

On Judith Butler's Performativity Theory to Margaret Drabble's *The Seven Sisters*

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Introduction

This paper is an attempt to introduce performativity theory with specific mention of the contribution of J.L.Austin, John Searle, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler to this theoretical model. Exclusive attention is bestowed on Butler's performativity theory. The major aim of this work is to analyze Margaret Drabble's *The Seven Sisters* (2002) by using gender performativity theory of Butler for more productive and exhaustive exploration. To the best of my knowledge, no one has studied Drabble's *The Seven Sisters* (2002) from this perspective. This makes the task challenging and daunting. Use of Butler's performativity theory moves away from the traditional reading and provides postmodern reading of Drabble's *The Seven Sisters* (2002). By using theoretical inputs of Butler, an attempt will be made to investigate concerns like gender discrimination, undermining gender stereotypes, cross gendering and others that are emerging in contemporary society and are reflected in Drabble's *The Seven Sisters* (2002).

This paper is structured as follows. In section 2, Performativity theory is explained in detail. But, specific attention is given to Butler's theory. Section 3 is devoted to how Butler's theory can be successfully applied to Drabble's *The Seven Sisters* (2002). Finally, in the last section we make concluding remarks.

Performativity Theory

In recent years, the concept of performativity has expanded from performing arts and theatre contexts into a heterogeneous range of sites of practice which identifies performativity in all expressive forms of behaviour and gestures. The term 'performativity' is derived from the verb 'to perform'. It implies the capacity to execute an action, to carry something out actually as well as to do something according to prescribed ritual. The term performativity has taken a precise meaning in language theory since Austin. About performativity, Austin in *Philosophical Papers* (1979) states:

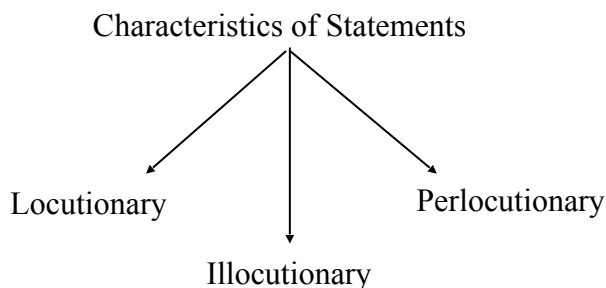
You are more than entitled not to know what the word 'performative' means. It is a new word and an ugly word, and perhaps it does not mean anything very much. But at any rate there is one thing in its favour, it is not a profound word (233).

Austin used the word performative to describe utterances such as 'I take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife' or 'I name this ship the queen Elizabeth'. In these cases, Austin claims that 'to say' something is 'to do' something. Austin in *How to do Things with Words* (1975) avers:

In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe my doing of what I should be

said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it (6).

Promises, bets, curses, judgments and contracts do not describe or represent the action. They are actions because speaker executes something while articulating. Austin also makes a candid distinction between constative and performative utterances. Explicitly, performative utterances cannot be judged true or false as constative utterance might be. Performative utterances can only be judged either ‘happy’ or “infelicitous”. In addition, performatives are dependent for their validity on conventions. For example, marriage can only be said to have taken place if the right words were said at the right time in the right place, if the right kind of person was officiating. Here, in this example of marriage, speaker creates a social reality (married couple) within certain social contexts (wedding). Moreover, Austin explicated three characteristics, or acts of statements. These are Locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts.



	Locutionary Act	Illocutionary Act	Perlocutionary Act
Austin	Speaker	Convention	

Locutionary acts are roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain ‘meaning’ in the traditional sense. Illocutionary acts are such as informing, ordering, warning, etc. Illocutionary utterances have a certain kind of conventional force. Perlocutionary acts are what we bring about or achieve by saying something such as convincing, persuading, deterring or surprising. Perlocutionary acts are not conventional.

Yoshitake Masaki in *Critique of J. L. Austin’s Speech Act Theory: Decentralization of the Speaker-Centered Meaning in Communication* (2004) also says that

The actual effect always contains a possibility that the effect might be different from what the speaker intends, or perlocutionary acts are beyond the speaker’s intention or out of his or her control (35).

Austin focused on illocutionary acts, stating that here we might find the ‘force’ of a statement and demonstrate its performative nature. For example, to say ‘Don’t run with knife’ has the force of a warning when spoken in a certain context. This utterance may also be stated in an explicitly performative way, e.g., ‘I warn you, don’t run with knife’. This statement is neither true nor false. It creates a warning. By hearing the statement and understanding it as a warning, the hearer is warned, which is not to say that s/he must or will act in any particular way regarding the warning. Austin is able to tabulate six rules for a happy and successful performative. They are quoted here in full. Austin states:

1. There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
2. the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
3. The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and recently and
4. completely.
5. Where, as often, the procedure is designed for the use by persons having certain thought or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of the participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further
6. must actually so conduct themselves subsequently (15).

In this way, Austin’s speech act theory leads to the conclusion that studying words and sentences outside of a social context tells us little about communication.

Searle in *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969) extended Austin’s investigation concerned to speech act theory. Searle tries to define illocutionary act in a refined way. For Searle, illocutionary is the minimal whole unit of human linguistic communication. In talking and writing to each other, we perform illocutionary acts. Illocutionary acts are performed with certain intentionality. As K. Bach and R. M. Harnish in *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts* (1979) explain that people “don’t speak merely to exercise their vocal cords” (3). Some reason always persists and this reason is called the communicative presumption. For Searle, Illocutionary acts are generally performed with the primary intention of achieving some perlocutionary effect. For example, a speaker may say ‘shut the door’ intending for the auditor to understand this communication as an order and further intending that the auditor should ‘shut the door’. According to Searle, a speech may have any number of effects and impressions on the auditor other than those intended by

Searle	Locutionary Act	Illocutionary Act	Perlocutionary Act
	Speaker	Intention	

the speaker. For example, the speaker might say ‘shut the door’, and the auditor might respond by saying ‘shut it yourself’. So we can conclude that illocutionary acts are essentially intentional, whereas perlocutionary acts may or may not be intentional.

Like Austin, Searle in *Rationality in Action* (2001) explicates that “a statement simply is a commitment to the truth of the expressed proposition” (184). Searle built up a new picture of the speech act that could take the place of Austin’s own set of six conditions. James Loxley in *Performativity: The New Critical Idiom* (2006) claims that Searle built a new picture of four conditions

central to the successful performance of speech act. These are propositional, preparatory, essentiality and sincerity.

1. Propositional condition: A requirement that speech acts include semantic and referential elements that ensure that they are about something.

2. Preparatory conditions: The circumstances that must obtain if an act is to be undertaken successfully.

3. Sincerity: The requirement that someone promising to do something intends to do it, that someone asking for something wants it done, and that someone claiming to know something wants it done, and that something claiming to know something believes that it is so.

4. Essentiality: The requirement that uttering these particular words does indeed count as the performance of the specified act.

So, Searle's speech act theory is called the most serviceable refinement of Austin's speech act theory. Searle presented the improved version of Austin's speech act theory.

The discussion on performativity theory would not be complete without referring to Derrida. Derrida's views on performativity theory are diverged from Austin and Searle. Bearing the stamp of postmodernist thinker, Derrida in *Signature, Event Contexts* (1972) criticizes the notion that the success of a performative utterance is determined by conventions. Derrida argues that Austin avoids to treat and account for the force of the locutionary aspect of language that accompanies the form of the words themselves. Derrida's chief premise is that language is itself performative and exercises force in its own right. Derrida stresses the distinctiveness of every individual speech act, because it has a specific effect in the particular situation in which it is performed. So, it is useless to try to define the context of a speech act. In addition, Derrida also says that due to the possibility of repetition, the intentions of an individual actor can never be fully present in a speech act. Derrida in *Signature, Event and Contexts* (1988) claims:

...a written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context, that is, with the collectivity of presences organizing the moment of its inscription. This breaking force (force de rupture) is not an accidental predicate but the very structure of the written text...by virtue of its essential iterability, a written syntagma can always be detached from the chain in which it is inserted or given without causing it to lose all possibility of functioning, if not all possibility of "communicating" precisely. One can perhaps come to recognise other possibilities in it by grafting it onto other chains. No context can entirely enclose it (9).

Therefore, the core of a performative utterance is not constituted by animating intentions, as Austin and Searle would have it, but by the structure of language.

Interestingly, Austin's account of performativity has been subject to extensive discussion in philosophy, literature, science, technology and beyond. Particularly in the work of feminists, performativity has played an important role in discussions of social change. Most recently, feminist theorist Judith Butler has used the concept of performativity in her analysis of gender development. Butler's gender performativity has found its most sustained expression in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), *Bodies That Matter: On the*

Discursive Limits of "Sex" (1993), *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) and *Undoing Gender* (2004).

Judith Butler, the acclaimed feminist theorist, has articulated a 'theory of performativity' which has been much discussed over the past decade. It was a sense of the pressing requirements of feminist political activism, rather than mere intellectual curiosity that led Butler to the concept of performativity as a theoretical resource. Applying performativity theory to the concept of gender, Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) tries to provide postmodern view concerning gender. In this, Butler discusses how gender is performative, how performances are bound and how drag (men in women clothes and women in men clothes) performances are accepted in our society. Butler in *Undoing Gender* (2004) states:

What moves me politically, and that for which I want to make room, is the moment in which a subject—a person, a collective—asserts a right or entitlement to a livable life when no such prior authorization exists, when no clearly enabling convention is in place (224).

Invoking the concept of performativity, Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) claims that gender identity is performative which means, quite simply to the extent that it is performed. Gender identity is not given by nature. Gender is the result of cultural process. So, we are what is made and remade through that process. In addition, gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. Consequently, "it becomes impossible to separate out gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (6). Butler says that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (33). Moreover, Butler in *Undoing Gender* (2004) states:

Restrictive discourse on gender that insists on the binary of man and woman as the exclusive way to understand the gender field performs a regulatory operation of power that naturalizes the hegemonic instance and forecloses the thinkability of its disruption (43).

So, gender is performative in this sense that it has no separate status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. Performances that do not serve to reinforce this law are repressed and criticized. For example, small girls who don't like dolls will learn to play properly; knights will not grow up to marry other knights. Explicitly, performativity is restrained by cultural factors, discourse and power structures. Butler accepts that such performances are like Austinian performatives because they create gender identity in being performed.

Being performative, gender is the result of stylized repetition of acts that involves bodily movements and gestures that are culturally approved for masculine and feminine gender. In particular, such acts produce us as men or women in a manner that reinforce the binary system of a heterosexual matrix. Heterosexual matrix bound the gender to behave in a binary term (masculine and feminine). Butler emphasizes that these styles are never fully self-styled. These styles have a history and limit the possibilities.

Further, we discuss how gender performativity is restrained by language. Butler concedes that gender identities are constructed by language and discourse. Butler has used the term discourse in analyzing her views concerning

gender and sex. So, it is pertinent to be familiar with the terms of discourse. In the simplest sense, discourse is conversation or information. Michel Foucault in *History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1976) defined the terms 'discourse'. For Foucault, discourse is a system of statements to understand the world. Discourses are modes of constituting knowledge together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations that inhere in such knowledge and the relations between them. In this sense, identity does not discourse or language, but language and discourse 'do' gender. There is no identity outside language and discourse. Culturally intelligible subjects are the effects rather than the causes of discourses that conceal their workings. It is in this sense that gender identity is performative. Butler quotes the claim of Monique Wittig in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999). Wittig states that "language is an instrument or tool that is in no way misogynist in its structures, but only its applications" (35). Wittig is explicitly concerned with the power of language that is responsible for the victimization of women. So, language misrepresents women in its application. That is why they are exploited in male dominated culture.

Butler in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993) states that performative acts are forms of authoritative speech. Following Austin, Butler states that most performatives are statements. In the uttering, performative also performs a certain action and exercises a binding power. Performatives not only perform an action, but confer a binding power on the action performed. Most crucially, "If the power of discourse to produce that which it names is linked with the question of performativity, then the performative is one domain in which power acts as discourse" (225). In addition, there is no power, construed as a subject, but "a reiterated acting that is power in its persistence and instability" (225). Butler continues to describe power in Foucauldian terms as multiple, myriad and productive. Defining power, Foucault in *History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1990) says that power is immanent in all human relations. It is exercised through the net like organisation in our society. The networks through which power is exercised are not static but always in a continuous state of flux. It is productive in this sense that it produces discourse and forms of knowledge. Women being a subject are passionately attached to the power structures in which they are victimized. These power structures favour men and make women dependent on men for counsel, guidance, money and everything. So, this unequal distribution of power in culture causes gender discrimination

So far, we have discussed the concept of gender. Now we will concentrate on the concept of sex. The concept of sex and gender is crucial to understand Butler's performativity theory. Commonly speaking, sex refers to the biological characteristics, while gender refers to behaviors, roles, expectations, and activities in culture and society. Different theorists have given their different comments on sex and gender. The psychologist Robert Stoller in *Sex and Gender: On The Development of Masculinity and Femininity* (1968) states that sex refers to biological traits and gender refers to pick out amount of femininity and masculinity that a person expressed. Gayle Rubin in *The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex* (1975) articulates that "part of social life which is the locus of the oppression of women" (159). Rubin's point is that biological differences are fixed, while gender differences are oppressive results of social interventions that tell us how women and men should behave. Postmodern theorist Butler says that distinction between sex and gender is unintelligible. As she states in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999):

If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all. (10-11).

Sex is constructed is to claim that "body appears as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed" (12). Butler in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993) claims that sex (male/female) is also performative like gender. Physical bodies never exist outside cultural and social meaning. Doctor's statements like 'it is a girl' or 'it is a boy' is a performative utterance that compels the girl to cite both sexual and gendered norms in order to qualify for subjecthood within heterosexual matrix. So, body is understood to be an active process of implying certain cultural possibilities. In addition, Butler also accepts that there is no essential relationship between sex and gender. Then, it is explicit that male can display feminine traits and female can display masculine traits. In this way, Butler has revolutionised our premises concerning sex and gender and has significantly contributed in developing sex and gender theory.

Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) says that Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1984) accepts the sexing of the body as either male or female. But de Beauvoir denies this premise that such a binary division implies any necessary consequence for what it is culturally to be a woman. Butler concedes that sex does not cause gender. If sex is a fact and destiny then gender is open to alterations and transformations. In that case, it is possible to have a designated female body and not to display traits generally considered to be feminine and to have a male body and not to display traits generally considered to be masculine. In essence, the cultural identity 'man' might therefore be applied to a female body and that of 'woman' to a male body. Moreover, there might be proliferation of genders rather than the two designated genders. Butler criticises the regulatory work of gender performatives. In addition, Butler also sees performativity as offering one of the best chances for opposing that work. So, there always remains a chance of multiple identities in the domain of performativity. Drag performances reveal that genders are simulacra (copies without originals). Drag means men in women's clothes and women in men's clothes. These instances show that there is a gap and dissonance between the body and the performed gender calling into question both categories. An important function of drag is to challenge compulsory heterosexuality. Butler also states that "drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity" (174). Geoff Boucher in *The Politics of Performativity: A Critique of Judith Butler* (2006) approves Butler's views that drag fully changes the distinction between inner and outer psychic space. Butler concedes that gender is the result of repeated acts. But they can repeat differently. Stress on repetition permits the suggestion that the norms thus repeated and recited themselves become vulnerable in their repetition. In short, performativity works both ways. It establishes the norms and also turn back to challenge them.

Application of Butler's Theory to Drabble's *The Seven Sisters* (2002)

The postulates of Butler's performativity theory enable us to analyze women's condition in Drabble's novel *The Seven Sisters* (2002). This novel echoes Butlerian thoughts offering numerous instances. With the help of this theory, we will study how women's performances are restrained by culture factors that cause

gender discrimination and how women can undermine their gender stereotypes. Here, specific attention is given to female gender that is oppressed in contemporary culture.

Margaret Drabble's *The Seven Sisters* (2002) is divided in four chapters: a) Her Diary, b) Italian Journey, c) Ellen's Version and d) Dying Fall. The whole story of this novel revolves around the female character, Candida Wilton. This novel evolves Candida's quest for a life after divorce. Deserted by her husband, Andrew, headmaster of a Suffolk school, rejected by her three daughters Ellen, Isobel, and Martha, Candida leaves Suffolk and moves to the anonymity of London. To build up her confidence she joined the night classes on Virgil, health club and purchased lottery tickets. She also made the circle of seven sisters and went on a tour from Carthage to Italy.

The summary of this novel suggests that it presents women's conditions and their problems in prevalent culture. We can better understand the condition of women by using theoretical inputs of Butler. Butler claims that gender is performative but she also accepts that gender performances are restrained by cultural factors. Cultural factors play an important role in causing gender discrimination. Shulamith Firestone stated in *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) that "Culture is so saturated with male bias that women almost never have a chance to see themselves culturally through their own eyes" (187). Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) said: "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" (33). Moreover, Butler also says that "gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out gender from the political and cultural interventions in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (6). These theoretical insights are iterated in *The Seven Sisters* (2002). Candida Wilton wanted to do job in bookshops and in cafes. But she was restricted from doing this. So, her choice to work outside the house was restrained by culture. As she stated:

When I was a girl, I wanted to get a job, to earn some pocket money, to learn about the world. Some of my school friends did. They worked in bookshops and in cafes. Some of them even had holiday jobs at Bultins. But my mother wouldn't let me. She thought shop work wasn't ladylike. She had never worked. She didn't expect to work. I was an obedient child, and I did not resist her prohibition (89)

After her marriage to Andrew, Candida was expected to establish heterosexual relationship with her husband. But she was not feeling fit in this heterosexual matrix due to her frigidity. She accepts "I have always been a passive person" (18). But she passively followed her husband in this relationship. She had three daughters from her husband that indicates the pressures of patriarchal culture on Candida as she followed the norm against her wish. C. MacKinnon in *Toward a Feminist Theory of State* (1989) argues that in heterosexual relationships masculinity is defined as sexual dominance and femininity is defined as sexual submissiveness. So, genders are "created through the eroticization of dominance and submission. The man/woman difference and the dominance/submission dynamic define each other" (113). Now, women have understood that their condition is such because cultural conditions in which women live, are either misrepresented or not represented at all. Butler in *Gender*

Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1999) also claims that “Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of women, the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought” (5).

Butler in *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory* (1988) claims that “Performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all” (528). So, gender has cultural survival as its end. In essence, those who do not do their gender correctly are punished by society. This theory also echoes in *The Seven Sisters* (2002). In this novel, Candida was not able to give sexual satisfaction to her husband. So, her husband divorced her. Then, “Everyone felt sorry for me when Andrew's dalliance became common knowledge, when it became clear to the world that our marriage was over. I became an object of gossip and pity and contempt” (19). So, when she tried to defy cultural norm then she faced misfortune. Misfortune came to her in the form of divorce. She felt moneyless, childless, futureless and even hopeless because she was totally dependent on her husband for everything. To some extent, Candida also found herself responsible for divorce. She explains:

I did not conduct myself like a lady in those few years in Suffolk. I had small tantrums over small things and slept much in the afternoons. (...) I withdrew my wifely support from my husband and gazed at my handsome daughter Isobel with envy and distrust (...) I moved out of my husband's bed and said that I preferred to sleep alone. I made the excuse that this was because I slept so badly (...) It is true that I sleep badly. Things got worse when I stopped Hormone Replacement Therapy. I still have night sweats, though they should have stopped long ago. I no longer sweat during the day, but I do feel hot at night. Nobody warned me of this. (...) what would have happened to me and my marriage (74).

Most interestingly, seeking liberation from male dominance is one of the vital issues of feminist writing. The desire of women to lead an independent life is an innate urge in women of all times. Their true identity is smothered by the patriarchal culture through assigning her experiences to the margins of existence. To find out who she is and what she has lost, it is imperative to challenge male dominated culture to make their position respectable in our society. There is the compelling need for women to construct a new cultural environment undermining their gender stereotypes so that they can empower themselves. Some theoretical insights of Butler also help women to undermine their gender stereotypes. Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) explicates that there is nothing that is essentially masculine or feminine. These concepts are only culturally reiterated practices that are constantly in flux. Parody and drag performances deprive hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities. For Butler, “In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative nature of gender itself – as well as its contingency” (175). So, it is explicit that one may be a ‘masculine’ female and a ‘feminine’ male. These theoretical insights are also reflecting in *The Seven Sisters* (2002). After divorce, Candida tried to make her own identity as she stated, “I shall remake my body and my soul” (19). “Nobody knew of the exhilaration I felt when I realized that I would not have to live with Andrew for the rest of my life. Nobody knew of secret delight”, says Candida (19). She joined the

night classes on Virgil, the health club and purchased lottery tickets in order to build up her confidence. Now, she was able to give expression to all her desires that were suppressed in the custody of her husband's hegemony. Moreover, Candida also made a group of seven sisters for a world tour. In this group, she preferred those women who were having similar experiences.

Being bold and assertive, Candida also criticised her husband. She finally accepted that she disliked her husband. She also gave the details why she was angry with him. Once she cooked a Hungarian Goulash for the dinner guests, and her husband rebuked her very badly in front of them by saying, "Well, sweetie, not quite one of your best, is it? (...) 'Just a wee bit on the disgusting side, I'm afraid'", and pushed all the meat to one side (84). Candida remarks that "at such moments, one dies a little, but I was also angry. I felt I had not deserved such treachery" (85). In this episode, Candida accused her husband for his manners towards her. Candida also blamed Andrew for having "alienated" and "seduced" their daughters and "stole their hearts away" (20). Further, in her narrations she asks:

Did I want children? I don't know. I loved them, when they were little, in a programmed biological maternal manner, and I am hurt now they have rejected me in favour of their father. It is not their fault that he forced them to take sides, but I do feel, in an old-fashioned way, that they should have been more loyal to their mother" (35).

Moreover, Candida tried to free herself from the memories of her husband and her daughters. But, she found difficult to forget them. She did her best to forget them. Before the Italian journey, she concedes "I am happy now" (161). After her brief encounter with her husband over the phone before she left for the journey, she tried to justify herself. She states:

I am not inhuman. I do not wish to cut myself off utterly from my family. It is simply that I feel a need to redefine what my relationship to my family should be, in these latter days, in these survival days, after biology has done its best and worst (160).

Julia is another female character. Julia's parents did not restrict her to do anything. "She did exactly what she wanted" (31). She challenged her feminine norms being free like a bird. She was free to do anything without any restriction. She had multiple sex partners. She did not feel shy even discussing sexual matters and experiences with her friends unlike stereotypical women. But, she was notorious on this count. She was highly ambitious and wanted to be a writer. Candida says, "I don't know where she got her confidence or her ideas. The environment was hardly supportive of her kind of interest or experimentation" (28). But, her works were not appreciated by people. She says: "I never get invited to literary events or festivals or anything artistic. Nobody thinks of me as a literary writer" (92). She also criticised the society to treat her like a shit. She says: "I am sick of being treated without respect. People don't respect women like me" (92). But she did not care she did what she desired. These paradigmatic instances validate Butler's concept of gender as a fluid variable.

Conclusion

So, the novel *The Seven Sisters* (2002) presents the complex case of gender performativity. Butler's theory aids us to accept the fact that women should not

be bound to follow feminine traits. They should be free to follow masculine traits if they so desired. They should strive for equality. This work is important for those who have not heard the story of the emergence of performativity theory, and to those also who know little about it. This paper acquaints us with the history of performativity theory including the views of Austin, Searle, Derrida and Butler. It is an undeniable fact that Butler's performativity theory is instrumental in understanding women's condition in Drabble's *The Seven Sisters* (2002). Some postulates of Butler's performativity theory reveal how women can challenge their gender stereotypical roles performing masculine traits. This will help in building up the confidence of women and raising their status in society. It is right saying that gender differences will lead to the degradation of our country and the world. Gender equality will lead us in the upgradation of our country and the world by envisaging equality of sexes. In other words, demand for equal rights means to create a social climate in which variety can flourish without being exploited and all persons may have the opportunity to earn respect and advancement.

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