

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Gender and sex are cultural based and varies across many diverse cultures of the world. Politics, religions, philosophies, linguistics, traditions and other cultural forces have shaped gender and sex for many years. Furthermore, gender and sex are constructed socially and therefore subject to change over time. The identification by others as male, female or intersex is based on physical or genetic factor. Johnson and Repta deliver those notions as “different cultures conceptualize sex variation in different ways, and our understandings of sex have changed over time (and continue to change) as biological variation is discovered and measurement techniques are refined” (20).

Feminist therefore distinguishes between the word sex, which refers to our biological constitution as female or male, and the word gender, which refers to our cultural programming as feminine or masculine (Tyson 86). This view of gender is an example of what has come to be called as social constructionism. Through social construction of gender in society, people believe that human was born into two categories, boys/men and girls/women. According to Judith Lorber, the author of *Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender*, for the individual, gender construction starts with assignment to a sex category on the basis of what the genitalia look like at birth (55). For example, the first thing a doctor does is look at the baby’s genitalia in order to determine whether it will be a boy or a girl. This is the beginning of the gender process of social construction.

One of the major pivotal roles in shaping the gender is parental guidance. Parents become part of the gender shaping processes as they start dressing their children with colors that identify their gender. For society, it is common to use colors as a distinctive symbol between boys and girls and these behaviors then leads to stereotypes (Flores 2012). Parents' duties includes assisting children in negotiating physical, psychological, and developmental processes so they can adapt socially to the cultural mandates of gender expectations (Istarlev 269). It suggests that they want their children to live under the heteronormative norms. If you were born as female, you will be dressed as one and on the other way around. Most of people rarely consider about boys/men and girls/women who begin the process of changing their gender appearance from one to another. That notion is called as the process of becoming transgender.

Transgender people are those whose appearance, behaviors, or personal characteristics differ from stereotypes about how men and women are supposed to be (National Gay Lesbian Task Force 2000 as cited SpectrUM, Whitten University Center). The group includes cross-dressers, transsexuals, and intersex. Sometimes, transgender people are often suffer from internal confusion and prejudice or violence from society, such as from the family, neighbors and workplaces. Moreover, transgender people are interested with their same sex. It is contradictory with heteronormative norms. Heteronormativity is in favor of opposite-sex relationship as a sexual nature, and against same-sex relationship (Broadbent 1). Its aim is to describe and explain about the ideal gender role based on heterosexuals about their nature of sexes.

Some might say that gender is about the performance identity in each individual. “Clothing is a badge of gender status, thus „correct“ gender appearance reaffirms our belief in the mutual exclusivity of masculine and feminine.” (Woodhouse xiii). Moreover, Judith Butler in her influential book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999), also stated that there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results (33). In other words, gender is a performance; it is what you do at particular times, rather than a universal theme on who you are.

The issue of transgender has become a big concern in Ireland. According to Jennifer O'Leary, a Dublin reporter, society is going to promote the heterosexual view of marriage, in relation to mothers, fathers and children, or promote a gender-neutral view, which will deny the other. Recently, both parents have promoted the more traditional view and it is the way to avoid any violence or bullying of gay people (BBC News Europe). To mark the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency publish the results of the largest survey on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in the European Union (EU). Approximately 93,000 LGBT people were surveyed across the 27 EU countries and Croatia, including 1,625 LGBT people from Ireland. The survey findings show that Irish LGBT people still face considerable levels of discrimination and harassment, and that many LGBT people cannot be themselves in their daily lives.

Across the EU, many LGBT people hide their identity and live in isolation and even fear (Gay & Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) journal 2013).

The writer chooses *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005) by Neil Jordan because, first, this film has won six awards. In 2005, it won Ljubljana International Film Festival as audience Award by Neil Jordan and National Board of Review, USA as its excellence in filmmaking. In 2007, Cillian Murphy, as the Patrick “Kitten” Braden, won Best Actor in a Lead Role in a Feature Film in Irish Film and Television Awards, Neil Jordan as Best Director, Film Glynn as Best Hair & Make-Up, Lorraine by Lynn Johnson, Best Script for Film by Neil Jordan and Pat McCabe (IMDB). The second is because the issues, transgender and gender performativity, that appear in *Breakfast on Pluto* film are interesting. Being a transgender is still being the minority group and being a sensitive topic in society. Furthermore, transgenders are being identified by the society by their performance, so it is very important for the researcher to dig deeper on their gender performativity. Those are the reasons why the issues of transgender and gender performativity in this film become very important to be analyzed.

Despite the portrayal of transgender in Ireland, *Breakfast on Pluto* is a film that turns out the issue of gender performativity. It is a queer film that has comedy-drama genre. This film was directed by Neil Jordan and based on the novel with the same name by Patrick McCabe. This film focuses on Irish culture, society, the changing toward gender, and sexuality. This film describes the story of transgender named Patrick „Kitten“ Braden who performs his opposite gender. This study aims to examine how gender performativity is represented and how

society reaction toward Patrick's gender. Patrick was abandoned by his mother on the doorstep of the local house when he was a baby. Then, Patrick is raised by foster mother because his father does not accept him as his biological son. A young Patrick prefers to wear girl clothes and apply a lipstick that angers his foster family. This film also describes the struggle of a boy searching for his biological mother in London.

The title of this movie also has a meaning, it comes from a 1970's song by Don Partridge who is well known as the "King of the London Buskers." It also represents Patrick behavior when he sees the whole world through the songs. He wonders about her mother in London city with all the songs she has listened, all the love songs but there is only one song. He wonders about her mother, she believes that a small cloud passes overhead and cries down on a flower bed and there is a peaceful place to be had, the place is on Pluto. Patrick's imagination is about her mother and he can go to that place, a quiet place on Pluto to breakfast.

In analyzing *Breakfast on Pluto* film, the writer uses the theory of gender performativity by Judith Butler. According to Butler, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts (179). In this sense, the effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. By using gender performativity theory, the writer also tries to analyze Patrick's gender performativity and also see the society reaction toward Patrick's gender performativity.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the background written above, there are two statements proposed in this study:

1. How is Patrick's gender performativity portrayed in *Breakfast on Pluto*?
2. How is the society reaction toward Patrick's gender performativity?

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study aims at reaching several objectives that are expected. Based on the statements of the problem the aims of the analysis are:

1. To explore and analyze gender performativity which is portrayed in *Breakfast on Pluto*
2. To see the reaction of society towards Patrick's gender performativity

1.4 Significance of the Study

There are three significance points from this study. First, the study is expected to be useful for the readers to learn about queer study, especially, in the term gender performativity. Second, by doing this study the writer expects to get more knowledge about queer studies. Third, this study aims to give the reference for English Department students of Airlangga University, especially for those who take cultural studies as their subject of study.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Gender : Gender is an act that brings into being what it names: in this context, a

- “masculine” man or a “feminine” woman (Salih 56)
- Gender performativity : The act of repeating, citing and imitating practice to become a particular gender (Butler 1993 p.2)
- Heteronormativity : The cultural bias in favor of opposite-sex relationships of a sexual nature, and against same-sex relationships of a sexual nature (Broadbent 1)
- Social constructionism : Homosexual, heterosexual, male and female is socially constructed distinctions subject to change (Tyson 321).
- Transgender : Male-to-female performances, the drag queen, gay male culture, the performances of drag kings or masculine woman (Krolokke and Sorensen 41).