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Performativity and Sexual Identity in Calderón's *Las manos blancas no ofenden* (White Hands Don't Offend)

MATTHEW D. STROUD

SPANISH *COMEDIA* BRIMS WITH EXAMPLES OF FLUID GENDER IDENTIFICATION. Not only do women frequently dress as men, but other characters almost always accept them as men or women depending solely on the clothes they wear. Is gender so superficial in these plays that it is merely a function of one's choosing the signifiers one wants to wear? Or is there an essentialism to gender that forces each character to assume the gender that corresponds to his or her sex in order to have a happy ending? Or is it something else, perhaps more reflective of Judith Butler's investigations into the performative aspects of gender, in which gender is an inculcated function of the symbolic Other, and is neither consciously chosen nor casually acquired? Informed by phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and feminism, Butler has constructed a thoroughgoing theory of gender in which the materiality of the body does not take precedence over its meaning. The body is inscribed by culture and history; it is a set of possibilities to be continually realized through construction by corporeal acts. Sex is a biological fact, but gender is cultural interpretation or signification, and gender is as gender does. Gender as performative implies that there is no pre-existing identity by which an act or attribute might be measured, no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender. Even the notions of an essential sex are part of the constructs to regulate and control gender and to conceal its performative nature.

In addition to consideration of the ideas of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, and Wittig, Butler clearly and unapologetically bases much of her work on gender on Lacan's often cited but massively misconstrued assertions regarding the relationship of sex and gender to symbolic signification. Countering those who dismiss Lacan's separation of sex from gender as a whim one chooses to adopt, Butler critically explores the nature of the symbolic, re-

membering that it, too, is not-all, and that, while the working of the symbolic is constant (at least in these theories), the particulars of the symbolic manifestations of gender are not only wildly differing from culture to culture, but also from time to time. Moreover, Butler adds to our understanding of Lacan's symbolic structure of gender by focusing on both the process of inculcation and iteration required for the establishment of gender, and the important areas of exclusion that are unsignified and unspoken, banished from thought.¹

An interesting play to study in light of Butler's ideas is Calderón's *Las manos blancas no ofenden*, a remarkable work that deals with a man, César, reared as a girl because his mother wanted him to avoid the rigors of war (1087b), and a *mujer varonil* [cross-dressed woman], Lisarda, both of whom appear in clothes appropriate both for their own and for the opposite sex.² Does their gender reside in their behavior, in their clothes, or in their biological sex? As frequently happens in the *comedia*, the gender questions in *Las manos blancas no ofenden* are framed against the background of love, both insistent, imaginary love and the symbolic obligations and expectations that the culture requires of those in love. César and Lisarda cross-dress in an attempt to fulfill their demands, but their motivations are different. Lisarda, abandoned by Federico who has gone off to try to wed the princess Serafina, cross-dresses in order to attend the competition for Serafina's hand and thereby to exact her revenge against Federico. Like Rosaura in *La vida es sueño*, she adopts masculine dress in order to take care of her own affairs. César dresses in disguise to escape his mother's controlling gaze and to win over Serafina, but he dresses and acts as a woman, rather than a man, in accordance with his "feminine" upbringing. In addition, according to Teodoro, César's femininity might be more successful with Serafina than masculine bravado:

. . . tu hermosura y tu gracia
(y más si es que alguna vez,
donde ella lo escuche, cantas)
podrá ser que la enamore
más por las delicias blandas
que esotros por los estruendos. (1091a)

[your beauty and grace
(and what's more, if on some occasion
she happens to hear it, your singing)
it may be that you can enchant her
more with gentle charms
than all the others with their ostentatious show].

In both cases, the new transvestite personas also have new names, thus linking sexuality, or at least sexual categorization, and identity. Lisarda invents for herself the name "César," unaware at the time that there is another character by that name whose path she will cross. Lisarda's self-naming assumes self-determination, but since all discourse is bounded by historicity, she cannot define a new exclusive identity for herself as she wishes. When she discovers the existence of the real César, she laments her misfortune at having chosen, strictly coincidentally, the name of a person others are looking for (1105a–6a). In the symbolic, however, there are always previous usages and prior significations that constrain the attempt at autonomous meaning (Butler, *Bodies* 227–228), and her inadvertent selection of the name "César" demonstrates that all names bring with them the history of their prior citations. When Lisarda introduces herself as "César," César does not know what to say (1996a); he ends up calling himself "Celia" (1097a).

Characters in disguise may wish that identity, both sexual and social, were simply a symbolic function of clothing and names, but recognition of identity (sexual and nonsexual) cannot be taken for granted. Although Federico recognizes Lisarda dressed as a man, Enrique, her own father, does not (1115b–1117b). Earlier, Serafina thinks she recognizes Federico as the man who saved her from the fire, but she is not sure (1099a). When Federico admits he saved Serafina, Lisarda, who has the ring Serafina gave to Federico, is able to convince Serafina that Federico was not the man who saved her (1100a–1a). Naturally, Serafina believes the possession of the ring more than Federico's words and accuses him of treason (1101a). In other words, the ring becomes the sole determiner of his identity just as Lisarda hoped she could really pass for "César" and César for "Celia"; the signifier is (wrongly) believed to have only one essential signified.

Curiously, while several (but not all) characters recognize Lisarda even when she is dressed as a man, no one believes that César dressed as "Celia" is César, or even a man (1117b). This disbelief occurs even after he, as "Celia," is ironically forced to pretend that he is César and he admits who he is (1123b). Adding to the complication is the play within a play in which Serafina's ladies want César as "Celia" to play the role of the *galán* (1098a). As preparations begin for the play, the stage is peopled by characters in masks, as well as Lisarda and Nise, who are dressed as men but in different outfits. When César as "Celia" dons masculine clothing for the play within a play, there is a different quality to the reaction of others around him/her. Although no one seemed to notice that

"Celia," who is a man dressed as a woman, was really a man named César, no one takes "Celia" dressed as a *galán*, that is, a man dressed as a woman dressed as a man, to be a man. Thinking that "Celia" has gone off the deep end in her overidentification with the masculine *galán*, Laura admonishes "her," "Mira, Celia, que es locura / creer que lo que finges eres," (1123b) [Look, Celia, it is madness/ to believe that you are what you pretend to be].

There is a difference between cross-dressing for theatrical purposes and cross-dressing in "real life." The difference lies both in the contextual signification of the cross-dressing and in the difference regarding control. Both Lisarda and César choose their names when they are in control of their cross-dressing, although they did not choose their names or their genders at birth, and César was not able to choose his gender in the play within a play. It is allowed, and even expected, in this case, that Celia should appear as a man. This was not an unfamiliar circumstance in palace dramas of the era and, because Serafina and the others know that "Celia" is to be dressed as a man, in other words, that she fulfills their expectations, they have no trouble identifying this masculine character as "Celia." When César comments on the novelesque qualities of his situation, he points out that someone else writes one's identity, one's gender, one's behavior, and the particulars defy the coherent logic one would expect of a unified reality completely bounded by symbolic restraints.

César's simultaneous conjunction of and disjunction between gender and anatomy bring up Butler's discussion of Lacan's ideas on signification and sexuality.³ Material, whether sexual or of a different nature, may exist in nature, but it cannot be apprehended by the human subject without recourse to language, to discourse, Lacan's symbolic register. Anatomy, like everything else, is subject to signification and imaginary investments. Through the acceptance of symbolic norms, of which "sex" is just one, the human subject takes its place in society, becomes "viable." It is only by submitting oneself to symbolic signification that one can become a properly functioning subject. Discourse does not create sex, of course, but language so structures human thought (and identity) that one cannot think about sex without filtering the thought through symbolic discourse.

The roles assigned to each sex are thus symbolically determined by the division of signifiers into the discursive categories, "masculine" and "feminine," implying a humanistic essentialism that demands that gender, both the gender of self-identification and the gender of the object of desire, flow naturally from anatomy (see

Butler, *Gender* 10). By this way of thinking, one knows what behavior one can expect from other people based on their sexual categorizations. At one point, César, dressed as a man for the play within a play, wants to defend Serafina, but she refuses, noting that it is not proper for a woman to do such things (1117b). But later, Serafina wants "Celia" to help her deceive Enrique (ironically by pretending to be César), a more "feminine" activity (1122a). In addition to their clothes and names, women are expected to be essentially deceitful (Lisarda's disguise, her theft of the ring, her lies to take revenge on Federico and to avoid being noticed by her father), unskilled in war or honorable actions, in need of protection (Enrique offers to hide Lisarda), objects of exchange (Serafina, who has been chosen by the Holy Roman Emperor to inherit Ursino, nevertheless needs a husband), fickle and unwilling to accommodate masculine desire, as well as beautiful, with white hands and good singing voices, associations that César exploits in his activities as "Celia" because of his sheltered childhood and his singing talent (1097a). As a result of the role granted to him when he is dressed as a woman, César is much more able to manipulate events regarding love through subterfuge than he could as a man. Most of what he does is to win the favor of Serafina, although he does it indirectly as a woman as opposed to directly as the other men in the competition.

If women are conniving and powerful in their fluidity, men, in addition to having appropriate names and clothes, are expected to be protective of women, valiant (Federico saves Serafina from a fire), cruel (Federico abandons Lisarda in search of a "better" mate), competitive (men vie for Serafina's hand, 1095a), and *pundonoroso* (Federico is prepared to fight Lisarda as "César" over a perceived insult, 1116a). Even Federico cannot avenge the insult regarding the glove since she is a woman, but he must do something to preserve his own honor. César, despite his "feminine" upbringing, is also prone to honorable action. When he is confronted with Lisarda's cross-dressing for revenge, he feels that he has been dishonored and grabs his sword (1123b). Enrique and Lisarda point out the contradictions of the masculine position. Enrique still wants to kill his daughter, but Federico, now engaged to Lisarda, protects her, and even Enrique himself, probably because he does not recognize Lisarda, offers her his protection: he will hide her in his room and tell the others that she has left (meaning that, ironically enough, Lisarda will hide in Enrique's room to hide, at least in part, from Enrique; 1118b–19a).

That sexuality may be a function of signification has contradic-

tory consequences. On the one hand, gender identity is seen to be no more than an accretion of superficial signifiers: Lisarda is a man if she dresses as a man. On the other hand, if one bears masculine signifiers, one can therefore be further defined by a whole host of expected behaviors that cohere with that label. Of course, signification, in sexuality as in everything else, based as it is on presence and absence, is a function of lack. Sexual materiality (or material sexuality) cannot be used reliably as a constant on which signification is based. The referent is never the same as the signified; there is always an element of imaginary *méconnaissance* [misapprehension] on the one hand and the unsymbolizable real on the other (Butler, *Bodies* 68–69, 191–192). Signification also captions otherness, for the signifiers themselves are not original with each subject, but are borrowed from (or imposed by) the symbolic register. For the subject, signification captions the structuring lack that creates desire and makes the human subject human. In the arenas of sexuality and identity, the signifiers that denote what one is (or what one wants to appear to be), always imply what one is not. Finally, the signification that is thought to spring naturally from the body actually creates the discursive context in which the body functions. Butler states that the “signifying act delimits and contours the body that it then claims to find prior to any and all signification” (*Bodies* 30). Just as there is no metalanguage, there is no metasignification. When the signifiers begin to shift, as in the case of cross-dressing, the important division between self and other starts to break down.

The submission to the symbolic that marks the construction of an identity, an “I” (however that may be defined), is also at work in gender. All symbolic distinctions are ultimately discursive, and even fictional. Neither names, gender, nor the pronoun “I” have any essential content or absolute meaning (Butler, *Bodies* 209). But neither is gender a casual choice, as easily changed as these characters change their clothes. Rather, gender is a repeated inscription “forced by symbolic repression on the unconscious level” (Butler, *Bodies* 12; “Performative” 276). One learns one’s gender, and the roles attached to it, in much the same way one learns one’s name: by repetition. The symbolic law does not merely prescribe or dictate a gender, much as it may try to; sex and gender maintain a dynamic interaction with the law, which is produced and upheld through its “citation” that establishes its authority by standing on the prior decisions infinitely extending into an unrecoverable past (Butler, *Bodies* 14, 108, 131, 225–26). In other words, the norms that are invoked regarding masculine and feminine behavior do not

precede that behavior but are, in fact, instituted by the behavior. Thus, there can be no essential gender, despite anatomical reality, because "gender is constituted by the performance itself" (Butler, "Performative" 278). Sex is not nothing, of course. It is a mark to be symbolized, to be regularized by symbolic signification, a process that retroactively attributes to the body a certain sexual position.⁴ Moreover, the body is subject to both symbolic signification and imaginary fantasy. As Lacan noted, the morphology of the body is a psychically invested projection; bodies are only "whole" in the imaginary (Butler, *Bodies* 72–73), and organs and other body parts, inasmuch as they are considered to establish gender, always become imaginary effects (Butler, *Bodies* 72–73, 77). While others believe that gender is a simple construct, Butler sees performativity as a way out of this constructed/determined dichotomy (*Bodies* 94). Socialization "requires a performance which is repeated" ("Performative" 277); ontology is "constituted by forms" (*Bodies* 99), forms that are insistently repeated.

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler explains in detail her notion that gender assignment is a forcible, reiterative practice, but it is not entirely successful or completely determining (231). The process of reiteration, so necessary to symbolic acculturation regarding both discourse and sexuality, underscores the submission of the subject to Other norms and one's entry into "society;" the image of the body, whatever that image is, comes at a price, that is, it "is purchased through a certain loss" (75). Reiteration also points out the lack of totalizability of the Other. If the symbolic process were completely effective, it would take place the first time; no repetition of the lesson would be necessary (2). The fact that one must constantly repeat the same lesson discovers the lack not only at the center of the subject but also at the core of the Other, the fact that there is no Other of the Other (Lacan, *Ecrits* 311, 316). Then again, instabilities arise in the repetition of the symbolic code from one iteration to the next (10). It is this ironic relationship between cause and effect that Butler defines as performativity. A performative "acts in some way to constitute that which it enunciates" (217). However, a performative success "is always and only provisional" (226). Gender, because it is performative, can never be completely internalized, completely absorbed into one's being as one's own (*Gender* 141). There is an intensified suspension of disbelief in all these actions, including (maybe especially) those involving gender. Gender, thus, is "a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. . . . , a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and

taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death" (Butler, *Bodies* 95; see also *Gender* 140–141). It is the coming together of materiality, discourse, and power exerted by others and by the symbolic Other.

The trope that best represents the gender fluidity in this play is catachresis, or the forced use of an inappropriate or paradoxical word such as the name "Celia" applied to a man and "César" applied to a woman. In the theater, one can extend the definition of catachresis to the application of inappropriate visual signifiers such as clothes. In its attempt at normalization, society tries to outlaw catachresis. The inappropriate signifier, especially in a gender sense, brings up the possibility of violation of the gender constrictions. Carlos is shocked that "Celia" should appear in masculine dress after the play within a play: "¿Qué hace Celia en este traje / delante de tanta gente?" (1124b) [What is Celia doing in this outfit / in front of so many people?], and he subsequently speaks of César's disguise in terms of treason and offense (1125b). But the inappropriateness is an effect of the law itself. Without the arbitrary law saying, for example, that men must not have women's names, there would be no catachresis. For Butler, then, catachresis is "a perpetual risk that rigid designation seeks to overcome, but always also inadvertently produces . . ." (Butler, *Bodies* 214).

So the body is defined by and represented in language, all speech is phallic, and the symbolic is androcentric (Butler, *Bodies* 60; Lacan, *Seminar II*, 261). Butler would add that the symbolic is also heterocentric or heterosexist. She discusses at length the "heterosexual matrix" of symbolic repression and the effect of enforced heterosexuality on the conceptualizations of sex (Butler, *Bodies* 3, 15, 63, 73, 97; *Gender* 19), all of which are manifestations of symbolic regulatory power. At the same time, there is law, the symbolic laws of discourse, that one must obey if one is to be able to think symbolically and thereby be admitted into symbolic society. The symbolic law everywhere insists on the heterosexual norm, which is accompanied by all manner of approbation for "correct" behavior and all manner of punishment and cruelty for transgression. From "It's a girl!" to "I pronounce you husband and wife," the symbolic insists upon the subject's inscription into the externally designated heterosexual role.⁵ But such intense insistence suggests that heterosexuality is not as stable, not as normative, not as "natural" or satisfying, as those who wish to regulate sexuality would like (Butler, *Bodies* 125–126; *Gender* 140). Sex, sexuality, and gender, and the distinctions that one makes among the terms, are manifestations of symbolic regulatory power, but materiality, including

sexual materiality, is a function not of adherence to symbolic norms but of violation (Butler, *Bodies* 29). Once again, the symbolic fails to deliver on its promises. The symbolic system will always demand more than the subject has to give, desire always insists, and subjects do not necessarily accept the roles that the symbolic has in mind for them. One can, according to Monique Wittig, choose to "become neither female nor male, woman nor man" (cited in Butler, *Gender* 113).

In the *comedia*, the symbolic culture attempts to restrain the free flow of gender signification by the insistence on heterosexual marriage. The repetition of the marriage scenario in *comedia* after *comedia* is one manifestation of this cultural insistence upon the inculcation of heterosexuality, and this imperative tries to convince us of the essential nature of heterosexuality as determined by anatomy. This play ends with three marriages, all of which are rather superficially (and heterosexually) imposed. The ending occurs rapidly and according not to the wishes of the characters involved, but to symbolic norms. Serafina marries César because they are both princes, despite his "femininity." The effeminate man, regardless of his inclinations, is still anatomically male and must be a husband to a wife. Only by submitting to the symbolic order can César continue to be part of the society, as others who have resisted submission, such as Gila in Vélez's *La serrana de la Vera* [The Country Girl from La Vera], prove by their effective expulsions, usually leading to tragedy. Federico marries Lisarda, despite her deceptions and his abandonment, because there was a promise, a symbolic contract, at the beginning of the play. Patacón and Nise marry, as far as we can tell, only because they are a man and a woman, and, *ipso facto*, should be married:

Patacón. ¿Qué haremos, Nise, nosotros?
 Nise. Casarnos adredemente,
 porque sepa que podemos
 cualquiera de los oyentes. (1126b)

[Patacón. What shall we do, Nise?
 Nise. Get married quickly,
 so that everyone
 will know that we can].

Any provocative gender subversion is erased by the symbolic. It is, perhaps, the *comedia*'s very insistence on the symbolic heterosexual pact, even when dealing with the most extravagant characters,

that calls attention to the binary system in which all members of society are categorized according to their sex.

The *comedia* in general, and this play in particular, seem to vacillate between assumptions of gender and identity fluidity and a heterosexual essentialism that forces characters ultimately to live according to their predetermined roles. As with many other instances of ambivalence, the *comedia* exploits the uncertainty for theatrical benefit, while at the same time commenting, directly and indirectly, on the issue at hand. It is quite possible that Calderón ended the play as he did because he believed, along with the moral arbiters of his day, that males and females had inherently masculine and feminine roles, that the body as signifier absolutely determined one's signified gender. Even if he had disagreed, of course, an alternative ending involving homosexuality or another unconventional arrangement would have been censored, that is, it would have put the plot into Butler's "uninhabitable", "unlivable," "abject" realm (*Bodies* 3, 243), the domain of the failure of the symbolic as manifested in alternative sexuality. Characters may cross-dress and take on new identities, and other characters may accept them in their new "performances," but always for the purpose of resignifying the social norm. At the same time, there is, within the limits of the play, a consistent notion, born out by the symbolic apotheosis of marriage at the end, that the identities they choose for themselves are theatrical and "performative" in a way that their "real" identities are not. Masquerade is not a defining experience, but is only "the performative production of a sexual ontology" (Butler, *Gender* 47), one based on the inculcation of what it means to be masculine or feminine. At the same time, feminists, bisexuals, homosexuals and others whom John Rechy might call "sexual outlaws" who resist symbolic normalization are nonetheless subject to that normalization. In fact, they are products of the same norms that they try to resist or overthrow (Butler, *Bodies* 15). Every being is constrained by the "radically unthinkable," of "desiring otherwise" (Butler, *Bodies* 94) in the case of sexuality. The undeniable aspect of homosexuality, or at least potential homosexuality, in the disjunction between anatomy and signifier in the play is firmly repudiated without ever being mentioned. One *must* desire the other gender (Butler, *Bodies* 239); homosexuality *must* be rejected in the overall scheme of heterosexual regulation. The law attempts to make homosexuality not just undoable, but unthinkable, unmentionable, *nefandus*. Within the terms of the play and its larger society, "Celia" cannot hope to consummate her desire for Serafina with the same success that "César" can.

Of course, censorship by no means eliminates a topic from discourse; the prohibitions in the law can even eroticize and make seductive the very activities they try to eliminate (Butler, *Bodies* 109–115, 127, 190). As Althusser noted, “a relation of misrecognition persists between the law and the subject it compels” (cited in Butler, *Bodies* 122). Censorship only shifts the subject underground, calling attention to its absence in the process. When homosexual subjects and objects, or even the hint of homosexuality, nevertheless reappear, they cast in doubt the validity, the certainty, of the authorized position. Because the symbolic is itself not-all, there is always an otherness hidden within the subject, an otherness that creates significant anxiety for the subject intent on asserting itself as not-other. Most importantly, the “outside” or “beyond” does not cease to exist; it lies in wait, threatening the symbolic law and order.⁶ It is to be considered as a failure to submit to the proper symbolic regulation, an imaginary aberration, devoid of the symbolic prestige of heterosexuality. At the same time, the appearance at the margins of alternate symbolic constructs enhances identification with the norm. The intended humor of the play resides at least in part in the assumed notion that we can all agree on the impossibility of the hinted homosexuality. In this manner, heterosexual culture produces some drag for itself, as Butler notes: “we might think of Julie Andrews in *Victor, Victoria* or Dustin Hoffman in *Tootsie* or Jack Lemmon in *Some Like It Hot* where the anxiety over a possible homosexual consequence is both produced and deflected within the narrative trajectory of the films” (*Bodies* 126). Heterosexual spectators are reassured that they are normal and acceptable, underscoring the fact that subjects define themselves in the symbolic in part by reference to what they are not: not dead, not perverse, not criminal, not alien, not other. By establishing the limits of acceptable and unacceptable sexuality, heterosexuality and homosexuality define each other. Homosexuality, by its very existence outside the symbolic norm circumscribes and delimits the symbolically acceptable. At the same time, homosexuality, as a symbolic concept, could not exist without the contrasting, defining terms of heterosexuality. It is, thus, an “outside” that is fully “inside,” created by the same normative system that tries to prevent it. According to Butler, it is not “a possibility beyond culture, but a concrete cultural possibility that is refused and redescribed as impossible.”⁷

A culture that works ceaselessly to eradicate homosexuality both produces and subjugates homosexual subjects. At the same time, it “produces occasional spaces in which those annihilating norms,

those killing ideals of gender and race, are mimed, reworked, re-signified" (Butler, *Bodies* 125–26). One such space is the theater, where playwrights have always played with the notion of easily changeable identity, including gender designation. Unlike other fictional genres, theater presents a character on stage who is only what he or she does, says, or wears. There is no guiding, omnipotent narrator to contextualize what one sees. Other characters can respond in ways that would be wholly unlikely in reality. Moreover, repression causes artists to become more creative, more imaginative, and, in a real sense, more subversive.⁸ In comedies, the truth is masked behind a ridiculous facade, one that allows us to call into question fundamental beliefs about sex, gender, and identity, while giving us an escape by pretending to be absurd. Given the nature of censorship and repression in the Golden Age, it is just this kind of intentional misdirection that Calderón, and the *comedia* in general, developed so well. The *comedia* raises the fear of sexual fluidity, of transgression, of perversion, then calms it, yet another example of Reichenberger's dictum that the trajectory of *comedia* plots is from order disturbed to order restored.

The *comedia* depended upon a paying public and was, as a result, hugely majoritarian in its overt social and political views. The anticipated gaze of the *comedia* audience is clearly heterosexual and culturally homogeneous. The spectators are meant to be part of the "us" of the dominant stage society. No doubt, state censorship and cultural norms were partly responsible for the legitimation of certain characters and delegitimation of others. But that same attempt at regulation, simultaneously bracketing and captioning taboos, allows for the plays to deal with, or at least hint at, behaviors considered unspeakable. *Las manos blancas* is, at least in part, a play about what can and cannot be spoken or shown on stage, about the limits of the symbolic sexual imperatives, and about the ability of art to send multiple, contradictory messages that will simultaneously uphold and subvert the symbolic culture. Calderón points to a sexuality that is left vacant; he outlines the lacking object, in this case, homosexual desire; he calls into question the defining terms of acceptable and unacceptable sexuality; he plays with the boundaries between "inside" and "outside," highlighting in the process that that which is "outside" both defines and is determined by the social "inside" (Butler, *Bodies* 206). Unable or unwilling to investigate homosexuality directly, Calderón has captioned it indirectly by carefully tracing the lines of heterosexuality, leaving it up to the audience to realize that what is left over or left out, what is literally *nefandus*, is indeed the homo-

sexuality that he couldn't present on stage, and that gender parody is not of a "real" gender attributed to a sex, but rather of the notion that there is such exclusive attribution in the first place (Butler, *Gender* 138).

Notes

1. Butler does a thorough, although flawed, examination of Lacan's concept of the phallus (Butler, *Bodies* 73–74, 77–88, 197–198, 205; *Gender* 44–49). The flaw comes when she overemphasizes a single text ("Signification of the Phallus") and tries to make concrete concepts that Lacan steadfastly refuses to reify. She appears to want to recast the phallus only as an imaginary effect (Butler, *Bodies* 81) and insist on the connection between the phallus and the penis (83–84). Lacan uses the phallus in a number of different, even contradictory ways, depending upon his use of the term in reference to symbolic, imaginary, and real effects on the subject. I find that Butler's oversimplified use of the term *phallus* is not particularly useful, especially in light of the misreadings given the term by feminist and Derridean scholarship. It is, rather, much more useful to discuss gender in terms of social norms and signification, with the understanding that there is a phallic component to all of this. However, it is not the intention of this article to go into detail regarding Lacan's writings themselves, or even to document every reference to his works. With rare exception, the Lacanian text can be accessed via Butler's notes.

2. Here there is some hint that a mother's treatment can feminize a man, thus unlinking masculinity from maleness. In his first appearance on stage, César sings of Aquiles:

... presumo que soy yo
quien en mujer transforma
su madre, pues que desea
que entre mujeres criado,
de Marte el furor ignore. . . .
(1087b)

[I presume that I am the one
whose mother transformed him
into a woman, since she desires
that, reared among women,
he shall remain ignorant of Mars's fury].

There is also here a hint of masculine homosexuality as femininity, since a male who is not masculine must be a woman; the universe is divided into just those two categories.

3. Butler would separate the kind of fluidity supposedly evinced by these characters from the nature of gender in real people. There is a great difference between the abject on stage and the abject in real life. A drag queen can be amusing or sympathetic on stage and frightening and threatening to the same audience on the bus home. Outside the conventions of the theater, "the act becomes dangerous, if it does, precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act, indeed, on the street or in the bus, there is no presumption that the act is distinct from a reality" ("Performative" 278).

4. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler discusses subjectivity, symbolic signification, and language (1–9) and the symbolic and imaginary effects of anatomical difference (64–66), basing her notions primarily on Lacan's "Mirror Stage" (*Ecrits* 1–7) and "The Signification of the Phallus" (*Ecrits* 281–91).

5. Butler, *Bodies* 97. Butler studies at length the Aristotelian dictum that matter is original potentiality and form is actuality, seen in terms of sex in the Spanish phrase "Materia la mujer, el hombre forma" (Butler, *Bodies* 31–36). In her reading of this dichotomy, matter is not-all without the grammatical, discursive addition of form, which also carries symbolic signification relating to power and repression (33–34).

6. Butler, *Bodies* 231–232, *Gender* 112. Foucault has pointed out that the attachment of gender attributes and a sexual object to a particular anatomical sex is "an unnatural conjunction of cultural constructs in the service of reproductive interests" (cited by Butler, "Performative" 275).

7. One indication of unwanted otherness lies in the mixture of signifiers. In sex, the abject subject is one who is not properly gendered, either through deficient or contradictory genitals, or through a disjunction between the genitals and symbol markers such as clothing and gesture, or between the genitals and behavior that does not conform to the symbolic norm, such as bestiality, homosexuality, and other "sex crimes" (Butler, *Bodies* 8).

8. *Gender* 77. Curiously, however, once a concept has been articulated in the symbolic, it cannot be completely retracted. This is the way the symbolic changes, and makes of the symbolic not a permanent structure but something more in the manner of a "temporalized regulation of signification" (Butler, *Bodies* 22). That which was taboo or, even worse, unspeakable (*nefandus*), can become a topic of normal conversation. For example, homosexuality, which was for centuries the "sin that dare not speak its name," has in our own day turned into what Armistead Maupin has characterized as the sin that won't shut up. The acceptance of homosexuality in American culture is far from complete, but just the last thirty years have witnessed the birth and rise of a truly astonishing public discourse regarding the most intimate details of homosexuals, homosexuality, and homosexual behavior, due almost entirely to the willingness of homosexuals to speak out and be publicly recognized for their sexual orientation.

9. When the Hays Office began to centralize censorship of Hollywood movies in 1922, the result was the creation of a new genre, the screwball comedy, in which sex was present, but only as a subtext underlying the clever dialog and coded plot lines. Through their efforts to protect the public from immorality, the censors forced the creation of some of the wittiest and most subversive comedies written for the screen.

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