

Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*: A Butlerian Approach

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ABSTRACT

The present article focuses on Judith Butler's theory of 'gender performativity' and its application to Joanna Russ's science fiction, The Female Man (1975). Butler applies Foucault's genealogical methodology in Gender Trouble (1999) to trace the processes by which identity is constructed within language and discourse. She sees the subject as the effect of institutions and discourses rather than the other way round, which implies that the subject cannot simply be but is always already instituted. She believes that since the subject is always involved in the endless process of becoming, it is possible to reassume or repeat subject hood in different ways. Butler's genealogical critique of the category of the subject coincides with her notion that gendered and sexed identities are performative. She extends Beauvoir's (1908-1986) famous statement that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" and suggests that Beauvoir's claim can be read as a formulation that shows gender as a process which has neither origin nor end, so that it is something that we 'do' rather than we 'are'. Gendered identities are therefore performative i. e., based on repetition and since the repetitions which form the subject's identity never finish, gender identity is never fixed. Russ (1937-2011) depicts four women from different worlds with different attributes which affirms Butler's belief in performativity of gender that challenges the presumed fixed gender identities.

Keywords: Joanna Russ; The Female Man; science fiction; gender performativity; womanhood

INTRODUCTION

Joanna Russ wrote her science fiction, *The Female Man*, in 1971, and published it in 1975. Her novel is prominent for the interweaving of four genres: "utopia, science fiction, alternative history, and "mainstream" postmodern autobiographical writing" (Cortiel 2005, p. 501). She develops the feminist utopian genre and utilises the postmodernist narrative structure to challenge the traditional ideas about fixed gender identity. Teslenko observes that "the book is socio-historically contingent and implicated in the politics of the second-wave feminist movement with which it is contemporaneous. Problematising patriarchal values, Russ discloses the linguistic sexism of patriarchal discourse by portraying a heteroglossia of societal voices" (Teslenko 2003, p. 124). Russ has been influenced by the early twentieth-century feminist writers in their vision of revised gender roles that "promotes a system of separate spheres of influence in which women take over government" (Lane & Carol 1994, p.9). Russ's novel, according to Lane, "shares an emphasis on the imaginative freedom of alternate world, the crossing of generic boundaries, the didactic politics of the writing, and the overrunning of gendered stereotypes in women's use of the genres" (Ibid.).

Joanna Russ is a radical feminist, and her novel, *The Female Man* (1975), can be analysed in different perspectives and a variety of feminist arguments about the relationship between gender and sex. Materialist feminists, like Monique Wittig, argue that "sex and gender do not exist, but are discursively products of heterosexuality, created by the "straight

mind” (Westfahl 2005, p.1033). In her essay “The “Straight Mind” in Russ’s *The Female Man*” (1995), Susan Ayres analyses the novel based on Wittig’s ideas about sex and gender. Teslenko also states that “my reading of [...] Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man* is informed by Burke’s rhetoric of identification, Bakhtin’s concept of chronotope, and feminist theories of gender and subjectivity” (Teslenko 2003, p. xi). Cortiel, another critic of Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man*, focuses on textual analysis of the novel and mentions that ““Sex’ in this study therefore refers to textual representations of the male or female *body*, which I take to be historically and culturally specific” (Cortiel 1999, p. 11).

The present article will focus on Judith Butler’s theory of ‘gender performativity’ in Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man* (1975) and shows how Russ moves beyond the stable categories of women by presenting dynamic subjectivities of women in the novel. Russ introduces four women of different worlds that differ culturally and socially from each other, and these differences have a significant role in the process of the characters’ subjectivity. They respond to the law of their worlds in different ways and prove Butler’s idea that “subjects are always implicated in the relations of power, but they are also enabled by them, they are not merely subordinated to the law” (Salih 2002, p. 79). Through the multiple and ambiguous images of the protagonists, Russ calls into question the originality of law and gender identity, and undercuts the stabilised categories of man and woman.

INFLUENCE OF FOUCAULT AND BEAUVOIR ON BUTLER’S THEORY OF THE PERFORMATIVITY

Judith Butler’s seminal ideas have been influenced by Hegel (1770-1831), Michel Foucault (1926–84), Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), and Simone de Beauvoir’s ideas (1908–86). Hegel has influenced Butler’s writing style, and her subject as a dynamic and historical process. Michel Foucault’s description of subject-formation as a process and his genealogical analyses of the changeable constructions of sex and sexuality in different societies and contexts provide Butler with a theoretical framework for her own formulations of gender, sex and sexuality as dynamic and constructed entities. Jacques Derrida’s linguistic theories also complement Butler’s formulations of the subject.

Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) has laid the groundwork for the radical second wave feminism, and the book’s central argument is that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society” (Beauvoir 1956, p. 273). She is clear that one becomes a woman, but under a cultural compulsion. Judith Butler as a feminist postmodernist was influenced by Simone De Beauvoir based on whose claims and ideas, she writes, “it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end” (Butler 1999, p. 43). Butler believes that “to be a woman is to become a woman; it is not a matter of acquiescing to a fixed ontological status, in which case one could be born a woman, but rather, an active process of appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting received cultural possibilities” (Butler 1998, p. 31). To become a woman under a cultural compulsion follows the active process of receiving and reinterpreting the cultural meaning of the concept of the ‘woman’ in different ways and introduces the multiple and dynamic images of the ‘woman’.

Judith Butler also uses a Foucauldian mode of inquiry to investigate identity, namely genealogy. In the Preface to *Gender Trouble* (1999), she refers to genealogy, “to expose the foundational categories of sex, gender, and desire as effects of a specific formation of power, and requires a form of critical inquiry that Foucault, reformulating Nietzsche, designates as genealogy” (Butler p. xxix). Genealogical investigation shows that discourses might change

over time; consequently, concepts are not stable and fixed entities but are subject to change. Under the influence of Foucault, Butler uses genealogical methodology to trace the processes by which identity is constructed and which result in the destabilization of the originality of law and gender identity.

Butler argues that “gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylised repetition of acts*” (Butler 1999, p.179). Butler defines the concept of gender identity as a ‘performative’ act which is the effect of social construction. Her work traces “the processes by which identity is constructed within language and discourse” (Salih 2002, p.10). The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, “in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction” (Butler 1999, p.179). Butler believes that if gender is a performative repetition, it will be possible to repeat one’s gender differently; consequently, subjectivities can perform gender outside the restricting frames of compulsory and exhibit free-floating attributes of gender identities.

BUTLER AS THE QUEER THEORIST AND HER THEORY OF PERFORMATIVITY

Since much of Butler’s work has been concerned with the ongoing analysis and resulting destabilisation of the category of the subject and the formation of the subject within sexed and gendered power structures, she is regarded by many as the queer theorist. Sedgwick, a queer theorist, defines ‘Queer’ as follows: “a continuing moment, movement, motive recurrent, eddying, *troublant*” (1994: viii). She characterises queer as indistinguishable, undefinable, and mobile.

Butler suggests that “performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularised and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject” (Butler 2011, p. 60). She is not claiming that gender is a performance, and she distinguishes between performance and performativity. She argues that “whereas performance presupposes a preexisting subject, performativity contests the very notion of the subject” (Butler 1994, p. 33). Butler believes that gender is a social construct that is produced by repeated performative acts, and in order to reformulate gender, it is possible to change the existing attributes that are now strongly associated with the sexes. Bakar hints that “rethinking gender as performative allows one to look at the various, sometimes contradictory ways in which a person presents gender. It also accounts for a wider array of gender construction and gender production that reflects, recreates and flouts binary gender categories” (Bakar 2005, p. 3).

Performativity and citationality will also be dealt with in relation to Butler’s theorisations of interpellation, signification, and discourse. Hamdan hints to the definition of interpellation as argued by Althusser and states that “when a subject is interpellated is that the individual behaves in accordance with what he freely adopts from the ideological apparatus in terms of practical attitude and regular practices” (Hamdan 2012, p. 54). Unlike Althusser who conjectures this hailing or interpellation as unilateral act, Butler argues that interpellation is not a simple performative, in other words, it does not always effectively enact what it names, and it is possible for the subject to respond to the law in ways that undermine it” (Salih 2002 p. 79). The law itself provides the conditions for its own subversion.

JEANNINE: THE OPPRESSED WOMAN

Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975) narrates the story of four women of four worlds that differ in time and place: Jeannine's world in which the Great Depression never ceased; Joanna's world is similar to the Earth in 1969; Jael's world is the dystopian future where Womanlanders are at war with Manlanders; and Janet's world which represents the all-female utopian society on Whileaway. The novel begins with Janet who arrives in Jeannine's world, and she takes Jeannine to Joanna's world. Joanna takes Janet to a party in mid-Manhattan to become familiar with the customs of her society. When Janet finds out that the man insults the women, she strikes the man down, and she is also attracted to Laura, a girl from Joanna's world. Afterwards, Jeannine comes back to her world and under her family pressure, she gets married to Cal, whom she does not love. Then, Jeannine, Joanna, and Janet arrive in Jael's world, and on a revolutionary mission in Manland, Jael kills Boss, a male representative character. When Jael asks other characters to join her war, Janet declines, but Joanna and Jeannine agree to help her. At the end of the novel, four women come back to their own worlds, and Joanna, the narrator of the novel, says goodbye to them.

The narrator of the novel introduces Jeannine: "Jeannine Dadier (DADE-yer) worked as a librarian in New York City three days a week for the W.P.A." (*FM*, p. 3). Jeannine lives in a world in which Great Depression has not ceased, and women are oppressed and impotent. It is extreme patriarchy that women "never get a good job" (*FM*, p. 57). The narrator describes Jeannine as follows: "her smooth face: tall, thin, sedentary, round-shouldered, a long-limbed body made of clay and putty; she's always tired" (*FM*, p. 79). The description of Jeannine's appearance reveals her weakness and passivity—the definite attributes that the society determines for her as a woman. According to Butler, "the subject [...] comes into being through the power of interpellation" (Lane 2006, p. 51). In this sense, Jeannine's gender identity is implicated in the relations of power that determines stable attributes for women. Jeannine is "stupid and inactive. Pathetic. Cognitive starvation. She daydreamed about buying fruit at the free market" (*FM*, p. 47). As Teslenko observes, "Jeannine is characterised by narcissism, fear, passivity, and dependence" (Teslenko p. 155).

Jeannine tries to listen to two men who are talking about war, but she repeats, "I don't believe it [...] not knowing what they were talking about" (*FM* p.3). The social norm is that activity and intelligence, which are valorised, are attributed to masculinity, and passivity and intuition are attributed to women; therefore, women do not know about the war discussions. Since Jeannine's subjectivity is constructed within a heterosexual matrix of power, she is stupid and inactive. Clothing is also the signifier of the social construction of gender in Jeannine's world, and women are obligated to dress skirt which makes them more feminine and inactive. Jeannine had to be very careful about her clothes: "Twice she had had to tuck her skirt above" (*FM* p.3). Since clothes differentiate men from women, it is very important how clothes are worn. As Butler observes, "what relation institutes women as the object of exchange, clothed first in one patronym" (Butler 1999, p. 52). In Jeannine's world, women wear skirt that restricts them and indicates their passiveness.

Women's subjectivities are determined by their husbands, and they are interpellated as objects: "Men succeed. Women get married. Men fail. Women get married [...] Men start wars. Women get married" (*FM*, p.63). They give good jobs to men and lower jobs to women; consequently, women are forced to get married a man who can support them. Jeannine's family enforces her to find a man and get married, but her resistance to patriarchal discourse is reflected on her refusal of marriage. Jeannine's brother asks her, "when are you going to get married?" (*FM*, p.56), and she answers, "I'm not happy. Sometimes I want to die" (*FM* p.74). When Cal, her suitor, asks to meet her, she says hastily that "I haven't got time" (*FM* p.3). Since she is a dependent and frightened girl, marriage is the only choice for

her; however, she feels more disappointed when Cal does not perform gender well. Jeannine says: “he's awfully sweet but he's such a baby [...] I know he doesn't make much money” (*FM* p. 43). Cal is not a perfect man, he possesses feminine characteristics: “sometimes he cries. I never heard of a man doing that” (*FM* p. 43). Through crying that is attributed to women, Call reverses the norm and “expose[s] the limitations, contingencies and instabilities of existing norms” (Salih 2002, p. 140).

Jeannine remarks that “he gets into the drapes like a sarong and puts on all my necklaces around his neck” (*FM* p. 43). He tries to utilise feminine devices, which makes him more feminine, and he fails to perform masculine gender in his relationship with Jeannine. As Cortiel observes, “he, too, may be read as a version of the ‘female man’, appropriating as he does the theatrical effeminacy conventionally associated with male homosexuality” (Cortiel 1999, p. 218-19). Jeannine says, “*I ought to get married. (But not to Cal!)*” (*FM* p. 54).

Under the influence of her society, Jeannine does not consider any subjectivity for herself: “who am I, what am I, what do I want, where do I go, what world is this” (*FM*, p. 61). She identifies herself through her properties: “*I have my cat, I have my room, I have my hot plate and my window*” (*FM* p. 3). Cortiel hints that “Jeannine—in the logic of the materialist feminist dialectic—stands for the total negation of self” (1999, p. 87). Jeannine is intuitive and very close to nature and “sometimes believes in astrology, palmistry, occult signs [...] Women's magic, women's intuition rule here” (*FM* p. 54). By emphasising Jeannine’s intuition, Russ mocks the patriarchal discourse in which intuition and magic are attributed to women, and intelligence is attributed to masculinity. The narrator describes Jeannine as a stereotype of femininity, “she washed the dishes and tried to mend some of her old clothing [...] she would certainly plant the orange seeds and water them” (*FM* p. 3). The effeminacy of washing the dishes, mending the clothes, and nurturing the plants is a social discourse that constructs womanhood according to stable feminine characteristics. According to Beauvoir, “There is nothing natural or inherent about woman or femininity. All of our lived experiences, our psychologies, our understandings of our physical and mental capabilities and gifts—every – thing that we know and experience about ourselves – is filtered through our situatedness” (as cited in Card 2003, p. 38). Jeannine’s attributes are acquired within a cultural field as Butler argues that “no one is born with a gender—gender is always acquired” (Butler 1999, p. 142).

The older Jeannine gets, the more worried she becomes about the pressures of the society that enforce her to get married and perform femininity. As Joanna says: “you're twenty-nine. You're getting old. You ought to marry someone who can take care of you, Jeannine” (*FM* p. 57). She finally submits to the social norms and gets married to Cal, “whom she neither loves nor respects” (Cortiel 1999, p. 81). She is more mixed up, and repeats “I want something else [...] *something else*” (*FM* p. 62). Although Jeannine submits to the patriarchal norms, she does not feel happy.

Jeannine’s world constructs her subjectivity that makes her passive, stupid, dependent, and intuitive, but after meeting Jael, a revolutionary woman who kills a man, she joins her to attain a new subjectivity. As Martins remarks, “nature does not help Jeannine; she welcomes Jael's technology and becomes fascinated with her prosthetic weapons” (2005, p. 409). Under Jael’s influence, Jeannine tries to obtain her new subjectivity and a new perception of her identity. She goes shopping that was considered a dream for women, “if she could get empty cans at the government store” (*FM* p. 3) and she passes a bridal shop, “balancing a bridal veil on her head. Jeannine shuts her umbrella, latches it, and swings it energetically round and round” (*FM* p. 102). She alters from a passive and invisible woman to an active and revolutionary woman that when Jael consults other protagonists in the matter of her revolutionary war, Jeannine says, “*I don't mind. You can bring in all the soldiers you want*” (*FM* p. 103). Jeannine tries to achieve her new subjectivity, which was negated by

heterosexual norms and says “goodbye to Normality, goodbye to Getting Married, goodbye to The Supernaturally [...] goodbye Politics, hello politics. She's scared but that's all right. The streets are full of women and this awes her” (*FM* p. 102). Jeannine, who was depressed before, feels happy that it is possible to change the situation of the women in her world when she joins Jael, “Jeannine is happy” (*FM* p.103). As Butler believes “gender attributes are [...] performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal” (Butler 1999, p. 180). If attributes are performative, it is possible for Jeannine to acquire new attributes “outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality” (*Ibid.*).

JOANNA: THE FEMALE MAN

Joanna's world is similar to the Earth in 1969. She lives in a world in which there are self/other and subject/object dualisms of the patriarchal thought. Women are considered as ‘object’ and their identities are observed into that of their husbands. Joanna resembles Jeannine who does not see herself as a subject. When Secret Service agents are asking for Janet, Joanna answers, “who are you looking for? There's nobody here. There's only me” (*FM* p. 12). Joanna does not consider any agency for herself, and according to Butler, “there is no volitional subject behind the mime who decides” (Rivkin and Ryan 2000, p. 724). Butler believes that “gender is an act that brings into being what it names: in this context, a ‘masculine’ man or a ‘feminine’ woman” (Salih 2002, p. 64). In this sense, “gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed” (Butler 1999, p. 33). Joanna's gender identity is socially constructed, and she is defined as a woman with feminine attributes whose role is “soothing The Man, flattering The Man, deferring to The Man, changing your judgment for The Man, changing your decisions for The Man [...] losing yourself in The Man” (*FM* p. 34).

Russ intentionally chooses her own name for this character, and most parts of the novel are narrated through Joanna's perspective. Teslenko remarks that “Russ deliberately starts her narration with —I” (Teslenko 2003, p. 128). Russ does not indicate the gender of the subject who is speaking, and the reader cannot recognize which of the characters is narrating the novel. The title of the novel, *The Female Man*, refers to Joanna who is transformed from a woman into a female man during the novel, and it can also refer to the other three characters, discussed in this article. As Teslenko states “a female man is a contradiction [...] ambiguity is important because, as Russ further shows, though “man” should include “woman,” it really does not: being a gender-specific term, “man” in patriarchal discourse excludes “woman”” (Teslenko p. 129). Through depicting ambiguous characters, Russ deconstructs the stable meanings of man and woman. As Butler observes, “female no longer appears to be a stable notion, its meaning is as troubled and unfixed as woman” (Butler 1999, p. xxix).

After meeting Janet, an independent woman, Joanna transforms from a female figure into a female man. Joanna says, “I had just changed into a man, me, Joanna. I mean a female man, of course; my body and soul were exactly the same. So there's me also” (*FM* p. 4). Joanna rescues herself from the stable concepts of womanhood through transformation and defines a new gender identity that is not defined by the heterosexual society.

After her transformation, Joanna's first attribute is anger: “I think you had better call me a Man [...] the female man. If you don't, by God and all the Saints, *I'll break your neck*” (*FM* p. 69). By saying “*I'll break your neck*”, Joanna reinforces her anger and shows that through the process of becoming a female figure, she should restrain her anger. Joanna's rage reminds the reader of Butler's discussions about Herculine's transformation: “Herculine [...]

is transformed into a full-blown rage, first directed toward men, but finally toward the world as such [...] s/he is legally obligated to dress in men's clothing and to exercise the various rights of men in society" (Butler 1999, p. 124). Like Herculine, Joanna wants to be a man to exercise the different rights of men in the society. She says, "I didn't and don't want to be a 'feminine' version [...] I want to be the heroes themselves" (*FM* p. 100). Joanna performs masculinity and rescues herself from femininity. She continues, "I'm not a woman; I'm a man. I'm a man with a woman's face. I'm a woman with a man's mind. In my pride of intellect I entered a bookstore; I purchased a book" (*FM* p. 66). As Butler observes, "it is of course always possible to argue that dissonant adjectives work retroactively to redefine the substantive identities they are said to modify and, hence, to expand the substantive categories of gender to include possibilities that they previously excluded" (Butler 1999, p. 33). Joanna is transformed from a woman into a female man to experience a new possibility of her identity.

In order to make herself a visible subject, she turns into a female man to exhibit a new gender identity. Instead of being a timid, passive, and dependent woman, she adopts a new subjectivity that is violent, active, and revolutionary. As she says, "I committed my first revolutionary act yesterday. I shut the door on a man's thumb" (*FM* p. 99). According to Butler, as Salih puts it, "it will be possible to have a designated 'female' body and *not* to display traits generally considered 'feminine' [...] to choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that organises them anew" (Salih 2002, p. 46). At the end of the novel, Joanna says: "Goodbye, Jeannine, goodbye, poor soul, poor girl, poor as-I-once-was. Goodbye, goodbye [...] I am God's typewriter and the ribbon is typed out" (*FM*, p. 104). Joanna says goodbye to the fixed definition of her identity and brings forth the possibility of a new definition of her identity.

Jael: THE REVOLUTIONARY WOMAN

Jael's world is a dystopia where war rages between Womanlanders and Manlanders who "believe that child care is woman's business" (*FM* p. 83). They alter some boys into anatomical females and use them for both sexual pleasure and "taking care of children" (*Ibid.*). They objectify these boys and do not consider them as subjects:

sex-change surgery begins at sixteen. One out of seven fails early and makes the full change; one out of seven fails later and (refusing surgery) makes only half a change: artists, illusionists, impressionists of femininity who keep their genitalia but who grow slim, grow languid, grow emotional and feminine, all this the effect of spirit only. Five out of seven Manlanders make it; these are "real-men." The others are "the changed" or "the half-changed." All real-men like the changed; some real-men like the half-changed; none of the real-men like real-men, for that would be abnormal. Nobody asks the changed or half-changed what *they* like. (*FM*, p. 81)

Jael believes that "they [Manlanders]'ve been separated from real women so long that they don't know what to make of us; I doubt if even the sex surgeons know what a real woman looks like" (*FM* p. 81). Jael is affected by the world she lives in, but she is also politically active and aggressive. On a revolutionary mission in Manland, she pretends to yield to Boss's demands, a male representative, and "she smiles gracefully" (*FM* p. 82). She performs feminine gender, and Boss thinks that she is submissive, patient, and passive. He tries to convince her that she is a woman: "You're a woman [...] This is what God made you for [...] You want to be mastered [...] All you women, you're all women, you're sirens" (*FM* p. 88). Jael lets him twaddle and express his opinion about women. Then, she says, "Oh, I couldn't," (*Ibid.*) and he does not hear Jael's voice and does not comprehend her anger because "there's

a gadget in Boss's ear that screens out female voices” (Ibid.). Then, she kills him: “Better to think his Puli went mad and attacked him. I raked him gaily on the neck [...] when he embraced me in rage, sank my claws into his back” (*FM* p. 89). Instead of submitting to Boss and performing feminine gender, Jael pretends patience and overcomes him. Cortiel marks, “the killing of Boss [...] is a carefully planned, deliberate act which is contextualised as part of a revolutionary war. Jael [...] has turned her body into a killing-machine through plastic surgery and metal implants” (Cortiel 1999, p. 61).

Through killing Boss, Jael searches for her subjectivity and shows the possibility of resistance to subject formation. She overturns the interpellation of woman as a feminine object, and says, “you only want to ensure the flattering deference to you that you consider [...] you want a devoted helpmeet, a self-sacrificing mother, a hot chick, a darling daughter [...] women to come to for comfort, women to wash your floors” (*FM* p. 95). She revolts against the stable feminine gender identity and shows that woman is not a submissive object. According to Butler, “Gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original” (as cited in Rivkin and Ryan 2000, p. 722), and if gender identity is the effect of the imitation, it is possible for Jael to imitate gender norms in a different way and introduce the new gender identity that is not defined according to the paternal law. As Cortiel states, “in the very act of becoming independent, she looks for recognition from a man, reaffirming her dependence. This dependence, however, has been transformed: it is “she, now, who is the master, not he” (1999, pp. 63-4). Through attacking the man, she undermines the stereotype definition for womanhood and introduces the possibility of a new gender identity.

Jael’s anger uproots the idea that men are easy to anger and there are social taboos for women to express their anger. They must be patient. She recollects her childhood: “when you grow up as an old-fashioned girl, you always remember that cozy comfort: Daddy getting angry a lot but Mummy just sighs [...] Mommy never shouted [...] That was her job” (*FM*, p. 94). The feminine is associated with physical weakness: “those shadowy feminine disasters, like pregnancy, like disease, like weakness” (*FM* p. 94). It is a cultural norm that women feel guilty if they do not obey men; however, Jael believes that she is not guilty because of her murder, for “murder is my one way out. For every drop of blood shed there is restitution made; with every truthful reflection in the eyes of a dying man I get back a little of my soul” (*FM*, p. 95). This sentence is reminiscent of Butler’s idea that “to become a subject is to be continuously in the process of acquitting oneself of the accusation of guilt” (1997, p. 118). Social norms persuade women to feel guilty for their weakness and force them to obey men; however, Jael feels, “satisfied from head to foot” (p. 89), and rescues herself from this guilty feeling by showing her rage toward the man, and acquires a new gender identity. Teslenko marks that “due to the symbolic violence of patriarchal discourse, through self-hate, rage and anger, the woman reverses the socio-symbolic contract and resorts to symbolic violence against men” (2003, p. 133).

As Butler states: “‘agency’ [...] is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition” (1999, p. 185). Jael’s body overturns the connection between sex and gender. Russ uses technology to introduce the new subjectivity: “Jael, the most politically active [...] is a cyborg, with a row of steel teeth and retractable claws [...] she and her social world represent the ways in which cyborg identities can be used to reinforce hegemonies” (Martins 2005, pp. 410-11). She sinks her claws into Boss’s back, and releases herself from reproduction. Butler hints that “the female body that is freed from the shackles of the paternal law may well prove to be yet another incarnation of that law” (Butler 1999, p. 119). Jael’s body is freed from the restraints of law, and she also cures herself from the illusion of true body beyond the law to prove the unoriginality of the law and gender identity.

Jael talks about her Davy, whom she loves “so lovely: Davy with his head thrown to one side, eyes closed, his strong fingers clenching and unclenching [...] His breathing in my

ear” (*FM* p. 96). Davy is a cyborg: “a hybrid creature who takes pleasure in the confusion of boundaries between machine and organism, between human and animal” (Cortiel 1999, p. 210). Davy does not perform male gender, and is controlled by Jael: “Stay, Davy.” This is one of the key words that the house “understands;” the central computer will transmit a pattern of signals to the implants in his brain and he will stretch out obediently on his mattress” (*FM* p. 97). It is not important for Jael whether he is conscious or not: “his consciousness [...] is nothing but the permanent possibility of sensation [...] It is experientially quite empty, and above all, it is nothing that need concern you and me” (*Ibid.*).

Masculinity corresponds with activity whereas femininity expresses passivity in a heterosexual society. According to Butler, “the body becomes a peculiar nexus of culture and choice, and ‘existing’ one’s body becomes a personal way of taking up and reinterpreting received gender norms” (Butler 1998, p. 38). But the relationship between Jael and Davy transgresses the subject/object dichotomy in a heterosexual matrix, and deconstructs the stable categories such as man, woman, male and female. By controlling Davy, Jael proves that women are not always subject to male domination. For Beauvoir, women are designated as the Other, as Butler puts it: “for Beauvoir, women are the negative of men, the lack against which masculine identity differentiates itself” (Butler 1999, p. 14). Butler pokes fun at the idea that women are other or object in heterosexual hegemony, and emphasizes the plurality of women gender identity: “women are the sex which is not “one,” but multiple” (1999, p. 14). Other characters’ reactions to Jael who makes love to Davy are different which implies the existence of different discourses: “Jeannine doesn't understand what we're talking about; Joanna does and is appalled; Janet is thinking” (*FM* p. 97). Since the protagonists’ gender identities are constructed through different discourses, they represent different reactions to the relationship between Jael and Davy. Jael says, “Alas! those who were shocked at my making love that way to a man are now shocked at my making love to a machine; you can't win” (*Ibid.*).

JANET: THE UTOPIAN IMAGE OF WOMAN

Janet introduces herself: “My mother’s name was Eva, my other mother’s name Alicia; I am Janet Evason” (*FM* p. 2). Joanna thinks that Evason is the name of son, but Janet explains to her that “Evason is not “son” but “daughter.” This is *your* translation” (*FM* p. 11). Russ subverts the patriarchal norm that woman’s identity is defined according to her husband’s identity after marriage. Janet is not forced to change her last name after her marriage, and her identity is not defined according to a binary relation in which the masculine comes in stark contrast with the feminine. Cortiel believes that “she takes no offence at the fact that her last name in English translates as *Evason* because she does not define her existence in opposition to another who is male” (Cortiel 1999, p. 214).

Janet immediately refers to this matter: “When I was thirteen I stalked and killed a wolf, alone, on North Continent above the forty-eighth parallel, using only a rifle” (*FM* p. 2). Teslenko indicates that “the “North Continent Wolf” is killed, once male power is broken, and women are free to establish their own society” (Teslenko 2003, p. 135). The killing of all men in the war has been changed to a “myth of a plague that killed all males on Whileaway” (*Ibid.*). The narrator describes, “there have been no men on Whileaway for at least eight centuries” (*FM*, p. 6).

After the killing of all men, Janet describes her new subjectivity: “I made a travois for the head and paws, then abandoned the head [...] I've worked in the mines, on the radio network, on a milk farm, a vegetable farm [...] I've fought four duels” (*FM*, p. 2). She applies her skill in doing both masculine and feminine jobs and she is not restrained by gender roles;

she is portrayed as independent, intelligent, and physically strong. She says: “I love my wife (Vittoria)” (*FM*, p. 2). Jannet and Vita are women, married together. She does not imbibe the concepts of husband, wife, and gender constraints. Whileawayans use technology as the way of reproduction: “the merging of ova [...] Whileawayans bear their children at about thirty [...] These children have as one genotypic parent the biological mother (the “body-mother”) while the non-bearing parent contributes the other ovum (“other mother”)” (*FM*, p. 8). Russ uses technology as the way of reproduction in Whileaway to flout the heterosexual family organised by men who consider women as objects. As Yaszek suggests that “feminist SF authors extend the ideas of their literary predecessors by imagining that women might not need to leave their homes to escape patriarchal culture, but instead might use science and technology to eliminate the problem of patriarchy itself” (Yaszek 2008, pp. 206-207).

There is no taboo against having sex with women: “Sexual relations—which have begun at puberty—continue both inside the family and outside it” (*FM*, p. 28). Since there is no man in Whileaway, according to Cortiel, Janet “is not a lesbian” (Cortiel 1999, p. 11). When Janet travels to Joanna’s world, she comes on the television and they ask her to talk about sexual love and Janet says, “You mean copulation” and tries to explain women’s *jouissance* in Whileaway. However, they cannot understand what she says. She wants to explain, but the narrator says, “she was cut off instantly by a commercial poetically describing the joys of unsliced bread.” Joanna’s world is a heterosexual society, and the narrator describes, “they shrugged.” Women are described as objects of pleasure, but Jannet is mixed up and does not understand their reaction. She says, “if you expect me to observe your taboos, I think you will have to be more precise” (*FM*, p. 7).

Jannet’s bewilderment affirms Butler’s idea that “bisexuality and homosexuality are taken to be primary libidinal dispositions, and heterosexuality is the laborious construction based upon their gradual repression” (1999, p. 98). Janet lives in a utopian society where individuals are not forced to compulsory heterosexuality, and sexual relationships are not limited to one person: “No Whileawayan marries monogamously” (*FM*, p. 28). They can have sex with their partner and everybody they like. Taboos on Whileaway are “sexual relations with anybody considerably older or younger than oneself, waste, ignorance, offending others without intending to” (Ibid.). Janet deconstructs this taboo when she meets Laura, the daughter from Joanna’s world. Laura is ready to weep and says to Janet: “I do love you. There is propaganda and propaganda and I represented again to Janet that what she was about to do was a serious crime” (*FM*, p. 38).

Laura lives with her parents and Janet is not comfortable in Laura’s house. Janet says, “we should go to a safer place where we can die in comfort” (*FM*, p. 37). That is why they travel to Janet’s world where they can be free. Both characters revolt against the social taboos of their cultures: Janet revolts against the social taboo of “sexual relations with anybody considerably older or younger than oneself,” (*FM*, p. 28) and Laura transgresses the homosexuality taboo. This is reminiscent of Butler’s idea that “the law contains the possibility of subversion and proliferation within *itself*” (Salih 2002, p. 39). She believes that there is no fixed identity and law, and the cultural norms change over time. She hints that “we might reconsider the history of constitutive identifications without the presupposition of a fixed and founding Law” (Butler 1999, p. 85).

Janet lives in Whileaway where women are free from masculine hegemony and are not constrained by gender distinction. Janet is not forced to restrain her anger when she faces a man: “When a policeman tried to take her arm, she threatened him with *le savate*” (*FM*, p. 4).

As Teslenko writes, “Whileawayans eliminated their male counterparts, in the meantime appropriating traditionally “male” values of anger, arrogance, dominance, hunger for power” (Teslenko 2003, p. 136) which implies the fact that women are not limited within

biological or cultural interpretations; consequently, they can balance both their masculine and feminine features and develop their self in balance with their society. Whileaway is where, according to Butler, “the female body [...] is freed from the shackles of the paternal law” (Butler 1999, p. 119), and Janet is not forced to perform femininity in the ways that are naturalized in Jeannine’s, Joanna’s, and Jael’s worlds. It is possible for Janet to display both feminine and masculine traits, reinterpret gender in different ways, and affirm the unoriginality and illusion of the law and gender identity.

Since Janet does not know womanhood, she does not perform femininity well at “cocktail party in mid-Manhattan” (*FM*, p. 4). Joanna gets her dressed and she “got reasonably decent shoes on Janet Evason’s feet” but “she smiled” (*FM*, p. 18). Joanna explains, “on my left hand Janet stood: very erect, her eyes shining, turning her head swiftly every now and again to follow the current of events at the party” but Joanna is worried about Janet’s reaction to her country’s social norms and says, “I’m anxious, Janet’s attention seems a parody of attention and her energy unbearably high” (*FM*, p. 19).

Janet would have gone to a party, and she should meet a man at that party and please him: “she would have gone out and bought mascara for the eyes that had been complimented by that man” (*FM*, p. 16). When Ginger Moustache, a man from Joanna’s world, says “it’s been great meeting you. You’re a real ballsy chick. I mean you’re a *woman*” (*FM*, p. 21). At first Janet does not understand that the man insults women, and she talks about her duels: “That’s from my third duel” (*FM*, p. 21). But the man does not think about women’s strength, and says, “men are physically stronger than women, you know” (*FM*, p. 23). He tries to convince Janet that masculinity is associated with the “brute, virile, powerful, good”, which are written in the book in his hand (*FM*, p. 24). However, when she realizes that the man tries to despise women by using the word ‘Bitch,’ “she dumped him. It happened in a blur of speed and there he was on the carpet” (*Ibid.*). Through battling against the man, Janet transgresses the norm, written in the man’s little blue book: “*Girl backs down—cries—manhood vindicated [...] Man’s bad temper is the woman’s fault*” (*FM*, p. 25). Janet overturns the social norm that woman’s response to man’s insult and anger is crying, and women are responsible for men’s anger. She presents the new subjectivity by violating the norms and confirms Butler’s idea that subject’s response to the law is different: “there might be produced the refusal of the law in the form of the parodic inhabiting of conformity that subtly calls into question the legitimacy of the command” (Butler 2011, p. 82).

Motherhood is a vacation as Janet describes: “I bore my child at thirty; we all do. It’s a vacation. Almost five years” (*FM*, p. 9). It is the benefit of Whileaway dominated by women, which results in plurality and freedom of the individuals. Martins believes that “the women of Whileaway use technology to fully realize their potential [...] Whileawayans meld their minds and bodies with computers and machines to perform not only heavy physical labor but also creative and intellectual work” (Martins 2005, pp. 405-408). Butler suggest that “anatomy alone has no inherent significance” (Butler 1998, p. 39), and she believes that the body is limited to social taboos. If we consider “the conceptualization of the body as non-natural” (*Ibid.*), we can assert the absolute difference between sex and gender. Thus, Russ uses technology to produce identities outside the cultural institutions to prove that gender is not dictated by anatomy or sex, and there is no relation between gender and sex. According to Butler, “if gender is a way of ‘existing’ one’s body, and one’s body is a ‘situation’, a field of cultural possibilities both received and reinterpreted” (Butler 1998, p. 38) then, gender seems to be a cultural affair and can be reinterpreted in different ways. Russ uses both nature and technology in Whileaway to overturn “the usual associations of women with nature, men with technology” (Martins 2005, p. 409) and affirms Butler’s ideas that if gender is a social construct that is produced by repeated performative acts, and in order to reformulate gender, it is possible to change the existing attributes that are now strongly associated with the sexes.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, in order to subvert the presumed stable subjectivity of women, Russ chooses four women from different worlds who represent different images of woman. Their different reactions to presumed attributes of masculinity and femininity affirm the idea of the artificiality and conventionality of gender system. Through using technology and different worlds, Russ subverts the illusory heterosexual assumptions pertaining the supposed relationship between sex and gender.

Butler believes that gender is a performance that is based on the correct repetition of behaviours. Since four women fail to repeat perfectly, they confirm Butler's claims about the illusoriness of social roles and destabilization of male and female categories. Jeannine is passive, weak, stupid, intuitive, and an invisible character. Joanna makes herself a visible subject when she turns into a female man and introduces a new gender identity. After transformation, she interprets a new subjectivity that is violent, active, revolutionary, and ambiguous. Jael is active, brutalised, revolutionary, and a cruel protagonist, and Janet, who is not oppressed by men, is independent and physically strong. She is conscious of her self and is in balance with her society. The protagonists' different characteristics affirm the Butlerian idea that womanhood cannot be assumed as a fixed concept, but suspended in time and space. The discourses might exchange over time; consequently, concepts are not stable and fixed entities but are subject to change. Russ uses technology to subvert "the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex" (Butler 1999, p. 10), and represents multiple gender identities to prove that if gender is performative, it can be interpreted in different ways and calls into question the originality of law and gender identity. Then, it is possible to change the stable attributes that are associated with the sexes, and show different images of woman as a seemingly fixed concept.

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