

**BEYOND GENDER BINARIES: EXPECTATIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH
DISCOURSE IN *RED CLOCKS* AND *NJAN MARYKUTTY***

Dissertation

*Submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
award of Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature*

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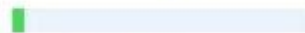
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I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **Beyond Gender Binaries: Expectations and Mental Health Discourse in *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty*** is a bonafide record of research done by **Sneha K B** (Register Number AIAWMEG021), has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title.

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Place: P.Vemballur

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Chapter I

Introduction

As feminism continues to evolve in response to shifting social, political, and cultural dynamics, it becomes increasingly imperative to critically analyze how gender norms, identities, and power dynamics are constructed and contested within literary texts. Through an interdisciplinary exploration informed by recent feminist activities and theoretical insights, this research aims to contribute to ongoing conversations about gender, literature, and social change, offering fresh insights into the complexities of contemporary gender dynamics and their portrayal in fiction. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity has revolutionized scholarly understandings of gender identity and representation, catalyzing a reevaluation of conventional gender binaries and essentialist assumptions. Against this intricate backdrop, this study embarks on an exploration of gender performativity in the novels *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty*, harnessing Butler's theoretical framework as a guiding lens. Although many studies have taken place on the novel *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty* no study has taken on the concept of gender performativity as reflected in these novel.

Through meticulous textual analysis and theoretical engagement, this research endeavors to illuminate the myriad ways in which characters in these texts negotiate and perform their gender identities within the confines of societal norms and expectations. By unraveling the complexities of gender representation in contemporary fiction, this study aims to contribute to broader dialogues about gender, literature, and social change. In doing so, it seeks to offer fresh insights into the intricate interplay between fiction and reality in moulding our perception of gender

dynamics, while also shedding light on the nuanced complexities of feminist literary analysis.

This project introduce *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty*. Gender performativity means and how it's relevant to our analysis of these stories. Moving on to the second chapter, taking a close look at *Red Clocks* and analyze how gender is portrayed in the book. Examine the characters, the plot, and the themes to see how they contribute to our understanding of gender performativity. In the third chapter, switch gears to focus on *Njan Marykutty* and how gender is represented in the movie. Discussing the characters, the storyline, and the cultural context to uncover insights into gender identity and expression. Moving forward, we'll explore how gender intersects with other aspects of identity, such as sexuality, caste, and religion, in both *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty*. Finally, wrap up the project by summarizing our findings and reflecting on what we've learned about gender in *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty*. Discuss the implications of analysis and consider how these insights can inform broader discussions about gender in literature and cinema.

In the multifaceted landscape of contemporary society, feminist discourse remains a crucial axis of discussion, spotlighting the ongoing struggles and triumphs in the quest for gender equality. Despite significant strides in various domains, such as education and workforce participation, entrenched gender inequalities persist, casting a long shadow over the journey towards true parity. Statistical analysis offer a nuanced perspective, revealing both encouraging advancements and enduring disparities. Notably, while women have made significant inroads into traditionally male-dominated fields like STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), systemic barriers continue to impede their access to leadership positions and wield influence, underscoring the entrenched patriarchal structures that

perpetuate systemic inequities. The underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles underscores the urgent need for transformative change, amplifying the voices of feminists worldwide who advocate for justice, equity, and inclusivity across all genders.

Feminist discourse stands as a cornerstone of contemporary social dialogue, addressing persistent disparities and advocating for gender justice across diverse spheres of human endeavor. Against the backdrop of ongoing struggles and achievements in the pursuit of gender equality, recent years have witnessed a surge of feminist activity that spans political, cultural, and academic domains. From landmark legislative victories to grassroots movements mobilized through digital platforms, feminist initiatives continue to shape public discourse and challenge entrenched patriarchal structures worldwide. Recent years have seen a rise in the number of women occupying key leadership positions, with some achieving historic milestones. Legislative advances have also been notable, with feminist movements pushing for reforms to address gender-based discrimination and violence.

Revelations of misconduct across various industries continue to fuel calls for accountability and systemic change to end workplace harassment and gender-based violence. Efforts to mitigate the enduring gender wage gap have garnered considerable attention, with advocacy campaigns shedding light on the disparities in pay and economic opportunities between genders. Calls for policy reforms, increased corporate transparency, and cultural shifts have intensified as society grapples with the systemic inequalities pervasive in workplace settings. Intersectional feminism serves as a foundational framework within modern feminist discourse, emphasizing the interconnectedness of social identities and the intersecting systems of oppression they face.

Recent endeavors have been dedicated to centering the perspectives and experiences of marginalized communities, including women of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities, within feminist movements and advocacy campaigns. Amidst these developments, academic research on feminism remains vibrant, with scholars producing ground breaking work across diverse disciplines. Recent studies have explored topics such as gender identity, reproductive rights, environmental justice, and the junction of race, class, and gender, contributing to evolving understandings of gender dynamics and informing policy debates on issues affecting women and marginalized communities.

This study seeks to situate itself within this dynamic landscape of feminist engagement by examining the intersection of gender performativity, societal boundaries, and literary representation under the prism of Judith Butler's influential idea. Within the sphere of literature, feminist critique serves as an effective tool for dismantling entrenched gender norms and interrogating dominant narratives. Rooted in the historical struggles of women writers to assert their voices in a canon traditionally dominated by men, the literary critique of women has burgeoned into a robust scholarly field characterized by diverse theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. Pioneering works by figures such as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir paved the way for contemporary scholars to dissect patriarchal ideologies embedded within literary texts. Among these, Judith Butler's groundbreaking theory of gender performativity occupies a seminal position, fundamentally reshaping feminist discourse by positing that gender does not intrinsic essence but rather a social construct enacted through repeated acts and gestures.

Chapter II

Gender Performativity in *Red Clocks*

Leni Zumas is a distinguished author renowned for her thought-provoking narratives that intricately weave together themes of gender, identity, and societal norms. Her work stands at the intersection of literature and activism, with a profound commitment to feminist principles evident in both her novels and her advocacy efforts. Zumas's literary exploration of feminism is exemplified in her critically acclaimed novel *Red Clocks*, where she delves into a dystopian world where reproductive rights are sharply curtailed. Through evocative narrative and deep character development, Zumas challenges readers to tackle the implications of patriarchal systems on women's autonomy and agency.

In addition to her literary endeavors, Zumas actively engages in feminist activism, utilizing her platform to raise awareness and advocate for gender equality. She participates in discussions surrounding reproductive rights, sexual violence prevention, and workplace equity, amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and striving to enact meaningful societal change. Zumas's approach to feminism is multifaceted, encompassing both her literary pursuits and her commitment to real-world activism. She believes in the transformative power of storytelling as a catalyst for social change. Through her novels and advocacy work, she challenges societal norms and encourages readers to critically examine the complexities of gender dynamics in contemporary society.

Leni Zumas's novel *Red Clocks* paints a vivid portrait of a dystopian society where four women navigate the complexities of reproductive rights and societal expectations in the coastal town of Birchville, Oregon. *Red Clocks* delves into the lives of four women grappling with the complexities of womanhood in a society where

reproductive rights are severely restricted. The biographer is the main character in the story, Ro, a single woman longing for motherhood but hindered by societal and legal constraints barring single individuals from adoption or fertility treatments. The lives of four women Ro, Susan, Mattie, and Ginare intricately woven together as they navigate a society rife with oppressive restrictions on reproductive rights and gender roles.

Ro, a high school teacher, shares the yearning for motherhood and explores alternative reproductive options. Her journey is marked by determination and resourcefulness as she navigates the clandestine world of fertility treatments and herbal remedies. Ro serves as a notable figure challenging conventional expectations and customs about the gender. As an unmarried woman pursuing alternative methods of conception, Ro boldly confronts societal conventions surrounding motherhood and feminine identity. She firmly rejects the notion that a woman's value is contingent upon her ability to conceive children traditionally, instead asserting her autonomy over her reproductive decisions. Ro's narrative underscores the restriction put on women by societal standards and the bravery required to defy them. Through her deliberate choices and actions, Ro embodies a form of gender performance that disrupts entrenched norms, advocating for individual agency and empowerment.

Ro emerges as a central and dynamic character whose journey encapsulates the themes of resistance, resilience, and the quest for autonomy within a dystopian society. Ro is portrayed as a single woman whose fervent desire to conceive and become a mother drives her actions and decisions. Despite societal pressures and restrictions on reproductive rights, Ro refuses to conform to conventional expectations and responsibilities for gender. Instead, she boldly seeks alternative methods of conception, challenging the notion that a woman's worth is tied solely to her ability to

bear children conventionally. It is evident from one of the quotes below. "The men are not. No one is. These days you might as well be dead if you're infertile" (Zumas 43).

As a single woman grappling with infertility, Ro embodies the repercussions of this societal attitude firsthand. She experiences the weight of being deemed "worthless" by societal standards due to her inability to conceive conventionally. Ro's journey exposes the harsh reality that individuals, particularly women, are judged and marginalized based on their reproductive capabilities. Throughout the novel, Ro's goes through a tremendous shift when she faces numerous obstacles and setbacks in her quest for motherhood. One example of an obstacle and setback that Ro faces in *Red Clocks* is her struggle to obtain a "Pink Ticket" to undergo a legally sanctioned IVF procedure.

United States congress ratified the Personhood Amendment, which gives constitutional right to life, liberty, and property to a fertilized egg a the moment of conception. Abortion is now illegal in all fifty states. Abortion providers can be charged with second-degree murder, abortion seekers with conspiracy to commit murder. In vitro fertilization, too, is banned, because the amendment outlaws the transfer of embryos from laboratory to uterus. (The embryos can't give their consent to be moved.) (Zumas 30).

In the novel's dystopian society, laws severely restrict access to reproductive technologies, particularly for single women like Ro. Despite her determination to conceive, Ro encounters bureaucratic hurdles and legal barriers that hinder her progress. Ro's efforts to navigate the complex and restrictive system are met with frustration and disappointment. She is forced to confront the reality of her limited options and the harsh consequences of defying societal norms. This setback highlights

the pervasive control exerted over women's bodies and reproductive choices in the novel's society, underscoring the challenges Ro faces in her quest for motherhood.

Despite this setback, Ro persists in her pursuit of alternative methods of conception, demonstrating her resilience and determination in the difficult circumstances. Her struggle against institutional barriers act as moving illustration of the broader themes of autonomy and right towards reproduction explored in the novel. Through Ro's journey, readers are confronted with the injustices inherent in a society that seeks to control and regulate women's bodies, inspiring reflection regarding the current struggle for reproductive equity and autonomy. Ro's defiance of societal norms is not limited to her reproductive journey; she also challenges entrenched gender roles and expectations, advocating for individual agency and autonomy. Her character embodies the complexities of womanhood as well as the fight for self-determination in a world where women's rights are severely restricted.

They are yipping and pipping, her two. They are rolling and polling and slapping and papping, rompling with little fists and heels on the bald carpet.

They are hers, but she can't get inside them.

They can't get back inside her.

They are hurling their fists—Bex fistier, but John brave (Zumas 23).

Susan, a mother of two, unexpectedly finds herself pregnant with her third child. Despite her initial joy, Susan's pregnancy forces her to confront the societal pressures and the given demands put on women to prioritize motherhood above all else. Susan, the herbalist, offers a different perspective on gender performativity within the novel. As a woman living in relative isolation, Susan's relationship with gender is complex and multifaceted. While she embodies certain traits traditionally associated with femininity, such as nurturing and caregiving, Susan also rejects

conventional gender norms in her rejection of societal expectations. Her choice to live on her terms, away from the scrutiny and judgment of others, reflects a form of gender performativity that prioritizes personal autonomy and self-determination over external validation.

Susan emerges as a complex and enigmatic character whose presence brings the complexity to the novel's exploration of reproductive rights and autonomy within a dystopian society. Susan is depicted as an eccentric herbalist living on the fringes of the community, harboring her secrets and vulnerabilities. Despite her unconventional lifestyle, Susan possesses a deep understanding of the natural world and act as a supply of wisdom and support for those who seek her assistance. Throughout the novel, Susan's character embodies a sense of resilience and self-reliance against the backdrop of societal restrictions and oppression. She rejects the constraints imposed by the patriarchal regime and asserts her autonomy over her body and choices, refusing to conform to societal expectations.

Ro meets Susan relatively early in the novel. Their initial encounter occurs when Ro seeks out Susan's assistance as an herbalist to explore alternative methods of conception. Ro, grappling considering the restriction of conventional medical options due to restrictive laws, turns to Susan for guidance and support in her quest to become a mother. This meeting marks the beginning of a significant relationship between the two characters, as Susan offers Ro insight, empathy, and assistance in navigating the challenges she faces in her reproductive journey. Throughout the novel, Ro and Susan's interactions deepen, highlighting the bonds formed between them as they confront the societal pressures and injustices that shape their lives.

Susan, as an herbalist, provides Ro with alternative remedies and therapies to aid her in conception. She offers herbal concoctions and treatments that Ro hopes will

increase her chances of becoming pregnant. Susan's expertise in natural remedies offers Ro a feeling of empowerment and hope in her quest for motherhood outside of conventional medical channels. Beyond the physical remedies, Susan also offers Ro emotional support and understanding. Ro confides in Susan about her struggles and fears regarding her infertility and her want to become a mother. Susan listens empathetically and provides a compassionate presence for Ro to express her emotions and concerns without judgment. Throughout their interactions, Susan offers Ro guidance and advice on navigating the societal barriers and legal restrictions surrounding reproductive rights in their dystopian society. She shares her own experiences and knowledge, empowering Ro to make knowledgeable decisions on her reproductive options and assert her autonomy in the face of societal pressure. As their connection grows stronger, Susan not only provides support but also becomes a friend to Ro. They forge a bond founded on mutual respect and empathy, seeking solace in each other's presence while they go through the obstacles they encounter.

Susan's compassion and empathy shine through in her interactions with other characters, particularly Ro, whom she supports in her quest for motherhood. Susan's character act as a ray of optimism and tenacity in a world plagued by uncertainty and oppression, inspiring others to query the current situation and seek alternative paths to empowerment. Susan's deterministic character is thoroughly illustrated through her words. "The system won't let us be our own humans. It makes us play our parts, our sacred roles, again and again and again" (Zumas 164).

Susan expresses frustration with the oppressive societal system that restricts individual autonomy and forces people into predetermined roles, highlighting the struggle for personal agency and self-expression within the novel's dystopian society through this quote. Susan articulates her frustration with the restriction set by the

societal system. She perceives the system as restrictive and oppressive, inhibiting individuals from fully embracing their humanity and exercising their autonomy. Susan's character embodies a spirit of independence and resistance against the constraints imposed by the system, advocating for individual agency and selfdetermination.

Susan critiques the societal expectation for individuals to conform to predetermined roles and norms, which she view as constraining and dehumanizing. She highlights the repetitive nature of these roles, suggesting that individuals are trapped in a cycle of conformity that stifles their ability to express their true selves. Susan's characterization as a nonconformist and free thinker underscores her refusal to adhere to societal expectations, as she contest the idea of "sacred roles" imposed by the system.

Mattie, a teenage girl, faces her challenges when she becomes pregnant after a brief affair. With limited availability of safe and authorized abortion, Mattie confronts the stark realities of motherhood at a young age, highlighting the consequences of restricted reproductive rights. Mattie emerges as a character who actively question the established gender standards throughout the narrative. Faced with an unexpected pregnancy as a teenage girl, Mattie confronts the societal expectations imposed upon her as a young woman. Mattie is one of Ro's students at the school where Ro teaches. When Mattie discovers she is pregnant and seeks advice and guidance from Ro. Mattie confides in Ro about her predicament and the challenges she faces, including her uncertainty about what to do about her pregnancy. Ro listens empathetically and offers support to Mattie, providing her with a compassionate presence during a difficult time. Mattie's helplessness is portrayed in her words as "She tells herself that's why she has trouble making friends: because she doesn't act like she's supposed

to. It's like everyone has a compass in their head pointing at the same north, and she's got a different one, maybe three degrees off, so when she talks to people she's always pointing in a slightly different direction" (Zumas 82).

While their interactions may not be as central to the plot as some of Ro's other relationships, such as with Susan, they still contribute to the complexity of Ro's character and her role within the community. Ro's interactions with Mattie highlight her compassion and empathy towards others, as well as her willingness to assist individuals who require it, even outside of her immediate circle of friends or acquaintances. Despite the pressures to conform to conventional notions of femininity and motherhood, Mattie grapples with her aspirations and desires. Her decision to seek an abortion defies the prevailing societal narrative that equates womanhood solely with maternal responsibilities and self-sacrifice. Through Mattie's journey, the novel interrogates the idea that there exists only one prescribed way to perform femininity, emphasizing the importance of personal responsibility in forming an individual's identity.

Mattie emerges as a complex and resilient character whose journey reflects the struggles and the difficulties encountered by young women in a dystopian society. Mattie is introduced as a troubled teenager grappling with an unexpected pregnancy, navigating the complexities of adolescence and womanhood amidst a society that imposes strict regulations on reproductive rights. Despite her youth and vulnerability, Mattie displays remarkable resilience and agency as she faces the daunting decisions and responsibilities thrust upon her. "How can you raise a child alone if you don't even find out what they're doing to your area?"(Zumas 5). Mattie's character experiences a dramatic change, she grapples with the repercussions of her pregnancy and with the societal expectations and pressures placed upon her. Despite facing

judgment and stigma from others, Mattie refuses to conform to conventional norms or sacrifice her aspirations and desires.

Mattie's journey is marked by moments of introspection, growth, and introspection as she navigates the uncertain terrain of adolescence and motherhood. Despite the challenges she faces, Mattie demonstrates courage and determination in asserting her autonomy and defining her path forward. Throughout the narrative, Mattie emerges as a compelling symbol of resilience and determination, particularly for young women facing adversity. Her experiences highlight stress the importance of agency and self-determination in navigating life's challenges, emphasizing the power of individual courage in shaping one's path forward.

Gin emerges as a multifaceted character grappling with her complexities within the novel's dystopian society. As a fellow teacher alongside Ro, Gin navigates her life with a guarded demeanor, harboring her secrets and uncertainties. Gin is depicted as someone who outwardly conforms to societal expectations, yet internally wrestles with the restriction imposed by the oppressive regime. She embodies a sense of resignation, resigned to her fate within the restrictive confines of the society she inhabits. Despite her compliance with the status quo, there's a palpable undercurrent of discontent simmering beneath the surface, hinting at a deeper longing for freedom and autonomy.

Throughout the novel, Gin's character serves as a foil to Ro's more overt resistance to societal norms. While Ro actively challenges the system and seeks alternative paths to fulfill her desires, Gin represents those who follow to societal expectations out of fear or resignation. Her character adds complexity to the narrative, highlighting the various ways individuals navigate and respond to oppressive structures. Despite her reserved demeanor, Gin's internal struggles and hidden depths

make her a compelling character in her own right. As the novel unfolds, readers are drawn into her inner turmoil and the complexities of her motivations, ultimately revealing a character who, like the others, grapples with the tension between personal desires and societal constraints in a world where individual agency is under constant threat.

The below quote portrays Gin's nonchalant attitude toward conventional titles and names typically associated with gendered identities. She is depicted as someone who is not restrained by social conventions or expectations regarding formalities. Gin's indifference towards being addressed by various titles like 'Mrs.,' 'Miss,' or 'Ms.' suggests her disregard for customary gender roles and societal labels. "The midwife doesn't care if anyone calls her 'Mrs.' or 'Miss' or 'Ms. 'She doesn't care if she's called anything at all. She doesn't care about her first name or her last. But she minds being called 'sir,' even as a joke" (Zumas 115).

Furthermore, Gin's lack of concern about her first or last name indicates a sense of detachment from personal identifiers. She seems to prioritize her professional identity as a midwife over her attributes, emphasizing her commitment to her role and responsibilities within the community. However, the quote also reveals Gin's sensitivity to being misgendered, even in a joking manner. Despite her apparent indifference to formalities, being called 'sir' strikes a chord with Gin, indicating her discomfort with being perceived or addressed as male. This aspect of the quote highlights Gin's awareness regarding gender identity and her desire for respectful acknowledgment of her femininity, even in casual interactions. Since these women's life intersect, *Red Clocks* explores the topics of autonomy, agency, and the societal pressures imposed upon women's bodies and choices. With evocative narrative and deep character development, Leni Zumas crafts a poignant exploration of the enduring

struggle for reproductive justice and bodily autonomy in a society rife with oppression and constraint.

Red Clocks is the exploration of reproductive autonomy, particularly for women. The novel portrays a dystopian society where legislation severely restricts women's reproductive freedoms, including access to abortion and assisted reproductive technologies. This theme underscores the importance of women's agency over their own bodies and reproductive choices, emphasizing the repercussions of eroding these rights. Another recurring theme is isolation and alienation experienced by the characters. Each protagonist struggles with loneliness and disconnects in their own way, whether Ro struggles to conceive a child, Mattie's sense of displacement as a teenager, or Susan's isolation as a reclusive herbalist. These themes underscore the emotional toll of societal expectations and conventions emphasizing the futility of connection and community in overcoming adversity.

Nature serves as a prominent motif in *Red Clocks*, symbolizing both fertility and the cyclical nature of life. The novel frequently references the natural world, from the coastal landscape of the Pacific Northwest setting to the herbal remedies used by Susan in her practice. This motif underscores the interconnectedness of humans and the environment, moreover the fragility and resilience of life. As we conclude our analysis of *Red Clocks* and delve into the exploration of *Njan Marykutty*, we transition seamlessly into a new chapter of examination. In *Njan Marykutty*, directed by Ranjith Sankar, we encounter another narrative that explores the nuances of identity and societal expectations, albeit in a different cultural and social context. Just as we have dissected the themes in *Red Clocks*, we shall embark on a similar journey with *Njan Marykutty*, drawing parallels and distinctions between the two narratives. Through this comparative analysis, we aim to deepen our understanding of the universal

conflict that everybody encounter in asserting their identity and navigating societal constraints, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. Unravelling the intricacies of *Njan Marykutty* continue the exploration of the multifaceted nature of human experience.

Chapter III

Gender Performativity in *Njan Marykutty*

Njan Marykutty is a Malayalam-language film directed by Ranjith Sankar, released in 2018. The film stars Actor Jayasurya in the titular role of Marykutty, a transgender woman. Marykutty, the central character in *Njan Marykutty* embarks on a transformative journey of self-discovery and empowerment as she navigates her gender identity and expression within the societal constraints of Kerala. Despite facing rejection and discrimination from her family and community, Marykutty remains steadfast in her determination to embrace her identity. Driven by her desire for self-acceptance and societal recognition, Marykutty undergoes gender reassignment surgery and strives to find employment and acceptance in her conservative village in Kerala. However, she encounters numerous obstacles, including prejudice, unemployment, and strained personal relationships.

MARYKUTTY. “ I’am a women, I’am mistakenly born in a man’s body. No one can recognize women in me! No one understand my pain! I need to correct this.”

(02:01)

Marykutty confronts her family about her gender and the decision to undergo gender reassignment surgery. This scene demonstrates Marykutty's courage in asserting her identity to her family, despite knowing the possible effects of rejection and ostracization. Marykutty struggles to find employment opportunities due to prejudice and discrimination against transgender individuals in the job market. Despite her qualifications and skills, she is repeatedly denied employment solely based on her gender identity. This lack of economic opportunities exacerbates Marykutty's financial struggles and contributes to her sense of marginalization and exclusion from mainstream society.

Marykutty faces discrimination during a job interview, where she is rejected solely based on her transgender identity. This scene highlights the systemic discrimination and prejudice faced by transgender individuals in the job market, as Marykutty is denied employment opportunities solely based on her gender identity. Marykutty's journey is also marked by strained personal relationships, particularly with her family members and loved ones. Her decision to embrace her true gender identity leads to conflict and estrangement from her family, who struggle to accept and understand her transition. Additionally, Marykutty faces challenges in forming and maintaining meaningful relationships due to societal stigma.

JOVI. "From LKG to plus two, it's her life ambition from then to get a job in police department." (34:58)

Marykutty forms a friendship with Jovi, a transgender woman who accepts and supports her unconditionally. This supportive relationships and solidarity within the transgender community, as Marykutty finds acceptance and belonging with Jovi, despite facing rejection from society at large. Marykutty faces pervasive prejudice and discrimination from various quarters of society due to her transgender identity. This discrimination manifests in verbal abuse, social ostracization, and exclusion from societal norms. For example, Marykutty is ridiculed and mocked by members of her community, who refuse to accept her gender identity and subject her to derogatory remarks and taunts.

JOHN. "These creature should be burnt alive people like Marykutty is a shame to society." (01:10:50)

Marykutty is ridiculed and mocked by members of her community, who refuse to accept her gender identity. This scene illustrates the pervasive prejudice and social ostracization faced by Marykutty from her community, reflecting broader societal

attitudes towards transgender individuals in Kerala. Despite the challenges, Marykutty's resilience and bravery are evident as she refuses to be defined by societal norms or expectations. With the support of a few allies and her unwavering determination, Marykutty embarks the path of self-discovery and empowerment, ultimately finding strength and fulfillment in embracing her true self.

MARYKUTTY. "I feel so sad when people like you interpret the word like transgender like this. To officially address people like me the authorities should find a new word. I don't want any privilege based on transgender."(01:21:58)

Marykutty becomes an advocate for transgender rights, speaking out against discrimination and advocating for equality. This scene showcases Marykutty's resilience and resolve to defy social conventions and fight for the rights and recognition of transgender individuals, despite facing significant opposition and resistance. Kerala, known for its rich cultural heritage and progressive social policies, still grapples with deeply entrenched societal norms and attitudes towards gender. Traditional roles are heavily emphasized, with expectations placed on individuals to conform to binary notions of masculinity and femininity.

In this context, the film portrays the struggles of Marykutty, a transgender woman, as she navigates a society that often marginalizes and discriminates against individuals those who don't follow conventional norms. Marykutty's journey reflects the broader societal challenges faced by transgender individuals in Kerala, including social stigma, discrimination, and limited access to healthcare and employment opportunities. Furthermore, the film highlights the intersectionality of gender identity with other aspects of identity, such as class and religion, which further compound the challenges faced by transgender individuals. Marykutty's experiences underscore the need for greater awareness, acceptance, and inclusivity within Kerala society towards

diverse gender identities and expressions. Despite the cultural and social barriers depicted in the film, *Njan Marykutty* also offers glimpses of optimism and fortitude. Marykutty's determination to embrace her identity and pursue her dreams act as potent testament to the spirit of humanity and the potential for positive change within society.

Marykutty proactively immerses herself in learning about transgender rights and the challenges encountered by the transgender community. By diligently educating herself on these matters, she equips herself with the knowledge necessary to effectively communicate her arguments and shed light on the discrimination faced by transgender individuals, thereby contributing to heightened awareness and advocacy efforts. Marykutty actively engages in public speaking and advocacy efforts to bring attention about transgender rights and promote equality. She participates in rallies, protests, and community events, where she delivers passionate speeches and advocates for legislative reforms to protect the rights of transgender individuals.

Marykutty is proactive in pursuing legal avenues and engaging with government officials and policymakers to advocate for the enactment of laws and guidelines that safeguard the rights of transgender individuals. Through collaboration with transgender advocacy groups and legal experts, she works tirelessly to challenge discriminatory practices and push for legal reforms aimed at securing equitable treatment under the law for all transgender individuals. Marykutty plays a pivotal role in building solidarity and providing support within the transgender community through her efforts to organize support groups, community events, and outreach programs.

By establishing safe spaces where transgender individuals can gather, share their stories, and access essential support services, Marykutty fosters a strong sense of

belonging and empowerment within the community. Marykutty harnesses the influence of media representation to amplify the voices of transgender individuals and confront stereotypes and misunderstandings. Through collaboration with journalists, filmmakers, and media platforms, she shares her personal narrative and endeavors to elevate the attention about transgender rights, leveraging her platform to advocate for increased visibility and accurate representation in the media. In *Njan Marykutty*, the film techniques of cinematography, editing, and sound design are instrumental in conveying themes of gender performativity and the challenges faced by transgender individuals in asserting their identities within society.

The cinematography in the film is used to visually represent Marykutty's internal struggles and external conflicts. Close-up shots and framing techniques are employed to capture Marykutty's emotions and expressions, allowing the audience to empathize with her journey. Wide shots are used to depict Marykutty's interactions with society, highlighting her sense of isolation and marginalization within her conservative village. Additionally, the use of layout of lights and palettes helps evoke mood and atmosphere, with darker tones often used to convey moments of conflict and struggle. The editing of the film plays a crucial role in pacing and narrative structure, allowing for the seamless transition between different stages of Marykutty's journey. Flashbacks and montages are utilized to provide insight into Marykutty's past and the events that shaped her identity, reinforcing the theme of self-discovery and personal growth.

The juxtaposition of scenes depicting Marykutty's internal struggles with those showing her interactions with society generate an atmosphere of tension and contrast, highlighting the dichotomy between her inner truth and societal expectations. Sound design is utilized to connect the emotional moments in the film. The use of diegetic

sounds, such as ambient noise and background chatter, helps to engross in the film's setting, while non-diegetic music underscores emotional beats and pivotal scenes. Sound effects, such as footsteps or door creaks, are employed to heighten suspense and tension during confrontational moments. Additionally, the use of silence is also significant, allowing the times for selfreflection and contemplation, particularly during scenes depicting Marykutty's internal struggles with her gender identity.

Visual and auditory elements in *Njan Marykutty* contribute significantly to the representation and exploration of gender identity, blending the emotional depth to the film's narrative. Marykutty's transformation is visually depicted through costume and makeup, highlighting her journey of self-discovery and transition. The gradual changes in her appearance reflect her evolving understanding and acceptance of her gender identity. The film utilizes body language and gestures to convey Marykutty's struggle with gender identity. Subtle cues, such as posture and facial expressions, reveal the internal conflict she experiences as she grapples with the norm and her sense of self. The film's set design and locations provide context for Marykutty's story, reflecting the cultural and social norms of Kerala society. The contrast between typical and urban settings underscores the difficulties encountered by transgender individuals in different environments.

The film's dialogue provides a window into the characters' perspectives on gender identity. Marykutty's own words convey her struggle for self-acceptance and her determination to assert her identity despite societal barriers. The use of language, including dialects and slang, gives deepness to the characters' interactions and experiences, enhancing the authenticity of the narrative. The film's soundtrack and score play crucial role in amplifying the impact of key moments in Marykutty's journey. Music is strategically employed to underscore moments of triumph and

despair, intensifying the audience's emotional engagement with the narrative. Furthermore, the strategic absence of music in certain scenes fosters a sense of tension and introspection, allowing for moments of quiet contemplation and reflection. Sound effects are utilized to enrich the film's atmosphere and mood, enhancing the audience's immersion in Marykutty's world. From the bustling streets of the city to the serene landscapes of rural Kerala, sound effects provide auditory cues that complement the visual storytelling, helping to evoke a vivid sense of place and emotion.

Njan Marykutty and *Red Clocks* offer distinct portrayals of gender performativity, each grounded in the unique cultural and social contexts of their respective narratives. Here's a comparison highlighting both similarities and differences: The film challenges traditional gender roles by centering on Marykutty, a transgender woman, against the social custom she embrace her identity. Marykutty's journey is characterized by her struggle to navigate a conservative society that often marginalizes and discriminates against transgender individuals. Similarly, *Red Clocks* explores challenges to traditional roles, particularly through characters like Ro, who defy societal expectations surrounding motherhood and female identity. The novel dives into the repercussions of deviating from established gender norms within a dystopian society where women's rights are restricted.

Marykutty actively resists societal norms and discrimination by advocating for transgender rights and visibility. She takes legal action, engages with policymakers, and organizes community support groups to challenge discriminatory practices and foster solidarity within the transgender community. While *Red Clocks* focuses more on personal struggles with gender roles within a dystopian setting, characters like Ro also engage in forms of resistance by asserting their agency over

reproductive choices. However, the novel primarily explores individual agency rather than collective advocacy for gender rights. Marykutty utilizes media representation to amplify the voices of transgender individuals and challenge stereotypes. By collaborating with journalists and filmmakers, she shares her story about transgender rights and advocate for greater visibility in the media. Media representation is not a central theme in *Red Clocks*; however, the novel does touch upon societal narratives and representations of gender roles, particularly the perspective about the reproductive rights and societal expectations surrounding motherhood.

The film acknowledges the intersectionality of gender identity with other aspects of identity, such as class and religion, which further compound the challenges faced by Marykutty as a transgender woman in Kerala society. While *Red Clocks* primarily focuses on gender and reproductive rights, it also point out the intersectionality of gender with other social constructs, such as politics and religion, within the dystopian society depicted in the novel. Both *Njan Marykutty* and *Red Clocks* offer nuanced explorations of gender performativity, highlighting the complexities and challenges of navigating societal expectations and norms surrounding gender identity. While their narratives unfold in distinct settings and contexts, both works underscore the importance of agency, advocacy, and resistance in challenging conventional roles and promoting gender equality. Both *Njan Marykutty* and *Red Clocks* engage with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity by exploring how gender identity is constructed and enacted within societal contexts. Here's how each work contributes to ongoing discussions about gender identity and representation:

The film directly engages with Judith Butler's theory by portraying Marykutty's journey as a transgender woman shows the societal expectations and

norms. Marykuty's life as transgender depicted as fluid and evolving, challenging the binary notions of male and female. *Njan Marykuty* critiques the rigid social constructs that limit gender expression, highlighting how these constructs marginalize transgender individuals. Marykuty's journey exposes the limitations of societal norms and the importance of self-acceptance and authenticity. The film advocates for greater visibility and representation of transgenders in media and society, aligning with Butler's call for the subversion of dominant gender norms through visibility and assertion of identity.

While *Red Clocks* primarily focuses on reproductive rights, it indirectly engages with Butler's theory by examining how societal expectations surrounding reproduction intersect with gender roles and identity. Characters like Ro challenge traditional notions of motherhood, highlights gender is performed in the framework of reproductive rights. The novel interrogates normative developing of gender and sexuality, demonstrating how these constructs are enforced and policed within society. Through characters like Ro and Susan, *Red Clocks* disputes the manner in which gender performativity is tied to societal expectations and regulations. *Red Clocks* stress the significance of agency and autonomy in defining one's identity and challenging oppressive structures. By depicting characters who resist societal norms and assert their agency, the novel aligns with Butler's emphasis on individual agency in subverting dominant gender norms.

Both *Njan Marykuty* and *Red Clocks* contribute to ongoing discussions about gender identity and representation by engaging with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Through their respective narratives, these works challenge traditional notions of gender, advocate for greater visibility and representation of marginalized identities, and underscore the importance of agency and autonomy in defining one's

identity within societal contexts. The exploration of gender performativity in *Njan Marykutty* offers striking realization of the intricate dynamics of gender identity representation in cinema. The film delves into the journey of Marykutty, a transgender woman negotiating social expectations in Kerala. Through meticulous visual and auditory elements, the film captures Marykutty's evolution, from selfdiscovery to advocacy for transgender rights, while also critiquing rigid social constructs.

Understanding gender identity in cinema through *Njan Marykutty* unveils the transformation of film as a vehicle for social commentary and advocacy. The analysis of gender performativity in this film unveils the multifaceted challenges faced by them in asserting their identities amidst societal pressures. Moreover, it underscores cinema's role in challenging normative constructs and fostering empathy towards marginalized communities. In the subsequent chapters, our inquiry will extend to other cinematic works to compare their engagement with gender performativity. Through this exploration, we seek a thorough grasp of the nuances of gender representation in cinema and its broader sociocultural implications.

Chapter IV

Intersectionality and Gender Identity

In both *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty*, characters navigate complex intersections of gender identity with other aspects of identity such as sexuality, caste, and religion, shedding light on the intersecting dynamics of privilege and marginalization. Characters in *Red Clocks* grapple with their sexualities in addition to gender identities. For instance, Ro's desire for autonomy over her reproductive choices intersects with her sexual identity as a lesbian, adding layers of complexity to her struggles against societal norms. Whereas Marykutty's journey intersects with her sexuality as she navigates both her identity as a transgender woman and her romantic feelings toward others. Her experiences highlight the complexities of navigating multiple layers of identity and the struggles for finding acceptance and love.

Red Clocks primarily focuses on gender and reproductive rights, it indirectly touches upon caste and socioeconomic disparities. Characters like Susan, who is financially privileged, have more agency in navigating restrictive societal norms compared to those from marginalized backgrounds. Marykutty's socioeconomic status also impacts her experiences, as she faces discrimination and barriers to accessing resources and opportunities. Her journey highlights the intersecting dynamics of class privilege and gender marginalization.

The novel hints at the influence of religious beliefs on characters' attitudes towards gender and reproduction. For example, certain characters' decisions regarding motherhood are influenced by religious convictions, complicating their interactions with societal expectations. The film explores the intersections of gender identity conviction about religion and customs within Kerala society. Marykutty's experiences

are influenced by her background as a member of marginalized caste, adding additional barriers to her journey toward self-acceptance and societal recognition.

Gender identity and expression are intricately connected to power dynamics within society, and these dynamics are influenced by various societal structures and institutions. Understanding these dynamics requires examining how power operates across different contexts and how it shapes individuals' experiences of gender. Individuals are socialized into gender norms from an early age, learning what behaviors, expressions, and identities are considered acceptable for their assigned gender. Conforming to these norms often leads to acceptance and privilege, while deviation may result in discrimination and marginalization.

Many societal institutions, including legal systems, healthcare, education, and employment, favor certain gender identities over others. For instance, transgender and non-binary individuals may encounter obstacles in accessing gender-affirming healthcare, face workplace discrimination, or struggle to obtain legal recognition of their gender identity. These institutional biases reinforce dominant norms and shun the people who don't fit in. Power dynamics concerning gender identity and expression intersect with various forms of oppression, including race, class, sexuality, disability, and nationality. This intersectional perspective highlights how individuals experience privilege and oppression differently based on the complex intersections of their identities. For example, transgender individuals of color face discrimination against persons of color worse overlapping effects of racism and transphobia, increasing their vulnerability to violence, economic hardship, and social marginalization.

Mainstream media often perpetuates narrow and stereotypical portrayals of gender, reinforcing binary notions of men and women. Transgender and non-binary individuals are frequently misrepresented or excluded, further marginalizing their

experiences and identities. Laws and policies can either challenge or perpetuate power dynamics related to gender identity and expression. Progressive legislation that protects the rights of transgender and non-binary individuals can help dismantle institutional discrimination and promote equality. Conversely, regressive policies, such as bathroom bills or bans on gender-affirming healthcare, exacerbate marginalization and reinforce dominant norms.

Cultural attitudes toward gender vary widely across societies and significantly influence power dynamics. Cultures that rigidly adhere to traditional gender roles may exert greater pressure on individuals to conform, leading to increased stigma and discrimination against those who deviate. Conversely, cultures that embrace diversity in gender identities may offer greater opportunities for self-expression and community support. The norms governing gender identity and expression within a novel and a film, it's essential to examine how these constructs are depicted and challenged through characters' actions and interactions. Traditional notions of men and women are likely to be prevalent, with characters conforming to expected gender roles and behaviors. Manliness may be associated with qualities like leadership, assertiveness, and dominance, while feminine may be linked to traits like nurturing, passivity, and emotional sensitivity.

The storyline might primarily subscribe to a binary concept of gender, categorizing individuals strictly as either men or women based on their biological sex. This binary framework could shape characters' self-perceptions and their perceptions of others, influencing how gender is depicted and understood within the narrative. Characters are likely to encounter societal expectations and roles depending on their gender, dictating how they should behave, dress, and interact with others. These expectations may include gendered divisions of labor, with men typically occupying

roles of authority and leadership, while women are relegated to domestic and supportive roles. Throughout the narrative, these gender constructs and norms may be reinforced through characters' actions, interactions, and dialogue. Characters may face consequences or social sanctions for deviating from expected gender roles, while those who conform may be rewarded with acceptance and validation.

The novel and film may depict characters conforming to gendered behaviors and appearances, such as men being portrayed as physically strong and emotionally stoic, while women are depicted as nurturing and emotionally expressive. These portrayals serve to reinforce traditional gender expectations. The adherence to or subversion of gender constructs and norms may also shape characters' development and relationships within the narrative. Characters who challenge gender norms may face internal and external conflict, while those who conform may experience a sense of belonging and acceptance within society. Butler's theory provides a valuable lens for understanding the intersectional identities portrayed in both *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty*. Butler posits that gender is not an inherent attribute but rather a socially constructed concept perpetuated through repetitive actions and behaviors. By applying Butler's framework, exploring the complicated dynamics of power, privilege, and resistance within overlapping identity categories in each narrative.

The characters in *Red Clocks*, including Ro, Susan, and Mattie, grapple with societal expectations surrounding gender roles and reproductive rights. Butler's theory of gender performativity offers a lens to analyze how these characters navigate and challenge these norms. For instance, Ro's refusal to conform to traditional motherhood norms and Susan's defiance against the restrictions imposed by the Personhood Amendment demonstrate acts of gender performativity that disrupt dominant ideologies. In Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, the examination of key

concepts such as gender norms is crucial to understanding how gender operates within society. Gender refers to the culturally and socially constructed expectations, rules, and behaviors that dictate how individuals should perform their gender identity based on their perceived biological sex. Butler's analysis of gender norms reveals their regulatory and coercive nature, and their role in shaping individuals' experiences of gender.

At the heart of Butler's argument lies the notion that gender norms are not intrinsic or predetermined but are instead socially constructed and upheld through diverse systems of power and control. Societal structures enforce stringent guidelines dictating individuals' conduct, attire, and self-expression following their assigned gender, frequently confining individuals within binary frameworks of male and female while dictating distinct roles and behaviors linked to each category. Moreover, Butler contends that gender norms operate through processes of normalization and marginalization, wherein certain performances of gender are privileged and normalized while others are marginalized or excluded. Those who stray from normative gender expectations may face social sanctions, discrimination, or violence, highlighting the coercive nature of gender norms.

However, Butler also highlights the subversive potential inherent in gender norms. By foregrounding the performative aspects of gender, Butler suggests that individuals can challenge and disrupt normative gender roles through their actions and expressions. This subversive potential opens possibilities for resistance and transformation, as individuals actively contest and renegotiate dominant gender norms. Furthermore, Butler's analysis of gender norms reveals their intersectional nature, as they intersect with other axes of identity such as race, class, and sexuality. Gender norms are not experienced uniformly across all social groups but are rather

shaped by intersecting systems of oppression and privilege. Understanding these intersections is crucial for recognizing the complexities of individuals' experiences the gender norms intersect with other forms of social inequality. By applying Butler's framework, explore the intersectionality of gender with other identity categories such as socioeconomic status and sexuality within the narrative. Characters like Ro, who enjoy economic privilege, may have greater agency to resist societal norms compared to characters like Mattie, who face economic hardships. Moreover, Ro's identity as a lesbian adds complexity to her experiences of gender, highlighting the intersecting power and privilege within the narrative.

Marykutty's journey as a transgender woman illustrates the nature of gender identity. Butler's framework helps us understand how Marykutty's performance of femininity is contested and policed by societal construction and expectations. Her actions challenge the gender binary and disrupt traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, highlighting the fluidity and complexity of gender performativity. Butler's framework aids in analyzing the identity with caste, religion, and socioeconomic status within Kerala society. Marykutty's experiences are shaped by her marginalized identity from lower caste transgender woman, illustrating how intersecting power dynamics reinforce systems of oppression. Her advocacy for transgender rights exemplifies resistance against these intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression. Butler's theory provides a nuanced understanding of how individuals navigate and resist societal norms surrounding gender identity within the circumstance of intersecting identities. It illuminates the complex dynamics of power, privilege, and resistance, underscoring the importance of intersectional analysis in understanding the complexities of gender identity.

Both *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty* illustrate the multifaceted nature of gender. Characters navigate intersecting identities, including race, socioeconomic status, and sexuality, which shape their experiences and interactions within their respective societies. The narratives highlight the norms and expectations on character's experiences of gender identity. Characters face pressures to conform to typical gender roles and face discrimination when they deviate from these norms. Intersectional analysis reveals the intersecting power of dynamics and privilege within gender identity. Characters with intersecting marginalized identities face compounded forms of discrimination, while those with intersecting privileged identities may have more agency to resist societal norms. Despite the constraints imposed by societal norms, characters in both works demonstrate acts of resistance and agency. They challenge dominant ideologies, urge for their rights, and assert their identities.

A woman might become a successful engineer, challenging the stereotype that engineering is a male-dominated field. Despite societal expectations that women should pursue traditionally "feminine" careers, she asserts her autonomy by following her passion and breaking gender barriers in her profession. The stereotype of men as emotionally stoic and unfeeling, a male character might openly express vulnerability, sadness, or fear. By rejecting the societal expectation that men should suppress their emotions, he asserts his autonomy and challenges the notion that masculinity is synonymous with emotional detachment. A character who identifies as non-binary may reject conventional gender norms by adopting an androgynous fashion sense, incorporating attributes commonly associated with sex. This expression of self-challenges the binary concept of gender and affirms their autonomy to shape their identity according to their standards, irrespective of societal pressures. A transgender character might assert their autonomy by openly identifying and living as their true

gender, despite societal pressure to conform to their assigned sex at birth. Through their actions and self-expression, they challenge the binary knowledge of sexuality and affirm their right to live authentically.

A character who identifies as gender non-conforming may assert their autonomy by rejecting traditional gendered pronouns (e.g., "he" or "she") and instead opting for gender-neutral pronouns (e.g., "they" or "ze"). This assertion challenges and affirms their right to be recognized and respected for their gender identity. A transgender character struggles with self-acceptance. Despite identifying as a different gender one who assigned at birth, the character may internalize societal transphobia and struggle with self-acceptance. They might experience sensation of humiliation or inadequacy, believing that their gender identity is invalid or unworthy due to societal stigma surrounding transgender identities. This internalized transphobia may lead them to suppress or hide their identity, fearing rejection or discrimination from others.

A gender non-conforming character faces bullying and harassment. A character who does not undergo through the traditional gender norms may internalize societal homophobia or transphobia after experiencing bullying, harassment, or discrimination based on gender expression. They may feel shame or self-loathing, believing that their identity is inherently wrong or abnormal. As a result, they may attempt to conform to societal expectations to avoid further mistreatment, even if it means sacrificing their authenticity. A feminine-presenting male character feels pressure to conform. A male character who naturally expresses themselves in a more feminine manner may internalize societal expectations of masculinity and feel pressure to conform to traditional gender norms. They may experience shame or embarrassment about their gender expression, believing that they doesn't want to meet society's standards of masculinity. This internalized pressure affect mentally and leads

them to suppression or hiding their feminine traits to avoid judgment or rejection from others.

Characters from marginalized racial groups may experience unique challenges in asserting their gender identity due to racial stereotypes and discrimination. For example, transgender individuals of color often increasing rate of violence and discrimination compared to their white counterparts. They may struggle to assert their agency in shaping their gender identity amidst systemic racism and transphobia. Socioeconomic status can also intersect with moulding their identity and expression. Working class individuals may face barriers to accessing gender-affirming healthcare or resources to express their gender identity authentically. Economic instability can exacerbate challenges such as homelessness or unemployment, make individuals to prioritize their gender identity journey. Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ may encounter intersecting forms of discrimination stemming from both their gender and sexual orientation. For instance, transgender individuals who also identify as gay or lesbian may experience rejection from both LGBTQ+ and cisgender heterosexual communities, resulting in increased social isolation and marginalization.

Characters from different national or cultural backgrounds may experience varying degrees of acceptance and recognition of their gender identity. Immigrants or refugees may face additional challenges in accessing gender-affirming resources or legal protections, particularly if their home country has restrictive policies or attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals. Characters from marginalized communities may face discrimination due to the intersection of multiple forms of oppression. For example, a transgender woman of colour who is also from a low-income background may face discrimination based on her gender identity, race, and socioeconomic status simultaneously, limiting her ability to assert her agency in shaping her gender identity.

Despite these intersecting oppressions, characters from marginalized communities demonstrate resilience and resistance in asserting their gender identity. Through community support, activism, and self-affirmation, they navigate and challenge intersecting systems of power and oppression, asserting their agency in shaping their identity.

Highlighting characters from diverse backgrounds and experiences in literature and film can empower marginalized communities and challenge dominant narratives about gender identity and expression. By emphasizing the perspectives and experiences those who straddle several marginalized identities, narratives can foster greater understanding and empathy towards the complex realities of gender diversity. Genuine representation of LGBTQ+ characters requires depicting them as fully fleshed-out individuals with their unique personalities, backgrounds, and motivations. They should exhibit depth beyond stereotypes, reflecting the varied experiences within the LGBTQ+ community. In authentic portrayals, LGBTQ+ characters are not confined to one-dimensional caricatures or token representations of their sexual orientation or identity. Instead, they are portrayed as complex individuals with hopes, fears, dreams, and flaws, much like any other character.

Furthermore, authentic representation acknowledges the intersection of LGBTQ+ identities, recognizing that individuals may have multiple marginalized identities based on factors race, ethnicity, class, disability, or nationality. These intersecting identities shape their experience in nuanced ways that go beyond simplistic stereotypes. By portraying LGBTQ+ characters as fully developed individuals with their own complexities and agency, narratives can contribute to greater understanding, empathy, and acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Authentic representation allows LGBTQ+ individuals to see

themselves reflected in media and literature in meaningful and affirming ways, while also challenging mainstream stereotypes and promoting inclusivity. Authentic representation of LGBTQ+ characters should consider their intersecting with race, ethnicity, class, disability, and nationality. Intersectional representation acknowledges that individuals' experiences of gender and sexual identity are shaped by multiple factors, contributing to a more nuanced and realistic portrayal.

For instance, LGBTQ+ characters from marginalized racial or ethnic backgrounds may encounter challenges and forms of discrimination that intersect with their sexual orientation. Similarly, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face different experience. Access to resources and support networks compared to those from more privileged backgrounds, which can affect their experiences of LGBTQ+ identity. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ characters with disabilities may face additional barriers to acceptance and inclusion within both LGBTQ+ and able-bodied communities. Similarly, individuals from different national or cultural backgrounds may navigate varying degrees of acceptance and recognition of their LGBTQ+ identity based on cultural attitudes and norms.

By acknowledging and incorporating these intersecting identities into the portrayal of LGBTQ+ characters, narratives can offer a more authentic and inclusive representation of the diverse experiences within the LGBTQ+ community. This approach lead to not only fosters greater empathy and understanding but also challenges stereotypes and promotes social justice by highlighting the complex intersections of identity, power, and privilege.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity offers insights into how gender identity is constructed and maintained through repeated performances of culturally prescribed norms and behaviors. Through Butler's lens, several potential changes can be envisioned for current society. Butler's theory challenges the binary understanding of gender, and also it is not an inherent trait but rather a social construct performed through repetitive acts. Embracing this perspective can lead to the deconstruction of binary gender norms and the approval of a broader spectrum of gender identities beyond just male and female. By acknowledging the performativity nature of gender, society can become more accepting of individual not who conform to customary standard of gender norms. This could involve creating spaces where people feel free to express their gender identity authentically, despite what society may think.

Butler's theory encourages a critical examination of the stereotypes and expectations associate with gender roles. Through education and awareness-raising initiatives, society can challenge and dismantle harmful gender stereotypes that limit individuals' freedom and potential according to their gender. By understanding gender as performativity, individuals may feel empowered to express their gender in ways that feel authentic to them, rather than conforming to societal norms. This can foster a feeling of power and self-determination in shaping one's own identity and expression. Institutions and organizations can accept methods and policies that recognize and accommodate diverse gender identities. This includes implementing gender-neutral language, providing gender-inclusive facilities, and offering support services tailored to the rights of transgender and non-binary individuals. Butler's theory intersects with other critical frameworks, such as intersectional, which acknowledges the

interconnectedness of gender with other kind of identity and oppression. By accepting an intersectional approach, efforts to promote gender equality can also address intersecting inequalities based on race, class, sexuality, disability, and other factors.

Understanding gender as performativity can inform advocacy efforts for legal protections and recognition of gender identity. This includes advocating for anti-discrimination laws, legal recognition of non-binary genders, and access to gender-affirming healthcare for transgender individuals. Through media representation, education, and cultural initiatives, society can promote a shift in cultural attitudes toward gender. By highlighting diverse gender identities and challenging stereotypes in popular culture and media, society can foster greater acceptance and understanding of gender diversity. In summary, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity offers a framework for envisioning changes in current society that promote greater acceptance, inclusion, and recognition of diverse gender identities. By understanding gender as a performativity act rather than a fixed category, society creating more equitable and affirming environments of their gender identity.

By analyzing works such as *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty* through the lens of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, the project sheds light on how gender is represented and constructed within narratives. The importance of portraying gender as a dynamic and performativity process, rather than a fixed or essential attribute. This contributes to ongoing discussions about the representation about sex the diversity in literature and cinema, challenging traditional binaries and stereotypes. The project explores how characters in *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty* navigate their identities amidst societal expectations and constraints. Characters' experiences of gender identity and expression are shaped by intersecting factors such as race, class, sexuality, and nationality, highlighting the complex and multifaceted nature of

identity formation. This provide insightful information into the ways individuals negotiate and assert their identities within diverse cultural and social contexts, contributing to broader discussions about identity politics and representation.

Through its examination of themes like reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ acceptance, and intersectional, the project addresses issues of social justice in contemporary literature and cinema. It highlights the systemic inequalities and injustices faced by discriminated communities, while also celebrating resilience, resistance, and agency. By centering marginalized voices and experiences, the project contributes to ongoing efforts to promote social equity, diversity, and inclusion within literary and cinematic spaces. The project's insights into gender representation, identity formation, and social justice offer valuable contributions to broader discussions within literary and cinematic scholarship. By critically engaging with texts and theories, the project advances the complexities of gender and identity in contemporary society, while also advocating for greater inclusivity and social change within literature and cinema.

Due to the project's focus on specific literary and cinematic works the analysis may not encompass a comprehensive range of texts and films that could provide additional insights into gender representation and identity formation. The limited scope restricts the generalizability of findings to other cultural contexts or literary/cinematic genres. Future research could delve into a wider array of literary works and films addressing gender representation and identity formation across diverse cultural contexts. This exploration might encompass works from various periods, genres, and geographical regions, thereby offering a more thorough comprehension of gender complexities in literature and cinema. Comparative analyses of multiple texts or films within thematic frameworks could yield insights into the

diverse approaches employed by different authors and filmmakers in gender representation and identity formation. By examining both similarities and differences across various works, researchers can identify recurring themes, tropes, and narrative strategies.

Future research might adopt intersectional frameworks to analyse how gender intersects with other social categories like race, class, sexuality, and nationality. This approach could entail an exploration of how intersecting identities influence characters' experiences of gender and identity formation in both literature and cinema. Reader and Audience. Research could explore reader and audience receptions of literary works and films, investigating how interpretations of gender representation and identity formation vary among diverse audiences. Understanding audience engagement and interpretations can lead an insight into social and cultural significance of gender in both literature and cinema.

In conclusion, this project has highlighted the importance of understanding gender performativity in both literature and cinema, as evidenced by the analysis of works like *Red Clocks* and *Njan Marykutty*. Judith Butler's theory, we have gained valuable insights into how gender identities are constructed and negotiated within narrative contexts. These analyses have demonstrated how characters challenge societal norms, resist oppression, and assert their agency in shaping their gender expressions and identities. The implications of this project reach beyond academia, emphasizing the significance of authentic representation and intersectional analysis in portraying the complexities. By depicting LGBTQ+ characters as multifaceted individuals with identities, narratives can foster empathy, understanding, and societal acceptance. Moreover, by interrogating and subverting conventional norms and stereotypes, literature and cinema can drive social change and promote inclusivity.

Looking ahead, it is necessary to continue exploring and questioning gender identity and representation in contemporary cultural production. Amplifying the voices and experiences challenge the dominant narratives and creates space for marginalized perspectives. Continued research in this area enriches our understanding of gender performativity, contributes to broader conversations about social justice, identity politics, and cultural representation. Ultimately, the exploration of gender performativity in literature and cinema catalyzes critical reflection and societal progress. By engaging with narratives that disrupt binary gender constructs and celebrate diversity, we may endeavor to create a society that is more egalitarian and inclusive for every person.

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