Fluidity in the In-Between Gender:

Territorializing the Novel *Kalahating Bahaghari*

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Abstract

This study investigates the fluidity of gender identities and the politics of representation in Ricky Lee's novel, *Kalahating Bahaghari* by integrating Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performativity with Deleuze and Guattari's Schizoanalysis concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Anchored in the Philippine queer context, the article will investigate how the novel constructs, debunks, and reimagines gender through language, narrative, and lived experience. Specifically, it explores how rigid gender binaries are rooted in male-female binaries, function to marginalize queer identities, while shaping broader cultural norms. Using Butler's notion of gender performativity, the study analyzes how characters enact gender through repeated acts and interactions and so destabilize the idea of a fixed identity. Moreover, the research highlights moments of deterritorialization in the text, where normative structures are disrupted to reveal the multiplicity of queer existence. Equally important is the focus on reterritorialization, where characters reclaim control by reconstructing spaces and narratives that affirm queer visibility in a patriarchal and heteronormative society. By weaving these frameworks, the study demonstrates how *Kalahating Bahaghari* challenges essentialist notions of identity and foregrounds the transformative potential of literature in articulating queer resistance. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to ongoing conversations on gender, power, and representation by affirming fluid gender expressions as powerful acts of defiance and empowerment within the Philippine cultural landscape.

Keywords: *Philippine Queer, Gender Identity, Gender Fluidity, Ricky Lee, Kalahating Bahaghari*

Introduction

Gender fluidity refers to the psychological phenomenon where a non-binary individual experiences shifts in their gender identity or expression over time, emphasizing that gender is not fixed or constant. This fluidity extends to sexuality, as seen when an individual's attractions change, such as a gay person later identifying as bisexual.

The concept of queerness, as defined by Whittington (2012), exists within a dynamic and ever-changing space that resists fixed categorization. It encompasses possibilities, overlaps, and shifts in meaning rather than a monolithic identity. However, Sinnott (2010) highlights that in many Asian contexts, including the Philippines, the term "queer" is not widely used for self-identification due to its specific cultural, historical, and political connotations, which may not directly translate into local discourses. In the Philippines there is no literal translation for the word "queer" because we only have "Bakla", "Lesbiana", "Tibo", "Paminta" – terms which may also connote a negative impression especially for someone who is not openly "queer". This complexity often creates challenges in

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understanding queerness and gender fluidity, making them seem more like ideals or potentialities rather than tangible realities, as Muñoz (2009) suggests.

Sociologists, including Valocchi (2005), argue that gender and sexuality are socially constructed concepts shaped by cultural norms and power structures. While these constructions are human-made, they carry significant consequences for personal identity, social interactions, and institutional power dynamics. One of the important power structures in the Philippines is religion. Libiran et al. (2024) state that the Philippines has long been deeply religious, and many biblical beliefs still shape society today. Christian homosexuals often face confusion, anger, and self-doubt when coming to terms with their sexuality. Church discrimination and strict interpretations of the Bible can leave them feeling isolated and questioning religious teachings. Judith Butler (1990) further develops this perspective in *Gender Trouble*, introducing the theory of gender performativity. In here, Butler asserts that gender is not an inherent trait but is instead performed through repeated social actions, reinforcing the idea that gender is fluid rather than innate. While Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity has been widely discussed in Western literature and culture, it has rarely been used to look closely at Filipino stories. Many studies on gender in Philippine literature center on the *bakla* identity or the visibility of queer characters, but few explore how gender itself is performed and policed in everyday life. This study takes Butler's theory and brings it into a Filipino context through the novel *Kalahating Bahaghari*. By doing so, it not only fills a gap in literary scholarship but also offers a more grounded and culturally specific understanding of gender.

Instead of simply applying Western theory, this research reinterprets Butler's ideas through the lens of Filipino experiences where expressions of gender are shaped by values such as *hiya* (shame), *pakikisama* (social harmony), and machismo. These cultural forces reveal that performing gender in the Philippines often involves balancing between acceptance and authenticity. In this way, the study becomes both culturally rooted and original: it connects global ideas about gender with the local realities of queer Filipinos, showing that each act of gender performance can be an act of negotiation, resistance, and survival.

Kalahating Bahaghari a novel by the National Artist of the Philippines, Ricky Lee is a perfect representation of Filipino queer identity because his writing shows social implications. Demeterio (2013) reads Ricky Lee's *Si Amapola sa 65 na Kabanata* as a deliberate counter-discourse that exposes and challenges Manila's homophobic consciousness, arguing the novel uses satire and queer subjectivity to destabilize normative Filipino attitudes toward gender and sexuality. Similarly, *Kalahating Bahaghari* serves as a mirror reflecting the social reality of queer people who face stigmatism, family expectations, and discrimination. Along with this, the novel also sheds light on the intersectionality of queer experiences such as class, cultural and regional backgrounds, ethnicity, and various forms of discriminations. Through this novel, readers can understand what "queer" is all about but most importantly, the novel provides a voice for the queer voiceless to tell their stories.

A study of Asia and the Pacific (2018) found there are 30% of the LGBTQIA+ who are bullied, discriminated, and harassed by others just because they wanted to express and show themselves in a society where they are not accepted. Abesamis & Alibubud (2023) state that even though the Philippines has made strides in promoting gender equality, many Filipinos still hold negative views toward lesbian and gay people. Bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals also continue to face discrimination and violence. Despite these ongoing issues, national laws protecting people from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) have yet to pass in the Senate. Thus, this research will contribute to show the fixed norms and power structures evident in Philippine society

through a close reading of the novel informed by the theories of Butler and Deleuze and Guattari.

Theoretical Discussion

What's In Between the Binaries

To break away from the continual cycle of the algorithms that keep us in a condition of polarization, we must continually deterritorialize and reterritorialize (Gosha, 2022) Moreover, the novel *Kalahating Bahaghari* is a perfect epitome of representations of the Filipino queer community that highlights what we need to deterritorialize and reterritorialize: the polarization of "queerness," as "idea" that is opposed and confronted by the privilege categories of the binaries. As Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1961) illustrated the social construction of women and their roles, a binary of men vs women, so too there needs a recognition of the binary of only men and women, with nothing in between. Thus, there is a need to present and provide awareness of what is happening in the "queer" community for people to not just understand the underlying issues that surround this queer challenge of the male-female binary, but also the need to deterritorialize it and reterritorialize a broader queer concept.

Schizoanalysis: Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization

Deleuze and Guattari (1985) argue that expression should not be confined to existing forms but should instead disrupt dominant modes of meaning to construct something new. When forms are broken apart, their content also transforms, leading to multiple ways of assembling meaning. Schizoanalysis, applied to literary works, operates by dismantling established forms and generating shifts in meaning rather than simply reconstructing the original structure.

Deterritorialization, a key concept in Deleuze and Guattari's theory, shares similarities with Derrida's deconstruction, as both deal with the disruption of fixed meanings, identities, and practices within cultural, social, or political contexts (Sussman, 2000). However, while deconstruction focuses on rejecting structural oppositions and exposing marginal elements within a system, deterritorialization emphasizes movement and transformation beyond fixed ideas, fostering more fluid concepts.

Additionally, Justaert (2010) highlights that deterritorialization is an ongoing process because no system is entirely enclosed; every "territory" has weak points or escape routes. When deterritorialization occurs, reterritorialization follows, attempting to restore stability. However, this cycle is never conclusive, as reterritorialization inevitably leads to further deterritorialization, maintaining a continuous process of change and reconstruction.

Statement of the Problem

This study explores how gender binaries construct a rigid system that excludes and marginalizes individuals who do not conform to traditional male-female categories, particularly queer individuals. These binaries sustain societal and religious norms that dictate which expressions of gender and sexuality are seen as "acceptable" or "deviant." As Bashe & Skinner (2022) point out, religion reinforces heteronormativity by upholding marriage as a sacred institution solely for heterosexual couples, further marginalizing queer identities — a pattern especially pronounced in the deeply religious Philippine context.

Additionally, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity is central to the study, highlighting how gender is not a fixed or natural essence but rather a set of repeated acts that construct the illusion of stable identity. When paired with deterritorialization and reterritorialization, Butler's framework helps show how queer identities actively challenge

and reshape entrenched binaries. By focusing on these three key variables, the study aims to reveal gender and identity as fluid, contested, and open to transformation, advocating for broader recognition and inclusion beyond rigid binary systems.

Lastly, to unpack these dynamics, the study focuses on *Kalahating Bahaghari*, a novel portraying the struggles of queer individuals navigating cultural and religious pressures. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the analysis explores how fixed meanings around gender and sexuality are destabilized (deterritorialized) and how new meanings and identities are re-formed (reterritorialized) in their place.

Objective of the Study

This study aims to explore the fluidity of gender identities and the politics of representation in the novel *Kalahating Bahaghari* by integrating Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performativity with Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization under Schizoanalysis. By examining how gender is constructed, deconstructed, and reimagined within the narrative, this research seeks to unpack the complex interplay between language, power, and identity in the context of queer experiences in the Philippines. The writer has (4) objectives for this research:

1. To explore the representation and operation of gender binaries in *Kalahating Bahaghari* by examining how the novel portrays rigid male-female divisions and the exclusion of queer identities, revealing the ways these binaries shape societal attitudes, cultural norms, and the marginalization of nonconforming individuals.
2. To examine the concept of Gender Performativity as proposed by Judith Butler by analyzing how characters in *Kalahating Bahaghari* perform and embody gender through repeated acts, behaviors, and social interactions, thereby challenging the notion of gender or queerness as a fixed identity.
3. To identify instances of deterritorialization in *Kalahating Bahaghari* by exploring how the novel disrupts and resists dominant gender norms and heteronormative structures within the context of Philippine society, revealing the fluidity and multiplicity of gender identities.
4. To analyze acts of reterritorialization within the novel by investigating how characters reclaim queer spaces and reconstruct gender identities, forming alternative narratives that assert agency and visibility in a patriarchal and heteronormative cultural framework.
5.

By addressing these objectives, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how *Kalahating Bahaghari* challenges rigid gender binaries and offers a dynamic portrayal of queer identity within the Philippine cultural context. Through the lens of Gender Performativity and Schizoanalysis, the research not only interrogates the mechanisms through which gender is constructed and deconstructed but also highlights the transformative potential of literary narratives in reclaiming spaces and reimagining identities. Ultimately, this study seeks to amplify queer voices and affirm the legitimacy of fluid gender expressions as acts of resistance and empowerment.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into gender studies, it is important to acknowledge its limitations, as they may influence the scope, depth, and generalizability of the findings. Recognizing these constraints allows future research to expand on this study and

explore areas that require further examination. One key limitation is the **text-specific focus**, as the study primarily explores *Kalahating Bahaghari* as its main source of information. While this literary work offers a rich narrative on queer identity and societal norms, relying on a single text limits the study's ability to account for diverse representations of queerness across different literary and cultural contexts. Incorporating multiple texts could provide a more comprehensive perspective on the themes explored.

Additionally, cultural and contextual constraints may impact how the findings are interpreted. The writer's analysis is shaped by the writer's own cultural and societal framework, which may differ from how other readers, particularly those from different backgrounds, perceive the findings and discussion. Since literature is open to multiple interpretations, conclusions drawn in this study might not be universally applicable, as cultural norms and societal attitudes toward gender and identity vary significantly across regions and historical periods.

Finally, the dynamic nature of gender and identity must be considered. Since gender is a fluid and evolving concept, the study's conclusions may not fully capture emerging discourses on queerness in the future. As societal understandings of gender and sexuality continue to shift, new perspectives and frameworks may emerge that challenge or expand upon the interpretations presented in this study. Future research should remain adaptive and consider evolving queer discourses to ensure continued relevance.

By acknowledging these limitations, this study encourages further exploration of queer identities, power structures, and literary representations through broader and more diverse lenses, ensuring that future research continues to refine and expand the discourse on gender and identity.

Research Questions

The research focuses on Deleuze and Guattari's Schizoanalysis particularly deterritorialization and reterritorialization and Judith Butler's Gender Performativity where the writer does a close reading of the text, identifying the power dynamics and fixed norms as well as revealing that gender is not fixed rather performed that are constructed within the scope of the novel *Kalahating Bahaghari* by the National Artist, Ricky Lee.

The writer focuses on these questions to limit the research:

1. In what ways does *Kalahating Bahaghari* depict gender identity as an ongoing process rather than a fixed essence?
2. How do characters from the novel go through deterritorialization and how does it contribute to their self- identity?
3. How do characters from the novel go through reterritorialization after deterritorialization?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework outlines the systematic process used to analyze the novel *Kalahating Bahaghari* through close reading and thematic exploration. It begins with reading the novel and selecting representative textual samples or passages from the primary source, followed by an initial close reading to familiarize the writer with the text. Next, the framework directs the writer to highlight passages that specifically reveal key theoretical concerns focusing on: gender binaries, gender performativity, and the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Each of these highlighted passages is then subjected to an in-depth close reading, enabling a deeper engagement with the passage's nuances. Finally, using a descriptive method, the researcher identifies themes within each

passage and formulates a cohesive narrative analysis, which culminates in the presentation of analyzed data. This framework ensures a structured, theory-driven approach to literary analysis, providing clarity and rigor to the interpretation of complex gender and cultural dynamics within the novel.

Discussion of Literary Theory and Related Literature

This discussion is structured into four sections: (1) Gender Performativity, which discusses Judith Butler's theory; (2) Schizoanalysis, which discusses the fundamental principles of schizoanalysis as a critical method; (3) Application on Various Literary Works, which explores how schizoanalysis has been employed in other literary outputs; and (4) Schizoanalysis in Related Fields, which examines its interdisciplinary applications beyond literature. These discussions provide a comprehensive understanding of how schizoanalysis functions as an analytical tool and how it has been previously utilized in academic discourse. Furthermore, the Theoretical Framework introduces two key theories that will support this study: Schizoanalysis and Rhizomatic Theory. Schizoanalysis, developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, serves as the primary analytical tool, offering a non-linear, anti-structural approach to textual interpretation that challenges traditional psychoanalytic readings. Rhizomatic Theory, also introduced by Deleuze and Guattari, complements this study by emphasizing interconnected, non-hierarchical structures of meaning, which align with the study's focus on deterritorialization and reterritorialization in *Kalahating Bahaghari*. Together, these theories establish the conceptual foundation for the deterritorialization, and reterritorialization analysis employed in this research, enabling a nuanced exploration of meaning and identity formation within the novel.

Gender Performativity

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, as articulated in *Gender Trouble* (1990), radically reconceptualizes gender not as an innate or stable identity, but as a series of repeated, socially sanctioned acts. According to Butler, expressions commonly associated with gender—such as behavior, dress, and speech—do not reflect a pre-existing identity but rather constitute that identity through performative repetition. In this view, gender is not something one is, but something one does; it is enacted within cultural norms that both produce and regulate gendered subjects. This deconstruction of gender challenges essentialist, biologically grounded accounts and reveals identity as a discursive effect rather than a natural given.

Expanding on Butler's framework, Lisa Disch emphasizes its political implications, arguing that recognizing the performativity of identity enables critical resistance to dominant norms. For Disch, performativity is not merely descriptive but potentially transformative, offering a means to destabilize hegemonic structures and imagine alternative ways of being. This political reading of Butler highlights the subversive possibilities inherent in revealing the constructedness of social identities.

However, Dennis Schep (2012) critiques the dominance of Butler's performativity within gender theory. While acknowledging its critical contributions, Schep warns that its theoretical hegemony risks marginalizing identities that fall outside its parameters. Drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of finite thinking, Schep advocates for a more pluralistic approach that resists totalizing frameworks and remains open to diverse gendered experiences. Synthesizing these perspectives reveals an ongoing tension in gender theory: Butler and Disch illuminate the generative and subversive capacities of performativity, while Schep urges caution against its universal application. Together, they underscore the need for a gender theory that is both critically deconstructive and epistemologically inclusive—one

that embraces complexity, resists reductionism, and remains attuned to the multiplicity of lived identities.

Schizoanalysis

Schizoanalysis, developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and expanded in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), offers a radical departure from traditional psychoanalysis by rejecting the Oedipal framework and reimagining the unconscious as a productive, machinic force. Rooted in a synthesis of Marxist, structuralist, and psychoanalytic thought, schizoanalysis emphasizes the fluidity and multiplicity of desire, which it sees as operating within social, political, and economic assemblages rather than being repressed or symbolically interpreted. Central to this approach are the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization—processes through which subjectivity and desire continuously break from and return to structured systems.

Stivale (1980) applies these concepts to literary studies, illustrating how schizoanalysis unveils texts as dynamic networks of desire and power rather than static structures to be decoded. By rejecting linear and hierarchical models of interpretation, schizoanalysis embraces multiplicity and rhizomatic thinking, recognizing the coexistence of multiple meanings and the interconnectivity of ideas. Buchanan (2021) further argues that schizoanalysis should not be seen as a closed or complete theory but as a flexible, evolving method. Its strength lies in its adaptability to shifting contexts, where meanings, identities, and power relations are in constant flux. Similarly, Scott (2001) seeks to make *Anti-Oedipus* more accessible, highlighting how schizoanalysis critiques psychoanalysis, capitalism, and fixed notions of subjectivity through its key mechanisms of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

Synthesizing these perspectives, schizoanalysis emerges as a non-hierarchical and open-ended framework that reconfigures how we understand subjectivity, literature, and social structures. It resists totalizing interpretations and instead promotes a mode of analysis grounded in becoming, multiplicity, and continuous transformation. This makes schizoanalysis not only a critique of dominant ideological formations but also a generative tool for reimagining identity, meaning, and resistance across disciplines.

Application to Literary Works

Schizoanalysis, developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, presents a radical framework for literary interpretation by rejecting traditional psychoanalytic models particularly those centered on the Oedipal complex and instead emphasizing the fluid, fragmented, and machinic nature of subjectivity. Central to schizoanalysis are the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, processes through which meaning, identity, and desire are continuously displaced and reconfigured. Literature, from this perspective, is not a closed system of stable signs but a dynamic assemblage of intensities, affects, and flows capable of producing new forms of thought and experience. Neff (1997), for instance, applies this framework to James Ellroy's *The Black Dahlia*, revealing how the novel critiques capitalist structures by illustrating how they produce alienation, obsession, and paranoia, thereby shifting focus from familial psychodynamics to broader socio-economic forces. Similarly, Negrete (2015) explores rhythm as a vital element that connects language with bodily experience, using schizoanalysis to show how literary form reveals the shared materiality of words and life itself. Meanwhile, Stivale (1984) examines how Deleuze and Guattari incorporate literary techniques in *A Thousand Plateaus* to construct a "new cartography" a non-linear, philosophical mapping that privileges multiplicity and variation over rigid categorization. Together, these applications demonstrate schizoanalysis's power to uncover the socio-political, affective, and ontological dimensions of literature, making it a

potent method for exploring how texts operate as open, generative systems within the flux of desire and power.

Schizoanalysis in Related Fields

Schizoanalysis, a concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, transcends its philosophical and literary origins to become a dynamic, interdisciplinary tool for rethinking subjectivity, desire, and structure across a wide array of fields. Departing from the interpretive and repressive focus of traditional psychoanalysis, schizoanalysis emphasizes the productive nature of desire, the dismantling of rigid frameworks, and the embrace of multiplicity and fluid identities. Rather than seeking fixed meanings, it interrogates how assemblages of power, discourse, and affect shape experience and identity. Nauha (2012) explores this potential within artistic research, framing schizoanalysis as a methodological approach that disrupts conventional notions of authorship and representation and instead highlights artmaking as a process driven by deterritorialized flows and intensities.

Moreover, Sellar (2015) brings this lens to neoliberal education, revealing how motivational discourses function as disciplinary tools that internalize control, and positioning schizoanalysis as a means of exposing and resisting these ideological mechanisms. Extending even further, Genosko (2022) merges schizoanalytic theory with magical thinking to challenge hegemonic social structures and unlock alternative modes of transformation beyond rationalist or psychoanalytic paradigms. Similarly, Welker (2020) applies schizoanalysis to environmental subjectivities, critiquing dominant anthropocentric models of ecological identity and proposing a more fluid, non-hierarchical conception of the "eco-subject." Collectively, these applications demonstrate the radical versatility of schizoanalysis as a method for interrogating and reimagining identity, power, and meaning across disciplines—offering a potent, anti-essentialist framework for theoretical and practical transformation.

Theoretical Framework

The writer will utilize Deleuze and Guattari's Schizoanalysis—specifically the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization—to explore how language operates through various signs and symbols, not limited to phrases alone, as emphasized by Stivale (1980). Through this lens, the study will analyze how *Kalahating Bahaghari* challenges normative gender roles by identifying acts of deterritorialization, where characters subvert traditional gender expectations, and reterritorialization, where they reclaim queer spaces and reconstruct alternative gender narratives within a patriarchal Philippine society. To support this exploration of gender fluidity, the writer will also incorporate Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performativity, which asserts that gender is not an innate identity but a repeated set of performances. By aligning Schizoanalysis with Butler's theory, this study aims to examine how gender is not only described through behaviors but also expressed across multiple semiotic forms, ultimately revealing the power structures embedded in gender construction and the resistance against them.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, since the novel primarily focuses on revealing the struggles and social realities of the Filipino LGBTQIA+ community using Roland Barthes (1915–1980) textual analysis which aims to reveal the underlying beliefs, cultural norms, and values that are woven into the piece's scope centering on the novel *Kalahating Bahaghari* by National Artist Ricky Lee as the primary source. The analysis critically engages with the novel's thematic elements and narrative structures to examine its

representations of gender and identity. Specifically, the study applies Judith Butler's theory of Gender Performativity to interrogate how gender roles are constructed, enacted, and subverted within the text. It further investigates the binaries between men and women, exploring how the novel reinforces, resists, or redefines traditional gender dichotomies in the Philippine socio-cultural context. In addition, the study incorporates the lens of Schizoanalysis, particularly the concepts of Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization as theorized by Deleuze and Guattari, to analyze how characters and spaces in the narrative disrupt fixed identities and reconfigure new modes of subjectivity. Through this multifaceted framework, the research aims to uncover how *Kalahating Bahaghari* challenges dominant ideologies and opens possibilities for alternative, queer, and fluid identities.

This study employs close reading as a critical method to explore *Kalahating Bahaghari* by National Artist Ricky Lee. Through a detailed and attentive examination of the novel's language, structure, character development, and symbolism, close reading allows for an in-depth analysis of how themes related to gender performativity, gender binaries, and schizoanalytic processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization are embedded and articulated within the text. This method supports the uncovering of subtle nuances and deeper meanings that inform the novel's engagement with identity, power, and resistance.

To ensure a systematic flow, the writer collects data by using the novel "*Kalahating Bahaghari*" by the national artist, Ricky Lee as its primary source. The writer identifies passages from the novel that shows power dynamics and fixed norms within the queer community limiting towards its variables; Gender Binaries, Gender Performativity, and Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization.

In the analyzation of data, the writer will use these steps;

1. Read the passages from the novel *Kalahating Bahaghari*
2. Select textual samples
3. Conduct close reading
4. Highlight passages that show characters experiencing gender binaries, gender performativity, or deterritorialization and reterritorialization.
5. Conduct close reading of each passage

Lastly, using descriptive method, the writer identifies the theme of the passage analyzed and formulates a narrative analysis.

Findings

In the presentation of the findings, the research follows a structured approach. First, the writer lays down the passage selected from the primary source, providing a clear excerpt for analysis. Second, the writer analyzes the thematic insights derived from this passage, focusing on the key themes, symbols, or patterns that emerge. Finally, the writer explores the broader implications of these themes, situating the insights within a wider social, cultural, or theoretical context to understand their significance.

Passage:

> "Asan 'yung baril, ano na naman 'yang hawak mo, Jim? Ang laging bitbit kasi ni Jim ay manika." (Lee, 2024, p. 4)

(Translation: "Where is the gun, what are you holding again, Jim? Jim always carried a doll.")

Close Reading

The character's question, "Asan 'yung baril," implies a societal expectation: boys should naturally prefer toys that symbolize masculinity (guns = violence, power) While, the "Manika" (doll) contrasts the expected masculine image, positioning Jim outside the traditional gender norm, the language ("ano na naman") carries a tone of frustration or disapproval, highlighting that Jim's behavior has been repeatedly judged as deviant. Moreover, Jim's continuous attachment to the doll ("ang laging bitbit") reflects persistence in his personal identity expression despite social pressure.

Thematic Insights

Gender Binaries

The passage clearly illustrates a traditional binary expectation of gender roles: boys are associated with aggression, strength, and violence, symbolized by guns, while girls are linked to nurturing, gentleness, and being passive, symbolized by dolls. This rigid division reflects a broader societal norm that dictates how individuals should behave based on their assigned gender. However, Jim's preference subverts this expectation. By choosing something associated with femininity, Jim crosses the imposed boundary between what is deemed "appropriate" for boys and for girls. His choice not only disrupts the traditional gender binary but also challenges the cultural assumptions that certain traits, interests, or behaviors naturally belong to a specific gender. In doing so, Jim's action opens possibilities for a more fluid and inclusive understanding of identity, where personal preference is not confined by restrictive social norms.

Gender Performativity

According to Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, gender is not an innate or fixed quality but rather something constructed and reinforced through repeated acts, gestures, and behaviors over time. It is through the continual repetition of these acts that the illusion of a stable gender identity is created. In this context, Jim's repeated choice to play with a doll becomes an act of resistance against traditional gender norms. Each time he selects the doll over a gun, he is enacting a version of masculinity that deviates from societal expectations. Rather than affirming the binary opposition between masculine and feminine behaviors, Jim's actions demonstrate that these categories are not biologically determined but are performed and maintained through social rituals. His nontraditional gender expression highlights Butler's argument that gender identity is fluid and constructed, not something one simply "is" but something one continually "does." Thus, Jim's behavior serves as living proof that the boundaries of masculinity and femininity are socially enacted and, therefore, open to disruption and redefinition.

Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization

Jim's act of carrying a doll can be seen as a powerful example of deterritorialization, a concept that refers to the breaking away from established structures, norms, or spaces. Traditionally, the "territory" assigned to boys is one marked by aggression, strength, toughness, and emotional restraint, symbolized here by the gun. By choosing to carry a doll instead, Jim disrupts this expected alignment, stepping outside the conventional boundaries of boyhood. His action unsettles the traditional markers of masculinity and challenges the assumptions about what behaviors are appropriate for boys.

However, Jim's consistent and repeated choice to engage with the doll also signals a process of reterritorialization. In this phase, rather than remaining in a space of pure resistance or dislocation, Jim begins to build a new meaning for boyhood, one that incorporates qualities such as tenderness, care, and emotional openness. Through his repeated acts, he constructs an alternative identity that redefines masculinity, proving that nurturing

behaviors are not exclusive to girls. In this way, Jim's actions not only break free from old structures but also actively participate in creating new, more inclusive possibilities for gender expression.

Broader Implication

Jim's simple yet powerful act of choosing to carry a doll directly challenges the deeply rooted gender norms embedded in Filipino culture. Traditionally, Filipino society expects boys to embody qualities such as toughness, assertiveness, and emotional restraint, while girls are associated with gentleness, care, and emotional expressiveness. These expectations are not just personal beliefs but are reinforced through cultural practices, family upbringing, and even media representation. In *Kalahating Bahaghari*, Jim's defiance becomes a meaningful form of resistance against these rigid cultural codes.

By repeatedly choosing the doll an object culturally marked as feminine Jim enacts what Judith Butler would describe as a subversive performance, revealing that gender identity is not something natural or pre-given, but something shaped and re-shaped through action, choice, and repetition. His behavior illustrates how even young individuals, often seen as passive recipients of culture, can actively participate in challenging and reshaping societal expectations. *Kalahating Bahaghari* thus presents childhood not as a period of blind conformity, but as a powerful space where norms can be questioned and transformed, suggesting that cultural change begins with small, everyday acts of courage.

Passage:

> "Pinili ba ng mga magulang niyang mamatay kaysa malamang bakla siya?" (Lee, 2024, p.5)

(Translation: "Did his parents choose to die rather than find out he was gay?")

Close Reading

The language in the passage is emotionally intense, presenting death as preferable to the shame associated with a non-heteronormative identity. The phrase "Did his parents choose to die?" suggests extreme societal rejection and internalized homophobia within the family structure. Meanwhile, "Rather than find out he was gay" frames queerness as something so unacceptable that it triggers catastrophic consequences. Overall, the passage highlights how deeply gender and sexuality binaries are policed within Filipino families, particularly under the influence of religious and traditional pressures.

Thematic Insights

Gender Binaries

The family, as a key social institution, enforces the binary of heterosexual male/female norms, positioning these roles as essential to societal order. Anything outside of this binary, such as a gay identity, is not merely seen as "different" but as catastrophic and unacceptable. This rejection stems from a belief that nonconformity threatens the family structure and cultural values, leading to marginalization and ostracism of those who deviate from these norms.

Gender Performativity

From Butler's perspective, the fear surrounding a gay identity is not rooted in biological sex, but in the act of performing an identity that disrupts socially accepted norms. The threat lies in the possibility of living and performing a non-heteronormative life, one that challenges the rigid binary of gender and sexuality that society upholds. This performance destabilizes the expected roles of masculinity and femininity, creating anxiety about the

potential erosion of established cultural values. The real fear, therefore, is not simply the existence of a gay identity, but the subversion of traditional norms through its visible enactment.

Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization

The mere existence of a gay identity represents a form of *deterritorialization* within the family's traditional structure, disrupting the established norms of gender and sexuality. The parents' imagined "choice" to die reflects their intense resistance to this shift, as they would rather erase themselves than accept a reality where these traditional gender roles are no longer stable. However, by surviving and embracing his identity, the character engages in *reterritorialization*, forging a new narrative of life and identity that moves beyond their parents' expectations. In doing so, he not only redefines his place within the family but also challenges the broader cultural norms that seek to confine him.

Broader Implication

This passage highlights the profound emotional toll that challenging gender and sexuality norms imposes on individuals within Filipino society, where traditional views are deeply ingrained. In *Kalahating Bahaghari*, queerness transcends personal identity and becomes a political act, threatening the established binaries that uphold family honor, religious morality, and national identity. By resisting these conventions, queer individuals are not only confronting personal and familial rejection but also challenging a larger cultural structure that views non-conformity as a threat to societal order. The text thus underscores the harsh consequences of adhering to rigid gender roles, while also suggesting the potential for liberation and transformation through the acceptance of alternative ways of living, providing a space for reimagining both personal and collective identities.

Passage

> "O di ba, sabi ni Marina kay Jim. Para kang bagong panganak? Ganyan din ang mangyayari kung itatakwil mo 'yang kabaklaan mo!" (Lee, 2024, p. 23)

(Translation: "See, Marina told Jim. You are like a newborn? That is exactly what will happen if you reject your queerness!")

Close Reading

The phrase "Para kang bagong panganak?" ("You're like a newborn?") suggests that rejecting one's queerness is akin to denying one's true self, rendering the individual incomplete, or forcing them into a false identity. The image of a newborn signifies innocence or a return to a blank slate, symbolizing the disconnection from one's authentic identity when queerness is rejected. Marina's warning, "Ganyan din ang mangyayari kung itatakwil mo 'yang kabaklaan mo!" ("That's exactly what will happen if you reject your queerness!"), emphasizes that rejecting queerness leads to personal emptiness and confusion, as it would deny Jim's identity. This illustrates that queerness is not an external trait but an integral part of Jim's identity and trying to remove it is an act of self-denial, leading to a loss of self.

Thematic Insights

Gender Binaries

The suggestion that rejecting queerness is akin to being "newborn" highlights how society pressures individuals to conform to heteronormative gender binaries. Marina's point emphasizes that denying one's queerness is an attempt to erase an essential part of identity that challenges these traditional norms. In doing so, individuals are forced to suppress aspects of themselves that do not align with established expectations of gender, effectively denying

their full identity in favor of a false, conforming self. This act of erasure reflects the destructive power of societal norms in shaping personal identity.

Gender Performativity

Butler's concept of gender performativity applies directly here, as Marina's warning underscores that Jim's queerness is not an innate, biologically determined trait, but something he actively performs and embodies. According to Butler, gender identity is not something one "is," but something one "does" through repeated acts and expressions. To reject Jim's queerness, therefore, is to reject his most authentic performance of self, denying the very essence of his identity. This act of rejection not only erases his queerness but also disregards the ongoing process through which he constructs and lives his true self.

Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization

Jim's potential rejection of his queerness would signify a denial of the identity he has cultivated, leading to a *deterritorialization* of his gendered self. This rejection would disrupt the space where his gender and sexuality intersect, causing him to step away from the authentic identity he has formed and into a space of conformity, where his true self is erased or hidden. While, if Jim heeds Marina's advice and embraces his queerness, he will reterritorialize his identity. By accepting and embodying his queerness, he allows a more complete, authentic version of himself to emerge one that integrates queerness as a fundamental and undeniable aspect of his being, thus creating a new, self-affirming space for his gender and sexual identity.

Broader Implication

Marina's words emphasize that rejecting one's queerness is an act of profound personal denial, where an individual attempts to erase or revert their true gender identity into a state of non-existence, neither conforming to nor defying the binary. This scene illustrates how gender is not simply an inherent trait but a series of performative acts that shape a person's sense of self, either aligning with or challenging societal expectations. Through Marina's urging, she encourages Jim to embrace his queerness as an intrinsic part of who he is, not as an imposed label but as a fundamental expression of identity. In doing so, she suggests that accepting one's authentic gender identity has the potential to reshape the larger cultural and familial narratives that demand conformity, offering a path toward personal liberation and the reconfiguration of societal norms.

Passage:

> "Dapat and lalaki pag may babae, kadyot agad. Sinasayang mo yang titi mo, ipinamimigay mo lang sa mga lalaki! Dapat babae ang pinaggagamitan niyan!" (Lee, 2024, p. 25)

(Translation: "A man should have sex with a woman right away. You are wasting your penis, giving it away to other men! You should be using that on a woman!") (Lee, 2024, p. 25)

Close Reading

The statement "Dapat and lalaki pag may babae, kadyot agad" ("A man should have sex with a woman right away") reinforces the heteronormative gender binary that dictates men should engage in sexual intercourse with women, emphasizing the belief that male sexuality is inherently tied to heterosexual interactions. The phrase "right away" suggests an urgency and expectation, implying that male desire must be acted upon instantly and without hesitation. In the phrase "Sinasayang mo yang titi mo, ipinamimigay mo lang sa mga lalaki!" ("You're wasting your penis, giving it away to other men!"), the idea of "wasting" one's

penis highlights the belief that male sexuality has a specific purpose, reproduction or heterosexual pleasure, and that deviating from this goal, such as engaging with men, is seen as a failure or misuse of masculinity.

Finally, "Dapat babae ang pinaggagamitan niyan!" ("You should be using that on a woman!") underscores rigid gender role expectations, dictating that male bodies and desires must be directed toward women to fulfill their "proper" function in society. This statement further enforces the patriarchal system that views women as the designated recipients of male sexual energy, reinforcing traditional and restrictive notions of masculinity.

Thematic Insights

Gender Binaries

The passage underscores how gender binaries tightly regulate male sexuality, associating it with heterosexual relationships, particularly with women. The terms "wasting" and "giving away" suggest that male identity is only valid when it conforms to prescribed heterosexual norms. In this framework, male sexual energy is seen as legitimate only when directed toward women, reinforcing the idea that men must fulfill traditional, dominant roles within heterosexual relationships to be considered "whole" or valid.

Any deviation from this binary, such as same-sex attraction, is viewed as deviant and destabilizing to the established order. This perspective marginalizes queer identities, positioning them as inferior or illegitimate compared to heterosexual norms. The use of such language reflects a societal tendency to police gender and sexual expression, where those who deviate from these strict norms face rejection and devaluation.

Gender Performativity

According to Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity, gender is not an innate or fixed trait, but something one "does" through repeated actions and performances. Butler argues that our gender identity is constructed through these performances, which conform to societal expectations. Rather than being a stable essence, gender is a series of acts that create the illusion of a consistent identity. In this framework, the performance of gender is central to its existence, and these performances are constantly being observed and reinforced by societal norms.

In this passage, the speaker demands that the male subject perform masculinity through sexual acts with women, underscoring the idea that masculinity is not just an internal identity, but something that must be enacted to be accepted by society. The speaker implies that masculinity is only legitimate if it follows prescribed, heteronormative behaviors. This expectation enforces the idea that gender identity must be demonstrated in specific, socially sanctioned ways particularly through heterosexual acts so that the individual can be recognized as fulfilling their prescribed gender role.

Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization

The statement challenges any deviation from heterosexual norms, such as same-sex attraction or relationships, by positioning them as a threat to the established structure of masculinity. When the man engages sexually with other men, he is seen as violating the "territory" of normative masculinity, which is traditionally tied to heterosexuality. This act of deviation destabilizes the rigid gender and sexual norms that define masculine identity, causing a rupture in the accepted boundaries of male sexual expression.

In response to this transgression, the speaker urges the man to reassert his masculinity by redirecting his sexual desire back to women, thus reestablishing his place within the traditional gender framework. This call to return to heterosexual behavior represents an effort to regain the "proper" territory of male sexual identity, reinforcing the idea that masculinity

can only be valid if it conforms to heteronormative expectations. Through this reterritorialization, the man is encouraged to realign his actions with societal norms, restoring stability to his gender performance.

Broader Implication

This passage reveals the rigid and controlling nature of societal expectations surrounding male sexuality, emphasizing the strict enforcement of gender binaries and the performative nature of heterosexual masculinity. The speaker employs harsh language to shame any deviation from these prescribed norms, particularly through the claim that a man's sexuality is "wasted" if it is not directed toward women. This statement underscores how Filipino society, along with many other cultures, perpetuates the reinforcement of traditional gender roles and punishes non-normative sexual expressions. The concept of reterritorialization here represents a cultural effort to push back against any sexual identity that does not align with these rigid norms, positioning deviation as a threat to masculine identity. The passage suggests that the consequence of failing to conform is not only social ostracism but also the loss of a sense of self and identity, underscoring the intense pressure on individuals to fit within narrowly defined sexual and gender frameworks.

Passage:

> "Kailangan nilang bilisan dahil tatamaan sila ng flashlight ng mga pulis, kapag nahuli ka ay makukulong ka buong gabi, pagtatawanan (Bakla ka ba?) bababuyin (Tsupain mo nga ako!), kukuwatahan" (Lee, 2024, p. 64)

(Translation: "They need to hurry because the flashlight of the police will hit them. If you get caught, you will be locked up for the whole night, laughed at (Are you gay?), degraded (Suck me!), robbed.") (Lee, 2024, p. 64)

Close Reading

The phrase "Kailangan nilang bilisan dahil tatamaan sila ng flashlight ng mga pulis" ("They need to hurry because the flashlight of the police will hit them") emphasizes the constant threat of law enforcement, symbolizing the surveillance that marginalized groups face. The urgency and fear of being caught reflect the precariousness of their lives, as engaging in activities deemed illegal or immoral by society puts them at risk of punishment. Similarly, "Kapag nahuli ka ay makukulong ka buong gabi" ("If you get caught, you'll be locked up for the whole night") highlights imprisonment as both a legal and societal punishment, a form of control that confines the individual's body.

The emphasis on the length of detention, "the whole night," underscores the emotional and psychological toll of living under constant fear of retribution. The phrases "Pagtatawanan (Bakla ka ba?) bababuyin (Tsupain mo nga ako!), kukuwatahan" ("Laughed at (Are you gay?), degraded (Suck me!), robbed") confront homophobia and sexual violence head-on. "Are you gay?" is a verbal insult designed to degrade, while "Suck me!" signifies sexual violence and coercion, exposing the physical and psychological threats marginalized individuals endure. The word "robbed" further suggests economic violence, representing exploitation that strips individuals of their dignity and reinforces their vulnerability within a hostile society.

Thematic Insight

Gender Binaries

The passage vividly illustrates how gender binaries are enforced through both law enforcement and societal violence, highlighting the severe consequences of deviating from prescribed gender norms. The threat of being caught by the police is directly tied to violating

these norms, particularly the societal belief that non-heteronormative sexualities, such as queerness, are inherently deviant. In this context, the law functions as a tool for upholding traditional gender expectations, with individuals who express non-heteronormative identities facing criminalization and punishment.

The humiliation that follows, including being laughed at, degraded, and robbed, reflects the deeply ingrained cultural view that queerness, particularly male queerness, is something to be mocked, shamed, and dehumanized. This societal violence reinforces the idea that queer identities are not only unacceptable but undeserving of basic human dignity. The passage, therefore, highlights the ways in which gender nonconformity is not just socially policed, but violently suppressed, perpetuating a cycle of marginalization and exclusion for those who fail to fit within the strict boundaries of heteronormativity.

Gender Performativity

This passage highlights the severe consequences of failing to perform normative gender roles, illustrating how both state and societal forces work to enforce heteronormative expectations. The police serve as a direct mechanism for enforcing these gender norms, ensuring that individuals adhere to traditional masculine and feminine behaviors. When individuals fail to conform, society enacts further violence, physical, verbal, and sexual, as punishment for deviating from these prescribed gender roles. This violence is not random, but a direct consequence of gender and sexuality not being performed according to societal expectations, underscoring the ways in which gender nonconformity is met with harsh retribution. The passage reveals how deeply entrenched the policing of gender is, with both legal and social systems working in tandem to punish those who defy heteronormative identities.

Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization

The fear of the police, the criminalization of queerness, and the associated violence all reflect how queer identities are deterritorialized. These individuals are displaced from mainstream, publicly accepted spaces and are forced to live in secrecy or underground, as their identities are deemed deviant by society. The violence that queers face serves as a mechanism to remove them from legitimate societal roles, pushing them into marginalized, hidden existences where they are denied visibility and legitimacy.

Despite this oppressive environment, the passage hints at the possibility of reterritorialization. Even in the face of violence and repression, queer individuals might seek solidarity with others who share their experiences, creating a sense of community and resilience. This reterritorialization involves reclaiming space and identity, resisting the forces that attempt to erase or silence them. While the passage does not fully explore this potential, the tension between societal repression and the desire for survival and resistance suggests that queer individuals may find ways to reassert their identities and reclaim their autonomy, despite the risks.

Broader Implication

This passage underscores the brutal realities faced by queer individuals in a society that criminalizes their existence, highlighting the role of the police in surveilling and controlling their bodies. The constant threat of humiliation, imprisonment, and the physical and emotional violence they endure are central themes that shape their lives. The enforcement of strict gender binaries is evident, with harsh consequences for those who fail to conform to heteronormative sexuality. These forces serve as a powerful reminder of the dangers of deviating from socially accepted norms. The passage also reflects the broader process of deterritorialization, where queerness is marginalized and excluded from mainstream,

accepted spaces. While there is an implicit potential for reterritorialization, the characters in this moment seem trapped in a cycle of violence, fear, and societal rejection, unable to escape the oppressive forces that continuously seek to erase or suppress their identities.

Discussion

The passages from *Kalahating Bahaghari* provide a vivid portrayal of the struggles faced by queer individuals in a society that demands strict adherence to gender binaries and heteronormative sexuality. By analyzing the text through the theoretical frameworks of gender binaries, gender performativity, and deterritorialization and reterritorialization, we can gain insight into the mechanisms of marginalization and the resistance that emerges in response. Each passage highlights the ways in which gender expectations are enforced, the violence that results from not conforming to these expectations, and the potential for reterritorialization, or the reclamation of identity and space.

Gender Binaries: Policing and Repression

Across all the passages, we see the enforcement of rigid gender binaries, where male and female roles are strictly defined, and any deviation from these roles is seen as a violation of societal norms. In the passage where a character is ridiculed for being "wasteful" with his penis and not engaging with a woman (*"You're wasting your penis, giving it away to other men!"*), the fundamental expectation is that masculinity is intrinsically tied to heterosexual sexual activity. The failure to perform heterosexuality is perceived as a direct challenge to the prescribed gender binary, where the person is reduced to a social outcast. This is compounded by the violence in the text, where the characters are mocked and degraded for their perceived failure to perform masculinity appropriately.

Similarly, in the passage depicting the interaction with the police (*"They need to hurry because the flashlight of the police will hit them. If you get caught, you will be locked up for the whole night, laughed at (Are you gay?), degraded (Suck me!), robbed"*), the policing of bodies serves to reinforce gender binaries. The policing of queer sexuality is not only about enforcing legal rules but also about preserving the rigid distinctions between acceptable and deviant gender performances. Queer individuals, in these moments, are marked as outsiders who do not conform to the dominant gender norms, and their bodies are subjected to ridicule, criminalization, and violence.

The consistent theme across the examples is the social rejection that comes from failing to adhere to these binaries. Whether through legal action (being locked up) or public humiliation (being laughed at and degraded), individuals who do not perform gender according to heteronormative expectations are subjected to both legal and social punishment.

Gender Performativity: Social Enforcement of Gender Roles

Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity provides a useful framework for understanding the violence and policing of queer identities in these passages. In Butler's view, gender is not something one inherently "is," but something one continuously *does* through repeated performances. In the passages from *Kalahating Bahaghari*, characters are compelled to perform their gender in specific ways or face severe consequences. The pressure to perform masculinity through heterosexual acts is evident when characters are criticized for engaging in same-sex activities, as seen in the passage about "wasting your penis." The implication is that the male body must act in accordance with the prescribed heterosexual sexual order to be considered valid or worthy of respect. Deviations from this performance are met with shaming, violence, and social exclusion.

Furthermore, Butler's theory highlights that gender performance is shaped by the repetitive nature of societal expectations. The phrase "Suck me!" in the passage from the police confrontation emphasizes how sexual violence and verbal degradation can be part of the mechanism that forces individuals to conform to gendered norms. The continuous harassment and physical violence that queer individuals face underscore the social imperative to perform gender correctly or face punishment.

The concept of gender performativity also ties into the cultural normalization of heteronormative performances. In these passages, the characters are subject to public scrutiny not because of their private sexual preferences but because of their failure to enact the socially sanctioned scripts of masculinity or femininity. This highlights the extreme social costs of non-conformity in a society that demands rigid gender performance.

Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization: Displacement and Resistance

The concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization offer a compelling lens through which to understand the experiences of queer individuals in these passages. Deterritorialization refers to the displacement of queer individuals from socially accepted spaces, while reterritorialization involves the process of reclaiming space and identity. The fear of being caught by the police or the threat of public humiliation are forms of deterritorialization, as the characters are pushed out of the spaces where they might live freely and authentically. They are forced to hide their identities, seek secretive spaces, and navigate the world with the constant risk of exposure, punishment, and violence.

The idea of reterritorialization becomes visible in the ongoing survival and resistance of queer individuals. Even in the face of police violence and public degradation, the queers in these narratives find ways to navigate and reclaim their identities. This process is subtle but powerful, through solidarity, underground networks, and the refusal to completely internalize shame, queer individuals resist the territorializing forces of heteronormativity. Though the passages do not explicitly show successful reterritorialization, the very act of survival and the desire to "hurry" to escape police detection reflect a form of resistance, where individuals continue to carve out spaces for their identities, even within a hostile environment.

In this context, reterritorialization is not only about physical space but also about emotional and psychological territory. The queer characters, despite their subjugation, continue to assert their identities through small acts of resistance, whether it is through defiance, seeking community, or simply existing in their bodies as queer individuals. The tension between deterritorialization and reterritorialization illustrates the constant push and pull between societal forces that aim to marginalize queer people and the resilience they demonstrate in reclaiming their space and identity.

Implications for Social Change

The experiences of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, as described in these passages, reflect a broader social issue: the ongoing marginalization of queer individuals within Filipino society and beyond. The consistent violence, whether legal, physical, or emotional, underscores the urgent need for social change and the creation of inclusive spaces where individuals can perform gender freely, without fear of persecution. The gender binaries that restrict queer existence need to be dismantled, and societal views on gender and sexuality need to become more fluid and accepting.

The possibilities for reterritorialization in these narratives suggest that resistance is not only a personal struggle but a collective one. As queer individuals find ways to survive and assert their identities in the face of overwhelming odds, they also contribute to a larger movement toward social transformation. This resistance, though often covert or imperiled, is a vital part of the ongoing fight for equality and recognition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the passages from *Kalahating Bahaghari* illuminate the harsh realities of queer oppression and marginalization through the lens of gender binaries, gender performativity, and deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The enforcement of rigid gender norms leads to violence and criminalization, while the failure to conform to these norms results in public humiliation and physical punishment. At the same time, the resilience of queer individuals in navigating these oppressive systems points to the potential for reterritorialization, where queer identities can be reclaimed and celebrated despite societal attempts to erase them. Understanding the mechanisms of gender performance, policing, and resistance is crucial in addressing the broader social dynamics at play and advocating for change. The path forward involves creating spaces of acceptance, solidarity, and freedom where queer people can thrive without fear of discrimination or violence.

In *Kalahating Bahaghari*, gender performativity becomes a mirror of how people struggle to exist within the limits that society sets for them. With this, the novel shows that gender is not something we are born with, but something we are constantly forced to perform sometimes out of fear, sometimes for survival. The characters' experiences of ridicule, violence, and exclusion reveal how deeply society polices those who do not fit into the narrow expectations of what it means to be a man or a woman. Yet, in their small acts of defiance and honesty, they also show that these norms can be questioned and undone. Through Butler's idea of gender performativity, *Kalahating Bahaghari* reminds us that gender is fragile, shifting, and shaped by power but it is also something that can be reclaimed and reimagined. The novel becomes more than just a story of queer pain; it is also about courage, identity, and the quiet persistence of being seen. In this sense, the work holds an important place in both literary and gender studies, it gives voice to those often silenced and challenges readers to rethink how identity is created and controlled. By telling these stories, literature helps us see that every performance of self especially one that resists conformity is an act of truth and survival.

In the novel, queer characters demonstrate that gender and sexuality are not fixed traits but are performed through everyday actions, behaviors, and ways of interacting with others. These performances are shaped by societal expectations, which often force them to hide, alter, or suppress aspects of their identity to live life. This pressure reflects the process of deterritorialization, where queer individuals are pushed out of socially accepted spaces and face constant threats whether from public shaming, policing, or violence that make living authentically a risky act.

Despite these challenges, the novel also shows how queer characters engage in reterritorialization, subtly reclaiming their space, identity, and agency. This might appear in acts of defiance, forming supportive communities, or simply asserting their existence as queer individuals in spaces that are often hostile. Reterritorialization is not limited to physical space, but it also involves emotional and psychological resistance, where characters refuse to internalize shame completely and continue to assert their identities on their own terms.

Overall, Ricky Lee's *Kalahating Bahaghari* portrays gender and sexuality as fluid performances constantly shaped by power and resistance. Through Butler's lens of gender performativity and the movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, the novel reveals how queer individuals navigate between exclusion and self-assertion. Despite the violence and constraints that they face, their acts of defiance and self-expression become powerful forms of reclaiming identity. In doing so, the novel not only reveals the social mechanisms that police gender but also celebrates the resilience of those who dare to live authentically within and beyond the limits on gender expression that society constructs.

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