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Negotiating Transgender Identity in Torrey Peter's Detransition, Baby

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Abstract

This research discusses the negotiation of transgender identity depicted in Torrey Peter's Novel "Detransition, Baby". Theory of Gender performativity by Judith Butler uses in analyzing data. In providing the data, this research used note taking as the instrument. The findings show highlight Reese's conviction in identifying herself as a woman, a transwoman, showcasing the fluid and complex nature of gender identity and Ames's detransition journey involves transitioning between genders and displaying various masculine and feminine traits, emphasizing the fluidity of gender and challenging established social norms. This finding also reveals a deeper understanding of the complex experiences of transgender identities and individual transgender journeys aligns with Judith Butler's concepts of gender performativity.

Keyword: Transgender, Gender performativity, Detransition, Baby.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas tentang negosiasi identitas transgender yang digambarkan dalam novel Detransition, Baby karya Torrey Peter. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui identitas transgender melalui negosiasi dalam novel ini. Peneliti menggunakan teori Judith Butler tentang performativitas gender. Penelitian ini menggunakan "note taking" sebagai instrumen. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan keyakinan Reese dalam

mengidentifikasi dirinya sebagai seorang perempuan, seorang transgender, yang menunjukkan sifat identitas gender yang dibangun dan kompleks dan perjalanan Detransisi Ames yang melibatkan transisi antar gender dan menampilkan berbagai sifat maskulin dan feminin, yang menekankan pada fluiditas gender dan menantang norma-norma sosial yang sudah mapan. Temuan ini juga mengungkapkan pemahaman yang lebih dalam tentang pengalaman kompleks dari identitas transgender dan perjalanan individu transgender yang sejalan dengan konsep Judith Butler tentang performativitas gender.

Kata Kunci: Transgender, Performativitas gender, Detransition, Baby.

A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian social media in 2022, was filled with discussions about nonbinary or neutral gender. It all started with a viral video of a new student at the Faculty of Law, one of University in Makassar, who was expelled from a campus orientation room for identifying as nonbinary. Despite asserting their neutral gender identity, the faculty insisted that they choose a binary gender. Since the student insisted on identifying as nonbinary, they were eventually asked to leave the room (Pasa'buan, 2022).

In social life, it is difficult for transgender individuals to express themselves as the opposite gender identity. leading many transgender people to adopt a non-binary identity, not specifically acknowledging their gender identity, and choosing not to undergo hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgeries to establish their gender identity (Rosalina et al., 2021).

There is an ongoing debate regarding the concept of transgender identity and the role of gender in society from the perspective of the general public, individuals who are biologically male but present themselves in a feminine manner or vice versa are commonly referred to as transgender. However, it is important to note that in the Islamic faith, such practices are considered forbidden or prohibited. The term transgender has been widely utilized in various contexts and has garnered numerous implications, making it challenging to define in a universally meaningful way. Within the psychological realm, transgender individuals are categorized as experiencing transsexualism, where their physical sex is clearly defined and complete.(Saidah & Annajih, 2022)

The discussion about transgender identity negotiation has been addressed in

many novels, one of which is the novel "Detransition, Baby". The novel by Torrey Peters is a literary work that highlights the issue of transgender identity and the challenges faced by transgender individuals in dealing with their changing identities. This novel describes the journey of the two main characters, one of character related to the process of detransition (returning to the sex that matches the sex they were born with).

Based on the explanation above, to delve deeper into the understanding of transgender identity from the perspective of the novel "Detransition, Baby" by Torrey Peter, which explores gender as its main theme. The researcher intends to analyzing the Negotiating Transgender Identity in Torrey Peter's Detransition, Baby was released on 2021.

Literature meets two criteria, namely *dulce et utile* (enjoyment and usefulness). Literature must be good, interesting and enjoyable. Literature must provide benefits or uses, namely inner wealth, insight into life and morals (Darma, 2019). The function of literature as a moral builder. According to Poe's term 'didactic heresy', literature functions to entertain and teach something (Nahdhiyah, 2018). This is in line with Horatius's view which states that literary works must have a purpose and function or *utile et dulce* (useful and enjoyable). Apart from being an expression of beauty and a means of entertainment, literature also functions as a means of education and instilling values such as moral, ethical, social, cultural and other values. (Sehandi, 2018). Therefore, this research tries to show the role of literature, in this case novels, in educating the public about transgender. Instilling moral values on how to view and live side by side with the Transgender community in social life and building a new societal paradigm regarding Transgender.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Transgender Identity

Transgender is a term used to describe individuals whose behavior or appearance does not align with their assigned gender at birth. For example, someone who is assigned male at birth but behaves and presents themselves in a feminine manner, even dressing like a woman, or vice versa (Dhamayanti, 2022). On the other hand, transexual is different from transgender. A transexual is someone who identifies their gender differently from their sexual orientation. They feel that their gender identity does not match their assigned body.

Transgender individuals may experience a disconnect between their names or gender identities and the information listed on their birth certificates or other

identification documents. According to a 2016 report from the U.S. transgender survey, 36 percent of transgender individuals encountered difficulties in legally changing their names, while 63 percent of those individuals were able to successfully complete the name change process. (Fataya, 2020)

Gender identity tends to be used to refer to how an individual understands their own gender, and in transgender individuals this does not align with their biological sex, often referred to as their ‘sex assigned at birth. Transgender children often ‘socially transition’ meaning that they present to others as their gender identity rather than their sex assigned at birth, which may include changing their name, the pronouns used to describe them, their clothes and the length of their hair. When an individual’s gender identity is aligned with their sex assigned at birth they may be referred to as cisgender.(Freedman, 2019)

The terms ‘transgender’ and “trans” are often used interchangeably in the literature. However, it’s important to note that some trans or transgender individuals may choose not to label their gender identity, and using such terminology could potentially marginalize these individuals. In this research, the term ‘transgender’ is employed to refer to individuals whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex, for instance, someone assigned female at birth but identifies as male.

2. Gender Performativity

Judith Butler in “Gender Trouble” has explores the performative nature of gender, arguing that gender is not an inherent or fixed characteristic but rather a social and cultural construction. She criticizes the binary understanding of gender and challenges traditional notions of identity, calling for destabilization of gender categories. Butler’s analysis in “Gender Trouble” has been influential in Queer theory by expanding our understanding of gender and opening up new possibilities for challenging norms and expectations associated with gender and sexuality. (Butler, 1990)

Butler perspective on identity as something constructed and performed. Therefore, gender is a category that is constantly changing (shifting category), and according to Butler, gender does not have to be understood as a stable identity or a locus of agency that is the origin of all actions. Instead, gender is an identity that is formed over time and institutionalized through repeated actions. Thus, according to Butler, identity is something that can change because it is influenced by society and occurs repeatedly. Even if someone is biologically male, Butler would argue that it can change based on how each individual chooses to perform and transform their

identity, making it different from the initial perception. (Wulandari, 2018)

Butler's theory actually states that gender individuals are social construct. The statement that one's identity is never fixed reflects the freedom individuals have over their bodies. It is more about the freedom to do anything to one's body and to become anything (male or female) if they wish to change it. From this understanding, Butler's statement about her theory is conceptualized through performativity, which refers to actions or performances that undergo changes in each individual's altered body, imitating the original. For example, a transgender person can be seen as imitating/imitating either a woman or a man. This perspective explains aspects related to language, such as definitions and explanations of word meanings. (Wulandari, 2018)

Butler argues that being born as a specific gender isn't inherent. Instead, she suggests that our actions, speech, movements, and way of expressing ourselves collectively influence how others perceive our gender. The notion that genders is performed differs slightly from the idea that it's performative. When we speak of gender as performed, we typically mean adopting roles or behaviors crucial to shaping and displaying our gender identity. On the other hand, asserting that gender is performative implies that these performances have various consequences. Our behaviors, speech, movements, and mannerisms all play a role in creating the impression of being identified as either male or female. (Butler, 1990)

Understanding the concept of performativity proposed by Butler is expected to foster an understanding of the transformative potential in challenging the cultural boundaries that have been constructed. It is argued that individuals should actively engage in the performance and embodiment of diverse gender expressions. According to Butler, gender is not simply synonymous with biological sex but rather a learned and enacted phenomenon. Everyday actions, language, movements, representations, clothing, and behaviors are said to contribute to the perpetuation of a binary gender system. By recognizing that gender is not a fixed noun but a dynamic process, individuals can eventually grasp its fluid nature. This perspective challenges the notion that one's body determines their gender and emphasizes that individuals are continually engaged in a process of becoming subjects within the realm of gender. (Fitriani et al., 2021).

C. RESEARCH METHOD

The research methodology is qualitative descriptive. Qualitative research is research using a natural setting with the purpose of interpreting a phenomenon that

occurs and is carried out by involving various existing methods. way of involving various existing methods. Qualitative research seeks to find and describe narratively the activities carried out and the impact of the actions taken on their lives. (Genot, 2018)

The source of data in this study is the novel written by Torrey Peters, “Detransition, Baby” (Peters, 2021). In qualitative research, the researcher themselves become the instrument or tool of the research also utilized writing tools and notebooks for assistance (note taking). The data collected by gaining the conversation narration occurred in the novel. The researcher selected and categorized the data into the character identity negotiation by using Butler’ theory about gender performativity.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Findings

1) Identity of the characters

Based on the Gender Performativity theory by Judith Butler, identity is something that can change because it is influenced by society (reaction of others) and occurs repeatedly (repetition of act).

a) Repetition of Acts

Butler emphasizes that gender is constructed through repeated performances. In analyzing the characters, the author looks at the actions, movements, and behaviors that characters repeat to express their gender identity.

But now, here’s Reese sneaking around with another handsome, charming, motherfucking cheater. Look at her, **wearing a black lace dress** and sitting in his parked Beamer, waiting while he goes into a Duane Reade to buy condoms. Then she’s going to let him come over to her apartment, avoid the pointed glare of her roommate, Iris, and **have him fuck her** right on the trite floral bedspread that the last married dude bought her so that her room would seem a little girly and naughty when he snuck away from his wife. (Peters, 2021: 2)

In the quotation above, it depicts Reese, who is dressed in a black lace dress,

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habitually hooking up with a man in their apartment as they always do. This repetitive behavior is part of gender performative.

I was told that I was sterile by the doctor who gave me estrogen. **I injected estrogen and took testosterone-blockers for about six years, when I lived as a transsexual woman.** He told me I'd be permanently sterile after six months. So, like, given my past as a woman, fatherhood is a lot for me to handle emotionally. (Peters, 2021: 25)

From the quotation above, Amy went through a series of processes to live life as a trans woman by injecting estrogen and inhibiting testosterone for seven years to appear as a woman.

So why does she put up with you, may I ask?" **"My rugged masculine good looks, obviously."** Reese scoffs. He's still too pretty by half; the once rhinoplasty perfect nose now broken but still delicate, and those light blue eyes that, in old photos, would have come out empty-white, one of those colors that required photographic technology to evolve before it could be captured on film. "Is she queer at all, this woman?" Ames had thought a fair amount about this. "I don't think she appreciates queerness so much as she came to feel ambivalent about heterosexuality. I know those two aren't the same thing. **She's attracted to masculine bodies, of that I'm sure.**" He flicks his wrist in a semi-ironic indication of his own now-curve-depleted body as evidence. "Although perhaps not men as a class. (Peters, 2021: 37)

In the quotation above, Ames, after undergoing detransition, had a masculine appearance, and that's what made their partner like them. Masculine bodies as represent of Ames perform as man. Even Ames was an ex-transwoman, their body can be masculine like other man.

b) Reaction of Others

According to Butler, in seeing identity, it can be seen from repeated actions and is also influenced by social, In analyzing the character's identity in the novel, the author uses the reactions of other characters in the story to see the character's identity displayed in the novel.

Reese really liked wearing yoga pants, **but his interest in her penis so early** in the date meant that she wasn't yet going to give him the satisfaction of saying so. She wondered if he'd somehow gotten confused. She'd clearly stated that she was a strict bottom on the fetish site. "You know I don't top, right?" "What? Of course not. I don't want that." "Okay, well you had so much interest in my junk." "**I'm interested in everything decorative on a woman.**" Referring to **Reese's genitals as purely decorative was an objectively asshole thing to say.** But instead of being offended, she was turned on." (Peters, 2021: 49)

Judging from the quotation above, the other character's reaction to seeing Reese someone who biologically has a penis but he really likes Reese who is very feminine, he is even interested in everything that is on Reese. From the reactions of these other characters, Reese's character identity is illustrated from Reese's performativity as a transgender.

Ingrid, one of the trans girls who'd been around Brooklyn at least as long as Reese, had said in half admiration and half condemnation, "**Reese is the only trans girl in this city whose incessant drama really has almost nothing to do with the fact that she's trans.** Her drama is just what **she makes for herself as a woman.**" (Peters, 2021: 112)

Illustrated from the quotation above, that in the view of the transgender community that Reese is a different trans person, Reese really lives like a woman rather than a transwoman. Naturally and without being made Reese appears as a woman.

That is not something a son asks his mother," her mother said carefully. And in her tone, beneath the impassive way she said it, Amy could feel something harder, a pit of revulsion, pulling tightly in on itself. **Her mother had never said anything like that before.** She was not the type to categorize behavior into what was and wasn't done." (Peters, 2021: 142)

The quotation explains about Amy who has undergone transition but is still referred to as a son by their mother, and they feel uncomfortable even though their mother accepts Amy's decision. The use of the word Son to refer to Amy who is a transwoman in this quote is the reaction of every parent to the expectations of their

child. The author sees Amy's character identity from the reaction of the character's mother's conversation with her mother.

2) Negotiating Identity of the Characters

To analyze how characters negotiate their transgender identity and gain a deeper understanding of how transgender characters negotiate their identity within the framework of Butler's gender performativity theory. The author uses indicators such as:

a) Challenging Norm

Identity negotiation in Butler's eyes can be seen by how characters challenge or follow the norms of gender norms in the society depicted in the novel in redefining the gender they identify with. There are two data found as representative the characters challenging norm.

Think about it, Reese. **You could be a mother. You could raise a child. Like we always wanted.** "I'm going to get up and leave," Reese says finally. "You've lost it. I thought I couldn't be shocked by your dumbass transformations anymore, but even I couldn't have predicted that you'd come back to me proposing to become a bigamist. What the actual fuck." But she doesn't get up and leave. She doesn't move at all. He catches his breath, waiting for her to say no, to say that she'd never raise a kid with him, to close the door on the best offer he'd ever have to put on the table. If she wouldn't accept motherhood from him, she'd never accept anything. "Is that how little you think of me?" Reese continues after a minute. "**That I'd accept some second-rate motherhood?** And meanwhile, **why the fuck would this other woman carry a baby for a transsexual and an ex-transsexual.** Who is this woman? What's wrong with her?" "Nothing is wrong with her. I don't even know if she'll be open to the idea. I haven't proposed it." (Peters, 2021: 33)

The quotation describes a complex interaction between Reese and Ames discussing the possibility of becoming a mother and raising a child together. Reese initially reacts with shock and disbelief at the proposal, expressing their concerns about the unconventional nature of the situation and questioning why anyone else would want to hold a baby for a transgender and ex-transgender person. This

situation clearly challenges the norm that motherhood is for cis-gender women and how trans motherhood relates to gender performativity as theorized by Judith Butlers.

I sometimes want bottom surgery,” Reese said. “When I turned eighteen, I got some money that my grandmother left for me. It was about two-thirds of what I needed to go to Thailand and get one. Instead I spent it on a road trip with a boyfriend and moving to New York. I got a job here in a daycare, then as a server, and I figured that it’d be years before I could afford surgery working as a waitress, **so I’ve worked to get comfortable with the idea that I have a penis, but that it’s a woman’s penis.** I’m pretty much there, mentally. It helps that I grew up watching trans porn. I watched way more trans girls getting fucked than cis women, so **I think I internalized the idea of trans women with cocks as the hottest, most feminine women out there.**” (Peters, 2021: 48)

From the quotation above, Reese intended to undergo gender reassignment surgery, but they didn't get the chance, so they made peace with the statement that they had a penis, but it was a woman's penis - a woman with a penis. With all their feminine traits, penises are not a problem, and they feel much more feminine than the average woman out there. It is Reese's redefinition of gender identity that challenges the norm that there is a female penis.

b) Internal Reflection

By looking at the story narratives that provide insight into the characters' thoughts and feelings, the author sees how the characters view their gender identity internally as part of their identity negotiation process.

There was another reason, beyond the stigma, taboo, and eroticization, that their particular brand of bugchasing had bite for Reese: **She really did want to be a mom. She wanted it worse than anything.** She had spent her whole adulthood with the queers, ingesting their radical relationships and polyamory and gender roles, but somehow, she still never displaced from the pinnacle of womanhood those nice white Wisconsin moms who had populated her childhood. She never lost that secret fervor to grow up into one of them. In motherhood she could imagine herself apart from her loneliness and neediness, because **as a mother, she believed, you were**

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never truly alone. No matter that her own and her trans friends' actual experiences of unconditional parental love always turned out to be awfully conditional." (Peters, 2021: 5)

In the quotation above, Reese is described as desperately wanting to be a mother, which is their desire, as they believe that by becoming a mother they will never be lonely. This strong desire shows the strong instincts that real women have in gender performativity, which shows that Reese's actions show the natural aspects of femininity.

I got sick of living as trans. I got to a point where I thought I didn't need to put up with the bullshit of gender in order to satisfy my sense of myself. **I am trans, but I don't need to do trans.**" Ames could run through this routine without even thinking about it. How many times had **he tried to explain his detransition** to other trans women? Tried to assuage the sense of betrayal that their wariness obviously communicated?" (Peters, 2021: 93)

In the quotation above, Amy, who is tired of being trans, also believes that being trans does not have to follow visible markers or conform to the standards set by society for trans individuals. In gender performativity, what makes up our gender identity is what makes us feel comfortable and how we identify ourselves, without having to act a certain way just to fit in, that is what defines our gender is also an internal reflection.

The first year of transition, **Amy discovered, was about learning how much you've lied to yourself.** How unreliable your own self-assessments were and how little the sense of self from **your past could be put to good use in transition.** The awful part was watching what therapy called "your coping mechanisms" flame out." (Peters, 2021: 114)

The quotation above explains that Amy realized that they had lied to themselves about their previous identities. After a year of transitioning, Amy distanced themselves from their past to be utilized in the transition process. Gender performativity shows in Amy internal reflection that Amy is comfortable in transitioning and continues to learn to adapt according to their own will.

"To say that Amy had never before had sex as a woman was the kind of

thing that trans activists would take issue with. Feel free to peruse the Tumblr-Twitter industrial complex for all the ways that “**trans women have always been women**”—**even before they transitioned**. But for Amy it was the first time she saw herself fucking as a woman without laying a psychic veil over whatever sexual scene was occurring; the first time it just was rather than something that, with effort, she could manage to see. **It was the first time she had been present as the woman** she so obviously had been all along, **a woman who required no effort to be present**, and who connected directly with Reese.” (Peters, 2021: 115)

The quotation explores Amy's experience of having sex as a woman for the first time. It then acknowledges the debate within trans activism about whether "trans women have always been women" even before transitioning. However, for Amy, this sexual encounter marked the first time they had sex as a woman without the need to mask their identity. It was a moment where they felt authentically present as women which was essentially them, without conscious effort, establishing a direct connection with Reese.

c) Fluidity and change

Butler's theory states that gender is not a fixed identity, but a fluid and changeable performance. The author observes the characters' changes in the way they express their identities in the negotiation process.

Back when **he lived as a trans woman**, hardly anyone spoke about detransition. It was treated as the purview of conversion therapists and tabloid headlines: **He Was a Man, Then a Woman, Then Back to a Man!** The topic of detransition was boring—the reasons for it were never complex: **Life as a trans woman was difficult and so people gave up**. Even worse, to discuss the possibility of detransition gave hope to the lunacy of bigots **who wished that trans women would simply detransition** (i.e., cease to exist in any kind of visible, and hence meaningful, way).” (Peters, 2021: 27)

In the explanation above, it states that Ames, who has detransitioned into being a man, feels tired of discussing transition. He believes that living as a trans person is very difficult, and many people face challenges, including himself. In gender performativity, gender change is seen as a natural occurrence, something

that happens fluidly based on Ames's experience.

Amy got from the conversation: **He'd lived as a trans woman** for seven years. **But it was too hard. Too hard. He didn't pass. He wanted to die. He was still a trans woman. Everybody saw it**, no matter what he did, but since he wouldn't say so, they couldn't either. He had a good job now. Medical supply distribution. He lived on Staten Island with those two young girls. He drove them to the party tonight and helped them get dressed.” (Peters, 2021: 30)

The quotation above illustrates Amy's realization that despite having transitioned to live as a man, others still perceive and view her as a transgender woman. This highlights the struggle of not being recognized for the identity they want, even after transitioning. This situation reflects how societal perceptions of gender can persist, making it difficult for individuals to be seen in accordance with their changed gender identity. This relates to Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity, where a person's gender identity is often understood by others based on perception and appearance, even after the person has transitioned.

After sex, he tells Katrina that **he has an answer. That he has made a decision, but in turn, she must make a decision about him.** He will raise a child with her. They can be parents together—but **he cannot promise that he won't someday decide to live again as a woman.** He cannot r wa we her that kind of stability. He cannot promise that he is sure of who he is, and so he cannot promise that Katrina or their baby will have an unchanging constant as either a partner or a father. And **while he wants to promise consistency in his ability to be a provider and lover**, he knows from experience that he can't promise that either. It's not up to him. As he changes, so too do the opportunities offered by the world around him ebb and flow.” (Peters, 2021: 301)

The quotation above explains that Ames decides the conclusion about the confusion within himself, he cannot promise to remain Ames and does not rule out the possibility of returning to his previous condition of living as a woman, but he will still love his wife. Gender performativity clearly sees gender as fluid because it is determined after the action occurs. For example, Ames transitions from a trans woman back to a man, and contemplates the possibility of living as a woman again

in the future. Gender is fluid and subject to change.

2. Discussion

In looking at transgender identity in the characters of the novel *Detransition, Baby*. The author uses Butler's theory which uses indicators to analyze it. Of the two characters chosen in the novel, the author sees both as transgender identities. First, Reese's characterization of gender identity begins with a repetitive performance. Reese's actions, wearing a black lace dress and engaging in a relationship with a man, exemplify the continuous repetition of behaviors that contribute to constructing her gender identity. This emphasizes the role of habitual actions in expressing and shaping one's gender in the context of performative theory. Appearing in a dress, shows Reese's feminine appearance, which can be said that Reese is a transgender.

Seeing the transgender Identity from another character's view, seen from their comment about being "attracted to everything decorative on a woman" and referring to Reese's genitals as "purely decorative", as noted in the data found, is quite insensitive. It objectifies Reese and simplifies their identity through physical attributes. However, Reese's reaction to this comment is quite significant. Instead of being offended, they are excited. This reaction may reflect a complex interplay of feelings, including a possible desire to be desired, a complicated relationship with their body and identity, or an unconventional acceptance of praise due to societal stigma surrounding transgender identity.

In another light, Reese's character can be seen as breaking down some of the stereotypical narratives about transgender individuals, where their stories often focus solely on their gender identity struggles. Reese's experience, as noted by Ingrid, is more universal, transcending the specific issues related to being transgender. Ingrid's observations and the reactions of others in their community may indicate recognition and acceptance of Reese as a woman, first and foremost. Their identity as a transgender woman is a part of Reese, but does not singularly define their life or the drama within it.

In the proposed action, in addition to Reese's character, Amy's character in the repetition of hormone therapy over several years signifies a deep commitment to the transgender identity. This long-term and consistent approach to transition was not only a physical transformation but also a psychological and emotional journey. This reflects the seriousness and authenticity of Amy's gender identity during this period. During her time as a transgender woman Amy really put in a lot of effort to perform as a transgender person.

Ames who was Amy, Ames' character in the complexity of transgender identity and the interplay between appearance, attraction and gender. Ames' detransition highlights the fluidity of gender expression, with masculine appearance attracting her partner. Ames' masculine appearance represents a man of a former transgender who is still seen as beautiful by Reese.

The reaction of others in this case their mother, Amy, a transgender woman, is still referred to as a boy by their mother. The mother's reaction and word choice is crucial in difficulty accepting change, Amy's mother's use of the word "son" instead of "daughter" or the name Amy chooses indicates a struggle to fully accept or adapt to Amy's gender identity. This can be due to a variety of reasons, including entrenched beliefs, lack of understanding, or difficulty in adjusting to change. The data that has been found to answer the process of negotiating the character's identity in the novel through several ways such as challenging norms, internal reflection, fluid gender change, which is in line with Butler's view in concluding transgender identity.

Relationship complexity in transgender narratives the conversation between Reese and Ames shows the complexity in relationships when negotiating transgender identities. It is not just about personal identity, but also how this identity interacts with the expectations and perceptions of others, especially in intimate relationships. Transgender and motherhood seen in Reese's reaction to the idea of motherhood as a transgender person underscores society's challenges in accepting transgender individuals in traditional gender roles. Motherhood, often seen as an exclusively cisgender female role, is here negotiated in the context of transgender identity.

Through Reese's response, " why the fuck would this other woman carry a baby for a transsexual and an ex-transsexual," reflects society's prejudices and misconceptions about transgender individuals as parents. It highlights the stigma and challenges faced by transgender people in society, especially in fulfilling roles traditionally considered to be gender-specific.

Butler's concept of Gender performativity states that gender is a performance, an action we perform, not a fixed identity. In this context, Reese's idea of motherhood can be seen as a challenge to traditional gender roles and performances, questioning societal norms about what it means to be a mother and how this role is related to gender.

Another challenging norm in narrative is seen from Reese who reflects a unique journey of negotiating transgender identity within societal norms. Despite initially desiring surgery on the lower half of the body, financial constraints diverted

their path. The decision to accept their anatomy as a "woman penis" signifies a personal redefinition of gender, challenging conventional notions. Reese's comfort with their identity, influenced by exposure to trans representations, also highlights a growing perspective within the transgender community, breaking away from traditional norms and encouraging self-acceptance.

Reese's desire to become a mother, as depicted in the data, highlights the complex negotiation of transgender identity and the internal reflections associated with it. In Reese's case, the desire to become a mother is linked to societal expectations and traditional notions of womanhood. Reese's story illustrates the nuanced process of negotiating a transgender identity, which involves a constant interplay between personal desires, societal expectations, and the evolving landscape of gender performativity.

In addition to Reese, Amy's character reflects Amy's frustration with society's expectations related to transgender people. The data touches on the idea that gender identity should not be solely determined by external markers, but should be an internal reflection of how one identifies and feels comfortable. This relates to the concept of internal reflection in negotiating transgender identity, which emphasizes the importance of personal authenticity rather than conforming to societal expectations or stereotypes.

Amy's journey highlights the deep internal reflection that occurs in transition. Recognizing the deceptions in self-assessment is an important part of this process. Amy's ability to distance herself from past identities underscores the fluidity of gender and the importance of adapting to an authentic self. Amy's internal struggle is not only about embracing a new identity but also about dismantling societal expectations and doing gender their own way. Amy's transformative experience of having sex as a woman. It highlights the ongoing discourse in trans activism regarding the assertion that "trans women have always been women." Regardless of the debate, Amy's encounter is a pivotal moment, allowing her to be authentically present as the woman she essentially is, unencumbered by the need to regulate or mask her identity. This intimate relationship with Reese marks an important milestone in Amy's journey towards self-realization and acceptance.

Ames' views on detransition during her life as a trans woman. The discomfort of discussing detransition can be due to societal views and the potential reinforcement of prejudicial views. Ames indicated that the challenges of living as a trans person contributed to the decision to detransition, emphasizing the complexity of the experience. This is in line with the concept of gender fluidity, where identities are not fixed and can evolve based on individual journeys and

social dynamics. Looking at Amy's character highlights the challenges transgender individuals face in being accepted and recognized for their chosen identity. The persistence of societal perceptions despite having undergone gender transition reflects the fluidity and complexity of gender identity. Amy's experience aligns with Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity, emphasizing that people's understanding of gender is often shaped by social norms and performance. This struggle highlights the need for greater societal acceptance and education around transgender identity, recognizing that identity is not static but evolves with personal experience and self-understanding.

The fluidity and uncertainty of negotiating a transgender identity, emphasizing the evolving nature of gender. Ames acknowledges this complexity by expressing his decision to raise a child with Katrina, but with the caveat that he cannot promise a stable, unchanging identity. This reflects the idea that gender is not fixed, as Ames contemplates the possibility of returning to life as a woman in the future. This narrative underscores the dynamic nature of gender, in line with the concept of gender performativity, where identities are formed through action and can change based on individual experience and self-discovery.

Reese and Ames' character journeys are very complex in every action, personal problems, societal views and gender changes are intertwined in shaping the character's identity. Although identity and sexual orientation are different things, in the data found, the characters have different sexual orientations in each plot. Ames' character's sexual orientation is straight in the transgender community but is called gay in the eyes of society. Amy relationship with Reese, a fellow trans woman, is narrated as a lesbian relationship in the transgender community. After Ames' detransition, Ames' sexual orientation returns to straight as seen from their relationship with Katrina, a straight cis-gender woman.

The complex negotiation of identity in overcoming social norms of each character in the novel, which is a literary element, emphasizes the function of literature in social criticism. One of the functions of literature is reflecting social reality, literature often reflects current social issues, in the novel detransition, baby the struggles and challenges faced by individuals negotiating their gender identity provides insight and understanding with literature allows readers to understand the complexities of gender identity negotiation through the experiences of the characters in the novel.

With literary works, it is easier for us to understand the negotiation of gender identity, which is indeed a phenomenon that occurs in society, regardless of the controversy, but as human beings who have a humanitarian spirit, we realize that

everyone has the right to freedom of expression and the right to bag themselves as long as they do not harm or interfere with other people in community life. In literary theory, literary works often expose and stimulate questions about the social construction of gender, allowing readers to understand the complexities of gender identity through characters and narratives. Judith Butler, known as a gender theorist, also plays a role in literary criticism. Her thinking, especially the concept of gender performativity in her work "Gender Trouble", has influenced literary analysis by highlighting how gender identity is performed and constructed through language and action. Thus, as a literary critic, Butler makes an important contribution to the understanding of literature through the lens of gender theory and performativity.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity is an important concept in literary theory, especially in the realm of gender studies and queer theory. This theory examines how gender identity is not something inherent, but rather something that is constructed and enacted through repetitive behaviors and societal norms. This theory has been influential in analyzing gender representation in literature, including how transgender characters are depicted and understood in narratives. As in the novel *Detransition, Baby*.

The literary side of examining Torrey Peters' *Detransition, Baby* is to examine how the novel negotiates transgender identity through its narrative, characters and themes. Peters explores the complexities of gender and identity, providing insight into the experiences of transgender individuals. Analyzing the literary aspects involves exploring character development, narrative structure, and the use of language to convey the nuances of transgender life. The novel's engagement with detransition and the intricacies of parenthood adds depth to the exploration of gender identity, making it a rich subject for literary analysis. As a form of gender criticism, *Transgender* is very much in line with Judith Butler's literary criticism in gender performativity in analyzing the characters depicted in the novel.

E. CONCLUSION

The actions carried out by Reese and Ames/Amy in along with their relationships with other characters in the novel depict their feelings about their transgender identity as main characters. Reese's habitual use of dresses and interactions with men, Ames presenting a masculine appearance, and Amy's routine estrogen injections illustrate a repetitive pattern in exploring the transgender characters' identity. There are three data found related to repetition of act. On the other hand, the portrayal of transgender identity is also evident in the reactions of

other characters in their interactions with Reese and Ames/Amy. There are three data found related to other characters. Reese despite biological conditions, finding her allure as a woman with a penis. Ames/Amy, still referred to as a son by their mother, despite undergoing transition to become Amy.

The negotiation process experienced by the characters Reese and Ames/Amy also influences the story in the novel. It can be said that Reese's character is a transwoman, has womanhood and is very feminine. Ames is a former transwoman who still sees herself as transgender. Two data show that Reese's character challenges the norm, as what is said to be transgender that goes against the rules or expectations of society in gender construction. Reese who desperately wants to be a mother and raise, and concludes that despite having a penis she is still a woman and even more attractive as a woman with a penis. Four data show the character's internal reflection in negotiating their identity, Reese's desire to become a mother, Ames' struggle to live a hard and difficult life as a trans person, feeling better and comfortable with her transition, and living as a transwoman who seems to show their natural self. Three data show fluid gender and change in transgender negotiation. Ames who transitioned into Amy then detransitioned into Ames, their confidence remains a transgender without following the social construct of a transgender in society, as well as Ames' conclusion that they are not sure and believes in gender change and may one day return to being a transwoman often.

After The negotiation process between Reese and Ames challenged societal norms relating to parenthood and gender identity, underscoring the complexity of gender roles in personal relationships. Together with Reese's partner and other community members, in navigating their identities, they eventually reconcile their chosen gender identities, namely Reese as a genuine transgender woman, Researchers emphasize that looking at the process experienced by Reese's character, Transgender identity can be present naturally from within each individual, which is also supported by the society in their environment.

Ames as a former transgender woman who still identifies as transgender and may change again, and whose identity is still uncertain. Reflecting on gender change, Ames who contemplates returning to life as a woman emphasizes the changeability and fluidity of gender. This suggests that gender identity is not static and can be influenced by personal experiences and actions. Looking at Ames' character, the researcher concludes that transgender identity can change at any time. The researcher hopes that through this study, readers can appreciate every transgender individual out there who is at war with their feelings in experiencing feelings of being transgender, because having a trait like layatransgender is not an

easy choice seen from a long process with a number of influencing factors.

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