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TRANSGENDER PERFORMATIVITY AND
SUBJECTIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN
DRAMA

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APPROVAL PAGE



DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this master's thesis titled as "Transgender Performativity and Subjectivity in Contemporary American Drama" has been written by myself in accordance with the academic rules and ethical approach. I also declare that all acknowledgements utilized in this thesis contains the mentioned resources in the reference list. I certify all these with my honor.

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ABSTRACT

Master's Thesis

Transgender Performativity and Subjectivity in Contemporary American
Drama

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Transgender studies, integrating discussions on essentialism and social constructionism in gender studies, provide a unique principal point that empowers the interpretation of alternative sexualities and the performance of non-traditional gender roles. The studies on differences between the biological sex and gender identities of transgender individuals decentralize conventional heteronormative understandings about bodies and identities. In addition to some significant debates on transgender authenticity, rage, visibility, agency, voice, transgression, and violence, transgender studies focus on the role of performativity and subjectivity attempting to understand transgender identities. Besides the theoretical perspective provided by transgender studies, transgender identities are also depicted and explored in the different genres such as fiction, non-fiction, films, musicals, and TV series. Also, in the theater genre, transgender identity is becoming more and more visible in which performativity and subjectivity are further questioned and scrutinized. These performances play a fundamental role in contributing narratives for identifying transgender individuals and positioning transgender individuals' subjectivity. This study concentrates on transgender performativity and subjectivity in three plays titled *Hidden: A Gender* (1989) by Kate Bornstein, *I am My Own Wife* (2003) by Doug Wright, and *Tara's Crossing* (2004) by Jeffrey Solomon. These plays not only represent the gender performances and subjectivity of

transgender individuals but also challenge heteropatriarchy in contemporary world.

Keywords: Gender, Transgender, Performativity, Subjectivity, Kate Bornstein, *Hidden: A Gender*, Jeffrey Solomon, *Tara's Crossing*, Doug Wright, *I am My Own Wife*.



ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Çağdaş Amerikan Tiyatrosunda Transgender Performatifliği ve Öznelliği

Özge KAYA MANAV

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Toplumsal Cinsiyet arařtırmalarındaki özcülük ve sosyal inşacılık üzerine tartışmaları katarak, transgender çalışmalar alternatif cinselliklerin yorumlanmasını ve geleneksel olmayan toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin performansını güçlendiren benzersiz bir temel nokta sağlar. Trans bireylerin biyolojik cinsiyet ve toplumsal cinsiyet kimlikleri arasındaki farklılıklar üzerine yapılan arařtırmalar, bedenler ve kimlikler hakkındaki geleneksel heteronormatif anlayışlara meydan okur. Transgender özgünlük, öfke, görünürlük, faillik, ses, ihlal ve şiddet üzerine bazı önemli tartışmalara ek olarak, transgender çalışmaları trans kimlikleri anlamak için performatiflik ve öznelliğin rolüne odaklanır. Transgender arařtırmalarının sağladığı teorik perspektifin yanı sıra, trans kimlikler kurgusal ya da kurgusal olmayan eserler, filmler, müzikaller ve diziler gibi farklı türlerde tasvir edilmekte ve tartışılmaktadır. Ayrıca tiyatro türünde, performatiflik ve öznelliğin daha fazla sorgulandığı ve incelendiği transgender kimlik giderek daha görünür hale gelmektedir. Bu performanslar, trans bireyleri tanımlamak ve trans bireylerin öznelliğini konumlandırmak için anlatılar sağlar. Bu çalışma, Kate Bornstein'ın *Hidden: A Gender (Gizli: Bir Cinsiyet)* ve Doug Wright'ın *I am My Own Wife (Ben Kendimin Eşiyim)* ve Jeffrey Solomon'un *Tara's Crossing (Tara'nın Geçişi)* adlı üç oyununda transseksüel performatiflik ve öznelliğe odaklanmaktadır. Bu oyunlar sadece trans bireylerin cinsiyet performanslarını ve öznelliğini temsil etmekle kalmıyor, aynı zamanda çağdaş dünyada heteropatriarkaya da meydan okumaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Transgender, Performatiflik, Öznellik, Kate Bornstein, *Hidden: A Gender*, (*Gizli: Bir Cinsiyet*), Doug Wright, *I am My Own Wife*, (*Ben Kendimin Eşiyim*), Jeffrey Solomon, *Tara's Crossing*, (*Tara'nın Geçişi*).



**TRANSGENDER PERFORMATIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY IN
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INTRODUCTION

Theatre has often been useful for representing non-binary characters. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) people have struggled against heteronormative systems to gain representation in the theatre during the last century. Queer theatre has contained different sexualities and gender identities in the past fifty years. Queerness, like all gender identity categories historically produced, since queerness firstly allows LGBTQ people to present their identities on stage. With the emergence of queer theatre, trans theatre finds a presence in the theater genre. For a while, transgender theatre is a subgenre of queer theatre.

Transgender identities have largely been trivialized and excluded from the debate between queer and transgenderism. The connection between queer theory and transgenderism has been discussed. One of the theorists is Michael du Plessis who focuses on gender studies in “Blatantly Bisexual; or, Unthinking Queer Theory”. Michael du Plessis unfolds the blending position between queer theory and transgenderism. “Queer theory, unlike Queer Nation, has been far from the troubled world of actual coalition-building, and has, more often than not, treated bisexuality and transsexuality quite shabbily...” (du Plessis, 1996: 32). Many transgender people struggle against the oppression of some queer theorists. Although they are informed by these theorists, their voices continue not to be heard. After this situation, bisexual and transgender communities have constructed powerful coalitions and they take part in the transgender theories.

The academicians used to talk about queer identities and transgender identities in the same sphere but these issues have changed remarkably since the 1970s in the theatre genre. In Early Trans Theatre, transgender representation often seems to be less explicit. Trans theater is not identifiable because transgender identity has appeared as a nascent identity. In early Trans Theater, playwrights begin to put transgender characters on stage but they appear in stereotypical roles. “Until recently, written theatrical works that included trans and gender-nonconforming characters tended to use them in the same way as film did—for comic, tragic, or plot twisting effect” (Pearlman, Szeszycki-Truesdell, and Lowrey, 2014: 554). Theatre gradually begins to contain gender non-conforming characters and transgender

characters. Some performances appeared in 1976 such as *Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean*. “This play also tended to conflate gender and sexuality, presenting characters that were somewhat interchangeably identified as being, for instance a woman in a man’s body” (Pearlman, Szeszycki-Truesdell, and Lowrey, 2014: 554). Since the 1990s, theatre as a literary genre begins to serve a sphere for presenting transgender individuals because they have tried to integrate autobiographical narratives into their plays.

Beyond blurring literary genres, trans writers often face the burden of representation in their work. It is often assumed that a trans author writing trans characters or experiences must be working from a memoir or autobiographical perspective, which can make it difficult for trans novelists and fiction authors to incorporate trans content into their work without it being assumed that they are representing their own experience. (Pearlman, Szeszycki-Truesdell, and Lowrey, 2014: 564)

Also, trans authors sometimes have difficulty in depicting trustworthy and truthful portrayals because they feel pressure and have anxiety about others’ expectations.

The burden of representation can also make it difficult for trans authors to write honest portrayals of trans experiences or include trans characters with flaws. There are already so many negative fictional portrayals of trans people that there is a lot of pressure to only portray trans lives and experiences in a positive light. Some trans authors complain that this expectation makes it difficult to write honestly about the communities that they live in and the people that inhabit them. (Pearlman, Szeszycki-Truesdell, and Lowrey, 2014: 564)

It can be difficult to write fiction on transgender experiences because of expectations. Their stories can create verisimilitude effects on their real-life experiences. After this transition process, many writers create new forms to make transgender individuals visible and make themselves heard in specific genres.

As time progressed, transgender characters can be more visible and moved away from stereotyped characters. Whereas transgender characters were typically stereotyped or unrealistic in the past, transgender characters tend to become more complex to reveal insight into their traumas and pain currently. Even though they appear as supporting characters in the past, they begin to be depicted as main characters. Transgender characters gradually reveal their subject positions through theater. “Since 1989, authentic trans and gender-nonconforming characters have

begun appearing more regularly onstage and in playwriting, mostly written and performed by trans and gender-nonconforming identified creators” (Pearlman, Szeszycki-Truesdell, and Lowrey, 2014: 554). As a result of this realization, some writers have been pioneers of the theatre genre. One of the transgendered theater performance artists is Kate Bornstein, who “debuted her first theatrical show *Hidden: A Gender*” (Pearlman, Szeszycki-Truesdell, and Lowrey, 2014: 554). She defines how to create trans theater with this definition:

Anyway, I work in theater because I really enjoy working with people, and theater is not an alone art. And current theatrical forms reflect a rigidly bi-polar gender system. They aren't fluid enough for what I want to say, and I feel that form and content in theater as in life should be complementary, not adversarial, so I work on my own gender fluidity and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. And I work on the fluidity of my theatrical style—and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. My life and my theater—my form and my content—sort of do as I say and do as I do. (Bornstein, 1994: 145)

According to her, theatre is a sphere to reflect her fluidity of gender and she strictly is against the bi-polar gender system. This play also reveals her own story and the transgender subject's experience. At the same time, the play provides for other transgender people to find themselves.

Kate Bornstein has observed there was no sphere for her as an artist who formulates theoretical aspects of transgender theatre. After she identified as transgendered, Kate Bornstein forms her theories that construct what she deems queer theatre. She does not emphasize linear narrative. “Instead of a linear storyline, there were many stories woven together, each beginning and ending at different times; and instead of conflict and resolution, there was transformation” (Bornstein, 1994: 151). Bornstein's understanding of transgender can be a unique representation in contemporary American drama. She identifies herself as an outlaw and her theater contains outlaws for erasing stereotypes in heterosexual society too. “As outlaws—lesbians, gay men, transgendered, bisexual, or as *S/M* players—we lampoon the images of the dominant *{i.e., heterosexual}* culture. Because we are in the process of lampooning the stereotypes of our oppressors, we are aware of stereotypes evolving in our subculture, and we'll lampoon those as well” (Bornstein, 1994: 159).

After Kate Bornstein's work, "in 1994 trans man performer/writer David Harrison premiered his solo show *FTM*" and "one of the first and few mainstream theater pieces to depict an authentic trans or gender nonconforming experience is the play *I am My Own Wife* written by Doug Wright" in 2003. (Pearlman, Szeszycki-Truesdell, and Lowrey, 2004: 554). When these works emerged, there has been a community which is increasingly making a splash in this genre. There are a few dramas, docu-dramas, and musicals which has gradually reflected the evolution of transgender characters such as *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (1998) by John Cameron Mitchell, *The Rocky Horror Show* (1973) by Richard O'Brien and *Christine Jorgensen Reveals* (1957) by Bradford Louryk. Moreover, there are new constructions such as solo trans performers. This is the trendy attitude that provides an "opportunity to offer authentic and nuanced narratives of trans lives and identities on stage, literally or symbolically" (Erickson-Schroth, 2004: 555). There are several trans solo performers and performances such as Alexandra Billings' *Before I Disappear* (1995), Scott Turner Schofield's *Underground Transit* (2001), *Debutante Balls* (2004) and *How to Become a Man in 127 Easy Steps* (2007), Joey Hateley's *A-Gender* (2004), *Engendered Species* (2007) and *The Gender Joker Show* (2010), Sunny Drake's *Gender—Queer Seeking* (2008) and *Other-Wise* (2010). These solo performances are "part of the long tradition of performers of marginalized identities taking to the stage to make ourselves known and tell our stories" (Pearlman, Szeszycki-Truesdell, and Lowrey, 2014: 555).

Transgender individuals on the stage serve denaturalizing gender, resisting categorizations, and holding a sphere for multiplicity. Theatre goes beyond fixed notions of gender identity. Theatre allows transgender individuals to constitute their gender identity and fluidity of gender. When trans actors destabilize gender identities in theater, the visibility of transgender individuals appears on the stage. Theatre can function as a potentially liberating sphere of transgender self-representation because the actor or actress engages with transitioning of the character through narrative. The stage is a potentially liberated area for them because they show transgender embodiment through performing a play. Transgender bodies on the stage subvert gender categorizations and provide the fluidity of gender. Their bodies are a way of liberating their position, disrupting old-fashioned or stereotyped characters, and

adopting new techniques in the theater. Drama as genre provides moments of empathy and new ways of thinking for transgender lived experiences for audiences and readers.

Before the elaborative summary of the plays, I would like to define several remarks about the particular terms such as transgender, transsexual and transsexuality along with this thesis. Transsexuality is used in a medical sense, which defines a process of sex reassignment surgery or body change. Therefore, it is commonly referred to within the biological aspects. Thus, the term presents a limited spectrum for the person, who feels that the gender assigned to him/her at birth does not give a true core of gender identity. On the other hand, transgender provides a broader meaning, who feel that both the sex and the gender assigned to them at birth are not enough to express their genders. By including social and cultural aspects, this is one of the reasons why this study that aims to go beyond the biological aspect, prefers to use the term transgender.

To understand terms such as transgender, transsexual and transvestite well, it is necessary to analyze some of the perspectives and terms in gender studies. Therefore, in the first chapter, gender and the concepts of gender are mainly defined such as essentialism, social constructionism and gender as performance. In the next section, besides the meaning and the inclusion of transgender term, there are several explanation of confusing terms like transgender, transsexual, transvestite in anatomical and social aspects. Whereas sex is defined as biological aspects of the body, gender requires a set of social roles, traits, and expectations. Gender is a learning process so, gender identity is dynamic and is socially and culturally constructed.

The next subsection explains the concept of performativity. Gender performativity determines the attitudes of individuals in life according to their genders and sexes in society. Judith Butler is an essential figure for gender performativity who has altered the way people consider sex, sexuality, gender, and gender identity. She expresses the notion of gender identity and develops the theory of gender performativity. The difference between performance and performativity is significant to understand Judith Butler's perspective on gender. Gender identity is formed with stylized and reiterated acts, which are reshaped and reproduced

endlessly. Gender performativity provides a significant and profound perspective to analyze the gender identities of the characters in the plays selected to be analyzed in this study.

The last subpart concentrates on transgender subjectivity that presents an analysis of the body and sexuality. It involves the construction of transsexual identities and mainly considers medical aspects. This subjectivity can be shown as the celebration of transgender multiplicities and diversities. Transgender subjectivity challenges traditional approaches to self. The subjectivity of the subject displays its different voices beyond the boundaries of the man/woman binary. The subject's position is always a reiterative process within distinctive social and cultural contents throughout the construction of the subjectivity.

In the second chapter, the aim of the study is to examine transgender performativity and subjectivity through selected plays from contemporary American drama. Several contemporary playwrights such as Nick Mwaluko, Jo Clifford, Deen The Playwright create unique characters, actions, and choices rather than stereotyped characters, behaviors, and options on sexuality and gender. This study seeks to articulate the transgender identity within all-inclusive details and analyze transgender lived experiences within the social and cultural potentialities through a focus on transgender voice and visibility in contemporary American drama. *Hidden: A Gender* (1994) by Kate Bornstein, *I Am My Own Wife* by Doug Wright (2003), and *Tara's Crossing* by Jeffrey Solomon (2005) demonstrate transgender lived experiences, transgender embodiments, and transgender voices. These dramas focus on questioning underlying assumptions of gender categories.

Kate Bornstein's *Hidden: A Gender* challenges expectations of gender identity and demonstrates the questionnaire of gender conformity. She shows unique transgender individuals Herman/Kate and Herculine/Abel who demand for sex change in the heterosexual system. L.C. Doc Grinder is a talk show host, and functions as a narrator in Bornstein's play. Kate Bornstein starts to share her story and aims to criticize the binary gender system as an artificial construction of physical and psychological dimensions. Kate Bornstein dislocates gender from sexuality and she creates gender-bending over strict gender conformity.

Doug Wright's *I am My Own Wife* shows a transgender experience during the mid-20th century. The playwright illustrates the life of a unique transgender woman, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, who lived through the Nazi occupation and Communist era in Berlin. Her connection with her family, acquaintances, and her county designate her construction of gender identity during the Nazi attacks and the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Doug Wright depicts the life of this cross-dresser and her resistance to heterosexual biased society in an era of war and political unrest.

Jeffrey Solomon's *Tara's Crossing* presents the narratives of transgender detainees and asylum seekers in the United States of America. The playwright creates a traumatic journey of a transgender migrant from Guyana who is known as Tara. The play takes place in Tara's single cell but Tara is incarcerated in the United States and remembers her traumas in the past throughout the play. After facing harassment within the men's facilities, she demands hormone therapy for constructing her transgender identity. Jeffrey Solomon criticizes the political and social aspects of gender identity under rigid asylum laws and national security rules.

Despite the existence of complex characters in contemporary American drama, there is a lack of academic interest in trans identities as represented on American stage. In an attempt to compensate this lack, this study focuses on transgender lived experience and embodiment through an analysis of transgender representation of these selected plays. These representations in contemporary American drama give priority to transgenders' own voices and expressions based on their auto/biographical narratives. Their expressions enrich the social, cultural, and political backgrounds of transgender identity and raise awareness about transgender lived experiences. Transgender representations are inclusive maneuvers enabling insight for understanding the construction of transgender identity. This study mainly focuses on the transgender experience and identity, along with discussions of performativity and subjectivity in these three plays.

CHAPTER ONE

TRANSGENDER PERFORMATIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY

1.1. DEFINING GENDER

Since the terms sex and gender have been sometimes used interchangeably or appear interwoven, a good definition of the term gender primarily requires an explanation of the different meanings and connotations of the two terms. Sex indicates anatomical, chromosomal, and physiological attributes of women and men that imply the biological femaleness and maleness of an individual. “Sex is a complex relationship of genetic, hormonal, morphological, biochemical, and anatomical determinates that impact the physiology of the body and the sexual differentiation of the brain” (Lev, 2016: 308). Sex, which is biologically determined, has some defining features such as chromosomes, and hormones. The anatomical differences are depending on whether the sexes form egg cells for females and sperm cells for males such as chromosomes XX or chromosomes XY. In *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World*, Anne Fausto-Sterling explains the combination of sex markers: “The male produces X- or Y- bearing sperm, females, having two X chromosomes, produce only one kind of egg” (Fausto-Sterling, 2012: 3). This is the beginning of the biological cycle in reproductive anatomy. Prenatal sexual differentiation presents distinct chromosomes. When the sperm cell fertilizes the ovum, twenty-three sex chromosomes from the female and twenty-three sex chromosomes from the male should be formed. An ovum carries the X chromosome, while a sperm carries either an X, or a Y chromosome. When the sperm holds an X chromosome, the embryo will appear female sex with a XX sex chromosome structure. If the sperm carries a Y sex chromosome, the embryo will normally be as male sex with an XY. In addition to chromosomes, hormones are categorized as estrogen and progesterone for the female body while androgens are identified for the male body.

On the other hand, gender can be defined as roles, activities, and responsibilities that are assigned to women and men in a specific time, culture, and society. Gender is a concept referring to the internalization of gendered behaviors

through bodily gestures and manners. Gender studies analyze gender stereotypes and labels beyond biological determinism. According to Kate Woodward, “gender categories are also associated with stereotypes, which may be either positive or negative, and which can reinforce the relationship of ‘us and them’ ” (Woodward, 2004: 63). These categories show positive and negative stereotypes stigmatizing an individual’s gender identity. Also, she continues, “identity is shaped by the categories with which we label ourselves and identify” (Woodward, 2004: 63). Gender categories are shaped through labeling. These gender stereotypes and labels necessarily build on the status quo in terms of women’s and men’s roles at all stages of life. Gender broadens the social, cultural, and historical nuances and changes from society to society, from time to time, and from place to place.

According to Julia T. Wood, “sex is a designation based on biology and gender is a classification that society makes, and, for most people, it endures throughout their lives” (Wood, 2015: 19-21). Sex can be determined as genetic and biological differences that are related to procreative function while gender can be defined as the description of roles, activities, and responsibilities. “A sex and gender system is not simply the reproductive moment of a ‘mode of production... and a sex and gender system involves more than the “relations of procreation”, reproduction in the biological sense” (Rubin, 1975: 159). The gender system is reconstituted by the patriarchal system to define different expectations from different sexes. Sex is natural and biologically determined whereas gender is a learned process that can be changed.

Culture possesses gendered stereotypes to encounter the expectations of each society. The cultural construction of gender is a sequence of learned behaviors, roles, and activities that society organizes appropriate forms for individuals through signifying biological femaleness and maleness. The features of femininity and masculinity are a component of the gendered system because the way of life and the relations of society are culturally defined and reinforced to internalize parameters of traditions and customs by each individual.

According to Judith Butler, gender and sex have different characteristics in each culture. Judith Butler asserts that each individual is not solely gendered but also sexed traditionally because they are obliged to name superficially, so the sex does

not run ahead of gender but gender is a complementary element of sex. For Butler, lived or experienced “sex is always already gendered” (Butler, 1999b: 142). To construct a sense of belonging in a gendered sphere, sexual practices exist in the matter to function within the heterosexual frame.

1.1.1. Essentialism

In many interdisciplinary arguments, the essentialism versus social constructionism debate has been remarkable. Diane Fuss’s book *Essentially Speaking* is a crucial contribution to this argument. To comprehend gender essentialism, it is necessary to check the definition of essentialism. “Essentialism is classically defined as a belief in true essence - that which is most irreducible, and therefore constitutive of a given person or thing. This definition represents the traditional Aristotelian understanding of essence, the definition with the greatest amount of currency in the history of Western metaphysics” (Fuss, 1989: 2).

Essentialists believe that the characteristics of people are mostly affected by biological factors and express human behavior as a part of human nature. Essentialism is “the notion that men’s and women’s mode of operation in society is governed by their biology” (Simmonds, 2012: 2). These characteristics make people what they are and these identities depend on a natural and biological basis. Embracing biological determinism, the essentialist approach emphasizes sex differences while they define the concept of gender.

Furthermore, essentialism and power relations are interactive ideologies. According to Mahalingam, “a life span developmental account of how essentialist beliefs about categories are shaped by power and privileged social status is sorely missing” (Mahalingam, 2007: 2). Essentialist categories maintain power relations, create a misrepresentation of social status and lead to the sovereignty of the dominant group. In the essentialist view, it is the genes or anatomical properties that affect power relations among humans determining forms of domination and subordination. According to Diana Fuss, “essentialism can be employed as a powerful tool of ideological domination” (Fuss, 1982: 46). The strategy of the essentialist approach is based on ideological dominance. In addition, essentialism perpetuates inequality and

gender discrimination because the norms of essentialism ignore any kind of deviation which further lead to stigmatizing attitudes toward sexual minorities. In “Review of Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference”, Smith argues that essentialism can be an instrument for not only discrimination but also resistance because “deployed by a hegemonic group, essentialism can further ideological domination, while in the hands of a subordinate group, it can become an intervention” (Smith, 1991: 110). This essentialist strategy of the dominant heteronormative ideology is likely to offer intervention or criticism by a subordinate group.

1.1.2. Social Constructionism

By advocating the idea that gender is not biologically determined or essential, social constructionists challenge the essentialist view of gender. Rather than an aspect of essential nature, gender is a part of the mechanisms in which the identities of the individuals are shaped and constructed. According to Kate Woodward, “gender describes the systematic structuring of certain behavior and practices which are associated with women or with men in particular societies” (Woodward, 2004: 30). It is a systematic structure that contains behaviors, roles, attitudes, and expectations. Gender is constructed according to social practices and values. Thus, gender roles, behaviors, attitudes, and expectations are created by society and enforced by its social norms. In “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theories”, Judith Butler emphasizes gender as a construction in which we repeatedly engage with the illusion of binary sex.

there is neither an ‘essence’ that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis. The tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of its own production. The authors of gender become entranced by their own fictions whereby the construction compels one’s belief in its necessity and naturalness. (Butler, 1988: 522)

Gender is not essence or fact, but it is a social construction and collective performance and production. Gender construction is culturally defined by

appropriate ideologies which do not change easily. Individuals internalize these ideologies and they become a part of the cultural mechanism in which the practice of gender roles is reassured and justified. According to Judith Butler, “gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive /cultural means by which ‘sexed nature’ or ‘a natural sex’ is produced and established as ‘pre-discursive’, prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts” (Butler, 1999b: 11). Butler disagrees with the essentialists, who traditionally observe the body as natural and pre-discursive, and she adds that the understanding of a binary system is overly simplistic. Sex should be seen as a spectrum rather than a dichotomy, that is why gender is culturally constructed and interpreted. Clearly, Butler does not argue that biological processes do not affect differences in anatomy classification. This classification displays sex distinctions in everyday life, not only in the practice of reproduction but also in the matter of gender. Gender is influenced by both biological and social factors.

Gender is a system that supports the foundations of patriarchal and heterosexist hegemony. Gender, supported by social institutions such as family, religion, education, and media, regulates gender identities within social relations. How the patriarchal heteronormative system produces power relations on gender is also evident in social discourse. Judith Butler, emphasizing how gender is constructed in social discourse, expresses that “identity categories are fiction, all products of these regimes of power/knowledge or power/discourse” (Jagger and Butler, 2008: 17). Judith Butler claims that the binary system of sex and gender is an artificial categorization imposed by the patriarchal discourse.

In order to grasp the theories which evaluate gender as a social construction, there are three concepts that need to be examined: gender identity, gender roles, and gender traits. The patriarchal ideologies see two sexes and two distinct gender identities as enduring categories in a society. This fact reveals and brings along some questions about gender identity, gender roles, and gender traits. What determines gender identity? Are our brains biologically programmed along with female and male prenatal sex hormones? Does the habitat affect learning experiences of gender identity after the natal period? And, does gender identity mirror an intermingling of anatomical and environmental influences? The answers to these questions also

include definitions of these three key concepts in the constructivist approach in gender studies.

Social constructionists, challenging biological determinism, define gender identity as separate from biology. The construction and socialization of gender identity are affected by the influence of socio-cultural settings and the influence of the time. “Gender identity is influenced by individual and collective and social and biological factors and gender identities are often associated with stereotypically feminine and masculine traits” (Woodward, 2004: 55). Individuals construct their identities by a set of feminine and masculine characteristics that are associated with gender categories in the patriarchal society. Patriarchy regulates power and control gender relations and idealizes heterosexuality in the process of gendering. The patriarchal system is a control system that provides prescribing roles in the hierarchal structure. Allan Johnson expresses the function of patriarchy in *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*. “In perpetuating patriarchy, femininity and masculinity are important tools for social control. This works primarily through people’s investment in maintaining a socially acceptable gender identity” (Johnson, 2005: 92). Patriarchy provides a continuation of the gender identity according to femininity and masculinity because it makes a connection with how we perceive a gender identity in a specific culture and how we participate in gender roles.

Gender roles are conditioned by expectations regarding proper activities and attitudes of females and males. These roles regulate how individuals think, act, and communicate with others within the context of patriarchy. Gender roles are divided into two groups which are known as masculinity and femininity. “As the reasoning goes, masculinity and femininity make up “gender roles” that define how men and women are expected to appear and behave, and this is the core of what makes patriarchy work” (Johnson, 2005: 90). The differentiation between males and females implicates specific duties, lifestyles, and tasks. Furthermore, Talcott Parson, a renowned sociologist, provides a sociological analysis of gender, and categorizes the roles attributed to men and women in the family institution. According to him, women have expressive roles, on the other hand, men have instrumental roles within the family. “Patriarchy expects that men play the role of instrumental leader and women play the role of expressive leader” (Parsons, 1955: 23). The two roles display

the division of labor and other aspects of interaction within families. Allan Johnson explains these gendered expectations:

Men are aggressive, daring, rational, emotionally inexpressive, strong, cool-headed in the control of themselves, independent, active, objective, dominant, decisive, self-confident, and un-nurturing. Men always have more dominance, strength, and power in making financially and socially efficient choices. Women are portrayed as unaggressive, shy, intuitive, emotionally expressive, weak, hysterical, erratic, and lacking in self-confidence”, women stereotypically put the welfare of husbands and children, associated with passivity, subordination, and nurturing. (Johnson, 1997: 86)

Both men and women act a certain way due to their gender. Gender roles are endorsed roles; therefore, they acquire sets of knowledge, specific duties and expectations for each gender. Societies cling to the set of gender categories which posits as the main source of gender identity in relation to other members of society. Gender socialization starts at birth and occurs through major institutions such as family, traditions, education, and governmental organizations.

Individuals can internalize the gendered traits around them through different sources, values, attitudes, and mechanisms as a categorization of women and men. “Typically, they are expressed in terms of personality traits that portray women and men as opposite sexes” (Johnson, 2005: 86). Gender behaviors are categorized as normal and abnormal or acceptable and unacceptable. Gender traits are powerful weapons of social construction that provide the sustainability of womanhood and manhood. Individuals, who are unconsciously cultural participants of the system, perpetuate gender behaviors as a normal part of daily life. For this reason, it is hard to ignore what is expected from their gender. “Individuals are not ‘cultural dopes’, passively accepting pre-written scripts for gender behavior, but nor are they entirely free to develop and act out their scripts” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: 163). Even if individuals are not “cultural dopes”, they are not totally free to write their own scripts.

1.1.3. Gender as Performance

Judith Butler argues that gender is not dependent on an essential understanding, but rather gender is created by its own performance. Performance is the total view of acts and behavior of an individual in life according to their genders and sexes in society. Individuals always perform through acts, bodily gestures, mimics, clothes, etc. Performance refers to a certain kind of action; it assumes a certain kind of choice within it. Gender “is real only to the extent that it is performed” (Butler, 1999b: 527). The main concept of the theory is that gender is constructed through an individual’s repetitive performance of gender.

Butler asserts that gender as a performance presents the illusion of binary sex in “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”. “The performance is effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame” (Butler, 1988: 526). The binary performance of gender is supported by the reactions of others to those who fail to cling to gender norms. Butler argues that “discrete genders are part of what ‘humanizes’ individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished” (Butler, 1988: 522). This punishment contains marginalization and oppression.

The performance forms “the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core” (Butler, 1999b: 173). Performances design gender core and gender is perceived as a performance rather than an inherent biological entity, and gender exists with the performances of various acts. According to Judith Butler, “there is neither an ‘essence’ that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all” (Butler, 1988: 522). Therefore, gender is not an essence or fact, because gender is constructed with various acts. Gender is understood as a process, a series of repeated acts. Butler mentions in *Gender Trouble*:

Gender is ... a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and

locate and account for those facts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. (Butler, 1999b: 43)

In this sense, the social appearance of gender is an outcome of continuous repetition of acts. Gender is determined within this regulatory frame and constitutive acts. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler asserts that gender proves to be a performance that regulates the construction of gender identities. Gender identity is not stable because it is a kind of organic being. Butler's theory does not show stable and coherent gender identity. While some of the individuals continue to behave appropriately following their gender assigned from birth, some of them do not adopt their anatomy, so they may go beyond the limitations of the assigned sex with choosing hormone therapy or surgery. This situation reveals multiple gender identities and holds active conditions.

Butler argues that gender cannot amount to a "performance that a prior subject elects to do" (Butler, 1993c: 314). Since the performance itself constructs the subject, it cannot "refer to [pre-discursive] subjects 'doing gender'" (Brickell, 2005: 28). The concept of performance may bring the element so that subjects are defined as "doers" from Butler's perspective. Gender is doing rather than being because gender is performance and can be repeated differently. Judith Butler then explains the case that Nietzsche makes in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. "There is no 'being' behind doing, acting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing—the doing itself is everything" (Nietzsche, 1887: 29). Gender is produced as people repeat certain acts and people become gendered subjects through repetitions. The doers empower through repeating gestures, roles, codes, and norms. The performance of the doer is a sort of playing that is done continuously. Candace West and Don Zimmerman agree with Butler and advocate that "doing gender is unavoidable" (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 137). Also, they assert that "doing gender also renders the social arrangements based on sex category accountable as normal and natural, that is, legitimate ways of organizing social life" (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 146). Doing gender is a process of self-construction under social arrangements. Gender as performance is fluid that can be changed by the doers during the time.

1.2. DEFINING TRANSGENDER

The dictionary definition of the term transgender is “of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity differs from the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth” (Merraim Webster, 2022). In transgender studies, ‘transgender’ is presently considered an umbrella term for different forms of gender identification. People identify transgender individuals as the ‘other’ sex, transsexuals, transvestites, cross-dress, or genderqueers. Even if today transgender is mainly used as an umbrella term, there have been several activists and theorists arguing that transgender identification is different from transsexual or transvestite. For this reason, to be familiar with these discussions, summarizing the historical usage of the term is meaningful.

The first usage of the term “transgender” is generally associated with Virginia Prince, a Southern California supporter, who strives for gender freedom. “Prince used the term to refer to individuals like herself whose personal identities she considered to fall somewhere on a spectrum between “transvestite” (a term coined in 1910 by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld) and transsexual” (a term popularized in the 1950s by Dr. Harry Benjamin)” (Stryker, 2006b: 4). The term shows a liminal process between the transsexual and the transvestite.

Susan Stryker defines a transsexual and a transvestite indicating that the main difference is only a desire for genital transformation:

If a transvestite was somebody who episodically changed into the clothes of the so-called “other sex,” and a transsexual was somebody who permanently changed genitals in order to claim membership in a gender other than the one assigned at birth, then a transgender was somebody who permanently changed social gender through the public presentation of self, without recourse to genital transformation. (Stryker, 2006b: 4)

The essential difference between transvestism and transsexuality was based on the genital transformation. Transgender identity is more socially built beyond biological determinism. Also, Sandy Stone presents the definition of The Stanford Gender Dysphoria Program in 1968:

A transsexual is a person who identifies his or her gender identity with that of the “opposite” gender. Sex and gender are quite separate issues, but transsexuals commonly blur the distinction by confusing the performative character of gender with the physical “fact” of sex, referring to the perceptions of their situation as being in the “wrong body”. (Stone, 1991: 281-2)

When Stanford Program’s definition is announced, transsexual is a person, who defines himself/herself by the opposite sex/gender assigned at birth. Transgender as a term takes its current meaning in Feinberg’s *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time has Come* in 1992 (Stryker, 2006b: 4) in which she broadens the meaning and the usage of transgender:

We are a movement of masculine females and feminine males, cross-dressers, transsexual men and women, intersexuals born on the anatomical sweep between female and male, gender-blenders, many other sex and gender-variant people, and our significant others. All told, we expand understanding of how many ways there are to be a human being. (Feinberg, 1998: 5)

This new perspective brings together gender variant individuals such as transsexuals, cross-dressers, drag queens, and kings. Moreover, Susan Stryker, as an activist, extends the meaning of the term and defines it as a “pangender” term for an inclusive community:

Transgender, in this sense, was a ‘pangender’ umbrella term for an imagined community encompassing transsexuals, drag queens, butches, hermaphrodites, cross-dressers, masculine women, effeminate men, sissies, tomboys, and anybody else willing to be interpolated by the term, who felt compelled to answer the call to mobilization. (Stryker, 2006b: 4)

Stryker also explains the relation between Feinberg’s *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time has Come* 1992 pamphlet and Sandy Stone’s article *The Empire Strikes Back: A Post-Transsexual Manifesto*, published in 1991. “To a significant degree, Feinberg’s ‘transgender’ named the ensemble of critical practices called for by Stone’s ‘post-transsexual manifesto’” (Stryker, 2006b: 4). Transgender and transsexual are not identical but they are intersectional.

Kessler and McKenna have discussed the prefix *trans* which is so often used in this academic schema. In order to understand the meanings of the terms and the differences between the terms, people need to look at the prefix *trans* (Kessler and

McKenna, 2000). The prefix has three distinct meanings: “change”, “transform”, and “beyond” (Kessler and McKenna, 2000). In the first look of “transsexual”, people change their bodies to fit the gender they feel they always were” (Kessler and McKenna, 2000). It means female to male or male to female change through sex reassignment surgery. In the second sense, the meaning of the trans symbolizes “transform” (Kessler and McKenna, 2000). It shifts from one gender category to another but it still has within a two-gender structure. In the last, the meaning is depending on “beyond” or “transcutaneous” (Kessler and McKenna, 2000). It refers to the multiplicity of gender options because if an individual does not need to change genitals, the individual is known as transsexual again. When people think outside the boundaries of male and female, gender “ceases to exist” (Kessler and McKenna, 2000). This new understanding represents a new angle in transgender studies.

In fact, the implications of these terms challenge to the heteronormative society. Transgender individuals change sex, because they feel uncomfortable with their bodies. While individuals describe this desire to change their public self, there no longer requires a surgical transition. Judith Halberstam is an American philosopher who agrees with this idea. Judith Halberstam explains that transgender identities sometimes might reject the idea of the surgery. In *Transgender Butch Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum*, Halberstam demonstrates that it is not necessary to choose sex reassignment surgery. “Transgender, which describes a gender identity that is at least partially defined by gender transitivity but that might well stop short of transsexual surgery” (Halberstam, 1998: 303). Transgender can be described without the need of the sex change operation. Judith Halberstam expresses a term, transgender, from another perspective in her book. It is not only a simply term but also a connection with community. A transgender individual also illustrates an embodiment that is not only about resisting gender, but about being realized discretely: “[t]ransgender proves to be an important term not to people who want to reside outside of categories altogether but to people who want to place themselves in the way of particular forms of recognition” (Halberstam, 2005: 49). The term symbolizes a certain social role within the sincere bonds.

Transgender studies have a connection with the feminist approach to re-examine the primary standpoints. There are many recommendations to situate

transgender issues within a feminist framework. Stone emphasizes: “I suggest constituting transgender are not as a class or problematic “third gender”, but rather as a genre—a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored” (Stone, 1991: 296). Sandy Stone argues that transgender issues should be revised and extend beyond the binary formation of gender. She recognizes that transgender approaches are stuck in binary viewpoints and she reveals its potentiality to decentralize the normative boundaries. She realizes that the categorization should be purified from the frame of binary oppositions. In addition, Eleanor MacDonald expresses the relation between the feminist discourse and transgender discourse in “Critical Identities: Rethinking Feminism Through Transgender Politics”. “In addressing transgender politics’ challenge to the boundaries of gender identity, traditional feminist approaches need to critique their own exclusionary practices, and challenge their own understanding of gender and sexuality” (MacDonald, 1998: 5). Transgendered people have difficulty with the instability of gender identity but the feminist approach may not internalize their gender and sexuality.

Moreover, feminist literature has interactions with the transgender field because the aspects of feminist approaches are shaped through conceptualizing women’s issues. Hausman says: “It is clear that transgender issues are becoming focal points of scholarly and popular thinking about gender in a way that women (as the objects of analysis) used to be” (Hausman, 2001: 465). Also, Heyes emphasizes the feminist approaches to transgender studies.

Woman typically has been mobilized in ways that advance the specific class, racial, national, religious, and ideological agendas of some feminists at the expense of other women; the fight over transgender inclusion within feminism is not significantly different... Just as in these other struggles, grappling with transgender issues requires that some feminist re-examine, or perhaps examine for the first time, some of exclusionary assumptions they embed within the fundamental conceptual underpinnings of feminism. (Heyes, 2006: 7)

When Heyes’ arguments are considered, the transgender issues contribute feminism and may guide feminist approaches to reshape their essential standpoints. These ideas guide feminist approaches to reshape the essential standpoints.

Transgendered individuals significantly tear apart, move beyond or transform normative heterosexuality. These qualities provide acquiring gender fluidity and transgender individuals intentionally transform and create their gender through body gestures, mimics, and surgery. This situation breakdowns the standardized schema of performativity. Transgender studies offer to have a new perspective to change biased thoughts about being transgender. The transgender theory presents limitless and productive representations rather than fixed sex roles and gender positions. Within this respect, transgender, as a term, deconstructs rigid biological determinism and challenges social and cultural constructions throughout the years.

1.3. (TRANS) GENDER PERFORMATIVITY

The theory of performativity contributes to transgender studies; that is why, transgender performativity is shaped through the theory of gender performativity generally. To understand the content of transgender performativity, people first pay attention to the characteristics of gender performativity in Butler's arguments in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. "The effect of *Gender Trouble* was precisely to secure transgender as a touchstone of lesbian and gay theory. How did *Gender Trouble* canonize, and how was it canonized for, a theory of transgender performativity that was apparently not its substance?" (Styrker, 2006b: 276). This book is a mediator of analyzing transgender and understanding its relations to performativity. This theory serves as insights into how transgender people express gender every day. The theory of gender performativity can be applied to transgender people, as the theory does not indicate any identity, but it describes the performative nature of gender. Transgender performativity tends to rely on performativity for portraying transgender lived experience, and enhancing the visibility of transgender identities. Thus, in order to understand performativity, it is essential to look at the concept of gender performativity.

Susan Stryker points out the impact of performativity theory on tr studies in the GLQ article. "The lived experience provide[s] a site for grappling with the problematic relation between principles of performativity and materiality that, while inescapable, defies stable representation" (Stryker, 1988a: 147). Through the lived

experience, transgender studies must follow the principles of performativity and its materiality beyond representation. Transgender studies contain vital notions of the reformation of gender and the body. With the help of performative theory, the lived experience is purified from the undefinable experience of gender, and it provides a dynamic representation in transgender studies. The theory of performativity relates to transgendered embodiment, transgendered experience, and transgender identity; therefore, it is essential to track the history and function of gender performativity in transgender field.

Performativity is the key concept in Judith Butler's treatment of gender. To comprehend what Butler implies by performance and performativity, it is fundamental to allude to John Langshaw Austin. John Langshaw Austin is the British theorist who analyzes the connection between performativity and linguistic analysis. Judith Butler borrows J. L. Austin's idea of performativity and re-theorizes it. Austin's hypothesis may be a beginning for Judith Butler. 'Performativity' is used by John Langshaw Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*. He emphasizes the relation between utterance and performative. He actually divides utterances into two categorizations which are known as "constative utterances" and "performative utterances" (Austin, 1962: 6). The constative statement describes utterances either truly or falsely and it covers the truth. However, performative statements do not state 'true' or 'false' and report anything. "Yet to be 'true' or 'false' is traditionally the characteristic mark of a statement" (Austin, 1962: 12). According to this view, individuals primarily use language to report facts and make utterances that are subject to truth and falsity. The statement is neither self-verifying nor self-denying.

According to Austin, the behavior of the person is a sort of performing a linguistic act that describes feelings, intentions, and thoughts. The performative is a new structure of utterance with an inability to illustrate the action but acts upon it. The performative utterance constructs the act itself. When individuals utter something, the speech represents a sort of doing. Individuals perform a particular act by uttering a unique combination of words.

What are we to call a sentence or an utterance of this type? I propose to call it a performative sentence or a performative utterance, or, for short, 'a performative' ...The name is derived, of course from 'perform', the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the

performing of action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something.
(Austin, 1962: 6)

Austin supports that performative is a certain kind of speech act and the creation of an utterance is the performance of an act. Certain physical and intellectual elements must be performed with the utterance. He presents some examples from daily life. There are a lot of examples of performance utterances in daily usage such as marriage license, making a promise, acts of naming contracts require an inclination of performativity that puts forth an act itself. One of the example is related to the marriage ceremony because when the act of getting married appears, the utterance ‘I do’ represents the moment of performativity as a lawful wedded wife or husband. Such acts are performative utterances since they are performed.

When the utterance is performative, it leads to a group of effects. For instance, an individual can reliably hold a characteristic sentence, which has truth esteem, and indeed it may be expressed in such a way as to say something genuine, whereas it can be denied that its utterance is an assertion. Performative utterances are assertions, which express their properties. For instance, one says “I promise you”, it is an act of promise but also uses something true or false about the individual’s attempt to promise.

A performative sentence does not convey or describe anything; on the contrary, its aim is to show the fulfillment of the act/performance and not what is to be done but what is already being done. “Performative language is the language that makes something happen first by saying something we do something” (Austin, 1962: 106). Austin focuses on how the language functions, but he does not address why it works that way. Since his main concern is how performative language works, he does not stop to ask why it worked.

Furthermore, Derrida, a significant figure in postmodern philosophy, responds to this crucial question in the essay “Signature, Event, Context”. According to Derrida, the performatives are “self-evident” and “self-referential” because the form of speech acts are by “nature reiterative” (Chinn, 2010: 107). To mean, they come into existence outside of performers and attesters. Derrida calls speech acts as an iterable citation because it is a complementary feature of all languages but the conventions mentioned have no origin other than themselves. Rather than being the

result of signification, it produces the signification. “When we utter performative speech acts, we are not acting with full or even conscious intention within a given context through our citation of the utterance” (Chinn, 2010: 108). An utterance is a declaratory act that depends on a speaker’s manifestation. The intention of the speaker verbalizes performative speech acts as an act of a certain kind.

The concept of performative ascribes distinct notions to these three philosophers. “Judith Butler was influenced by Austin’s depiction of performative and even more by Derrida’s assessment that the source of the performative comes from their iterability” (Kroløkke, 2006: 38). “The Derridean notion of iterability, formulates in response to the theorization of speech acts by John Searle and J. L. Austin, also implies that every act is itself a recitation” (Butler, 1993a: 244). The effects of performative called “recitation” for Austin, “iterability” for Derrida, and “repetitiveness” for Butler.

Judith Butler supports that gender is performative because individuals do not have to show stable gender identities, roles, and traits throughout their lives. Performativity is not a temporary concept and it is changeable. “Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (Butler, 1999b:179). Performativity is a form of repetition of acts, an imitation of the particular conventions of gender. Performativity determines the behavior of individuals in life according to a stylized repetition of acts. Furthermore, Judith Butler adds that the crucial aspect of performativity is the repetitiveness of the acts. These acts are constantly being repeated and continue to make over the years. “Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration” (Butler, 1999b: 16). For Butler, performativity is based on bodily repetition because it is a process of self-replication for constructing gender identity. The performative acts may be described as habits that can be repeated. The concept of performativity must be sustained through divergent and new performances without limiting gender identities. Performativity constitutes gender identity because gender is shaped by discourse, power relations, historical practices, and cultural experiences.

Judith Butler is affected by J. L. Austin's speech acts. J. L. Austin expresses that speech acts and non-verbal communication systems are performative. These speech acts are terms of performativity that affect language, power relations, and discourse. Language dictates "power relations and a sense of control with a discourse in a hidden way. Judith Butler perceives performativity as a power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration" (Butler, 1993b: 20). Creating acts with discourse is performative because these acts function as a set of learned behaviors which are social norms. People generally "make heavy use of gender pronouns and suffixes which encourage us to see sex distinctions" because it is a piece of learned information for the perception of the body during the centuries (Johnson, 1997: 54). It leads to the social and cultural degradation of bodies. Discourse affects experiences and spoken language in the construction of the performativity theory. Judith Butler explains the connection between gender ontology and the binary relation in gender roles. According to her, "as a genealogy of gender ontology, this inquiry seeks to understand the discursive production of the plausibility of that binary relation and to suggest that certain cultural configurations of gender take the place of "the real" and consolidate and augment their hegemony through that felicitous self-naturalization" (Butler, 1999b: 43). Her theory presents to demolish the practice of an ontologically fixed gender identity. It endures previously cultural composition and reforms gender as a performative through the reiteration of acts and discourses and it breaks the illusion of an essential gendered identity. Thus, from the perspective of Judith Butler, gender is the "reiterative notion by which discourse creates the effects that it names" (Butler, 1993b: 2). *Gender Trouble* destabilizes gender identities and reveals the performative side of gender identities.

The function of discourse has principles of control, domination, and hierarchy to sustain norms and enhance the construction of productive regulations through the body. The body is considered an embodied activity. This activity becomes crucial since "speaking is a bodily act. It is a vocalization; it requires the larynx, the lungs, the lips, and the mouth" (Salih and Butler, 2004: 172). The body is in a consistent handle of normalization, which is controlled by discourse. Bodies have physical notions but the understanding of the body is socially determined through discourse. The body does not show a stable process, because the significance of the body

presents the discursive sign that causes to have multiple meanings. Furthermore, the establishment of performative gender opens a road to read through the body. She brings an ontological perspective on body with her theory. The performativity theory emphasizes that body can be fluid and performative in socio-cultural settings.

She extends the theory of Austin that the natural body is also performative construction. Butler states that: “acts, gestures, and desires produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggests, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause” (Butler, 1999b: 173). Acts, gestures, and desires are crucial signifiers; therefore, the body is a performative construction in Butler’s view. Also, performativity is not a singular act but is a productive act. There is no singular gender identity that does not occur in fixed gender quality. In other words, the body can be male but it may not contain masculine traits.

The heteronormative system provides the naturalization of gender roles and the reproduction of these roles through performances. Certain performances are imposed on individuals due to the patriarchal demands. Judith Butler stands against approving patriarchal notions of gender identities as stereotyped norms. She clearly expresses that her goal is not to challenge the persistence of certain stereotyped patterns of gender identity in individuals. The heteronormative system reflects gendered authorization and they want individuals to sustain the dogma of the binary system.

Judith Butler reveals how heterosexual norms might be destabilized by individuals who do not match accurately in the categories of the heterosexual matrix. Previously, such norms are not stable, they may be reiterated under the subversive performances of binaries. Binary categorizations discourage individuals to identify their unique bodies and gender. She disagrees with binary categories that leave the act of being an intended individual as norms necessitate. An individual who physically has a male body may hormonally feel female. Referring to what Simone de Beauvoir suggests “one is not born a woman, becomes one ” (Butler, 1999b: 12). Butler tells that Beauvoir’s argument is crucial to contemplate that the subject is always involved in a process of acquiring gender along with cultural implications and categorizations. Individuals are limited by the words that the hegemonic system

implies some cultural prototypes such as female and male representations. However, individuals should question being the subjects of cultural mechanisms because gender is an active process and individuals may develop gender identities disregarding cultural and normative practices.

The conventional sex and gender distinction consistently provides heterosexuality. Heterosexuality is an institutional sexual identity and homosexuality is regarded as abnormal. Judith Butler explains the connection between sex, gender, and sexuality with the exact identification “heterosexual matrix” (Butler, 1999b: 194). The conception of heterosexuality presents that individuals have certain sex and gender identity. Being homosexual is not the opposite of being heterosexual. Berlant and Warner explain the notion of heterosexuality.

The institution, structures of understanding, and a practical orientation that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent—that are, organized as a sexuality—but also privileged. Its coherence is always provisional and its privilege can take several (sometimes contradictory) forms; unmarked as the basic idiom of the personal and the social; marked as a natural state; or project as an ideal or moral accomplishment. (Berlant and Warner, 1998: 548)

Heterosexuality and homosexuality are known as contradictory notions but they actually are not. Institutions show heterosexuality as an ideal and moral accomplished form. It is related to the racial, class, ethnic, regional, and political modalities which design constituted identities in the heterosexual matrix. Heteropatriarchy creates a simple coherence about sexual identity and individuals need to internalize heterosexual bonds in the social realm as a moral and natural state.

In addition to this, Judith Butler holds the view that “the radical disjunction posited between heterosexuality and homosexuality is simply not true, that there are structures of psychic homosexuality within heterosexuality relations, and structures of psychic heterosexuality within gay and lesbian sexuality and relationships” (Butler, 1990d: 165). The naturalization of heterosexuality is not a necessary concept because gender and sexual identity are performative features. To a certain extent, the continuity of sex and gender binary historically pushes individuals to experience institutional heterosexuality. Several social instruments like family, education,

religion, and politics teach individuals to become heterosexual. In contrast, non-binary individuals break down the binary categorization. All sexualities- gay, lesbian, and transgender sexualities- are dynamic probabilities one might have.

To internalize the content of transgender performativity, people first pay attention to the norms of gender performativity. The theory of performativity does not indicate any identity, but it describes the performative nature of gender. Transgender performativity separates from the rejection of gender expectations that direct what kind of gender to perform and what kind of body to get. Transgender performativity presents the diverse identifications and creativity of the individuals. Firstly, it tears apart biological essentialism surrounding transgender performativity. Secondly, trans bodies overcome prejudice because societies have biased thoughts on their bodies. Transgender individuals fight against biological determinations and they redesign their bodies to feel comfortable throughout their lives.

The transgender performativity exposes the idea of gender performativity through fluidity because a transgender individual needs to change. “Gender roles are what a particular culture thinks one should do with one’s life, including personality traits, mannerisms, duties, and cultural expectations, given one’s gender” (Bornstein, 1994: 28). The perceptions of transgender performativity remarkably revolt against society’s normative beliefs and ideas about gender identity. Transgender performativity shows the integration of the individual’s life and experiences throughout one’s life. Bornstein utters: “I keep trying to integrate my life, I keep trying to make all the pieces into one piece. As a result, my identity becomes my body which becomes my fashion which becomes my writing style. Then I perform what I’ve written to integrate my life, and that becomes my identity, after a fashion” (Bornstein, 1994: 1). Kate Bornstein’s figurations of the self and transgender identities from the perspective of performativity are defined as fluid, fragmentary, and multiple. The performativity of the transgendered self coexists in plurality and changes throughout the construction of the gender.

The next chapter analyzes the construction of transgender subjectivity in terms of displaying transgender identifications. As has been mentioned in the “defining transgender” part, there may still be confusion about what the term transgender includes. Some theorists such as Jay Prosser, Bernice L. Hausman use

the transsexual term to study the reflection of subjectivity, it should be regarded as a significant part of transgender subjectivity in general.

1.4. TRANSGENDER SUBJECTIVITY

This part illustrates the different experiences of transgender individuals. The theory of transgender subjectivity focus on transgender identity, transgender embodiment, and transgender voice. The emphasis on transgender subjectivity has brought into intellectual attention to the possibility of accounting for transgender embodiment productively and constituting multiple transgender identities culturally. The transgender subjectivity reveals transgender subject positions. Transgender subjects serve to create examples of passing beyond the gender binary and question the normative standards of gender. It is a significant element for illustrating the performance of the transgender subjects through creating unique gendered experiences in American literature as well. Utilizing transgender experience, transgender subjectivity theory breaks down the linear narrative in which an individual identifies herself/himself through deconstructing gender labels. So, it enhances generating the transgender self and broadens the medical, social, and political boundaries in American culture.

Transgender subjectivity is closely based on constructing transgender identity. This theoretical approach can be observed as the entrance and continuation of transgender multiplicities through constructing a more subjective transgender identity. Susan Stryker is renowned scholar who is concerned about the significance of transgender subjectivity. She asserts that: “histories in fact have been rewritten; the relationship with prior gay, lesbian and feminist scholarship have been addressed; new modes of gendered subjectivity have emerged, and new discourses and lines of critical inquiry have been launched” (Stryker, 2006b: 2). Therefore, transgender subjectivity is based on the writing of transgender history. This is quite essential to reveal distinctive lives and produce unprecedented discourses on transgender subjectivity. Transgender subjectivity is to embody transgender voice and visibility. The notion of transgender subjectivity provides a more subject-centered understanding which is constructed by transgender subjects.

The presence of transgender subjects has a prominent role in reading transgender embodiment and depiction of transgender recuperation. The subjectivity of transsexual individuals is reflected as a stand for negotiation and resistance because they try to constitute a transgender agency. This transgender agency is reflection of transgender lives to represent their performativity and subjectivity through demanding sex change as archetypically constructed subjects, presenting being trapped in wrong body image as medical subjects, and creating the transsexual as discursive subjects throughout academic studies.

First of all, the subjectivity endorses a set of medical and social methods called sex reassignment surgery, whereby an individual changes sex. The theory of subjectivity indicates transgenderism as including elements of transformation. This demonstration plays an important role for sex reassignment surgery. With this demonstration, transsexual narratives become meaningful. The appearance of the transsexual narratives distributes transsexual personal histories and underlines the continuing importance of accounting for transsexual subjectivity, where transgenderism would mend the gendered part of transsexuality, and the collection of narratives would cure or renovate the resistance in gendered plots.

Recently, Bernice L. Hausman has been researching medical technology on gender. Hausman's *Changing Sex: Transsexuality, Technology and the Idea of Gender* illustrates the denial of transgender subjectivity. She proposes that transsexuality was created by endocrinology in the twenties and thirties. When plastic surgery occurs after the World War, the improvements in restorative innovation were brought together with the idea of sex reassignment and the treatment of intersexuality. She identifies a transsexual subject as an "archetypical constructed subject" (Prosser, 1998: 8). She indicates how transsexual individuals constitute their future: participants and clinicians who have shaped medical operations as much as they have been formed. Bernice Hausman defines transsexuals as "dupes of gender" (Hausman, 1995: 140). Their gender identities are re-invented by creating a constructed effect and forming a dupe of the medical sector and the redefinition of the medical narrative of transsexuality.

She exposes transsexual subjectivity as "demand for sex change" through sexual reassignment and hormonal treatment. "The demand for a sex change is an

enunciation that designates the desired action and identifies the speaker as the appropriate subject of that action” (Hausman, 1995: 110). It is the initial property for demanding sex change because it is “part of what constructs the subject as its subjects” (Hausman, 1995: 110). In this sense, “transsexual subjectivity is performative” (Hausman, 1995: 111). The subject shows a performative attitude to construct gender identity. The understanding of transgender subjectivity is linked with performative embodied subjects and attitudes to determine gender identity beyond the binary frame. In the demand for a sex change, the subjectivity demonstrates “other sex” as the origin of the demand for surgical and hormonal sex change (Hausman, 1995: 137). The demand itself, in any case, introduces within the subject a desire that cannot be met through the particular surgeries. This demand serves to relocate her or him within the inverse sex category. The problem occurs a significant incompatibility between transsexuals’ desire for medical surgery to feel comfortable with this gender and sex in the body. Moreover, she puts technology as the signifier of the transsexual subjects that “exhibiting cross-sex behaviors before the technical capacity for sex reassignment” (Hausman, 1995: 117). The technology is sort of token because transsexuals does not appear until after the medical operation.

According to Bernice L. Hausman, transsexual is generally observed as a designed subject. Hausman omits the work of personal narratives to recommend instep that the transsexual individual emerges through a demand. This demand for sex change presents in response to the presence of the determination and the innovation of sex change. “Gender identity is the stabilizer of transsexual (and “normal”) subjectivity only insofar as it represents the goal of the demand; transsexuals in this scenario, demand sex change in order to achieve a position as an authentic gender” (Hausman, 1995: 137). The concept of gender identity seems to achieve the desire of operations to construct a transsexual subjectivity. Also, Hausman asserts that a transsexual refers to an “engineered subject” because it depicts a demand for technological interference (Hausman, 1995: 137). The main role of technology contributes to the construction of the transsexual subject and engineering oneself as a subject is as much a sign of the transformation as idealizing oneself to be the other sex.

Like Bernice Hausman's ideas about the dependence of transsexualism on the demand for technological perspective, Dallas Denny, who is a writer and an activist in the transgender movement for advocating transsexual rights, describes the role of technology in redesigning the transsexual subject. She exposes that transsexual people refashion their bodies and create a space for themselves under the demand of re-engineering.

This human re-engineering, and not the actual genital surgery which morbidly fascinates the American populace, is the true significance of the transsexual change. What is significant is not that penises and scrotums can be fashioned into vaginas or that phalluses can be made from the skin of the forearm, but that someone who is easily identifiable as a man can come to be identifiable as a woman, and vice-versa, by sheer will of self-determination. (Denny, 1940: 112)

Gender identity is a sort of a desire for fashioning a self-image. The impact of re-engineering is a perspective that is radically transforming the transsexual identity as a subject of the other sex. This gender transformation is a kind of cover as the prevailing demonstration of subjectivity in transsexualism, functions to camouflage in compulsory heterosexual societies. The traditional sense of gender ideologies becomes a compulsive property relation to technology. Demanding sexual reassignment surgery by technological intervention, transsexuals search for acceptance into the social system of gender difference as its noticeable subjects. To summarize, transsexuals are called medical subjects under the medical authority and agency. Bernice L. Hausman supports that the demands for transgender subjectivity are only reiterations of the gender system under the patriarchal medical authority.

In 1997, Jacob Hale wrote *Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing about Transsexuals, Transsexuality, Transsexualism, or Trans*. Hale propounds the concern with the denial of transgender subjectivity, which is the result of theorizations on transsexuals. "Transsexuals interrogate their own subject positions and avoid dynamics of exoticization and misrepresentation" (Hale, 1997: 1). Some theorists present misrepresentative qualifications, trivialize transgender experience and ignore transgender participation. His reproach is that transgender subjectivity is defined by non-transgender experts and transphobic writers. So, they demand an authentic transgender voice.

Like Bernice Hausman, Janice Raymond is interested in the connection between the emergence of the biomedical technology foundation and the regulation of transsexual identity. She is a radical feminist writer who wrote *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* in 1979. She emphasizes the role of transsexualism in society and the function of a medicalized gender identity. She focuses on psychological and surgical approaches to transgenderism. She mentions that transsexuals are seen as products of the biomedical department due to the sexual reassignment surgery, as a code for patriarchal authority. She exposes:

Transsexual surgery and treatment do nothing to challenge gender conformity but rather reinforce it by encouraging the individual to become an agreeable participant in a role-defined society, substituting one sex-role stereotype for the other. What ultimately happens in the transsexual fabrication process is that men are turned into artifactual women. Although transsexuals are in many ways what a patriarchal society's stereotype of femininity is, they are not real women.(Raymond, 1994: 628)

Transcending gender is a way of being an artifactual participant in a patriarchal society because the process of self-making is duplicitous and superficial from the gaze of patriarchy. Transgender subjects are innately patriarchal subjects who hold values of patriarchy and the feeling of being an insider of society. In addition, transsexuals are considered both as subjects constituted in medical discourse, and its dynamic exercisers. The notion of biomedical discourse affects the constitution of transgender subjectivity. They become aware of their social positions in a limited sphere because their roles are interpreted by institutionalized constraints and medical authority negatively. Janice Raymond criticizes pre-existed roles of gender because of challenging patriarchal ideology. She disagrees with sex reassignment surgery since these medical interventions camouflage non-conforming identities through imitating female and male bodies in the patriarchal system.

A transgender subject is a sort of a signifier of gender transgression for defining bodily and identical characterization. Individual transgender subjects are strengthened by narratives through the union of the body and the narrative. Jay Prosser is a transgender writer who examines the transsexual narrative and the characteristics of individual transsexual subjects. Prosser writes more about transsexuality than about transgender, but how he describes transsexual subjectivity

offers insight to understand transgender subjectivity as well. He strategically emphasizes the relation between transsexual's narrative and transsexual's subjectivity. In *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, Jay Prosser attributes a transgendered subject which has been called a "key queer trope" (Prosser, 1998: 5). Also, Judith Halberstam expresses the transgender subject to keep an embodiment. She emphasizes "the split between sex and gender which is so readable within the transgender or transsexual body reveals the constructed-ness of all sex and gender" (Halberstam, 2000: 64).

Transsexual subjects themselves have traditionally figured their transition as a final going home, a trajectory that is only worth its risks, complications, and intense pain (somatic and psychic) because it will allow one to finally arrive at where one should have always been: the destination, the telos of this narrative (being able to live in one's "true gender identity") is all. Gender is not so much undone as queerness would have it as redone, that is, done up differently. (Prosser, 1998: 487)

Additionally, Jay Prosser depicts transsexual bodily experiences which is the notion of second skins. In terms of transsexual embodiment, he depicts the first skin, the pre-surgical skin, as a false outer skin, and the second skin, the body image, as the "authentic" skin (Prosser, 1998: 69). As transsexual embodiments are between outer falseness and inner authenticity, Prosser complies with essentialist properties of transsexual embodiment, because he implies the innateness of gender identity rather than considering how identity is socially, and culturally ductile. Positioning his correspondence of second skins, he defines transsexual narratives as the second skin that makes bodies readable. Prosser notes that "[n]arrative is also a kind of second skin: the story the transsexual must weave around the body so that this body may be 'read'" (Prosser, 1998: 101). Initially, pre-transitioned transsexuals are obliged to persuade psychiatrists and surgeons, who he calls their suspicious confessors, to give them the bodies they already have. Eventually, when doctors give them the diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder (GID), transsexuals have started hormone replacement therapy and physical surgeries. Prosser imposes that all transsexuals, even if they do not write narratives, are already "skilled" autobiographers because of the narratives they tell doctors. The second skin of narration also appears when transsexuals tell retrospectively about the conditions of their post-transitioned identities. Prosser

argues that the narrative, the second skin, authorizes trans subjectivity because “autobiography, then, allows the transsexual to remain a transsexual” publically (Prosser, 1998: 131). By pointing to transsexual subjectivity through the narrative, the connection between the transsexual’s desire and the autobiographer’s memoir makes an individual recognized as a transsexual subject.

Narratives are the reflections of transsexual lives to represent their identities. There is a restriction in Prosser’s use of second skins to define both transsexual embodiments and narratives. He argues that “transsexuality is always narrative work, the transformation of the body that requires the remolding of the life into a particular narrative shape” (Prosser, 1998: 4). Pointing to the specific cultural narrative of transsexuality as a narrative work, he locates subjectivity in his notion of skins. At first glance, by placing the first act of narration in doctors’ offices, Prosser does not take into consideration the personal narratives because transsexuals tell themselves before they come across doctors. According to Jay Prosser, transsexuals should be “arch storytellers” because they try to be accepted by doctors’ diagnoses of Gender Identity Disorder (GID) (Prosser, 1998: 118). They create anti-narratives that have already belonged to them before they constitute their stories for doctors.

On the other hand, Judith Butler discusses that the common interest among transsexual individuals is passing another sex. When transsexuals pass, they must not be read. Judith Butler asserts that “reading means taking someone down, exposing what fails to work at the level of appearance, insulting or deriding someone” (Butler, 1993a: 137). This statement shows that the transsexual subject is strengthened in the same continuum as all of us, and is struggling with the impact of realness. Sandy Stone, one of the renowned scholars working on transgender individuals, draws on Judith Butler’s work in her energizing and rich article “The Empire Strikes Back: A Post-Transsexual Manifesto”. Employing Butler’s concept of cultural intelligibility, Stone recommends that within the case of the transsexual, “the varieties of performative gender, seen against a culturally intelligible gendered body which is itself a medically constituted textual violence, generate new and unpredictable dissonances” (Stone, 1991: 296). These cacophonies would be made by comparing the transsexual’s ‘refigured body’ with conventional gender discourse which, Stone contends, would result in the fracture in subjectivity and reconstitution of gender into

modern and startling areas. Hence, she proposes that transsexuals ought to not be created as a class or 'third gender'. Sandy Stone affirms a position on the public disclosure of transsexual identity that is unmistakably against passing and which, curiously, puts literary genre as its figure.

Secondly, transsexuality is a narrative work that already consists of the image of the wrong body embodiment. Jay Prosser's analysis of narrative depends on the wrong body experience rather than how transsexuals are placed in the connection of cultural and social factors. This dichotomy relation between right versus wrong body embodiment in subjectivities occurs constructed versus an innate sense of self. While they feel bodily discomfort, Prosser depicts a complicated situation in this bodily discomfort. Whereas the wrong body image represents pre-transitioned bodies, the right body image symbolizes post-transitioned bodies. Even if they have completed the surgery process, they still adapt to their changed bodies because of the process of reattempt. With his notion of second skins, Prosser puts essential significance on representations of the psychiatric perspectives of transitioning in transsexual narratives and decreasing transsexual subjectivities to bodies. He implies that transsexuals are regularly under pressure of transitioning process.

The wrong body image is a dominant representation in transsexual narrative. Jay Prosser elucidates the system of transsexual as "the subject trapped in and trying to escape the wrong (sexed) body" (Prosser, 1998: 67). This explanation is regulated by transsexuals because they explain the subjective experience of transsexuality. In addition, the concept of transsexuality is involved in the daily life interference as a model of transvestitism in the beginning but this identification creates a mismatch because they have needed a change. Doctor Harry Benjamin's effective book *Transsexual Phenomenon* credits medical discourse for the legitimacy of transsexual desires, the exact classification between transvestite and transsexuals, and the reintegration of sex and gender. He is remarkably concerned about the medical, cultural, and legal rights of transsexual individuals and ethical standards of sex rearrangement surgery and cares for after surgery period. He unconsciously contributes to technological aspects and medical aspects. His precursor attitude has affected people's knowledge of transsexuality because people thought that transsexuality was known as gender dysphoria. This understanding has been torn

apart and contributed to the appearance of transsexual subjectivity thanks to his legitimized bio-medical science. The existence of gender dysphoria can be influenced by transition-seeking individuals to articulate their subjectivity and identity. They should be conscious of whether they want surgery or not. Harry Benjamin's transsexual diagnosis shows "original criterion in its simplest form: the sense of being in the 'wrong' body," (Stone, 1991: 10).

With the help of Harry Benjamin's theory and academic studies, the first surgery was done. In the early 1950s, Christine Jorgensen is an example of a woman who was trapped in the wrong body, she was transvestite "before being reclassified as transsexual" (Prosser, 1998: 69). Christine Jorgensen was the first American transgender who became popular in America for having sex reassignment surgery. Before he followed his desire, "he was a very unhappy young American photographer by the name of George Jorgensen" (Benjamin, 1999: 12). Actually, by the 1950s, the notion of sex reassignment surgery was enigmatic and the understanding of sex change had not been known. Christine Jorgensen is likely the most famous receiver of sex-reassignment treatment but was not analyzed or depicted as a transsexual until after the completion of her surgery. This occurred in a category that had not yet been completely conceptualized. Christine Jorgensen articulates transsexual's feelings in terms of describing her experience under the concept of the wrong body discourse. Further, she is a sort of pioneer transsexual who medicalized transsexual subjectivity. Her demand for sex change was instantiated as the primary symptom (and the sign) of the "transsexual" and "the transsexual agency may be traced through their doctor's discourses" (Hausman, 1995: 110). These medical discourses challenge the depicter aspect of transsexuality and try to disempower the speculation of medical approaches to transsexuality.

Transsexuals proceed to convey the image of the wrong embodiment since being trapped within the wrong body is simply "what transsexuality feels like" (Prosser, 1998: 69). Emphasizing wrong body embodiment and using examples of bodily discomfort in the contemporary readings of narratives can lead to the problem of essentialism. Prosser explains the difference between that which is essentialist and that which is anti-essentialist.

[T]o the extent that transsexual narratives cannot be read without our accounting for the subjective experience of being transgendered, reading them necessitates our taking at every step what Sedgwick and Frank term -it's a phrase that's been much circulated recently – "the risk of essentialism". That is, to the extent that they are written out of the experience, the body, sex, feeling, belief in immanent self, reading transsexual body narratives necessitates our using these categories that we have come to believe require deconstructing a priori. (Prosser, 1998: 16)

Prosser pays attention to these categories between transsexual, transgender, and queer, in an attempt to ground a particular transsexual 'essence'. Jay Prosser attempts that 'being trapped in the wrong body' has become the principal factor to get access to sex reassignment surgery. He suggests that transsexual individuals continue to get benefit from this mentality simply because it conveys a shiny demonstration of their feelings of disembodiment. If the transsexual transition aims to show the feeling of a specific gendered embodiment with the material body, the image of the material body conveys material force. It illustrates how body image is radically split off from the material body in the first place, how body image can feel sufficiently substantial as to persuade the transsexual to alter his or her body to conform to it" (Prosser, 1998: 69). He is interested in the similarity between the material body surface and body image which is a sort of feeling comfortable in one's skin. The image of the wrong body is the most impressive experience of "pre-transition (dis)embodiment" (Prosser, 1998: 69). Transsexual individuals feel stuck between inner and outer body conflict when they start to experience this transition. Individuals feel bodily sensations and social, and personal difficulties of transitioning.

The position between the inner and outer body can lead to the border between psyche and body. The body's appearance is bringing to the material surface profound psychic disturbance. Indeed, skin conditions with certain natural causes are thought to be exacerbated by a psychic stretch. In turn, skin properties bring psychical discomfort. For Prosser, skin functions as an organ both epitomizing and allowing "psychic/corporeal interchange of subjectivity" and subjectivity is not only having a physicality, but rather subjectivity is a way of "psychic investment of self in skin" (Prosser, 1998: 72). Also, the importance of the pre-transition body is stuck between real and imaginary. Also, "genitals remain unsexed, both non-erogenous and not included in the imaginary 'true sex' morphology" (Prosser, 1998: 77). Thus, Prosser

contends that the wrong body embodiment captures this crucial sense: the transsexual subject's conceptualization of sexed morphology as not the property of the subject's body image. He clarifies that as this sense of impropriety is found in the material body, the transsexual subject looks for surgical mediation to change their physicality, rather than psychotherapy, to recreate a desire for another body. Transsexual subjects can escape her or his body to reform skin because of the discomfort with the body.

Judith Butler thinks not only acts and intentions but also subjectivity as performative. Individuals form categorizations about male/female, masculine/ feminine, and masculinity/femininity in terms of limiting certain kinds of bodies unfairly. However, these categories bend a person's subjectivity. Transgender subjectivity has become the main struggle in the hegemonic struggle. Judith Butler expresses implications in terms of simplifying the performative conception of subjectivity. Gender identities are caught up within the patriarchal relations that search to exclude and marginalize identities. Constituting the signification of transgender subjectivity reveals the contemporary social struggle and cultural struggle. Butler, in her chapter on "Gender is Burning" in her book *Bodies That Matter* elaborates on the concept of subjectivity and theorizes the connection with the social forces which surround a network of social relations. These social forces destabilize the subject through power relations in which the subject might come across the cultural mechanism of society. John Fiske expresses the concept:

what cultural studies are concerned with, of course, is the sense that various cultures make of "the individual," and the sense of self that we, as individuals, experience, and this constructed sense of the individual in a network of social relations is what is referred to as "the subject" (Fiske, 1987: 48).

The subjectivity displays the connection between the subject and social relations in the cultural regulatory practices. What creates a subject, the connection between an individual and a system of social forces to which he is subjected, is by no means straightforward and clear. Replying directly to *Paris is Burning* documentary film, Judith Butler conveys: it is "about simultaneous production and subjugation of subject" (Butler, 1993a: 124). By examining the subjectivity of drag performance, Butler narrates the idea of the subjectivity of performance as a reluctance because the

subjectivity demonstrates dominant cultural and social power networks in which gender identity is constructed as her/his subjectivity. Furthermore, as an example, she refers to the character Venus Extravaganza who is a transgendered sex worker in New York collecting money for sex reassignment surgery. As Butler mentions, Venus is killed by a client because of her transsexuality and she wants to be a 'real' woman by medical transitioning to find a man and share a house but she has not experienced it. According to Butler, the application of medical transitioning is still stuck in the heteronormative gender understanding where an individual can be either a female or male because of the heteropatriarchy system. It conveys transsexual denaturalization of sex which does not test the subversive gender binary. Butler chooses Venus to show that "the denaturalization of sex, in its multiple senses, does not imply a liberation from hegemonic constraint" (Butler, 1993a: 133). Venus does not challenge the distinction between transsexual's sex and transsexual's gender the way that drag in *Gender Trouble* does. Moreover, this situation shows a resistance to the hegemony. Transsexual subjectivity challenges the normative framework of the oppressive gender binary and displaces the appearance of the subjects because of the marginalized community as evident in Venus Extravaganza's personal narrative.

In the part of "Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex" in *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, Jay Prosser expresses the main concepts in relation to the connection between queer theory and transgenderism. "Queer studies can be a tendency on the figure of transgender" (Prosser, 1998: 31). A transgender subject can be considered as an individual who possesses and challenges the naturalness of the binary boundary. As Jay Prosser poses, this place of the transgender subject in queer theory does not address the visibility. Prosser states that "the transgendered subject of a drag is always in the margin of the text" (Prosser, 1998: 26). To expand this splitting, Prosser differentiates between transgender and transsexual subjects. In *Gender Trouble*, the queer transgender subjects are called "gender troubler" whereas not all transsexual subjects are correspondingly "queer and subversive" in *Bodies That Matter* (Prosser, 1998: 26). Jay Prosser expresses the borders of subversive queerness in the image of transgender through the example of transsexual Venus Extravaganza. She is a character of transgender and transsexual splitting which is based on the

hierarchy between subversive transgender and normative transsexual. Jay Prosser implies that this splitting is unable to account for the exceptional materiality of the body.

Judith Butler wants to clarify the borders of the transsexual subject's positions because transsexual identity is a dynamic symbol of the conceptual splitting between transsexual and queer. According to Butler, the transsexual individuals construct the trajectories without the limitations of queer theory. So, transsexual individuals are not visible in queer theory because this categorization displays a liminal space between sex and gender and it endures invisible embodiment in queer theory.

Proceeding along with this judgment, the transsexual narrative is based on the primary belief of this bodily sense as productive ground. The difference between "corporeal reality (internal bodily sensations) and "external surface of the body" is related to the discrepancy between sex and gender. This distinctness affects the "logic of transsexuality" (Prosser, 1998: 43). A transsexual trajectory constructs the feeling of being different gender from the individual that is assigned at birth. Butler utters "the transsexual doesn't necessarily look differently gendered but by definition feels differently gendered from her or his birth-assigned sex" (Prosser, 1998: 43). According to Prosser, Butler supports gender only as being explained through the performances on the surface of the "body as surface" because gender has completely a tendency of visibility (Prosser, 1998: 43). The notion of the body is theoretically referred to as "visual surface" in *Gender Trouble*. (Prosser, 1998: 43). This is probably pointed to its position of the transgendered subject to display gender subjectivity. The subjectivity of transgender represents the visual surface on the *body*.

Jay Prosser mentions political and theoretical aspects of queer qualities concerning transgenderism. He argues that transgender is identified as a queer transgressive attitude, idealized with queer transgender identity. "Crucial to the idealization of transgender as a queer transgressive force in this work is the consistent decoding of "trans" "as incessant destabilizing movement between sexual and gender identities" (Prosser, 1998: 33). In *Gender Trouble*, the description of transgender subjectivity efficaciously means "archetypically queer and subversive"

(Prosser, 1998: 29). Even though there was no description, *Gender Trouble* establishes this syllogism. Transgender is queer syllogistically subversive. “If Gender Trouble enables the syllogism, transgender= gender performativity=queer= subversive”, it stabilizes this syllogism through suggesting as constant its antithesis: nontransgender=gender constativity =straight= naturalizing” (Prosser, 1998: 33). The syllogism shows the cycle and it increases the visibility of transsexual subjects. Reading queer as a transgendered subject implicitly re-literalizes the gender rules because the more individual moves away from biological sex, the more subversive individual feels.

In this subsection, I would like to express subversive and normative binary qualities through transsexual subjectivity. Transgender individuals question their positions and their narrative challenges the gender binary whereas they already are members of the heteronormative system. They are supposed to be contesting the gender binary that they never really were part of it in the first sphere due to their feelings of attachment. Some transgender individuals make an effort to become a part of it. As it is exactly mentioned by Eris Davis in “Situating “Fluidity”: (Trans) Gender Identification and the Regulation of Gender Diversity”, the discussion presents the social acceptance of subjects and the criteria of social intelligibility. Initially, transsexual subjects are forced to obey heteronormative rules because of social expectations. Secondly, social intelligibility functions as a precondition of social acceptance as permission to apply to certain social norms. Society imposes a set of expectations, values, and beliefs and expects individuals to practice norms maintained by social institutions. Transgender subjects in society are referred to as subversive or normative as constructed on “false dichotomies” that “reiterates dichotomies of stable/fluid, hegemonic/subversive, and oppression/empowerment” (Davis, 2009: 4). This dichotomy situates transsexuals as either stabilizing or destabilizing their identities altogether.

According to Eris Davis, transgendered subjects are a quite striking example of gender destabilization because they are obliged to misrepresent their bodies and displace their authenticity in society. They must design authentic selves. In this design, they are forced to be responsible for obeying norms of gender. That is why their subjectivity occurs within a social rule of normative expectations that control

the subject's self-representation. When the subjects do not reflect hegemonic gender expectations, they challenge gender norms. Thus, the discontinuity of sex and gender is the main problem for society and it does not provide hegemonic expectations of gender convenience. Desires of transgender individuals conflict with the idea of being a real woman and being a man.

Normative rules construct gender binary and set up rigid regimes for social reality, in which subjects have to obey criteria forcibly; no matter if the individual is transsexual or not. Davis clarifies: "social authentication is significant to transsexual individuals because it enables them to be accepted and treated in a manner with which they feel comfortable" (Davis, 2009: 11). Davis explores how individuals are situated in the context of social order. The self-representation of transgender subjects displays a tension between socially reproducing normative subjectivity, limiting self-declaration, providing a sphere for self-description, and challenging normative standards. They become a good example of gender disruption and fluidity because their bodies obviate hegemonic regulations. "Transgendered individuals have become ideal representations of gender disruption and fluidity because they have histories and bodies that do not reflect hegemonic expectations" (Davis, 2009: 3). Their experiences are based on evidence of multiplicity and fluidity of gender so they would be able to collide with the static social ethos and biological standards of sex and gender. While transsexuals might practice gender fluidity as they find a true gender core, their notion of fluidity is necessary to be confirmed socially and medically.

Transgender fluidity is a crucial concept because it is holding the potential for self-making and deconstructing stability of gender categories. Transgender subjects have a desire about moving beyond and reinforcing a flexible notion of gender without any patriarchal gaze. Kate Bornstein supports the idea that "gender fluidity recognizes no borders or rules of gender" (Bornstein, 1994: 52). She emphasizes gender fluidity through enchanting gender freedom and withstanding gender regulation. "Gender fluidity is the ability to freely and knowingly become one or many of a limitless number of genders, for any length of time, at any rate of change" (Bornstein, 1994: 52). The demand for open-ended gender categories can be read as constructing a body and growing awareness of gender and sexual fluidity.

Furthermore, Erin Davis agreed that “fluid, disruptive, transgressive beings are juxtaposed with intelligible, coherent, stable, hegemonic beings” (Davis, 2009: 7). Situating fluidity, changing, unstable identities diverge from consistent, definable, stable identities; therefore, transgendered individuals are referred to as an ideal illustration of fluidity and gender transgression categorizations.

The interconnected role of fluidity and social intelligibility represents the possibility of distortion in subjectivity when the limits of cultural and social values are exceeded. Intelligible genders form cohesion and durability among sex, gender, and sexual practices. According to Judith Butler, “their persistence and proliferation of improper identities expose the limits and regulatory aims of the matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder” (Butler, 1999b: 24). The perseverance of improper identities rejects hegemonic power relations with enduring flexibility and fluidity of gender. This rejection of fixed identity displays the pluralistic diversity and the potency of the desired identity. Sandy Stone contributes to the concept of cultural intelligibility. In the circumstance of transsexuality, “the varieties of performative gender, seen against a culturally intelligible gendered body which is itself a medically constituted textual violence, generate new and unpredictable dissonances” (Stone, 1991: 296). These dissonances could clash between contemporary and traditional understanding of gender construction. The emergent gender identities can lead to a distinctive incompatibility, that is why the hegemonic power dominance does not approve of their cultural intelligibility.

To sum up, transgender studies give a point of view about the representation of transgender subjects. The notion of transgender subjectivity contributes to the transgender experience and transgender voice even if the theory has got the complexity of terminological descriptions. Transgender subjectivity questions the gendered politics of sexuality and demonstrates the difference between their assigned sex at birth and the gender they feel. They point out the disjointedness of body and mind to find a true core of self. The ontological discussion illustrates multi-dimensional aspects of sex, gender, and transgender subjectivities. Such a concentration enables mobilization for spreading transgender liberation, transgender empowerment, and transgender emancipation. The next chapter analyzes how

transgender individuals are portrayed along with the discussions of performativity and subjectivity in contemporary American drama.



CHAPTER TWO
TRANSGENDER PERFORMATIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY IN
CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN DRAMA

2.1. KATE BORNSTEIN'S PLAY *HIDDEN: A GENDER*

The literary representation in transgender drama, conceptualizing different approaches in gender studies, challenges the normative expectations of gender. It demystifies the gender binary system and disrupts dualistic representations through depictions of contemporary gender non-conformity. The transgender in contemporary American drama, along with discussions of performativity and subjectivity, makes an important contribution to the conceptions of the transgender embodiment and transgender voice through the development of the transgender gaze. The central point of the study provides an insight into the process of constructing both individually transgender identity and socially transgender communities. This study, focusing on transgender performance practice, reveals representations of fictional or real stories of transgender subjects. Along with other genres of fictional and non-fictional literature, depictions of the lives of transgender subjects on stage, whether they are inspired by real-life experiences or not, constitute an innovative perspective in the context of transgender identity formation.

Many scholars, writers, and activists become supportive of the rights of transgender people. One of them is Kate Bornstein who is known as an American performance artist and writer. Identifying herself as a post-operative male-to-female, Kate Bornstein opens a new sphere of transsexual identity that does not fit into the binary system. Bornstein introduces herself as a lesbian transwoman in the beginning. She defines her gender journey through her time as a male until she completely changed her sex from male to female and she started living as a transgender. She contributes to the development of transgender studies which have been broadened considerably through a collaborative effort with other writers such as Bernice Hausman, Leslie Feinberg and Jay Prosser.

Contemporary drama plays an important role to explain the experiences and the behaviors of individuals as a collective and sociocultural phenomenon. It

liberalizes stereotyped behavior toward trans identities and questions heteronormativity. This part focuses on transgender subjectivities, transgender lived experiences, and transgender embodiments to expose the positions of transgendered individuals. Kate Bornstein's play *Hidden: A Gender* provides intellectual engagements with the connections between sex and gender, portrays a various range of critical practices, and represents a transgender subject.

Through maintained engagements with such creative drama, this offers the history of the construction of transsexual identity and the personal, cultural, and political interferences of gender variance. Kate Bornstein's *Hidden: A Gender* deconstructs the constitution of gender roles to evaluate some sexual practices liberally and re-design subjects and performances without the understanding of compulsory heterosexuality. The play presents the body as a material existence, the relation between the authentic performance on stage and the authenticity within the body, the reflections of gender fluidity, and performing transsexual subjectivity with the demand for sex reassignment surgery.

Hidden: A Gender depicts the lives of two transgender individuals through conceptualizing the performativity and the subjectivity of transsexual experiences on the stage. Theatrical performance of transsexuality is intertwined with the subject matter and the performance of gender. The first subject, Herman/Kate, is a figuration of the audience and the present behavior towards transgender individuals. The second subject, Herculine/Abel, enables the audience to analyze the cultural implications of transgender subjectivities and observe historic and medical treatments of transgender individuals. The play starts with the form of the talk show program with the character of Doc Grinder who is known as a game show host or barker to the audience. Bornstein herself acts as the character of the game show host, Doc Grinder, who asks transgender candidates about their statements. Doc Grinder communicates with the characters of Herculine/Abel, a 19th-century transsexual character living in France, and Herman/Kate is a reflection of Bornstein's male-to-female life, whose often is the same as Bornstein's.

During act one, the drama opens with a game show directed by the barker and displays Doc Grinder and Herman/Kate characters. Doc Grinder tries to understand if the candidate is a "real transsexual" or not. Herman/Kate tries to convince Doc

Grinder and the audience to get a sex reassignment surgery through the correct response to his questions. Then, Kate Bornstein also puts cosmic importance to make a clear separation between sex and gender from the perspective of performativity. This difference between biological and social factors inevitably forms an individual's life and exists regardless of time and place. The social aspects of performativity present a binary practice, the system pushes individuals directly proportional to combine a sexual preference and gender identity. When Herman and Doc Grinder talks about questions on a talk show, they make critics of gender identity and gender relations. Herman responds to Doctor Grinder. "My gender identity has nothing to do with my sexual preference. Gender identity for me answers the question of who I am. Sexual preference answers the question who do I want to be romantically or sexually involved with. My being a woman does not mean I must love men. These are two separate issues" (Bornstein, 1994: 191). Herman does not bear hegemonic expectations and his experiences of gender roles on gender identification deconstruct gender dualism. His rejection of gender dualism can lead to the representation of the self as unstable, empowering, and subversive. These identifications tear apart the hegemonic production of gender ideologies, leading to the condition of transgender individuals as either subverting the gender system or endorsing their lived experiences.

Gender-specific roles and relations are the systematic rules where society determines the rights, and responsibilities, identities of women and men concerning one another. According to heteropatriarchy, male-born bodies have to love women, women, on the other hand, have to be sexually involved with men. The understanding of sexuality has been changed throughout the play because gender performativity is changeable, and the notion of gender performativity is depending on "radical free agency" such that we can "get up and put on a new gender today" (Salih and Butler, 2004: 571). The speech of Herman is a striking example of radical intercession. He reacts to Doc Grinder:

Doc Grinder: Hey—he's not a gay man! But that's just the first of our questions. The next question is...oh, this is a killer...Herman, can't you just dress up like a woman, occasionally, like a hobby?
Canned audience – whoa-oo-oo.

Herman: it is not the clothes, LC-I feel I am a woman no matter what I am wearing. (Bornstein, 1994: 190)

In any case, Herman consolidates a character that administers a strict division of sexual and gender roles and performances. Identity cannot be determined by clothes or daily behaviors. Whether he wears men's clothes or displays the gender roles attributed to men, transgender individuals who were born male but feel female cannot overcome their identity crisis in these ways. From this perspective, "having a clitoris is about sex; ideas and practices about clitoris are matters of gender" (Johnson, 1997: 56). In the play, the process of transforming the genital area from testicles to labias can be observed as "the excessive scrotal skin transforms to be tailored a labia majora" (Bornstein, 1994: 216). When he practices this gender, he adapts to the social aspects of being female. When Herman starts to analyze the process of self-discovery, she feels excited to hear Doctor Grinder's explanation. He tells that "her clitoris was found to be an intriguing two inches long" (Bornstein, 1994: 187). Having a clitoris is a subject of biological determination to give a social status in heteropatriarchy.

Kate Bornstein uses the potential of the theatre to reveal the performativity of transsexual experience on the stage. She questions the system of normative structured society by leaving the behavior of being a normal individual as norms dictate. Within the concept of gender performativity, the position of transsexual individuals problematically pushes themselves to put into the binary categories of man and woman. For Butler, stylized bodily performances are performative and they produce the fiction of stable identity in front of the society that the individual needs to be oriented in a certain way. For instance, Herman explains that "these are the days when the boys and girls have to play separately, so I start to go off with the other little girls to play" (Bornstein, 1994: 176). Herman produces a gender identity that will be a part of the girl community. On the other hand, Miss Tissue says "no, no Dear; this is the line for the little girls. And I say, I know, I'm a little girl" (Bornstein, 1994: 176). According to biological sexes, how individuals should behave and start to be taught by the society in their childhood. That is why, the authority established on children, especially at the age of play, and the facts to which they are exposed, intentionally or unconsciously, are important for the subsequent

identity formation processes. Herman's fiction of pre-existing gender identity at the age of play is a kind of behavioral manifestation through the journey of gender performativity. As we have understood from the example, the concept of performativity constructs stylized repetitive acts that the individual shapes how to perceive gender performances and practices.

Moreover, this example functions as a performative utterance and it brings forth a group of performative effects. "The idea of a performative utterance was that it was to be (or to be included as a part of) the performance of an action. Actions can only be performed by persons, and obviously, in our cases, the utterer must be the performer" (Austin, 1962: 60). This situation compels Herman to obey sexual and gendered norms because he "pretends to be a little boy from then on and he behaves appropriately for subjecthood within the heterosexual matrix" (Bornstein, 1994: 176). According to Butler, Herman's utterance is a sort of assertion to express a property of gender choice through making repetitiveness of pretending. The system does not approve of destabilizing normative boundaries so, the subject has a limited number of utterances which has been already shaped by "a highly rigid regulatory frame" (Butler, 1999: 43). This example is a sort of declaratory act that depends on Herman's manifestation. The performativity of gender roles does not present a single fixed gender identity and it can lead to a productive identity that challenges the regulatory practices of the heterosexual matrix. Like Herman's body, he is male but he does not internalize masculine traits throughout his life.

The production of an utterance is the performance of an action. Such acts are performative utterances since they are performed. Herman's inability to absorb neither his original gender identity nor his original religious identity is related to finding oneself. When Herman talks about the school's ceremony, his production of utterance shows the performance of his action. His utterance is "I am studying for my Bar Mitzvah. I just know the day I become thirteen, I am going to become a man. I never believe that, but I'm hoping the ceremony's going to do its job" (Bornstein, 1994: 177). "Bar mitzvah (son of the commandments) and bat mitzvah (daughter of the commandments) are names given to boys and girls when they become adults. Jews also use the terms to mean the ceremony that marks the passage from childhood to adulthood" (Forta, 1995: 74). Reaching a Jewish identity through the ceremony of

the Bar Mitzvah is an indication of stating Jewish identification. Herman's position explains the significance of utterance as a performance of religious activity. It exemplifies religious impact on gender through the awareness of discontinuity in his sexed body. Bornstein comments on the effect of religious laws on gender identity. "Religions may dictate proper behavior for men and women, but no religion lays out what is a man and what is a woman. They assume we know, that's how deep this cultural assumption runs" (Bornstein, 1994: 57). This religious didacticism makes individuals obey regulations of manhood and Jewish identity. The pressure on following religious codes strictly makes Herman pretend to be oriented religiously.

Acts and utterances are performative construction through language. Language is also an effective tool to distinguish sex distinctions as female and male in the context of the social aspect of performativity. Language helps construct gender identity through discourse. Language is a living thing used for defining our experiences and interpreting the world in which people live. It contributes to seeing the reproduction of sexuality and shaping perceptions and senses. "If a language doesn't include pronouns that distinguish by sex, such as she and he, people who speak that language will be less likely to see female and male as important distinctions" (Johnson, 1997: 79). Society imposes this thought about language with the grammar rules consciously. "When we use gender pronouns, we don't set out to shape reality in a gender-conscious way. We just obey rules of grammar and usage and fit into a culture that makes a great deal of gender" (Johnson, 1997: 79). Similarly, Kate Bornstein protests against social discrimination in linguistic context and sex distinctions. Herman addresses his high school English teacher, Mr. Blunt, who teaches the doctrines of gender and pronouns. Within the references to pronouns and gender, Mr. Blunt "uses correct pronoun to refer to correct person" (Bornstein, 1994: 177).

Pronouns and gender. I has no gender. Neither does you. He and she definitely have a specific gender which is very helpful to all of—us—because we doesn't have a gender either. Does we? Back to he and she or rather to him and to her. He is masculine except when he is universal and means him and her and all of—us, who has no gender still. She is feminine, except of course when she is inanimate, like a ship or a salad, but six of one, half a dozen of the other, am I right? We still doesn't have a gender. You plural has no gender either. Unlike him and her, they has no gender whatsoever, which I will admit introduces some

confusion, but we're almost finished so live with it. It has no gender at all, except of course when it refers to an infant about whose gender we are uncertain. Not unlike me. Or you. (Bornstein, 1994:178)

Although it looks like a typical lecture, it is a very symbolic scene. It shows both how flexible the language is, and how authorities try to sexualize the language. In addition, the circumlocution in the teacher's narration and the intention of telling and memorizing at one time show that gender is taught by recitative acts. Language has gender patterns that contain inconsistencies. The mechanisms of authority like Mr. Blunt, try to make sense of gender by classifying and stereotyping just like grammar. Since gender is an element of identity, it is not a phenomenon that can easily become stereotyped, nor is it a feature to be taught at once. It is a feature that covers daily life and can make itself question every day.

Judith Butler expresses the creation of gender performativity within a society that exists through the false reality of societal values and sanctions. Social expectations and taboos define the acts that people perform in a specific culture, setting, and history with patriarchal authority. Patriarchy as a role model presents sets of ideas about what is expected from people based on gender identity. Gender identity is a social construction because maintaining gender order is necessary to be socially acceptable from the perspective of performativity. Expectations of gender presentation between females and males are different in a heteronormative society. For instance, she does not fit into the categories of heteronormativity, she feels like a woman, so she is likely to be a vampire. Herman says "I'd read anything I could get my hands on. Anything that would tell me what I was. Who I was. What gender I was. Herculine learned about being a woman from the nuns, and from her aunt, the vampire. I watched television. I read *Life* magazine" (Bornstein, 1994: 180). The vampire image both raises the desire for sexual freedom and exemplifies the failure to fit in the heteronormative system. Gender is a learned process and being a woman is a learned process too.

The scene also depicts a correlation between the figure of the vampire and Judith Butler's concepts of gender performativity. Judith Butler stands against compulsory performativity. Gender performativity is fundamentally acquired through corporeal acts. Butler expresses "[...] three contingent dimensions of significant

corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance” (Butler, 1999: 175). The performance of transgender puts a distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender of the performer. The desire for gender identity is a performative act. In the description of the vampire figure, all three aspects of corporeal acts apply, because vampires are the most efficacious figures of gender performativity and dimensions of corporeality. In the other scenes, the quality of being a vampire is continuously repeated because transgender subjects or non-binary subjects are defined as ‘vampires’. For instance, when Aunt Carmilla and Herculine talk about the Parisian lifestyle, she refers that “Parisians call us vampires” (Bornstein, 1994: 179). She talks about “loose women” and herself as mentioning “vampires”, “because we desire the essence of men fluids” and later on she exposes “do come visit me, Herculine, and we can be vampires together” (Bornstein, 1994: 179). Then, her aunt is a representation of the dangerous change of body fluid sarcastically because she drinks “daily cup of ox-blood” as “a medicine” (Bornstein, 1994: 179).

The reflection of transgender performativity construction links with the humiliation of transgender subjects. This quality reveals the anger of transsexuals to reflect dehumanization with the repetition of the vampire image. Susan Stryker emphasizes transgender rage in compliance with disidentification with mandatory assigned subject identifications. They reproach their visibility when they become the source of mockery. “Transgender rage is a queer fury, an emotional reply to conditions in which it becomes imperative to take up, a set of practices that precipitates one’s exclusion from a naturalized order of existence that maintain itself as the only possible basis for being a subject” (Stryker, 2006b: 253). Kate Bornstein shows this impudence attributed to transgender subjects. For example, Aunt Carmilla refers to non-binary identities and emphasizes that “vampires are all the rage now” (Bornstein, 1994: 179). This rage is a consequence of an unsatisfactory society that orders the norms of the gender binary system and heterosexual embodiment obligatorily.

Aunt Carmilla ironically criticizes the heterosexist paradigm due to the intense social pressures and traditional stereotypes and desires. She intellectually ridicules to mention the book “Mister Venus” by Rachilde’s latest novel and she

highlights “a delightful story of a woman who keeps a man as her male mistress in an apartment” (Bornstein, 1994: 179). The heterosexual paradigm humiliates transgender life, and non-binary individual’s life for the sake of compulsory heterosexuality regarding dichotomous, coherent, and stable gender expectations. These identifications reiterate false implications of heteronormativity and it can cause to limit the performativity of the subject and fail to construct subjectivity. “Failure to comply with expected bodily modes of behavior” could lead to “bullying and harassment” (Nayak and Kehily, 2006: 468). As Aunt Camilla mentions the irritation of heteronormative expectations, the construction of heterosexuality is then dependent upon the iteration of the stereotypes and desires.

Judith Butler and Kate Bornstein have a common attitude about the tyrannizer side of heteronormativity. They stand against essentialist viewpoints on sex and gender categories and conventional heteronormative accounts of gender. Butler points out, “as much as drag creates a unified picture of ‘woman’ (what its critics often oppose), it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence” (Butler, 1999b: 175). At this point, Kate Bornstein is “especially tired of watching theater that limits itself to the portrayal of heterosexuality—and heterosexual romance only” that is why she reveals theater how hegemonic and sexual norms might be destabilized by transgender subjects (Bornstein, 1994: 162). She creates a new sphere for transgender subjects through theater. In addition to this, Kate Bornstein affirms that “the incessant struggle between nature and reason exhausts me more and more each day, and drags me with great strides toward the tomb” (Bornstein, 1994: 218). In the play, when Herculine leaves his girlfriend, Sara, because of social codes and restrictions, Herculine screamingly emphasizes “Sara, he is saying I am a man. He is saying I am a man and I must obey him for I am nothing if I am not obedient why is my head spinning? Sara—two women cannot be lovers. It is obscene” (Bornstein, 1994: 188). Herculine’s doctor explains his maleness and he pushes Herculine to obey heteronormative rules. Herculine necessarily leaves Sara. From the perspective of heteronormativity, Herculine tries to create a unified picture of a woman and falsely naturalized as a female identity through the heterosexual gaze.

From the theatrical perspective, Doc Grinder reflects an example of dissonance between sex and performance, and gender and performance. According to Judith Butler, “the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance” (Butler, 1999: 175). Doc Grinder has been acted by Kate Bornstein herself, so the character has been altered from male to female or from female to non-binary figure. L.C. Doc Grinder is “part twentieth-century television talk show host, and part nineteenth-century medicine sideshow barker. It is never clear whether Doc is a man or a woman, and this ambiguity is never acknowledged by Doc him/herself. Doc speaks directly to the audience, and the actor playing Doc is encouraged to ad lib in response to any audience comments” (Bornstein, 1994: 172). Doc Grinder also feels category crisis and gender dissonance because Doc Grinder widens the boundaries of gender presentations, and transcends the restrictive of gender identification; therefore, Doc Grinder’s gender identity challenges traditional gender and sexual categories.

In addition to this, Kate Bornstein makes a parody of public gender performances ironically. Doc Grinder is the representative of the medical community who acts like a hypocrite. His medicine provides subjects to acquire normative gender identity. He commercializes a medicine, which is called Gender Defender elixir. Medicine is a sort of marketing tool and audiences buy a gender in accordance with heteronormative expectations. In the scene, the announcer determines the limits of the heteronormative system and rationalizes two stereotypes of gender identities. With the reflection “Gender Defender elixir”, individuals are obliged to fit conventional stereotypes and internalize inflexible gender paradigms. He utters “what’s My Gender—the fun question and answer game brought to you by Doc Grinder’s famous elixir, Gender Defender, in the pink and blue bottles” (Bornstein, 1994: 189). After a while, Don’s Voice suddenly interrupts the conversation between Herman and Doc Grinder subconsciously. “What’s My Gender is brought to you by Doc Grinder’s Gender Defender, the miracle elixir that keeps you straight. In the pink bottles for girls, and the blue bottles for men. And now—back to our show!” (Bornstein, 1994: 190). Moreover, Doc Grinder is a medicine show barker who sells gender conformity to the audience as a form of elixir. Doc Grinder states that “Gender Defender- one bottle and your fears disappear! Two bottles and your family

breathes a sigh of relief. Three bottles and you can vote Republican” (Bornstein, 1994: 192). *Hidden: A Gender* depicts that gender is a form of a mask that functions as a benefit of society’s norms. Like Republicans, heteronormative society does not approve of non-binary gender forms and it reveals the underlying political and social construction of gender. Doc Grinder is an advocate of confirming the gendered identity and his initial words fight against transsexual authenticity within the body of Herman. The hierarchy of gendered authenticity transgresses the deviant gender binaries. Kate Bornstein tries to deconstruct the representations of fixed identities to destabilize the gendered identities.

In “The Empire Strikes Back: A Post-Transsexual Manifesto”, Sandy Stone depicts a situation on the transsexual identity that is definitely against passing and which, differently, puts literary genre as its figure. She interprets:

In the case of the transsexual, the varieties of performative gender, seen against a culturally intelligible gendered body which is itself a medically constituted textual violence, generate new and unpredictable dissonances which implicate entire spectra of desire. In the transsexual as text we may find the potential to map the refigured body onto conventional gender discourse and thereby disrupt it... To foreground the practices of inscription and reading which are part of his deliberate invocation of dissonance, I suggest constituting transsexuals not as a class or problematic ‘third gender,’ but rather as a genre—a set of embodied texts whose potential for productive disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored. (Stone, 2006: 231)

From the aspect of performativity, the understanding of the ‘third gender’ is automatically problematic. The concept of the third gender on transsexuals considerably results in the same occasion as the heteronormative system does. The conceptualization of the third gender remains a problem of gender binarism. Sandy Stone suggests seeing it as a genre to destabilize the structured sexualities. Likewise, Kate Bornstein is fed up with resisting essentialized and naturalized sex/gender binary system and seeing gender as a category of the third gender. She enunciates “When I get too tired of not having an identity, I take one on” (Bornstein, 1994: 39). Bornstein thus defines herself not only as belonging to a ‘third sex’ but also as a ‘gender outlaw’ (Bornstein, 1994: 144). The play further displays the aftermath of Herman’s body transformation and the transformation of identity indicated also in

the change of name from Herman to Kate. Kate Bornstein identifies herself as “the outlaw” and adds that “the outlaw has found her place” (Bornstein, 1994: 222).

Judith Butler’s concept of gender fluidity has a perspective of physical construction. On the other hand, Kate Bornstein expands the concept by adding both physical and psychological construction of gender fluidity. “Bornstein’s figuration of the self as fluid, fragmentary, multiply coded also includes a longing for a manner of being through which a sense of continuity coexists alongside plurality and change” (Freiwald, 2001: 43). The psychological components of gender formation contain plural forms of gendered identities and the process of change. The physical aspect of gender construction focuses on voice and gesture and it increases the theatrical possibilities of Butler’s concept of gender fluidity because of the series of mimics and gestures. “Gender is constructed through the stylization of the body and the gesture that bodily gestures and movements of different kinds form the vision of a persistent gendered self” (Butler, 1988: 519). The characters’ acts are revised and recreated through time to reflect the desired gendered self through physicality. The physicality on the stage contains physical signs such as skin, body, hair, clothes, voice, and movement to lead to the fluidity of gender. Kate Bornstein comments on physical cues by pointing “like most people born male, my hands, feet, and forearms are proportionally larger to my body as a whole than those of people born female. My hair pattern included coarse facial hair. My voice is naturally deep” (Bornstein, 1994: 26-27). Changing physical cues is a way of expressing fluidity in front of society on the stage.

The psychological aspect of gender fluidity in *Hidden: A Gender* contains power dynamics of gender performance such as aggressiveness, ambition, sexual desire, and sexual aggressiveness. Herman’s first monologue in *Hidden: A Gender* indicates that “the one that says that you are loathsome and sick and vile and about to be abandoned. She gives me that look” (Bornstein, 1994: 176). Herman loses his past identity to change psychologically and mentally. Later, Herman/Kate identifies herself as saying “I am to be a woman, I said to the man, I once had been, goodbye he said. Oh god, I am disappearing” (Bornstein, 1994: 210). Herculine/Abel suddenly shares “it is as though I come apart from myself. No longer woman, not yet a man. Standing outside” to Herman (Bornstein, 1994: 210). They start to dance to visualize

gender fluidity on the stage and to show the aspect of gender psychologically and physically. The performance of Herculine and Herman's dance expresses the desire to make transgender subjectivity real and present transgender performativity. The dance as a theatrical element represents the change from one sexual mode of being to another. Their physicality is a crucial element because it involves an appropriate sexual self-identification. In the dance scene with the rhythmic bells, Herculine/Abel and Herman/Kate become more androgynous and repeat overlapping lines harmoniously. Fluidly, they reduplicate lines so as to increase the fluidity of their feelings.

*Herculine/Abel: They're looking at me.
Their eyes are burning me.
Herman/Kate: They're looking at me.
Their eyes are burning me.
Herculine/Abel: Is it my body?
Herman/Kate: Is it my hair? (Bornstein, 1994: 208)*

They challenge stigma and claim recognition of their transgender identity because of other people's eyes. Also, their psychological attitude relieves them from society's oppression and expectation. Staging the trans individual's experience both physically and psychologically, Bornstein attempts to pluralize gender identity and flourish gender fluidity from the point of staging a new sphere for transgender lived experiences. The richness of sexual desire cut across all boundaries about gender identity. The stage gives a place to a range of marginalized subjects and performative practices because the play makes transgender subjects readable through the awareness of distinctive identities.

The theory of transgender subjectivity affects cultural, social, and personal influences on transgender subjects. *Hidden: A Gender* structurally engages with transgender subjectivity relating medical, social, and political comments to the theoretical and autobiographical discourse. From the light of transgender subjectivity theory, transsexuals continue to demand for a sex change to construct transgender embodiment. Transgender subjects request sex change through the medical institution. The demand for surgical and hormonal sex change has become a sign for transgender subjects. Throughout the play, Herman's understanding of transgender subjectivity determines his gender identity beyond heteronormativity. His request for

surgical and hormonal treatment reveals how he feels uncomfortable with his gender and sex. Before the sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy, Herman gets ready to complete medical treatments and he responds to Dr. Razor “I am here about a sex change”, and “to make a new vagina” (Bornstein, 1994: 201-203). Dr. Razor plans the reinvention of gender identity and the redefinition of identity as a constructed subject. According to Jay Prosser, transsexual subjects re-construct the body, gender, and self. Herman is an archetypically constructed subject of the propriety of medical technology to change his sex and he holds performative embodied subject qualities as a transsexual subjectivity beyond heteronormative hierarchy.

Demanding sex change appears a problem between transgender subjects and clinicians and at a larger level the dialectical relation between “sex change technology and the demand for sex change” (Hausman, 1995: 4). Both transgender subjects and the clinicians depict as participants in the process of medical treatment; therefore, clinicians try to match their bodies with the compulsory manipulation. “These clinicians attend to the subject’s sexual physiology and anatomy, yet they encourage their patients to develop an effective gender performance and technical manipulation of the body’s sex” (Hausman, 1995: 140). In *Hidden: A Gender*, Dr. Razor and his colleague, Dr. Weener, mock Herman’s explanations. For instance, Herman’s research about sexual reassignment surgery makes her confronted with in medical community’s mockery. For example, Herman wants to live as a trans woman with another woman. On her journey, Herman is consulted by Doctor Razor and her potential surgeon is fulfilled with satirical events. Dr. Razor asks a question scoffingly and he adds “no fiancé! But you are seeing a man, aren’t you?... But you are planning on marrying a man, adopting two-point-three children, a dog, a third of a cat, and a white picket fence?” (Bornstein, 1994: 205). The connection between Herman’s demand for sex change and the clinician’s sex change technology sometimes creates a manipulative situation as in the example.

The clinician’s concern in performing the surgery is quite significant for constructing technological and medical interventions on the body. Then, the notion of demand finds meaning in transgender subjectivity. With the operation, transgender subjects conform to the new identity and body. During the pre-operative process,

Herman wonders about the planning phase of the operation and tries to learn about the preferred sex through surgery. Dr. Razor as a clinician makes sex reassignment surgery possible physiologically, and plans “probably something very technical and very medical about the sex change procedure” (Bornstein, 1994: 203). While the body modification appears on the stage, Dr. Weener enhances sexual organs to observe as a form of food. Dr. Weener ridiculously demonstrates “a banana from his lab coat, slowly peeling it” (Bornstein, 1994: 203). The banana is a symbol of technical manipulation of the penis and later, it will be removed from the body. As the play progresses, Herman acts as Cook and she plays “a large wad of bread dough, shaped like a penis” (Bornstein, 1994: 215). The bread dough is a symbol of the penis that foreshadows the transformation from the penis to the genitalia. The scene shows the of the penile inversion technique and genital vagina operation that has been completed. After that, Cook celebrates this surgery by “placing a small birthday candle in the vagina-shaped dough and lights it” (Bornstein, 1994: 215). The bread dough automatically changes from the shape of “space” to the shape of a “vagina” during the post-operative period. The deconstruction of the penis is a presentation of the desired goal of gender identity.

The concept of technology is a very significant condition in refashioning the transsexual subject. According to Bernice L. Hausman’s terminology, Herman and Herculine depict them as “designed subjects” or “engineered subjects”, since they have a request to engineer themselves as human subject and have a demand to achieve authentic self through the technological self-construction. (Hausman, 1995: 137). Cook expresses the re-engineering of the actual genital surgery step by step:

Cook: Then with finger dissection, we continued to form the large vaginal cavity. Once this was done, a large pack was placed in the area, and we returned to the penile skin, into which we placed a plastic tube, while the lower third of the penile skin was completely denuded. This was to act as a skin graft within the vaginal cavity. The posterior aspect of the orifice was accomplished primarily with chromic catgut sutures utilizing. (Bornstein, 1994: 216)

The role of medical technology in the construction of the transsexual subject is provided through engineering. Herman must undergo the social and psychological transformations who is easily identifiable with the new identity.

Transsexual autobiographies are considered a source provider for the construction of transsexual subjectivity. According to Bernice L. Hausman, these personal writings allow transgender subjects to identify themselves comfortably. Transsexual autobiographies “serve to encourage and enable transsexual subjects to conform to the parameters of an established ‘transsexual personal history’ in order to obtain the desired medical treatment” (Hausman, 1995: 143). During the play, Kate Bornstein’s personal story matches with the character of Herman/Kate. “The official autobiography of the transsexual subject is part of the ‘true story of transsexualism’” (Hausman, 1995: 174). Thus, Herman/Kate’s character is an inspiration for Kate Bornstein’s official autobiography. Bornstein shows us that there is an interrelation between subjectivity and autobiography. Also, Jay Prosser comments that Kate Bornstein’s *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* “opposes transsexuality’s telic narrative structure (that it has a gendered outcome) precisely as it rewrites the telic structure of conventional autobiographical narrative” (Prosser, 1998: 174). He qualifies this book as “first postmodern transsexual autobiography” to create a space for transgender subjects (Prosser, 1998: 174).

The connection between the transgender experience and the autobiographer’s memoir makes an individual recognized as a transgender subject. “Transsexual autobiographical narratives cannot merely be a part of the repressive structure of ‘official’ transsexual experience, since they clearly enable others to identify themselves as transsexuals” (Hausman, 1995: 339). In addition to the autobiographical elements, Bornstein’s play is also an outcome of inspiration from other individuals’ personal histories too. Initially, she refers to the first transsexual individual in the United States of America, who is known as Christine Jorgensen. When Herman was a young boy, he tried to stare at a magazine through the store window in act one. Herman says “I go in and buy the paper—I never had before, so I know the people in the store know I’m weird just like the beautiful blond lady on the cover. It’s Christine Jorgensen. “Ex-GI, Now a Blonde Bombshell” (Bornstein, 1994: 177). Herman draws a parallel between Christine Jorgensen and his desired gender identity. Next, Kate Bornstein touches on Herculine Barbin’s memoirs entitled *Les Vies Parallèles*, which have been edited by Michel Foucault. Herculine/Abel associates with Herculine Barbin because *Clerks* refers to “the first name shall be

substituted for the first name Herculine” (Bornstein, 1994: 216). She was a 19th-century hermaphrodite who refashions from the female body to the male body. As Herculine Barbin redesigns her gender identity, Herculine follows her road to finding the journey of self-discovery. The desired medical surgery depends on a real version of personal history. It can lead to healing Herculine trauma and internal struggles. The personal physical transition journey bears a torch to Herculine/Abel to find a true core of the self. The union of body and narrative serves to construct a transgender subject through personal histories.

A narrative is a form of a second skin, which identifies with the transsexual story. According to Jay Prosser’s terminology, Herculine and Herman’s first skin represents a pre-surgical skin, the second skin symbolizes the authentic skin of Herculine and Herman. Pre-operative transsexuals convince their clinicians to operate on themselves or on their first skins. For example, Herman makes a compliment to persuade Dr. Razor to finalize the surgery agreement.

Dr. Razor: Hold on there, young fellow. I’ll have you know that we—Dr. Razor and Dr. —are the tops in our field. Why, we have diplomas from everywhere! And you won’t find a better pair of surgeons in all of Philadelphia!
Herman: Oh, all right. You’re the boss. (Bornstein, 1994: 204)

They talk about their post-transition retrospectively in order to show their second skins publically. Herculine/Abel and Herman/Kate burst with happiness and felicitate their realization of transsexual subjectivity. Moreover, according to Prosser, Herculine/Abel and Herman/Kate are “skilled autobiographers”; therefore, they can narrate their journey of self-discovery and the richness of their lived experiences (Prosser, 1998: 108).

Transgender subjects on stage feel trouble about the authenticity of biological sex and witness problems with gender identity. “When gender category and heterosexual authenticity are policed through reference to genitalia, the choice of target is gendered” (Schilt and Laurel, 2009: 452). The reference to the genitalia is an important element of the transgender sensibility, and the body is experienced and modified through the social construction of gender. This choice of the new body constitutes hopeful desires about the corporeal body. For instance, Cook expresses the evaluation of Herman’s desired genitalia:

Cook: We then tailored a labia majora, excising out the excessive scrotal skin, and returned to the before-mentioned purse-string suture which was now pursed in such a fashion as to not obliterate the blood supply but as to purse the new clitoris in an outward direction. The patient withstood the procedure well and returned to the recovery ward in good condition. (Bornstein, 1994: 216)

According to Jay Prosser, the body narratives of transsexuals affect the feelings, emotions, and expectations of new bodies. The narrative of the transsexual body represents “lengthy, formalized and normally substantive transition: a correlated set of corporeal, psychic, and social changes” (Prosser, 1998: 4). As mentioned above, his body is kind of a narrative, which functions as a bridge between embodiment and transition. Herman’s body narrative allows accepting a second skin, which is the skin of a new gender as a transsexual identity.

One of the basic features of transsexual narratives is the idea of ‘being stuck or trapped in the wrong boy’ which further relates to transgender subjectivity. The self is trapped and the authentic gender can be released through sex reassignment surgery. According to Jay Prosser, the demand for sex reassignment surgery forms the transsexual embodiment. “Transsexuality reveals the extent to which embodiment forms an essential base to subjectivity; but it also reveals that embodiment is as much about feeling one inhabits material flesh as the flesh itself” (Prosser, 1998: 7). The ‘wrong body embodiment’ externalizes a transsexual’s feeling, which is a sort of demand. The notion of the ‘wrong body’ concerning medical discourse employs the transgender agency and subjectivity. In *Hidden: A Gender*, Herman’s trauma reveals the ‘wrong body embodiment’ between the biological sex status and gender identity in his monologue.

Herman: Oh, no—no no no no I am a woman. I am sensible I am charming I am literate I am happy I am what men are not. Men are busy—I am to be idle. Men are rough—I am to be gentle. Men are strong—I am to be frail. Men are rational—I am... I am rational. God help me I must be a man. What? Yes, more laudanum, of course. I have no uterus? What in heaven’s name is a uterus? Oh. (Bornstein, 1994: 188)

Herman is determined to live life as a man since it becomes unbearable. “As the contours of body image are outlined as fundamentally non-coincident with the material body, it is this sense of im-proper-ness—the conceptualization of the sexed

morphology as not the property of the subject's body image –that is captured so succinctly in the wrong-body formula” (Prosser, 1998: 77). His body is captured by the wrong body formula. The failure as a male subject pushes Herman to represent dis-ownership of the body and the sense of impropriety. Emphasizing the bodily discomfort with the false dichotomies creates a chaotic situation to choose either destabilizing his body or stabilizing through stable and hegemonic identity.

Centering transgender agency and performativity puts two main ideas which are the transsexual body as a material existence and as an authentic self. The representation of trans-sexed bodies on stage reveals the authenticity of transgendered subjectivity and the visibility of transgender subjectivity through drama. *Hidden: A Gender* provides the transformation from a horrible present in the wrong body to a shiny future in the right body. The body is a sort of illustration of material existence because the material body conveys material force. Transgender subjects feel discomfort and reject material bodies. They idealize their imaginary body images that could merely be reached by bodily change. “The body image radically separates from the material body because the feeling of a sexed body dysphoria profoundly and subjectively experienced” (Prosser, 1998: 69). Similarly, Kate Bornstein shares a non-essentialist gender approach to the body because she integrates the body as a material existence throughout the play.

The pathologic evaluation of transgender subjects in Kate Bornstein's play allows them to receive sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy. The focus on medicalization “allows trans-identified folks access to medical technologies; therefore, some agency to alter their bodies as they desire, whether that desire precipitated by an inner natural force concerning socio-cultural dynamics” (Detloff, 2012: 78). The desire for self-image on the medical journey links with socio-cultural elements because transgender subjects are designed subjects with the combination of socio-cultural and medical technologies for achieving an authentic self. Herman's material existence can be provided through medical technologies and his attitude results in body alterations.

*Herman: I'm transsexual, I said to my wife.
I'm not a lesbian, she said, goodbye.
I'm transsexual, I said to my friends.
We don't know you, they said, goodbye.
I'm transsexual, I said to my mother.*

*You're my child, she said, but for now goodbye.
I'm transsexual, I said to my boss.
Can you still sell, he said, get back to work.
I'll need time to go to the hospital, I said to him.
Goodbye, he said.
I'm definitely transsexual, I said to my first shrink.
I wonder, he said, how our therapeutic relationship would change,
he said, if he were to leave his home and his wife and his two children, he
said, and we were to shack up together, he said.
Goodbye, I said.
I'm transsexual, I said to the surgeon's nurse on the phone, and I'd like an
appointment.
Two o'clock next Friday, she said, goodbye. (Bornstein, 1994: 198)*

Herman is a sort of “arch storyteller” because he has been accepted by the clinicians for getting sex reassignment surgery. Furthermore, the skin serves as an organ, which is stuck between the real one and the imaginary one within the material existence. This condition affects psychic and bodily interchange of subjectivity. Herman begins to internalize body alteration under the circumstances of social and personal difficulties during the transition period. Transgender subjects are in trouble due to the liminality between the inner and outer body which would further lead to psychological burdens. That’s why they want to recreate their bodies.

The material existence of the body is related to the clinician’s medical approach. In *Hidden: A Gender*, the character of a transgender woman, Herman, perceives herself as a trans female from the point of Doctor Razor and Dr. Weener. They follow surgeons of the tradition of Harry Benjamin. Harry Benjamin is the pioneer of applying sex-change treatments and surgeries to transgender people as an endocrinologist. He became known under the favor of Christine Jorgensen because Christine was his patient who is known as an initiator figure for transsexuality. Benjamin thanked her “without her courage and determination, undoubtedly springing from a force deep inside her, transsexualism might be still unknown - certainly unknown by this term- and might still be considered to be something barely on the fringe of medical science” (Benjamin, 1999: 4). Kate Bornstein intellectually depicts this type of clinician’s role model for transsexual subjects in the play. Like Harry Benjamin, Dr. Razor and Dr. Weener are key figures for Herman/Kate’s character. the surgery contains measurements of physical alterations like Herman/Kate’s physical change. The representation of Herman/Kate’s body is a sign

of sexual reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy which the self of the transsexual individual proves her psychic and corporeal interchange of subjectivity.

The authentic performance of transsexual identities on stage and the authenticity within the body are the significant elements of transgender visibility. According to Kate Bornstein and Zackary Drucker, “transgender visibility is more and more inclusive because the flood of trans is especially binary identified trans people” (Bornstein and Drucker, 2017: 5). Transgender visibility can construct to be aware of the dominant gender ideology and gender stereotypes. For example, Herman has not held these gender stereotypes anymore and Herman does not want to deal with prejudices about gender identity. The scene ends with the orison:

*Herman: I am a transsexual lesbian, I said.
Goodbye, they all said.
That's just too much to handle, they all said.
One or the other, maybe, they all said.
But both, they all said, goodbye.
Good bye.
Good bye. (Bornstein, 1994: 206)*

People also say goodbye to him because they exclude from public life. Herman says goodbye to the restrictions, biased discourses, and heteronormative system. Like Herman, transgender subjects' goal is to create a sense of consciousness, which pluralizes gender identities without any stereotypes and generates sexual and gender freedom without the dependence on the dual-gender system.

As a result, gender independence imposes the awareness of the variable gender preferences through staging the character's struggle with gender both physically and psychologically. Transgender individuals have some bounds to overcome and reconstruct their bodies with hormone treatment or surgery. The breakdown of the dual gender system will cut the gendered expectations and it will be a process of struggling against gender conformity. Theatre is a place to give a voice to the ambiguity of gendered selves. Transsexual individuals in *Hidden: A Gender* destruct the heteronormativity and struggle against gender conformity to depict non-traditional gender experiences. Butler's theory of performativity emphasizes a destabilization of gendered norms through articulating other fluctuating gender identities. The concept of gender performativity is against the naturalization

of gender identities and their fulfillment because Judith Butler asserts that gender roles are social constructs and gender identity is more fluid, as opposed to the heteronormative ideas about gender. That is why gender performativity denaturalizes identities to give a sphere for the self-making of trans individuals. Kate Bornstein and Judith Butler approach the psychological and psychological dimensions of the construction of gender fluidity to prove the existence of multiple identities. Gender identity is a continuum of self-fashioning in terms of subverting essentialistic ideals of trans individuals and validating their gender core with the possibility of surgical methods. It builds a base about revealing transgender visibility through theatrical performances.

To make the lived experiences of transgender subjects understood, Kate Bornstein comments on the nature of gender. It reveals a distinction between the physical embodiment (sex) and psychological embodiment (gender) identity. Kate Bornstein posits the specific issues of understanding, raising, and challenging questions and empowering transgender subjects; therefore, she tries to construct coalitions between them and other socially oppressed groups in *Hidden: A Gender*. She transcends social constructs of gender by means of containing ideas of the fluidly embodied, socially constructed, and self-constructed aspects of gender identity. Transgender subjects consciously make the possibilities of constructing embodied practices that subvert traditional rules of gender categorization and sexual classification. Many of them, like Herman/Kate and Herculine/Abel move beyond those limitations of dominant ways of thinking about transsexualism through discovering a hidden self-image within their bodies. Transsexual bodies as a material existence can be proven that the medical authority is aware of transgressing different levels of permanence as a gender identity. This material existence is visible through the performativity of gendered subjects and the authenticity of transgender subjectivity. Kate Bornstein provides an initial step toward gender non-conformity by refusing the dual-gender system and providing space for new identities on stage Bornstein's divergent ways of tolerating narrative closure show a desire to explain alternative futures for transgender subjects that are not restricted to stability and conformation with the stereotypical gender roles.

2.2. DOUG WRIGHT'S PLAY *I AM MY OWN WIFE*

I am My Own Wife is written by Doug Wright who is known as an American playwright and screenwriter. The play “honored with a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, a Tony Award for Best Play, a Drama Desk Award, a Lucille Lortel Award, an Outer Critics Circle Award, and a Drama League citation, Wife” (Schiavi, 2006: 197). The play was originally produced Off-Broadway in 2003¹. Doug Wright has “an interview with real character, Lothar Berfelde before she died in 2002” (Pavelková: 2013: 62). The play is based on the true story of Lothar Berfelde. After the play was produced on the stage, Doug Wright created this work as a screenplay. Wright’s theatrical technique is based on a one-person play in a transformational style which one person acts a lot of characters. The use of a single actor is not only a striking representation but also an impressive physical practice of the fluidity of performativity and subjectivity. It is a type of documentary theatre that “works with containing authentic materials, finding the truth, placing into a historical context, transforming a material to art and handling the details of the language, the rhythm, the juxtaposition, and the flashback” (Nussbaum, 1981: 239). Wright depicts a documentary theatre that is dependent on a retelling of the story of Lothar Bernfelde’s experiences. According to Garry Fisher Dawson, the contemporary documentary theater contains several qualities:

The documentary theatre is known by an assortment of names and expressions such as a type of drama, a kind of historical drama, a contemporary history play, a subgenre, and more recently, a genre. Critics and the playwrights from time to time refer to it as theatre-of-fact, as fiction, as non-fictional theatre, as the theatre-of reportage, and as theatre –as-journalism. (Dawson, 1999: 10)

The documentary theatre conveys a theatrical presentation of real events and inspires history, memory, and traumas to alter the world outside the theater walls. The playwrights generally take advantage of various documents such as historical writing, newspaper quotations, extracts from interviews, records, and telephone

¹ The information was taken from <https://namibsands.wordpress.com/2009/07/23/a-formidable-performance-a-review-of-i-am-my-own-wife/>

conversations. The play is depending on the interview of Lothar Berfelde. Wright explains the structure of his documentary theater as:

I have edited Charlotte's anecdotes for clarity; I have condensed several characters into one when it best served the drama of her story; I have created certain archetypal figures in the play, such as newspaper reporters, bureaucrats, and specialists; I have imagined certain scenes while wholly inventing others for narrative clarity and in pursuit of my own thematic purpose. While I hope the text does justice to the fundamental truths of Charlotte's singular life, it is not intended as definitive biography. (Wright, 2004: xxiv)

In this biographical representation, Doug Wright uses tape records to write a script. Doug Wright illustrates a combination of Lothar's real-life story and the recreation of the theatrical identity with Charlotte's characterization. Wright is not only the playwright but also puts himself on the stage as the solo actor that plays for all the characters in transformational technique. Martin explains the relation between archival narrative and the creation of theatrical performance: "Creating performances from edited archival material can both foreground and problematize the nonfictional even as it uses actors, memorized dialogue, condensed time, precise staging, stage sets, lighting, costumes, and the overall aesthetic structure of theatrical performance. The process is not always transparent" (Martin, 2006: 10). Playwrights sometimes integrate archival narrative into the theatrical performances. In this sense, Wright is a multitasker, because he records biographies, writes scripts, and appears on the stage.

The play examines the formation of transgender identity and the subjectivity of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf along with discussions of presenting performativity and subjectivity. Doug Wright's *I am My Own Wife* illustrates the life of a transgender person, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, who lived in the Third Reich Germany during the mid-to-late 20th century. It displays social, political, and historical aspects of constructing transgender lived experiences under the Nazi regime during the Communist era in Berlin. He embodies different types of characters and goes in and out of them with sometimes abrupt and sudden changes indicated by a change in costumes, sound, and gestures. Michael Schiavi explains Doug's acting style relating it to the issue of reliability of the narrator:

In one sense, Wright's self-inclusion steadies Charlotte's shifting story by subjecting it to the interviewing process in which Wright had grown expert. In a more important manner, Wright's presence in the play reassures audiences that their own search for truth a principal root of their spectatorship is reasonable and will be rewarded by the playwright figure who, because he is based squarely on the author, will provide more immediate knowledge than even an omniscient narrator. (Schiavi, 2006: 209)

In addition to Charlotte as the interviewee and Doug as the interviewer, Doug Wright as an actor acts in more than 30 characters and he writes a story of Charlotte as a narrator. This multifocal perspective provides proving the truth of the story for audiences and readers and increases the persuasiveness of the narrator.

Prior to the analysis of the play, it is necessary to comment on the use of the word transvestite instead of transgender in the play and the general difference between these terms briefly. In her study of transvestites and transsexuals Marjorie Garber indicates "two big problems obsessively addressed in medical and cultural discourses: artifactuality and uncertainty. What did they get, what did they lose, and how could we know what they really were now? Not knowing, not being able to know, became ... a source of anxiety" (Garber, 1992: 10-16). Garber emphasizes the ambiguity of usage of these terms which shows the loss of meaning. Another advocater, Michael R. Schiavi recommends:

"transvestites" spectators proceed from a semiotic blizzard of anatomical and sartorial effects that disorient, that force viewers to read gender-under-construction rather than see gender-as-given. Because the material trappings of transvestism are usually more visible than their transsexual counterparts" (Schiavi, 2006:202).

Audiences or readers need to adopt the image of transsexual on the stage formidably, but they comfortably imagine the image of transvestite and visualize the bodily image effortlessly. Besides, Nels P. Highberg supports Schiavi's thoughts about reflecting on transgender instead of saying transvestite in his article.

Von Mahlsdorf is a person for whom I believe transgender functions more appropriately. As scholars such as Judith Halberstam, Cherly Chase, Kate Bornstein, and Judith Butler have noted, the range of identities that evolve from categories of sex and gender demand new uses of language to label and describe them; how transgender highlights a person's psychological connection to gender, while transsexual and transvestite mark physical or bodily identifications (Highberg, 2009: 176).

Even though the word transvestite is used in *I am My Own Wife*, the word transgender makes more sense not only because of its more inclusive context as defined in the first chapter of this study but also because it, as Highberg examines, maintains a psychological connection to Charlotte's gender. Furthermore, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf uses the term transvestite to define herself and it should not be surprising because transgender was not used as an umbrella term during her lifespan. If the play depends on a truthful depiction of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf's experiences, the choice of using the word transvestite makes sense. The use of the word transgender in this study for this play should not confuse the readers because after all transgender is an umbrella term including the experiences of transvestites as well.

The setting of the play is full of antique objects which is like a museum atmosphere. Charlotte collects historical objects in the Gründerzeit Museum which literally shows "a place of antique materials" (Doug, 2004: ix). Doug Wright presents historical objects during the Nazi occupation and the Communist rule in East Germany. Also, she gives priority to objects compared to other things in her life. The play starts with Charlotte explaining the Edison phonograph under the soft rhythms. Then, the actor shifts into the character of John Marks, a newsman, and friend of Doug Wright's, as he tells Wright about Charlotte's story and Marks insists Doug choose a subject for his research and come to Germany from America. Mark says "She's way up your alley," and "believe me, I use the term 'she' loosely" (Wright, 2004: 11). Mark does not describe her gender identity at the beginning of the play. Even before Charlotte utters any line on the stage, the information that Marks gives us in his monologue indicates the indistinctness of Charlotte's identity. They offer to make an interview with Charlotte in East Berlin. Later, she accepts the interview and Doug helps Mark to translate simultaneously.

The theory of performativity is one of the main themes in *I am My Own Wife* since it concerns a transgender individual experience that subverts normative rules. Judith Butler's performativity and gender identity are crucial elements to contemplate Charlotte's self-journey since Butler expresses how the new identity gets rid of innate qualities and comprises stylized acts. "Sex qualifies the human as a necessary attribute. But sex does not cause gender, and gender cannot be understood

to reflect or express sex” (Butler, 1999b: 142). From that perspective, Charlotte’s performativity shows her self-discovery and the way she constructs her acts and behaviors.

Gender is socially learned behavior. Society defines constructed roles, activities, and attributions. Individuals gain gender identity through social learning. Specifically, childhood experiences shape gender identity, and individuals learn how to conform to gender roles. Gender role is described as “an extension of role theories which say that children learn ways of relating to the world around them through observing how people act, and by being rewarded when they themselves display appropriate behavior or punished when they display inappropriate behavior” (Francis and Skelton, 2005: 21). In *I am My Own Wife*, clothing, especially imitating her aunt’s style, is a way of showing performativity and finding the core of the self. It has a great impact on the formation of a new identity with the choice of clothing to change gender identity. For instance, Charlotte remembers her younger ages expressing the connection with Tante Louise, her aunt, who lives in East Prussia. Charlotte describes her aunt “since she was sixteen years old she never wore ladies’ clothes” (Wright, 2004: 21). She compares her aunt’s appearance to “land inspector, not a fine lady” because she disharmonies with her gender identity and gender expectations; therefore, she challenges fixed gender identity and breaks the characteristics of femininity and masculinity that are attributed to women and men in heteronormative patriarchy. She learns her gender roles from her cross-dressing lesbian aunt. Then, Charlotte remembers her visit to East Prussia to her aunt in 1943, she “whispered with an erotic tonnage” and Charlotte took “girl’s clothes from her aunt’s closet” (Wright, 2004: 22). “The costume is a demonstration of not only Charlotte’s open transvestism, but metaphorically, also of the different guises he/she had to adapt to survive Nazism and Communism” (Pavelková, 2013: 62). She aims to displace the stability of gender categories; therefore, the concept of clothing directly relates to the human body that regulates her desired identity under the harsh realities of political conditions.

Gender functions as a performative phenomenon. Performative is a kind of utterance through discourse. Discourse produces bodily signs, actions, and situations to define performative acts. According to Sara Salih, Butler’s theory of

performativity “traces the processes by which identity is constructed within language and discourse” (Salih, 2002: 10). Charlotte constructs performativity within his effort to both languages and discourses. Charlotte’s performativity shows a relation between English utterances and German utterances. Several moments shifts between English and German. Like the actor’s gender changes, the discourse instantly evaluates a sequence of utterances in both languages. On the other hand, Doug gets stuck between English and German. Wright attempts to learn German in order to get along with Charlotte, but it fails suddenly. Specifically, Wright expresses his failure at learning German by means of telling a memory from his German class. Austin notes that: “once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act” (Austin, 1962: 139). His utterance is related to state performing as an act. The utterance was from Magnus Hirschfeld’s *Die Transvestit*, and introduced himself by saying, “Hi, ich bin Doug, und ich trage schwarze Spitzenunterwäsche” and he adds “Hi, my name is Doug Wright, and I am wearing black lace panties” (Wright, 2004: 30). Doug is aggrieved by this exchange because such statements are performative utterances. In addition to theatrical performances, performativity is “a twist of language” and “binary frame is strongly illustrated in performative speech acts which defines characters as male or female” (Butler, 1999b: 25). Doug uses a twist of language through speech acts to depict himself as a man.

Moreover, Charlotte embodies the realization of her transgender identity in terms of the discovery of Magnus Hirschfeld’s book *Die Transvestiten*. The understanding of transvestism has created confusion about sexual and gender categories during the ages. Magnus Hirschfeld is a pioneer figure for naming transvestite during the transition period in Germany. “His work on transvestites published in 1910, includes first-person cross-dressers, Hirschfeld’s commentaries on these case histories, and theoretical generalizations based on his analysis. Although the prima cases was destroyed by Nazi in 1933, the book remains offering crucial aspects of his respondents’ experiences” (Hill, 2005: 316). Today, this concept, transvestite has been evaluated over time and the meaning of the term has been altered throughout the years. “If completed today, *Die Transvestiten* would

likely be a popular German term referring to a broad community of people, who cross-genders including “transvestites” but also transsexuals, transgenderists, and others” (Hill, 2005: 330). When she starts with an anecdote about Tante Luise, Charlotte’s aunt, she realizes her gender identity through the piece of art. She utters “did you know that nature has dared to play a joke on us? You should’ve been born a girl and I should’ve been born a man!” (Wright, 2004: 23). From Butler’s sense, her utterances sustain to create an identity by the continuation of her gender performativity. Tante Luise is a sort of role model who destabilizes the effects of stereotyping and displaces fixed and stable gender definitions. Her aunt does not accept her sexuality that is assigned at birth sex. She does not feel a sense of belonging to the heteronormative system with no necessary to hide her lesbian identity. On the contrary, she directs her nephew to search personal journey towards self-discovery.

When she starts to read from *Die Transvestiten*, Charlotte resists gender binary norms and stigmatization. Charlotte expresses that “in each person, there is a delicate balance of male and female substances. Just as we can’t find two matching leaves from the same tree, it is scientifically impossible to find two human beings whose male and female characteristics match in kind and number” (Wright, 2004: 23). At this point, individuals do not have to show the gender presentation assigned at birth. Like leaves, individuals are not constructed with exact gender identities or matched with heteronormative identifications. Every individual is unique even if they come from the same family. Gender is not a stable perception. Gender and sexual identities are culturally constructed by a heteronormative system. This system imposes on dominant discourses of binary frames such as femininity/ masculinity and female/male. Furthermore, *Die Transvestiten* is an educational practice that is called the “Bible” by her aunt (Wright, 2004: 24). She strategically imposes the specific book that presents a learning process of gender identity.

The role of performativity is associated with the politics of sexual minority identification during World War II. The performativity of political configurations reinforces through reiterative practices such as military service missions. In *I am My Own Wife*, Charlotte’s performativity has a connection with the reflection of the political instability in Germany during the Third Reich period, because the political

representations of non-binary identities have been overwhelmingly negative. This reinforces oppression performed on LGBTQ people that subvert their gender identities. Under the sound of nostalgia from the phonograph, she mentions World War II, when Berlin was heavily bombarded by “Russian splatter bombs” (Wright, 2004: 25). She visualizes the vulnerability and the brutality of the war in terms of memorizing the traumas of the war. Officers look for boys and men because of the necessity for soldiers and they recruit troops. One of the German officers asks whether Charlotte is a girl or a boy. SS Officer interrogates her gender identity:

SS Commander: Are you a boy or a girl?

Charlotte: And I thought, if they shoot me, what is the difference between a boy and a girl, because dead is dead.

(She becomes a child and answers.)

Young Lothar: I am a boy.

SS Commander: How old are you then?

Young Lothar: Sixteen. (Wright, 2004: 27)

Political agenda demands the same, stable, and fixed identity for participating in a military service task. According to Wittig, “man and woman are political categories, not natural given” (Wittig, 1992: 13). Charlotte does not illustrate the potential of political performativity because she does not encounter the responsibilities that are presented by the officer’s harsh and violent expression. Her perception of military service mismatches her gender identity. The collision between military expectations and transgender individuals’ frailties leads to inner degradation as proof of repression. At first glance, the officer’s image becomes more intense and presents a more extreme depiction of domestic violence. His tyranny has been read as an expression of German militarism expectations. She is not oppressed by Nazi imprisonment because of being a disarmed male, “to be a deserter” (Wright, 2004: 26). She refuses to participate in Hitler’s youth and resists national systems of state power under the socialist regime.

In East Germany, marginalized people such as transgender, gays, and lesbian hardly find a way to construct a social network. “In East Germany, being seen as a part of a group of marginalized, others often led to scrutiny, incarceration, or death” (Highberg, 2009: 174). Charlotte is seen as a marginalized individual because she is not only part of the military group but also is not a supporter of the binary frame. She

experiences a harsh abuse of national identity and strict conditions of military service. “East German citizens experienced a serious abuse of national identity and community in Nazi Germany and under the socialist regime. These experiences created a strong suspicion of group identifications and an emphasis on individuality for resistant acts” (Giersdorf, 2006: 172). She resists political and military service and keeps away from biased thoughts about homosexuality. On the contrary, she is an example of a marginalized figure who is a role model for non-binary individuals. Doug Wright appreciates her stance with these words:

I'd long held a casual interest in gay history, and Charlotte seemed like a veritable treasure trove. There are only a handful of books about gay life in Germany during the Second World War, and even fewer about the plight of homosexuals under Communism. Charlotte's story, I reasoned, might help to fill in the considerable blanks. Furthermore, her quiet heroism—maintaining an unwavering sense of herself during such repressive times—could be a boon to gay men and women everywhere. In an age where politicians still routinely decry homosexuality on the evening news and 'fag' remains the most stinging of all playground epithets, Charlotte's dogged insistence on her sexuality could prove downright curative. (Wright, 2004: xi)

Charlotte challenges the dominant understanding of gender within the boundaries of the heteronormative German system. Politicians create the heteronormative discourse to ban non-binary lived experiences. During the transition period in Germany, the appearance of new marginalized sexualities is seen as a threat to heterosexual families.

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) ideology was also influenced by the Soviet Union. After a short period of sexual liberation following the October Revolution in 1917, the Soviet Union repressed any sexual experiments that challenged the heterosexual family. That repression resulted from Marxism-Leninism's neglect of sexuality as a driving political force. The reduction of sexuality to a private and exclusively physical act frames sexual identity as private and corporeal, removing it from more abstracted group and class interests that powerfully underwrite Marxism-Leninism's concept of class struggle. (Giersdorf, 2006: 173)

This class struggle affects sexual experiments in terms of repressing non-binary people's feelings and ignoring their identities politically. Politicians take the reduction of a minority group for granted to erase these identities for political benefits. This political force pushes politicians to talk of non-binary groups through

constructing laws or deconstructing rights without any ideas about these sexual choices.

Charlotte performs an identity by showing acts, gestures, and behaviors of those who surround her. The acts of her father have a great impact on shaping her gender identity through psychological trauma and military trauma. She narrates her father and her relationship with him. He is strictly Nazi and supports militarism. She raises herself to go against Prussian and fascist male ideologies. In 1943, while Charlotte's siblings and her mother were living with her aunt, Luise, Charlotte's father visits them and offers to stay together with Charlotte. When Charlotte's mother does not accept his offer, he threatens to kill his wife and children. Later, Charlotte was sent back to Berlin to renovate the family home to accommodate war refugees. When she met with her father, she was exposed to hearing death threats and being locked in the bedroom. She describes the room and the moment that she attempts to kill her father. According to Herman, traumatic experiences can be the most effective to direct an individual's life. "At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities" (Herman, 1997: 24). She is helpless and is overwhelmed by the atrocities of her father and military force. She refers that "he locked me in the bedroom by turning the key. Because it was war, I could hear the Allied bombs coming in the night. And then under the bed, I saw a large wooden utensil used to mix cake—*wie sagt man*—a rolling pin. And I thought I can take this as a weapon" (Wright, 2004: 31). She encounters war traumas and experiences gendered traumas at the same time. She feels claustrophobia as a space of oppression of the war and chaos of the familial issues. She describes her tragedy with these explanations:

It was very dark, except for a little moonlight which was shining. And I saw my father. He was lying on the sofa in the dining room, and his gun lay on the chair next to him. And I saw the chair. I saw the pistol. And, in that moment, the clock—we had a Westminster clock—and the clock was chiming, and I saw my father's hand; he was reaching for his weapon. And in this moment I began beating him. (Wright, 2004: 31-32)

The scene shows both verbal and psychical traumas that get out of her control. She is sentenced to four years in prison. She was released in April 1945 because the Soviet

soldiers marched into Berlin. Charlotte's future is constructed with some political arrangements. According to Namaste, "the subject is not something prior to politics or social structures but is precisely constituted in and through specific social, political arrangements" (Namaste, 1994: 221). During the Cold War, members of the German Military caught and shot any person who was on the street for not serving in the German army. Charlotte Von Mahlsdorf was caught by the SS German officers and found a chance because of a bombing of the execution site by the Red Army. This political arrangement makes her live out of the rigid regime rules of Germany and the oppression of her father at the same time. She acts as resisting the regimes of power and survives as a transgender individual during the Nazi occupation and the Communist rule in East Germany.

Performativity is an essential quality that connects with Charlotte's identity. She performs gender as an East Berlin furniture collector and an ethnographer as a result of repetitive acts that constitute a core of true gender. Charlotte's traits are repetitively seen as a collector and ethnographer during the play. As an ethnographer and collector, she has "an opportunity to examine both authentic identity and authentic performance" (Lones, 2002: 13). Her reflection of authentic identity culturally and sexually can lead to performing the authentic performance in *Gründerzeit* era. *Gründerzeit* importantly has a great influence on architecture in many German cities, leading to revealing art deco on furniture and architecture. Under Hitler's regime, she saves many historical and antique objects, and she mentions how furniture come to her home. "When families died, I became the furniture. When the Jews were deported in the Second World War, I became it. When citizens were burned out of their homes by the Communists, I became it. After the coming of the wall, when the old mansion houses were destroyed to create the people's architecture, I became it" (Wright, 2004: 18). Her mission shows cultural preservation by collecting vintage objects such as a record player, coffer, polyphone, Edison ambrenola, pionala, nipper, grandfather clock, etc. "Ethnographers do not present the culture but are conscious of how they act as interpreters of the culture" (Lones, 2002: 9). She does not show German culture and she acts as an interpreter of German culture as an ethnographer. "The museum with its turn-of-the-century furniture collection provides a perfect backdrop for her resisting performance"

(Giersdorf, 2006: 178). For example, she has an appointment to see a clockmaker in Kopenick. She expresses the priority of objects in her life and she tells “Museum, Furniture, Men” (Wright, 2004: 67). She cares about their situation and Charlotte’s repeated depiction of furniture functions reinforces their priority.

Transgender subjectivity is one of the main themes in the play. *I am My Own Wife* emphasizes the subjectivity of Charlotte’s lived experiences through demanding the desired gender identity; therefore, she creates a sphere, *Mulack-Ritze*, to live as a transgender individual and gather non-binary identities. She is a creator not only for her self-preservation but also because she is the constructor of non-binary people’s self-representation. *Mulack-Ritze* is an old Berlin tavern that was “a restaurant for gays and lesbians from the time of the Emperor Wilhelm II” (Wright, 2004: 37). She rescues from the Stasi, the Communist secret police, who is known as the most feared government spies in all the world in 1963. After the Berlin Wall is torn apart, she secretly opens this tavern and she paints all windows black for the protection of the polices. She constructs a set for transgender and homosexual subjectivities by creating a self-governing territory. She explains the condition of the *Mulack-Ritze* during the rigid political atmosphere in Berlin:

And then came the wall. And for us here in Eastern Berlin it was finished, gay life. The bars, closed. Personal advertisements in the newspaper, canceled. No place to meet but the tramway stations and the public toilets. We were not supposed to exist. Persona non grata. So I thought to give homosexual women and men community in this house. Yes. It was a museum for all people, but I thought, Why not for homosexuals? (Wright, 2004: 38)

Mulack-Ritze illustrates her unexampled contribution to German culture and her preservation of cultural artifacts. It is a sort of meeting place which is referred to as social gatherings of transgender, gays, lesbians, etc. She is a pioneer in searching for an equal place in East German socialist society. She criticizes this period by drawing forth the community’s homophobia into a general criticism of socialism’s Marxist-Leninist ideology. Like homosexuals, Charlotte tries to constitute her subjectivity and protect others’ subjectivity under the East German government. She defends her museum or tavern against government officials so many times.

Transgender identity needs to gain social recognition by providing subjectivity. “The public variability of one’s identity is an attempt to express one’s

gender in a manner that is comprehensible and understandable and that results in social authentication” (Davis, 2009: 123). The self-representation of Charlotte displays a strain between feeling compelled to the normative system and providing a self-description in front of the society through social authentication. Her subjectivity becomes meaningful when she receives a medal for protecting the historical asset of the objects because her social authentication enables her to define herself as a transgender or transvestite. For instance; her subjectivity becomes visible when she is honored with the medal. She shares her happiness with John and Doug:

Charlotte: The day I received the medal was for me recognition of my work, and I thought—wie soll ich sagen—I thought, It’s good, because other people see that a transvestite can work. A transvestite becomes such a medal! If other people—heterosexual people—they look at the television, and they read the newspapers and they say, “Ah! He or she is able to work, ja.”
John: They presented the award on national German television. Aw, Doug, I wish you could’ve been there. Picture it. An elderly man, in a skirt and a string of pearls. Nobody laughed. No catcalls. And, at the end of the ceremony, the Cultural Minister himself even leaned down to kiss her hand. (Wright, 2004: 40-41)

She takes a medal from the Berlin Culture of Minister which is known as the most prestigious gift for her. Her recognition on television brings a more respectful and powerful appearance and self-confidence through transgender subjectivity. This ceremony enables her to be accepted and people feel relaxed being around her. When she interacts with the authority and shows off her transgender identity, she shows her social knowledge of transgender experiences and expectations. Her identity construction represents a unique appearance because she is like an elder man with her pearl necklace. This is the first time that she has experienced social recognition in front of the heteropatriarchy.

After Charlotte takes a medal, her subjectivity is damaged from the specific document: Stasi file. This scene reflects the relationship between Alfred Kirschner and Charlotte von Mahlsdorf. Kirschner is in jail for having sold antique clocks to American soldiers. She keeps a secret about holding vintage clocks at her museum and she is questioned by soldiers, she does not utter Alfred’s name. Charlotte’s subjectivity starts with the role of the informer and the storyteller. When Doug wonders about references in the Stasi file, Charlotte starts telling stories about

Alfred. She informs us how they meet and sell cuckoo clocks. Doug also speaks with a Stasi agent and he is not contended due to the lack of information and the wrongness of the information: “We can’t go looking to the Stasi file for facts. Those agents and quotas to fill, supervisors to impress. Reports were doctored all the time. On entry contradicts the next” (Wright, 2004: 53). Narratives, like reports, need to be filled for the absence of the story. Clinicians fill the absence of their patients’ narrative, Doug also tries to fill the absence of the Stasi file. On the other hand, John comments on the Stasi file “that’s one helluva story. Trouble is, it does not scan with the facts in her file” (Wright, 2004: 62). The process of the Stasi file represents suspicion because “this historic document, which certainly omits all reference to Charlotte’s cooperation with the Stasi, helped to earn her a Bundesverdienstkreuz (National Medal of Honor) in 1992” (Schiavi, 2006: 200). However, politicians and other citizens are discussing in public whether her medal of honor should be taken away from Charlotte because of the news of her being an informant. Her subjectivity is reflected as being disgraceful in front of society. The possibility of the loss of a medal can harm the transgender subjectivity because she is well known in media and in public as a transgender individual.

The role of medical institutions affects the construction of transgender subjectivity. Clinicians try to authorize transgender individuals’ subjectivity. According to Bernice Hausman, clinicians are essential figures that constitute homophobia. “Physicians and other clinicians demonstrate the homophobic prejudice that grounds the practices of sex change in a desire to see bodies that are sexed in accordance with social categories of appropriate gender performance” (Hausman, 1995: 7). They trivialize their identities and insult their identities instead of constructing a medical-therapeutic model of healing. Furthermore, transgender individuals are seen as “a suspect text” because Psychologists Leah Cahan Schaefer and Connie Christine Wheeler assert that: “this tendency among some clinicians to approach the transsexual as a suspect text—a lack of understanding from the medical establishment of the difficulty in rendering transsexuality as story—that may provoke transsexuals to ‘falsify’ histories in the first place” (Prosser, 1998: 111). Clinicians tend to provoke transsexual stories when they communicate with them. In *I am My Own Wife*, Dieter Jorgensen is a psychiatrist who sees transsexuality as a stigma of

mental illnesses. He analyzes Charlotte's acts as aberrant behaviors. "The classification of aberrant behaviors is central to differential diagnosis, the diagnostic technique with which psychiatrists define and categorize mental illnesses" (Hausman, 1995: 116). That is why Dieter Jorgensen describes her suffering from autism:

Dieter Jorgensen, psychiatrist, Bonn. Berlin's most notorious transvestite is neither a raconteur nor Machiavellian; she is, in fact, mentally ill. Charlotte von Mahlsdorf suffers from autism. Listen to the manner in which she recounts her stories: in a highly ritualized, cadenced way, less to communicate content than to provide a kind of rhythmic reassurance to the chaos in her psyche. This is true of autistic adults; repetition is a palliative. Her stories aren't lies per se; they're self-medication. (Wright, 2004: 75)

Dieter Jorgensen is unsatisfied with reading about Charlotte as a transgender individual. Clinician's diagnosis mismatches with Charlotte's subjectivity; therefore, he blames Charlotte due to recounting her story. It is a complex relationship between clinicians and transgender individuals and it shows the problem of the subject's construction throughout the play.

Transgender subjectivity is related to the understanding of 'being trapped in the wrong body. The notion of the wrong body is the crucial element in transgender autobiographical writing. Lothar Berfelde conveys the image of the wrong embodiment since being trapped within the wrong body means clearly what she feels like. Emphasizing wrong body embodiment for transgender can lead to feeling bodily discomfort. Doug Wright explains the significance of Lothar's feelings before the script starts. Charlette von Mahlsdorf feels discomfort like Lothar Berfelde: "Born Lothar Berfelde in 1928, she had long considered herself a member of the "third sex": a female spirit trapped in a male body" (Wright, 2004: x). She maintains her life as trapped in a male body under the regime of the Nazis and the Communists. She holds disembodiment with her body that is why she refashions her body. She makes up the layer of female skin to cover his male skin throughout the play as a Charlotte and in real life as a Lothar. Moreover, "transgender individuals have built upon the tradition the community has of autobiographical writing to give a voice to their self-acknowledged subjectivity" (Whittle, 2016: 216). Charlotte tries to give her a voice and show her transgender visibility. Charlotte feels a sense of

inappropriateness in the gender role because she substantiates her transgender identity through the subject's life history.

In the play, the wrong body position can cause a discrepancy between the corporeal body and the external body. The difference between corporeal reality (internal bodily sensations) and the external surface of the body can lead to the problem which presents the construction of her subjectivity. At the end of the play, some reporters such as Mark Finley and Pradeep Gupta ask about Charlotte's identity. They inevitably think that she has already lied about her gender identity compared to her appearance. Charlotte responds with an anecdote:

*Charlotte: When I was almost forty years old, my mother was doing the laundry, yes? Hanging my stockings and my garters on the line. And she turned to me, and she said, Lottchen, it is all very well to play dress up. But now you've grown into a man. When will you marry?
(She raises her eyes to look at them, each in turn.)
And I said to her, Never, my dear Mutti. Ich bin meine eigene Frau. I am my own wife. (Wright, 2004: 74-75)*

Charlotte's subjectivity displays her transgender identity by announcing herself as her own wife and rejecting heteronormative expectations. Her bodily sensations do not match with the external surface of the body. She has the sensations of transgender identity and her external body seems to be a man. She feels dysphoric about body parts because she sometimes declares to experience her body as differently sexed from its materiality.

Transgender subjectivity is a significant concept to consider a relation between body and narrative. The union of the body and narrative is the obvious matter in this play. "Transsexual narratives cannot be read without our accounting for the subjective experience" (Prosser, 1998: 17). The subjective experience is the initial quality for defining the transgender narrative. Also, Jay Prosser adds that "autobiography, like the transsexual's first look in the mirror, breaks apart the subject into the self-reflected upon and the self that reflects; autobiography, like transsexuality, instantiates (or reveals) a difference in the subject" (Prosser, 1998: 102). Lothar's autobiography is a self-reflection for the writer and readers and her autobiography is presenting the self-image of the transgender subject. Doug Wright explains the self-image of Lothar commenting on her use of pronouns: "Hence her

preference for female pronouns even before it became the politically correct mode of address for the transgendered” (Wright, 2004: x). By referring to the transgender’s subjectivity through the narrative, Lothar Bernfelde’s autobiography makes Charlotte recognized as a transgender individual. Even if Lothar does not write her autobiography, she is a sort of skilled autobiographer in terms of Prosser’s terminology. She narrates her story to the writer because she sees him as a therapist to tell her traumas through narrative.

According to Jay Prosser, the narrative is known as a second skin. Lothar’s narrative is described as a second skin which authorizes the subjectivity of Charlotte. In this sense, the theatre is a kind of mediator between Charlotte’s theatrical presence and Lothar’s real-life story. Lothar’s memoir makes Charlotte recognized as a transgender on the theatre stage. Besides, theatre gives rise to visualize the body of transgender identity and gives a voice to listen to her autobiography. Lothar’s story is a second skin because the narrative is a type of second skin. Charlotte weaves the story so that this transgender experience can be read on the stage aesthetically. Doug Wright retrospectively tells the narrative of Lothar Berfelde and the play is a way of making the body readable through the transsexual bios.

The reconstruction of life with the play makes Lothar Berfelde readable through the narrative and the records. *I am My Own Wife* ends with a recording of the real Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, the actor’s performance of Charlotte, who finalizes with the same words as the person being performed. Charlotte protects archival file and reveals the archival value. Doug as an actor stands silently beside the gramophone and listens to the record of Charlotte’s voice. This moment displays the final conversation between Charlotte and Doug as the actor will portray them on stage:

Doug Wright: Does a piece ever get so old – so damaged – that you throw it away?

Charlotte Von Mahlsdorf: Nein. You must save everything. And you must show it – auf Englisch, we say – “as is”, [...] It is a record, yes? Of living. Of lives. (Wright, 2004: 76)

After they finish their conversation, the stage directions state that Charlotte removes her scarf and becomes Doug. The directions indicate that “Doug unclasps Charlotte’s pearls from around his neck” (Wright, 2004: 76). The dialogue transforms to be a monologue from Doug’s perspective, during the narrative of the final years of Charlotte’s life. She moved to Sweden, and, after returning to Berlin for a visit, died because of a heart attack.

After Charlotte’s death, he takes a delivery from her which is a single photograph of herself as a child. The image of the photograph is a fundamental element in autobiographical writing because it serves as a referential property. “The effect of photographs in any autobiography, transsexual autobiographies included, is immediately referential. Autobiographical photographs serve to embody the subject of the narrative. This is the real body of the autobiographer; they declare; the text you read refers to this subject you see here” (Prosser, 1998: 209). The play embodies the real-life story with the influence of the autobiographical photograph. It functions as embodying the transgender subject of the narrative. Doug identifies the child as Lothar Berfelde, Charlotte’s birth name, and describes what he sees in the photograph in a detailed way:

He’s at the zoo in Berlin. He’s wearing a sailor suit, with a blue-collar and matching cuffs. His ears are sticking out at an angle; he’s got a very adorable smile. He’s on a bench. Sitting on either side of him, two tigers. Cubs, sure, but they’re still as big as he is. And they’re not fond of posing, either. Their eyes are dangerously alert. At any moment, they might revolt; they might scratch or bite. (He says with awe) But Lothar has one arm around each tiger, and they’re resting their forepaws on his knees. (Wright, 2004: 77)

Charlotte is not only a textual subject but also is real-life subject. Charlotte has been transubstantiated to Lothar Berfelde thanks to the photograph. The photograph of the transgender in the autobiography symbolizes the transgender embodiment. The scenery ends with the recording which begins to play, beginning with a short clip of Doug Wright’s voice, followed by the recording of Charlotte’s.

The choice of costume, stage decorations, and objects present vivid imagery. Nels Highberg saw an original stage of Broadway production and she comments on the set through two primary areas: “the front area, where most of the action took place, contained basic tables, chairs and key props including an Edison phonograph.

This simplicity of this area contrasted strongly with the back wall, which contained shelving from floor to ceiling filled with antiquities” (Highberg, 2009: 173). In the scrip notes, Doug Wright explains the set contents such as “gilded mirrors, upturned chairs, ornate German cabinetry, porcelain dogs, sideboards, tea tables, music machines of all makes and varieties, old crystal chandeliers, bureaus, bric-a-brac, and bronze busts, marvelous debris culled from the nineteenth century and hoarded with a kind of obsessive grandeur” (Wright, 2004: 5-6). Throughout the play, the stage gets darkened and pushes readers to focus on the actor’s or actress’s speech.

Doug Wright emphasizes the worth of a real-life story and gives value to Charlotte’s story in Lothar’s narrative in *I am My Own Wife*. Wright presents a unique transgender story which is a representation of a nationally specific sexual identity during Nazi and Communist regimes. With the rigid conditions of East German life, Charlotte von Marshdolf is a reflector of social, political, and gender problems throughout the play. Doug Wright uses the tactics of the documentary performances in response to social and political crises during World War II. As a playwright, he presents a real event of Lothar Berfelde and he directs audiences and readers to question political circumstances, historical approach, and cultural concepts outside the theatre walls. The archival documents and interview records have become the main sources for his play. His documentary performance displays the fluidity of the transgender character, time, and place with the multi-role casting.

2.3. JEFFREY SOLOMON'S PLAY *TARA'S CROSSING*

Tara's Crossing is a play by an Emmy-nominated playwright, who advocates the rights of LGBTQ people. Solomon is the founder of the "Houses on the Moon"² theater in 2001. Solomon created a coalition with the Queer Immigrant Rights Project (QuIR)³ and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in order to write the script of *Tara's Crossing*. He supports a group for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) identified immigrants in New York City. Jeffrey Solomon tries to show unheard voices and invisible individuals through theatrical composition. *Tara's Crossing* illustrates a present issue of transgender asylum seekers and the experience of transgender detainees. The play presents the performativity of transgender asylum seekers through sex/gender binary, gendered trauma through immigrant detention, political and national procedures, and the subjectivity of transgender bodily trauma, the relation between the skin/psyche of the transgender asylum seeker, and the political perspective of transgender subjectivity.

Tara's Crossing represents immigrant drama in the United States which touches on problems of LGBTQ asylum from the sexual, cultural, and political aspects. It portrays the difficulties of transgender asylum seeker experiences, the distortion of transgender bodies, and abnormalities of the United States immigration detention. It is a theatrical representation of a female-to-male transgender asylum seeker from Guyana in the 1990s. It is depending on the real story of Balmitra Vimal Prasad⁴, an immigrant from Guyana. The United States immigration officials arrested Vimal in July 2003 after she pleaded for political asylum when she arrived at the Miami, Florida airport. Tara is the protagonist of the play who is taken into detention while her asylum is being adjudged like Balmitra Vimal Prasad. Solomon interviewed thirty LGBTQ asylum seekers who had experienced political asylum in the US, living in New York City. From this interview, In Solomon's utterance, "Vimal appealed to me because she went through four other countries while she was

² Houses on the Moon website is available at <http://www.housesonthemoon.org/about/timeline/> accessed on 4/20/2022.

³ QuIR is a project sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee in New York City and Jeffrey explained in my personal interview.

⁴ Interview with Balmitra Vimal Prasad and Jeffrey Solomon on Out FM Radio. Appears at <http://outfm.info/announce/2005%20remake/20050626%20tara%20ann.htm> accessed on 4/17/22.

trying to leave extremely painful circumstances... and also Vimal wants to be recognized and wants to be famous. This character who in the past is recognized as a disgusting character is a beautiful soul and deserves to be recognized” (Prasad and Solomon, 2005). In my interview, Jeffrey Solomon expresses how he is inspired by Vimal’s life:

There was one from Guatemala who was Balmitra Vimal Prasad. Her case is the need to live as oneself, to express oneself not in the assigned gender, but the true gender. It was an unstoppable force. This trans woman risked everything, her life, her safety, and her family, she risked everything to breathe as herself. I guess I didn't understand that before. I didn't understand how vital, how essential, how necessary it was to be able to express one's gender as one experiences it and she can live that out in the world. (Solomon, personal communication⁵, May 4, 2022)

He asks Vimal how she feels to be part of the theatrical process. Vimal “says a lot of my past comes back to me, the hard things as well as the fantasies” (Prasad and Solomon). Vimal remembers her traumas and agony, and she raises awareness about LGBTQ detainees to reflect on political, cultural, and gender practices during the contemporary age.

The play begins with the arrival of Tara at John F. Kennedy Airport. The problem arises with the distinction between Tara’s sex and Tara’s gender because society determines the categories of sex and gender to sustain ongoing patterns of beliefs, norms, and ideas at the beginning of the play. According to Butler, “this sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders” (Butler, 1999b: 10). In this sense, Tara’s sexed body and constructed gender reveal discontinuity owing to the expectations of heteronormativity. Society expects individuals to perform feminine roles and masculine roles. These gender issues serve a national, cultural, political, and economic adhered in the society’s rigid system. For instance, the officers of the Department for Immigration Service ask Tara’s official name in her passport. They understand that Terrace represents her sex at birth as a male. Tara offers political asylum in the United States to ask for help. She declares “I want asylum. Please.

⁵ Personal interview by e-mail with Jeffrey Solomon. I am so thankful for this interview.

Political Asylum”⁶ (Solomon, 2004: 7). At the national level, the representative of government officers dominantly regulates Tara’s presentation of self. The body can be a male, but it may not reflect masculine traits.

Gender is a type of learning because individuals learn how to display and perform gendered identities. Women and men are expected to perform the fixed roles assigned to them in society. Gender reflects patriarchal authority and hegemony, which holds societal legitimate power strategically. While they are performing, they unconsciously adapt to the dualistic gendered attributions.

Gender is not passively scripted on the body, and neither is it determined by nature, language, the symbolic, or the overwhelming history of patriarchy. Gender is what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly, with anxiety and pleasure, but if this continuous act is mistaken for a natural or linguistic given, power is relinquished to expand the cultural field bodily through subversive performances of various kinds. (Butler, 1988: 531)

Under the constraint of immigration service, Tara is obliged to wear the male gender identity abidingly. Tara is detained by Elizabeth Detention Center in New Jersey, where Tara has been banished to a single cell after facing harassment within the sexed identity. Tara requires to prove that she was harassed in Guyana due to her female gender presentation. The reality of gender is constructed by the performative acts since “gender reality is performative” (Butler, 1988: 527). At this point, Tara’s identity is real only to the extent that she is performed. Judith Butler assesses:

Gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative- that is, constituting the identity, it is purported to be. (Butler, 1999: 33)

Gender acts construct a subject or an identity and Tara’s act is a sort of performative construction because Tara tries to identify with Judith Bright, who is known as an American film artist. Tara is inspired by Judith Bright’s films and Tara narrates a dystopic story with Judith Bright. She utters “it was your movies that gave me hope

⁶ Jeffrey Solomon sent a script from e-mail. All quotes from *Tara’s Crossing* are from the unpublished play. I would thank to Jeffrey Solomon for granting me permission to quote from his work.

that I would one day triumph”. Tara’s world is also performative construction because her story is made into “a Lifetime Original movie”, in which Judith Bright will act as Tara (Solomon, 2004: 2). With the performativity of rehearsing the text, Judith Bright provides Tara to seek self-discovery through reflecting on transgender traumas under Tara’s directions.

Performance is a crucial aspect of constructing gender identity under the influence of time and geographical and socio-cultural elements. Individuals evolve their gender identities in the relation to the performance of the desired identity.

Performance is a key factor in the ways that people construct themselves and are constructed by the world. Through performing, whichever form that performing takes, a performer is experimenting with re-presenting ways of being. One is selecting what works and what does not work, evolving the practice over time, and doing all of this in relation to other social beings, which in turn and at the same time contributes to the making the person. (McNamara, 2009: 19)

Through performing, she makes an experiment about the construction of gender identity with the disguise of being an American film star. The performance of Judith Bright symbolizes the performative side of the desired gender identity because she desires a female body that sticks to the male-sexed body as a transgender asylum seeker. Beyond the film star’s experience, the context of Judith's performance on the theatrical stage contributes to carrying the potential of reaching transgender identity by using a drama as a source of the mediator.

Performing transgender experience is associated with expressing the transgender self. Reflecting the performativity of transgender performance through a particular body makes the subject engaged with others through body and discourse. “Gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one” (Butler, 1999b: 10). In *Tara’s Crossing*, heteronormative discourse clashes with the normative understanding of gender. When Officer Ray Donaldson accompanies Tara to the shower room, she refuses to participate in the men’s part, she suddenly reacts:

Tara: There are men showering here also?

Ray: ...Of course, but they ain’t gonna’ bother you. Go on.

Tara: Perhaps I could use the ladies.

Ray: Come on, man. You know I can't do that. (Solomon, 2004: 35)

She does not have a sense of belonging, a sense of being a part of a male group. The insistence on the ladies' part can lead to feeling comfortable and living gender identity independently. However, the scene also represents her confidence and self-esteem. Under the soft light, naked Tara bursts out.

Tara: Get me out of here. I don't like it. I don't want to be around these men.

Ray: Woah. Woah. Woah. ...What happened?

Tara: They turned the lights out. Someone grabbed me. They were laughing.

Ray: They were just messing with you, man. (Calling through open door) Very funny assholes!!!

Tara: I don't like it. And I'm not going to -- live with it any longer. (Solomon, 2004: 36)

Tara is disturbed and starts to feel more alienated from people and searches for an escape from male domination in the shower room. With this scene illustrates how a transgender subject can be insulted psychologically and damaged emotionally.

Speech acts or non-verbal communication systems are indicative of performativity. Speech acts also are the construction of performative behaviors. Butler indicates that "performative acts are forms of authoritative speech: most performatives, for instance, are statements that, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and a binding power" (Butler, 1993a: 232). Individuals perform a certain action in power relations. Tara's speech acts, in which she challenges the heteronormative organization of national security services under the U.S. immigration and detention laws, can be considered a resistance to the heteropatriarchy. One of the main performative utterances is related to Tara's identity. Barry is an immigrant attorney, who is assigned by Officers of the Department for Homeland Security to Tara. By the way, Jeffrey Solomon acts as Barry to show discriminative political power properties in the play. Barry talks from the perspective of authority:

Terrance, it's very important for you to recall things...Exactly. Especially dates. Timeline is very important. See, we have a bit of a challenge with your asylum case, because there is very little information about the way gays and lesbians and trans...um, transvestites are treated in your country...I called the Guyanese

consulate and they said, ‘We don’t have any problems with gay people in Guyana because there are none.’ ...so anyways, I’m doing as much research as I can, on the web and at the university...but, well... without good country condition information, your story, becomes... all the more important. The most important thing really. (Solomon, 2004: 14)

Barry consciously utters Tara’s identity because he emphasizes gay instead of saying transgender identity. If Tara gets out of the detention cell, Barry lies about her identity. Tara becomes surrounded by the dominant discourse of ideology, and authorization. Even if his goal is to rescue her from detention and solve Tara’s identity problems, he equivocates with the authoritative speech in terms of reflecting the immutability of gender identity between Guyana and the United States. Barry is a representative of inconsistency within the U.S. discourse of sexual identity politics.

Gender is performative that is established through gendered performances, gestures, mimics, and costumes. These expressions can lead to the construction of gender identity. Butler states. “Within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be... 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” (Butler, 1999b: 33). In *Tara’s Crossing*, there is an example, which matches up with the performativity side of transgender identity. The most performative experience of Tara’s girlhood is related to winning the 2003 Miss Guyana Sari Contest in her mother’s wedding sari, Tara tries on her mother’s own finest outfit. In this scene, Jeffrey Solomon designs a scene between Tara and Bibi, her friend who enters the Miss Guyana Sari Contest. Bibi helps Judith (acting Tara) to wrap Sari but unfortunately, the act of wrapping is unsuccessful at first:

Judith: My special sari!

Tara: You give it to Bibi and you tell her, she can wear the winning Sari when she competes in the Ms. Guyana Sari Pageant in three weeks.

(Judith hands the Sari to Bibi.)

Bibi: It’s...It’s beautiful. I can’t take this. No.

Judith: (as Terrance/Tara): Please. It’s my mother’s and I don’t know when or if she is coming back, and you are my best friend and I want you to have it.

(BIBI tries to put the Sari on.)

Bibi: This one folds differently. I’m not sure how to put it on.

(JUDITH goes to Bibi and fumbles awkwardly with the fabric as she tries to put it on her.)

Judith:(to Tara) You didn’t show me.

Tara: Start there at the belly button, you need to tuck the plain end in...no the plain end, tuck it. One complete turn. Wrong way...wrong direction...It's hard to tell it. My hands remember better. Here, let me show you first.

(Tara takes the Sari and puts it on herself. She folds and pleats it expertly, then strikes a pose.)

Tara: Tada! (Solomon, 2004: 45-46)

The performativity is reflected in appearance, particularly dressing. Tara tries to repeat the act of wearing a Sari. The cloth gives her belonging to a transgender identity through feminine clothes and her sense of visibility at the same time. She becomes visible as sari marks as a transgender woman. Her fantasy provides a chance to take control of gender identity performatively. Furthermore, Jeffrey Solomon expresses the importance of performativity. "Performing gender is both the performance and the expression, it symbolizes the most authentic expression of gender. The everyday close of the assigned gender at birth is a sort of costume or drag or something to fit in but the dawning of women's clothing, the performance"⁷ (Solomon, personal communication, May 4, 2022). Later in this scene, Bibi is fascinated by Tara's appearance, and Bibi "gasps as she sees the real Tara for the first time and utters "I can't believe it. You... You are a more beautiful woman than me" (Solomon, 2004: 46). The formation of Tara's gender identity is shown in relation to the effect of dressing as a way to change gender identity. The important reflection of the Sari, which is carried on the body, is that individuals like Tara, create unstable and fluid identities. Performing a body with Sari's image gives a sense of belonging to the transgender identity.

From the perspective of performativity theory, reiteration and repetition are remarkable elements for expressing the transgender self. Gender identity is constructed through how reiterative and repetitive acts are reflected. Butler says: "(it is) not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very norms that enable the repetition itself" (Butler, 1990: 148). Tara's performativity is reiterated again and again as she publicly reiterates her performance of womanhood in every stage. For instance, when the imaginary situation appears between Judith and Tara, Tara reiterates "I am a woman of style...of taste, of substance" or "I am a woman. Inside, I am, I know I

⁷ This answer is part of my question in the interview.

am” (Solomon, 2004: 6). Tara constructs her gender identity through repetitive and reiterative acts. Tara’s gender identity is uniquely constructed and she defines her gender identity in the ongoing creation of the transgender self.

The sex/gender binary system affects political power relations in terms of United States immigration and detention procedures. Asylum law requires proof of gender transformation and demands appropriate gender presentation and sexual orientation. Joseph Landau expresses the number of recent developments in transgender asylum laws.

The asylum law depends on the asylum seeker’s expression of gendered traits, including a person’s hairstyle, clothing, demeanor, use of makeup, and choice of names. In these cases, the court honors such expression as a true and honest depiction of identity and self-determination, extending protection to litigants because the traits they exhibit are integral to their identities. (Landau, 2005: 102)

Transgender asylum protection is based on an asylum’s definition of gender identity. Concerned with presenting the asylum law rights to privacy in their protection, some documents are necessary to prove an individual’s imputed sexual orientation. The concept of imputed sexual orientation is a significant representation of gender in the context of the politics of asylum law services. “Under the “imputed gay identity” theory, individuals who do not identify as gay or lesbian but who are labeled and persecuted as such can still litigate an asylum claim based on sexual orientation” (Landau, 2005: 102). The “imputed sexual orientation” claim in *Tara’s Crossing* remains a crucial feature of transgender asylum law since political arguments about the immutability of gender identity has been achieved through several cases involving male-to-female asylum seekers, and have broadened to cases involving female-to-male legal subjects. When Barry pushes Tara to be a gay, they discuss the law procedures in the small meeting room in detention:

*Barry: Well, I have some very good news. Guyana has a buggery law. Did you know that?
(She hands Tara a piece of paper to read.)
Tara: No. What is that?
Barry: A little gift from the British Empire. The law makes Homosexual behavior punishable with up to life imprisonment. That’s excellent! I mean, for us, now, here, for your case. It’s very good.*

Tara: But what if I...have not behaved as a homosexual?

Barry: Even though you are not homosexual, in Guyana you were perceived to be one, right?

Tara: Yes. They thought I was gay.

Judith: That's imputed sexual orientation, which will be part of our claim.
(Solomon, 2004: 32)

Barry recommends Tara identify herself as a gay man because Guyana's anti-sodomy laws and derogatory procedures are the indicators of the proof of her persecution. Persecution is discussed through the demands of the law and the suitability of the asylum seeker. "An anti-sodomy statue that represents a hold-over of colonial mores in Guyana, Tara's history is implicated in more ways than one, since she has earlier revealed herself to be the descendant of African slaves and indentured workers transported from India by the British in the previous century" (Hsu, 2020: 84). The play presents Tara's incongruent gender identity with the complexity of political procedures and cultural compositions through imputed sexual orientation. Barry satirizes the discovery of a residual state with the prejudiced behavior about homosexual practice and Barry pushes Tara to feel performativity of being gay through the political reiterative acts.

Gendered asylum procedures are related to the transgender performativity of the body. Detention centers and asylum courts want subjects to prove gender transformation in the case of being homosexual for demanding protection from the United States nation. Landau suggests a concept that is called "soft immutability" for transgender asylum seekers in these cases.

These cases evidence a "soft immutability" standard that, while requiring the asylum seeker to prove a "fundamental" transgender identity, allows a more relaxed set of criteria that adjust to the context of the particular asylum seeker's case and circumstances. The conception of identity advanced in these cases eschews a standard biological approach of protecting only innate characteristics like chromosomal makeup, internal sex organs, or "birth sex" (the gender assigned to an individual at birth), extending protection based on characteristics adopted over time-including behaviors, character traits, and forms of dress. (Landau, 2005: 102)

Gender representation and sexual orientation should be necessary for demanding gender identity. Furthermore, when transgender asylum seekers demand this law, they have to arrange two qualifications on their behalf. "First, they can assert that

they qualify under prevailing definitions of “particular social group”; second, they can assert a claim based on an “imputed gay identity” (Landau, 2005: 102). Tara is a member of a social group in Guyana and Barry refers to the homosexual group in Guyana and interrogates whether Tara can be identified with this group. Barry delineates Tara’s experience with gendered traumas:

Barry: Yes. It must tell all the bad, the awful, the terrifying things that happened to you, and everything else, though it is important to you, we leave out. It's a horror movie.

Tara: ...and I am the victim, right?

Barry: RIGHT. Exactly. You're the victim. Those are the experiences we need to focus in on here. Threats. Fear. Violence you may have experienced on account of your perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. And we need details. You can't be vague. You have to be as specific as possible, OK? (Solomon, 2004: 33)

Tara’s repeated acts present her transgender lived traumas and painful memories. Barry reads this story “like a horror movie” and he eliminates Tara’s transgender identity as a necessary quality under the buggery laws. Tara is obliged to internalize gay identity under the imputed gay identity classification. It depicts the category of gender-based violence against transgender asylum seekers within asylum law. Tara is the victim of anti-gay violence of United States laws and imputed gay identity and burger laws. In addition, In my interview, Jeffrey Solomon expresses the demand and the asylum process.

One thing that was quite interesting was the demands of the asylum case on the refugee or the asylum seeker to present himself as a victim. To win asylum, the demand of the asylum process constantly relives individuals, and it shows the most powerless state, victimized state, traumatized state. The replaying of trauma, and the packaging of trauma into the story show the legal requests of the asylum system. There was a tension between the demand and the lawyer. (Solomon, personal communication, May 4, 2022)

The other form of performative matter in *Tara’s Crossing* is the cultural potential of trauma through immigrant detention. Tara is an outsider from her original culture Guyana and she tries to adapt her identity to the host culture of the United States. Butler explains that “a subject deprived of rights of citizenship enters a suspended zone, neither living in the sense that a political animal lives, in community and bound by law, nor dead and, therefore, outside the constituting condition of the rule

of law” (Butler, 2004a: 67). Tara enters a suspended zone because she is deprived of citizenship rights and personal liberty in the United States. When the officer announces some rights, Tara tries to contemplate U.S law procedures.

Officer 2: You do not appear to be admissible or to have the required legal papers authorizing your admission to the United States. This may result in your being denied admission and immediately returned to your home country without a hearing. If a decision is made to refuse your admission into the United States, you may be immediately removed from this country, and if so, barred from reentry for a period of 5 years or longer. (Solomon, 2004: 8)

Tara’s biological body is not suitable for deserving citizenship rights. In Tara’s condition, Tara’s biological body and Tara’s political body can be stuck in the sovereign state. They become integrated under the sovereign state. “The traditional distinction between the sovereign’s political body and the physical body disappears, and the two bodies are drastically contracted into one” (Agamben, 1998: 90). Tara attempts to hold on to some coalitions between the two countries in terms of playing alternative sets of repeated acts and political genealogy of gender identity. Her journey crosses geopolitical boundaries because Tara’s bodily dysphoria is framed by the repressive narrative of the sovereign state.

Secondly, the idea of transgender subjectivity places the production of a desire about changing sexual morphology. Transgender subjects experience gender dysphoria and gender disorientation; therefore, transgender subjects have a demand to alter their bodies through sex reassignment surgery or hormonal treatment. The medicalization of transgender subjects is constructed with the discourse of cures such as hormonal therapy. In *Tara’s Crossing*, Tara requests hormone therapy from officer Ray Donaldson, for she sustains her feminine appearance psychically and psychologically. She utterly asks: “Donaldson, I need my medicine...I don’t even recognize myself any longer. Why they don’t let me see the doctor?” (Solomon, 2004: 10). Ray negatively responds “I gave them the request. Now you just got to wait. And they’re not going to give you hormones. That’s a luxury item” (Solomon, 2004: 10). The administrative system does not have an access to reach hormonal treatment. For the system, medical treatment is a luxury. She is also kept alone in Protective Custody owing to the threat to her safety displayed by other male detainees.

Tara's subjectivity is performative; Tara presents a performative attitude to construct transgender identity and maintain this gender identity in the detention cell. Tara's subjectivity is connected with performative attitudes beyond heterosexual authority. Tara wants to reach a material body and she dreams of an idealized body, the image of a material body holding a material force. As a transformation of the material body, "the subject often speaks of the imaginary body as more real or more sensible" (Prosser, 1999: 44). Tara speaks of the transgender imaginary body as more real and desirable. In act one, Tara uses a butter knife as a mirror to look and pull off whiskers from her chin and upper lip. She needs to hide a butter knife when Officer Ray Donaldson enters the room. The change of lights on the stage indicates the passage of time during the detention cell.

Ray: Food Services said your tray came back without a butter knife. You got to give the knife back, man.

(Tara quickly conceals the butter knife in her undergarments.)

Tara: I don't have it. They must of forget to give it to me in the first place.

Ray: We have to search the room?

Tara: You can do it.

Ray: Come on, chief. Give it up. Code 104 of the Detention Operations Manual prohibits possession or introduction of a gun, firearm, weapon, sharpened instrument, knife, etcetera, bla, bla, bla. (Solomon, 2004: 9)

Tara feels hatred toward the material body and she dreams of an idealized body image through bodily alterations such as cutting whiskers. "This phenomenon illustrates the materiality of the bodily ego rather than the phantasmatic status of the sexed body: the material reality of the imaginary and not, as Butler would have it, the imaginarieness of material reality" (Prosser, 1999: 44). Tara holds the imaginarieness of her material body through the symbol of the knife. The butter knife symbolizes her physical transformation. As we understand from the stage directions, the butter knife symbolizes a penis because Ray holds on to "a latex glove and takes the knife" (Solomon, 2004: 10). It represents a fetish object like a penis and she wants to remove it the material body and replace it with a vagina.

Tara: Do you think it would be possible to get a mirror in my room?

Ray: Not in Protective Custody.

Tara: But why?

Ray: Because you could break it.

Tara: ...I'm not going to kill myself. I'm not. (Solomon, 2004: 9)

The scene shows an imaginary castration of a male-to-female transgender subject through the reflection of the surface of the knife. The knife symbol is a complex element because the knife is both a phallic object and a mirror at the same time. First, Tara removes a phallic object from her body. Then, she constructs a new self through the mirror. The knife functions as a mirror to Tara's fantasized body and observes her body parts through the reflection of the mirror. The mirror is a sort of tool that forms the body through fantasy. Fantasy is not an antonym of reality. According to Butler, "fantasy in this sense is to be understood not as an activity of an already formed subject, but of the staging and dispersion of the subject into a variety of identificatory positions" (Butler, 1993a: 261). Tara's fantasy of being a woman is a formula of identificatory position. Looking at the parts of her body is an act of constructing a transgender body. She fights against how others perceive her transgender subjectivity and how the political authority constructs her body in the detention cell.

The concept of the wrong body presents the construction of transgender subjectivity and transgender embodiments. The image of 'being trapped in the wrong body' provides escapism from the sexed body. The subject's desired embodiment sustains the body as the unelaborated and the unsatisfactory elements. In *Tara's Crossing*, Tara's body is trapped in which gender body and gender identity are mismatched. For Tara, it is hard to construct the desired embodiment. When Barry tries to comprehend Tara's gender identity, he attempts to interrogate her.

Barry: At what age did you become aware that you're gay?

Tara: I am not gay.

Barry: You are not?

Tara: I'm a female featured in a male's body.

Barry: I'm sorry. What?

Tara: I am a female featured in a male's body. (Solomon, 2004: 12)

Tara's definition reveals how he feels about the material body assigned at birth. Her outer skin locks the inner self because she feels trapped under the false outer skin and authentic skin. The first skin presents Tara's innate gender identity; on the other hand, the second skin symbolizes the desired gender identity and authorizes Tara's subjectivity.

The asylum narrative is also second skin because the transgender weaves the body narrative through the asylum seeker experience. The asylum narrative reveals an insight into understanding Tara's subjectivity. "Asylum narratives contain memories of events that are highly mediated by time and distance, to begin with and tend to feature multiple framing devices and styles. These representations of violence and trauma are shaped, after all, by the requirements of the law as much as they are by the idiosyncrasies of their narrators" (Hsu, 2010: 82). The narrative starts with a traumatic gender dysphoria childhood and continues with Tara's inability as a transgender individual to adapt to feminine roles and her different sexual abuses. In the play, Barry defines an asylum narrative, which is "more like...a soap opera...or a melodrama...but the asylum narrative needs to be more like...well, it sounds terrible, but a horror movie" (Solomon, 2004: 33). The asylum narrative is despised by Barry tactically due to its resemblance with soap operas, melodramas, and horror movies. He presents certain opportunities about the law, which "stand to reshape and redefine the bonds between a sovereign power and its subjects" (Hsu, 2010: 86). Tara's asylum narrative functions as hoping for "a desire for her adopted nation-state and its protection" (Hsu, 2010: 87).

Secondly, the asylum narrative can be associated with the desired self-image throughout the play. The asylum narrative enhances Tara to alter her self-image into "the vision of Indo-Caribbean womanhood" on the television screen in her fantasy world. Tara is the writer of the script, she reflects on certain immigrant subjects. The notion of the asylum narrative creates the desirable image of the transgender subject with the image of the citizen as a transgender asylum seeker on the television screen. This reference to Caribbean roots shows her family history under the colonial attacks and loss of Caribbean South Asia lineage.

Tara regards Judith Bright as a role model for her journey for self-discovery because Judith plays Tara's childhood memories and traumas and encounters with her abusers in Guyana by Tara's directions. Initially, Judith acts like a ten-year-old Terrance, who is beaten by his father owing to her effeminacy. Judith reacts unexpectedly "this is not stage fighting!" and Tara's response is based on the change of the script surprisingly, "You are going to tell me how to survive?" (Solomon, 2004: 30). The narrative provides an opportunity to remain as a transgender subject.

“She embraces her narrative authority in this fleeting moment, but we are reminded by Judith’s screams that the power which Tara has reclaimed to tell her version of this story has been gained at another’s expense” (Hsu, 2010: 85). Tara revisits personal traumas through the acting of Judith Bright to relieve her pain with the help of stage directions.

(Father grabs Judith by the hair and throws her down. Judith cowers and screams.)

Tara: And then he beats you mercilessly with a branch. He does it with a limb that he snapped off a tree. A branch is terrible because one blow feels like many because of all the separate stalks, the twigs...the buds...you can feel everyone.

Judith: Let’s not do that part.

Tara: His final blow is with words only.

Father: I wish you had never been born.

Tara: And you cry out –

JUDITH (as Terrance): So Do I! (Solomon, 2004: 30)

In order to redesign gender identity, she tries to escape from the first skin and redesign the second skin, narrative, by re-writing the script of her life. She makes herself readable by regulating her authentic self and making up the story. Tara turns to Judith:

Tara: And this is my story. You have been replaced.

Judith: I don’t get replaced. I won five Emmys, a golden globe and three cable ace awards.

Tara: You can narrate how it happened.

Judith: I don’t do bit parts.

Tara: This is my story. To be told my way. (Solomon, 2004: 47)

Tara is a creator of her past to endure as a transgender subject. The transgender subject is replaced by a white liberal actress to enable empathy for transgender lived experiences and traumas. Narrative can be associated with the responses to the traumas. One of the scholars is Judith Herman, who analyzes the connection between traumas and narratives. Judith Herman supports that the story of the traumatic events emerges with the narratives. “The narrative includes not only the event itself but also the survivor’s response to it and the responses of the important people in her life” (Herman, 1997: 126). Tara’s response as a survivor represents her consciousness which is reshaped through the narrative memory. “The survivor develops idealized expectations from the listener” (Herman, 1997: 137). To retell transgender

experiences from the gaze of a survivor, Judith reformulates traumatic memories to reflect more visible transgender individuals. As a survivor, Tara expects a more intimate and bare fact narrative from Judith Bright.

With the help of narrative or second skin, Tara reveals an affair with a boy from her neighborhood named Daryl, who is one of the attackers. When Tara authorizes her subjectivity with the narration, she foreshadows sexual assault as a painful memory. Tara acts as Daryl and offers Judith to hang out. With the volume of the dancehall music, he tosses Tara down to the ground. Under the spotlight, Barry comes and reads the narration:

Please accept these lyrics into the record as exhibit number one. The song "Log On" by Elephant Man advocates the torture and murder of gay people, and was used by my client's persecutors as a justification for their crimes. "Log on a chi chi man" means literally to step on a queer like a piece of wood. The respondent, Terrance Patel, was attacked by three men in a bar and suffered eight fractured ribs, a punctured lung, and damage to one of the kidneys, all of which are injuries consistent with being stomped on. (Solomon, 2004: 71)

Her second skin presents a narrative and the social construction of her gender identity. This skin gets damaged and feels discomfort because of the harassment. The narration, depicting psychological and physical violence, is a kind of mediator between the harassed second skin and the first skin, false outer skin. Moreover, when Daryl pushes Tara down, the lights get darkened. This theatrical element foreshadows a sexual assault that she is exposed to by Daryl. When the lights get lightened, Judith and Tara try to rescue her from the traumatized side of the narration.

Daryl: God a mi Backative. You know what that mean? God's at my back. Not battyman. Think you can break the natural law? Think you can infect us in the market, walk down the street in front of di children? You should be ashamed. You don't belong in dis country. We goin a CRUSH OUT THEM. Dis ya dance di people dem want. Dis yah new dance a run di place. IT'S JUDGEMENT TIME.

Judith: Tara!!!! Tara, help me! It doesn't happen this way. I have dignity! I am not supposed to die here like a piece of worthless nothing shit.

(They struggle violently. He wraps his hands around her neck and begins to squeeze. She rips off his hat and discovers it is TARA.)

Judith: ...Why are you doing this to me? I didn't do anything. ...Please. It's not my fault.

Tara: I know. Now I know.

Judith: Tell me. How do I survive this?
Tara: If you believe there is a reason... Then fight me. You have to fight for your life now. You are strong enough. Fight me.
(JUDITH struggles violently, wildly. She beats Tara, who collapses.)
Judith: Oh my God. Tara. I'm so sorry. Are you OK? Let me help you.
Tara: Your services will no longer be needed, Ms. Bright. (Solomon, 2004: 71)

The conversation between Tara and Judith in the fantasy world represents a bodily trauma experience. Judith Bright is a representation of Tara's inner self that has to endure vivid and intense physical sensations. The reflection of violence on the stage is proof of Tara's transgender traumatic experiences. Also, Daryl harshly judges and punishes Tara because of infecting her appearance in the street, public spheres, etc. Due to her transgender identity, Tara is not even classified as a third country citizen. Tara, as her transgender identity, does not find recognition and respect.

At the end of the play, Tara provides a hopeful tone for individuals who are subjected to gender inequality. Her monologue is very essential for other transgender asylum seekers.

Tara: ...Your honor, I know it's a not a fairy tale here in the United States. I don't think everyone will just automatically love and accept me but maybe they will just...let me be. And I will grow into someone who could...be something. What I have been through has not been easy. I faced it with strength and courage and if you can't say yes to me today... I suppose I can face whatever comes...even if it's the end. But, I think there might be something about me that is special, you know. Maybe I could give something to this country. I don't know what that is yet... but, I think it would be possible for me to find out. I don't know, but I think you can be yourself in America. See yourself as you are, and no one can tell you how or what you must be...I don't know if that's how it is... that's not for me to decide. But I believe it must be true about this place. I believe it. And that's why I came here. And I want to thank you for this opportunity. (Solomon, 2004: 78)

Tara sees herself as an independent transgender woman and feels comfortable in that country. She purifies her traumas and her experiences to construct a hopeful life for herself. She guides and shapes her identity, needs, and wishes. Solomon comments on the ending of the play as follows⁸:

⁸This is Solomon's answer to my question as "Your play has an open ending, what do you think about the end of the play?"

At the end of the play, Tara's final sort of argument is proof for asylum to the court which intended as an appeal to the public. I knew very little about the immigration system and the asylum system before embarking on this research process. And it occurred to me that most people know very little about the court acts in the name of United States citizens and supposedly democratic society. We know nothing. So, the last message was hopeful. The court has profound power and I guess it was also to get us to consider their power, privilege and in terms of being hopeful, the characters hope that every refugee and asylum seeker has for a country like the US, to live up to its stated values of freedom and providing shelter from persecution. (Solomon, personal communication, May 4, 2022)

Tara as a transgender subject questions social and cultural norms and boundaries like Balmitra Vimal Prasad. From the perspective of the autobiography of Balmitra Vimal Prasad, performing an autobiography of transgender subjectivity aims to challenge the dominant social and cultural conditions. She breaks away from her torture, pain, trauma, and harassment in Guyana. In this sense, Vimal's autobiographical narrative challenges the hegemonic understanding of gender. "Performing personal narrative is also political because it does something; and in doing something in and with the discourse that is neither uniform nor stable, performing may re-inscribe or resist the bodily practices and material conditions in which they are embedded" (Langellier and Peterson, 2006: 164). Performing autobiography is a kind of protesting against the stable, fixed body and resisting the dominant representations of subjects. Vimal expresses "I break down silently. I try to be strong because I want to show others that this play can send a message to give hope to people who are going through this trauma in the same situation"⁹. At this point, Jeffrey Solomon reflects a hopeful tone and sends a message to erase transphobia from people's mind. Meanwhile, autobiographers play a crucial role to construct a transgender identity by recreating their own lived experiences. Hausman recommends, "[t]he official autobiography of the transsexual subject is part of the 'true story of transsexualism'" (Hausman, 1995: 358).

Vimal's official autobiography is part of the true story of transsexualism. When Jeffrey Solomon creates Tara, he is inspired by Vimal's traumatic memories.

⁹ Vimal talks about her traumas on the website <https://www.housesonthemoon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/TarasCrossing-ThinkProgressOrg.pdf>.

Jeffrey Solomon creates the character Tara. In the interview, while explaining Vimal's lived experience, Solomon refers to her as a transgender woman¹⁰.

As beautiful as heroin, which is what really appealed to me about Vimal's story when I spoke with her. It was essential that she'd seen as a certain way in which she saw herself, she needed others to see her, and that it goes beyond the scope and the demands of the asylum case. It's so much, it is so much bigger.
(Solomon, personal communication, May 4, 2022)

To sum up, *Tara's Crossing* not only provides emotions, traumas, and sensibilities of transgender lived experience but also depicts certain political and formal practices and procedures in the United States and the National Security Service. The binary system between sex and gender is criticized through transgender asylum narratives and procedures. The play illustrates an uprising of the humiliated transgender immigrants to show how trauma affects transgender asylum seekers and makes transgender subjects heard collaboratively. Vimal's experience as a transgender asylum seeker is an example of the damage and insult under political and cultural distortion. As the protagonist of the play, Tara, gives hope and stays powerful for others who experience transphobia and homophobia like Balmitra Vimal Prasad. Tara presents the potential to challenge the social discourse on transgender asylum seekers through the real story of Vimal. The play reveals constructing transgender lived experience on the stage, articulating the transgender voice by expressing the transgender performativity and the subjectivity. Tara's experience on the stage and Vimal's experience in real-life give a chance to understand the transgender lived experience and hear the voices of transgender subjects in contemporary world.

¹⁰ He comments on Vimal's lived experience as a transgender woman during the interview.

CONCLUSION

Queer and feminist approaches, in general, have contributed to understanding the transgender identity and experience in the first place. However, these theories are not enough to understand certain dynamics and issues in transgender studies because they try to reply the demands of transgender experiences. Queer and Feminist approaches to trans theory reveal possibilities of difference and openness for multiplicity. Especially (trans)gender performativity and transgender subjectivity, perspectives later integrated extensively in transgender studies, provide to decentralize the essentialist understanding of the binary system.

In the first chapter, after gender and transgender terms are explained briefly, the theory of performativity which contributes to the performance of transgender individuals is presented. From the perspective of Judith Butler's theory, gender performativity is the continuum of subject formation, the production of stylized effects provides constituting and forming a new gender identity. Gender identity, performance, and performativity have been discussed since transgender individuals can deconstruct the heteronormative power and recreate transgender identities in relation to performativity. Sex and gender are not correlated terms because gender is a preference, it is performed through reiterations and repeated behaviors. Next, transgender subjectivity theory that presents the main features of transgender individuals and transgender embodiments is presented. It displays transgender subject positions through the psychic/corporeal interchange of subjectivity. The theory conveys the construction of subjectivity concerning social, medical, and political aspects.

In the second chapter, transgender identity is contextualized with the performativity and the subjectivity of transgender experiences in contemporary American drama. Transgender identity can be constituted through articulating the transgender lived experiences, transgender embodiments, and transgender voices. Transgender experience gives a chance to theorize the real-life stories and hear the voices of transgender individuals through contemporary drama in *Hidden: A Gender*, *I am My Own Wife*, and *Tara's Crossing*.

Mainly, playwrights create a third space for transgender individuals because transgender individuals proliferate, and diversify the content of transgender identity and experiences. Kate Bornstein expresses the significance of third space in the theater.

I think it's up to each transgressively gendered person to create a space for this life as Third. At home, at play, and at -work. My workplace is the theater, and while there is a lot of theater about folks like us, there is very little space for us in person. Like other transgressively gendered folks, I'm managing to get a foot in the door; my door is the Stage Door, that's all. (Bornstein, 1994: 141)

This is how Bornstein defines theater as the third space. Gendered people transgressively construct a space in real life and the theatre gives place to transgender experiences on the stage. In addition to portraying the experiences of transgender individuals, one of the common points in these three plays is that the playwrights somehow take place on the stage as actors. Their roles function as a way of contesting and resisting political and social boundaries. Kate Bornstein acts as Herman, Doug Wright acts as more than thirty characters using transformational acting technique and Jeffrey Solomon acts as Tara's lawyer. Their participation as both writers and actors is fundamental. Doug Wright's contribution reflects the complexity of Charlotte's story in *I am My Own Wife*. "Wright attributes his own appearance to dramaturgical frustration. Overwhelmed by the moral and historical complexity of Charlotte's story, much of which lay well beyond Wright's own knowledge of twentieth-century German culture, he decided to turn the play's focus upon himself" (Schiavi, 2006: 209). Instead of reflecting on complex moral and historical elements, his self-inclusion illustrates the combination of his interview with a real-life person and his interpretation. He explains the role in the play, "I would present myself in the play as a curator of [Charlotte]. The whole piece could be a rumination on the preservation of history" (Doug, 2004: xv-xvi). He is responsible for presenting Charlotte and keeping the details of the real-life story. On the other hand, Jeffrey Solomon acts in *Tara's Crossing* as a representation of the patriarchal authority as a lawyer and he understands how the patriarchy looks and develops a perspective on transgender individuals. Also, Kate Bornstein in *Hidden: A Gender* gives the importance of acting and participating as an actor or actress.

“When we play with our identities, we play with desire. Some identities stimulate desire; others diminish desire” (Bornstein, 1994: 39). Kate Bornstein as a performer energizes her desires. The different experiences in acting can contribute to understanding transgender identity in diverse ways.

Rather than depicting earlier stereotypical characterizations of transgender individuals, these playwrights prefer reflecting unique, complex, and developed characters through which the audience and reader can maintain a better insight into the traumas and hardship in the lives of transgender individuals in heteronormative patriarchy. They present the understanding of gender and sexuality beyond the binary frame and develop a verisimilitude approach to all characters and scripts. With the erasure of stereotyped characters, they constitute transgender characters through revealing transgender lived experiences. Transgender experience is the way of expressing difference through constructing one’s transgender self and revealing possibilities of difference. In these plays, Herman, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, and Tara reflect transgender experiences. Therefore, their experiences are a creative guide for articulating their own voice through auto/biographical narratives. “The autobiography is fundamentally constructed as narrative: a telling, a representation, the life thoroughly contingent on the form” (Prosser, 1998: 110). Auto/biography constructs a narrative with the exact representation. Auto/biographical performance displays the performance of the marginalized individuals’ voice, where the voice of the transgendered self interacts with the voices of others.

With the contribution of the auto/biographical experience, theatre becomes a vehicle for displaying trans(gressive) gender experiences. Three plays “examine the intricate fretwork of transsexuality as subjectivity and autobiography as narrative form” (Prosser, 1998: 106). For instance, Kate Bornstein, Doug Wright, and Jeffrey Solomon draw inspirations from a transgender individual in real life. These playwrights make potential adaptations for their plays. They present essential figures for their characterization of transgender identities such as Christine Jorgensen’s, Lothar Berfelde’s, and Balmitra Vimal Prasad’s auto/biographies. Auto/biography gives inspiration by revealing real-life body representation and voice through subjectivity. Bornstein expresses the role of auto/biography that create effects on her theatrical characterization. She utters “Christine Jorgensen and Renee Richards wrote

chapters of my story in their autobiographies” (Bornstein, 1994: 13). Herman and Herculine characters appear in *Hidden: A Gender* because Christine and Renee are the sources of inspiration. On the other hand, Solomon and Wright had interviews with real storytellers and they adapt their auto/biographical narratives to the theatre. Solomon’s inspiration is based on Vimal’s traumas and Balmitra Vimal is a source of Tara’s characterization in *Tara’s Crossing*. Similarly, Dough was influenced by Lothar’s striking life story in *I am My Own Wife*. Thus, auto/biography is a kind of source that centralize the real transgendered self by revealing the subjectivity and adapting to the fictional character. Performing transgender experience is an ongoing practice and it contributes to the construction of the identity on the theatrical stage.

Within the context of performativity, characters might hold the potential to construct transgender identity. Reiteration is a central concern in the constitution of identity. Herman, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, and Tara reiterate their experiences in every particular stage. The reiteration of their experiences might be the way of constructing the gendered self. In *Hidden: A Gender*, Herman/Kate and Herculine/Abel repeat their statements and dance together because the transition has occurred on the stage with the rhythmic music. They repeat together “is it my movement? Is it my emotion? Is it my ambition?” and Herman becomes one and Herculine becomes another (Bornstein, 1994: 209). Like Herman and Herculine, when Charlotte performs their gender, it becomes a way to show her gender identity. For instance, her transgender identity matches her preference for clothes. She wears “black housedress with peasant stitching, a kerchief on her head, and an elegant strand of pearls” (Wright, 2004: 9). Charlotte’s reiteration about clothes can be visualized as more feminine outfits. Like Charlotte, Tara’s reiteration about appearance might be a way of constructing a gendered self. Her preference is Sari outfit because she is crowned in Guyana Sari Contest. She behaves as if she was accustomed to wearing and performing. “She folds and pleats it expertly” and the repetition can lead to Tara’s ability as an expert (Solomon, 2004: 46). Charlotte’s aunt’s cloth and Tara’s mother’s outfit can serve as a reiteration of the performances and a sense of visibility. They repeat to express their transgenderism in the public sphere. Commonly, Tara and Charlotte prefer putting women role models in the center of their life. Whereas the heteronormative system shows a dominant attitude

toward transgender characters, these women role models can sympathize with and understand transgender individuals' performativity and subjectivity.

In Butler's terminology, gender is understood as the reiterations of the forms through performativity. Butler explores that an individual can alter her/ his gender identity if an individual can perform an alternative set of repeated acts. Butler informs that "if the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts" (Butler, 1988: 520). The possibility of gender transformation sustains with the repetition of performative acts. Herman's, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf's, and Tara's performances are performative acts because these acts reveal through reiterations of patriarchal roles. Herman reiterates his performance to get sex reassignment surgery. Charlotte von Mahlsdorf reiterates her performances by reflecting as a furniture collector and an ethnographer. Tara reiterates her performance by getting rid of the detention cell. These three characters' stylized acts are continually produced and reproduced throughout plays. Similarly, Tara and Charlotte reiterate their performances against the heteronormative system. For instance, Tara's demonstration of effeminacy and Charlotte's belongingness to prepubescent effeminate identity come out with the violence of their father. Their transgender identities can occur through some feminine traits but their father, as a demonstration of the heteronormative system, shows domestic violence and death threats to their identities.

Subjectivity provides the appearance of the transgender identity in these plays. The construction of transgender identity is related to the medical authority while they form their subject's position. The authoritative voice of the clinicians in each play can be visible on the stage. Their attitude affects transgender subjectivity. Transgender people need thoughtful clinicians instead of insulting and mocking their situations. Some of the clinicians are like "cultural critics"; therefore, transgender people can be humiliated by the medical gaze. Even if they have a great deal of difficulty finding clinicians, they are exposed to the mockery of clinicians. In *Hidden: A Gender* and *I am My Own Wife*, clinicians criticize and ridicule transgender protagonists. In *Hidden: A Gender*, Doctor Razor is a clinician and *I am My Own Wife*, Dieter Jorgensen is a clinician too. Doctor Razor teases Herman and

Charlotte. In Herman's case, Dr. Razor teases the lack of money and he adds that "you're becoming a woman, and that's a de-motion if I ever heard of one! So tell me, is your boyfriend going to help you out with the money for the surgery?" (Bornstein, 1994: 204). Clinicians' attitudes are not a representation of proper consultation. On the other hand, Charlotte's clinician, Dieter Jorgensen, humiliates transgender identity because Dieter sees transgender identity as an autism illness. Charlotte resists the clinician's classification and medical authority in the play. The clinician tries to "settle the matter with science" but he fails to understand some medical parameters" (Wright, 2004: 75). Dieter Jorgensen is a representation of medical ignorance, who is unaware of the possibility of transgender identity. Charlotte and Herman are sorts of medical orphans who need consultation for sustaining their lives. From the medical gaze, clinicians sometimes provoke homophobic discourse and prevent the construction of their subjectivity.

Herman, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, and Tara show transgender lived experiences in contemporary American drama by indicating the construction of their experience on stage. As the collaborative voice of transgender protagonists, they struggle against the social discourse on transgender identity in the heteronormative system through their own voices. Transgender protagonists articulate their difference through their own voices because they reflect the colorful diversity of their lived experiences and strengthen the transgender identities and transgender embodiments. Herman, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, and Tara are illustrations of transgender experiences that depend on a performance-based approach. Transgender experiences can be constituted through expressing and articulating the transgender self. It allows theorizing for their lived experiences and hearing the voices of transgender people.

To sum up, demonstrating transgender lived experiences on the theatrical stage is considered a way of explaining and articulating the transgender self. The transgender experience illustrates openness for multiplicity in theatrical space and engages with the audiences and readers showing different representations on the stage. Theatre presents a schema enabling the awareness of gender and sexuality as different spheres. Plays present the transgender self through the body and voice of the subject; therefore, it maintains transgender visibility and voice in the theatre genre. Therefore, performing transgender experiences and reflecting the transgender

real-life experiences constitutes the transgender subject as a unique subject in theatre genre. As evident in these three plays, contemporary American drama is an arena to represent transgender identity and experience along with the discussions of performativity and subjectivity and welcome audience into the inner worlds of transgender characters under the pressure of heteronormative society.



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