

## Ideology, Subject and Gender: Undoing Representations in the Thought of Teresa De Lauretis and Judith Butler

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### ABSTRACT

In Louis Althusser's conception of ideology, the subject is linked to gender rules. However, the answer to the question of why there is a collaboration between ideology, subject, and gender is not found in Althusser. Political subjectivity and political struggle therefore remain trapped in class debates for Althusser. Judith Butler and Teresa De Lauretis, similarly situated in their understanding of subject, gender, and politics, extend Althusser's perspective on ideology and subject to the construction of gender and understand gender as a kind of ideology. By emphasising the outside of ideology, they disrupt the collaboration between ideology and subject. They extend the economic level, in which Althusser was trapped, to the whole of social life. In this way, they turn life and every encounter in life into a space of possibility for overcoming gender representations and political emancipation.

**Keywords:** subject, ideology, gender, identity, heteronormativity, emancipation

### INTRODUCTION

Althusser's voice transcends the limits of Marxist theory with his perspective on the logic of the orientation of individuals to the authoritarian voice. Althusser has become the main reference point for almost all philosophers thinking about the relationship between subject and ideology in political philosophy. In some of these references Althusser is affirmed, in others he is criticised. The aim of this article is to argue Althusser's understanding of ideology and subject through its two critics. Lauretis and Butler, who have emerged in the literature with their writings on gender and practices of subjectification in general, are discussed in this article based on their responses to Althusser. Although both thinkers lived in similar eras, Lauretis' interest shifts to the realm of cinema, while Butler's interest shifts to the realm of political theory. Nevertheless, the two thinkers develop their perspectives from a similar standpoint: the construction of the critical subject and the politics of feminism through a critique of Althusser's conception of ideology and the subject. Despite the similarities between these two thinkers, who can be said to have grounded their philosophies in their emphasis on the 'double status' of the subject, there is silence in Butler's own works on Lauretis' thought. The main goal of this article is to contribute to the ongoing debates in this field.

For that purpose, the article focuses on the thoughts of the two thinkers in relation to their responses to Althusser's conception of ideology and subject. It is argued that it is possible to identify their similarities and, at the same time, their differences in terms of their responses to this conception. To this end, the article, which examines in detail the works of three thinkers and their evaluations in the context of qualitative research methods, focuses on the thoughts of Lauretis and Butler in terms of their inter-reactions to Althusser's conception of ideology and subject. It is argued that both thinkers read Althusser's understanding of the subject in the same way, and in this respect Lauretis and Butler are two thinkers who mirror each other. Despite this closeness between them, the article points out that Butler does not discuss Lauretis' assessments of the subject in Althusser. Second, the article argues that the two thinkers share a similar feminist political perspective that draws on Althusser's thought and evaluates the subject in the same way. It refers to this perspective as 'undoing given representations.' Third, the article points out that the similarity of the politics proposed by Lauretis and Butler resulted in both thinkers reaching the same political impasse. Both Lauretis and Butler limit political struggle and change to the individual level and cannot shift the struggle to the level of collective politics.

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To discuss these claims, the first section of the article, which consists of three parts, discusses Althusser's conception of ideology and the subject and the implications of this conception for Butler and Lauretis. The second section discusses gender as part of ideology. In the third section, I discuss how Butler and Lauretis show a way out of gender ideology and thus suggest methods to overcome Althusser's conception of ideology. Finally, it is emphasised that this perspective, which is positive in the sense of the individual struggle for existence, cannot produce a perspective on collective politics.

## **IDEOLOGY AND DOUBLE STATUS OF SUBJECT**

In his work *On Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and ideological state apparatus*, Althusser draws attention to the fact that he is outlining a general theory of ideology (2003: 79). The relations of exploitation in everyday life are often reduced to oppression. However, Althusser sets himself apart from this tradition by emphasising that exploitation cannot be reduced to oppression and state apparatuses cannot be reduced to oppression. Alongside oppression, he shows the place of ideology as an element distinct from it in the functioning of individuals in their daily lives. Ideology is 'an imaginary "representation" of the imaginary relation that individuals establish with their real conditions of existence' (2003: 89). According to Althusser, who believes that oppression alone does not contribute to the reproduction of class society and relations of production, ideology is a 'beautiful lie' that perfectly ensures this production (2003: 88). Individuals work in the service of class exploitation in capitalist society. Ideology consists of the mechanisms that make this work possible. Ideology, which gives people a worldview in legal, moral or political terms, becomes visible when people relate to reality in a way that is different from reality. Thanks to this difference between reality and the imaginary, people have the possibility to maintain their role in capitalist and patriarchal social relations.

Althusser points out that ideology is more than a pure, abstract idea. As Butler, who shares this judgment, points out, for Althusser, ideology 'always exists in an apparatus, and its realization, its implementation. This existence is material' (Butler, 1997a: 121). That is, it embodies in different practices. This bond of ideology with practices binds it to the subject. Ideology requires the person, that is, the subject, who thinks and acts in order to be embodied. In Althusser, the construction of the subject is also material. Sharing this view, Butler points out that establishment takes place through rituals. Subjectivity, which is the living and imaginary experience of the subject, derives from the material rituals that constitute the subjects (Butler, 1997a: 122). Ideology embodied in human thoughts and actions takes the form of ritual. Ritual constitutes the material dimension of the ideological apparatus (Butler, 1997b: 25). The materiality of ritual is evident in its productivity: it produces the belief that seems to be 'behind' it (Butler, 1997b: 25).

The exploitation in particular and the rules that ensure the functioning of the social order in general, are accepted and applied by individuals. This is how the structure functions. Everyone is a subject in the social structure: one constantly fulfils the ideological rules of acceptance. The ideology that exists through and for the subjects addresses the individuals as 'subject' (Althusser, 2003: 99). When the police officer (as a state apparatus) calls a person 'hey, you there!', in this scene, it is assumed that the person called directly responds to the sound. The person, realising that the call is directed at him, turns one hundred and eighty degrees (Althusser, 2003: 103). In this situation, where the act of hearing and understanding takes place, there is a functioning consciousness. This consciousness is interpreted as a sign that man is a subject. The interpellation brings the subject into existence. Being a subject means controlling our behaviour by making calculations about the causes and consequences of our actions in daily life. The interpellation is formative. It puts the individual in a subordinate position (Butler, 2011a: 82). But this management narrows and evolves toward an awareness of the duties we have to fulfil, according to Althusser, and that we must respond to every call. It turns out that the individual who comes into contact with the police is pacified and passive in the relationship, taking the submissive side. The individual is portrayed as simply turning to the sound. He lacks transformative power. It is not a force. He accepts that the social structure created by the relationships between individuals and places is already in order. In this order, human is nothing more than a being that exists in practices, rituals and definitions. However, the subject exists through its actions. Answering the call of the police is also an action, and there is a consciousness behind it. In Althusser, there is a unity between being subject and consciousness. Lauretis and Butler also affirm the unity of subject and consciousness (Lauretis, 2008: 44). However, unlike Althusser, both accept the role of the unconscious as well as the conscious in the emergence of subject performance and shift their discussion to this point. As Lauretis points out, the unconscious is an important field of inquiry for feminist theory (Lauretis, 1999: 28).

Althusser, who sees the capacity for individual action despite the allocation of power to the police, to the caller, therefore gains importance for Butler and Lauretis. As Butler points out, in Althusser the subject is the one who acts to turn to the voice of the law, state or authority (Butler, 1997a: 14; 2016b: 33). By contemplating ideology with individual actions and practices, Althusser inspires Butler, as well as Lauretis, for understanding the subject. Both Butler and Lauretis see the active character of subjects in ideological production. They take this vision from

Althusser. As all three thinkers can accept, the continuity of the social and political system depends on individuals becoming subjects, that is, fulfilling their roles. But, in Althusser, the interpellation of ideology to individuals as subjects has a cyclical character. 'The cycle results from the fact that, in the field that Althusser describes, there is no way to determine what "individuals" are if not as pre-existing subjects, so that the effect presupposes its own outcome' (Balibar, 2016: 11). Thus, individual turns without hesitation to the policeman who addresses him. In his conception of ideology and subject, Althusser imagines both the individual and society as static. Power is interpreted as the domination of one group over another. The state, which is the focus of power, and state apparatuses are marked as places where power gathers. In his discussions of ideology and the subject, Althusser shows that each individual begins life with a primordial resignation. This subservience ensures the continuation of people's identities in contemporary society, which is formed around categories such as class, race, religion, sexuality, and gender (Butler, 2016a: 138).

A person born into a certain family structure is a subject who gains gender type in line with the ideology operating in the family as a representation of state apparatuses. The type of gender given to a person in the family also imposes roles that must be fulfilled. The control of conformity to gender roles is an ideological control that is active in the establishment of human as a subject. Althusser, who sees the family as one of the ideological apparatuses, is not interested in the relationship between gender operating in the family and subjection. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler puts the stability of gender up for discussion and questions the stability of identity implied by subjection (Butler, 2011a: 15). According to Butler, a discursive gesture must be performed and repeated over and over again to assert its power (Butler, 1997a: 129-131; Balibar, 2016: 11). For Butler, who opposes the absolute nature of submission, the constitution of the subject is not only subordinate but ambivalent (Butler, 1997a: 9). The power that acts on the body activates it. For 'the subject is created in times and places in which it is not conceived as a sovereign agent, a holder of rights or power' (Butler, 2004a: 188). To be a subject is both to be subordinate, that is, to be the object of something, and to become a subject by taking an active position (Butler, 1997a: 10). Lauretis also recognises this dual character of being a subject. The subject who follows the rules is also a being capable of action and will (Lauretis, 2007: 2020). Being a subject is the coming into existence of human with identification with representations and rejection of non-representational ones.

## REPRODUCTION OF SUBJECTIVITY THROUGH GENDER

Gender is one of the ideological elements that enable the functioning of the social and political system. It refers to social expectations and assumptions about what behaviours are appropriate for male and female individuals (Stone, 2007: 53). It links gender to cultural content according to social values and hierarchies (Lauretis, 1987: 5). Gender, which is not natural, is 'an ideological representation ... between positions provided by hegemonic discourse' (Lauretis, 2007: 7). The ideological representation between positions is heteronormative in nature. It imposes on each individual a way of being within this structure. One of the conditions for people to become subjects within the ideology that appeals to people is that they comply with gender norms and follow its call. From the perspective of Althusser's fiction of ideology and subject, the subject is complicit in the gender order (Sainz Pezonaga, 2017: 2). But the answer to the question of why there is complicity between ideology, gender and the subject is not found in Althusser. It is Butler who really asks why there is complicity between ideology and subject. Butler formulates the relationship between power and subject in terms of 'passionate engagement.' The subject who wants to exist submits to the subordination of power (Butler, 1997a: 14).

Power is something that subordinates the human and establishes her/him as an active being, that is, as a subject. Through the act of returning to the voice that calls her/him, the human is established as a subject. The existence of the subject cannot be mentioned before the act of conversion (Butler, 1997a: 12). All state apparatuses, from the family to the school, are apparatuses in which individuals are reproduced as subjects. Gender is a concept that runs through these apparatuses. Althusser, who is not interested in this aspect of the apparatuses, is interested in showing how the collaboration between people and power is maintained through the concept of reproduction. Butler assumes that this collaboration is not merely a cognitive process, and directs his attention to more than that. When Butler shows the subordinating effect of people's collaboration with power on their existence, she does not preclude them from becoming subjects. People are formed by various institutions such as school, family, church. But this process does harm to the human being. Butler's interest is to make visible the relationship that people establish with these harms and the impact of this relationship on their political agency and the political possibilities therein. In this regard, Butler's conception of the subject establishes a productive rather than repressive relationship to subordination, subordination as the condition that creates the subject. She pays attention to regulative norms and finds in their repetition the conditions for being subject (Butler, 2011a: 61).

Along with Butler, Lauretis also draws attention to the appeal of gender as an ideology to human beings. Lauretis is a thinker who does not seem to attract as much attention in the critical literature as Butler. However, we can say that Lauretis had expressed a similar reading to Althusser, before Butler. According to Lauretis, gender

is not located in the superstructural sphere to which Althusser's concept of ideology belongs and which is determined by economic forces and relations of production. It is located in the private sphere of reproduction, the family (Lauretis, 1987: 6). Gender is at the centre of the family. It is necessary for the creation of the family and is reproduced through the family. Institutions such as medical facilities, the police, and the judiciary are complicit in domestic violence and its social entrenchment (Lauretis, 1987: 33). Just as ideology serves to establish concrete individuals as subjects, so too does gender work. According to Lauretis, who adapts Althusser's definition of ideology to the concept of gender, gender has the function of establishing concrete individuals as men and women (Lauretis, 1987: 5). She points to a similar situation in Butler: Gender, which is the set of meanings assumed by the gendered body, classifies bodies into two sexes. Before the sign of gender, bodies have no meaningful existence (Butler, 1999a: 54). Gender is an effect of ideology. Within gender ideology, people transform from simple subjects into women and men. While men are sexually and socially privileged in family practices and social arrangements, the woman – starting in girlhood – is imagined as an inadequate and deficient being. According to Lauretis, who following Freud and Lacan, points out that this is a psychological condition, the lack of existence of a girl's full subjectivity is because she does not have a penis, Lacan's 'lack'. Accordingly, the girl's whole life is focused on making up for this lack. Therefore, motherhood is considered an important fantasy for all women (Lauretis, 2007: 115). However, this gendered division of labour prevalent in capitalist society is a technology developed for the benefit of reproducing heteronormative, white, middle- and upper-class families. Like an ideology, gendered fantasies construct subjectivity by transforming social representations into subjective representations, self-representations. In making the connection between subject and ideology, Althusser does not distinguish between subject and subjectivity, nor does he show much interest in the production of subjectivity. However, for both Lauretis and Butler, subject and subjectivity are not the same thing. Only by seeing this difference can one think about different ways to return to the voice of ideology and gender.

The fact that the subject is one of the fundamental categories of ideology is why Althusser has his own place in the literature. But that is where Althusser's innovation ends in terms of the subject. For Althusser cannot conceive of gender as ideology. According to Lauretis, ideology, however, is the primary site of the constitution of gender (Lauretis, 1987: 7). While Althusser defines ideology as the imaginary relation of people to the real relations they live, he also defines ideology as something that determines people's existence. This definition also describes how gender functions (Lauretis, 1987: 6). Gender as representation and the construction of representation is both the effect of representation and something that goes beyond it. The basis established is based on the identification of people with two positions: for Lauretis, a subject within gender is constructed through languages and cultures as well as sexual difference; it is also formed through the experience of other intersectionalities such as race and class. Therefore, it has a plural character. Gender, which is one of the means of reproduction of the subject, is an effect or a product. Some of the social technologies (such as family, culture, cinema, and so on) and institutionalised discourses are at the origin of the things that produce it. Gender, which in this respect is more than a property of a body, is the totality of effects produced in bodies, behaviours and social relations (Lauretis, 1987: 3). The subject emerges in the process that presupposes identification with what the gender system of society presupposes. Just as the concept of gender is a subject of representation and construction that is subject to certain technologies of power, the subject also derives from these technologies and manifests itself through their performances. Gender is about culturally and politically determined roles and is normative. It speaks to people as subjects, and it works because people listen to that voice. Gender technology, which produces and reproduces hierarchical distinctions and classifications between masculinity and femininity, is an organised system of management and control (Terry and Calvert, 1997: 4). It gives value and meaning to individuals in society by making them into men or women.

To be a subject, according to Plato, means to be specific in the sense of a tradition of thought that distinguishes man from everything else. This clarity is established in contrast to the indeterminate, the formless chaos, of *physis*, that is, of nature. Active man, conceived as a subject, is also masculine as a cultural and political entity. Nature at its opposite pole is woman, the womb, matter. According to Lauretis, in reality all oppositions are based on the opposition between nature and culture or man and woman (Lauretis, 2007: 29). Butler shares this observation and points out that the body/woman/matter/insignificance is positioned in philosophy as a secondary, dependent party (Butler, 1999a: 63). The secondary is worthless compared to the primary. The body is the site where signification of signifiers/signs takes place for the subject. The body itself is produced as a sign (Lauretis, 2007: 120). One of the meanings of the concept of self, based on perspectives that show that it is trapped in an essentialist perspective with dualities such as soul and body, culture and nature, on which it is based, is 'the reality of the underlying phenomenon, absolute existence,' while another meaning is 'the thing that establishes the existence of something' (Lauretis, 2007: 185). A thing cannot be itself without its essence. While the masculine nature of the being that establishes existence comes to the fore in terms of gender, women are shown to remain subordinate to it, constructing their existence as owed to it. Masculinity, while detached from the body, is also produced by detachment from the negative meanings it represents. Masculine corporeality, which represents this disembodied spirit, is achieved through the materialisation of other bodies (Butler, 1999a: 78). In the representation of gender

that overshadows the philosophical imagination of the subject, two forms of identity are affirmed and the others are excluded. In this way, identification, which is an active process, is stabilised. The regulation of gender always serves the regulation of sexuality. The regulation of sexuality, in turn, aims to stabilise gender norms (Butler, 2013: 45). Butler draws attention to this stabilisation by saying that gender in societies is either seen as a natural manifestation of sex or perceived as a cultural constant that no human actor can change (Butler, 1999a: 25). This constant is maintained by gender norms that determine what is possible.

Gender ideology, which establishes subject positions and subjectivity by drawing the boundaries of what is possible, represents existences. This representation is depressing and oppressive. It is insensitive to the question of sexual difference and subjectivity. Woman, the object of representation, is supposedly the telos and origin of male desire. She is the object and symbol of man's culture and creativity (Lauretis, 1984: 8). Woman is defined by man. Subjectivity and subjective processes are also defined by the male subject. As Lauretis points out, it is possible to see the oppressive and depressing nature of the representation of gender ideology in language and cinema, which are among the ideological apparatuses. Thus, in the representation of the cinematic apparatus, woman occupies an incongruous position. Woman is only found in the space of meaning, in the space between signs (Lauretis, 1984: 8). Representation in cinema is the mapping of the social imagination in subjectivity. Cinema binds the imagination to meaningful images. This connection has a subjectively productive effect. It has an effect on the viewer. The movement of the film defines and directs desire. Cinema is strongly involved in the production of forms of subjectivity (Lauretis, 1984: 8). Active sex in cinema, which is an ideological apparatus, is a relationship, a representation of relationship. This representation continues in literature, which is a cultural apparatus. Italo Calvino's representation of women in *Invisible Cities* is an example of this situation (Lauretis, 1984: 13). For Lauretis, although culture begins with women, that is, women are the subject, they are not mentioned in the cultural and historical process. In the Calvino narrative, there are no women as historical subjects. This is a language practice like cinema, it is an imaginary signifier. It is the constant movement of representation born out of a woman's dream, a representation that perpetuates female bondage (Lauretis, 1984: 14). In the narrative, there is no woman as a theoretical or historical subject. Literature and cinema, which maintain the constancy of the representational schema of gender ideology, become a historical and ideological form and apparatus in this regard. It is in these domains that the subject and codes meet. While codes and social formations determine points of meaning, the individual reworks these positions in personal, subjective construction (Lauretis, 1984: 14). The subject establishes itself in the apparatuses that address the individual as subject. The subject exists in this material and symbolic social habitat (Zaharijević, 2021: 23).

Every image in existing culture is placed within the overarching context of such patriarchal ideologies. Cinema, working with the sexed dichotomy of men and women, functions as an apparatus of representation. It is seen as an image machine designed to construct images and ideas of social reality and their place in the audience (Lauretis, 1984: 37). In cinema, women are usually represented as the object, the audience, the image of beauty. Cinema functions like an image machine. It produces images of women and non-women and reproduces women as images (Lauretis, 1984: 38). In its function as an apparatus of representation, cinema also includes the production and reproduction of meanings, values, and ideology. It is a process in which the subject is constantly captured, represented, and defined by ideology (Lauretis, 1984: 37). Cinema, as a subjective production, influences and produces the audience by connecting him certain representations (Lauretis, 1984: 52). It positions the subject in the processes of seeing, looking, and vision and involves his or her desire. Through the narrative it contains, cinema mediates the movements and positions of desire. The narrative is the condition for the process of meaning and identification. It is the ability to see something. In this respect, cinema is an institutionalised technology (Lauretis, 1984: 82). Cinema, which focuses on the human body, is based on an imaginary representation of the body. The imaginary representation of the body is at the centre of the visual pleasure of cinema, of every identification process. In cinema, where the narrative and the image interact, the subjectivity of the spectator is linked to the body and meaning. The place where body and meaning are connected in classical cinema becomes the male and female dichotomy. In this way, gender ideology appeals to individuals from all walks of social life, especially family structure and cultural institutions, guiding them to remain on the heteronormative fantasy plane in their theoretical and practical lives.

## SEEING OUTSIDE IDEOLOGY

Lauretis and Butler agree with other Marxist critics that the social sphere is the domain of power. Society is formed by the intersection of practices and discourses, including power relations. Individuals, groups, or classes have different positions in social space. In dynamic, changing relationships, there is both subordination and resistance. The full existence of power relations rests on the plurality of points of resistance that are ubiquitous in the web of power (Lauretis, 1987: 35; 2007, 167). In the sociality that is the field of power, individuals, groups, classes, etc. move through the various default positions. They exercise power and resistance simultaneously

(Lauretis, 1984: 86). What Althusser calls ‘interpellation’ is the process of an individual’s acceptance or rejection of a social representation as his or her own representation. Lauretis and Butler, who emphasise the diversity of people’s responses to interpellation that is functional to produce the existence of power, draw attention to the fact that the possibilities of resistance are simultaneously hidden in people’s subordination. According to Butler, power has both regulative and productive effects. For Lauretis, who shares this insight, gender, which relates to the institutional structure of heterosexuality and heteronormativity, is sometimes subjugating and sometimes empowering the struggle (Lauretis, 2007: 6). It is the productive structure of power that emerges from resistance to gender regulations and thus to the call of the law: the pleasures, desires, etc. that constitute human existence. repressive power produces what it wants to regulate. Power operates with the logic of multiplication-growth-dissemination (Butler, 1997a: 61; 2004a: 183, 187). To sketch the details of this process, Lauretis asks, ‘How is representation constituted and accepted or rejected by the subject?’ and Butler asks similar questions such as, ‘How do norms arise? How do people internalize them?’ (Butler, 1997a: 27). Both thinkers answer these questions from the same point of view, that is, regarding sexuality.

According to Butler, who points out that sexuality is something provoked rather than suppressed by power, gender, which assigns meanings by classifying, that is, ‘naming,’ bodies across two genders, lacks the power to accurately mark bodies. For no category is complete. Thus, any category can be subject to contestation (Butler, 1999a: 64). Gender is ‘a complicated entity whose totality is always delayed, which is never quite what it is at any given moment’ (Butler, 1999a: 65). The gender norm, which establishes identification with the two basic genders, denies the others in the face of a particular gender emphasis. These denied possibilities constantly fracture identity (Butler, 2011a: xiii, 11). It constantly undermines identities that exclude identities. Gender, produced in the materialisation process of norms, is also distorted in processes of repetition. The act of repetition that ensures the dominance of the gender norm also displaces it (Butler, 2011a: 20).

For Lauretis, this means that identification with the representation drawn by the apparatuses is a moving rather than a fixed process. No one sees himself exactly in the object position. Everyone has an ego. The ego, by definition, actively constructs itself (Lauretis, 1984: 141). For Butler, gender and identifications are also in an unstable structure (Butler, 1999a: 15). There is no substantial character. The I, the subject, is the executor of conscious or unconscious choices. It always disguises itself to go somewhere, pretends to be (Butler, 1997a: 143). For example, in wartime, when the number of men at the front decreases, women go to war like men. After the war, when the number of men decreases, they give birth, that is, they return to their female identity. In this way, gender is really about performance. Performance is a ‘conscious act of at least imitating what one is not. There is then a clear indication of a fundamental self that puts on an appearance that, however convincing, remains on the surface, outside of an unchanged person underneath’ (Butler, 1999b: 413). It includes the possibility of deception and implies that there is no pre-existing self that performs. However, the performative body establishes identity, and gender is one of the most important components for identity (Butler, 1999b: 414). The self/identity that presupposes and seeks to establish and maintain the gender norm is in fact unstable, i.e., non-essential. Subjectivity is also not fixed, because human beings are social beings. We create subjectivity through social interactions in the society in which we live (Butler, 2016: 140). Subject of performance. This means that it is a process of becoming. As Butler puts it:

gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the gender border control that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the ‘integrity’ of the subject. (Butler, 1999b: 417)

Gender and identity are thus an effect of discourses. The body is a permeable boundary rather than a specific entity (Butler, 1999b: 419). ‘The subject is consequently never coherent and never self-identical precisely because it is established, and indeed constantly re-established, through a series of defining exclusions and displacements that constitute the discontinuity and incompleteness of the subject’ (Butler, 2011a: 141). Identity discourses attempt to eliminate this permeability, that is, instability. The reason for the instability is that gender, and thus subjectification and subjectivity, is a process that is produced through performances. Gender is construction, it is an act of doing. It does not belong to a subject that can be said to have existed before the doing (Butler, 1999a: 89). There is no entity behind the verbs do, act. The doer is a fiction that is only added to the done (Butler, 1999a: 77; 2011a: 84). Each person has more than one version of himself. Gender, built around femininity and masculinity, is the reduction of these versions to two and the negation of the other. To be ourselves, on the other hand, we need a plurality of our self-variations (Butler, 1997a: 149). Gender based on repetition and imitation is about structure. ‘Gender identity does not lie behind gender expressions; that identity is performatively constructed through the very “expressions” that are said to be the result of it’ (Butler, 1999a: 77). In this respect, Butler’s performative notion merges with Lauretis’ notion of experience. Experience is the term used to describe the process of role-

playing. Through experience, human beings position themselves in social reality, understand financial, economic, etc. Relationships and becomes subjectively aware of them. The continuous process is renewed in daily life (Lauretis, 1984: 159). Accordingly, subjectivity becomes an ongoing construction. It is more than a fixed starting point from which one interacts with the world. Rather, subjectivity is the effect of that interaction. It refers to the self-constitution of the subject through desire (Call, 2011: 93).

Subjectivity is constructed by external experiences shaped by language and culture. It is also shaped and constructed by inner experiences. The inner world is the representation of the given, the outer world, it is not a negation or a consequence. The inner and outer worlds of experience influence each other in dialogue. Gender, which is part of these experiences, is experienced differently by each person. Each person's sense of gender is an individual creation, created by the mix of discursive fields around her/him. Like meaning, which is shaped by experience, gender meanings are reshaped by the emotional self. Subjectivity is fantasy and reality, unconscious and conscious, inside and outside. It is a process of experience consisting of their fusion and separation. It privileges diversity, plurality, and difference over unity and change over the stability and essentialism of identity (Eckert, 2011: 51). Identity could be understood as a socio-political concept of a person's position in society, while subjectivity could be seen as a more psychological concept, resulting from the contextualisation of personal experience and psychological makeup (Eckert, 2011: 62).

The specific identity determined by gender is an artificial determination, the consequence of a range of gender representations. The subject emerges and is constructed in constant interaction with gender technologies. What is called subjectivity therefore is a unique way of being a subject (Lauretis, 2007: 220). As both Butler and Lauretis have pointed out, the subject has two meanings. First, the subject is a being that is subject to rules and rigid social norms. Second, it is the I that exists, moves, and is capable of willing and acting (Lauretis, 2007: 220). The subject, constituted in the context of heterogeneous and often contradictory differences, is determined by race, gender, culture, and sexual identity (Lauretis, 1988: 7). Subjectivity has a dual value that depends on the two meanings of the subject: on the one hand, subjection/dependence determined by social constraints, and on the other hand, the capacity for self-determination, the space of resistance to oppression (Lauretis, 2007: 220). Subjectivity refers to the way of being a subject. It is self-translation. The second value of the subject and subjectivity, the capacity for self-determination, develops from defence against the forces at work in the external world. The external world is both id and superego. The subject of subjectivity is both a social and a psychic being. Consciousness is permeated by unconscious desires, impulses, and fantasies as well as consciousness (Lauretis, 2007: 220). These psychic elements form another modality of limitation in addition to the social elements. Located between the id and the superego, the ego is the split entity that responds to contradiction. The experience of contradiction is the main condition of feminist subjectivity. Sometimes the subject, resisting the optimism of the will, develops its claims, passions and rights (Lauretis, 2007: 221).

The performance or experience that takes place in response to the tensions of the ego is in its interaction with the world. It is not generated by the subjective engagement of the person. It is through experience that people become the women, men, or gendered being that they become. Gender as a normative element controls the processes of subjectivity by determining the normal of everything. It is a normalisation process which draws upon the boundaries of a valuable, intelligible life (Butler, 2004b: 206). Similar to Lauretis's experience of gender, gender for Butler is something that is constantly performed. It is not something that people do necessarily intentionally. It is a matter of improvisation within certain boundaries (Butler, 2004b: 1). This construction of gender happens in conjunction with others. In this respect, gender constitutes both the norms and the field of their degradation. The forms of existence that are prohibited by gender norms are excluded from the dominant structure, even though they are in society. The constitution of the subject requires a social environment (Van der Weele, 2021: 106; Butler, 2014: 35). The human being is a being open to the Other who both craves recognition and is excluded from the arrangements that ensure recognition. Openness to the other makes him feel responsible. His interactive nature makes him vulnerable (Butler, 2004c: 27). This is also true for gender norms. Gender norms, whose main characteristic is their fragility, have the capacity to renew themselves in unpredictable contexts and ways (Butler, 2000: 24).

Gender, as experience and also as a field of ideas, exists through repetition. The subject, which is the domain of such repetition, is a non-mechanical repetition (Butler, 1997a: 23; Lauretis, 2007: 205-206). Behind the demand of such repetition practices by various ideological devices, there is the possibility that individuals do not repeat and threaten (Butler, 2011a: 149). According to feminist psychoanalytic theory, gender norms are phantasmatic, and therefore fictional. Fiction is a historically influential type of idealisation. It is something other than a lie or an illusion. It is an embodiment of an ideal that achieves historical efficacy (Butler, 2013: 98). Gender as fiction is not a specific truth that emerges from the materialisation of the body. Rather, it is the repetitive materialisation of forms in an ordering matrix that creates the appearance of essence (Butler, 2013: 98). No one can fully embody these fictions. The basis of gender identity is a stylised repetition of acts over time: the possibilities of gender transformation lie precisely in the arbitrary relationship between such acts, in the possibility of non-repetition, de-

forming, or parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of enduring identity as a politically questionable construction (Butler, 1999b: 412). Given gender identities that do not have absolute identities, Lauretis argues that the construction of gender can lead to the deconstruction of gender due to the clarity of repetition. Drawing on Butler's notion of the subject in question, Lauretis notes that subjectivation or agency in no way presupposes a choosing subject. Subjectivation is a regenerative or reactive practice; it is intrinsic to power. There is no acting power without an acting agent or subject (Lauretis, 2007: 206; Zaharijević, 2021: 24). Since gender is performative and therefore there is no pre-existing identity against which we can measure actions, there are no gendered actions such as right and wrong. Gender identity can be established and thus distorted through sustained social performances. The postulate of a true gender identity is a 'regulatory fiction' (Butler, 1999b: 412):

if there is agency, it is to be found, paradoxically, in the possibilities opened up in and by that constrained appropriation of the regulatory law, by the materialization of that law, the compulsory appropriation and identification with those normative demands. (Butler, 2011a: xxi)

The social norms, which involve subordination and existence at the same time, constrain desire and generate it. Thus, it directs the formation of the subject and draws the boundaries of the social order. As Butler points out, repressed desire does not disappear completely. Excluded desire establishes the subject through 'loss.' The loss in question melancholises the subject and identification, as it is a loss that cannot be mourned. The social order, gender as an element of this order, includes the sanction as a kind of regulation. If the subject does not live up to this order, he becomes the object of various sanctions and feels his existence threatened. By repeating the norms given by the rules in his life, he exists on the one hand, and on the other hand his existence is cut off and his life is threatened. But without these repetitions that endanger life, the performative lines that open the possibility of life cannot be established (Butler, 1997a: 35). Lauretis, who reiterates Butler's understanding by stating that 'the radical delegitimization of the subject coexists uneasily with the progressive, redemptive political project' (2007: 206), gives meaning to Butler's thoughts in terms of the displacement of the Cartesian subject. Bodies that conform to ideology are only legitimised in subjects' practices of repetition. The identification of subjects with their roles is thus guaranteed.

The body, which acquires gender/meaning through the embodiment of gender norms, is a field in which the logic of the sensible and the visible operate simultaneously (Lauretis, 1991: 123). This distinction considers both the materiality of the body and sensory registers. The body responds to the external world through sensory records. The body, which is both a material and an immaterial (sensory) thing, hears and feels. Gender, which is not just an abstract social form, acts according to the logic of the body. The subject that relates to the external world ascribes meaning to itself in the internal world as a function of this interaction and is constantly forming itself (Lauretis, 1999: 128). Thus, the subject that performs non-mechanical repetitions is material, that is to say corporeal. Materiality is a particular effect of power (Butler, 2011a: 9). Gender, which is not something natural, is embodied in particular individuals as social subjects. In cultural imaginaries and discourses, the body is represented as inherently differentiated. The body is positioned in both genders. When individuals follow this representation, gender becomes an abstract social form embodied in single individuals (Lauretis, 1999: 133). Similar to Lauretis, Butler acknowledges the material nature of gender and focuses on the psychological underpinnings of the construction of subjectivity with the concept of loss to which he draws attention. This dimension that Lauretis refers to with sensuality is expressed in Butler's reactions to the melancholy caused by loss and the failure to accept the loss that melancholy entails. For Althusser, who is not interested in this area of overlap between Butler and Lauretis, ideology has no outside. As a result, the traces of effect are obliterated. Individuals pass into the other before we become ourselves (Balibar, 2016: 13). Everyone in the ideology becomes caught in its web. According to Lauretis, however, this is not the completely the case in relation to gender ideology. Gender does not have the power to erase the effects of its functioning. This is because gender is a representation, and to be represented is to be constructed. In our age, the construction of gender is perpetuated by the power that controls the field of social meaning that produces, promotes, and inoculates gender representations. This power is accompanied by various gender technologies and institutional discourses (Lauretis, 2007: 18). Gender technologies are at the heart of social work, the production of goods and services, the inner life, the division of labour. While the representation of gender is constructed through a particular technology, it is also subjectively absorbed by each individual. This can be observed in domestic work, service or commodity production, social work (Cervulle *et al.*, 2009: 154).

For Althusser, who seems to represent the masculine standpoint of philosophy from ideology and subject theory, individuals do not have the power to adopt gender technologies into their daily lives, that is, to act and determine their own destiny. The only field of struggle in Althusser's philosophy that replaces individual struggle with class struggle is the field of production. For both Lauretis and Butler, however, exploitation is not only a class or society-related problem. It is also an individual issue. Patriarchal domination is the primary instrument of individual exploitation. Through cinema, media, school, court, and family, various forms of gender identification are practiced. In describing these forms of identification in *Technologies of Gender*, Lauretis also identifies spaces of



resistance that resist the gender system and oppose its hegemony (Cervulle *et al.*, 2009: 140). She acknowledges other discursive and social fields such as literature and cinema. She points out that practices of resistance are practiced at the margins, at the edges of hegemonic discourse, at the crevices of institutions, thanks to counter-practices and new forms of sociability (Cervulle *et al.*, 2009: 140). She thus accepts the possibility of the individual to resist gender technologies. Her acceptance of this possibility is made possible by turning to psychoanalysis, just as Butler did.

## OVERCOMING GENDER REPRESENTATIONS

Submission to power, which leads to losses in people, interacts with processes of social regulation. Regulatory power acts through the incorporation of norms. This is a psychological process (Butler, 1997a: 26). The process of internalisation of norms generates the distinction between inner life and outer life. Norms are not internalised in a mechanical way. The psychic norm, the gender norm, gives presence to the person by regulating and restricting desire. It is this desire excluded by the norm that, as Butler has shown, grounds subjectivity. Exclusion shows that power lies outside both the subject and subject space (Butler, 1997a: 27-28). Our existence moves impermanently on the horizon of an imposed but incomplete social subject of uncomfortable repetition and its risks (Butler, 1997a: 40). Any attempt to limit the body results in self-consciousness becoming a pleasure-seeking agent (Butler, 1997a: 56). The regulated body is reproduced in this way. Propagation against regulation creates a potential field of resistance. For Lauretis, who argues this point of view, gender, which refers to social relations between the sexes, is subject to social and discursive technologies. These technologies and relations treat masculine and feminine subjects differently. Gender technologies vary according to cultural diversities such as the division of places, goods/properties, traditions, and constantly established powers, religions, and laws. These established relations can also be disrupted (Cervulle *et al.*, 2009: 143). This is because interpellations in ideological apparatuses fail to fully establish the subject. 'The success of the interpellation is not hindered by a structurally permanent form of prohibition (exclusion), but by the inability of the interpellation to determine the human constitutive domain' (Butler, 1997a: 123). The status of human existence is not something that ends, but brings possibility, potentiality, so that the entity is 'a potential that is not claimed by any particular interpellation' (Butler, 1997a: 125). The identity that the subject possesses today is not transferable to the future. This is because, due to the prohibitions that build heterosexuality, desire attempts to transcend an incomplete identification.

In this regard, the critical feminist politics emphasised by Lauretis and Butler, which considers exploitation along with the habits maintained in daily practices, emphasises the invention of new strategies that promote and mobilise change in people's habits. Lauretis embraces this tendency and identifies the change of habits as one of the fundamental elements of both the class struggle and the feminist struggle. Gender ideology is reproduced in daily life. Any change there can lead to a shift toward equality between women and men in gendered relations (Lauretis, 1987: 18). Changing habits means reversing given practices. To resist capitalism, exploitation, and patriarchy, the capacity for productive action and subjectivity must be redirected (Sainz Pezonaga, 2017: 3). Although Althusser points out the connection between ideology and subject and accepts that ideology acts subjectively, the understanding of struggle remains stuck in the class struggle. Its ideas are not extended to the various forms of reproduction of subjectivity that continue to function in society. For Lauretis, on the other hand, subjectivity is at the centre of social transformation given the social reproduction of subjectivity and the gender ideology that is functional in this production (Sainz Pezonaga, 2017: 4). There is a collaboration between the construction of gender and the field of economic relations. In order not to reproduce this collaboration and thus the construction/reproduction of gender, Lauretis chooses to speak where sexual difference is constructed. For Lauretis, women being objectified and ignored by gender is not a concept, but a political issue. Women are constructors, and established women can abandon their construction and turn it upside down (Cervulle *et al.*, 2009: 143). Since there is no real body/identity beyond the gender norm, according to Butler, who also accepts the possibility of disrupting representations, it is possible to subvert them. 'This is only possible through the possibilities that arise within the law, that is, when the law contradicts itself and produces unexpected permutations of itself' (Butler, 1999a: 168). To overturn the law is to reposition power. Power cannot be transcended, but it can be repositioned (Butler, 1999a: 212).

The repeated materialisation of gender enables this repositioning. Gender enactments, which acquire a substantial character through the repetition of norms, cover reality only to a limited extent. The gaps between norm and reality are the space for the repositioning of power, for the subversion of the law. For Lauretis, who interprets the gender embodied by the subject through his performances, technology of gender is the management of people as action over their behaviour. It is a system that shapes people's lives by structuring what they do and how they do it. These people, who seem to occupy the object position by being governed, are in fact free people: they move, they run, they flee. Freedom is the precondition for the exercise of power, but it also includes the possibility of resisting the exercise of power.

To be a subject then, is to leave one's home, one's family, one's self, and experience a change of place, a change of understanding and a conceptual point of evaluation. This point is the eccentric point of view. The shifting movement of the subject is an unusual process of knowledge or cognitive/mental practice. It is a personal, political, and also textual, linguistic experience (Lauretis, 2007: 175). But it is not metapolitical because it is experiential and performative (Zaharijević, 2021: 25). We see this in the process of reading and interpreting, in that the connection between experience and representation, the possibility of expressing experience, forms and codes that enable representation and communication change as historical and cultural conditions change. The author struggles and uses to give the experience in the form of representation. The reader accesses the experience/representation in the historical context and in the subjective dimension of his or her own experience. Each person's reading experience is determined by codes of representation, forms of consciousness, and one's own experience (Lauretis, 1998: 25). Being a subject means liberating bodies from their domestication. It means having the courage to rewrite it beyond given representations.

The subject derived from the contradictions is therefore called the eccentric subject in Lauretis. The eccentric subject is the body that does not position itself within the institution. With its straight logic, the institution produces and supports heterosexuality (Lauretis, 2007: 73). The eccentric subject, who psychically transfers erotic energy to a figure that transcends gender and gender categories, is also a deviation from cultural assumptions and social practices (Lauretis, 2007: 74). The eccentric subject is the one who rejects the heteronormative contract. This rejection requires an epistemological shift in life and knowledge practices. It results from the change in historical consciousness. The eccentric subject begins with the reconfiguration of previous discursive boundaries that constitute a change in historical consciousness. It involves a shift and a self-exit. It leaves the safe place to go to another unknown and risky place. Being an eccentric subject involves both a displacement and a self-displacement. It means leaving the known place, the nest, and going to another unknown place. The reason for the displacement is that it is not possible to live in the nest. Thus, leaving is a necessity rather than a choice (Lauretis, 2007: 75, 175). De-identification as liberation from identitarian, identitarian hegemonic forms, mobility to the margins and peripheries has a special meaning. It implies a shift in point of view and conceptual evaluation (Cervulle *et al.*, 2009: 140). The shift involves a double movement, one theoretical and one experimental. It is through this double movement that the eccentric subject first emerges. It is constituted through the geographical, linguistic, and cultural displacement/division and de-identification of the person. It is both an emotional and a mental/cognitive process. It is created through a process of struggle and interpretation. It is a rewriting of oneself with a new understanding of society, history, and culture (Lauretis, 2007: 77). The eccentric subject is constituted in the process of rewriting the self in a process of struggle and interpretation. This process is linked to a new understanding of community, history and culture. It is a position that is expected to emerge from political and personal practices of displacement. It emerges through the crossing of boundaries between bodies and discourses, between communities (Cervulle *et al.*, 2009: 140).

As Butler points out, the body must be visible for politics to occur. A body appears to others and others to that body. Only the body simultaneously establishes and displaces the human perspective. We notice this most clearly when we see bodies moving together (Butler, 2011b). With her eccentric understanding of the subject, Lauretis attacks the existing ideology of gender, here specifically the concept of woman. While considering the subject as something constituted, she points out that this organisation is a new process of self-description, linked to a process of struggle and interpretation, a process of re-translation, a new interpretation of society, history and culture (Cervulle *et al.*, 2011: 146). To set this process in motion, Butler argues, bodies must be visible and in action, for the body is not only the object of power, it is also the power to interpret and act. Similarly, Butler seeks ways to critically engage gender norms. This tendency means that she locates the action/subject at a point of conscious level. For Butler, it is constructed through a social world in which the individual does not choose agency (2004b: 3). To create space for new possibilities, Butler argues for questioning the meanings of this life-limiting world (Butler, 2004b: 4). Subjectivity is affected by the formations that shape the body. Critique is therefore nothing other than the self-criticism of the subject (Butler, 2017: 92). Butler's subjectivity can be described as a critical subjectivity. One of the main objects of critique is the understanding of property in bourgeois society. Against this understanding that enslaves the appropriate, Butler emphasises the concept of dispossession in political subjectivity (Butler, 2013: 35).

Gender roles, which are part of the basic ideological apparatuses of western bourgeois society, are derivatives of bourgeois society's concept of property, which separates the appropriate from the inappropriate and solidifies inequalities. The renunciation of property implies the renunciation of the dominant/sovereign subject, that is, the male position, and can be seen as a form of dispossession. Lauretis' eccentric subject in contrast to Butler's subject can be criticised because it remains within Cartesian boundaries, because it starts from the concept of consciousness. For one thing, the eccentric subject is the cognitive subject, and what is cognised is the self. Self-knowledge is an epistemic desire for the eccentric subject (Cervulle *et al.*, 2009: 150). Lauretis' eccentric subject, however, is a figural, theoretical subject with epistemological value. It reflects Lauretis' conceptual originality and

significance. For the position of the critical subject is eccentric. It reconceptualises knowledge and the social from an eccentric position. It does so thanks to its cognitive as well as sensory capacities. In this respect, the eccentric subject is the subject of cognitive and sensory practice (Lauretis, 2007: 80). The subject of her feminist consciousness is an actor who has agency and social responsibility (Lauretis, 2007: 74), someone who constantly crosses the boundary. It shifts the boundaries between bodies and discourses, identities and things.

## CONCLUSION

The fact that the subject is one of the fundamental categories of ideology is why Althusser has an important place in critical theory. However, Althusser, cannot conceive of gender as a part of ideological apparatuses and remains limited in his discussion of subject and ideology. Ideology, however, is the primary site of the constitution of gender. For the purposes of this article, both Lauretis and Butler are thinkers who find themselves in two similar positions, acknowledging the connection between subject and ideology made by Althusser and providing the starting point in the creation of their own theories. Unlike Althusser, Lauretis and Butler refer not only to gender as a field of ideology, but also see the possibility of a political struggle on how to transform this field. Both thinkers allow us to see the category of gender as a part of his idea of ideological apparatuses, because it is something that determines human existence. The firm foundation is based on people's identification with the cultural and political meanings of the two positions. Individual existence and a certain social and economic order are reproduced through social technologies such as cinema and literature that feed the heteronormative notion of gender. In this regard, we can say that gender, which is the heteronormative notion of bodies, is a means that operates in the reproduction of people's individual and social existence, if we think within the framework of Althusser's concept of reproduction.

By pointing out that the subject is something that emerges in the process of reproduction of the social structure, Althusser's views allow us to see the role of gender in the production of the subject. In the process of responding to gendered regulations that address the individual, people have the possibility of being subject. But in Althusser's world of thought, there is an identity between being a subject and the subjection. Butler and Lauretis, meeting in the same position by pointing to the double meaning of subject, extend this identity toward the possibility of liberation from gender norms and change of order/imagination. They destabilise the relationship between subject and ideology established by Althusser. Thus, they shift the focus to the transcending character of identity that gender orders directed at individuals confer on people.

Unlike Althusser, for Lauretis and Butler exploitation is not only a class or society-specific problem, it is also an individual matter. Hetero-patriarchal domination is the primary instrument of individual exploitation for these feminist critics. Heteronormative gender representations are one of the fundamental elements of this domination. The performative/experimental nature of these representations, which gives identity to individuals whilst making them subjects, allows us to see the practices of resistance at the margins of norms/discourses. These practices are individual in nature, and this character of the experiences of resistance leads both thinkers to neglect the collective dimension of the politics of emancipation.

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