

Gender Fluidity in Harmony: Lyrics of *Born This Way* as The Manifestation of Body without Organs

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Abstract

Lady Gaga's "Born This Way" (2011), inspired by 1990s music about empowering minorities, women, and the LGBTQ+ community, is a song about the view that identity, including gender, is dynamic and changeable. The song is also used as the national anthem of Americans for LGBTQ+ people. To explore this statement, this study uses Judith Butler's (1990) theory of Gender Performativity and the concept of Body without Organs Deleuze and Guattari, as a framework to analyse gender fluidity and to understand the body in lyrics as a non-hierarchical space, and free from the normative constraints of society. The method used is qualitative text analysis, where the lyrics of the song are analysed in depth to identify the representation of gender fluidity and Body without Organs. This study intends to investigate how the song *BTW* represses gender fluidity through the analysis of its lyrics. This research shows that the lyrics of the song are not only as musical works but as a medium to voice or support gender identity. The results of this study show that the reflection of the values of freedom, self-acceptance, and respect for diversity of identities is in the lyrics of *BTW*. This research contributes to the study of gender and popular culture by showing how art can be a transformative medium to break down the boundaries of traditional identities and celebrate fluidity as part of human existence.

Keywords

Born This Way, Gender Fluidity, Body without Organs, Freedom.

Introduction

The gender that prevails in a society is determined by the relationship of society about the relationship between men and their masculinity and between women and their femininity. In general, the female gender is related to the gender of feminism. However, the relationship is not a correlation. (Dwijowijoto, 2008) The debate about gender identity has become an increasingly relevant issue, especially in the midst of the development of an increasingly inclusive society towards identity diversity. In the contemporary era, gender identity is no longer seen as a fixed and rigid entity, but rather as a spectrum that allows individuals to express themselves freely. The idea of gender fluidity, which violates traditional binary norms, has lately become one of the main focuses in the study of culture and critical theory. In the context of voicing progressive ideas about identity and gender.

According to the father of music psychology, humans have a musical mind, namely the ability to understand sounds, imagine sounds into reproductions, calculate emotions, understand sounds, and provide emotional expressions. (Seashore, 1967) This is in line with what Steffani J. Germanotta, or internationally known as Lady Gaga in her song *Born This Way* (*BTW*). He

explained that this song is his song of freedom. The song debuted in the top five spots of every major chart worldwide, including the Billboard 200. In the United States, the record sold more than one million copies in its first week—the highest first-week album sales in five years; An estimated 440,000 copies were sold on Amazon in its first two weeks for 99 cents. According to the International Federation of Phonographic Industries (IFPI), it was the third best-selling global album of 2011. At the time of its release, the title track was the best-selling single in iTunes history.

Lady Gaga through her songs represents the content of her thoughts and emotions which are considered important in supporting the discourse on diversity and fluidity. Released in 2011, the song was hailed as a symbol of a celebration of inclusivity, diversity, and self-acceptance. Lady Gaga uses the lyrics of *BTW* to convey that each individual is unique and deserves to be accepted as they are, without having to submit to restrictive social norms. As part of popular culture, *BTW* is not only a piece of music but also a social manifesto that supports the LGBTQ+ community and fights for freedom of expression. Research also shows how diverse academic approaches are in understanding this song. Several researchers have studied the discourse that emerges from this song, including an analysis of the logical implications in the lyrics (Malewa & Arman, 2018), a study of the theme and artistic style (Hawa, 2019), and an analysis of the morphology of the words (Aprianti & Parmawati, 2020). All of this confirms that artworks like this song are not only entertaining but also have the power to bring about social change and open up space for deeper reflection.

In the context of analysis of identity and gender, one of the main questions is how identity is formed, maintained, and governed by social norms. A person's identity often cannot be understood as something completely logical or innate, but rather as the result of social construction. As stated, "The 'coherence' and 'continuity' of 'the person' are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility." (Butler, 1990) The meaning of the sentence is that the existence of a person as a coherent "person" is only possible through obedience to social rules that define gender and sexuality. Butler's theory of gender performativity provides a relevant theoretical foundation. Gender is not something that is inherent or naturally attached to the individual, but rather the result of social constructions created through the repetition of daily actions and performance. In other words, gender is something that is "done" rather than something that "has" (Butler, 1990). In addition, the concept of the Body without Organ from Deleuze and Guattari offers a framework for understanding the body as an entity that transcends social hierarchies and structures, the possibility of individuals to form their identity independently.

Through *BTW*, it not only celebrates the diversity of identities, but also reflects the concept of Body without Organs (BwO) introduced by Deleuze and Guattari. This concept views the body and identity as something fluid and free from a binding structure or hierarchy. The Body without Organs supports the idea that the body or entity does not have to be fixated on functions that have been determined by society. Deleuze and Guattari saw Body without Organs as a potential not limited to function and described the body as a vessel of expression that did not require validation from external systems. Body without Organs is used as a space full of possibilities to become whatever each individual wants. The song shows that identity is an unstable social construct, supporting the view that identity is "a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience." (Butler, 1990) This study aims to analyse how gender fluidity and the concept of a body that is free from social construction are represented in the lyrics of the song *BTW*. Using qualitative text analysis methods, the book explores how songs can be a symbol of resistance to traditional gender norms and a tool for introducing identity diversity. This research is expected to contribute to cultural studies, especially in understanding the role of popular music as a medium of social transformation and progressive discourse on gender.

The lyrics of Lady Gaga's "*BTW*" can be analyzed through Judith Butler's theory of performativity and the concept of Body without Organs (BwO) from Deleuze and Guattari. These two theories are relevant to understand the theme of self-acceptance and identity fluidity in the lyrics of the song. Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990) explains that gender is the result of repetitive performative actions, not something essential. Lyrics such as "No matter gay, straight, or bi, lesbian, transgender life" show an acknowledgment of the diversity of identities, reflecting Butler's performative approach. Bennett (2014) highlights that the "*BTW*" narrative celebrates queer identity but can be considered too essentialist. Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) introduced the concept of BwO, which rejected rigid identity structures. Lyrics like "Don't be a drag, just be a queen" reflect the fluidity of identity that is free from traditional social categories. Piller (2014) discusses the relevance of the concept of BwO in understanding fluid and free identities. The song emphasizes self-acceptance and celebrates racial and gender diversity, as in the lyrics "No matter black, white, or beige, Chola or Orient made". Byrne (2014) mentions that racial and gender identities are fluid social constructs, in line with Butler and BwO's ideas.

The researcher used text analysis method in qualitative research. Qualitative research is research that intends to understand what phenomena are experienced by the research subject such as actors, perceptions, motivation to act, and others holistically and by way of description in the form of words and language in a special context that is natural by utilizing various natural methods

(Moldong, 2017:16). Qualitative research emphasizes quality not quantity and the data collected does not come from questionnaires but from interviews, direct observations, and other relevant official documents. Qualitative research is also more concerned with understanding data than the results obtained. This allows researchers to understand this phenomenon in depth, especially in the context of the representation of gender fluidity and the concept of the body in the lyrics of the song *BTW*. With this method, this study seeks to provide a deep understanding of how *BTW* is a medium to represent gender fluidity and the concept of an organ body in popular culture discourse.

The data from this study is the lyrics of the song Lady Gaga *BTW* which was released on February 13, 2011. Lyrics are obtained from official sources, lyric providers, and original recording albums to ensure data accuracy. In addition, this study uses secondary references in the form of journal articles, books, gender performativity theory, and the concept of Body without Organs. The data collected starts by downloading the lyrics and verifying them on a trusted source. Afterwards, the research focused on the process of lyric interpretation based on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and the concept of the Organ Body from Deleuze and Guattari, to understand how the lyrics of the song reflect gender fluidity and the body that transcends social construction.

The researcher, firstly, did the observation by reading lyrics to understand the explicit and implicit meanings it contains. Second, certain elements such as the use of metaphors, symbols, and narratives in the lyrics are identified and attributed to Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and the concepts of Body without Organs Deleuze and Guattari. Third, the findings are interpreted in a socio-cultural context to understand how the song contributes to the discourse of gender fluidity and identity freedom. This study did not involve human participants because the focus was on analysing the lyric text of the song as the object of study. This detailed research design is expected to help other researchers reproduce similar research with different objects or contexts.

Result and Discussion

An analysis of the lyrics of the song *BTW* by Lady Gaga, known as a hymn of self-acceptance that raises the theme of gender fluidity, LGBTQ+ pride and freedom from social norms. The song was released as the lead single from the album of the same name in February 2011.

From this analysis, several main themes are found that represent gender fluidity and identity freedom, as in this lyric:

- a. “I’m beautiful in my way, ‘Cause God makes no mistakes”

The lyrics reflect an acknowledgment of identity freedom, by challenging the idea that a person's body or identity must meet certain standards or norms. In accordance with Butler's theory, 1990, that gender is not an inherent or biological thing. So, it can be seen that the meaning of the lyrics is used as a form of affirmation of self-identity that is not bound by expected gender roles or social norms. Butler considers that we should question and overcome the limits imposed by social norms, and the lyrics are also in line with this idea, Butler asserts that the fault or defect that is perceived to exist in the body or identity is an invalid social construct. As for the correlation with the concept of Body without Organs, in the discussion of the lyrics it can be understood that it is used as a rejection of the concept of the body that is confined to traditional boundaries, such as beauty norms or gender identity that has been determined.

- b. “Don’t hide yourself in regret, just love yourself and you’re set”

The theme of the lyrics is self-acceptance and freedom from binding social norms, which is in line with the theory of gender performativity and the concept of Body without Organs. In the context of gender performativity theory, this lyric is considered a rejection of guilt or regret that often arises from social pressure to conform to certain gender, sexuality, or body norms. Gender identity and sexuality are social constructs that are repeated through performance, so people often feel compelled to hide their authentic selves if they don't conform to social norms. (Butler, 1990)

In the lyrics "just love yourself and you're set", Lady Gaga invites us to love ourselves as we are, which can be interpreted as a subversive act. (Butler, 1990) Discusses the liberation of the body from restrictive structures, whether social, biological, or psychological norms. The sense of selflessness in the lyrics can be interpreted as a form of social organization that limits a person's potential to live life freely. In the concept of Body without Organs, a free body is a body that is not bound by shame, regret, or pressure to become something it is not. Both of these theories highlight the importance of liberation and restrictive social constructions.

- c. “No matter gay, straight, or bi, lesbian, transgender life”

The lyrics celebrate the diversity of gender identities and sexual orietalization and can be attributed to Butler's theory in Gender Trouble (1990), which emphasizes that gender is not a biological or natural essence, but a performance that is repeated and shaped by social norms. In this lyric, it

rejects the idea that one's identity must conform to certain social norms and affirms that all identities (gay, straight, bi, lesbian, and transgender) are valid and worthy of celebration. With this, the lyrics break the heteronormative binary system, supporting gender plurality and fluidity.

As for the relationship with the concept of Body without Organs in the book *A Thousand Plateaus*, 1987; This discussion focuses on the liberation of the body and identity from social or biological limitations. This lyric celebrates the spectrum of identities without hierarchy as described in the concept of Body without Organs. Deleuze and Guattari viewed the human body as a tool that could not be limited by a particular category. These lyrics motivate the audience to accept their own self-worthiness and provide space for the plurality of identities in society, breaking the traditional norms that often discriminate against humans.

d. “Don’t be drag, just be a queen”

The lyrics celebrate all gender identity and expression without hierarchy or discrimination. The term "drag" refers to gender expression that often goes beyond binary norms, while "queen" provides a positive affirmation of any form of self-expression. These lyrics are in line with the concept of Body without Organs, where individuals are free to express a fluid and diverse identity. Gender expression through "drag" according to Butler is one example of gender performativity that can deconstruct heteronormative systems.

e. “No matter black, white, or beige, Chola or Orient made, I'm on the right track, baby, I was born to be brave”

The lyrics emphasize acceptance and courage in embracing diverse racial and ethnic identities. This message can be discussed through the lens of Judith Butler's theory of performativity and the concept of Body without Organs from Deleuze and Guattari. Gender performativity theory also applies the concept to race. Butler argues that racial identity is shaped through repeated actions and representations, similar to gender constructs. In the context of these lyrics, the recognition of various racial and ethnic identities shows that racial categories are not a fixed essence, but rather a result of social performativeness. Butler also stated that "race is proven to be performative, i.e., to form the identity it claims."

The concept of Body without Organs by Deleuze and Guattari depicts a body that is free from defined structures and organizations, allowing for fluid and unfettered expression of identity. Lady Gaga's lyrics that celebrate racial and ethnic diversity reflect the spirit of Body without Organs, where individuals reject rigid racial categories and choose to express their identities freely.

f. "Rejoice and love yourself today, 'cause baby, you were *BTW*"

The lyrics encourage individuals to accept and love themselves as they are, which can be interpreted as an invitation to break free from rigid social boundaries and embrace a freer and more authentic identity. According to Butler, identity, including gender and sexuality is formed through repetitive performative actions, is not an innate essence. The lyrics emphasize that a person is "born like this", can be seen as an identity that is considered natural and unquestionable. However, some critics suggest that this kind of essentialist appropriation may overlook the complexity of the social construction of identity. These lyrics encourage self-acceptance and pride in private identity. Through Judith Butler's perspective, the message from this line can be seen as a reinforcement of an identity that is considered natural.

Body Without Organ in *BTW*

Lady Gaga's *BTW* presents an in-depth narrative of identity freedom, and gender fluidity through lyrics that depict self-acceptance and respect for diversity. In this discussion, song lyrics are not only considered as works of art, but also as a medium to voice resistance to traditional norms and social hierarchies that limit one's identity.

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the Body without Organs is the main framework for understanding how these lyrics remove traditional boundaries regarding the body and identity. The body without organs reflects the body as a changeable and fluid space, free from binding hierarchical structures, and makes the individual interpret that he or she is not bound by biological or social norms. Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performativity, provides the view that gender is not something that is inherent in nature, but rather the result of social constructions that are realized through the repetition of daily actions and performance.

Gender as a Social Construction and Performativity

Judith Butler's Concept of Gender Performativity states that gender is not a natural or innate attribute, but rather a series of repetitive actions and behaviors shaped by social norms. This theory is in line with the lyrics of *BTW*, such as "No Matter gay, straight, or bi, lesbian, transgender life, I'm on the right track, baby, I was born to survive", explicitly celebrating the plurality of identities and rejecting the rigid binary system in heteronormative diversity. By approving the existence of gender identity and sexual orientation, the song challenges the notion of fixed or predetermined roles, supporting a fluid and performative understanding of identity. Butler (1990) asserts that gender is something that is "done" from something owned, which is reflected in this lyric with an emphasis on the legitimacy of all forms of self-expression and identity.

This song highlights the performative aspects of gender in daily practice. For example, the use of the term "queen" in the lyrics "Don't be a drag, just be a queen" shows how gender expression through performance such as drag can deconstruct heteronormative systems. According to Butler, such performative actions can challenge binding social norms and open up space for gender plurality.

Body without Organs: Freedom from Social Construction

The concept of Body without Organs by Deleuze and Guattari views the body as a space of freedom that is not bound by social or biological hierarchies, this perspective is reflected in *BTW* through the theme of self-liberation and rejection of normative Boundaries. Like, "Don't hide yourself in regret, just love yourself and you're set." The sentence of the lyrics encourages individuals to accept their true selves, free from expressions or roles imposed by society. In the framework of Body without Organs, this can be defined as a rejection of hierarchical structures that dictate how the body should function or be perceived. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain that the body is a container for expression and individuality, not a static entity defined by external validation. This concept also supports the idea that the body has unlimited potential to be anything an individual wants. For example, "I'm beautiful in my way, 'cause God makes no mistakes" Lady Gaga emphasizes that everybody and identity is unique and should not be judged based on rigid social norms. This concept is in line with the view that the BwO rejects fixed categories or hierarchies in defining bodies and identities.

Affirmation of Fluidity and Diversity

One of the main aspects of *BTW* is the celebration of diversity and fluidity, as seen in the lyrics "No matter black, white, or beige, Chola or Orient made, I'm on the right track, baby, I was born to be brave" This lyric depicts inclusivity and recognition of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. By voicing various identities without discrimination, Lady Gaga promotes the idea that all identities have equal value. This, reflects the concept of Body without Organs, where the body and identity are not constrained by restrictive social or biological categories. supported by the next lyric, "Don't be a drag, just be a queen" underscores the importance of embracing self-expression without shame or fear. Drag, as an art form and gender expression, is a vivid example of how performativity can be used to challenge and construct traditional norms.

Cultural Impact and Safe Spaces

In addition to its theoretical implications, *BTW* has made a real cultural impact by creating a safe space for marginalized communities, especially LGBTQ+ individuals. The universal message of

this song has turned it into a hymn of pride and resilience. In the lyrics, "Rejoice and love yourself today, 'cause baby, you were *BTW*" is very relevant for those who face discrimination or exclusion due to their identity. By normalizing the discussion of gender fluidity and self-acceptance, *BTW* contributes to the reduction of stigma and the promotion of inclusivity in popular culture and social norms. Lady Gaga also strengthened the message of this song through real actions. Like the *BTW* Foundation, she focuses on empowering youth to create inclusive communities. This step expands the impact of the song from just a work of art to a social movement that supports the acceptance and restriction of identity.

The Intersection of Art and Social Change

BTW shows how art can be a powerful medium for social transformation. Lady Gaga's use of music as a tool to challenge traditional notions of identity highlights the role of popular culture in the arts can serve as a form of resistance to oppressive structures, inspiring individuals to accept their authentic selves and champion broader social change. For example, the video clip of the song *BTW* itself depicts the birth of a new world that is free from traditional norms. This visualization reinforces the message that identity and body are spaces that are free to express without restrictions. In the context of art, it creates a dialogue between music, visuals, and cultural theories that enrich each other.

Conclusion

Lady Gaga's song *BTW* is more than just a piece of music, it is also a social manifestation that celebrates the diversity of identities and rejects traditional norms. By combining Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performativity and the concept of Body without Organs by Deleuze and Guattari, the song is also used as a powerful tool to break the boundaries of traditional identities and promote gender acceptance and fluidity. Butler highlighted that gender is performative, that is, a social construct that is formed through repeated actions and behaviors. This is in line with the lyrics "No matter gay, straight, or bi, lesbian, transgender life", which affirms that all gender identities and sexual orientations are valid and worthy of celebration. In this framework, Lady Gaga shows that identity is not something fixed or innate, but rather the result of ever-evolving choices and expressions. The song helps deconstruct traditional binary norms and normalize gender diversity in popular culture.

The concept of Body without Organs by Deleuze and Guattari offers a broader perspective on the body and identity as a boundless space. The body, in this concept, is not bound to hierarchical categories or social norms, but rather becomes a medium for free and fluid expression. The lyrics

describe the spirit of liberation from social pressure to conform to certain standards. The body is seen as a flexible container, which allows individuals to define their identity without fear or regret.

In the lyrics of the song *BTW*, there is also the word "drag", which is an expression of subversive actions that deconstruct heteronormative gender norms. In addition to its theoretical impact, the song also has a significant cultural influence. *BTW* has created a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community and individuals who feel neglected by social norms. By normalizing discussions about gender fluidity and self-acceptance, the song helps reduce stigma and promote inclusivity in society. Gaga also reinforces the message of this song through concrete actions such as, *BTW* Foundation is an initiative that focuses on empowering youth and creating a more inclusive community. The foundation not only expands the song's impact but also makes it part of a larger social movement to support identity freedom. With this approach, Gaga shows that art can go beyond its role as entertainment and become a tool for real social change.

BTW is a work of art that transcends the boundaries of music. By integrating cultural theories and progressive philosophies, the song becomes a manifestation of self-acceptance, diversity, and rejection of limiting norms. Lady Gaga not only uses art to create a dialogue about identity but also to empower individuals and communities. In an ever-evolving world, *BTW* remains relevant as a symbol of courage, celebration, and freedom that embraces human diversity holistically.

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