

THE SUBJECTIVITY OF THE TRANSEXUAL BODY IN CINEMATOGRAPHIC WORKS

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Abstract

*Transsexuals are individuals who feel out of place in their own bodies, facing constant conflicts between identity and biology and still face barriers and social prejudices. The subjectivity approach present in transsexual bodies assumes relevance in the contemporary scenario to foster discussions of gender, prejudice and social inclusion, through the problem of dominance of the body. This article aims to identify the subjectivity present in the transsexual body presented in the cinematographic works *Transamérica* and *The Danish Girl*.*

Keyword: TRANSGENDER, BODY, CINEMATOGRAPHIC WORKS

1. INTRODUCTION

The second half of the 20th century is marked by significant changes in society, mainly in the conception of man, who assumes the role of the sovereign subject of his life, endowed with his own wishes and individual issues. At this time, the standards that in the past provided solid references for locating individuals are in doubt and new personal identities are emerging that need to be supported and integrated into society.

In this scenario, gender studies emerge as a result of the libertarian struggles started in the 1960s, with feminist movements that aim at the recognition of women in society and equal rights between the sexes. In Brazil, the field of gender study began in the 1970s and 1980s, also around discussions of issues of the female condition in society.

The movement of transgender individuals, as well as feminists, results from an important social evolution in the search for equal rights present in contemporary society. Body modifications reveal to be a central point for countless individuals declared in the transgender category, since they look for natural attributions for a given gender with the objective of combining physical body and its identity.

Cinema takes on the role of enabling a favorable scenario to foster discussions regarding gender issues. This article aims to identify, in cinematographic works, the subjectivity of the transgender body and, in this perspective, the films *Transamérica* and *The Danish Girl* were chosen, which directly address the theme proposed in the study in which the main characters are transsexuals and experience the experiences of women individual and social barriers in relation to the body itself, in gender identity and decide to perform sex resignation surgery.

2 METHODOLOGY

To explain the phenomenon suggested in this project and achieve the proposed objectives, a qualitative and bibliographic research will be carried out. Qualitative research understands that people share experiences and give them different meanings, in order to study these meanings Chizzotti (2013) highlights that the term qualitative implies a dense sharing with people, facts and places that constitute research objects, to extract from this interaction visible and latent meanings that are only noticeable with sensitive attention. After this training, the author interprets and translates in a text, zealously written, with

scientific insight and competence, the patent or hidden meanings of his research object. According to Gil (2002), bibliographic research is based on ready-made material, with scientific books and articles as main sources. The bibliographic research is done from the survey of theoretical references already analyzed, and published by written and electronic means, such as books, scientific articles, web site pages. For Fonseca (2002) any scientific work begins with a bibliographic search, which allows the researcher to know what has already been studied on the subject.

3 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

3.1 Body in contemporary times

The construction of human identity happens mediated by the use of the body, from the movement of walking to the primary forms of social interaction are grounded by the bodily senses. Throughout history, man has gone through the constant search to change and dominate the three elements to which human flesh is subjected: aging, disease and death.

The body is always immersed in a web of powers that dictate prohibitions and obligations, constraints that determine its gestures and attitudes and that delimit and invest its exercise and practices, mechanisms of building the intelligible body in a political field of utility-docility. This is "discipline", a system of subjection that creates a 'knowledge' about the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a control of its forces that is nothing more than the ability to overcome them: this knowledge and this control constitutes what could be called the political technology of the body (FOUCAULT, 1987).

According to Birman (2014) the body is the most eminent anthropological record in which the malaise of the present is stated, capable of generating constant concerns and dissatisfaction. The body assumes a position of supremacy in the contemporary world because it is the only good of the citizen, since, according to him, all the others have disappeared or been relativized. Thus, aspects related to health and aesthetics, in order to improve quality of life and longevity, are prioritized.

For Breton (2012) the significant body is an efficient and living cultural fiction that can be understood in the social network of meanings, even when there are ruptures in physical relations with the actor's world in the face of pain, illness and unusual behaviors.

The body thought in front of the social mirror tries to understand contemporary phenomena that influence human behavior in relation to bodily aspects. (BRETON, 2012).

It is always imagined that something must be done so that the body performance can improve, as this is always below the desired level. We always feel at fault, failing to do everything we should, considering the multiple possibilities offered for body care. Anyway, we are always guilty, albeit slightly, and in a frank position of debt in relation to this. (BIRMAN, 2014, p.69).

The individual decision to act on the body can be characterized as a freedom shaped by countless influences, mainly the sociological burdens, the ambivalence of time, the social condition and the social actor's own history. The generation that dominates the body lives the incessant search to remodel physical

aspects and faces constant frustrations when it does not reach the ideal standards of beauty. (COUTO; GOELLNER, 2012, p. 15).

Birman (2014) points to a style of being of modern individuals, characterizing the acceleration of the subject, hyperactivity assumes a constant, in which individuals act on impulse, without thinking.

Couto and Goellner (2012) argue that control of one's own body over appearance is a means of reducing uncertainty by seeking symbolic limits as closely as possible. Modern life surrounds man with complex social conflicts at work and in the family environment, and the issue of worshipping the body enables the feeling of control and dominance.

The fact that he is the master of his own body comes up against the irreducibility of the inheritance and history of parents. The individual refuses to see his body as a root of identity to which he belongs and resort to plastic surgery to reformat his body, the most common ones include breast prostheses and liposuction. (COUTO; GOELLNER, 2012).

For Breton (2012, p. 92) “The body is the interface between the social and the individual, between nature and culture, between the physiological and the symbolic; therefore, the sociological or anthropological approach requires particular prudence and the need to accurately discern the object's boundary”.

Foucault (1987, p. 117-119) points out that during the classical era, the body is discovered as an object and a target of power that can be manipulated and trained to obtain better results and, at this moment, the human body enters a machinery that scans it, dismantles and recomposes it. Discipline organizes, transforms and improves the body, as well as extending bodily forces, it also forms docile and submissive bodies.

The institution of the discipline requires some rules that establish the presence of the fence, that is, the space must be heterogeneous in relation to others and closed in itself, the rasterization of individuals who need to occupy their specific place in the space, the organization of rules specific to the institution and establishing the position of the body in the queue, being classified in the geographical space it occupies. (FOUCAULT, 1987)

Bio-power devices seek to obtain a certain body docility, installed in human organisms to train them in order to feed the gears of factory production and the ranks of national armies. Docile bodies come to serve certain economic and political interests. The configuration of the modern capitalist economic policy has clear interests that are easily identified, but the anonymity of the personalities involved is preserved. (SIBILIA, 2015). Also according to the same author:

This formatting of modern bodies was complex, too, because it had a double physiognomy: the process must combine a series of stimuli and repressions at the same time, in a difficult balance that was always in danger of being challenged. On the other hand, bodily forces were increased, developed and stimulated, to be used in economic terms of utility. (SIBILIA, 2015, p 33).

The strategies adopted, while aiming at the development of human capacities through the application of a set of training and qualifications, also needed to decrease the energies of these bodies in order to keep them obedient to the system of repression. The main objective of capitalism was to convert

the bodies and times of individuals into productive force, inspired by the model of industrial machines. (SIBILIA, 2015).

The vision of man as a machine allows for relative perfection to the body and is stimulated by the constant offer of tele-computing devices and services, from the ubiquitous cell phones to portable computers with internet access. The use of virtual technologies enhances and multiplies human possibilities, as it breaks the spatial barrier and cancels geographical distances without the need for physical displacement. (SIBILIA, 2015; BRETON, 2013).

In a critical analysis in relation to technological development and impacts on bodies, Breton (2013) highlights that body resources have never been so in disuse as they are today, mobility and physical resistance are little explored in routine human activities that are increasingly developed by the machines.

Cyberculture frees the individual from the identity injunction, exempts him from being accountable, suspends his ontological identification with the body. The individual plays with his virtual identities, without problems of conscience, and even with joy. The body is no longer the irreducible place of the feeling of identity, it is one of them, and undoubtedly the most uncomfortable due to the limits it always brings to memory at the last moment, where the Internet user believed he had gotten rid of it. (COUTO; GOELLNER, 2012, p 27)

Breton (2013) states that anatomy is no longer a destination and at any time man can change his physique using the current model as a reference. The body design industry is developing significantly and, currently, when visiting plastic surgeons' offices, it is possible to choose among the options those most suited to the patient.

3.2 Subjectivity of transsexual individuals

Gender studies represent the power structure that is established in relationships that are regulated and reproduced according to the requirements of standards that meet certain social interests. Butler (2003) cites the legal formation of language and politics that the subjects represent are the effects of a representational political version that produces subjects with gender traits determined in accordance with a differential axis of domination, or presumably produces them male.

Gender identity or expression includes how a person identifies himself. The human being can identify with his birth sex (male or female, male or female), with the opposite gender to his biological or present characteristics of both types.

In the definition of gender, the classification points out that the cisgender is the individual who identifies with the biological sex with which he was born and the transgender is a person who was born with a certain biological sex, and in some way does not identify with his body.

The transsexual is included in the transgender category and can be a man or woman who identifies with the opposite gender. Many transsexuals feel as if they were born in the wrong body. To adapt to the gender with which they identify, these people undergo hormonal treatments to achieve the desired appearance, modify the voice and, with psychiatric authorization, perform sexual reassignment surgery and other surgical interventions that are necessary.

The transsexual is an individual who has the feeling of belonging to sex contrary to their genetic condition, that is, who does not identify with their biological genitals and socio-cultural attributions (Peres & Toledo, 2011). In the definitions established by Harry Benjamin (1966) it also includes the question of the desire to perform sex reassignment surgery as an inherent factor for all transsexuals.

Transsexuality can be male or female, the male transsexual is anatomically a man, but he feels like a woman since childhood and the female transsexual is a woman who feels intimately like a man, also since childhood. In both cases, it is as if the person belongs psychologically to one sex, with the image equivalent to that of the opposite sex.

Regarding the physical body, Breton (2013) states that transsexualism is configured in a technological artifact, built through surgical and hormonal intervention based on the individual's will to restructure his body on other aspects of gender. The transsexual is an almost caricature symbol of the feeling that the body is a form to be transformed. (BRETON, 2013).

Transsexuals are people who experience psychological discomfort with their antagonistic sex, obsessively wishing to have their bodies readjusted to the opposite sex they believe they have. For them, the sex change operation is an obstinacy, and at no time behaves according to their biological sex.

The authentic transsexual does not recognize himself as homosexual, having an aversion for his genitalia, both from the point of view of his anatomical conformation and its functionality, distinguishing himself from homosexuals, in which the genitalia plays an important role.

Highton points out that the transsexual represents emblematically a subject who presents an eloquent and defined contrast between the physical element, that is, the external sexual characteristics, and those of a psychic nature. This leads to an anxious search for a correspondence between physical appearance and behavior, habits, gestures, customs, gestures and attitudes in general, which are those of sex that they really feel and deeply experience in their daily lives. This tendency, aiming at their own sexual identity, leads transsexuals to undergo genital surgery, although it is irritating and unbearable, to "replace" them with those that match their psychological state and their ways of life.

Transsexuality is not a sexual orientation, but a question of gender identity.

The old identities, which have stabilized the social world for so long, are in decline, giving rise to new identities and fragmenting the modern individual, hitherto seen as a unified subject. The so-called "identity crisis" is seen as a broader process of change, which is displacing the central structures and processes of modern societies and shaking the frames of reference that gave individuals a stable anchorage in the social world. (HALL, 2006, p.7).

Since the identity changes according to the way the subject is challenged or represented, identification is not automatic, but can be gained or lost. It has become politicized. This process is sometimes described as constituting a change from an identity (class) policy to a difference policy (HALL, 2006). According to Hall (2006), we can understand that identity is a representation of who we are, and it is changeable by the way we show it.

The game of social changes raises issues that reaffirm the lack of a master identity that can be classified exclusively by social interests in relation to the classes and the range of issues that need to be

observed from the feminist, black and national liberation and identification has become politicized (HALL, 2006).

The individual subject and its identity that liberate from traditional and stable structures for the birth of the sovereign individual that has its singularities, distinctive and unique. (HALL, 2006).

Subjectivity as ways of being and being in the world. The human being stands out for its elastic contours that change from different cultural traditions. Subjectivity is built on the collective framework and has forms that are steeped in an intersubjective culture. Personal experience can be strongly influenced by others and the world. Culture directly influences our way of being (SIBILIA, 2016)

The author (Sibilia, 2016) reports that subjectivity can be studied in three broad dimensions which are: singular dimension, which includes the individual trajectory of being, the universal dimension, which encompasses all the characteristics of the human species and the particular or specific dimension which aims to detect elements common to some subjects, but not necessarily inherent to all human beings.

“Subjectivity is conceived as what is constituted and is transformed in the relationship it has with its own truth. There is no theory of the subject independent of the relationship with the truth ”. (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 13)

Subjectivity is an expression of our relationship with the world, through history, the most immediate way of building this relationship is expressed through the body formed by the organic aspects and the individual's historicity. The body involves the physical aspects and the entire relationship of the subject to the world.

Subjectivity permeates the different forms of consciousness of the subject, the identity formed by the psychic experiences, the moral, the political and intellectual conscience. From the development of different areas of consciousness, man becomes a subject that is characterized by the awareness of thoughts and responsible for their actions. (GHIRALDELLI JUNIOR, 2000).

According to González-Rey (2003), the notion of subjectivity is a complex and pluridetermined system, affected by the very course of society and the people who make it up, within the continuous movement of social networks that characterize social development. In this movement, knowledge is produced about the psychic, systemic, dialogic and dialectic processes that recognize the human being as an individual who, for the author, has the capacity to overcome the immediate, directing himself to the realization of his own projects. We emphasize, in this definition of subjectivity, the presence of a notion of subjectivity that supposes the ability to mediate and project itself in the future through an ideal, that is, a creative being, master of his destiny and with the possibility of inventing himself .

Subjectivity is a complex and pluridetermined system, affected by the very course of society and the people who constitute it within the continuous movement of the complex networks of relationships that characterize social development (GONZÁLEZ-REY, 2003, p. IX).

Butler (2003) highlights that to build a solidarity of identity, a division is introduced in the subject through the distinction between sex and gender. Originally created to question the formulation that biology is destiny, the distinction between sex and gender meets the thesis that, although sex seems intractable in biological terms, culturally constructed gender: consequently, it is not even the causal result of sex , nor as apparently fixed as sex. Thus, the subject's unity is already potentially challenged by the distinction that opens space to gender as a multiple interpretation of sex.

If gender is the cultural meanings assumed by the sexed body, it cannot be said that it stems from a sex in this or that way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex / gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexualized bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for a moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of "men" applies exclusively to male bodies, or that the term "women" interprets only female bodies. Furthermore, even if the sexes seem not problematically binary in their morphology and constitution (to which it will be questioned), there is no reason to suppose that the genders must also remain in number two. The hypothesis of a binary gender system implicitly encloses the belief in a mimetic relationship between gender and sex, in which gender reflects or is restricted by sex. When the constructed status of gender is theorized to be radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a fluctuating device, with the consequence that men and men can, with equal ease, mean both a female and a male body, and a woman and a female. both a male and a female body. (BUTLER, 2003 p.24 and 25)

3.3 Cinematographic works - Transamérica and The Danish Girl

The American film *Transamérica* is a drama released in 2005, under the direction of Duncan Tucker and starring Felicity Huffman, who plays the character Bree, a transsexual woman who faces the journey of gender transition with the realization of the reassignment surgery. sex. The plot of the story revolves around the conflicts and paths followed by Bree to achieve his dream.

The feature film presents situations of dualism and self-knowledge, focusing on the complexity of accepting a transsexual in today's society, based on their internal conflicts and situations of family and society rejection. The film approaches Bree as an individual, seeing herself in a context in which not everyone accepts her, and how she decides to show herself to the world, the symbolic construction that triggers being a woman, through the intonation of voice, clothes, way of sitting and use of the bathroom.

A week before surgery, Bree obtains the necessary authorizations to follow her route, but discovers that she has a son, Toby, a 17-year-old boy, previously unknown. Bree's psychologist forbids her to undergo surgery without resolving the matter. Then, Bree travels to New York to find the boy, who is under arrest and pays bail to release him.

Upon meeting her son Bree does not claim to be her father, but a church missionary. Initially Bree shows disgust about Toby's way of life. He lives in a tiny, filthy and messy apartment. During their trip, the relationship changes and begins to be affectionate. Until the moment Toby sees that Bree has male genitals. Toby is silent and then they give a ride to a hippie who assault them. Taking each other's car and favorite objects.

After the assault, they arrive at Bree's parents' home, where he is only recognized by Stanley (birth name). We come across a traditional and moralistic family that does not allow Stanley to have a more friendly relationship with her body. After a fight between Bree and Toby, Toby leaves the house.

After Toby's disappearance, the film goes straight to Bree's surgery, which is visited by the therapist. On this visit, Bree cries a lot and reports the pain in the physical body, the psychological conflicts triggered from the moment she meets her son, the love that touched her and the difficulty of being away from him. Bree is touched by the experience of motherly love.

The film ends with Toby's visit to Bree, but no longer in the dimension of a teenager and rebel, but of a son, and at this moment Bree feels complete and receptive to her son.

In *Transamerica*, Bree's position as Tody's mother or father was built primarily, by the unexpected news of having a child and in the face of getting to know him better, the difficulties he faced throughout his life with his mother and stepfather and affirming the relevance of their reception. The fact that the sexual is not restricted by the superficiality of the performances, because nobody is what he seems to be, and in that the characters of *Transamerica* demonstrate in a spectacular way. Bree builds the subjectivity of being a woman by exposing her clothes, she assembles and protects herself in her clothing, giving her characteristics that build her as a woman within her social niche.

The film *Transamérica* addresses several situations that are commonplace in the life of a transsexual, the family prejudice faced by Bree, who goes so far as to tell Tody that she has no family, at the same time, in desperation she returns to seek her parents again, always with the intention of be accepted and understood in its uniqueness.

The issue of sex change, made possible by surgery, the long process of medical follow-ups for approval, the financial cost of the procedure, the intense invasion of the body, the pain, the expectation that at the time of leaving Bree surgery will be complete and yet , conflicts accompany it.

3.4 The Danish girl

The film *The Danish Girl* stars Eddie Redmayne (who plays the character Einar Wegener and his transformation to Lili Elber) and Alicia Vikander (Gerda Gottlieb) and directed by Tom Hopper. It is a film adaptation of the book of the same name, *The Danish Girl* tells the story of Lili and her discovery, acceptance and transition as a transsexual woman. Einar Wegener, the girl's christening identity, was a notorious Danish painter who made a name for himself in Europe during the 1910s and was married to the beautiful and also artist Gerda Gottlieb, his lifelong partner.

In the film, Einar's first identification as a woman appears when his wife, needing to finish a painting, asked her husband to put on the model's socks and sneakers, who would not appear on the day in question. At this moment, feminine instincts emerge in Einar that, due to the repression he faced in the past, he left internally asleep. This moment is crucial for Einar to perceive himself as someone else, and then begins to dress as a woman and adopt the name of Lili for Gerba is also a transforming instant, because when painting Lili, he finds the inspiration and the right element that transform his performance as a painter, giving her prominence and professional recognition.

The plot presents the plot of the two characters, Gerba and Lili, the personal comforts faced by both in facing Einar's transsexuality. For Einar, the difficult question of looking at the male body and the comfortable feeling experienced when wearing women's clothing and being recognized as a woman, even desired by the opposite sex, as the case started at the party of artists in which for the first time appears in society like Lili and ends up kissing a guy she knows. They continue to meet at various times throughout the film.

Gerba's character is represented as a strong and daring woman for the time. She wears a dress that shows her ankles and took the initiative to invite the future husband to go out and to give the couple the first kiss. She comes to be defined as shameless by Einar, who has a special charm for his wife's

personality. At the beginning the film shows a couple with well-tuned intimate desires and Gerba's desire to be a mother. In the course of the plot, Gerba faces intense internal conflict at the moment when she notes that Lili's transformation is something more than a joke to pose as muse in her paintings. After realizing that Einar is not happy and feels out of place in his own body, Gerba is the biggest supporter to resolve the issue.

At first they resort to treating disorders, but both realize that Lili has no mental insanity. In a second moment, Gerba goes after Einar's childhood friend in which a kiss took place to seek explanation. Gerba encourages Lili to see a doctor for transformation and accompanies Lili on the first appointment. During the visit to the doctor, the two affirm that Lili is a woman in a male body. Gerba supports Lili in sex reassignment surgery, but feels the conflicts of letting the loved one assume her new identity, in which she finds herself excluded.

Having decided on a sex change, Lili is preparing to perform the first sex reassignment surgery and has Gerba's unconditional support and undergoing a series of surgeries that would make her, in her words, she defines herself as a “ woman completely ”. Lili cannot resist the complications of surgery. At the end of the film, Gerba appears, visiting the place that inspired the paintings and the wind blows strong, taking Lili's scarf and Gerba says “let it fly”.

The Danish Girl narrates to life not only an emblematic figure, but in a way, the still harsh reality of thousands of people who go through countless problems every day because they are simply who they are. She is Danish, but also Brazilian and global and the film, makes us reflect a little on this harsh reality and reflect on the welcome that society needs to have to include and guarantee them integrated and whole as they choose to be.

CONCLUSION

The study allowed for reflections related to changes in paradigms on gender issues and the relevance of society to welcome transgender groups allowing access to rights and the dignity of choice. For the construction of a community life more free from disturbances and tensions, individuals need to have sufficient satisfaction and in order to have a more satisfactory individual existence, the social structure must be organized in a way that relieves tensions, disturbances and conflicts.

The way of being of contemporary subjects is transformed from the movements that took place in the 60s that challenged the form of family constitution, political power and division of tasks of men and women in society, giving rise to forms of subjectivity. The transsexual movement reaffirms a new meaning of being to transform its identity, through body construction, it does not mean just the change of sex, but a change in the individual's way of being.

The subjectivity perceived in both characters clarifies what transsexuals Bree and Lili face daily, the conflicts expressed by both when facing the body in the mirror. Dysphoria in relation to the physical and psychological leads to the decision to undergo reassignment surgery, conflicts, before, during and after facing such an invasive moment in the physical body, the psychological satisfaction of reaching the desired forms.

Transsexual individuals feel incomplete in their own bodies. Some studies show that between 40 and 50% of people who are identified as transgender face drug addiction, depression and repression at some point in their lives. Identity problems are triggered by social labels that constantly refer to patterns of fitting in and reclining in their identity and exposing themselves to being recognized and accepted as a social subject in their identity.

The current society registers countless victories for transsexuals, mainly in relation to the recognition of rights, universities start to recognize the social names of their students, the public health system guarantees sex change surgery to those who want to do it. But addressing the issue at the beginning of the last century was even more difficult and, in addition to mentioning these issues in society in general, little was known about the subject, including the aforementioned sexual readjustment surgery. However, the Danish Lili Elbe became a big name because she was one of the first transsexuals on record, inspiring others from her courage.

Among some proposals that the Brazilian Government could expand its activities include sexual and gender education to teach young people and the general population the respect for human rights and citizenship of transgender individuals, approval of affirmative laws that guarantee full citizenship of the population, equating homophobia and transphobia to the crime of racism, development of public policies in the area of health, human rights, education, that provide citizen equality to the community and demand that the Police and Justice investigate and punish homo / transphobic crimes with all severity.

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