with pineapple, pineapple upside-down cake, chicken in pineapple sauce, pineapple chunks, pineapple slice" (172). The fact that she says, "oranges are not the only fruit' does not mean that she has changed. She, I would suggest, still resists admitting the multiplicity of truth, merely replacing oranges with pineapples.

In my reading, thus, oranges symbolise singularity in general, and the heteronormative discourse in particular. Often, they function to avert the danger of divergent possibilities. When Jeanette's mother realises Jeanette's confusion at school (39), and later when Jeanette is confused about men and marriage (74), she offers her an orange. At more significant moments, there appear plenty of oranges. For instance, when Jeanette is at hospital, Louie gives her "a bag of oranges" (27). Similarly, when Jeanette is exorcised, she leaves her "a bowl of oranges" (113). Jeanette, however, questions the singularity of her mother's discourse: "What about grapes or bananas?" (ibid.). Jeanette does not find oranges helpful: "I lay for a long time just watching oranges. They were *pretty, but not much help*. I was going to need more than an *icon* to get me through this one" (132). After exorcism, when Melanie offers Jeanette an orange, Jeanette refuses to eat it (122), which is indicative of her resistance to compulsory heterosexuality. Above all, Jeanette's acceptance of the orange demon, which symbolises the "constitutive outside" of the heteronormative discourse, collapses the boundary between the outside and the inside, and, as such, de-constructs the heteronormative discourse.

This inside/outside distinction is also put to question in the secret garden, an embedded text which is the most complicated part in which oranges appear:

> On the banks of the Euphrates find a secret garden *cunningly walled*. There is an entrance, but the entrance is guarded. *There is no way in for you*. Inside you will find every plant that grows growing circular-wise like a target. Close to the heart is a sundial and *at the heart* an *orange tree*. This fruit has tripped up athletes while others have healed their wounds. All true quests end in this garden, where *the split fruit pours forth blood and the halved fruit is a full bowl for travelers and pilgrims*. *To eat of the fruits means to leave the garden*

> *because the fruit speaks of other things, other longings*. So at dusk you leave the place you love, not knowing if you can ever return, knowing you can never return by the same way as this. It may be, some other day, that you will open the gate by chance, and find yourself again on the other side of the wall. (123; emphasis added)

This garden, in my reading, reveals what Butler terms "inevitable comedy of heterosexuality" (*GT* 166). If we take the orange tree, which is at the centre of the garden, to represent the centrality of heterosexuality, it is possible to read this embedded text as de-stabilisation of the centre. According to Butler, heterosexuality "is constantly haunted by the domain of sexual possibility" (*BTM* 85). Heterosexuality and homosexuality are not mutually exclusive. In other words, they are not two separate things. This garden, I would argue, shatters this hetero/homo binary. Oranges in this garden "*[speak] of other things, other longings*," which means it is the orange tree itself that makes divergences from it possible. Thus, the centre, heterosexuality, and the margins, "*nameless desires*," that is, deviant sexualities, are entangled with each other. In other words the outside is in fact inside. Additionally, the fact that "the entrance is guarded," that "*There is no way in for you,*" suggests that heterosexuality is an ideal that cannot be embodied. In other words, heterosexuality is, as Butler puts it, "an intrinsic comedy, a constant parody" (*GT* 166). Furthermore, "*the split fruit*" and "*the halved fruit*" that are for "*travelers and pilgrims*" indicate that the fruit is not a coherent whole; rather, it can be distorted. This means that the centre is not stable. Rather, it has ruptures, it is faltering, and, as such, insecure.

Stones and walls are other frequently occurring metaphors that also play a significant role especially in the reading of "Ruth" chapter. There is a huge controversy over "Ruth" chapter, especially Jeanette's return home. Jeanette's return has been seen as "reject[ion of] the fairy-tale edict that forbids the journey home" (Reisman 31). According to most critics, such as Bollinger, Jeanette's return suggests maturity and female loyalty. Bollinger claims that "Jeanette, by modelling her own relationship after Ruth, reappropriates this sexuality while reasserting the primacy of loyalty between women" (369). According to her, Jeanette's return is "the *conclusion* of this bildungsroman" (372; emphasis added). Jeanette, on her

reading, returns home to pursue her relationship with her mother (371). Here, I would suggest, lies a danger of foreclosure. The text, I suggest, resists conclusion and this lack of conclusion is central to the text.

In my reading, in line with other chapters, the text diverges from the biblical story of Ruth, parodying the familial bond which is represented in the Book of Ruth. I would argue that the institution of family and the notion of loyalty are parodied in the text. As I have mentioned, I find the metaphors of stone, wall, and thread, alongside the stories of Winnet and Sir Perceval, of great significance in the context of Jeanette's return[42]. Before Jeanette leaves home, she is filled with fear and uncertainty: "For a moment I leaned on the *wall*; *the stone was warm*, and through the window I could see a family round the fire. Their tea table had been left, *chairs, table and the right number of cups*" (*O* 133; emphasis added). Jeanette knows she will have "difficult, different time" away from the comfort of "family," but she knows, as well, that she cannot live within the shackles of it. Although it seems to be warm, it is likened to a stone. A similar scene recurs when Jeanette comes back at Christmas to visit her mother:

> *Families, real ones, are chairs and tables and the right number of cups,* but I had no means of joining one, and no means of dismissing my own; she had tied a *thread* around my button, to tug when she pleased. I knew a woman in another place. Perhaps she would save me. But what if she were asleep? What if she sleepwalked beside me and I never knew? (176; emphasis added)

Far from a desire for reunion with her mother, I suggest, this recurrent scene demonstrates Jeanette's ambivalent feelings towards her mother, and to the notion of family. Despite admitting the bond with her mother, Jeanette does not consider her family as a "real family"; she says she has "no means of joining" a real family. Although it is inferred that Jeanette desires a "real family," the notion of "real family" is parodied here. Real family, for Jeanette, is *"chairs and tables and the right number of cups,"* which is quite ironic and parodic, too. Reducing family to "the right number of cups" parodically suggests that family is nothing more than "the right number of cups." In other words, "real family" is an ideal that does not

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[42] However, as I have mentioned previously, there are different ways of reading these metaphors.

exist. Moreover, Jeanette's reference to "a woman in another place" that can save her heightens the ambivalence of the ending, rendering foreclosure impossible.

Furthermore, I suggest that the "Ruth" chapter cannot be reduced to a mere advocacy of "female bond." This reduction entirely neglects the female-male and male-male bond in the embedded stories of Winnet and the sorcerer, and Sir Perceval and King Arthur, which are, I suggest, as important as Jeanette's story. Thus, considering the wider context, it could be argued that the "Ruth" chapter deals with familial bonds in general. Additionally, the text has an ambivalent approach to familial ties. Like Jeanette's mother, who does not want a demon at home[43], the sorcerer—who becomes Winnet's father—asks Winnet to leave his castle because she loves the wrong one. In the same way that Jeanette has to leave her mother's house, Winnet has to leave his father's *high ceiling[ed]* castle (145), and Sir Perceval leaves King Arthur and his *high-walled* castle" (128; emphasis added) in search of Holy Grail. Betrayal is central to all these three stories. Jeanette is betrayed by her mother and Melanie, Winnet is betrayed by her father, and Sir Perceval betrays the King. Despite the motif of betrayal, however, in all these departures there is a bonding thread. King Arthur gives Sir Perceval "a *string* of bells" (166; emphasis added), Winnet's father "[ties] an invisible *thread* around one of her buttons" (148). Similarly, Jeanette says that her mother "[has] tied a *thread* around my button, to tug when she pleased" (176). Jeanette, Winnet, and Sir Perceval are all haunted by homesickness, but still reluctant to go back. Sir Perceval "dreams of Arthur's court, where he was the darling, the favourite" and "his face [is] bright with tears" (135); he "curses himself for leaving the Round Table" (166). Feeling homesick and lost (153), Winnet decides to sail to the ancient city (153). Jeanette, too, ponders about going back: "People go back, but they don't survive, because two realities are claiming them at the same time" (160).

This homesickness, alongside the recurring thread metaphor, according to most, suggests "the inevitability of the return" (Simpson 61). Susan Onega, however, believes that "all three of them [Jeanette, Winnet, and Sir Perceval] resist 'the temptation of going back' " (Makinen 39). I claim that there is no clear

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[43] " 'You'll have to leave,' she said. 'I'm not havin' demons here.' " (136)

resolution in the text, and there is no need for it. The text does not offer a binary option of going back or resisting it. Neither does it impose the necessity of re-bonding or getting rid of the bond. What the text does, I suggest, is much more ambivalent. Whether Jeanette, Winnet, or Sir Perceval go back or not, whether they can get rid of the bond or not, the text reveals the constructedness of this bond. Constructedness of family is also symbolised by Winnet's forgetting her past: "She forgot how she had come there, or what she had done before. She believed she had always been in the castle, and that she was the sorcerer's daughter. He told her she was. That she had no mother, but had been specially entrusted to his care by a powerful spirit. *Winnet felt this to be true*" (145; emphasis added). This is indicative of the fact that family is a discourse, that familial bond is something acquired rather than an essence.

Thus, without imposing a choice, the text underlines the confines that are warned against by the orange demon and the raven. Ravens in the stories of Winnet and Sir Perceval play the same role as that the orange demon plays in Jeanette's story. In Sir Perceval's dream, the raven rips his thread and in Winnet's story, the raven warns Winnet in the same way as the orange demon warns Jeanette: "I chose to stay, oh, a long time ago, and my heart grew thick with sorrow, and finally set. It will remind you" (148). Like orange demon, the raven gives Winnet "a rough brown pebble" (148) to help her resist going back. Thus, in my reading, whether Jeanette chooses to stay or leave, the notions of family, familial ties, and loyalty are all revealed to be constructed. In other words, the text de-constructs the notion of family in the same way that it de-constructs religion. When she is betrayed by her mother, Jeanette says, "In her head she was still queen, but not my queen anymore . . . . *Walls protect and walls limit. It is in the nature of walls that they should fall*" (112; emphasis added).

Apart from "the memorial stone" on top of the mountain (7), and the "stone mound" (127) that must stand for "tablets of stone" (170), emblematising the rigidity of Judeo-Christian rules, the stone/wall metaphors appear in the secret garden which has religious connotations. Despite the secret garden's divergence from the Garden of Eden, there is an obvious allusion to it and the forbidden fruit.

The fact that the "secret garden [is] cunningly *walled*" and "the entrance is guarded" indicates the rigid boundaries of the paradise: "*There is no way in for you*" (123; emphasis added), that is, there is no way into paradise. As the Dog-Woman in *Sexing the Cherry* states, one is taken "straight to the *gates of Paradise* only to [be] remind[ed] *they are closed for ever*" (*SC* 35; emphasis added). Thus, the discourse of paradise is subject to self-parody. The fact that there is no way into paradise not only parodies the discourse of Paradise, but it also reveals its mythicality.

The stone/wall metaphors also appear in the ancient city referred to both by Jeanette and Winnet. Jeanette dreams about "the city of Lost Chances," which is "a great *stone arena*, *crumbling* in places" (*O* 110; emphasis added). Later in the embedded text[44], the City of Lost Chances or the Forbidden City reappears. She sees mutilated men and women, and "prisoners [who] were very quiet and marched without resistance towards a massive *stone turret*" (111; emphasis added). She starts climbing as well and later sees "a number of buyers and browser, and a team of young women translating *Beowulf*" (ibid.). In this city everything is made of stone and it "is full of those *who choose the wall*" (113), but it "lies *ransacked* now and the topless towers are all gone" (112). This city reappears in Winnet's story as well. When Winnet feels lost in the forest, a woman finds her and takes her to a village where she hears about this "beautiful city, . . . an ancient city, *guarded by tigers*" (153). The villagers "h[o]ld [this city] in awe" despite not having seen it. Feeling excited, Winnet decides to sail to this city. A blind man gives Winnet "a *singing stone* for her journey," and she sails on (159; emphasis added). The distinction between Winnet and Jeanette is blurred here; immediately after Winnet's story, Jeanette, who is in this ancient city now, expresses her disappointment with this ancient city again:

> This ancient city is made *of stone and stone walls that have not fallen yet*. *Like paradise it is bounded by rivers, and* contains *fabulous beast.* Most of them have heads. If you drink from the wells, and there are many, you might live forever, but there is no

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[44] It is not clear who the narrator is.

guarantee you will forever as you are. You might mutate. *The waters might not agree with you*. They don't tell you this. I came to this city to escape. *The city is full of towers to climb and climb, and to climb faster and faster*, marvelling at the design and dreaming of the view from the top. At the top there is a keen wind and everything is so far away it's impossible to say what is what. . . . *Wouldn't it be nice to sit on the ground again*? I came to this city to escape. (161; emphasis added)

The fact that "a team of young women translating *Beowulf*" appears in Jeanette's dream about the ancient city might carry multiple implications. Being the oldest surviving text in English literature, *Beowulf* might well stand for the English literary canon. If we take *Beowulf* as representing the canon, it can be argued that women's translating *Beowulf* suggests the possibility of re-writing the canon, that is, the patriarchal literary tradition. This can also be inferred by the image of crumbling stones; the crumbling stone arena and the ransacked city suggest that even stones are not stable, indestructible and abiding: "These are *ancients*. Weathered and wise as they are, respect them but they are *not* the *everlasting* substance" (113; emphasis added). Nevertheless, the fact that this city "is full of *those who choose the wall*" (ibid.) as well as the fact that it is referred to as the city of Lost Chances and the Room of the Final Disappointment casts doubts on such a reading, rendering this ancient city highly ambivalent. The fact that Jeanette is frustrated with "*climb[ing] faster and faster*," that she wants to "*sit on the ground again*" (161) deepens this ambivalence further more. I suggest that this ancient city, with *Beowulf* being translated, might metaphorise the institution of university and Jeanette's disappointment with it due to its rigid discourses and limitations. Jeanette's artistic aspirations might not have been fulfilled within this institution. This ancient city is a place where "you can climb as high as you like" (111), but "[y]ou might mutate. *waters might not agree with you*" (161) Mutation, I suggest, might stand for the foreclosure of Jeanette's desire to become an artist; her stories might still be unintelligible within the institution of university, in the same way that they were unintelligible at home, at church, and at school. Thus, The Room of Final Disappointment can be read as Jeanette's final disappointment with institutions.

Accordingly, the stone and wall metaphors, which are prevalent in the text, all stand for institutions and their normative frameworks; that is, for the constraints and limitations of discourse. Tablets of Stone and the walled garden stand for the rigidity of the established religion; the warm wall Jeanette leans against alongside the "high-ceiling[ed]" and "high-walled" castles, in which Winnet and Sir Perceval are confined, suggests the constraints of the discourse of family and the confinement of familial bonds; and the recurring ancient city suggests the constraints of the discourses of educational institutions. Jeanette's disillusionment with these institutions, which are all *walled*, invites the reader to think about discursive constraints of these institutions. What the text foregrounds by this wall metaphor is the fact that every discourse has a boundary, and every discourse establishes its own truth by rendering other truths untrue, that is, by setting a boundary between the "truth" and the "non-truths." In other words, all discourses produce their truths through exclusionary practices. Thus, in Jeanette's words, "*Walls protect and walls limit.*" However, as she puts it, "*It is in the nature of walls that they should fall*" (112; emphasis added).

4.1.3 Louie's Failure to Be Virgin Mary

Although Louie is obsessed with holiness and salvation, she fails to be a "holy" person. When Jeanette recounts her mother's conversion story, it is revealed that the motives behind her conversion were not "holy" at all: "Now and again my mother liked to tell me her own conversion story; *it was very romantic.* I sometimes think that if Mills and Boon[45] were at all revivalist in their policy my mother would be a star" (8; emphasis added). Jeanette's mother converted because she was sexually attracted to Pastor Spratt: "He was very impressive. My mother says he looked like Errol Flynn[46], *but holy*" (8; emphasis added). Louie's relationship with Pastor Spratt is a source of huge irony within the text. It is obvious that Louie is attracted to Pastor Spratt: "My mother was excited because Pastor Spratt had

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[45] A British press that publishes romance fiction.

[46] A Hollywood actor.

promised to call in on one of his rare visits to England" (34). Apart from this obvious attraction, there are many evidences in the text that implies a secret liaison between Louie and the Pastor. Louie goes to Wigan to join the Society for the Lost because of Pastor Spratt, who is there; however, she says, she is "*busy with the Lord* in Wigan" (56; emphasis added). This statement produces a significant ironic effect, because what is implied is that she is actually with Pastor Spratt, not with the Lord. Furthermore, Jeanette says that her "mother never stayed in other people's houses except when she went to Wigan *on her business*" (103; emphasis added), which heightens this irony.

Jeanette's father, similarly, converted because of his attraction to Louie. Thus, conversion is highly sexualised, and, as such, profaned in the text. Like Louie, Jack, Melanie, and Katy's conversion, behind all conversion stories in the text there is a sexual motive:

> During the first year my mother had gone into all the pubs and clubs urging the drunkards to join her at church. She used to sit at the piano and sing *Have You Any Room For Jesus?* It was very moving, she said. The men cried into their tankards and stopped playing snooker while she sang. She was plump and pretty and they called her the *Jesus Bell*.
>
> 'Oh, I had my offers,' she confided, 'and *they weren't all Godly*.' Whatever they were, the church grew, and many a man will still stop in the street when my mother goes past and raise his hat to the Jesus Belle. (36; emphasis added)

As seen, holy motives are constantly juxtaposed with unholy motives within the text. By this sexualisation of the stories of conversion, that is, by profanising the sacred, the text not only parodies conversion, but also interrogates the boundary between the holy and the unholy, the sacred and the profane.

Louie alters the stories about her past and present as Jeanette implies: "Quite often, she'd start to tell me a story and then go on to something else in the middle" (16). Thus, her relationship with her ex-boyfriends, whom she still sees, remains ambiguous. For instance, Jeanette does not understand why she buys meat from the butcher she claims to hate: "My mother always got her mince cheap because the butcher had been her sweetheart once. She said he was a devil, but she still took the

mince" (78).   Above all, Jeanette says that her mother still lives with her "memories of Paris" (ibid.). However, Louie never talks about her life in Paris in detail. Pierre's story might be the biggest gap about her past. It is clear that Louie does not tell Jeanette the whole story about Pierre:

> 'Lord forgive me, but I did it.'
>
> My mother stopped, overcome with emotion. I begged her to finish the story, proffering the Royal Scots.
>
> 'The worst is still to come.'
>
> I speculated on the worst, while she chewed her biscuit. *Perhaps I wasn't a child of God at all, but the daughter of a Frenchman.* (87;emphasis added)

Later, when Louie sees a doctor "in a fit of guilty anxiety," he says that Louie's stomach ache all has to do with her ulcer: " 'You may well be in love,' said the doctor, 'but you also have a stomach ulcer.' " (88). Consequently, Louie takes the medicine and leaves the country in order not to see Pierre again.

> 'Then am I . . . ?' I began.
>
> 'There was no issue,' she said quickly.
>
> For a few moments we sat silent, then:
>
> 'So just you take care, what you think is the heart might well be another organ.'
>
> It might, mother, it might, I thought. She got up and told me to go and find something to do. . . .
>
> 'Don't let anyone touch you Down There.' . . . (88)

This scene strongly implies Louie's pregnancy, whether with Jeanette or another (probably aborted) baby. In short, although Louie struggles to be a Virgin Mary, she fails to be one. She becomes an unholy Mary instead, and by doing so, effectively parodies Virgin Mary. Thus, Louie, the failed Mary, reveals Mary to be an ideal that can be approximated but not attained. In other words, Louie de-mythologises Virgin Mary and the virgin birth.

Furthermore, the page "Old Flames" in the photo album is suggestive of same-sex desire in Louie's past. When Jeanette asks her who the woman is, she panics: " 'That? Oh just Eddy's sister, I don't know why I put it there', and she turn[s] the page." Later, she removes the photo: "Next time we looked, it had gone" (36). Louie's implied same-sex entanglement, which is one of the gaps in the text, parodyingly reveals the ruptures within the heteronormative discourse even further. That is because *even* Louie, who offers the orange—which symbolises the heteronormative discourse—as the only option, fails to be faithful to it. This failure points to the fact that ideal positions produced by heterosexuality, as Butler argues, cannot be fully embodied (*GT* 166). Even Louie, who imposes the orange on Jeanette, diverges from the discourse the orange symbolises. Thus, heterosexuality is subjected to self-parody.

Accordingly, Louie is a character fraught with ambivalence and irony. Although she strongly advocates the discourse of the Church, she cannot be said to be faithful to it. Nor can she be said to be "a staunch defender of the patriarchal hierarchy," as it has been claimed (Simpson 53). As I have discussed previously, far from being a conventional subordinate and passive woman, Louie is a dominant and manipulative woman. Louie refuses to be cast in the role defined for her within the heteropatriarchal discourses. Her agency is indicated not only in her manipulative role at home, but also in her manipulation of stories. Like Jeanette, Louie manipulates stories, whether biblical or non-biblical, to serve her own purpose. Jeannette says that "sometimes [her] mother invented theology" (5). For instance, she tells Jeanette that "The Devil himself is drunk" (5). It is not only theology that she invents; she also alters the ending of *Jane Eyre*, which is "her favourite non-Bible book" (74), while telling the story to Jeanette. She tells Jeanette that Jane marries St John, while in the original story she marries Mr Rochester. Not only does Louie re-write *Jane Eyre*, but she also re-writes her own life; disregarding her husband and Jeanette, she spends most of her day at the church; that is, instead of living with her husband, she lives with Pastor Spratt, much like her own version of *Jane Eyre*. Unlike Jeanette's aunt, who passively

accepts the role of victim, Louie refuses to serve the roles of wife and mother, that is to limit herself to her "family;" she pursues her own sexual desire instead.

In short, it is true that Louie is not independent of the discourse of the Church, nor is she independent of patriarchal and heteronormative discourses. Despite this entanglement, however, her identity is not determined by these discourses. In other words, although her identity has been acquired through undergoing the interpellation of the patriarchal discourse of the Evangelist Church, like Jeanette, she repeats these subjectivating heteropatriarchal norms differently, creating ruptures within the discourses. Thus, I am suspicious of the claim that Louie "is a staunch defender of the patriarchal hierarchy" (Simpson 53). I would argue that despite being entangled in "power relations," like Jeanette and like all other subjects, she is a fatal rupture not only within the discourse of the Church, but also within the patriarchal and the heteronormative discourses. Thus, Louie's role is not less important than that of Jeanette.

4.2 "Misrecognition of Interpellation" in *The Stone Gods*

The Stone Gods is divided to four sections. The first section, "Planet Blue," is about a dying planet named Orbus. This section of the novel depicts a high-tech society similar to the future of our own, but probably 65 million years ago. Since Orbus is dying, they have to move to the newly discovered Planet Blue, which is probably the Earth. The mission is to kill the dinosaurs by deflecting the course of an asteroid. Billie Crusoe is an employee of the Central Power, who is sent on this one-way journey, due to being under suspicion concerning the campaigning against the system. While on mission, she begins to love a female robot named Spike. Their mission fails to be successful, triggering an ice age. The second section, "Easter Island," takes place in the seventeenth century. This section is about Billy Crusoe, a member of Captain Cook's crew, who is left on Easter Island. Billie Crusoe and Spike re-appear in "Post-3 War," and "Wreck City," the following sections of the novel which depict the near future, the aftermath of World War III.

There is an ambiguous continuity and discontinuity between these sections and the first section of the novel which takes place 65 million years ago.

4.2.1 The Dominant Discourses of Billie's Society

Billie works in Enhancement Services in the Central Power, an organisation that enhances bodies. Billie has to work for the Central Power, because in her society "natural food is [considered] dirty and diseased," as a consequence of which she cannot make money out of her farm (*SG* 9). Billie lives in a high-tech society where people can live longer and do not age; they all look beautiful and sexy; women do not have to bear children; there are no taboos against homosexuality, paedophilia, and polygamy. Billie's society is, thus, referred to as "a post-gay society" (Dolezal 96), or a "post-homophobic socio-sexual epoch" (Shannahan 5). It has been claimed that "*The Stone Gods* captures a society of bodies which are so far from any 'norm' that norms themselves cease to function as normalising devices" (Shannahan 3). Nevertheless, I argue that it is difficult to make such a claim.

It is true that there is considerable freedom in terms of sexuality; autoeroticism, homosexuality, paedophilia, and polygamy are no longer taboos; autoeroticism has been enhanced by technology: "Translucents are see-through people. When you fuck them you can watch yourself doing it. It's pornography for introverts" (*SG* 22); homophobia has also been overcome: apart from marginal characters, even Billie's boss, Manfred, has a boyfriend (11); having sex with children is no longer labelled paedophilia: "sexy sex is now about freaks and children. . . . Grotesques earn good money. Kids under ten are known as veal in the trade" (23); group sex is also allowed: "I can take four men at a time – front, rear, here and there" (24). Accordingly, nobody is labelled pervert in Billie's cultural context, because everyone is "pervert" now: "Peccadillo is a perverts' bar, and *we're all perverts now*" (22). The meaning of "pervert" is, thus, de-familiarised in the text; it breaks with its former context and acquires a different meaning. In other

words, by re-contextualising "perversion," the text removes the stigma attached to it, and by so doing, it reveals the contingency of the norms, that is, their temporality and historicity, and, as such, their malleability and transformability.

In spite of sexual "freedom," however, I would argue that heteronormativity is still dominant in Billie's society. We must not forget the fact that gender and sexual politics are deeply entangled; they cannot be treated as two independent things. In the context of *The Stone Gods*, biomedical control—which has replaced compulsory heterosexuality—has strengthened male/female and masculine/feminine binarisms, reinforcing the "man" and the "woman," who are, using Butler's words, the "central protagonists [of the heterosexual regime]" (*GT* 200). As Butler points out, femininity and masculinity are constructed within the heteronormative matrix and, thus, function to serve the heterosexual discourse.

Billie's high-tech society is a "hyperbolic version of our own society" (Dolezal 107), which is afflicted with what Luna Dolezal calls "biomedical-beauty complex" (91), where "[a]ge is information failure" (*SG* 10). Everyone is genetically fixed; hence, everyone is young and beautiful:

> Celebrities are under pressure, no doubt about it. We are all young and beautiful now, so how can they stay ahead of the game? Most of them have macro-surgery. Their boobs swell like beach balls, and their dicks go up and down like beach umbrellas. They are surgically stretched to be taller, and steroids give them muscle growth that turns them into star-gods. Their body parts are bio-enhanced, and their hair can do clever things like change colour to match their outfit. They are everything science and money can buy. (19)

Although all bodies, whether female or male, are enhanced, it is obvious that it is still women who are confined to a greater extent by this bio-medical control. Some men "have . . . themselves genetically Fixed at late-forties. Most men prefer to Fix younger than that, and there are no women who Fix past thirty" (10), which means that it is still women who are expected to look younger: "women feel they have to look youthful, men less so, and lifestyle programmes are full of the appeal of the older man" (11). Body standards are also harsher for women: "there are only two sizes, Model Thin and Model Thinner" (28). Mrs Mary McMurpghy (or Pink

McMurphy) can be taken as "a parody of [this] normalized femininity" (Dolezal 99). Her characterisation mockingly symbolises the "biomedical-beauty complex" that Dolezal refers to (91). Pink, whose real age is fifty-eight, was fixed when she was twenty-four. She has "even had [her] vagina reduced." She says that she is as "tight as a screwtop bottle" (*SG* 71). Despite this, she "wants to be genetically reversed to twelve years old to stop her husband running after schoolgirls" (14). Genetic reversal is "possible, but it's illegal," so Pink "wants to take her case to the Court of Human Rights" (ibid.). Pink wants to look like "a twelve-year-old pop star [called Little Seňorita] who has Fixed herself rather than lose her fame" (19). Pink wants to look like Little Seňorita, because "[her] husband likes girls" (20), and, hence, he is crazy about Little Seňorita (19). Pink does not mind her husband having sex with younger girls as long as he has sex with her, too (20); they do not have sex anymore, "[b]ut [she doesn't] want to lose him" (ibid.). Interestingly, however, when Billie asks Pink why she does not want to lose her husband, she cannot offer any answer. Pink's situation, thus, parodies the "freedom" that technology is claimed to bring about; that is, the claim that technology alone can liberate women. Despite living in a high-tech society, "women are [still] figured as passive, receptive, and dominated, while men are active, self-determining, and productive" (Dolezal 100).

Although people are "free" to have sex with children, this "freedom" is not allowed *everyone*: "[l]egal sex starts at fourteen, . . . everybody does it younger" (*SG* 20); it is no longer pathologised; interestingly, however, it is practiced only by men: "lifestyle programmes are full of the appeal of the older man" (11), while men are after kids:

> '. . . We all want our wives to look like Little Seňorita.'
>
> 'Why is that?'
>
> 'Coz she's hot, and this town is frigid.' (25)

It is not only women who are subordinated and marginalised by the "democracy" of the Central Power/the MORE; a man whom Billie talks with in Peccadillo, a bar for perverts, says,

> '. . . I'm getting one [a wife] from the Eastern Caliphate – it'll be legal, believe me, but she's nine years old and I'm gonna Fix her.'
>
> 'Children cannot be fixed. That is the law.'
>
> 'Little Seňorita –' (ibid.)

So, the children who are bought and fixed are Eastern Caliphate children; this is not done "to the kids born in the Central Power because (a) it's illegal and (b) [they] are civilized" (23). The text, thus, sheds light on the fact that neither gender, nor race has been eliminated, which means that the "democracy" of the Central Power/the MORE has "an Us and a Them" (199). In other words, the text foregrounds the fact that technology cannot simply eliminate gender and race as long as it is in the service of the heterosexual desires of white men. In high-tech society of Orbus and Tech City, technology "continues to privilege male desires" (Jennings 137); bodies are still modified "according to prevailing heteronormative standards" (Dolezal 100). Thus, Rather than eliminating gender stereotypes, technology has intensified these dichotomous stereotypes. Nevertheless, it is not technology and biomedicine that is problematised in the text; it is, rather, the "patriarchal employment of biotechnology" that is interrogated (ibid.). Accordingly, the text draws attention to the "power relations" at work; rather than celebrating or criticising technology, the text has a far more ambivalent approach to technology and the "freedom" it has brought.

The Central Power and the MORE can be said to be "anonymous big brother[s]" (Dolezal 93). The text depicts an "Orwellian vision of a London where constant surveillance and restriction of citizen rights and privacy are justified in the name of 'Freedom Act' " (Jennings 139). The inhabitants of Orbus believe that "It's a *free* country" (*SG* 71; emphasis added); they believe that "The Central Power is a *democracy* [because they] look alike, except for rich people and celebrities, who look better. That's what you'd expect in a *democracy*" (23; emphasis added); they are "individuals" with the "choice" to modify their own bodies. When Billie talks with Mr McMurphy about Pink's decision to be genetically reversed, he says, "whatever she wants, I'm behind her all the way. Her *choice*. I believe that *women should make their own choices*" (26;emphasis added).

This choice, however, is parodied in the text; the text reveals the irony and ambivalence of choice by demonstrating the subordination that "choice" brings about. Even though on Orbus, one can have the body she or he "wants," this "wanting" is revealed to be fraught with ambivalence, since one must use language to say what she or he wants, as Butler points out. Thus, one "present[s oneself] in *a discourse that is not [hers/his]*" (*UG* 91; emphasis added). According to Butler, this is "the paradox of autonomy, a paradox that is heightened when gender regulations work to paralyze *gendered agency* at various levels." Accordingly, "[u]ntil those social conditions are radically changed, *freedom will require unfreedom, and autonomy is implicated in subjection*" (101; emphasis added).

One cannot help remembering the Foucauldian "power-knowledge" and his notion of the "individual": Foucault asserts that the individual is the result of the internalization of "discipline." "Discipline," according to Foucault, is a sort of "self-regulation," and "self-control" imposed by institutions and their "disciplinary techniques" (Mills 43). Thus, the individual is entangled in "mechanisms of control, discourses of truth, and systems of knowledge" (MacQueen 79). The subject, for Foucault, is "an object of discourse, an object of power/knowledge" (Mills 73). One becomes to think of himself or herself as an individual only by being subjectivated. The subject can only tell the truth about itself by being "constituted as a subject across a number of power relations which are exerted over [him or her] and which [he or she] exert[s] over others." In other words, the subject is compelled to "produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function" (Foucault, *PK* 93). In short, the individual, for Foucault, "is an effect of power" (98).

The society of Orbus and that of Tech City are disciplined societies. "Discipline is," as Foucault states, "a political anatomy of detail" (*DP* 139). In both of these societies, each and every detail is organised, observed and controlled. As opposed to "sovereign power," which functions through coercion, "disciplinary power" functions through "normalisation" (*PK* 106-107). Disciplinary power "is constantly exercised by means of surveillance" (104). The Central Power controls the society of Orbus through panoptic surveillance. Panopticism serves "to induce

in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (30) Panopticon internalises power by internalising the gaze. Thus, it renders "surveillance . . . permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action" (ibid). This permanent effect of power is depicted in Orbus and Tech City. The Central Power and the MORE have disciplined their citizens so that continuous act of surveillance is not necessary: Billie says, "I am being watched, but that isn't strange. That's life. We're all used to it. What is strange is that I feel I am being watched. Staked out. Observed. But there's no one there" (*SG* 30). Whether she is being watched by CCTVs or not, she has internalised the gaze. According to Foucault, "the perfection of power tend[s] to render its actual exercise unnecessary. . . . [T]he inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers" (*DP* 201). All citizens of Orbus bear this gaze; they discipline themselves; they normalise their bodies at "will."

> [D]iscipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on one hand, it turns it into 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. (138)

The Central Power and the MORE have produced "docile bodies" through "disciplinary power;" they have produced bodies with great aptitude and capacity, bodies that not only bear the power, but also reproduce it. Thus, Billie's society is revealed not to be freer than that of Jeanette. While Jeanette's Church controls bodies through exorcism, the Central Power and the MORE achieve this effect through disciplining bodies. While Jeanette is under constant observance of the Church and her mother, the inhabitants of Orbus/Tech City are subjected to self-observation, that is, "self-discipline."

4.2.2 The Constitutive Outside of Billie's Society

The Stone Gods demonstrates Butler's assertion that it is "only by the production and maintenance of those socially dead" that social existence is achieved (*PLP* 27). The "human" comes into being through exclusionary practices, abjections and erasures. In other words, the human achieves "humanness" *only* at the expense of the "non-human" and the "less-than-human." Butler argues that "[t]he human is understood differentially depending on its race, the legibility of that race, its morphology, the recognisability of that morphology, its sex, the perceptual verifiability of that sex, its ethnicity, the categorical understanding of that ethnicity" (*UG* 2) Accordingly, *not all* humans are recognised as humans. There are always those who fail to conform to the norms of humanness, and, as such, left outside of this exclusionary framework, leading unlivable lives, which means that the matrix of intelligibility is constructed alongside the matrices of unintelligibility, and unthinkability.

As seen in the society of Orbus, "[p]erfected people have become 'reality' " (Dolezal 106), as a consequence of which all those that are not perfect, those who have not been fixed have become unintelligible; they are considered "unreal." This is foregrounded in the scene where Billie faces an old woman on a pollution day:

> 'Getting old,' she said, and I wondered if I had misheard because we don't use those words anymore. We don't need to use them: they are irrelevant to our experience.
>
> 'Getting old,' she said again. Then she pulled off her mask. Her eyes were bright and glittering, but her face was lined, worn, weathered, battered, purple-veined and liver-spotted, with a slot for a mouth, garishly coated with red lipstick.
>
> I recoiled. I had never seen a living person look like this. I had seen archive footage of how we used to age, and I had seen some of the results of medical experiments, but in front of me now, was a thing with skin like a lizard's, like a stand-up handbag.
>
> 'I am what you will become,' she said. 'I know you haven't been Fixed.' (*SG* 44-45)

The old woman is "only . . . able to go out on pollution days so that no one can see [her] face" (45). Since she is not young and beautiful, that is, since she fails to

conform to the norms of humanness established by the Central Power, she is rendered unintelligible and unthinkable. Thus, the very norms that grant the "perfected people" with humanness, deprive this old woman of it, rendering her as "less-than human." Standing for the abject, the "less-than-human," the unreal, and the socially dead, this old woman calls attention to the mechanisms of exclusion of the discourses of the Central Power/the MORE.

The zone of uninhabitability is also brought into light in the last section of the novel, titled "Wreck City," which is referred to as "No Zone." This "No Zone" is "where you want to live when you don't want to live anywhere else. Where you live when you can't live anywhere else" (179). Wreck City, in other words, is the unintelligible outside of Tech City inhabited by all those who are considered "less-than-human" or "non-human:" the "toxic radioactive mutants," all "incurables and the freaks" (203). In the Dead Forest, Billie can see them

> coming in ragged, torn, ripped, open-wounded, ulcerated, bleeding, toothless, blind, speechless, stunted, mutant, alive – the definition of human. Souls?

> They lived in the Dead Forest. They were the bomb-damage, the enemy collateral, the ground-kill, blood-poisoned, lung-punctured, lymph-swollen, skin like dirty tissue paper, yellow eyes, weal-bodied, frog-mottled, pustules oozing thick stuff, mucus faces, bald, scarred, scared, *alive*, *human*. (232; emphasis added)

Although *alive* and *human*, all these people are *socially dead*. Thus, like the old woman, they stand for the exclusionary practices, abjections and erasures of the matrix of intelligibility. All these people fail to conform to the norms of humanness that the Central Power and the MORE have established. Hence, they are left outside of this exclusionary framework, condemned to lead unlivable lives. Nevertheless, it is in this margin that lies a subversive power. The category of human, as Butler asserts, "is not captured once and for all." As Butler argues, "[t]hat the category is crafted in time, and that it works through excluding a wide range of minorities means that its rearticulation will begin precisely *at the point where the excluded speak to and from such a category*" (*UG* 13; emphasis added). By revealing the ruptures of the high-tech city, that is, by giving voice to the silenced others of

Orbus/Tech City, that is by giving the excluded the chance to speak, the text problematises the category of human, challenging the norms of humanness established by the Central Power and the MORE.

Billie is also on the margins of Orbus/Tech City; she is an eccentric according to her boss Manfred: "Billie, if you weren't so eccentric, you'd fit in better here" (9). Manfred thinks Billie is "out of touch with *real life*" (40; emphasis added), because instead of SpeechPad, Billie still uses books and notebooks, which are considered "unreal," and she still has her farm which is "unreal," as well (9). Thus, according to the constructed "reality" of the Central Power and the MORE, Billie is "unreal." Apart from being "unreal," Billie is accused of "acts of Terrorism against the State that included aiding, abetting and hiding Unknowns" (54). She is considered "a problem" because she "bucked the system [which is] not allowed" (ibid). Furthermore, not only has Billie resisted being fixed, which is against the laws of the Central Power (45), she has also been "campaigning against Genetic Reversal" (70).

Notwithstanding her eccentricity, and her resistance to the discourses of the Central Power and the MORE, Billie cannot be said to be independent of these discourses; she cannot be said to be outside the culture of Orbus or that of Tech City. As Butler argues, subjectivity cannot be acquired outside culture. "The unthinkable is . . . fully within culture, but fully excluded from *dominant* culture" (*GT* 105). In the same way that Jeanette's identity has been acquired by being interpellated through the discourse of the Church and that of her mother, Billie's identity has been acquired by being interpellated by the discourses of the Central Power and that of the MORE, and as a subject, she is bound up with "power relations." The horror she is filled with upon seeing the old woman, her abjection of Spike, and her limited criteria of humanness imply this entanglement. However, since the constitution of the subject is an ongoing process, Billie's constitution is not completed; that is, Billie's identity is not frozen by the discourses of the Central Power/the MORE. Since the subjects have to repeat the subjectivating norms again and again, there is always "the possibility of a repetition that repeats against its origin" (*PLP* 99). For Butler, this dependency of the subject on repetition is

significant, because it is the possibility of diversion within this process of repetition that enables the subject (94). Thus, it is the very discourse, in which the subject is constituted that enables its de-constitution (99). Although Billie's agency is enabled by power, it "exceeds the power by which it is enabled" (15). Despite having acquired her subjectivity within the discourses of the Central power/the MORE, Billie fails to conform to their norms. Thus, like Jeanette and Louie, Billie's agency lies in her ability "to do something with what is done with [her]" (*UG* 3). Despite having to work for the Central power/the MORE, Billie is not faithful to them. Despite being subjectivated by the norms of the Central Power/the MORE, Billie re-directs these subjectivating norms; unlike other female characters, Billie fails to embody normalised femininity, calling its reality into question. In other words, by failing to conform to the norms of "realness," Billie interrogates the reality of Orbus, obliging the reader to re-think the "real."

Billie's ambivalent relation with the discourses of the Central Power and the MORE is also evident in her ambivalent approach to Spike. Although in the society of Orbus same-sex desire is no longer a taboo, "[i]nter-species sex is punishable by death" (*SG* 18). Despite the fact that the Robo *Sapiens* Spike had been designed to give sexual service to men on mission, sleeping with a Robo *Sapiens* is still unthinkable on Orbus. Thus, despite being important for the Central Power/the MORE, Spike, as Robo *Sapiens*, is still *the* abject *other* of the human being. Billie finds Spike "absurdly beautiful" (33), and "incredibly sexy" (6). Despite this, however, she refuses to sleep with her: "*I can't sleep with a computer*," she says (82). She thinks Spike cannot love her because she does not know her. Thus, as I have mentioned previously, as a subject, Billie, too, is bound up with "power relations" within which sleeping with a robot is unthinkable. Billie repudiates Spike, because she is not a "human": "If she had been human," she thinks to herself (61). This is what Butler calls "the policing of identity." As she points out, it is through this "the policing of identity," that is, repeated repudiation of the abject that " 'coherent subjects' are constituted" (*BTM* 79), that is, the subject acquires its subjectivity through the process of performative action, interpellation, and abjection, and it is through this repudiation of the abject that the normative

boundaries of the subject are policed "against the invasion of queerness" (86). This repetition, however, bears the danger of failure. Thus, as Butler asserts, interpellation is not necessarily successful. Billie's attraction to Spike symbolises this failure. Although Billie repeatedly repudiates Spike, reminding her that she is only a robot, that she cannot feel and that she cannot understand human beings, she chats with her: "The strange thing is that although Spike is a robot we chat. I tell her about my life" (163). This is indicative of Billie's failure to fully otherise Spike. Above all, the fact that Billie finally sleeps with Spike speaks for itself:

> When I touch her, my fingers don't question what she is. My body knows who she is. The strange thing about strangers is that they are unknown and known. . . . She is a stranger. She is the stranger that I am beginning to love. (107)

This queer moment not only suggests the failure of the interpellation of the discourses of the Central Power and the MORE, it also de-sediments the reader's notion of the abject, and pushes the boundaries of legitimate sexual categories. By interrogating the boundary between the legitimate and the illegitimate, the text brings the abjected inter-species sexuality into legitimacy; the text, in other words, opens up more possibilities for sexuality. Thus, it demands re-thinking not only the abject, but also the possible. Furthermore, the fact that Billie finally sleeps with Spike suggests that "sexuality is never fully captured by regulation . . . [I]t can exceed regulation, *take on new forms in response to regulation*" (Butler, *UG* 15). This means that deviant sexualities are entangled with the very regulation from which they diverge. As Butler points out, sexuality is "mobilized and incited by constraint, even sometimes requiring them to be produced again and again" (ibid.).

4.2.3 The Double Function of Spike

The role of Spike in *The Stone Gods* can be read in different ways. In my reading, Spike has a double function in the context of the novel. I suggest that Spike not

only metaphorises[47] the "misrecognition of interpellation," she also draws attention to the ambivalence of technology, by parodying the cyborg myth. *The Stone Gods* clearly alludes to Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto*. Haraway claims that cyborg is "an ironic political myth," which can become "a common language for women in the integrated circuit" (291). She asserts that the cyborg belongs to "a post-gendered world" (292). According to her, "the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense," and does not follow teleological logic; rather, it "[subverts] teleology . . . as star wars." In short, "[t]he cyborg incarnation is," according to Haraway, "outside salvation history" (ibid.). She writes,

> [T]he cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden; that is, through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate, through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmos. The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust. . . . the main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential. (293)

Haraway's claim is that cyborgs are "floating signifiers" (294), that breach the boundaries between "human and animal," "animal-human (organism) and machine," and "physical and non-physical" (293-294). She insists that "[r]ace, gender and capital require a cyborg theory" (316). She is positive that the cyborg will bring about "a revolution [in] social relations" (293). *The Stone Gods*, on the other hand, is not that positive about the cyborg. The text's approach to technology and the cyborg is quite ambivalent. Spike stands for the ambivalence of the cyborg as well as technology.

Along the lines of Haraway's myth of the cyborg, Spike is outside salvation history; this is pointed to by sister MacMurphy: "No soul, no salvation" (*SG* 229). She is also unfaithful to her fathers in a similar way to Haraway's dream; although Spike has been designed for the men on the space mission, she falls for Billie, and

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[47] Since cyborg life, consciousness, or identity is beyond the scope of my study, I read Spike as a metaphor.

has sex with Nebraska (209). She also breaks the limits within which she can think and evolve:

> 'Robo *sapiens* were programmed to evolve . . .'
>
> 'Within limits.'
>
> 'We have broken those limits.' (35)

Moreover, despite being a robot, Spike makes choices; she chooses to live in the Wreck City: " 'I have disabled my Mainframe connection', said Spike. 'I have chosen to live as an outlaw.' " (209). Spike's defiance of the discourses of the Central Power/the MORE is of great significance. Like Haraway's cyborg myth, Spike is utterly unfaithful to her origins; she significantly diverges from the discourses of her fathers. Despite being unfaithful to her fathers, however, Spike cannot at all be said to be independent of them. The fact that they want to dismantle Spike suggests that her existence depends on the Central Power/the MORE. Thus, Spike calls attention to the entanglement of agency with power, that is, the ambivalence of both. As Butler asserts, agency in enabled by power. However, it "*exceeds the power by which it is enabled*" (*PLP* 15; emphasis added). Agency, for Butler, "is the *assumption of a purpose unintended by power*" (ibid.; emphasis added). Spike's agency is, thus, enabled within the discourses of the Central Power/the MORE. Like Billie, however, she is unfaithful to these discourses; like Billie, she assumes "a purpose unintentioned by power;" that is, she re-employs and re-directs these subjectivating norms by which her identity is acquired. Thus, I suggest that Spike metaphorises the fact that although identity is performatively acquired through interpellation, the interpellation is not necessarily successful.

In the same way that Harraway dreams, Spike blurs the boundary between nature and culture; that is, she serves to reveal the constructedness of the so-called human attributes. Spike learns to smile and cry; she also develops the ability to feel: "I was experiencing *system failure*. In fact I was sensing something completely new to me. For the first time I was able to feel" (81). Even more surprisingly, she develops a heart:

> Then I felt it. Then I felt it beating.

'What?'

'My heart.'

'You don't have a heart.'

'I do now.'

'But . . .'

'I know it's impossible, but so much that has seemed impossible has already happened.' (110)

Attribution of heart and feeling to Spike is highly parodic. These attributions, alongside the fact that Spike has learned to smile and cry, parody "feeling," which is the criterion of "humanness" according to Billie. The text, thus, points to the fact that human characteristics, like feeling, are performatively acquired in the same way that Spike acquires them. Not only does Spike parodies these "natural feelings," she points out the limitations of Billie's criteria of humanness:

'So your definition of human being is in the capacity to experience emotion?' asked Spike. 'How much emotion? The more sensitive a person is, the more human they are?'

'Well, yes,' I said. 'Insensitive, unfeeling people are at the low end of human – not animal, more android.' (78)

Billie's definition of the "human" based on one's sensitivity renders insensitive people "less-than-human" or "non-human." This exclusion of insensitive people from the category of human reveals the exclusionary mechanisms through which the "human" is constituted. In other words, it highlights Butler's assertion that the human is constructed at the expense of the non-human, and that "[t]he human is understood differentially" (*UG* 2). The norms according to which Billie defines "humanness" deprive others of it. Thus, the text draws attention to the fact that not all humans are recognised as humans. By demonstrating the exclusionary mechanisms of the constitution of the human, the text problematises the category of human, opening it to re-signification.

In the same way as Haraway's dream, Spike questions the easy distinction between human and machine: 'Every human being in the Central Power has been

enhanced, genetically modified and DNA-screened. Some have been cloned. Most were born outside the womb. A human being now is not what a human being was even a hundred years ago. So *what is a human being?*' (77; emphasis added). Spike draws attention to the fact that human life is entangled with machines so that we cannot easily draw the boundary between the two. As Haraway puts it, "we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras" (313). Moreover, she reminds us of the fact that category of "human" is not stable; it is, rather, contingent. The text, thus, de-centres the notion of the "human": "She seemed quiet, subdued. I forgot all the time that she's a robot, but *what's a robot?* A moving lump of metal. In this case an intelligent, ultra-sensitive moving lump of metal. *What's a human?* A moving lump of flesh, in most cases not intelligent or remotely sensitive" (*SG* 99; emphasis added).

Although Spike questions the boundaries between human and machine, between nature and culture, I would argue that she fails to fulfil Harraway's dream of going beyond the categories of gender. Harraway's claim that "High-tech culture challenges. . . dualisms" (313), is revealed to be highly problematic. Spike is not "a creature in a post-gender world" that Harraway dreams of (292). She is not a genderless robot; rather, she is a woman, a sexy woman who had been designed for men who were on the space mission. She "had sex with spacemen for three years" and "used up three silicon-lined vaginas" (*SG* 34). When Spike is going to be dismantled, Billie asks her:

> 'Spike, you're a robot, but why are you such a drop-dead gorgeous robot? I mean is it necessary to be the most sophisticated machine ever built and to look like a movie star?'
>
> She answers simply: 'They thought I would be good for the boys on the mission.' (34)
>
> 'I'm assuming you're not talking sexual services here.'
>
> 'What else is there to do in space for three years?'
>
> 'But inter-species sex is illegal.'
>
> 'Not on another planet it isn't. Not in space it isn't'
>
> 'But you were also the most advanced member of the crew.'

'*I'm still a woman*.' (ibid.; emphasis added)

According to Haraway's own theorisation of "the transition from the comfortable old hierarchal dominations to the scary new network . . . [which she calls] informatics of domination," optimisation has replaced perfection (300). Spike stands for this optimisation; she embodies optimised femininity: "you were designed perfect. Hair and makeup are for the rest of us" (*SG* 174). Thus, far from being a genderless robot, Spike is a "perfect" feminine robot, who does not have to be perfected like other women on Orbus. In other words, while the women on Orbus bear perfected femininity, Spike bears optimised femininity. Thus, she is "*still a woman*."

Harraway further asserts that "Modern machinery is an irreverent upstar god, mocking the Father's ubiquity and spirituality" (294). Reference to star-gods in *The Stone Gods* (19, 23) clearly alludes to Harraway. However, *The Stone Gods* does not share Haraway's celebratory attitude towards the star gods. It is true that star gods, that is, the discourses of technology, interrogate the discourse of God and the Garden of Eden. However, they have become gods themselves; they have seized the Garden of Eden:

> '*Isn't this just a new way of inventing God?* We invented God the first time round, and now we're doing it again – only this time we're letting everyone see the working drawings.'
>
> 'She [the Robo *Sapiens*]'s like God without the Old Testament.' (171; emphasis added)

Thus, the text sheds light on the fact that although God has been brought down from His throne, *the throne is there*, remaining intact; it has always been there; it has been occupied by different gods, whether the stone gods, the Christian God, or the star gods. In other words, *the centre* which was the Christian God has been replaced by *another centre*; the discourses of technology and science have replaced the discourse of salvation. The ambiguous image of the Garden which appears towards the end of the first and last sections of the novel might be indicative of this recurrence. In the Blue Planet, Billie refers to "the massive branches of *a fallen tree*" (102; emphasis added), and at the end of the novel, there appears *a garden*

with "*an apple tree* at the beginning" (245; emphasis added). Billie hesitates to enter the garden because if she enters the garden she "can't come back" (246). This recurrent image of the Garden indicates that it is still there despite having changed. Thus, it is the very notion of *the centre*, whether the Christian God (in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*), the star gods (in Orbus/Tech City), or the stone gods (in the Easter Island) that must be called into question.

Accordingly, the text interrogates the notion of the centre by calling attention to the fact that all centres generate hierarchies and all centres have their margins. In other words, all discourses have "constitutive outsides." Each discourse establishes its truth through exclusionary practices, that is, through abjections and erasures. Social existence, as Butler asserts, is only achieved "by the production and maintenance of those socially dead" (*PLP* 27). The established truth of the Central Power/the MORE has rendered Billie alongside lots of others "unreal" in much the same way that the established truth of the Church condemns Jeanette's desire as "unnatural." In the same way that God casts Jeanette, Melanie, Katy, Ida, May, and Ms Jewsbury out from the Garden of Eden, the star-god-worshiping society casts out Billie, the old woman, and the inhabitants of Wreck City. All these people are left outside the zone of intelligibility. Nevertheless, it is this unintelligible outside that puts question to "the grid of intelligibility," revealing its "moments of discontinuities," that is, its ruptures.

By way of conclusion, juxtaposing *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *The Stone Gods* which depict two distinctly different societies, illustrates Butler's argument over subversion. As Butler points out, subversion has no meaning outside context. What may be considered subversive in a particular context can be a cliché in another context and the other way around (*GT* xxii-xxiii). Same-sex desire, for instance, is unthinkable in Jeanette's society, while it is a cliché in Billie's. Thus, it is not possible "to name the criterion of subversiveness" (ibid.). Neither Jeanette's nor Billie's subversiveness can be understood outside the social context they live in. Both Jeanette and Billie's subversiveness lies in their re-employment and re-direction of the norms, which is enabled through the repetition of the subjectivating norms. Jeanette re-employs the subjectivating norms of the Evangelist Church,

while Billie re-employs those of the Central Power and the MORE. Both Jeanette and Billie demonstrate the fact that interpellation is not necessarily successful; not only is it bound to fail, it "could also be the site of radical reoccupation and resignification" (*PLP* 104).

While *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* interrogates compulsory heterosexuality, *The Stone Gods* interrogates the biomedical control of bodies. However, both do this by revealing the ruptures within these systems. Jeanette, Melanie, Katy, Ida, May, and Ms Jewsbury, and even Louie reveal the ruptures of the dominant heteronormative discourse in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, in much the same way that Billie, the old woman, and the inhabitants of Wreck City reveal the ruptures of the discourses of the Central Power and the MORE and in *The Stone Gods*. It is important to note that these people are not outside culture, but rather on the margins of the dominant culture. As Butler argues, "[t]he unthinkable is fully within culture but excluded from dominant culture" (*GT* 105). In both texts the dominant discourses are shown to be vulnerable from inside. Both texts not only expose the margins, that is, the margins of the Evangelist Church in the context of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, and the margins of the dominant tech-ridden culture in the context of *The Stone Gods*, but also bring these margins to the centre, as a result of which the centre is de-stabilised. In short, subversion, as Butler suggests, is "*rethinking of our basic categories*" or "*a radical shift in one's notion of the possible and the real*" (GT xxiv; emphasis added). This effect is achieved in both *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *The Stone Gods*. Both texts aim at "*maximiz[ing] the possibilities for a liveable life*" and "*minimiz[ing] the possibility of unbearable life, or, indeed, social or literal death,*" using Butler's words (*UG* 8; emphasis added).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

> *The only thing for certain is how complicated it all is.*
> (*O* 93; emphasis added)

Written on the Body, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *The Passion* effectively interrogate the boundaries of the binary categories of the heterosexual regime, such as, male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, and heterosexual/homosexual. The anonymous narrator of *Written on the Body* remains stereotypically feminine and stereotypically masculine, not allowing the reader to pin her/him down to one side of the binary. In other words, s/he defies categorisation. Furthermore, by wearing multiple masks, by performing femininity and masculinity excessively and by parodying them, s/he draws the reader's attention to the fact that s/he is *doing* femininity and masculinity, that gender, as Butler asserts, is a mask, a *doing* rather than a psychic reality; that is, rather than an essence, s/he reveals gender to be a performative accomplishment. Accordingly, s/he de-sediments the reader's gender stereotypes, and disrupts not only the easy distinction between femininity and masculinity, but also the distinction between interiority and exteriority, compelling the reader to re-think gender as performative. In addition to disrupting gender binarism, the narrator disrupts the binary categories of sexuality and sex. The fact that s/he practices sex with both women and men unsettles the coherence of both heterosexuality and homosexuality, calling the hetero/homo binary into question. Moreover, the absence of the narrator's body despite the abundance of discourses on it invites the reader to re-think the uncritically accepted "naturalness" and "materiality" of sex. *Written on the Body* not only de-constructs the

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heteronormative categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, but also de-mythologises love, rendering it a discourse on desire which serves to ward off the deviant forms of sexual practice.

Alongside the androgyny of the characters in *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion*, gender is effectively parodied by Jordan, Tradescant and Villanelle's cross-dressing. Like the narrator of *Written on the Body*, by imitating gender they reveal gender to be an imitation. As Butler argues, "*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency*" (*GT* 187). This is highlighted when Villanelle asks "And what was myself" (*P* 65). As a result of performing masculinity and femininity, she comes to doubt which gender is more "real." Here, the reader, too, is obliged to think over this question. Thus, both *Sexing the Cherry* and *The Passion* reveal gender to be a performative accomplishment rather than a psychic reality. Jordan and Villanelle's cross-dressing, alongside Jordan's feminine looks, not only results in gender confusion, but it also creates considerable confusion in terms of sexuality. Due to her cross-dressing, Villanelle's sexual intercourse with her husband and with the Queen of Spades is not unproblematically heterosexual and homosexual respectively. Nor can Jordan's sexual intercourse with Zillah be unproblematically categorised, because for Zillah, who takes Jordan to be a girl, this sexual practice is homosexual, while For Jordan it is not. Accordingly, the text parodyingly queers and de-constructs the hetero/homo binarism. Furthermore, both texts de-sediment the reader's notion of incest. The incestuous desire of Zillah for Jordan and that of Vilanelle for Henri, none of whom are "real" siblings, demand a re-thinking of the incest taboo as a cultural myth, that is, not more "real" than the incestuous desires in these texts. In addition, both texts problematise the normative boundaries of the "natural body" by calling attention to the violence of these boundaries. The Dog-Woman stands for the "constitutive outside" of the human body and Villanelle for the "constitutive outside" of the binary sex, reminding the reader of the bisexual, the transsexual, and all others who do not fit into the one side of the binary. Accordingly, by bringing the "unreal bodies" into reality, these texts demand the re-signification and re-materialisation of the "body."

In short, by occupying "hybrid regions," by vacillating between these binary categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, the unnamable narrator, the Dog-Woman, Jordan, Villanelle, and Henri bring the discourses of continuity and coherence into question; they reveal the boundaries of sex, gender, and sexuality to be porous. The confusion they cause is a "subversive confusion" that invites the reader to re-think these uncritically accepted boundaries. The metafictional device of the unreliable narrator confounds this confusion even more; it not only calls attention to the fictionality of the texts, but also troubles the distinction between fact and fiction, that is, between the reliable narratives and the unreliable ones; it casts doubt on the discourses which construct the myth of origin and the myth of coherence; it deprives these discourses of their authority. In other words, these discourses, which construct sanctioned/unsanctioned bodies, identities, and desires, that is, the discourses which define viable/unviable subject positions, and, therefore, livable/unlivable lives are rendered as unreliable as the narrative embroidered or made up by these unreliable narrators. In short, in all these texts the hierarchy between the texts is undermined; they all foreground the fact that all texts, regardless of their genre, are fictions.

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit parodyingly de-constructs the heteronormative discourse; it does so by revealing the ruptures within it. Jeanette, Louie, Melanie, Katy, Ida, May, and Ms Jewsbury are the ruptures within the heterosexual regime, who interrogate its coherence. In spite of being imbued with the discourse of the Evangelist Church and that of her mother, Jeanette significantly diverges from them. Although she is supposed to be a "holy" Jesus figure, she, ironically, gives in to "unnatural passions" and "nameless desires," which are constantly cautioned against by the Church and her mother. Even more ironically, the Lord, who is supposed to protect her from "nameless desires" brings her and Melanie together. It is the Lord again who brings Jeanette and Katy together, and it is the Lord who brings Jeanette and the orange demon together. Far from casting the demon out of Jeanette, exorcism results in Jeanette and the orange demon's friendship, which is highly parodic. By embracing the orange demon rather than casting it out, Jeanette demands the recognition of the "unnatural passions" and

"nameless desires" that the Church has foreclosed. In other words, she demands the legitimisation of the abject, which is homosexuality in the context of the novel. The fact that Jeanette becomes a demonised Jesus rather than a holy Jesus, that is, Jeanette's failure to become a holy Jesus, parodies holiness; it indicates the fact that interpellation, as Butler points out, is always in danger of failure. Louie's "unnatural passions," that is, her failure to be holy indicates this failure, as well; it reveals the "internal comedy" of heterosexuality even further. This is because even Louie, who imposes heterosexual norms on Jeanette, fails to be heterosexual. Although both Jeanette and Louie are entangled with the discourse of the Church, they fail to be faithful to it; rather, they both re-deploy and re-direct the subjectivating norms of the discourse, although in different ways.

The Stone Gods parodingly interrogates the technoculture and its biomedical control of bodies. Being a sexy woman, Spike parodies Haraway's dream of genderless cyborg. The over-optimism about technology's liberating power is also parodied by Pink. In a similar way to *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, *The Stone Gods* de-stabilises the discourse by revealing its ruptures. Like Jeanette, Louie, Melanie, Katy, Ida, May, and Ms Jewsbury, who are the ruptures within the heteronormative discourse, Billie, the old woman, the inhabitants of Wreck City, and even Spike are the ruptures of the discourses of the Central Power and the MORE. The inhabitants of Wreck City are the "unreal" outside of Tech City, that is the "constitutive outside" of the "reality" of Tech City; they are all those whose lives are considered "unreal" according to the discourse of the MORE. In the same way that *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* demands the recognition of abjected homosexuality, *The Stone Gods* demands the recognition of these erased people. Furthermore, like *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit,* the text calls attention to the fact that interpellation is not necessarily successful. Billie and the old woman's refusal to be genetically fixed indicates the failure of the interpellation of the biomedical discourses, and the possibility of Spike's dissention from the Central Power/ the MORE symbolises the failure of interpellation, as well. Like Jeanette and Louie, and others who re-direct the norms of the Church, Billie, Spike, and all

the "unreal" others re-deploy and re-direct the subjectivating norms of the Central Power/ the MORE.

Accordingly, apart from interrogating the heterocentric and technocentric discourses respectively, both *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *The Stone Gods* foreground not only the complexity of identity, but also the ambivalence of subjectivity and agency. They remind us of Butler's assertion that subjectivation does not rule out agency; that agency is entangled in subjection. As subjects, Jeanette, Louie, and Billie, like the unnameable narrator, the Dog-Woman, Jordan, Villanelle, and Henri, are entangled in multiple discourses that constitutes their identities. This, however, does not mean that they are determined as a subject, because the constitution of the subject is an *ongoing process* which is never completed. Since the subject has to repeat the subjectivating norms, there is always the possibility of a subversive repetition that diverges from the norms. Thus, it is this iterability/citationality, not a transcendental agency, that enables the Dog-Woman, Jordan, Villanelle, Henri, Jeanette, Louie, and Billie to re-employ and re-direct the subjectivating norms.

Furthermore, juxtaposing *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *The Stone Gods* reveals the fact that subversion has no meaning outside context. As Butler reminds us, what may be considered subversive in a particular context can be a cliché in another context and the other way around. The Dog-Woman, Jordan, Villanelle, Henri, Jeanette, Louie, and Billie's subversiveness cannot be understood outside the social context of the texts. However, the subversiveness of them all lies in their re-employment and re-direction of the norms, which is enabled through the repetition of the very subjectivating norms. Similarly, the subversiveness of a particular text cannot be understood without the social background against which it is written. Subversion, as Butler suggests, is "*rethinking of our basic categories*" or "*a radical shift in one's notion of the possible and the real*" (*GT* xxiv; emphasis added). This effect is achieved in the texts I have studied. All these texts aim at "*maximiz[ing] the possibilities for a liveable life*" and "*minimiz[ing] the possibility of unbearable life, or, indeed, social or literal death*," which, according to Butler must be the concern of politics (*UG* 8; emphasis added). What these texts demand

is permanent "*openness* and *unknowingness*" that non-violence requires. Thus, their subversive and political potential cannot be denied.

True stories are the ones that lie open at the border, allowing a crossing, a further frontier. . . . Like the universe, there is no end.

And this story? (*SG* 106; emphasis added)

One word, and a million million worlds close (83-84; emphasis added).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TURKISH SUMMARY/ TÜRKÇE ÖZET

KİMLİK KATEGORİLERİNİN EDEBİYATTA YAPISIZLAŞTIRMASI: JEANETTE WINTERSON'UN ROMANLARINI BÜLERCİ PARODİK YARIŞMASININ PERSPEKTİFİNDEN BIR OKUMA

Jeanette Winterson'un metinleri gerçeğin sınırlarını zorlar; cins, cinsiyet ve cinselliğin kemikleşmiş kavramlarını çökerterek, okuyucuyu ikilik dışındaki cins, cinsiyet ve cinsellik kategorilerini yeniden düşünmeye zorlar. Başka bir deyişle, okuyucuyu olasılığı yeniden düşünmek zorunda bırakırlar. Winterson'un karakterleri melez, toplumsal cinsiyeti sorunlu, ikili kategoriler arasındaki, yani çoklu tanımlamaların ve arzuların kavşaklarında; kolayca tanımlanamazlar; cins, cinsiyet ve cinselliğin ikili kategorilerine kolayca sokulamazlar. Diğer bir deyişle, kategorize edilemezler ve sınıflandırmaya karşı bu meydan okumayla, erkek/kadın, erkeksi/kadınsı ve heteroseksüel/homosexüel ikili kategorilerin düzeninibozarlar.

Cinsiyet, Winterson'un metninde uyumsuzluğu ön plana çıkararak sürekli parodi haline getirilir. Winterson'un karakterleri cinsiyetlerinin normlarına uymaz. *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir*'deki Jeanette ve Louie *Tutku*'daki Henri ve Villanelle, *Kirazı Cinslendirmek*'deki Köpek-Kadın ve Jordan, *Vücut Üzerine Yazılmış*'dakiadlandırılamaz anlatıcı ve *Taş Tanrılar*'daki Billie cinsiyetin ikili kategorilerine sığdırılamaz. Bu nedenle, bu kategorileri sınırlı, münhasır ve sorunlu olarak ortaya koyarlar; okuyucunun kadınlık ve erkeklik algısını sorunlaştırıp

yapısöküme uğratırlar. *Vücut Üzerine Yazılmış*'daki Anlatıcının, aynı zamanda stereotipik olarak kadınsı ve stereotipik olarak erkeksi olması, kadın veya erkek olarak sınıflandırılmayı reddetmesi, Villanelle ve Jorden'in örtüşmesi, özellikle de Villanelle'nin "gerçek cinsiyeti" konusundaki karışıklığı, toplumsal cinsiyeti psişik bir gerçeklikten ziyade performatif bir başarı olarak ortaya koyar.

Winterson'un metinleri cinsiyeti bir kültürel efsaneye dönüştürse de, geleneksel feminizmin içine çekildiği doğal cinsiyet/toplumsal cinsiyet yapısı ikilisini doğrulamaz. Aksine, bu ikili de oynamaktadır; "doğal" ve "materyal" kavramlarını sorgularlar; okuyucuyu, "doğal"ın kültürel ve "materyal"in dilsel olarak yeniden düşünülmesine çağırırlar. Okuyucunun dikkatine, "beden"in inşasında çoklu söylem rolünü getirirler; okuyucuya, "beden"in yalnızca söylemlerle algılanıyor olduğunu hatırlatırlar. Dolayısıyla, bu biyolojik bir gerçek değil, daha çok kültürel bir kavramdır. Dahası, Winterson'un metinleri olan Villanelle, Köpek-Kadın ve Wreck Şehrinsakinleri arasındaki anlaşılmaz organlar cinsel/morfolojik normların şiddetine dikkat çeker. "Beden"in tutarlı bir bütün olmadığı ve seks kategorisinin homojen olmadığı gerçeğini ortaya koyar; cinsel/morfolojik homojenlik varsayımı, diğer organların silinmesine neden olur. Winterson'un metinleri, bu dışlanmış ve silinmiş bedenlerin dahil edilmesi talebinde bulunur.

Winterson'un metinleri, anlaşılmaz toplumsal cinsiyet kimlikleri ve bedenler "kültürel matriste" dahil edilmesine yönelik talebin yanı sıra, haksız yere, tabulanmış arzuların ve cinsel uygulamaların dahil edilmesini talep eder. Metinleri "eşcinsellik" ve "ensest" gibi cinsellik hakkındaki tabuları, sapkın cinsel uygulamalar arasında çiğniyor; okuyucunun bu tabuları kavramını, onları yeniden bağlamlaştırarak tasfiye ederler. Diğer bir deyişle, meşruiyeyi meşrulaştırmaya yeniden yazarak, metinler meşruyu yeniden belirtir. Üstelik, Winterson'un metinleri cins ve cinsiyet ikili kategorilerinin yapısızlaştırılmasının yanı sıra heteroseksüel/homosexüelikili de bozguna uğratır. Okuyucuyu bu kategorileri sosyal yapılar olarak yeniden düşünmeye zorlar.

"Süreksizlik anları"nı yakalayarak, cins, cinsiyet ve cinselliğin ikili kategorilerindeki çatlaklar açığa çıkarılarak Winterson'un metinleri parodi olarak oluşturuldu ve onları parçaladı. Bu metinler beden, cins, cinsiyet, kimlik, arzu, cinsellik, aile bağları, ensest ve hatta insan kavramlarını queerleştirir; okuyucuyu aksini düşünmek zorunda bırakarak, bu eleştirilmemiş kabul edilen düşünceleri de-sediment ettirir. Bunu baskın söylemlerin marjinallere dikkat ederek yaparlar ve yalnızca "gerçek" ve "doğal" cins, cinsiyet ve arzuların "doğal olmayan"ın pahasına olduğunu ön plana çıkarırlar. Bu "gerçek dışı" dışa işaret ederek ve "gerçek cins/cinsiyet/cinsellik" ifadeyi gerçeğe yeniden yazarak, Winterson'un metinleri "kültürel anlaşılabilirlik matrisini" bozar; dışlanan ve silinenlerin "gerçek", ve"gayrimeşru meşrubun meşrulaştırılması", yani "gerçek" ve "doğal" nın yeniden belirtilmesini talep eder.

Winterson'un metinleri, anlatı sesinin çokluğu, kimlik çokluğu, yer ve zaman çokluğu ve tür çokluğu ile karakterizedir. Çokluğu ve akışkanlığı ön plana çıkararak, sabitliği, kesinlik, birlik ve tutarlılığı sorgularlar. Söylemleri, yani "üstanlatıları" toplamaya, merkezileştirmeye ve normalleştirmeye güvenmezler. Aksine, toplamlaştırma, merkezileştirme ve normalleştirmeye meydan okurlar. Gerçeğin tekil bir söylemini oluşturmak yerine, okuyucuyu, gerçeğin çoğulluğunu anlamayı ertelemek ve kapatmaktan kaçınarak kutlamaya davet ederler.

Hikaye anlatımı ve tarih kavramları Winterson'un metinleri içimçok önemlidir. Metinleri hikayelerle dolup taşıyor; onlar, gerçekçi/fantastik, kutsal/profesan ve tarihi/tarih dışı hikayelerin ayrışması mümkün olmayan bir birleşimidir. Bu dolanma, gerçeklikle fantazi arasındaki, kutsal ile kınamak arasındaki ve her şeyden önce tarih ile öykü anlatımı arasındaki, yani gerçek ile kurgu arasındaki sınırları karıştırır. Winterson'un metinlerinde ön plana çıkan şey tarihin objektif olmadığı gerçeğidir. Aksine, öznel bir seçim ve olayların ihmalidir; metinleri hiyerarşik hale getirme, bazı anlatıları yetkilendirmeye ve diğerlerini yok saymaya hizmet ederler. Başka bir deyişle, "resmi olmayan" tarih, "resmi olmayan" geçmişleri susturmak için ortaya çıkar. Winterson'un metinlerinde üstkurmaca aygıtlarının kullanılması, yalnızca metinlerin kâriflerine dikkat çekmekle

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kalmamakla birlikte, makale olarak yetki veya kutsallıklarına bakılmaksızın tüm metinleri gerçekle kurgu arasındaki ayrımı zorlaştırmaktadır. Başka bir deyişle, metinlerdekihiyerarşi yok edilir; güvenilir anlatılar ile güvensiz olanların, yani yetkili ve otoriter olmayanların arasındaki ayrım sorunludur; okuyucu, tüm anlatıları güvenilmez olarak yeniden düşünmeye davet edilir; Başka bir deyişle, tüm metinler kendi yetkilerinden yoksun bırakılır. Dolayısıyla hepsi yeniden yazılabilirler. Winterson'un metinleri parodik olarak bu söylemlerin marjinleri merkeze getirerek, konuşmalarına izin vererek tarih, din ve edebiyatı diğer "üstanlatıları" arasında yeniden yazıyor; bunlar merkezin ve dışlananları yeniden belirtilmesini sağlıyor; Winterson'un metinlerinin yıkıcı potansiyeli vardır.

Buna ramen, Winterson'un metinlerinde yatan bu yıkıcı potansiyel, metinlerini ya hayatına ya da paradoks, karmaşıklık ve kararsızlığı ekarte eden modernist söylemlere indirgeyen çok sayıda eleştirmen tarafından ihmal edilmektedir. Winterson'un metinlerinin indirgeyici alımının tahıllarına karşın, bu tez, *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir*, *Tutku*, *Kirazı Cinslendirmek*, *Vücut Üzerine Yazılmış*ve *Taş Tanrıları* Butler'cı bir bakış açısıyla okuyacak. Eleştirmenler arasında, Jeanette Winterson'un cinsel kimliğini metninde tutma eğilimi, yani onu "lezbiyen bir yazar" olarak, metinlerini de "lezbiyen metinler" olarak belirleme eğilimi vardır. Bununla birlikte, hem lezbiyen kategorisinde yazar ve lezbiyen metin kategorisi sorunludur, çünkü bu kategorizasyonlar metnin karmaşıklıklarını ihmal eder ve diğer yorumlara aykırıdır.Ben iddia ediyorum kiWinterson'un metinlerine bir yazar (lezbiyen bir yazar) verilmesi okuma sürecini basitleştirir; Winterson'un cinsel kimliği kendisinin de işaret ettiği gibi "harika bir saptırma"dır (*AO* 106). Metinlerindeki tüm belirsizliği ve boşlukları ortadan kaldırır ve yorumları kontrol altında tutar.

Winterson'un metinlerinin biyografiye indirgenmesinin yanısıra, eleştirilerinin çokluğu, bir metnin köktenci olarak yıkıcı ya da konvansiyonel olduğu, yani normların ötesine geçen ya da devam ettirdiği ikili dalgalanma anlayışıyla da bağlantılıdır. Buna göre, çalışacağım metinler, karakterleri normları aşıp çıkmayacaklarına bakılmaksızın, yıkıcı ya da konvansiyonel olup

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olmamasına ilişkin büyük tartışmalarla çevrilidir. Önlenebilirlik konusundaki tartışmalara ek olarak, Winterson'un metinlerinin çoğunun siyasetçilik konusundaki tartışmaları da tetikledi. Winterson'un metinlerini "lezbiyen metinler" olarak etiketleyen bazı eleştirmenler bile, bu metinlerin siyasi olarak lezbiyen olmadığını iddia ediyorlar.

Buna göre, Winterson'un metinlerini Butler bakış açısıyla okurken ihmal edilen karmaşıklıkları analiz edeceğim. *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir*'deki Jeanette ve Louie *Tutku*'daki, Henri ve Villanelle, *Kirazı Cinslendirmek*'deki Köpek-Kadın ve Jordan, *Vücut Üzerine Yazılmış*'daki adlandırılamaz anlatıcı ve *Taş Tanrılar*'daki Billie'yi Butler'in öznelik anlayışı iyle analiz edeceğim ve öznenin özgür irade/determinizm ikiliğine indirgenemeyeceğini açığa çıkaracağım.İsimsiz anlatıcı, Köpek-Kadın, Jordan, Villanelle, Henri, Jeanette, Louie ve Billie, farklı "iktidar-bilgi" ağı içerisindeki bireyler haline geldi; hepsi kaçınılmaz olarak "iktidar ilişkilerine" girer. Özneler iktidarı aşamazlar, ancak sorgulayabilirler. Başka bir deyişle, kendi öznelikleri söylemin normlarını yeniden yönlendirme yeteneğine sahiptir. Louie ve Köpek-Kadın'ın konvansiyonel karakterler olduğunu iddia edenler, sadece kimliğin karmaşıklığını ihmal etmekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda normların yıkıcı yeniden yerleştirilmesinin önemini fark edemezler.

Bundan başka, Butler bakış açısı siyasetin daha derin bir anlayışını sunar. Winterson'un kadın ve lezbiyenin ne anlama geldiğini ihmal ettiğini iddia edenler ve Winterson'u kesinlikten yoksun bırakmakla suçlayan kişiler kesinliklerin maliyeti olduğu gerçeğini kabul etmemektedir. "Kadın" ve "Lezbiyen" kategorilerinin istikrarı istikrarsızlıkların ortadan kaldırılması ve silinmesini gerektirir. Bu kategoriler sadece "doğal olmayan" pahasına vatandaşlık kazanırlar. Butler'ın da belirttiği gibi, bu kategorilerin tümü "kurucu dış"lara sahiptir. Başka bir deyişle, "gerçek" sınırı, "gerçek dışı" dış sınırıyla belirlenir. Dolayısıyla, politik eylem uğruna kesinlik isteyenler, bu belirli ve istikrarlı kategorilerin kendilerinin söylemsel olarak inşa edildiğini unutmamalıdır; yani "içsel olarak siyasal" oldukları anlamına gelir. Dolayısıyla, istikrarsızlığın politik önemi vardır. Buna göre, yapısızlaştırmanın "söylemin yerinden olması"na yol açan bir "siyasi proje" olduğu

söylenebilir (Jaggar, 18). Winterson'un metinlerinin, söylemsel olarak yapılandırılmış cins, cinsiyet ve cinsellik kategorilerinin yerini alması anlamında yıkıcı olduğunu iddia ediyorum; dışlananlara dikkat ederek, dışarıyı merkeze getirerek, anlamlı bir siyasi eylem olan söylemsel olarak kurulmuş merkezin istikrar ve merkeziyetçiliklerini ortadan kaldırıyorlar. Cins, cinsiyet ve cinselliğin ikili kategorilerinin, diğer bir deyişle onları queer yapısökümüyle çökerterek, bu metinler yeniden anlamlandırmaya açıyor; Butler'ın savunduğu "demokratik açıklık" istiyorlar. Kısacası, ihtimalin siyasi önemini göz önüne alırsak, Winterson'un metinlerinde "ciddi bir siyasi gündeme" (Makinen 87) zarar vermekten uzak durmanın önemli bir siyasi direniş olduğunu savunabiliriz.

Vücut Üzerine Yazılmış, *Kirazı Cinslendirmek* ve*Tutku* heteroseksüel rejimin ikili kategorilerinin (erkek/kadın, erkeksi/kadınsı ve heteroseksüel/homosexüel) sınırlarını etkili bir şekilde sorgular. *Vücut Üzerine Yazılmış*'daki anlatıcı, stereotipik olarak kadınsı ve aynı zamanda erkeksi kalır, okuyucunun ikiliği bir kenarına sokmasına izin vermez. Başka bir deyişle, sınıflandırmaya meydan okumuyor. Ayrıca, birden fazla maske giyerek, kadınsılık ve erkekliği aşırı derecede ve parodiğini kullanarak okuyanın dikkatini kadınlık ve erkeklik yapıyor olması, Butler'in belirttiği gibi cinsiyetin bir maske, psişik bir gerçeklik yerine yapmak; yani bir özden çok cinselliği performatif bir başarı olarak ortaya koymaktadır. Buna göre, okuyucunun cinsiyet kalıplarını çökertiyor ve sadece kadınlık ve erkeklik arasındaki kolay ayrımı değil, aynı zamanda içyapı ile dışsallık arasındaki ayrımı da bozarak okuyucuyu, toplumu cinsiyet olarak performatif olarak tekrar düşünmeye zorluyor. Cinsiyet ikiliğinin bozulmasına ek olarak, anlatıcı, cinsellik ve cinsiyet ikili kategorilerini de bozuyor. Hem kadınlar hem de erkeklerle seks yapması, hem heteroseksüelliğin hem de homosexüelliğin uyumluluğunu engelliyor ve bu ikiliği sorguluyor. Ayrıca anlatıcıların bolluğuna rağmen anlatıcının bedeninin bulunmaması, okuyucuyu eleştirel olarak kabul görmeyen "doğallık" ve cins "önemlilik" kavramlarını yeniden düşünmeye davet ediyor. *Vücut Üzerine Yazılmış* sadece heteronormatif cinsi, cinsiyet ve cinsellik kategorilerini çökertmekle kalmayıp aynı zamanda da mitolojileri seviyor ve bu da

cinsel uygulamaların sapkın biçimlerini önlemeye hizmet eden arzuyla ilgili bir söylem oluşturuyor.

Cinsiyet, *Kirazı Cinslendirmek* ve *Tutku*'da Cinsiyetindek karakterlerinandrojenizinin yanı sıra, Jordan ve Tradescant'in kadın kıyafeti ve Villanelle'in erkek kıyafeti giymeleri etkili bir şekilde parodi haline getirilir. *Vücut Üzerine Yazılmış*'daki Anlatıcısı gibi, cinsiyeti taklit ederek cinsiyeti taklit olarak ortaya koyuyorlar. Butler'in belirttiği gibi cinsiyeti taklit ederek, sürükleme örtük olarak toplumsal cinsiyetin taklit yapısını ve ihtimalini ortaya koyuyor. Erkeklik ve kadınsılık gerçekleştirmenin sonucu olarak, Villanelle hangi cinsiyetin daha "gerçek" olduğunu şüpheye düşürür. Burada okuyucu da bu soruyu düşünmekle yükümlüdür. Böylece hem *Cinslendirmek* ve *Tutku*cinsiyetin psişik bir gerçeklikten ziyade performatif bir başarı olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Jordan ve Villanelle'inkıyafetleri, Jordan'ın Kadınsı görünüşüyle birlikte yalnızca toplumsal cinsiyet konusunda karışıklığa neden olmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda cinsellik açısından da büyük karışıklık yaratır. Karşı cinsiyetin kıyafetini giydiği için, Villanelle'in kocasıyla ve Spades Kraliçesi'yle olan cinsel ilişkisi sırasıyla heteroseksüel ve homoseksüel değildir. Jordan'ın Zillah ile olan cinsel ilişkisi sorunsuz bir şekilde sınıflandırılamaz, çünkü Jordan'ınkız olarak kabul eden Zillah için bu cinsel pratik eşcinseldir, oysa Jordan için değildir. Buna göre, metin parodivan olarak heteroseksüel/homoseksüel ikiliği queerleştirir ve onarır. Dahası, her iki metin de okuyucunun ensest kavramını çökertir. Hiç kimsenin "gerçek" kardeşleri olmadığı, Jordan için Zillah'ın ensest arzusu Henri'ye ve Vilanelle'ye olan ensest tabuyu, kültürel bir efsane olarak, yani ensest arzularından daha "gerçek" değil olarak yeniden düşünmeyi talep ediyor. Buna ek olarak, her iki metin de bu sınırların şiddetine dikkat çekerek "doğal beden" in normatif sınırlarını sorguluyor. Köpek-Kadın, ikili seksin "kurucu dış" için insan vücudunun "kurucu dış" ve Villanelle'i, okuyucuyu biseksüel, transseksüel ve bir tarafa uymayan diğerlerini hatırlatarak duruyor. Buna göre, "gerçekdışı bedenleri" gerçek haline getirerek, bu metinler "beden" in yeniden belirlenmesi ve yeniden canlandırılmasını talep etmektedir.

Kısacası, cins, cinsiyet ve cinselliğin bu ikili kategorileri arasında yalpalayan "hibrid bölgeleri" işgal ederek, isimsiz anlatıcı, Köpek-Kadın, Jordan, Villanelle ve Henri, süreklilik ve tutarlılık söylemlerini sorguluyor; cins, cinsiyet ve cinselliğin sınırlarını gözenekli olarak ortaya koyuyorlar. Ortaya koydukları karışıklık, okuyucuyu bu eleştirilmemiş sınırları yeniden düşünmeye davet eden "yıkıcı bir karışıklık" tır. Güvenilemez anlatıcının üstbiçimsel cihazı bu karışıklığa daha fazla karışıyor; yalnızca metinlerin kurguya dikkat çekmesi değil, aynı zamanda gerçek ile kurgu arasındaki, yani güvenilir anlatılar ile güvenilmez olanlar arasındaki ayrımı da zorluyor; menşe miti ve tutarlılık efsanesini oluşturan söylemlere şüphe düşürüyor; bu otoritenin söylemlerinden mahrum kalmaktadır. Başka bir deyişle, onaylanmamış bedenler, kimlikler ve arzuları, yani yaşanabilir/yaşanamayan özne pozisyonlarını tanımlayan söylemler ve dolayısıyla yaşanabilir/yaşanamayan hayatları yapılandıran bu söylemler, nakış yapılan ya da yapılan anlatı kadar güvenilmez olarak verilir bu güvenilmez anlatıcılar tarafından. Kısacası, tüm bu metinlerde metinler arasındaki hiyerarşi zayıflatılmıştır. Hepsi, tüm metinlerin türüne bakılmaksızın kurgusal olması gerçeğini ön plana çıkardı.

Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir parodize ederek heteronormatif söylemin yapısızlaştırıyor; içindeki tutarsızlık açığa çıkararak yapar. Jeanette, Louie, Melanie, Katy, Ida, May ve Bayan Jewsbury, heteroseksüel rejimdeki tutarlılığı sorgulayan kopuşlardır. Evangelist Kilisenin söylemiyle ve annesininki ile sızdırılmış olmasına rağmen, Jeanette onlardan büyük ölçüde ayrılır. Her ne kadar "kutsal" bir İsa figürü olması beklentisine rağmen, ve her ne kadar Kilise ve annesi tarafından "doğal olmayan tutkular" ve "isimsiz arzulara" karşı sürekli olarak uyarılmasına rağmen, ironik bir şekilde, bu "doğal olmayan tutkular" ve "isimsiz arzular" Jeaneatte'den uzaklaşmıyor. Daha da ironik biçimde, onu "isimsiz arzular" dan koruyacak olan Rab, onu ve Melanie'yi bir araya getirir. Jeanette ve Katy'yi bir araya getiren Rab'dir ve Jeanette ile portakal şeytanı bir araya getiren Rab'dir. İblisin Jeanette'den dökülmesinden çok, şeytan çıkarma, Jeanette ve son derece parodik olan portakal şeytan dostluğuyla sonuçlanır. Jeanette, portakal şeytanı kastetmek yerine Kabul ederek, Kilisenin vaat ettiği "doğal olmayan tutkular" ve

"isimsiz arzular"ın tanınmasını talep ediyor. Bir başka deyişle, roman bağlamında homoseksüellik olan fahişenin meşrulaştırılmasını istiyor. Jeanette'in kutsal bir İsa yerine şeytani bir İsa haline gelmesi, yani Jeanette'in kutsal bir İsa olmaması, kutsama ayrılır; Butler'in belirttiği gibi, sorgulamanın her zaman başarısızlık tehlikesiyle karşı karşıya kaldığı gerçeğini gösterir. Louie'nin "doğal olmayan tutkuları", yani kutsal olmaması onun başarısızlığını da gösterir; heteroseksüelliğin "iç komedisi"ni daha da ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bunun nedeni, Jeanette'e heteroseksüel normlar uygulayan Louie bile heteroseksüel olmamaktadır. Hem Jeanette hem de Louie, Kilise söylemiyle dolaşsalar da ona sadık kalmazlar. Bunun yerine, her ikisi de farklı yollarla olmasına rağmen söylemin tabiiyete geçirme normlarını yeniden yerleştirip yeniden yönlendirirler.

Taş Tanrılar, teknokültürü ve bedenlerin biyomedikal kontrolünü parodize ederek sorgularlar. Seksi bir kadın olan Spike, Haraway'in cinsiyete bağlı olmayan cyborg hayalini bozuyor. Teknolojinin özgürleştirici gücü konusunda aşırı iyimserlik de Pink tarafından parodize edildi. *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir*benzer şekilde, Taş Tanrılar, söylemi tutarsızlık açığa çıkartarak yapısızlaştırıyor. Heteronormatif söylemin tutarsızlığıolan Jeanette, Louie, Melanie, Katy, Ida, May ve Ms Jewsbury gibi, WreckŞehir'deki yaşlı kadın, Billie ve hatta Spike, Orta'nın söylemlerinin Central Power ve MORE Enkale Şehrinin sakinleri, Tech Şehiri'nin dışındaki "gerçek dışı" lar; bu, Tech Şehiri'nin "gerçekliğinin" "kurucu dışındadır"; hepsi, MORE söylemine göre yaşamlarını "gerçek dışı" kabul edilen kişilerdir. *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir*gibi, aynı zamanda abartılı homoseksüelliğin tanınması talep edilir, *Taş Tanrılar*, bu silinmiş kişilerin tanınmasını ister. Üstelik, *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir*gibi, metin, sorgulamanın mutlaka başarılı olamayacağı gerçeğine dikkat çekmektedir. Billie ve yaşlı kadının genetik olarak düzeltilmeyi reddetmesi, biyomedikal söylemlerin sorgulanmasının başarısızlığa uğradığını ve Spike'nin Central Power/ MORE'un başarısızlığını gösteriyor. Jeanette ve Louie ve Kilisenin normlarını yeniden yönetecek diğerleri gibi, Billie, Spike ve tüm "gerçek dışı" diğerleri Central Power/MORE'un tabiat normlarını yeniden yerleştirip yeniden yönlendirirler.

Buna göre, sırasıyla heterosentrik ve teknosentrik söylemleri sorgulamaktan başka, her iki *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir*ve *Taş Tanrılar*, yalnızca kimlik karmaşıklığı değil, aynı zamanda öznelik ve kararsızlığı da ön plana çıkmaktadır. Bu Butler'in özneleşmenin kurumları ekarte etmediğiiddiasını hatırlatıyorlar. Özne olarak, Jeanette, Louie ve Billie, isimsiz anlatıcı gibi, Köpek-Kadın, Jordan, Villanelle ve Henri, kimliklerini oluşturan çok sayıda söylemin içinde dolaşıyorlar. Bununla birlikte, bu, bir özne olarak belirlendiği anlamına gelmez, çünkü konunun yapısı hiçbir zaman tamamlanamayan devam eden bir süreçtir. Özne özneleştirici normları tekrarlamak zorunda olduğu için, her zaman normlardan uzaklaşan yıkıcı bir tekrar olasılığı vardır. Bu nedenle, Dog-Woman, Jordan, Villanelle, Henri, Jeanette, Louie ve Billie'yi özneleştirici normları tekrar kullanmak ve yeniden yönlendirmek için olanak sağlayan, mutlak bir özne değiller, tekrarlanabilir özneler.

Üstelik, *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir* ve *Taş Tanrılar*'ı, yana getirerek yıkımın bağlam dışında hiçbir anlamı olmadığı gerçeğini ortaya koymaktadır. Butler'ın bize hatırlattığına göre, belirli bir bağlamda yıkıcı olarak düşünülebilecek olan şey, başka bir bağlamda ve diğer tarafta bir klişe olabilir. Köpek-Kadın, Jordan, Villanelle, Henri, Jeanette, Louie ve Billie'nin yıkıcı olmasımetinlerin toplumsal bağlamı dışında anlaşılamaz. Bununla birlikte, hepsinin yıkıcı etkisi, normların yeniden istihdamı ve yeniden yönlendirilmesinde, özneleştirici normları tekrarlanmasıyla mümkün kılınıyor. Benzer şekilde, belirli bir metnin yıkıcılığı, karşı karşıya olduğu toplumsal arka plan olmaksızın anlaşılamaz. Yıkıcı olmak Butler'in dediği gibi, "temel kategorilerimizi yeniden düşünüyor" ya da "olası ve gerçek arasındaki bir kavrayışta radikal bir değişme" (*GT* xxiv; vurgu eklendi). Bu etki okuduğum metinlerde başarılmıştır.

APPENDIX B

TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

<u>**ENSTİTÜ**</u>

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü

Enformatik Enstitüsü

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü

<u>**YAZARIN**</u>

Soyadı : Shojaei
Adı   : Mahsasadat
Bölümü : Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları

<u>**TEZİN ADI**</u> (İngilizce) : Literary De-construction of Identity Categories: A Reading of the Queer Crossings in Jeanette Winterson's Fiction from a Butlerian Perspective of Parodic Contest

<u>**TEZİN TÜRÜ**</u> : Yüksek Lisans   Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.

2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.

3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

<u>**TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ**</u>: