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Reading the Theoretical Work of Judith Butler

Yu-ling Lin

Judith Butler is one of the most important contemporary theorists of feminism. Henning Bech describes her as influential:

Judith Butler is American, a philosopher and teacher in the fields of rhetorics and gender studies. Her work has become widely influential in cultural and social studies of gender and sexuality (1995: 188).

Her performative model of gender has been widely applied in women and gender studies, cultural studies and lesbian/ queer studies (Christian, 1994; Malone, 1995; Staks, 1992; Sedgwick, 1993), because her model can effectively explain the possibilities of subversion and displacement within the hegemonic structure (especially, phallogocentrism).

However, Butler points out that some scholars misunderstand and misuse her ideas; those scholars merely emphasize her claim of "gender as a performance" and yet they neglect her theoretical implications. Indeed, Butler does not explain her points well in her earlier work, so that she seems to have a notion of gender as voluntary¹. However, in her latest work, she intends to use Lacanian and Foucaultian theories to revise her model². If we want to evaluate the importance of Butler's assertions, we must put them into her theoretical

1. In this paper, Butler's work published before 1993 was categorized as her earlier work. Those publications in which she tried to clarify her misread ideas were categorized as her latest work.

2. The ways that she applies Lacanian and Foucaultian theories in *Gender Trouble* are different from those in *Bodies That Matter*. In this paper, I use the differences found in these two books to explain the shifts of Butler's theoretical model.

framework and trace out the shifts of her arguments.

In this paper, I will mainly focus on how Butler interprets, appropriates, and rewrites the theories of Lacan and Foucault into her model, for her model is deeply influenced by the two theorists. In her two books--*Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, Butler employs a genealogical analysis to trace out several authors' theoretical concepts of sex/ gender and the body, Lacan and Foucault being among these authors. Thus, it is no simple task to find how Butler incorporates their work into her model. Here, to elucidate such an influence, I will examine several of Butler's ideas, including no distinction between sex/ gender, sexual difference, performativity of gender, and drag and parody.

I. No Distinction between Sex/ Gender

Butler makes gender trouble by subverting/ destabilizing those established and naturalized notions of sex/ gender that support hegemonic heterosexuality rather than through developing new strategies that figure a utopian beyond.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler points out that feminists use a foundationalist approach, which presumes the universality and unity of the subject of feminism, to develop representational politics (1990:3, 14). Such politics not only fails to explain the concrete situation of gender oppression, but also achieves stability in the heterosexual context to a certain extent. Therefore, Butler emphasizes that we should re-examine the use of the category of "women" as the subject of feminism and the sex/ gender distinction. Since both are involved in the metaphysics of substance about the category of sex, Butler explores how the category of sex influences the social formation of gender in her first chapter of *Gender Trouble*.

First, Butler questions some feminists' assumption that the cultural construction of gender is dependent on sex, a biological nature (1990: 7). These feminists consider sex to be a prediscursive anatomical entity and gender as a cultural interpretation of sex (figure 1). Their relation is mimetic whereby gender mirrors sex. Butler further points out that such an ontological view of gender limits the possible relations among the triad of sex, gender, and desire.

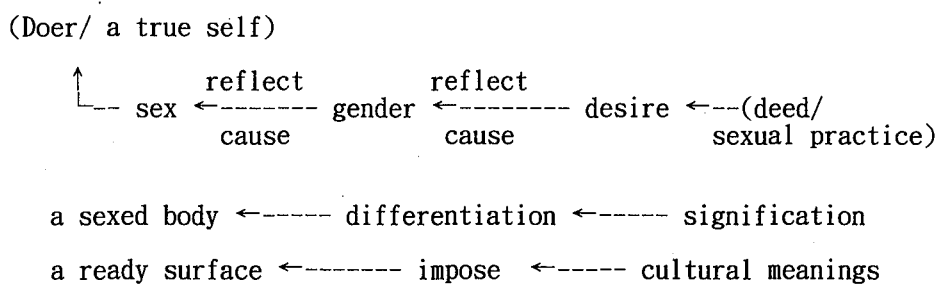
Figure 1: The Relation Between Sex and Gender

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Gender</u>
nature	culture
prediscursive	discourse
biological female	culturally prescribed woman
sexed body	a sexually differentiated body
stability of binary sex:	only male bodies can be named
male and female	as men; only female bodies can be named as women

Gender can denote a unity of experience, of sex, gender, and desire, only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender --where gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self-- and desire-- where desire is heterosexual and therefore differentiates itself through an oppositional relation to that other gender it desires (Butler, 1990:22).

This implies simple linear relations: sex-gender-desire (see Figure 2). That is, gender can reflect one's sex; desire can express one's gender; and vice versa. The three elements keep their internal coherence through the mechanism of differentiation. Here, so-called sex indicates the sexed surface of the body, such as penis, vagina, breast, etc., which can construct the body as gender-specific and serve as the original and continuous cause and signification of (bodily) pleasures and desires. One's sex is merely dependent on some parts of the body (eg. sexual organs). However, these sexual organs are able to determine the destiny of the whole body in a heterosexualized society. Therefore, Butler argues that sex is not a simple fact or static condition of the body, but a norm which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility (1993a: 2-3). Its "material" foundation always naturalizes its (artificial) existence and disguises its regulatory force.

Figure 2: Butler's Interpretation on the Substantial Nature of Sex



Butler also points out that some feminists confirm the variable nature of gender by the radical distinction between sex and gender, for example, Wittig's lesbian as the third gender, but they assume that there exists a natural sex. Hence, they still fail to destabilize the substantial notion of sex.

Based on these points, Butler claims that feminists treat sex as an origin rather than as a practice or effect. Sex becomes ontologically immunized from power relations and from the mechanism of its own productivity. Under such a premise, feminism has difficulty dealing with the specificity of women, because the analysis of gender is eventually reduced to sex (Butler, 1994). For example, recent studies try to use the term women to replace the term woman, but they are still not able to examine the specificity of the feminine (Butler, 1987: 141). Because these feminists assume the universality of women, their so-called "specificity" of feminine is fully decontextualized and separated off analytically and politically from the constitution of class, race, ethnicity, and other axes of power relations (Butler, 1990:14).

Moreover, such a universalistic claim implies that, on the one hand, women are always oppressed by the mechanism of differentiation, regarded as a singular source of women's oppression; and on the other hand, "women" are able to function as a universal basis for feminists to struggle against this mechanism and to initiate feminist interests and goals. However, the fact reveals that this model reinforces the heterosexist framework that puts gender into masculine/feminine, and fails to account for the operations of gender oppressions (multiple

rather than singular) and the possibilities of different sexual preference (eg. homosexuality and bisexuality) in the concrete cultural contexts in which they exist.

Butler admits that "identity" is crucial for (feminist) politics; however, she asserts that an identity should not be seen as a given and authorizing ground, but, rather as a contingent and contestable basis (1991b: 19; 1992: 8). In order to explain that sex as anatomical identity is the effect of discursive practices, Butler uses Foucault's theory to break the mimetic relation of gender to sex, or put differently, to deconstruct the substantial nature of sex. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault explains how the category of sex is itself constructed through a historically specific apparatus of sexuality (1980: 209; 1990). Butler accepts Foucault's consideration of sex as a fictional construction which is articulated within the field of power.

Like gender, the concept of sex is a cultural construction. As a cultural construction, sex is not only fictional but also normative, used to mask the political stakes of the institution of phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality in regulating gender and desire. Thus, Butler claims that there is no distinction between sex and gender.

If the immutable character of sex is contexted, perhaps this construct called "sex" is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all (1990: 7).

Once the notion of sex is cultural construction, and gender no longer reflects sex, either causally or expressively, gender can potentially proliferate beyond the binary of sex. Gender would become variable, dissonant and complex.

Butler troubles gender categories, in order to extend feminist practices and provide a theoretical basis for queerness. In addition to using Foucault's idea to

break the causality of sex and gender, she uses Lacan's theory to explain how the categories of sex/ gender consolidate and naturalize the convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression.

II. Sexual Difference

Butler points out that Lacan makes an effort to explain how becoming "sexed" occurs under symbolic constraints. But she interprets Lacan's notion of sexual difference in her two books from different perspectives. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler points out that Lacan's main concern is to explain how sex as a cultural apparatus is produced in, through, and for the Symbolic, the law of the Father (or the paternal law). Based on the Phallus as a privileged signifier, the law of the Father can effectively establish sexual difference/ division and determine a hierarchized and differentiated specular relation (Lacan, 1977:1-7); that is, man "has" phallus and woman "reflects his having" (see figure 3).

Through the production of sex, the Symbolic creates culturally intelligible genders, which are able to distinguish the visible from the invisible, the speakable from the unspeakable, and the legitimate from the illegitimate, in terms of the mutually exclusive (heterosexualized) positions of "having" the Phallus and "being" the Phallus within the structure of signification. Here, Butler elaborates the operation of "sex" from a macro-level point of view.

Figure 3: Butler's Interpretation--Lacan's Notion of Sex in *Gender Trouble*

The Symbolic order: through the Phallus to institute sex	
<u>Man</u>	<u>Woman</u>
having the Phallus masculine position of having being the Subject: to signify to pursue the Other the threat of castration	being the Phallus feminine position of not-having being the Other: to be signified to confirm/ reflect the power of the Phallus already castrated (penis envy)

Butler considers Lacan's notion of the Symbolic to be a repressive law, which prohibits incestuous desires and constructs certain gendered subjectivities (1990: 79). In *Gender Trouble*, Butler criticizes the repressive effect of the Symbolic that Lacan postulates. First, she uses Freud's notion of melancholia to explain the main (prohibitive) function of the Symbolic against homosexuality. Butler thinks that Lacan ignores this effect because of his heterosexualized and masculine observational point of view. Lacan considers female homosexuality (lesbian sexuality) as asexual (desexualized state), and thus that female homosexuality is unnecessary to be re-counted into the domain of the foreclosure as it is already a refusal of sexuality (1990: 49-52).

Second, Butler uses Foucault's concept of power to stress that sex as an apparatus of heterosexual culture has not just a juridical power but also a generative power (1990: 95). Not only does the Symbolic forbid and dictate sexuality in certain forms, but it inadvertently produces a variety of substitute desires and identities. That is, as soon as the Symbolic produces sanctioned heterosexuality, it indirectly exposes transgressive homosexuality or other sexual preferences. To take drag as an example, when heterosexualists label drag as abnormal, people recognize that drag exists in a social zone of abject beings.

In her second book, *Bodies That Matter*, Butler re-interprets Lacan's concept of "sex" from a micro-level point of view (see figure 4). I believe that Butler's theoretical shift intends to link a Lacanian schema with Foucault's latest work on the subject, especially, technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988:3). Foucault argues that the individual is subjected to not just forms of domination (eg, Lacanian sense of symbolic constrains) but also those of self-knowledge (1983: 212). That is, the individual can construct himself/ herself in accordance with certain cultural prescriptions. Actually, the Lacanian project is also concerned with the process of the subject-formation.

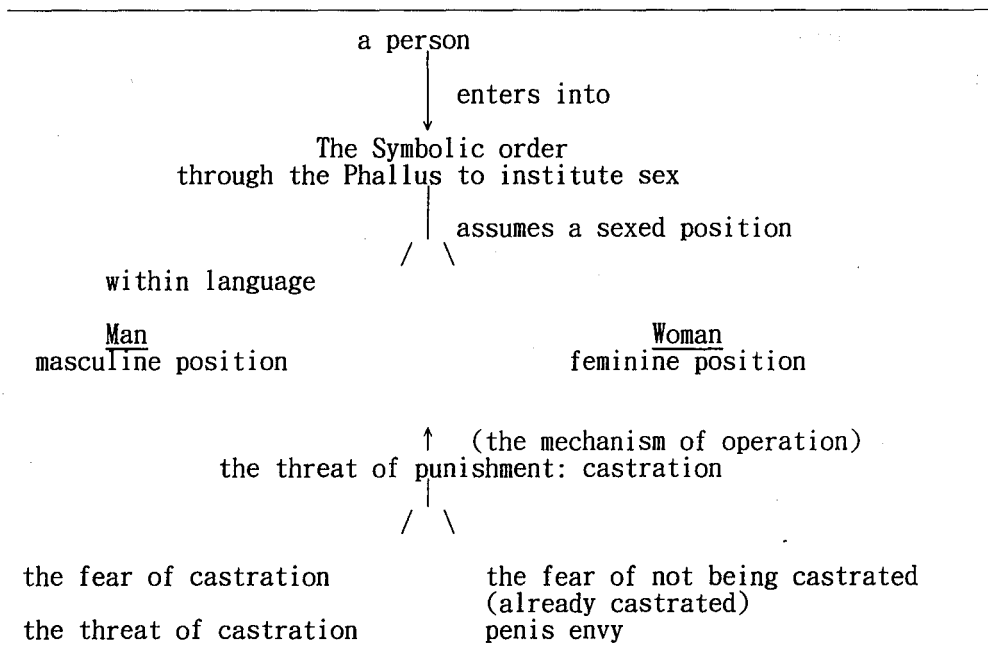
In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler claims that Lacan's notion of sex indicates a sexed position within the symbolic (language) domain in which one assumes the masculine or feminine sex under the threat of punishment (1993a: 96). Here, a so

-called threat of punishment means an imaginary threat rather than a real one, and a (internalized) self-punishment rather than an exterior control.

Castration is the figure for punishment, the fear of castration motivating the assumption of the masculine sex, and the fear of not being castrated motivating the assumption of feminine (1993a: 96).

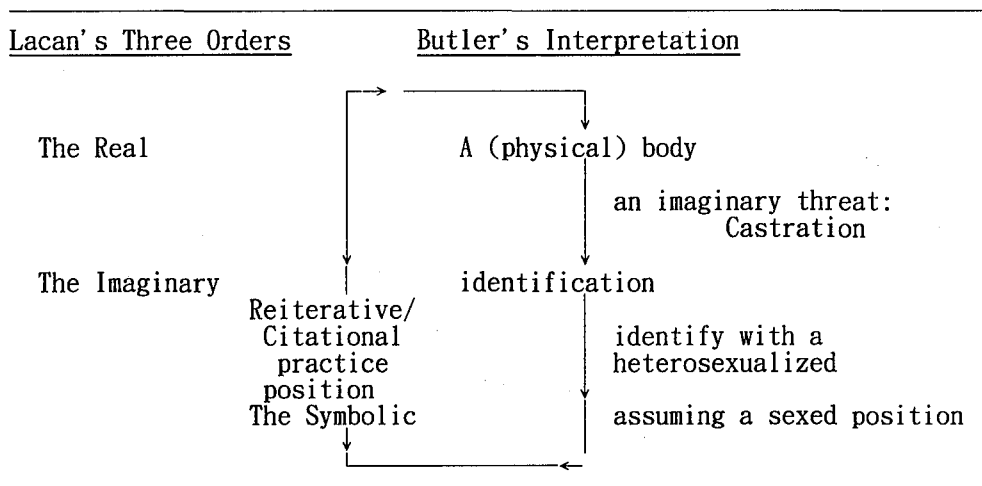
As an imaginary threat, castration operates differentially to constitute the regulatory force of gendered punishment. Through the imaginary process of castration (on the psychological level), the individual can identify/ acquire his/her sex (sexed position) from the Symbolic domain. That is, the concept of sex operates not just as the technique of the dominance, but also as the technique of the self.

Figure 4: Butler's Interpretation--Lacan's Notion of Sex in Bodies That Matter



Here, I attempt to use Lacan's idea of Three Orders to explain Butler's concept of sex in her second book, *Bodies That Matter*. Lacan's Three Orders include the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. The Real means something concrete and fundamental, which stands behind the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The Imaginary involves the fields of phantasies and images, operated by identificatory and fusional logic. The Symbolic is the sphere of culture/language on which it can name, codify, and legitimize things, through a differential logic. Lacan thinks that the Imaginary and the Symbolic exist, in part, as efforts to account for the Real that shapes them, and on which they, in turn, put their stamp (Benvenuto and Kennedy, 1986: 80-81; Ragland-Sullivan, 1986: 131). Therefore, the relationship of the three categories is dynamic and dialectic rather than static and mechanical. Butler uses Lacan's model to explain how the individual body assumes a sexed position within the domain of the Symbolic order (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Butler's Interpretation of Assuming a Sex in Terms of Lacan's Three Orders



A physical body is located in the domain of the Real. Butler treats this body as an "irreducible" materiality (1993a: 29). However, she insists that this body as a material foundation shall not be seen as innocent (outside of power relations).

On the contrary, this body exists as matter, which is founded through a set of injuries and violations that varies over time/ space (1993a: 28-29).

Here, Butler considers the body as a historical materiality (with meanings) rather than a natural species. In the process of assuming a given sex, the body is crafted or made to matter through a set of problematic categories of sex. Of course, this set of violations, constructed by and in the Symbolic, wields the force of exclusion and abjection through delivering a threat of punishment.

The imaginary plays an important role in the process of identification. Butler stresses that the individual imagines being punished if (s)he fails to assume a given sex. Thus, (s)he is willing to identify with the normative phantasm of sex in order to avoid punishment. This reveals that identification is not given, but, rather is phantasmatic and constructed. It is never completely and finally achieved; conversely, it is incessantly reconstituted.

By the imaginary, the individual body assumes repeatedly a sexed position. Butler points out that "sexed positions" are not localities but citational practices instituted within a regulatory domain (1993a: 108). I think that Butler interprets the assumption of a normative heterosexuality based on Lacan's Three Orders, and further successfully transforms Lacan's model and uses it in her latest work, *Performativity of Gender*.

III. Performativity of Gender

Referring to Figure 5, Butler must recognize that the domains of the Real and the Imaginary are mainly influenced by the Symbolic. However, she argues that Lacan misunderstands the Symbolic as a universalized and fixed system so that he describes the development of anatomy in an unexamined framework of normative heterosexuality. For example, Lacan categorizes bodies into the binary concepts of man and woman which are enabled to constitute the subject. Under this premise, the Symbolic cannot allow the possibilities of other sexual preferences. This is why Lacan relegates homosexuality to the unrealizable life of passing fantasy (1990: 79, 93; 1993a: 110).

Butler uses Foucault's idea of power to rethink the Lacanian concept of the Symbolic. In her earlier work, she emphasizes that the subject is socially constructed (Lacan emphasizes this point), as is the Symbolic. The Symbolic is not fixed, but is contingently and continually constructed through time and space; it has its history and its specificity. Butler thinks that sex as an apparatus of the Symbolic is, of course, a construction. However, it is a historical and normative construction that can enter into the domain of the Real to govern and produce the body as matter. Thus, a sexed body is a materialized body rather than a natural/ real body.

If an anatomical sex is no longer a so-called "true" sex, the inner truth of gender will be a fabrication. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler tries to propose a performative model of gender instead of a substantial model, based on the perspective of phenomenology (1991a: 271-2), which is concerned with how an object is perceived in our consciousness rather than whether or not an object exists in reality (Husserl, 1973: 59). Therefore, Butler deals with the existence of gender, according to social phenomena of gender rather than eidos of sex (its eidetic reduction). In her model, Butler applies an idea that the prescription of sex is performed or embodied within a specific historical condition to explain how gender is acquired. Five characteristics of gender are summarized as follows (Butler, 1990: 139-141):

1. Gender should be regarded as a corporeal style, an act, or a performance which is both intentional and performative.
2. As a corporeal style, gender has cultural survival as its end. It is accompanied by social sanctions and taboos.
3. Gender as a performative act is repeated in a mundane and public way.
4. Gender can not function as a stable identity or a locus of agency, but, rather as an identity tenuously constituted in time, and in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts.
5. The possibility of gender transformation is able to be found in the arbitrary relation between corporeal styles, or in the subversive repetition of certain style.

To some degree, Butler's model can explain the phenomenon of domination and the possibility of struggle. In her model, we can find that the individual body embodies his/her gender in accordance with certain cultural prescriptions rather than being passively scripted with cultural codes. Unlike Lacan, Butler considers the body as a set of variable boundaries rather than a ready surface awaiting signification. She presumes that the body is a material ground of cultural meanings both received and innovated. That is, the body is a locus of the dialectical process of interpreting (or experiencing) anew a historical set of conventions which have already informed corporeal style. This assumption allows the possibility of resistance.

In the performative process, the individual acquires not only his/her gendered body but also his/her subject-position, gendered self, and gender identity that all are constructed by certain rule-governed discourses. Obviously, there is no need for a unified "doer behind the deed," because a doer (the subject) is constructed again and again in and through each act (1990: 148). The constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency so that agency is not something given to free us from power (1990: 147; 1992: 12-13; 1993b: 22). Conversely, agency is located within the possibility of a variation on repetition (1990: 145). Therefore, agency is something that can prompt the subject to be subjected and produced time and again.

In her earlier work, the main concern of Butler's model is to deconstruct the substantive effect of identity, emphasizing the variable nature of gender.

The choice to assume a certain kind of body, to live or wear one's body a certain way, implies a world of already established corporeal styles. To choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that reproduces and organizes them anew. Less a radical act of creation, gender is a tacit project to renew a cultural history in one's own corporeal terms (1991a: 131).

Such an idea has been misread. This misreading is that sex/ gender is something to be put on and taken off arbitrarily, like changing one's clothes (Butler, 1993b: 21; Malone, 1995: 458). Moreover, some critics argue that Butler, in *Gender Trouble*, does not explain how gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities (Martin, 1991: 421; Phelan, 1992: 77).

Confronting these questions, Butler revises her model in her second book, *Bodies That Matter*. First, she uses the terms "reiteration" or "citation" to replace the term "repetition". Butler emphasizes that the performativity of gender should not be simplified as a repetition of acts, because it is easy to misunderstand that "acts" remain self-identical as they are repeated in time. This is why some misread an act as a dress which can be repeatedly put on or thrown away. In fact, an act is not fixed or self-identical, but is itself a repetition of the past. Butler originally tries to use the discrepant (or irrecoverable) character of "repetition" to explain "act", and then to deconstruct the substance of the subject (a doer). Yet, it seems somewhat unclear. Therefore, she borrows the notion of "reiteration" from Derrida to clarify her idea.

every act is itself a recitation, the citing of a prior chain of acts which are implied in a present act (1993a: 244).

The performativity of reiteration can elucidate that gender is neither a role (she does not claim gender as a performance any longer) nor a set of free-floating acts; however, gender is a sedimentation which has been produced and compelled by/ in the nexus of power relations over time. Here, Butler underlines that gender performativity is not a matter of choosing which gender one will be today, but, rather is a matter of reiterating the norms by which one is constituted (1993b: 24).

Second, Butler rethinks the operation of power in the domain of the Symbolic. She points out that the existence of sex is not given; it is determined and

constructed by (and in) the context of a dynamic field of cultural relations. Thus, she presumes that the Symbolic is mutable and is always challenged. As a regulatory power, the Symbolic is able to link heterosexuality with cultural viability and homosexuality with abjection through the logic of repudiation/ exclusion. However, homosexuality is not fully repudiated, because it is seen as a transient and imaginary affair to reinforce heterosexuality that is very real. Even though homosexuality always remains "entertainment", it still can be seen, and also can, in turn, question and destabilize the Symbolic. Therefore, Butler emphasizes that the Symbolic does not always work; as soon as it disavows a homosexualized position, it produces this position as a heterosexual Other.

In addition to the destabilization of the Symbolic, Butler emphasizes its complexity. Gender is not the only power-axis in the Symbolic; it always intersects with the other axes of power, such as race, class, ethnicity, etc., which might support or conflict with each other. Therefore, a gendered subject-position is, in fact, produced through a plurality of exclusions and foreclosures (1993a: 116). In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler tries to challenge a (Lacanian) psychoanalysis which would privilege sexual difference as an autonomous sphere of relations whereby she analyzes how a sexed and racialized body (or subject) is created in a dynamic field of power relations (for example, she questions the assertion of the priority of sexual difference over the racial difference by analyzing a text of Nella Larsen (1993a: 167-185)).

Butler's re-interpretation of the Symbolic serves to effectively explain why an identity should be seen as a contingent foundation. Identity works dynamically in a broader social context; it can be mobilized over time/ space in terms of its political goals and appeals. However, identity is achieved through its own form of violence which excludes and repudiates other identities. Hence, Butler reminds feminists that they must be aware of a violent rift whenever they develop their identity politics (1991b: 19; 1993a: 117-118).

IV. Drag and Parody

In order to elaborate gender as performative rather than substantive, Butler examines the cultural practices of drag in terms of her model (Christian, 1994: 154, 156). She mentions that the past studies of drag always focused on how women were degraded and how sex-role stereotyping was uncritically appropriated within contemporary culture (Butler, 1990: 137; 1993a: 126). These studies presupposed that there was an original gender so that they were concerned with the expressive relation between the "original" and the "imitation". However, Butler emphasizes that the performance of drag is not a secondary imitation (1991b: 21). Actually, in the process of imitating a gender, drag reveals the constructed nature of gender, because there is no causal relation between the anatomy of the performer and the gender of the performer.

Butler declares that the analysis of drag ought to deal with three dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance, and to explore their relations.

If the anatomy of the performance is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance (1990: 137).

She finds that, the performance of drag can expose the disruption (or discrepancy) of these aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence.

Here, we can put the performance of drag into the model of Figure 5 (see Figure 6). The performance of drag figures male-to- female transexuality and cross-dressing. An imaginary threat does not work, because a male body refuses to reiterate the law of the Father to assume a masculine position. On the contrary, he

imagines and imitates a feminine position from the Symbolic. Through an identificatory phantasm, he identifies with a feminine position and reiteratively performs it.

Originally, the performative model of gender is applied to describe heterosexuality; however, drag is also suitable to this model. In some sense, this implies that heterosexuality is like drag, making an effort to imitate its own idealizations. Butler tries to use this analogy to reveal heterosexuality as a phantasmatic and mimetic construction rather than as an original and natural one.

Butler admits that drag is not necessarily related to subversion. It might be used in the service of both the denaturalization and reidealization of hyperbolic heterosexual gender norms. In addition to drag, other styles of performativity (eg. the sexual stylization of butch/ femme identities) can create ambivalence. Butler points out that parody alone is not subversive--it must depend on a way to explain the subversion of parodic reiterations.

Parody by itself is not subversive, and there must be a way to understand what makes certain kind of parodic repetitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony. A typology of actions would clearly not suffice, for parodic displacement, indeed, parodic laughter depends on a context and reception in which subversive confusions can be fostered (1990: 139).

Butler calls this parodic politics. Through a set of imitative practice, parodic politics can disclose the illusion of gender identity and constitute a fluidity of identities. Its aim is to question the naturalized categories of identity/ desire and to open room for resignification and recontextualization.

I think that Butler's notion of parodic politics is a product of her subversive strategy.

If subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself (1990: 93).

By imitating a so-called origin, a subversion can emerge from the disruption between an imitation itself and a naturalized real. Obviously, to subvert a law is not to negate or throw it away, but, rather, to continue to use it, to repeat it subversively, and to displace it from the contexts in which it has been deployed as instruments of oppressive power (Butler, 1992: 15). Here, two elements are included in her strategies: the one is to deconstruct the fixed relation between signifier and signified/ referent; the other is to resignify the signifier within the context of the subordinated. For Butler, feminist politics, dealing with the problematics of the subject, agency, sex, identity, etc., is the eternal possibility of resignifying processes.

Conclusion--Beyond Butler?

Judging from the above analysis, it seems that Butler has successfully deconstructed the prediscursive existence of sex. However, Copjec claims that sex is reducible to a discursive construction in Butler's model. Copjec argues that "sex is something that is beyond language, something that language forever fails to grasp (1994: 206)." In Copjec's account, Butler has erroneously attributed objective reality to an idea.

Basically, I agree that Butler does not deal with the physiological state of sex, if this is so-called reality-in-itself without significance. However, I disagree

with Copjec's usage of Kant's idea of reason to critique Butler's conclusion from the level of the concept to the level of being, because Butler's model is based on phenomenology. Phenomenology avoids looking at objects independent of us; conversely, it emphasizes that objects do not simply exist in objective reality but are perceived in our consciousness. (Macann, 1993: 30). Phenomenologists suspend objective reality which is unsignified, because no one can guarantee that (s)he holds objects as objective. Thus, phenomenologists develop the *epoche*, phenomenological reduction. In the *epoche* they put the real world of objects "between brackets"; they attempt to do without "them", but do not deny them, in their investigations (Roche, 1973: 12- 13). Therefore, phenomenologists are interested in the perceived and live-in world rather than in the physical world out-there; that is, they are concerned with how objects are constructed by consciousness.

According to phenomenological assumptions, apparently Butler does not explore what sex is in the physical world, but she wants to explain how the perceived sex is constructed in the live-in world. If the perceived sex is not beyond language, we ought to understand how it is constructed by discourses. Perhaps, we can have a chance to re-approximate an unknown state of sex through deconstructing notion of sex.

On the theoretical level, I think that Butler's model is useful to develop micro-politics for feminists. She has revised her model. In her most recent work, Butler successfully incorporates Lacan's and Foucault's theoretical points into her model, using Foucault's critique of psychoanalysis to correct Lacan's repressive hypothesis of the Symbolic. She claims that the Symbolic functions not just as the juridical power but as the productive power; its structure is not centered and monolithic but is off-centered and multiple.

Furthermore, Butler adds Lacan's notion of the imaginary to Foucault's idea of self-formation. She tries to explain how the bodies come to matter through identificatory process. In this sense, she holds the three axes of Foucault's project--discourse, power and subject--to explain the operation of micro-politics.

So far, Butler's model is widely applied in queer studies. However, I think

that it is also useful in women studies. For example, women are pressured to keep slim. We can use her model (see figure 5) to explain how slenderness becomes a contemporary ideal of female attractiveness. First, slenderness is not a simple fact or static description of a body. On the contrary, slenderness is one of the cultural norms, one of the violations, upon the female body. It is not given but is historically and socially constituted over time. Second, slenderness as a regulatory norm can qualify a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility and demarcate the social zone of abject beings. The individual women fear to become abject beings. They imagine that they will be treated with humiliation and disrespect if they are fat. Lastly, they identify with the ideal of slenderness so that their body repeatedly assumes a slender style.

Although Butler's model can explain the process of self-formation and the materiality of the body, she seems to neglect the influence of non-discursive elements, especially, economic factors. For instance, sexual difference is effectively operated not just by the law of Father, but also by the law of Capitalism. The later reinforces certain ways of sexual division. Cast calls Butler a materialist poststructuralist (1990 :8). But her work seldom explains how the Symbolic is inevitably influenced by the specific material conditions. This is an important issue in a contemporary capitalist society.

On the practical level, Butler aims to question hegemonic heterosexuality and the stereotype of queer rather than to develop a collective identity for women. Butler's strategy of deconstruction can help her reach her political goal; that is, it can denaturalize the substance of identity and elucidate the fluid, fragmentary, contradictory, and complex characters of identity, subject and subjectivity.

Note

1. In this paper, Butler's work published before 1993 was categorized as her earlier work. Those publications in which she tried to clarify her misread ideas were categorized as her latest work.
2. The ways that she applies Lacanian and Foucaultian theories in *Gender Trouble* are different from those in *Bodies That Matter*. In this paper, I use the differences found in these two books to explain the shifts of Butler's theoretical model.
3. Foucault's theoretical focus shifts from the discourse, power, to the subject. His latest work includes *The History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasure, and The Care of Self*.

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解讀茱蒂巴勒的性／性別理論

林宇玲

(中文摘要)

本文試圖解釋巴勒的性別扮演模式。這模式已被廣泛地應用在女性與性別研究上，因為它提供了一套反叛策略去對抗陽物中心主義。本文為了解釋巴勒如何利用拉崗與傅柯的理論去發展她的扮演模式，特別檢視她的四個主要概念，分別是性與性別無分別論、性差異、性別扮演力、扮裝與嘲弄。

本文發現巴勒的模式能幫助女性主義者發展她們的微觀政治，因為她已成功地合併傅柯的權力觀與拉崗的想像概念，以致於她能解釋身體是如何透過認同的過程被形塑成物，並進而發展她的解構策略去對抗此種異力。

關鍵字：性別表演、性別扮演力、扮裝、嘲諷政治、再表意〈再賦予新意〉。

Reading the Theoretical Work of Judith Butler

Yu-ling Lin

(ABSTRACT)

This paper tries to explain Butler's performative model of gender. This model has been widely applied in women and gender studies, because it offers a strategy of subversion against phallogocentrism. In order to elaborate how Butler develops her model based on theories of Lacan and Foucault, this paper will examine Butler's four concepts: no distinction between sex/ gender; sexual difference; performativity of gender; and drag and parody.

This paper finds that Butler's model is useful to develop micro-politics for feminists, because she successfully incorporates Foucaultian notion of power and Lacanian notion of the imaginary into her model, thus being able to explain how the bodies come to matter through identificatory process and develop her strategy of deconstruction.

Key Words: performance of gender, performativity of gender, drag, parodicpolitics, resignify.