

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Gender Fluid

Gender fluidity is a phenomenon in which a person has an unstable and fluid gender identity. This means that they do not fully identify as male or female, but rather may experience a combination of male, female, or other gender variations that can change over time or in different contexts. The word "gender" began to be used as a broader concept in modern society in the mid-20th century. Simone de Beauvoir, in her book "Le deuxième sexe," defined women as the "second gender" in a male-dominated society. Later, John Money separated "gender" and "sex," which later developed into a more complex one in the influence of psychological studies (Toar, 2023). This makes it difficult to fit them into existing sexual orientation categories: heterosexual or homosexual. The phenomenon of gender fluidity is increasingly visible in modern society, especially with the development of technology and social media. Androgynous and unisex fashion styles have increased in popularity, indicating that society is starting to let go of traditional norms about the shape and color of clothing that is categorized as belonging to men or women (Belinda, 2022).

Theories about gender fluidity often involve anthropological and psychosociological analysis. For example, the concept of non-binary gender has caused a massive exploration movement in contemporary society. People who identify as gender fluid tend not to undergo medical intervention to change their genitals, because they believe that gender is not static and can change. The social implications of gender fluidity are quite significant. Transgender individuals, for example, often experience pressure due to discrimination and discipline from a society that still prioritizes binary gender norms. They use gender attributes to free themselves from the constraints of gender rules, although this freedom is still limited to the internal realm and is hampered by social structures that construct masculine-feminine gender. In synthesis, gender fluidity is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, involving identity, expression, and interaction with society. This literature review provides a complete picture of the evolution of the concept, social implications, and variability of gender identity in the modern context.

2.2 Transgender

Transgender is a term used to describe individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. Transgender encompasses a spectrum of gender identities beyond the binary concept of male and female. Transgender people may identify as male, female, both, or even have no specific gender identity (Understanding transgender people, gender identity and gender expression, 2024). Gender identity theory focuses on how a person understands and experiences their identity as male, female, or other non-binary categories. Judith Butler, a feminist philosopher, argues in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) that gender is the result of performativity, namely the repetition of actions and behaviors that shape a person's gender identity.

Studies show that transgender individuals are more susceptible to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) compared to the general population. This is largely due to the discrimination, stigma, and social marginalization they experience. A meta-analysis conducted by Price-Feeney et al. (2020) found that access to supportive medical care, such as hormone therapy and gender affirmation surgery, has a positive impact on the mental well-being of transgender individuals. Transgender people often face discrimination in various aspects of life, including employment, education, and health care. According to A4TE (2024) refusal to hire trans people, invasion of privacy, harassment, and even physical and sexual violence in the workplace are very common, and trans people of color are even more likely to face these adverse effects. Nearly half of all transgender people have experienced discrimination in hiring or firing decisions and over 40% have experienced harassment in the workplace because they are transgender.

These factors are closely related to social conditions that have not accepted or understood transgender identities. Many countries have begun to introduce laws that protect the rights of transgender people. In some countries, such as Canada and most Western European countries, transgender people can change their name and gender on official documents without requiring medical or surgical intervention. However, in other countries, transgender rights are still very limited, and transgender people often face barriers in obtaining legal recognition that corresponds to their gender identity. The media plays a significant role in shaping society's views of transgender people.

Accurate and empathetic representations of transgender people can help increase public understanding and acceptance. However, much criticism has been directed at media that often depicts transgender people in stereotypical or sensationalized ways. Some films and TV shows that feature transgender characters in more positive and realistic ways, such as the series "Pose" and the film "The Danish Girl," have helped broaden the public's understanding of the transgender community (Where we are on TV: Transgender representation in media. , 2021)

2.3 Representation

Transgender representation in media, art, and culture refers to the way transgender individuals are portrayed or presented to the wider public. This representation is important because the media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of transgender identities. Accurate and inclusive representation can help reduce stigma, increase understanding, and support equality, while negative or inaccurate representation can reinforce stereotypes and discrimination. Stuart Hall, a cultural theorist, explains that representation is the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged through language, images, and symbols in society. In the context of transgender, representation serves to convey meaning about transgender identity and experiences. This representation not only influences how society views them, but also how transgender individuals see themselves and understand their place in society. For decades, transgender representation in the media has tended to be negative or sensational (Radja & Sunjaya, 2024)

In the past, transgender characters were often portrayed as the butt of jokes, villains, or marginalized. For example, classic films like Psycho (1960) and The Silence of the Lambs (1991) reinforced negative images of transgender people by portraying transgender characters as mentally ill or criminals. A study conducted by GLAAD showed that the media often portrayed transgender people in a misleading or detrimental way, which negatively impacted public perception. In the last decade, transgender representation in the media has evolved to be more positive and inclusive (Understanding transgender people, gender identity and gender expression, 2024).

Research shows that positive representation of transgender people in media can influence changes in public attitudes. One study found that exposure to realistic and empathetic transgender characters in media can reduce prejudice and increase positive attitudes toward transgender people. Strong and positive representation can also serve as a source of strength and inspiration for transgender people, helping them see themselves in a more inclusive social narrative. Despite progress, challenges remain in transgender representation. One major issue is the limited space for transgender people behind the scenes in the media industry. Most film and television productions are still dominated by non-transgender people, which can affect the accuracy of representation. Additionally, transgender characters in media are often limited to storylines that focus on their medical transition or trauma, without showing the complexity and depth of their lives outside of that. Popular films and television series often influence the wider public's perception. Initially, transgender characters were rarely featured in mainstream media, and when they did, they were often only as extras or even objects of ridicule. However, films such as *The Danish Girl* (2015), which depicts the true story of transgender painter Lili Elbe, helped introduce transgender stories to a wider audience. However, the film has also drawn criticism for casting cisgender actors in transgender roles, which has been called a form of "erasure" or erasure of transgender roles in the film industry (Lipińska & Stock, 2023). Social media provides a platform for transgender individuals to speak directly to audiences and shape their own narratives. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok allow transgender people to create and share their own content, without the filter or scrutiny of traditional media. Transgender influencers such as Gigi Gorgeous and Nikita Dragun, for example, have used these platforms to discuss transgender life, their transitions, and advocate for transgender rights, helping to create a supportive community online. Transgender representation in media has undergone significant transformation in the past few decades. While challenges remain, more inclusive and positive representation has helped to increase public understanding and strengthen the transgender community. It is important to continue to encourage the presence and involvement of transgender people both on and off screen to ensure that their stories and experiences are told in an authentic and insightful way.

2.4 Critics Through Films

The existence of film today has transformed into a more critical medium. More cinematic works are trying to challenge reality and convey sharp messages about the lives of various groups in society. Films not only function as a means of entertainment, but also as a mirror that allows us to reflect on and question various aspects of life that are often overlooked. One of the advantages of cinema is its ability as an audiovisual medium, which allows the audience to see, hear, and feel various perspectives on various issues and situations that exist in the world today.

Film, as a depiction of human reality, means that film shapes and re-presents the existing reality using codes, conventions, and ideologies of human culture. Balász, Bazin, and Kracauer in Hayward (2018) explain that film can be connected to social activities, namely when the film clearly depicts the life of society and its interactions with individuals, but besides that, the film also reveals the conditions and conditions in society. Issues of sexuality and gender are central points in many recent cinematic works. This is not surprising considering that although there has been progress in gender equality and recognition of sexual diversity, related issues are still a major concern in our society. In some cases, these films become a mirror that depicts the bitter reality of injustice, discrimination, and violence that still plagues sexual and gender minorities.

“Nimona” challenges traditional views of gender by presenting characters who are not bound by binary norms. With a main character who is able to change shape and identity, the film shows that gender can be fluid and diverse, supporting the understanding that identity does not always have to conform to social expectations. The film explores the stigma faced by individuals with non-binary and transgender identities. Nimona’s character is often treated with incomprehension and prejudice by those around her, reflecting the real-life experiences of many individuals who face discrimination based on their gender identity. It invites viewers to reflect on the importance of acceptance and empathy. By featuring complex and diverse characters, “Nimona” serves as a critique of the often simplistic and stereotypical representations in media. The film demonstrates the importance of inclusive and accurate narratives, encouraging filmmakers and audiences to appreciate and understand diverse identities. Through an entertaining yet provocative story, “Nimona” raises social awareness

about gender issues. By presenting these themes in an engaging context, the film invites viewers to not only enjoy the story, but also reflect on the realities faced by individuals with diverse gender identities.

2.5 Queer Theory

Queer theory is a critical theory that examines and critiques societal definitions of gender and sexuality, with the goal of exposing the social and power structures at play in our everyday lives. Specifically, queer theory can serve as a lens for examining subjects outside of traditional gender and sexuality binaries that assume heterosexuality and cisgenderness are the “norm.” (Imagining queer methods, 2019). The word “queer” is believed to have been used in the early 1500s to describe something that was peculiar or not normal. If something out of the ordinary happened, you could say that you were experiencing something “rather queer”. Over time, “queer” developed as a pejorative term to describe someone who was “homosexual”, particularly in the late 1800s and early 1900s in the US.

But by the 1980s, at the height of the AIDS crisis, members of the LGBT organization Queer Nation took it upon themselves to reclaim the word as a positive label rather than a term to be ashamed of. Today, the word queer is more commonly used as an umbrella term for anything that is not heterosexual. For queer theorists, the word “queer” is not just an identity but rather a critique of the mere concept of creating and maintaining our identities. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the verb “queering” means “to consider or interpret something from a perspective that rejects traditional categories of gender and sexuality”. As such, you’ll find books and journals with titles like “Queering the City”, “Queering History”, and “Queering English”. (Villareal, n.d.)

In *Nimona*, this theory helps us see how the main character breaks away from usual ideas about gender. She can change her body into different forms, both human and non-human, which shows how gender isn’t fixed. Her appearance doesn’t stick to one set idea of male or female. Instead, it keeps changing, which represents how gender can be fluid and not always clear-cut. Using this idea, we can see that gender isn’t something we’re born with or that’s fixed. It’s something we act out, negotiate,

and change—something that matches what Judith Butler said about how gender is performed.

2.6 Binary Opposition Theory

Binary opposition by Claude Lévi-Strauss is a way of thinking that uses pairs of words or ideas that are opposite in meaning. It is not just about opposites being completely different, but about how they work together to help us understand language and thought. The meaning of one idea often comes from how it relates to its opposite. For instance, the idea of "good" makes sense because it is set against "evil.". Usually, one term in the pair is more powerful or important than the other, and this contrast helps us form ideas and make sense of the world. (Rezhepovich, 2023)

This theory helps us understand how *Nimona* challenges and breaks down traditional ideas about who we are. The movie shows how it questions strict divisions like male/female, human/monster, and following rules vs. rebelling. These contrasts not only create conflict in the story but also show how society often treats gender and identity in black-and-white ways. *Nimona*, who can change her shape and doesn't fit neatly into any one label, disrupts this kind of thinking. Her ability to change makes the idea of a fixed gender feel less certain, suggesting that gender is more like a range than just two choices. By combining Binary Opposition Theory with a look at how transgender people use symbols, the movie shows how *Nimona* changes how we think about identity and supports the idea that being nonconforming is valid.

2.7 Previous Research

Table 2.1 Previous Research

Name and Year of Publish	Title	Similarity	Difference	Contribution
Musyorafah, Muhammad Hasyim, Andi Faisal (2023)	Transgender Identity Representation in Anime Film Back Street Girls: Gakudolls	This research focuses on the themes of gender identity and transgender, as well as how the characters in each work face challenges related to their identities.	This research highlights the more static journeys of characters in determining their identities. While the research to be conducted emphasizes the fluidity of gender identity and how characters can transition between different forms and identities.	This research can help see how the concept of transgender is depicted by other animated works.
Moh Mahrush Ali (2021)	Transgender in Film “Salah Bodi”	This research explores how transgender identities are represented in films.	This research uses narrative analysis where the analysis is carried out based on the nuances of the film and the dialogue. Meanwhile, the research that will be conducted uses semiotic analysis derived from the character's physical abilities (shapeshifting).	This research can help see how other ways can be used in analyzing films that have transgender representation.