SUBVERTING LÉVI-STRAUSS'S STRUCTURALISM: READING *GENDER TROUBLE* AS "TWISTED BRICOLAGE"

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Abstract

This article critically analyzes Judith Butler's presentation of Claude Lévi-Strauss in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999). In this book, Butler criticizes feminists for employing Lévi-Strauss's binary oppositions and their use of the sex/gender binary in their critique of patriarchy. Butler's analysis provides a fruitful lens to understand how gender operates. However, as the article shows, this analysis relies on a misrepresentation of Lévi-Strauss's take on these dualities. Employing Lévi-Strauss's term "bricolage," the article reads Butler's misinterpretation as a twisted form of bricolage, which destabilizes certain assumptions in Lévi-Strauss's structuralism. The article presents an example of how Lévi-Strauss's structural theory has influenced not only feminist theory but also its critique. The article also aims at providing an alternative way to understand influential gender theorist Judith Butler's misinterpretation of other scholars.

Keywords: Claude Lévi-Strauss, Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, twisted bricolage, structuralism, subversion

LÉVI-STRAUSS'UN YAPISALCILIĞINI ALTÜST ETMEK: *CİNSİYET BELASI'*NI *"*BÜKÜLMÜŞ BRİCOLAGE" OLARAK OKUMAK

Öz

Bu makale, Judith Butler'ın *Cinsiyet Belası: Feminizm ve Kimliğin Altüst Edilmesi* (1999) adlı kitabında etkili yapısal antropolog Claude Lévi-Strauss'u sunuşunu eleştirel bir şekilde analiz eder. Bu kitapta Butler feministleri, ataerkil düzen eleştirilerinde Lévi-Strauss'un ikili karşıtlıklarını ve cinsiyet/toplumsal cinsiyet ikiliğini kullandıkları için eleştirir. Butler'ın analizi, toplumsal cinsiyetin nasıl işlediğini anlamak için verimli bir mercek sağlar. Fakat bu analiz, bu makalede gösterildiği gibi, Lévi-Strauss'un bu ikilikleri ele alışının yanlış bir ifadesine dayanmaktadır. Bu makale, Lévi-Strauss'un "bricolage" terimini kullanarak, Butler'ın bu yanlış yorumlayışını Lévi-Strauss'un yapısalcılığındaki bazı varsayımları sarsan bükülmüş bir bricolage formu olarak okur. Bu makale, Lévi-Strauss'un yapısal

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teorisinin sadece feminist teoriyi değil onun eleştirisini de etkilediğine dair bir örnek sunmaktadır. Bu makale, bunun yanı sıra, etkili toplumsal cinsiyet kuramcısı Judith Butler'ın diğer akademisyenleri yanlış yorumlayışını anlamak için alternatif bir yol sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Claude Lévi-Strauss, Judith Butler, *Cinsiyet Belası*, bükülmüş bricolage, yapısalcılık, altüst etme

Introduction

As a critical rearticulation of various theoretical practices, including feminist and queer studies, this text is not intended to be programmatic. And yet, as an attempt to clarify my 'intentions,' it appears destined to produce a new set of misapprehensions. I hope that they prove, at least, to be productive ones (Butler, 1993, p. xii).

This statement, which concludes the preface to influential gender studies scholar Judith Butler's renowned book *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* reflects Butler's concerns about misinterpretations of her work and her use of other scholars' theories to build her arguments. Butler published *Bodies that Matter* in 1993, three years after her influential book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999)[2], which puts forward the controversial idea that gender be understood as performative rather than as a steady identity. This book has influenced scholars in various disciplines including literature, sociology and gender studies. However, in the review titled "Becoming Butlerian," scholar of English literature Frederick Roden suggests that Butler's discussion of gender performativity in *Gender Trouble* has often been misconstrued, especially when people tried to implement her ideas into practice (Roden, 2001, p. 27). Butler agrees with this observation. As stated in its preface, Butler wrote *Bodies that Matter* "in part as a rethinking of some parts of *Gender Trouble* that have caused confusion" (Butler, 1993, p. xii). Thus, Butler proposes that many readers have misunderstood her arguments in *Gender Trouble*, necessitating her to re-address her theory of gender performativity in a separate book.

Whereas these accounts indicate misunderstandings of Butler's arguments, critics have also perceived Butler as a theorist who misrepresents others' works. Various scholars have pointed out instances of Butler's misappropriation of influential works including those of renowned scholars such as Simone de Beauvoir and Toni Morrison (see, for example, Heinämaa, 1997; Femenías, 1999; Martínez, 2010; Myers, 2016). Considering these abundant claims regarding both misunderstandings of Butler's writings and Butler's misunderstanding

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[2] Henceforth, the title of the book will be shortened as "*Gender Trouble.*"

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of others' work, this article seeks to understand what value such misrepresentations might have. Butler's wish for productive misapprehensions of her own work put forward in the Preface to *Bodies that Matter* gives us a clue to interpret the function of these misappropriations. Following the last sentence of this preface where Butler wishes for "productive" misrepresentations of her work (Butler, 1993, p. xii), one could understand Butler's misappropriation of various theoretical tools as a productive method generating works that continue to influence activists and scholars working in different fields.

The objective of this article is to interpret Judith Butler's misrepresentation of distinguished structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's work on binary oppositions in *Gender Trouble (1999)* as an illustration of this productive method. In the book, Butler analyzes Lévi-Strauss's work, which influenced certain lines of feminism, to build a critique of feminist identity politics. In this analysis, Butler presents Lévi-Strauss as if he refers to structural binaries that simply exist outside the human mind whereas Lévi-Strauss is, in fact, concerned with structures within the human mind through which humans interpret the world. I read Butler's misappropriation of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism as productive because it turns Lévi-Strauss on his head and generates a constructive interpretation that enables Butler to develop a fruitful critique of feminist theory and a re-theorization of how gender operates. By twisting Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, Butler destabilizes his assumption of stable structures as well as clearly defined borders between the outside and the inside of the human mind.

In addition to destabilizing Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, this twist actualizes Butler's argument that the human mind, the self, and meaning are not finished products but are continuously reformed through the entanglement of the inside and the outside of the human psyche as well as the interaction between biology, discourses and social relations. Butler argues:

> Certain features of the world, including people we know and lose, do become 'internal' features of the self, but they are transformed through that interiorization, and that inner world, as the Kleinians call it, is constituted precisely as a consequence of the interiorizations that a psyche performs (Butler, 1999, p. xv).

Thus, Butler proposes that the process of internalization is integral to the production of these "features of the world" (Butler, 1999, p. xv). Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is one of those theoretical features that get "transformed" through Butler's interiorization. In other words, just like other theoretical accounts, Lévi-Strauss's structuralism continues to take on different meanings as different scholars engage with it; some of which we see in *Gender Trouble*.

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Whereas this "interiorization" (Butler, 1999, p. xv) appears as an indispensable feature of human thought and processes of self- and meaning-making, I conclude the paper by asking whether it could also be understood as a fruitful method for social analysis and at what cost this method operates.

Reception of Butler's Work

Judith Butler's work has been controversial, bringing into dialogue scholars working in a wide range of disciplines across geographies. Scholars working in different fields including anthropology, geography, and literature have critically evaluated and applied her theories (see, for example, Brown, 2019; Busby, 2000; Ewing, 2008; Gilbert, 2007; Kelan, 2009; McNay, 1999; Mitchell, 2003; Morris, 1995; Nelson, 1999; Sanger, 2008; Trevenna, 2002). At the same time, various scholars have criticized Butler. A widely cited objection to her work is Martha Nussbaum's essay "The Professor of Parody" (1999), where Nussbaum criticizes Butler for using a language suitable only for an academic audience and not engaging with the material, real-life problems women struggle with. Other scholars have stated that Butler does not properly interpret the works of others. Ernesto Javier Martínez (2010), for example, analyzes how Butler misuses black American novelist Toni Morrison's Nobel Prize lecture. Martínez states that Butler uses quotations from Morrison in ways that contradict Morrison's interpretation of how language works (Martínez, 2010, p. 822). Martínez situates this misappropriation within a tradition of misrepresentation of works of women of color by white feminists.

Likewise, Sara Heinämaa (1997) states that Butler misreads Simone de Beauvoir's work. According to Heinämaa, unlike in Butler's presentation, Beauvoir does not present a theory of gender but rather provides a "phenomenological" account of the different meanings attributed to "sexual difference" and femininity (Heinämaa, 1997, p. 20). Just like Heinämaa (1997), Kali Myers (2016) suggests that Butler mistakes Simone de Beauvoir's theory as a theory of gender. For Myers, this misinterpretation results from Butler's relying on a poor translation, which misrepresents Beauvoir (Myers, 2016, p. 93). Myers suggests that such uses of mistranslations have the potential to be "productive" for feminist thought as long as they are "meaningful" and "respectful" (Myers, 2016, p. 91). The translator's and relatedly Butler's misinterpretation of Beauvoir proved to be "productive misreading[s]" because they helped to create "the work of Butler" which became "canonical" (Myers, 2016, p. 103).

In addition to elaborating on feminist scholars such as Beauvoir and Morrison, Butler engages extensively with anthropological works. This engagement has received attention from

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anthropologists as well. For example, Thomas Strong (2002) elaborates on Butler's discussion of anthropological accounts with specific attention to kinship studies, a signature field of socio-cultural anthropology. In his review of Butler's writings on kinship, Strong suggests that Butler's work provides an innovative approach for kinship studies but it concentrates on "normative institutions" and thus largely misses what lies outside "institutions and norms" (Strong, 2002, p. 401). Also, just as Heinämaa, Martínez, and Myers argue that Butler misreads Beauvoir and Morrison, for Strong, "there is a bias" (Strong, 2002, p. 413) in Butler's reading of Lévi-Strauss's "Race and History" (1976) (as cited in Strong, 2002, p. 412) in her book on kinship titled *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (2002).

Similar to these readings of Judith Butler's presentation of other scholars' works, I consider Butler's interpretation of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism in *Gender Trouble* (1999) as a misinterpretation. Additionally, I offer a Lévi-Straussian reading of how Judith Butler destabilizes Lévi-Strauss's structuralism through this misreading. Borrowing Lévi-Strauss's term "*bricolage,*" the paper argues that Butler's method could be read as a productive "twisted *bricolage*."

Bricolage

Claude Lévi-Strauss, a French anthropologist born in 1908, was a founding figure in structuralism. His work is marked by an effort to uncover structures shared by all humans. For example, in the first chapter of his influential book *The Savage Mind* (1966) titled "The Science of the Concrete," Lévi-Strauss challenges the dominant framework at the time which considered Western ways of thinking as superior to those that have been called "primitive." He suggests that the pursuit of order appears as the basis of both science, associated with Western thought, and magic, associated with "primitive" ways of thinking. Lévi-Strauss posits that these seemingly different ways of thinking require "the same sort of mental operations" (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 13). Thus, Lévi-Strauss exposes the search for order as integral to all human thought (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 10) even though this search takes different forms in different places.

Lévi-Strauss continues his comparison by establishing mythical thought as "the science of the concrete" as opposed to "modern science." The doer of modern science is the engineer who pursues tasks as long as *he*[3] has the "raw materials" and the "tools" designed and acquired for the specific project (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17). On the other hand, *bricolage* is the method of mythical thought, which "expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous

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[3] Lévi-Strauss uses the male pronoun when he refers both to the *bricoleur* and the engineer.

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repertoire, which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited" (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17). Lévi-Strauss explains:

> His [*bricoleur*'s] universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand,' that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17).

In this sense, the *bricoleur* does not invent new tools or procure instruments specifically for his project. He rearranges whatever is in the toolbox.

Judith Butler's work is similar to a *bricoleur*'s. Butler uses Lévi-Strauss's structural framework in *her* discussion of feminist theory in *Gender Trouble (1999)*. She places Lévi-Strauss's work on binary oppositions at the center of her criticism of feminist identity politics. This bricolage, however, is twisted because Butler does not simply employ Lévi-Strauss's theory as it is; she subverts it. Unlike the way it is presented in *Gender Trouble*, Lévi-Strauss's analysis of binary oppositions concentrates on structures in the human mind instead of structures outside of humans. Butler's work is a twisted form of *bricolage,* which takes different theories, distorts them, and uses them as tools to build her argument.

Butler's Critique of Feminist Identity Politics

In *Gender Trouble* (1999), Judith Butler criticizes feminist identity politics and feminists' use of the category of "woman" in their identity claims. She suggests that gender should not be understood as a fixed identity, but it is rather an effect produced through continuous performative acts. To build this argument, she examines the fallacies in Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology, which, according to Butler, many feminists utilize to claim that a natural state of humanity existed before the establishment of patriarchy.

At the beginning of the second chapter of *Gender Trouble (1999)*, "Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix," Butler examines the tendency in the feminist literature to concentrate on questions regarding "what it was like *before* the advent of the law" (Butler, 1999, p. 46) and "whether prepatriarchal cultures have existed" (Butler, 1999, p. 45). This historical and anthropological search for "the story of origins" (Butler, 1999, p. 46) is important for feminists because such a discovery would show that patriarchy is a recent invention; and therefore, this invention could be destroyed, and "a

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new order" (Butler, 1999, p. 46) could be established. This "new order" (Butler, 1999, p. 46) would be a feminist one.

As Butler states, this tendency to search for a story of the beginning can, ironically, also take the form of an anti-feminist argument. In this case, the origin story "serves to legitimate the present state of the law" by displaying it as a "necessary form" or as "a historical inevitability" (Butler, 1999, p. 46). Thus, these conceptualizations legitimate political arguments regarding the present (by justifying the current state of things) as well as the future (by justifying certain imaginations of the times to come) in both feminist and anti-feminist terms. This discussion shows that the search for "an origin" before the invention of patriarchy is historically produced, politically motivated and creates a risk to support "a politically problematic reification of women's experience" (Butler, 1999, p. 46).

Butler relates this search for an original state of humanity to assumed distinctions between nature and culture as well as sex and gender frequently examined in feminist studies (see, for example, Beauvoir, 1956; Ortner, 1972). In *Gender Trouble* (1999), these distinctions appear as a basis for a line of feminist identity politics which builds itself on the assumption of a common experience of women. Butler presents this feminist argument as: "the position that there is a natural or biological female who is subsequently transformed into a socially subordinate 'woman,' with the consequence that 'sex' is to nature or 'the raw' as gender is to culture or 'the cooked'" (Butler, 1999, p. 47). For Butler, within this framework, sex appears as "the 'raw material' of culture" (Butler, 1999, p. 47). Sex and nature represent what existed before culture. Sex belongs to the "precultural sphere of the authentic feminine" (Butler, 1999, p. 46), which is, ostensibly, shared by all women across cultures and history and can be established as a feminist political ground. Therefore, feminists search for stories of origin where sex, nature and the raw—not yet shaped by gender, culture and cooking—can be found.

Butler's Critique of Structuralist Binary Oppositions

In her discussion of feminist identity politics, Butler (1999) introduces Lévi-Strauss's well-known binary opposition between the raw and the cooked from his study with the same name (Lévi-Strauss, 1983), as akin to the binary opposition between sex and gender. Lévi-Strauss's structuralist binary oppositions are crucial for Butler's critique of feminist theory since it is a basis on which the distinction between sex and gender is built as is the case, for example, for Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1956). As Beauvoir famously states, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 273). According to

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Butler, however, gender cannot be conceptualized as a "stable identity" or a finished self (Butler, 1999, p. 179)—be it understood as imposed by nature or culture. The assumed firmness of a "gendered self" is not the result of the conclusive embodiment of norms generating a finished gendered product; this image of stability results, instead, from continuously repeated actions that provide the "illusion" of steadiness (Butler, 1999, p. 179).

Butler destabilizes the binaries structuralism and certain lines of feminism hold dear. She suggests that the nature/ culture binary and the idea of "sex-as-instrument-of-cultural-signification" are "discursive formation[s]" (Butler, 1999, p. 47) that support existing relations of domination. Butler states:

> The binary relation between culture and nature promotes a relationship of hierarchy in which culture freely "imposes" meaning on nature, and, hence, renders it into an "Other" to be appropriated to its own limitless uses, safeguarding the ideality of the signifier and the structure of signification on the model of domination (Butler, 1999, p. 48).

In this reading of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, culture and gender appear as temporally coming after nature and sex, which are treated as "matter," "the 'raw material' of culture" and an "instrument-of-cultural-signification" (Butler, 1999, p. 47). The relationship between nature and culture, as it appears in this constitution, is not neutral. Culture is the prime signifier; it places a seemingly non-agential nature within a hierarchy with itself by exposing nature as its opposite. Moreover, Chapter 2 "Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Heterosexual Matrix" in *Gender Trouble* posits that the idea of a natural binary between female and male as well as the understanding of sex as a natural raw material serve to legitimate a heterosexist framework of naturalized desire.

To expose this unrecognized historicity and these hidden hierarchies, Butler builds on anthropologists such as Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern who provide a gendered critique of the binary opposition between nature and culture. MacCormack and Strathern (1980) argue that in this oppositional understanding where culture shapes nature, nature holds a feminized, non-agential position whereas culture occupies a masculinized, agential role (as cited in Butler, 1999, p. 48). Butler also introduces anthropologist Clifford Geertz's criticisms to suggest that structuralism's "universalizing framework discounts the multiplicity of cultural configurations of 'nature'" (Butler, 1999, p. 48).

Butler applies Geertz's criticism of the structuralist nature/ culture opposition to the feminist distinction between sex and gender. According to Butler, by reifying this assumed binary opposition, feminists neglect that these binaries themselves are cultural products

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formed within specific discursive contexts. Butler asks: "How are the sex/ gender and nature/ culture dualisms constructed and naturalized in and through one another?" (Butler, 1999, p. 48). The question implies that sex/ gender and nature/ culture dualisms are not facts out there but are naturalized cultural constructs.

The construction and naturalization of these dualities are not neutral processes either. Butler suggests that feminist arguments that rely on a distinction between sex and gender actually reproduce existing gender hierarchies. Butler continues: "If the very designation of sex is political, then 'sex,' that designation supposed to be most in the raw, proves to be always already 'cooked,' and the central distinctions of structural anthropology appear to collapse" (Butler, 1999, p. 48). Thus, Butler argues, the distinction that Lévi-Strauss's structuralism holds dear, i.e. the nature/ culture binary, is not an empirical fact as some social scientists and feminists would argue. Rather, this distinction is defined, constructed and naturalized as a fact. That is to say, nature and sex, which are proposed to be prediscursive, are actually produced within language and therefore within culture. They cannot be assumed to precede culture. Butler builds this argument by using Lévi-Strauss's own terms, "raw" and "cooked," to expose this flawed logic which considers sex as akin to the raw. For Butler, sex "proves to be always already 'cooked'" (Butler, 1999, p. 48). Thus, Butler builds her critique of feminist identity politics based on her (mis)interpretation of Lévi-Strauss who appears to naturalize the distinctions between nature and culture, which are, in fact, cultural constructions.

Lévi-Strauss's Binary Oppositions

The nature / culture distinction proposed by Lévi-Strauss is crucial for Butler since many feminists build their "sex / gender distinction" on this division (Butler, 1999, p. 47). Lévi-Strauss's structuralist binary oppositions provide the ground for certain forms of feminist identity politics which regard gender as dressing the prediscursive sex in problematic ways. Butler plays with Lévi-Strauss's binary oppositions of nature/ culture and raw/ cooked to build her argument that opposes the objective existence of these divisions. However, Butler's appropriation of Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology is distorted.

Unlike many other structuralist scholars such as Radcliffe-Brown, a prominent British social anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss did not analyze societies as functioning systems composed of various structures. Instead, Lévi-Strauss examined how certain structures within the human mind were expressed in different cultures through similar products such as myths. Influenced by Kant's conception of "mental constraints," he perceived the unconscious as a central unit

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of social analysis (Rossi, 1973, p. 20). As Rossi states, Lévi-Strauss proposed that unlike natural scientists "social scientists deal with representations" (Lévi-Strauss, 1971b, p. 12) (as cited in Rossi, 1973, p. 20).

For Lévi-Strauss, the structures in the human mind take the form of universal binary oppositions and constitute the central subject of anthropology. In fact, these structures inside the human mind are the main theme that anthropologists work to uncover. Lévi-Strauss presents various binary oppositions such as "raw and cooked"; "nature and culture"; and "means and ends" as examples of these themes. Lévi-Strauss suggests that these oppositions constitute the universal structure of the human mind. In other words, every human being possesses these structures through which they make sense of the world.

In "Structuralism and Ecology" (2010), which analyzes myths of different cultural communities, Lévi-Strauss posits that the grammar of these myths is the same since the structures within the human mind are universal. The differences between the contents of these legends stem from the differences between the environments these communities live in. Myths emerge within the interaction between two kinds of restrictions: "the one imposed on mythic thought by the constraints inherent in a relationship to a particular environment; the other drawn from persistent mental constraints which are independent of the environment" (Lévi-Strauss, 2010, p. 170). These mental constraints, which are "independent of the environment" (Lévi-Strauss, 2010, p. 170), are the structures of the human mind that are constituted of binary oppositions.

In the chapter titled "The Effectiveness of Symbols," from his influential book *Structural Anthropology*, Lévi-Strauss illustrates the importance of these universal structures:

> As the organ of a specific function, the unconscious merely imposes structural laws upon inarticulated elements which originate elsewhere—impulses, emotions, representations, and memories. We might say, therefore, that the preconscious is the individual lexicon where each of us accumulates the vocabulary of his personal history, but that this vocabulary becomes significant, for us and for others, only to the extent that the unconscious structures it according to its laws and thus transforms it into language (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 203).

This structural mechanism, which is the same among all humans (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 203), is the central subject of anthropology for Lévi-Strauss. The structure defined by Lévi-Strauss, which is constituted of binary oppositions such as nature/ culture and raw/ cooked, is not *out there,* independent of humans as represented by Butler. Rather, Lévi-Strauss's understanding of structures posits them within the human mind.

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In "Structuralism and Ecology" (2010), Lévi-Strauss relates these structures to the working of human sensory organs and the brain. He introduces the research on animal vision, which suggests that eyes do not simply photograph things but rather encode them. The mind reconstructs things through the information it receives about stimuli such as the "contrast between motion and immobility" or the "presence or absence of color" (Lévi-Strauss, 2010, pp. 170-171). Lévi-Strauss argues: "There is every reason to believe that this encoding and decoding mechanism, which translates incoming data by means of several grids inscribed in the form of binary oppositions in the nervous system, also exists in man" (Lévi-Strauss, 2010, p. 171).

By analyzing different aspects of culture such as myths, Lévi-Strauss exposes this universal grammar, i.e. the structure of the human mind which relies on binary oppositions and translates what arrives from the external world into the language of the mind. To illustrate, in the chapter "The Effectiveness of Symbols" (1963), Lévi-Strauss juxtaposes a psychoanalyst's relationship with his patient and a shaman's relation with a woman in labor. The duality between the healer and the person in pain appears as a binary opposition in the human mind. This duality exposes the fact that although environmental conditions transform the content of a culture and their reflections in the world (such as the figure who provides relief for suffering people), they do so within the possibilities and constraints of the universal binaries the human mind works with.

In this sense, Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is not merely an effort to expose the binaries existing as an objective reality outside of the human mind as they are presented in *Gender Trouble*. Rather, Lévi-Strauss is concerned with binaries like nature/ culture and raw/ cooked as universal structures through which all people make sense of the world. As earlier quotes show, Lévi-Strauss establishes anthropological inquiry as a quest to discover the structures inside the human mind. In this sense, Butler's emphasis on the fallacies of the distinction between nature and culture does not fit Lévi-Strauss's structuralist framework because Lévi-Strauss does not propose these distinctions as objective realities. Lévi-Strauss presents these distinctions as products of the structures inside the human mind through which humans make sense of the world they live in. Therefore, Butler's discussion of binary oppositions misappropriates Lévi-Strauss's framework. In other words, Butler twists Lévi-Strauss's structuralism to build her critique of feminism.

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Gender Trouble as Twisted Bricolage

Gender Trouble can be read as a form of *bricolage*, the method of Lévi-Strauss's *bricoleur* who brings together the available tools to solve a problem (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, pp. 16-17). Butler draws upon theorists such as Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan and Claude Lévi-Strauss. She does not invent brand new tools to build her argument. Her finite toolbox consists of theoretical tools that were introduced in relation to other problems. Thus, her tools are not unique to her specific project, just as is the case with Lévi-Strauss's *bricoleur*. Butler's work can be read as the rearrangement of the theories to be found on her library shelf. Therefore, the theoretical elements in *Gender Trouble* appear to "come in handy" (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 18) for Butler. She reassembles these theories which did not necessarily appear in relation to each other before. As an intellectual *bricolage*, Butler's project can be read as reaching "brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane" (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17).

Butler utilizes Lévi-Strauss's theory of binary oppositions and specifically the nature/ culture distinction as she presents him as a foundational theorist that inspires feminist identity politics. The binary opposition between raw and cooked also serves as a rhetorical tool in different places in *Gender Trouble*. Butler does not take these distinctions as given facts. Instead, she builds her argument by misappropriating these tools.

What is more, Butler subverts Lévi-Strauss's structuralism with the tools of his invention. To illustrate, she states one of her main arguments in *Gender Trouble*, i.e. sex not preceding gender but its being always already within the discursive space in the following way: "… 'sex,' that designation supposed to be most in the raw, proves to be always already 'cooked'" (Butler, 1999, p. 48). Whereas Lévi-Strauss's *bricoleur* would bring *his* tools together as they are, the creative *bricoleur* in *Gender Trouble* twists *her* tools. She uses the conceptual tools presented in Lévi-Strauss's works (such as the raw/ cooked binary) against themselves and twists these instruments to build her own argument.

Therefore, *Gender Trouble* can be read as a *bricolage* since it assembles different theoretical tools. However, these instruments are not presented in their classical forms. Butler dresses them up in such a way that serves her project, which reveals the flaws of feminist identity politics that rely on structuralist binary oppositions. In this sense, her method is not a straightforward *bricolage* where the *bricoleur* assembles whatever is in hand. She does not work like Lévi-Strauss's engineers and come up with new tools designed for the current

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project either. She distorts whatever is handy. I read this method of hers as a "twisted *bricolage*."

This twisted *bricolage* disrupts the theories used in *Gender Trouble (1999)*, including Lévi-Strauss's structuralist theory of binary oppositions. By twisting Lévi-Strauss's work, Butler also subverts the method of *bricolage,* which refers to the method of "the science of the concrete" (or mythical thought) where the bricoleur works with available tools without "creat[ing] its means" as is the case with modern science (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 21-22). Such twisting of theoretical tools at hand could be considered a tool of invention itself that can generate fruitful critiques and interpretations just as is the case with Butler's *Gender Trouble*.

Conclusion

What is the role of Judith Butler's method, what I have called "twisted *bricolage,*" in constructing her arguments in *Gender Trouble*? When Butler's utilization of Lévi-Strauss's theory is considered, this style seems like a necessary component of her argument. Butler discusses Lévi-Strauss's distinction between nature and culture because she aims at negating the distinction between sex and gender. Therefore, Lévi-Strauss's nature/ culture opposition is not an arbitrary starting point. This opposition is central to the object of criticism in *Gender Trouble*, i.e. certain forms of feminism that take the sex/ gender distinction as a given fact. As Butler states: "Lévi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology, including the problematic nature/ culture distinction, has been appropriated by some feminist theorists to support and elucidate the sex/ gender distinction" (Butler, 1999, p. 47). In this sense, Lévi-Strauss's binary opposition between nature and culture, which actually refers to structures in the human mind instead of structures *out there*, constitutes the foundation for the feminist discourses Butler criticizes. In other words, Lévi-Strauss's binary oppositions already appear as twisted within certain feminist accounts.

By distorting Lévi-Strauss's framework and embedding it in the sex/ gender dichotomy, Butler constructs the feminist argument that she negates. This subversion is not groundless since some feminist scholars relate their theories regarding the sex/ gender distinction to Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology. In this sense, by presenting the nature/ culture dichotomy as a *thing* in Lévi-Strauss's work, Butler shows that his theory is reshaped when other scholars interpret it. This reinterpretation becomes a part of the continuously changing meanings these binary oppositions take on. This transformation indicates that meaning is not stable but is formed as texts continue their lives as people read, interpret, and use them to make sense of the world. By establishing these binaries as realities outside the

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human mind, Butler is able to move onto her central concern about the sex/ gender dichotomy. By demonstrating the artificiality of the nature/ culture distinction, Butler infers that the sex/ gender distinction is constructed as well. Thus, Butler's misappropriation of Lévi-Strauss works as a successful tool to build her argument while also subverting Lévi-Strauss's structuralism.

Butler does not work like a classical intellectual *bricoleur* who would assemble theories as they are so that they lead to a conclusion. Instead, she does unconventional readings of these theories. These unconventional readings let her offer criticisms about feminist thought and politics. In this sense, Butler's style of twisted *bricolage*, which is prevalent throughout *Gender Trouble*, works well in relation to her aims and offers a fruitful reading of Lévi-Strauss and a productive critique of feminist theory.

A couple of questions regarding twisted *bricolage* and ethics remain unanswered, however. First of all, what are the consequences of building an argument by misappropriating existing theories and bringing them together as *bricolage*? Is it fair to the producers of these theories to present their work as different from their aims? What valuable aspects of theories might get lost when distorting them? Further studies can help answer these pressing questions and help reveal the limits of misrepresentations of existing social theories to construct new ones. This research can demonstrate how cultural contexts in which works of twisted *bricolage* are written and received shape whether these twists are perceived to be "productive ones" (Butler, 1993, p. xii).

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