



# The Queerness of Art and the Foucauldian Origins of Judith Butler's Notion of Performativity: An Overview

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## Abstract

By deploying the methodology of Judith Butler's notion of performativity, this article intends to understand the possibility of the concept of queerness beyond the possibilities of gender studies and queer theory and to develop a concept transcending the limits of identity. It is undeniable that Foucault's concept of disciplinarity is one of the major precursors of the notion of performativity, which is a more focused tool for what Foucault broadly devised. Both thinkers explain how the subject is a construction by power. They explain how bodies are marked, assigned, and manipulated and expose the banality with which these operations take one for granted. It is through unearthing the disciplinary aspects of performativity in Butler and foreseeing the performative aspects of disciplinarity in Foucault that this article finds its methodological perspective. It is notable that disciplinarity and, as its extension, performativity ultimately exposes the underlying ontology of identity as a 'truth effect' rather than as an apriori truth. The paper critically analyses the artist's identity and the artistic discourse to unravel the queerness or an underlying plurality of aesthetic experience using performativity as a formative tool.

**Keywords:** Foucault, Butler, disciplinarity, performativity, art, aesthetic experience, queerness

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## Introduction

While Foucault explains the formative aspects of subjectivity in the context of power relations, Butler investigates the ontological validity of subjectivity by framing the same power relation in connection with performativity. Undeniably, Butler re-researches the classical Nietzschean concern of doer and deed to re-theorise it in her study of gender (Nietzsche, 1969, as cited in Butler, 1999, p. 33). Butler also substantiates that Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* is based on the work, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1999, p. 206). However, it is not the concern in this article to go into the nuances of this evolution in thought. The comparative research concerning Foucault and Butler is primarily focused either on the idea of “subjectivation” or on the epistemological problem of the body's position (Ong-Van-Cung, 2011; see also Dudrick, 2005; Carlson, 2008; Balasingham, 2019).

However, there is an introductory remark by Shildrick and Price on how Butler's notion of performativity draws from disciplinarity (1999, p. 9). Although, it does not elaborate on how and to what extent these notions interact with each other. The primary intention of this article is to understand and render an overview regarding the prototypical link between performativity and disciplinarity in particular. The introductory part describes how Foucault explains that the subject is a construction by power and how power comes into being by examining his historico-political investigation into the genealogy of self.

This examination is followed by an analysis on how Butler's notion of performativity draws and differs from Foucault's genealogical method in its critique. After examining the interconnection between the theoretical notions of 'observation' in Foucault and 'anticipation' in Butler, the author intends to examine how the discourse of art produces the subjectivity of the artist; this is a power relation similar to the discourse of gender and its performative production of gender identity. At the same time, the Butlerian notion of performativity is not simply limited to the gambit of subjectivity, even when the gender studies context is very dominant. This paper intends to expand the possibility of understanding subjectivity concerning the domain of aesthetic experience.

For this purpose, in the next section, the notion of performativity will be deployed to understand the possibility of developing the concept of 'queerness' as an inevitable offshoot considering the developments of the trajectory of gender, post-Butler's idea of performativity. It aims to develop a concept that contests the identitarian position and its underlying assertion of a monolithic truth. Here, queerness is tethered to aesthetic experience, transcending the limitations of identity and expanding the possibilities of aesthetic experience as a phenomenological experience without dismissing the multiplicity inherent in such experience and restricting it within the symbolic discourse of art.

In the final part of the article, the exclusivity of the discourse of art is examined by understanding its naturalized facade as an effect of the textual and bodily performance constituted by the same discourse, which is maintained by constantly abjecting what is not art, and who is not an artist as well. It leads to the conclusion whereby the concept of queerness is engaged in the light of what it means to be associated with artistic discourse and how it is instrumental in deconstructing the artistic identity.

### **An Introduction to Foucault's Account of Disciplinary Power**

Power is traditionally understood primarily in a juridical-political sense. Power is always understood as a negative, repressing, and homogenizing authority wielded by the superior over the inferior, a binary relation in which desire is always already regulated by this relation. As per this notion, desire cannot transcend or become separate from the law, which always already pervades its very existence. Foucault exposes or argues that this monotonous understanding of power, while it has its reality and sways over our subjectivity, is not the only way to look at it. Foucault then introduces a perspective different from the usual narrative of power as the hierarchical and homogenous 'law' controlled by certain institutions like the state over its 'subjects'.

Thus, he turns our attention to the local and heterogeneous nature of force relations, which 'creates' power. Foucault says, "Power is everywhere, not because it's omnipresent, but because it

comes from everywhere" (1978, p. 93). He clarifies that the omnipresence of power is not similar to the omnipresence of a trans-historical self; instead, power is dependent upon its movement from one point to the next, forming various relationships for and by it. It is understood by its strategic force relationships. This understanding of power as an autonomous and self-producing necessity has been the predecessor to Judith Butler's theory of performativity. She exposes the abstract and productive conditions of power, which feigns its authoritative and mythical origin. It gives credibility to all forms of repercussions for the individuals within such systems as casteism, racism, totalitarianism, religious fundamentalism and all forms of essentialism, which resulted in political conquests, along with the wars and famines humanity has undergone for ages.

The body of the individual and the collective body of society had to be managed, regulated, and normalized as per the changing nature of power from the ancient sovereign to modern capitalism, from bare law to juridical-political system, and from a dictum to the norm. A long history of judgments went towards understanding the power-knowledge relationship and its mastery over the body. Foucault repeatedly reminds us that disciplinary power is not necessarily repressive and reductive as it is immediately thought of but also creative and productive. This notion in biopolitics represents the discovery and staging of previously unaddressed bodily intensities or force relations in the modern platform of science-knowledge-power mechanism, unlike the traditional model of power relation under the sovereign, which exercised a strictly hierarchical, arbitrary and corporeal form of discipline. The relationship between knowledge production and power that is behind the creation of a particular subject is minutely studied by Foucault, where he traces this manipulation and subjection of bodies through exercising discipline on them; according to Foucault "Exercise is that technique by which one imposes on the body tasks that are both repetitive and different" (1995, p. 161)

This repetition of acts that produces a 'docile'<sup>1</sup> body pertaining to the utility of the particular tasks in their respective context could be one of the driving forces for Butler's notion of performativity, where she re-contextualizes the phenomenological and linguistic aspects of subjectivation concerning the body and its sexual

ontology. Foucault's production and utilization of docile bodies for economic and political interests are another critical observation. Foucault explains:

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 the one hand, it turns it into an '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. (1995, p. 138)

### **Disciplinarity and Performativity**

Performativity is an exclusive notion by Judith Butler. Though Foucault had never used the term, let us examine closely how the notion of performativity derives from Foucault. Disciplinary power creates subjects and objectifies them with the support of the judiciary and democratic state apparatuses by normalizing the productive capacity of power. This normalization is created by various political technologies of the body, as Foucault calls them. The various methods or acts through which the norm is achieved are what he collectively calls 'discipline'. It can be understood as the subtle construction of bodies that are meaningful concerning the use-value of their efficiency and productivity. This is ensured by the repetition of various acts that discipline the bodies by segregating them in space, punctuating them in time, and individualising them through constant visibility.

The function of the penal mechanism in the judicial system differs from the punishment in the case of disciplinary power. It infiltrates and corrects the areas that the law has left empty. Ultimately it is the power that normalizes by giving values and, it is also and fixated on the nature of individuals. For example, the etiquettes of masculinity and femininity are not under the surveillance of the law. It does not come under the binary operation of permitted and prohibited, yet individuals adhere to and aspire to advance themselves to achieve these ideals and thus, retain the status of normalcy associated with it. There are punishments for one who does not perform as masculine or feminine, and there are

rewards for those who acquiesce. These perpetual rewards and punishments are not enabled by any external institution, but work within the collective structure of the discipline, among the mass of disciplined individuals, under the network of mutual surveillance. In other words, these micro penalties and rewards form a need for performative discipline. Here, each individual is always a potential Other<sup>2</sup> to the rest, thus perpetuating an infinite Othering<sup>3</sup> by and through the individualizing mark by which one is individualized. Foucault outlines these micro punishments concerning time, activity, speech, body, and sexuality, which become entrapped in a “punishable, punishing universality” (1995, p. 178). The incentive to remain masculine or feminine and not to level down to what these ideals are not, or into obscurities or queerness is caused by the mutual surveillance or the element of Other with the simultaneous generation of self.

This disciplinary power that monitors individuals makes the subject always visible under the omnipresent gaze of authority that itself is invisible. Making visibility and examination of individuals compulsory and autonomous ensures the subjection of the individual proper. It is different from the traditional model of power, where the subject could remain in the shade, as the sovereign displayed its power only to whoever came in its way. All these aspects collectively construct the subject through their 'correct' performances of an expected norm or respective subjecthood. Here, Butler introduces her insight into the nature of the ontological validity of such performances. She says there are no correct or incorrect performances, but only normalizations. She argues that the normative operation of power is the substratum upon which the meaning and value of gender are constructed, that there is no 'natural' gender; as is the case with any performative positions like citizenship concerning the concept of nation, or an artist in relation with the idea of Art and its discursive position in aesthetic experiences.

There is no substance to this performativity, but the potential for 'sedimentation' in time, and therefore it produces truth effects and not truth itself. Butler explains sedimentation as below: The process of that sedimentation or what we might call materialization will be a kind of citationality, the acquisition of being through the citing of

power, a citing that establishes an originary complicity with power in the formation of the "I." (Butler, 1993, p. 15) In this context, Butler gives concrete ways to tackle the problem of the body being constantly under the reign of power-imbued positions; there can be performative protests or subversion of the normative, which can create alternate truth effects to deconstruct fixed power relations.

Foucault is also critical of the naturalness of things and stresses their "constructedness". It is another example of how performativity draws from disciplinarity. He specifies this in terms of the idea of crime. "It is the society that defines in terms of its own interests, what must be regarded as a crime; it is not therefore natural" (Foucault, 1995, p. 104). However, to establish a stable link between crime and punishment, that is, to forge an analogous relationship between the two, punishment is installed prior to the consciousness of crime, so that when one thinks about committing an offense, the fear of punishment diverts the mind from advancing on it. The advantage of these tactics is that punishment does not appear as the arbitrary effect of human power; it is not the man that punishes man, but punishment derives from the crime itself. Foucault refers to Marat to substantiate his argument:

To derive the offence from the punishment is the best means of proportioning punishment to crime. If this is the triumph of justice, it is also the triumph of liberty, for then penalties no longer proceed from the will of the legislator, but from the nature of things; one no longer sees man committing violence on man. (Marat, 1780, see also Foucault, 1995, p. 105).

We can see how Foucault strives to clarify the procedure of concealing the arbitrary source of power by naturalizing its effects. It cannot be a coincidence that Butler goes into the scientific origins of sex determination within the logic of modern biology and attacks the presumptuous neutrality of its scientific language, which she argues is already invaded by gendered meanings as the result of the sedimentation of culture into nature (Butler, 1999, p. 139).

The origins of performativity could be further found in Foucault's observations of the subtle mechanism of disciplinary power. The mechanisms of exercises that are utilised by various forms of institutions which he traces from monasteries to factories, military, schools, prisons, and hospitals and, as an automatic extension- the family, where a collection of individuals is properly observed and examined whether they 'perform' or act as they are supposed to. This ritualistic element in disciplinary power is crystallized in the notion of performativity. "Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalisation in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (Butler, 1999, p. xv). The ritualistic element in disciplinary power and performativity has its common source as the origin of abstract authority from which the power is drawn. It must be one of the cues for Butler's argument of the constructedness and mythical nature of the origin of power drawn by performative acts.

She exposes the effect of power which constitutes the discursively produced 'subject' as an epistemological marking imbued by the performative acts the body undergoes. We can see the various forms of this epistemic violence produced by authorities or origins of power characterized by a divine origin of patrilineal religion or by a scientific origin of psychoanalysis and other modern sciences. Butler tackles both the metaphysical source of religion and the empirical source of science by saying that these origins are retroactively conjured by performative acts and thus have no fundamental basis but is sustained by the anticipation of power. These investigations can be traced to its Foucauldian origins, where he analyzes both the institution of religion and the role of science in the disciplining and subjectivation of the body in the modern age.



## Observation and Anticipation

Now, let us examine the relatively common forces within the theories of Foucault and Butler, whose functions are crucial to the overall functioning of the notions of disciplinarity and performativity. The tools of observation and examination are fundamental to Foucault as they form the crux of all forms of disciplinarity. The condition of the body's subjection in modern disciplinary systems is to become the constant object of surveillance. The body being the subject and object, simultaneously creates a site of knowledge that gives birth to a new mode of power. Foucault gives the scenario that, in prison, this power is wielded by the person in the central watchtower, from where all the guards and inmates can be seen, but the seer is unseen by them; he remains anonymous. The interesting fact is that the position of the observer could be anyone and no one; even the observer could be observed and examined, and so on and on. (Foucault, 1995, p. 201).

The hierarchical illusion of this mechanism is studied through Jeremy Bentham's architecture of the panopticon, which later became the model for all disciplinary institutions from the 17th century. Foucault observes this fact about the functioning of the panopticon's architecture and the ensuing social phenomena of panopticism or the formation of a disciplinary society. At the same time, Butler explores the idea further and argues that there is no ultimate, natural, or original sovereign power from where the power of law is forged and expands it to the point of saying that the person who watches everyone from the watch tower is neither true nor false, but a truth effect. The person or law or the transcendental signified is a fact conjured by anticipation. Butler (1999) says the following:

There the one who waits for the law, sits before the door of the law, attributes a certain force to the law for which one waits. The anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is the means by which that authority is attributed and installed: the anticipation conjures its object. I wondered whether we do not labor under a similar expectation concerning gender, that it operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates. (p. xiv)

The observer is metaphysical, a myth, but that which intervenes with the corporal in strange ways. For Butler, Performativity is the mechanism through which the body is both mythicised and also allows de-mythification. According to Butler, "It is this constitutive failure of the performative, this slippage between discursive command and its appropriated effect, which provides the linguistic occasion and index for a consequential disobedience" (1993, p. 122). The mythification of the body is never complete; it inevitably contains failure, and for Butler, this constitutive failure is the occasion for subversion or disobedience. In terms of sexuality, she mentions drag<sup>4</sup> as a form of disobedience to exposure of illusory completion and coherence within the norm of heterosexuality. Both 'exercise' in Foucault and 'performance' in Butler hold in them this incompleteness that allows for the construction and deconstruction of subjectivity. Butler goes on to say that the ritual of repeated acts internally manufactures an essence through anticipation. By inference, it can be understood that one can anticipate differently and manufacture alternate essences. Interestingly, the essence here is a hallucinatory effect prompted by naturalised gestures (Butler, 1999, p. xv). The constructivism inherent in Butler's critique is thus an extension of Foucault's notion of disciplinary power. The mechanisms of observation and anticipation are, thus, mutually enabling phenomena in constructing and deconstructing the subject.

Butler remarkably stresses the constructedness of this disciplinary operation by stating that it is 'doing' that defines 'being'. The performative aspect of disciplinary power and the disciplinary aspect of performativity are thus crucial in understanding the nuances of subjectivity in terms of both these thinkers. When we analyse the subjectivity accorded to the body, we can see the underlying aspects of the observatory and anticipatory gestures throughout history, especially regarding alienating and subordinating power relations that are normalized. For instance, gender is an immediate mark that defines a body irrespective of the function of that body in the world. However, it is an invisible yet omnipresent marking taken for granted.

## **The Double Performance of the Artist**

The disciplinary mechanism or subjectivation of gendering is prior to the objectivity of the functional verb of the 'artist', one who performs artistic acts. Here, that which denotes the description of what one 'does' (Art) is subsumed by the description of what 'it' is (gender); hence the performative utterance, 'She/he is an artist'. This utterance contains both the disciplinary observation and performative anticipation to fix or conclude 'who' and 'what' one is, or in other words, the gaze of observation is itself an examination anticipating what is desired by the Other. Interestingly, both the 'who' and 'what' in the utterance have their discursive reality; the doing of gender creates the 'girl', as well as the doing of Art, which creates the 'artist'. Thus an artist does a double performance. However, the ambivalence and contingency underlying one's subjectivity are homogenized and fixed in a logocentric move of 'being' and is represented by the single utterance of 'She/he is an artist', which marks the body with a certain ontological positing.

I argue that the origins of the notion of performativity have important foundations in the Foucauldian episteme on power, discipline, and subjectivity. While Foucault heavily invests his observations on the nature of the constructedness of power and its methods of distribution which affect individual bodies as well as social bodies, Butler focuses more on the internal contradictions and subversive possibilities of the same power using sexuality and the body as her site of critique. Understanding the Foucauldian origins of Judith Butler's notion of performativity allow us to critically analyze the operation and limits of subjectivity, understand the power-laden relationship between the doer and the doing, and, most importantly, ask the question, of whether the doer exists. If yes, then what is the nature of the doer's existence?

## **Aesthetic Intelligibility and Performativity**

It demands the following question: What is it to act without an actor? According to Butler, identity is undeniably constituted as a retroactive effect of the very doing; if so, how can we understand art in this context? To begin with, the consequences of such a reformulation of art would be 'troubling', which is also followed by the Butlerian project of troubling itself; 'to call the frame into

question' (Butler, 1999, p. xi). This meta-analysis brings the frame of art into question and asks what produces the congealed subjectivity of 'artist', similar to 'gender identity'. The production of this subjectivity of the artist and the notion of an exclusive artistic act originates in its anticipation; to produce the very phenomenon that it anticipates. Both gender and art result from the ritual performance, resulting in the congealment of identities in complexly distinct ways. This aspect of how both are synonymous and different under the discourse of performativity needs further explanation. Let us examine this.

An artistic act is understood as the same when the act, through repetition, has acquired a productive power to name and to do what it anticipates. However, no 'act' apart from a regularized and sanctioned 'practice' can wield power to produce what it declares (art). This way, the domain of 'that which is art' is a performatively constituted intelligibility or a state of iterability within that domain (to say, state, or perform again). The demands of the symbolic law constitute the bar or censor through which an act is sanctioned or regularized as artistic. It is the nature of the symbolic to "abject", in order to be a stable norm that can create subjectivating effects; namely, that which is named as the 'artist' or the culturally viable aesthetic subject to which a sanctioned act that is aesthetically intelligible is referred. Abject here is linked with Butler's theorization of the 'constitutive outside' that marks the self, which she develops from Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection (Price, J., & Shildrick, M., 1999, p. 7).

When understood in the light of performativity, the causality of the subject of 'artist' is not an original essence. It is traditionally accepted as an exclusive will, but an effect, a subjectivating effect as it is for any identification induced by symbolic acts like gender acts or racial acts. Suppose the artist's subjectivity is accepted as an effect, retroactively posited before the aesthetically intelligible act itself. In that case, the question of what constitutes (constitutive demands) the intelligibility concerning aesthetics or aesthetic differences is inevitable.

The histories of art and aesthetics are evident with this changing notion of aesthetic intelligibility. These radical notions challenged previously accepted rationale behind dominant acts or interpretive

matrices. So, the history of art can be viewed as a repetition, reproduction, and re-introduction, which constantly contests existing notions of intelligibility. Thus, the history of art arrive at newly sanctioned acts that resist the dominant symbolic capital. The constitutive demands of the law position this identificatory flexibility within the domain of aesthetic 'acts' or aesthetically intelligible signs.

These demands are normalized as a universal notion of aesthetics and are overtly rationalized by its institutions, which rely on such production for centralization and corresponding marginalization. In this light, the paintings of a mud house in Kutch are marginalized as craft, tradition, and ritual. Still, the canvas paintings in a gallery in Bombay are considered objects of art, modernity, and performance. Whereas the performative production and ritual aspects of both are nullified by such urgent binary divisions which create a hierarchy of values, which produces and maintains the discourse in which anything radical should pass through this censor of its own constructed rationality to be acknowledged as 'art' per se. Binaries like international-local, traditional-modern, political-aesthetic, art-craft, and functional-fantasy all have effects of such discourse logic, favoring one of the dominant binary to abject the other as its absence.

### **Queerness as a Break in the Performative Matrix of Art**

Aesthetics and art must be understood as radically different from each other but not necessarily alienated. Aesthetic experience is based on specific and indefinable, non-teleological spatiotemporal experiences, like standing in front of a mountain, immersing in music - a phenomenological experience that has no performative aspect to it in the sense of a discourse; while what we understand as Art is its staged presentation in language or the symbolic domain. It renders the multitude of aesthetic experiences into culturally intelligible and sanctioned forms, each specific to its socio-linguistic conditions and the existing discourse in which the artistic subject is already situated.

However, aesthetic experience is the domain where the subject empirically engages with the world. They are, not limited to the world of spectacles but synaesthetic and visceral experiences. In this

spontaneous and unexpected friction, the body goes through the experience of queerness. It produces the experience of ambivalence, multitude, and spontaneity which transcends the stable, essential, and conclusive subjectivity. This new experience takes some form and thus gives birth to an avant-garde language that reflects the world in an alternate way. Therefore, this may be conjured as a sign, which is maintained and identified by its performative position within the discourse of art, or in other words, a culturally intelligible form that has acquired a natural status of that which is named (as art). This frame or stage of art gives the platform for the representation of aesthetic experience, yet effectively hiding its constitutive ambivalence in its very formation.

The institution of art is a result of the textual performance of art history as well. Within its framework, some modes or movements claimed themselves as subversive and revolutionary, namely the domain of identity politics in art. However, if we observe them based on the knowledge of performativity, identity politics is a permutation of the artistic performance. While positing its subversion as resisting the symbolic hegemony, performativity stresses its specificity and thus essentializes its own identity, resulting in inevitable epistemic violence, one which necessarily abjects other forms of subversions to exist as it is. 'Inevitable' epistemic violence is the very condition of a 'category' that aims for inclusivity and, at the same time, is descriptive and tends to foreclose alterities within the ideal under which they labor. Butler explains this as the 'constitutive failure', because the potential to fail also constitutes the possibility for subversion. It is structured differently in different discourses in which humans exist as groups. Constitutive failure is bound in coalitional unity and renders an exclusive subjectivity. It is also self-disciplined, and structured in its re-presentation. There are multiple forms of subversion, like feminist aesthetics, or queer aesthetics, each specifically reactive in its state of affairs. The idea of subversion- the political agency of the individual, which is retroactively positioned as an ideal homogenous subject fails to enact itself in totality. This constitutive failure is at the heart of all political performativity, as is explained earlier in this article.

Institutional spaces maintain the discourse of art as an exclusive citational practice that retroactively posits a natural agency behind

the sanctioning act, thus effectively creating an abject exterior for aesthetic intelligibility<sup>5</sup>. These abject exteriors result from the performative constitution of an inside that posits itself as self-sustaining and coherent, concealing its constitutive ambivalence. The history of art and its textual or archival bodies effectively bring this performative origin of art into a linguistic presence. Also its trajectory is embedded with all newly sanctioned actors and acts are constantly added or rejected. This repository also creates a metaphysics of substance or sedimentation of "bodies that matter", sanctioning specific bodies or bodily configurations as 'artists' and creating bodies that do not matter as spectators, laymen, or Other non-intelligible actors. The phrase "bodies that matter" is an important notion in Butler. It denotes regulatory schemas which "are not timeless structures or a priori truths but historically revisable criteria of intelligibility which produce and vanquish bodies that matter" (Butler, 1993, p. 14). The Other in this context is the collective absence of the artist's sedimented subjectivity, which is maintained by the discourse of art by its overarching presence. Art and the artist are the product of the performative power of creating truth effects. This truth effect is not just linguistic but also of the body. The artist's subjectivity is related to the sedimentation of substance acquired over a period, a specific configuration of bodies that is then exclusively staged within the symbolic field of the discourse of art.

In this way, the metaphysics of substance identified by Judith Butler as related to the conjuring of intelligible bodies is an extension of the Derridian notion of metaphysics of presence, which is the overarching presence of signs which dominates its opposite by ignoring the role of absence and difference. It may be assumed that Butler adopts Derrida's deconstructive methodology to widen its potential for critique from the domain of linguistics to the human body, to a logocentrism of the human body. This bridging between sign and body highlights the critical relationship between the symbolic domain of signs and signs written onto the future of all bodies yet to exist, presupposing an apriori-metaphysical meaning to matter to impinge an effect of truth unto it. This authority over the body is constructed both ideologically and empirically.

## **Conclusion**

The radical queerness, which is in-dissociable from the aesthetic experience and different from the dominant intelligibility of art, is not a privileged experience of a few sanctioned actors or coalitional groups with exclusive and ideal political intentions. It does not mean these socio-linguistic spaces (like feminist art or queer art) in which art is 'maintained' as aesthetic (within the constitutive demands of the symbolic) cannot necessarily be found as experiences or instances of queerness. It is that queerness cannot be reduced to performative acts of naming- which are essentially modes of dominant knowledge (logos) and sanctioned intelligibility.

Aesthetic experience and queerness are not modalities at all, thus indefinable through metaphysical presences in language or sedimentation of substances in bodies. They can be inferred through textual and bodily aporias or openings; revealing the ambivalence, inclusivity, and indefinability inherent to them. This bodily aporia or contradicting experience to the a priori symbolic existence impinged on it can reveal the underlying ambivalence and, hence, the experience of queerness. The power to conjure an identity and posit itself within discourse is only possible when this underlying experience of queerness is then 'cultivated' into the purview of discourse. This performative power to structure an origin and effect, or in other words, the agency and act that arises from the desire to give form to the underlying ambivalence of aesthetic experience, reveals the paranoia to immediately contour and stabilize the ambiguity or queerness of the body itself.

The constitutive ambivalence of aesthetic experience is inseparable from the domain of queerness, and the experience of queerness that, in effect, triggers deconstruction of subjectivating effects of the body could also be called an aesthetic experience and vice versa. In this context, these two terms are indistinguishable. While aesthetic experiences and queerness are equated on one level, it is also essential to understand that it does not necessarily operate within the discourse of 'art'- an arbitrary discourse formed on the grounds of mundane and heterogeneous aesthetic experiences. Anyhow, the above arguments attempt to demonstrate that the Butlerian notion of performativity can also be extended beyond the purview of gender to enquire into this underlying queerness of what



constitutes the name of art, and what is hidden underneath the naturalized façade of artistic identity as well.

## Endnotes

1. Docility results from the intervention of power upon the body which alters it in ways that are feasible to the norm. The docility of the body is an essential factor in Foucault's theory of disciplinary power. See Foucault (1995, p. 137) for further details.
2. Jacques Lacan uses the notion of 'Other' in two aspects; the collective of others and the unconscious, which is synonymous with the discourse of language and law (Fink, 1995). But in this context, I am using the term 'Other' to denote the seat of moral gaze and judgment; the subjectivity of the individual being infected by this 'Other'.
3. What I mean by 'Othering' is the alienating phenomenon resulting from the omnipresence of disciplinary power. The process of Othering can also be understood as performative because surveillance is a repeated exercise that achieves a normalizing effect.
4. The term 'Drag' has many subtle and complex underpinnings within Butler's theory (Butler, 1999, pp. xxii-xxiv), but the general meaning of it is that of a cultural practice of performance aimed at undoing gender norms by doing (or dressing) the part of the opposite sex. This differs from cross-dressing, which involves secrecy and is associated with fetishes.
5. What I mean by art as a citational practice is that artists derive from the repository of what has happened within the discourse of art and revolutionize it by challenging its dominance using subversive practices. These practices disrupt the default aesthetic intelligibility with which art is understood till then. For example, in the history of art, various idioms and -isms constantly produce new corporeal significations for the body of the artist (metaphysics of substance) and the text of art (metaphysics of presence) within its discourse. We can see the example of this citation from Renaissance to post-modern Art in

the context of Western Art history. See Gombrich, E. H. (1995). *The story of art*. United Kingdom: Prentice-Hall for more details.

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