

The Gender Reflection:

An investigation into what contemporary, mainstream Western cinema highlights
about social attitudes towards people with non-traditional gender.

Submitted as the thesis component of the Auckland University of Technology
Master of Communications degree.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this thesis submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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And for Lisbeth, who is ready and waiting.

Abstract

This thesis investigates how characters with non-traditional gender¹ are depicted in contemporary Western cinema on the basis that this depiction illustrates society's unease with individuals who do not easily confirm to the standard male-female gender binary. Through focusing on four Western feature films (each of which features a non-traditionally gendered character in a leading role), the thesis will argue that each film reinforces traditional social mobilisations of gender.

In order to understand how gender is socially mobilised each film will be closely read with a specific focus on camera, lighting, editing, dialogue, sound, costume and script function. The data will be analysed to assess how characters with non-traditional gender are portrayed on screen and how other characters and social structures respond to them.

Ultimately this research will show that within these films the dominant social reaction to people who do not present as either traditionally male or female are feared, misunderstood and rejected from mainstream society.

¹ The term non-traditional gender refers to the gender of an individual who does not identify as either male or female in a traditional sense (that is, emotionally, psychologically, mentally *and* physically).

Contents Page

Attestation of authorship

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Contents Page 1

Chapter 1	Introduction	
1.1	Gender and controversy in contemporary society	6
1.2	Focusing on cinema	8
1.3	Categorising films with non-traditionally gendered characters	9
1.4	My positionality as researcher	11
1.5	Structure of the thesis	12
Chapter 2	Literature Review	
2.1	Introduction to the Literature	15
2.2	A Matter of Terminology	15
2.2.1	Terminology - <i>Sex and Sexuality</i>	16
2.2.2	Terminology - <i>Gender and Gender Roles</i>	17
2.2.3	Terminology - <i>Sexist and Heterosexist</i>	18
2.2.4	Terminology - <i>Femininity and Masculinity</i>	19
2.2.5	Terminology - <i>Butch, Camp and Sexual Inversion</i>	20
2.2.6	Terminology - <i>Drag Queen, Drag King,</i> <i>Cross Dresser and Transvestite</i>	21
2.2.7	Terminology – <i>Transsexual</i>	23
2.2.8	Terminology – <i>Transgender</i>	24

2.2.9	Terminology - <i>Intersexual, Hermaphrodite and Androgyne</i>	26
2.2.10	Terminology - <i>Queer, Postgender and Genderless</i>	29
2.3	Basic Gender Development and Existence	31
2.4	An Introduction to Queer Theory	34
2.4.1	Development of Queer Theory	34
2.4.2	Academic Positioning of Queer Theory	35
2.4.3	Queer Theory and Cinema	36
2.4.4	Transgender Theory In Its Own Space	37
2.5	On to a Cinematic Analysis	39
2.5.1	The Basics of Representation	40
2.5.2	Gender Roles and Stereotypes in Representation	43
2.6	An Introduction to Foucault	45
2.6.1	Foucault and Sexuality	46
2.6.2	Foucault, Normality and Abnormality	48
2.6.3	Foucault and Power	49
2.6.4	Foucault and Power Relations	51
2.6.5	Foucault and Knowledge	52
2.7	An Introduction to Judith Butler	53
2.7.1	Butler and Essential Concepts of Gender	54
2.7.2	Butler and The Performance of Gender	55
2.7.3	Butler and Specifics of Gender Performance	56
2.7.4	Butler, Gender Performance and Sexuality	59
2.7.5	Critique of Butler - Acknowledging the Unacknowledged	60
2.8	The Lived Experience	61
2.9	A Conclusion on the Literature	64
Chapter 3	Research Procedures	
3.1	Methodology	
3.1.1	Introduction	67
3.1.2	Line of Enquiry	67

3.1.3 Intellectual Reasoning	68
3.2 Method	
3.2.1 Introduction	68
3.2.2 Benefits and varieties of case study	69
3.2.3 Application to this thesis	70
3.3 Research Approach	
3.3.1 Introduction	71
3.3.2 Formalist theory versus other filmic analysis	72
3.3.3 Why analyse?	74
3.4 Conclusion	76
Chapter 4 Analysis	
4.1 Introduction	77
4.2 <i>Boys Don't Cry</i>	77
4.2a <i>Boys Don't Cry</i> in Context	78
4.2b Camera, Lighting and Editing	86
4.2c Dialogue and Sound	91
4.2d Costume, Hair and Makeup	93
4.2e Script Function	94
4.3 <i>TransAmerica</i>	
4.3a <i>TransAmerica</i> in Context	96
4.3b Camera, Lighting and Editing	104
4.3c Dialogue and Sound	108
4.3d Costume, Hair and Makeup	110
4.3e Script Function	111
4.4 <i>XXY</i>	
4.4a <i>XXY</i> in Context	113
4.4b Camera, Lighting and Editing	118
4.4c Dialogue and Sound	121
4.4d Costume, Hair and Makeup	123

4.4e Script Function	124
4.5 <i>Orlando</i>	
4.5a <i>Orlando</i> in Context	126
4.5b Camera, Lighting and Editing	134
4.5c Dialogue and Sound	137
4.5d Costume, Hair and Makeup	140
4.5e Script Function	142
4.6 Conclusion	144
Chapter 5 Discussion	
5.1 Introduction	145
5.2 <i>Boys Don't Cry</i>	145
5.3 <i>TransAmerica</i>	148
5.4 <i>XXY</i>	152
5.5 <i>Orlando</i>	156
5.6 Conclusion	160
Chapter 6 Conclusion	
6.1 Introduction	161
6.2 Previous literature	162
6.3 Conduct of research	163
6.4 Process of analysis	164
6.5 Summary of key findings	
6.5.1 Introduction	165
6.5.2a Power and knowledge – Situating the findings	165
6.5.2b Power and knowledge –Findings	166
6.5.3a Power through isolation - Situating the findings	166
6.5.3b Power through isolation – Findings	167

6.5.4a The authority of Eurocentrism - Situating the findings	168
6.5.4b The authority of Eurocentrism – Findings	169
6.5.5a The solitary soul - Situating the findings	170
6.5.5b The solitary soul – Findings	171
6.5.6a The construction of identity through reflection – Situating the findings	173
6.5.6b The construction of identity through reflection – Findings	173
6.5.7a Trauma and liberation - Situating the findings	175
6.5.7b Trauma and liberation – Findings	176
6.6 Directions for further research	177
6.7 Conclusion	178
Reference List	180
Appendix Synopsis' and Plot Breakdowns	195

Chapter One: Introduction

Caster Semenya, forced to take gender test, is a woman ... and a man

(Yaniv, 2009)

1.1 Gender and controversy in contemporary society

This quotation encapsulates the issues at the centre of this thesis: it is unusual and newsworthy to be both or neither male and female, in large part because the duality represented by those states is seen to be natural and all-encompassing. When people act in ways (or appear to be) contesting that duality, reaction is usually swift, decisive and in favour of the status quo. In Semenya's case these issues played out on a global level and her story provides a clear insight into contemporary social and cultural constructions of gender.

Semenya, a middle distance runner, first became 'suspect' after the African Junior Championships in 2009. Her win in the 800m at the World Championships in Berlin in August of that year prompted the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) to request verification of her female physical state despite her passing Athletics South Africa (ASA) testing (Mahalo.com, 2010). Speculation centred on Semenya's supposed intersexual state (referred to in medical circles as hermaphroditism), whether she continued to live with both male and female organs and whether or not this altered her performance by allowing her an unfair advantage (Dugas and Tucker, 2009).

In most of the public debate about Semenya and her authenticity as a female athlete, sex and gender were typically collapsed together. As Jonathan Dugas and Ross Tucker (2009) observe, this is not unusual in contemporary society, as in most cases “[the terms] are used interchangeably”. A more nuanced understanding would be that one’s gender is a social construct while one’s sex is biologically determined (ibid). When Semenya underwent sex determination tests (to settle the issue of her eligibility to compete as a female athlete), these were usually interpreted as pertaining to her gender (which is a more psychological, genealogical and physiological construct) (ibid).

Preliminary anatomical testing found that Semenya does not possess a womb or ovaries, has internal testes and exhibits higher than normal testosterone levels for a woman, yet she also has some female hormones and external female genitalia (Yaniv, 2009). In other words the medical examination seemed to suggest Semenya is both male and female, and while this outcome is biologically secure it can only partially assess the totality of Caster Semenya’s gender. Unsurprisingly, she spoke out about the testing procedures as an “unwanted and invasive scrutiny of the most intimate and private details of my being” (Semenya, 2010).

Semenya remained vindicated from any suggestion of wrong doing or cheating and retained her 800m World Championship gold medal and official ranking as 800m female world champion (ibid). The issue and the coverage it provoked, however, breathed new life into arguments about the concepts of gender and identity. One reading suggests Semenya’s story shows that contemporary society does not welcome

(or even tolerate) a person with non-traditional gender orientation let alone revere them for their achievements (be they sporting or otherwise). My thesis seeks to explore this same issue through the medium of cinema, and focuses on particular films where non-traditionally gendered characters are central within the narrative. I aim to develop a critical analysis of these films to better understand the social and cultural positioning of people who, like Caster Semenya, are not obviously and easily accommodated in the male/female duality.

1.2 Focusing on cinema

In taking this approach I am working from the proposition that cinema reflects the ideologies of contemporary society.¹ Suzanna Danuta Walters ventures that of the various mediums film is the more progressive art form, exploring topical social phenomena (2003). In choosing to focus on film, I am mindful of Mark Cousins' argument that, despite its supposed artistic greatness cinema is fundamentally accessible to audiences of any class and background and, as such, cinema projects the culture of those who make it and consume it (Cousins, 2004).

Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White (2009) support this theory when they note how cinema's growth in the 20th Century caught the attention of psychologists and sociologists, who considered cinema to have a significant impact on "social relationships and the way people perceive the world" (p. 7). They argue that film retains this presence and impact in contemporary society. For instance: film information becomes common knowledge; film remains a pleasurable pastime for all

¹ For the purposes of this academic thesis a more in depth and intellectually oriented discussion of the relationship between film and society can be found in chapter two – the literature review. This section of chapter one is a light introduction to the idea (that film is an influential medium in contemporary society) rather than an attempt at any deep analysis of the theory.

social classes; and film is also a form of fine art at institutions such as universities and museums. Here the “undeniable prominence of film and media in the values and ideas that permeate our social and cultural lives” means it is vital to “think seriously” about this art form as “one of the most influential forces of our lives” (ibid, p. 9). Therefore, to study a film, to read it thoroughly and understand it, can allow the analyst to develop a deeper understanding of social and cultural life. At the very least studying a film expands understanding from the formalist structure of a cinematic text to alert viewers “to wider sociocultural patterns and questions” (ibid).

1.3 Categorising films with non-traditionally gendered characters

I have chosen to focus on Western films and I have limited the sample to the last two complete decades (that is the 1990s and the 2000s).² I therefore anticipate that these four films are representative of conventional cinema at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st Centuries.

I have purposefully chosen four films to highlight current views concerning gender. The key criterion of the purposive sample is that the films focus on issues relating to gender (in terms of character, plot or both). Not surprisingly there are few Western films which deal with the realities of gender progressive stories. However, since the early 1990s popular culture appears to have been influenced in part by second wave feminism and an increasing focus on science-fiction (Barker, 2008; Watkins, Rueda, & Rodriguez, 1994). These two factors mean that it is now more common to see examples of female characters crossing traditional gender divides on-screen (in action genre roles). Prior to 1990 this rarely occurred, with Sigourney Weaver arguably

² Though the East also has a large film industry (particularly India), most contemporary Western filmgoers lived experience is dominated by Western productions. The restriction on dates is due to a limited word and time capacity for this project.

carving the way forward with her renowned performance as Ellen Ripley in *Aliens* (1986). Ripley, Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) from *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991) and Rebecca Buck (Lori Petty) from *Tank Girl* (1995) are obvious examples of the tough female action heroine and provide a basis for my project in that their characters exhibited personality traits and physical appearances at odds with notions of traditional femininity. Other texts I considered using included *The Crying Game* (1992) and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) which both focus on male-to-female transsexualism and transvestism. The success of *The Crying Game* and *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* signalled a new era in screen media – a time when previously taboo stories received funding, got produced, distributed widely and seen by a variety of audiences.³

I eventually developed a corpus of films to analyse which provided a variety of perspectives on contemporary gender issues. My starting point was the ‘female (or male) character whose existence is possibly biologically non-female (or non-male)’. Here, my focus was on transvestism and transgenderism (*Boys Don’t Cry* [1999]) and transsexualism (*TransAmerica* [2005]). Both films explore a character’s movement from one gender polarity to the other. The following step was the ‘character who is both male and female or neither male or female’. There are very few films that meet this criterion. However, *Orlando* (1992) and *XXY* (2007)⁴ depict characters whose

³ I chose not to include these texts in this thesis for various reasons; I felt that the role of Ripley in *Aliens* had been written about academically a number of times already. I also felt that Ripley, along with Rebecca Buck (also known as Tank Girl) (from *Tank Girl*) and Sarah Connor (from *Terminator 2*), though interesting characters, do not challenge the gender binary overtly enough for the purposes of this research. Finally, I perceive *The Crying Game* and *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* to be films which are more focused on sexuality than gender, and would therefore be more appropriately placed in an academic discussion about non-heterosexual characters as opposed to non-traditionally gendered characters.

⁴ *XXY* is the least mainstream of my chosen films but fits within my purposive sampling criterion (more information on this can be found in chapter three).

gender issues are centred around their intersexual, gender ambiguous or gender changeable states.

1.4 My positionality as researcher

I am a young, white woman living in Western society whose main identity with respect to this thesis is a post-graduate university student. It is therefore appropriate for me to foreground that I am a well-educated individual working in the field of academia. My middle class upbringing in a Western but relatively isolated country (New Zealand) has encouraged me to be interested in cultural phenomena including the performance of gender and the physical manipulation of personal identity. Obviously I am unable to extract myself entirely from this project and conduct analysis with absolute objectivity (although this isn't necessarily achievable or desirable in any research). My self-awareness of my own position however contributes to the depth of my study and the validity of the research from someone in my standpoint.

I am especially interested in depictions of the human body, with particular focus on classical art with its devotion to 'beauty' and on the contemporary mass media with its obsession with 'bodily flaws'. The potential to manipulate the physique through diet, exercise, surgery, cosmetics and clothing is particularly interesting to me because of my neo-feminist views.⁵ However, as a previous sufferer of anorexia

⁵ Neo-feminist views typically pertain to a philosophy that recognises and applauds the individual's power to control their own physical existence through the manipulation of aesthetic appearance (Phoca & Wright, 1999; Wolf, 1994; Lumby, 1997). For example, ways to empower oneself through the altering of physical presence include using exercise, diet, clothing, make up, hairstyle, posture and body adornments such as piercings and tattoos. Estelle Freedman is another prominent neo-feminist writer who also considers that the neo-feminist school of thought stands for the celebration of sexuality (not the shamed hiding of it), acceptance of all body shapes and sizes, pay parity for people regardless of gender, sexual orientation or race, but essentially liberation and the ability for modern women to choose their destiny (Freedman, 2003).

nervosa, I am very aware of the potential difficulties that this ‘power to control’ can lead to. My academic interest in the human body, for example, stemmed from my experience of losing traditionally feminine curves as a result of extremely low body weight. When I was ill with anorexia my thinner body, devoid of rounded hips or bust, felt streamlined and androgynous. This prompted me to yearn for a state where I could still be a woman but maintain the leaner, more athletic body of a young man. Of course, this is almost impossible, and trying to sustain such a low body weight was detrimental to my health.

It is important to note, before I begin the thesis proper, that I believe it is possible to present oneself to the world as a person who is gender undefinable or gender changeable by choice of aesthetic and physical presence. I now consider that a gender-ambiguous persona need not come as a result of drastic changes to body composition: the possibility exists to look and act in a way that is not traditionally gendered. The aim of my thesis is to look to filmic texts to investigate how non-traditionally gendered characters fare. Specifically, I am interested in whether their position (when they are between or outside of the traditional gender polarities) remains aberrant or if a more accepting and ideologically flexible society is depicted in the films.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Chapter two is the literature review. I begin the chapter with a breakdown of the specific terminology used in literature about gender. I also take this opportunity to investigate how perceptions of gender have changed over time – from the Greek classical era through to modern day and subsequently I am able to formulate my own

definition of these terms. I follow this with a short discussion of queer theory and a more in-depth discussion of the relationship between film and society (the process of representation and myth). The heart of the literature review focuses on gender philosophy by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler – two prolific writers whose contributions to academic gender discussion form the basis of my approach to gender. The final section of this chapter includes several excerpts from individuals with lived experience as a non-traditionally gendered individual.

Chapter three is my discussion of research procedures and method. Initially I specify what academic reasoning is used and what type of data will be produced through analysis (theory of method). The second section of chapter three discusses the relevance of the case study method and details why case studies are suitable for this research. This is followed by a consideration of the appropriate research approach (close reading) and the other possible methods of film analysis.

Chapter four first includes a section which contextualises each film (by covering background information, casting and financial details, fan and critical reaction). This is followed by a close analysis of each of the four chosen films. My purpose here is to become intimately acquainted with the central character in each film and consider the ways in which their role within the film and their relationships with other characters are influenced by their gender status. The main character's social standing will be revealed through a close reading of several film production elements including camera, lighting, editing, soundscape, appearance and function within the script.

Chapter five reports on the discussion that arises from the close analysis section. It identifies reoccurring findings to acknowledge key themes throughout the films individually and the films as a group. The discussion chapter aims to identify how specific filmmaking techniques contribute to the representation of non-traditionally gendered characters in recent Western film.

An understanding of the representation of these characters leads into the final chapter which seeks to conclude on the central character's social and cultural status. Chapter six identifies how society deals with people who do not conform to the male/female binary. Ultimately the conclusion will address the ideologies of contemporary society with regards to non-traditional gender.

Following on from chapter six is a reference list and an appendix. The appendix contains a brief synopsis of each film and scene-by-scene plot breakdown.⁶ For each scene I have issued a scene name and number. This appendix is designed to assist the reader when moving through the analysis and discussion sections.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

⁶ The plot breakdowns are not derived from the official film scripts but through my interpretation of where each scene begins and ends.

2.1 Introduction to the literature

Any research project needs to be grounded in relevant literature to provide a basis for enquiry. To perform a thorough analysis of the chosen text (or texts) a clear understanding is required of various terminologies, predominant theories and personal or professional viewpoints. To this end I have utilised academic literature covering gender, sexuality, screen representation, power and the relationship between gender and society. Covering these areas informs my understanding of gender as a social phenomenon thereby assisting my analysis and reinforcing the relevance (and significance) of this research in the wider gender discussion.

2.2 A matter of terminology

One of the issues with writing about gender and sexuality in an academic context is the lack of consistency surrounding various terminology. What may be considered an acceptable term by one author may actually be offensive to another (for example Lynn Edward Harris (1997) openly refers to herself as an hermaphrodite while fellow writer Cheryl Chase (1998) much prefers the term intersexual when referring to her personal gender state). Similarly, a single word may have different meanings depending on the usage, the author, the reader and the era in which it was written. I therefore find it necessary to include at the beginning of this chapter a section addressing the ambiguity of particular terminology. Through the synthesis of previous literature I will generate a new (negotiated) understanding of the term. This will enable me to use the term with accuracy, consistency and sensitivity in this research.⁷

⁷ In wanting to be both accurate and consistent I have also attempted to follow ten guidelines issued by the Intersex Initiative [IPDX] (an American national advocacy organisation for intersex individuals). These guidelines suggest how people who are not intersex can respectfully write about those who are, in an academic or formal context (Koyama, 2011).

2.2.1 Terminology - *Sex and Sexuality*

John Phillips (2006) considers that sex is the anatomical aspect of a person, similarly to Anthea Callen (1998) who defines male and female as the “biological distinctions of gender” (p. 401). Judy Root Aulette and Judith Wittner (2011) consider sex is biologically based although they also acknowledge that a combination of genetics and hormones are involved (by being part of the individual’s congenital and chemical make-up) as well as environment (as upbringing and exposure have an impact on the individual’s personality). They also believe that this “biological substratum” is the foundation level for gender, “the social arrangements built on sex differences” (p. 28), creating a complex relationship between the two.

In relation to this Root Aulette and Wittner consider sexuality to be the “lustful desire and emotional involvement” involving interactions between physical bodies (p. 29). However, they acknowledge that sexual preferences aren’t permanently fixed and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They also believe that sexuality may come in many forms including homosexual (relations between two people of the same biological sex), heterosexual (relations between two people of different biological sex), bisexual (a person who has relations with people of the same and different biological sex) or asexual (a person who does not have sexual relations). As with Root Aulette and Wittner, Annamarie Jagose (1997) considers sexuality to be evolving, flexible and varied and believes that some sexualities are more social roles than human conditions. Therefore according to these writers the term ‘sexuality’ is a combination of the words ‘sexual’ and ‘identity’.

2.2.2 Terminology - *Gender and Gender Roles*

In contrast to Root Aulette and Wittner, Gretchen Fincke and Roger Northway (1997) place gender at the core of personal identity (rather than sex), followed outwards by sexuality, personality, behaviour, cognition and affect. However, Phillips (2006) and Root Aulette and Wittner (2011) do agree with each other that gender is a social construct, a social status and a personal identity. Likewise Judith Butler (1990), Philip Devine and Celia Wolf-Devine (2003) consider gender to be both a social and psychological construct. Devine, Wolf-Devine and Myra Macdonald (1995) consider gender to be the manifestation of masculinity or femininity (two words which I define later in the chapter).

Devine and Wolf-Devine describe gender roles as the social expectations associated with gender. Other authors sometimes use this term interchangeably with the term sex roles, but when making a distinction between sex and gender (as with this research) I think it important to avoid using them interchangeably. Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna (2006) think gender roles are assigned through the automatic process they call gender attribution, which occurs every time an individual meets another individual. Transgender individuals reveal the process because they make other people question what gender they are, thereby revealing the usual spontaneity of that decision. Kessler and McKenna suggest that people look to a set of cues when attributing gender. The cues include genitalia, dress, accessories, nonverbal communication and paralinguistic behaviours. The observation of the genital

appearance in particular then influences the perception of other physical attributes including hair length and placement, muscle mass and bone structure.⁸

2.2.3 Terminology - *Sexist and Heterosexist*

Sexism is commonly understood to mean the favouring of either males over females or females over males in social situations. The group which is not favoured is disadvantaged. Anne Bolin (1997) also acknowledges sexism in medical fields specialising in gender reassignment surgery. For a long time transsexualism was exclusively male to female (though she acknowledges that this was largely due to medical technology developments) which disadvantaged females with gender dysphoria.

Similarly to this, heterosexist refers to social situations in which people who are not heterosexual are disadvantaged. Root Aulette and Wittner (2011) state that examples of heterosexism are rife in modern society and often enforced through language. Heterosexual privilege includes the right to show one's partner affection in public without negative consequences, the right to legally marry and never having one's normalcy or sanity questioned based on sexual orientation.⁹

2.2.4 Terminology - *Femininity and Masculinity*

⁸ Further on in this chapter (following the terminology section) is a small section which briefly considers the social development of gender identity and the structure of a gender hierarchy. I did not feel it appropriate to include this discussion within a basic breakdown of the term "gender" and "gender roles".

⁹ The pervasiveness of the heterosexist structure is also alluded to in Juan Kent Fitzsimons' 2007 thesis which focuses on how society either embraces or ignores people based on their physical body. He explains that architecture can deploy a discriminatory habit of excluding individuals who do not fit into the hegemonic norms of traditional society. He describes these people, who may be deaf, blind, paralysed, pregnant, overweight or limited by age, as 'improper bodies'. This is relevant to my research because it shows how deeply rooted hegemonic notions of the physical body can be (Orbach, 2009). I would argue (and subsequent chapters will show) that the discrimination and social disapproval Fitzsimons points to in architecture is deployed through social and communicative means in the films I investigate (although the bodies are gender transgressive not 'disabled').

Macdonald (1995) and Callen (1998) define femininity and masculinity as a sheer concept where certain attributes and human characteristics are associated with being one side of the gender binary – either female or male. The characteristics manifest through speech patterns and vernacular, movement and behaviour.

Some theorists assert that masculinity and femininity are more than merely the outer element of the biological and anatomical body. Milton Diamond (1997) believes that masculinity and femininity are only defined and measured by a comparison between oneself and the images which exist in the media as well as the ideologies of educational and religious institutions.

Judith Halberstam (1998) claims that heroic masculinity (heralded as magnificent) can actually be “produced across both male and female bodies” (p. 2) in the same way that tomboyism is “an extended childhood period of female masculinity” (p.5). Halberstam claims tomboyism is generally accepted so long as the child is prepubescent, which reaffirms her other claim that society and academia ignores postpubescent female heroic masculinity.

Traditional definitions of femininity can also be contested. Bolin (1997) claims that femininity began with the fragility of 1800s-1900s corsets, emphasized by the thinness of 1960s models (such as Twiggy), the toned Amazonian body of the 1980s supermodel (such as Cindy Crawford) and the underdeveloped look of the 1990s waif (such as Kate Moss). In addition to this Bolin credits top sports women with presenting a whole new femininity where the ideal is muscular and challenges the

notion that muscle is the biological domain of men and therefore traditional masculinity.

2.2.5 Terminology - *Butch, Camp and Sexual Inversion*

Complementing her work on female masculinity Halberstam covers butch at length. Butch is a term used to describe a woman with physical and/or behavioural characteristics that are not typically associated with being female. She insists that degrees of 'butchness' do not necessarily correlate with the likelihood of or desire for sex change. For example, women who exhibit what Halberstam calls 'stone butch' tendencies may have no symptoms of gender dysphoria. Whereas someone who is 'soft butch' or 'androgynous' may suffer from strong gender dysphoria and be desperate for change, Halberstam claims butch women can be heterosexual just as feminine women can be gay (1998).

In contrast to butch is camp, which is a term used in contemporary society to describe men with physical and/or behavioural characteristics that are not typically associated with being male. Susan Sontag's essay *Notes on Camp* (1966/2001) was instrumental in establishing the modern understanding of camp. She names artifice, frivolity, middle-class pretentiousness and excess as the key elements which contribute to camp's deliberate theatricality. Esther Newton (2006) defines camp more broadly as a quality in things, people and activities. This quality has a particular flavour which is constantly evolving, guided by the homosexual community and is incongruous, theatrical and humorous.

William Dragoin (1997) is the first to use the term “sexual inversion” in his writing and defines this as “gynemimesis” or “sissy boy syndrome”. Sexual inversion is not the same thing as homosexuality or transsexualism. Sexually inverse behaviour is seen in boys who are effeminate and may cross-dress, avoid physical social interaction with other boys and display gender identity that is not consistent with their genitals. The term sexual inversion is not heavily or favourably used by many gender writers so I have chosen to avoid using it in this thesis.

2.2.6 Terminology - *Drag Queen, Drag King, Cross Dresser and Transvestite*

John Phillips’ (2006) definition of a drag queen is a biological male who dresses in women’s clothing (though not with subtlety) and does so for entertainment. Butler and Halberstam have aligning definitions.

Halberstam (1998) explains that a drag king is essentially the opposite to a drag queen (so a biological female who dresses in men’s clothing [without subtlety] for entertainment purposes) although it is even less accepted in mainstream society and is less covered by academic literature.

Yvonne Tasker (1998) defines a cross-dresser as someone who dresses in the clothing of the opposite sex. She notes that cross-dressing films which make it into the mainstream such as *Tootsie* (1992) and *Mrs Doubtfire* (1993) celebrate the process of transformation and aesthetic manipulation by including montage sequences with an upbeat soundtrack that gives the act of cross-dressing a positive buzz. Tasker writes that cross-dressing films highlight the gender binary system by featuring a character who either swings from side to side of the dichotomy or sits entirely outside the

binary – thereby highlighting it again. Tasker coins the term ‘class-cross-dressing’ in films where a character cross-dresses to pretend to be from, not another gender, but another class. Narratives that feature female-to-male [FTM] cross-dressing are almost always motivated by the need or desire to gain status within the diegesis – this status can be witnessed in class change or through gender change.

Phillips (2006) defines this type of trans-film as a ‘progress narrative’. Progress narratives (such as *Tootsie* and *Mrs Doubtfire*) are usually based on comic deception rather than expression. None of the films I have chosen to analyse fit within this category. Phillips states that when trans-films are not from the comedy genre the cross-dresser may instead fall into the ‘psycho-trans’ mould. This genre makes the cross-dresser psychiatrically unwell, perverse or outright insane which creates negative connotations of trans characters. When trans-films are neither from comedy or psycho-trans categories they may fall instead into the drama category. According to Phillips the 1990s saw a rise in dramas which took cross-dressing seriously. *Boys Don’t Cry* and *The Crying Game* are both examples of 1990s serious treatment of the subject. He notes that many of these films are low-budget, independent and often shot away from Hollywood. This genre treats characters with non-traditional gender with a “sympathetic irony” not previously witnessed in Western filmmaking (p. 115).¹⁰

Phillips’ definition of transvestites and cross dressers (which he places in the same category) are people who dress in the clothing of the opposite sex for sexual pleasure (also stated by Devine and Wolf-Devine, 2003). He notes that transvestites are usually

¹⁰ Phillips uses a Baudrillardian philosophical framework to suggest how the future of trans-screen media might go. He suggests the boundaries will continue to be pushed out and the gender binary will continue to be challenged; identities will become broader and more fluid and one person could potentially have many previous identities and become increasingly (but acceptably) fragmented.

male-to-female [MTF] and heterosexual. Viviane Namaste (2005) goes further by classifying a transvestite solely as a heterosexual male who dresses in women's clothes (her definition of transvestite does not include a woman dressing in men's clothes). Newton (2006) establishes the variations within transvestism by suggesting three reasons for transvestite behaviour; those who cross-dress to make a living out of it, those who cross-dress to attain sex and those who cross-dress for their own erotic pleasure. However like Namaste, Newton's research doesn't include a discussion of FTM cross-dressers.

For her doctoral thesis Rebecca Bell-Metereau (1981)¹¹ investigated whether a selection of American films recognize and admire transvestism or whether they ignore and/or reproach it. She discovered that whether or not transvestism is celebrated or admonished, the act of cross-dressing is always "discordant" and reflects how contemporary society responds to the same circumstances.^{12 13}

2.2.7 Terminology - *Transsexual*

Devine and Wolf-Devine (2003), Phillips (2006), and Namaste (2005) define transsexuals as people who are born as one sex (anatomically and biologically) but identify that their gender belongs to the opposite sex (the medical term for this is

¹¹ Bell-Metereau's PhD thesis (submitted to Indiana University for her doctorate degree) was published as a book called *Hollywood Androgyny* by Columbia University Press in 1985 (four years after thesis submission).

¹² Bell-Metereau found that when female characters cross-dressed as males they frequently gained social status, signalling that women are often depicted, albeit with subtlety, as second-class, less free individuals in screen media (similar findings to Tasker's). Bell-Metereau also found that when a female cross-dressed the secondary character who emerged is sometimes a "powerful figure". Although the "powerful figure" is externally male, inwardly the character remains female.

¹³ Marie Maguire (2004) (who is a mental health professional and practising psychotherapist) is quick to label the desire to cross-dress as *clinically* perverse behaviour. While in modern context this term (perverse) does not necessarily have negative connotations, it still carries the suggestion of abnormality. Though Maguire may use the term 'perversion' broadly, it is an indication of medical classification surrounding certain tastes and lifestyles. Maguire pries into whether these tastes can be 'fixed' and whether they are merely the unfortunate result of some childhood or adolescent trauma.

gender dysphoria). A transsexual can be MTF or FTM and can change their anatomical sex (to match their gender) through hormonal treatment and/or surgery.

Some of the criteria considered for hormonal medication and sex reassignment surgery include a sense of unease about one's born-with sex, dysphoria in adulthood and disgust with the genitals, lack of sexual pleasure derived from the genitals, a tendency to dress in clothes more closely aligned to the other sex or androgynous fashion and depression due to their predicament (Walworth, 1997).

According to Halberstam one of the dividing lines between masculine women and transsexual men is the emotional weight of their aesthetic. She claims butch women for example play with the aesthetic of masculinity whereas transsexual men have "real and desperate desires for re-embodiment" (1998, p. 143).

Halberstam also questions the use of the term FTM rather than transsexual man or MTF rather than transsexual woman. She suggests the FTM or MTF label is a sign that the individual is either still in the process of change or is content to stay in a 'not-quite-there' position. She claims a transsexual man or transsexual woman label recognises the current state (the completion of the transformation) and the location from which they have come (the opposite sex) by retaining the 'transsexual' qualifier.

2.2.8 Terminology - *Transgender*

Namaste (2005) claims that transsexuals prefer to distance themselves from the term transgender because it implies that the site of resistance (their personal body) is a space upon which broad social changes may be occurring (the physical manifestation

of queer theory for example). Transsexuals do not necessarily want to see themselves in opposition to the gender dichotomy. Some want to remain part of the binary and to clearly identify as a woman or man.

Root Aulette and Wittner (2012) state that the term transgender is more complicated than transsexual as a variety of circumstances may fit underneath the term. To them, to Namaste (2005) and to Halberstam (2005) transgender is anything which defies the traditional gender binary system. For example a homosexual, a butch heterosexual, a cross-dresser or a fa'afafine¹⁴ could fit under the term transgender.

Dallas Denny (1997) states that transgender people define themselves rather than being defined by professionals (in particular medical doctors). He suggests that the term transgender refers to people who manipulate their bodies heavily but usually stop short of surgery. For example transwoman (which sits under the term transgender) is a biologically born male living as a woman without having had surgery. A transman (also sitting under transgender) is a biologically born female living as a man without having had surgery (Denny, 1997).

Leslie Feinberg (2006) disputes Denny's definition of transgender, pushing out the term to encapsulate more than transwoman and transman scenarios. Feinberg states that transgender is an umbrella term for a myriad of sexual and gender minorities that

¹⁴ Fa'afafine is a concept acknowledged in Polynesian communities. The fa'afafine is a biological male child who embodies both male and female traits. Western and American Samoans use the term *fa'afafine* (and this is most widely recognised in New Zealand), Tongans use *fakaleiti* or *fakafefine*, Cook Island Maori use *akava'ine* and Hawaiians use *mahu*. The concept is also recognized in Fiji (*vaka sa lewa lewa*), Tahiti (*rae rae*) and Niue (*fiafifine*). In any of these cases the word references the concept of feminine behaviour and social role. While fa'afafine may be considered camp, they mostly maintain a distinction between themselves and gay men, defining their identity as a third gender rather than a homosexual male (Schmidt, 2005, 2011; Samoa Fa'afafine Association, 2011).

have been oppressed under the gender binary system. Feinberg also points out that just because someone is homosexual does not mean that they are also cross-gendered. Likewise, not all transgendered people identify themselves as lesbian or gay. Feinberg argues it is a mistake to assume that those who identify as being a non-traditional gender also identify as having a non-traditional sexuality.

Finally, Evan Towle and Lynn Morgan (2006) also acknowledge the term “third gender”. Third gender is another problematic term because of its ambiguous use in academic material from the past 25 years (sometimes being used in a gender context and sometimes in a sexuality context). Towle and Morgan note that in more recent writing third gender is being used interchangeably with the term transgender and in some cases has been totally replaced by transgender. Therefore I find it appropriate to use the term transgender which appears to be rooted in more modern literature and has a firmer definition.

2.2.9 Terminology - *Intersexual, Hermaphrodite and Androgyne*

Root Aulette and Wittner (2011) clearly define the relatively new term intersexual. They state that intersexual individuals are born with ambiguous genitalia (such as a penis that looks small enough to be a clitoris or a clitoris that looks large enough to be a penis). This is classified by the medical community as a sexual disorder. For example 5-alpha reductase deficiency and congenital adrenal hyperplasia often cause ambiguous genitalia (although there are several other causes) Storkey, 2001. However, intersexuals can also be people who are born with definitive genitalia but

who develop sexually along unexpected paths around puberty¹⁵ and who are neither fully biologically male or female at this time (Root Aulette and Wittner, 2011).

Physiologically a person with XX chromosomes is usually female but can still develop ambiguous genitalia due to genetic or biochemical abnormalities. In this case the person (who is intersexual) may have fallopian tubes, a uterus and ovaries but the external genitalia of a male (formally known as pseudo or partial hermaphrodite in medical literature). A person with XY chromosomes is usually male but can also develop ambiguous genitalia due to genetic or biochemical abnormalities. In this instance the individual (who is intersexual) may have either female genitals or ambiguous looking genitals but they may also possess internal male testicles (also formally referred to as a pseudo or partial hermaphrodite). XXY, XXX and XO are other alternative chromosomal variations which will always lead to abnormalities of sexual development. A gonadal intersexual is a person with both ovarian and testicular tissue in one or both gonads (formally known as a hermaphrodite). A ‘true’ gonadal intersexual, (someone with both male and female genitalia *and* gonads) is extremely rare (ibid).

Lynn Edward Harris (1997) is an intersexual. When talking about herself she uses the term hermaphroditism alternating with androgyny and describes both as the “grey zone between the sexes” (p. 495). Edward Harris states that the difference between her and

¹⁵ Linda Geddes’ (2008) article outlines that recent medical advances can now allow intersexual and transsexual children to postpone making a gender choice (or having the choice made for them) until physical maturity. The draft guideline issued by the International Endocrine Society states transsexual and intersexual children should be able to take puberty-blocker drugs during their teenage years. These drugs prevent the onset of puberty and it would then be easier for gender ambiguous people to choose their gender at the age of 18 (when they can legally consent). Geddes states, “puberty blockers would also make life easier when transsexuals become adults. Male-to-female transsexuals, for example, will not have the deep voice, masculine bone structure and body hair associated with adult men” (p. 8).

transsexuals is that she has never felt trapped inside the wrong body, as many transsexuals describe (Halberstam, 1998). Instead she felt equal comfort and value in both genitalia. She states the term intersex is merely a modern term for hermaphrodism and does not suggest hermaphrodism has negative or offensive connotations. In contrast, Halberstam (1998) states hermaphrodite has connotations of same-sex desire and sexual perversion.

Halberstam (1998) writes that social confusion around gender ambiguity is more often the result of female masculinity than androgyny, stating that truly ambiguous gender is very rare and on most occasions is put down to something 'other', something negative or a very flawed version of a male or a female. It is not clear whether Halberstam differentiates truly ambiguous gender from androgyny but she defines androgyny as the mixing of male and female. This is similar to Macdonald's definition of androgyny which is the combined manifestation of traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine traits (1995). Ariadne Kane, director of the Human Achievement and Outreach Institution, considers the term androgyny fits under the transgender umbrella. She promotes it as a valid term and a feasible lifestyle choice (Bolin, 1997).

Edit Klara Godogh sought to reveal the ways society perceives and classifies an androgyne within her thesis (2002). Eurocentric schools of thought believe androgyny to be a sign of pathological illness. Psychoanalysis claims androgyny (biological or behavioural) is an example of an individual attempting to return to an imagined and ideal state of sexual wholeness, prior to the onset of growth, puberty and maturity; it is the supposed manifestation of concealed, infant desire (Godogh, p. 67).

Some views of androgyny don't necessarily class it as a medical condition that requires fixing. Androgyny is viewed by some as a harmonious state of being where an individual may experience both genders and find an enviable balance between them. For example ancient Greek and Roman eras viewed androgyny as the perfect (and unattainable) aesthetic (in terms of beauty). Various Greek, Roman and Egyptian Gods presented in myth as androgynous beings (Godogh, 2002).¹⁶ As a result the notion of androgyny became divine, and an androgynous body was one that transcended time and space. It appears for some of humanity, an androgyne was a balanced individual, in contrast to other interpretations which find androgynes to be lacking in identity. Androgyny of the Romantic period found merit not in the physical results of merged biology but in the completeness and wholeness of the human condition – through both male and female emotions and experience. Recent interpretations of androgyny (such as Trinity and Neo in *The Matrix* (1999) or Ripley in *Aliens* (1986)) focus more on the concept of it, rather than the surface properties it comes with such as aesthetic appearance (a physique indistinguishable as male or female).

2.2.10 Terminology - *Queer, Postgender and Genderless*

According to Root Aulette and Wittner (2011) the term queer, while once used as an insult against gay men and lesbians, has now been adopted by many who exist in a sexual minority. Therefore queer includes gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, sadomasochistic and fetishist communities. However, queerness remains

¹⁶ It must be noted that in ancient Greece and Rome the androgyne was more aligned with the masculine than feminine polar (despite the concept suggesting the individual is evenly split between the two). The ancient Greeks and Romans considered the utmost beauty to be found in a boy on the cusp of adulthood, for young men have the physical energy and intent of masculinity yet possess an essential naivety and softness that only children and women have (Godogh, 2002).

subversive by challenging the sexual norms. Root Aulette and Wittner posit that queer theorists reject traditional sexualities (even those living outside the hegemonic heterosexual binary) and prefer a paradigm where sexuality exists on a scale unrestricted by a binary model. They credit Alfred Kinsey as one of the first to consider sexuality beyond the gender binary after his sexology studies during the 1950s.

In a similar vein of thought, Halberstam (2005) uses the term queer with reference to something which opposes the hegemonic institutions of family, heterosexuality and reproduction. More broadly, queer subcultures allow their members to partake in a lifestyle which differs from the binary imposed experience of birth, marriage, reproduction and death. A queer time and a queer space refers to the temporality lived outside the heterosexual normative society. Like Halberstam, Leslie Feinberg (2006) imagines a society unrestricted by the traditional binary, coining the terms “s/he” and “hir” to refer to a non-specifically gendered person, someone who is post-gender or genderless.

Towle and Morgan (2006) claim that while alluding to a third gender linguistically represents a positive sign of progression, it also reveals that there are two other genders (but only two) and they come before the third gender. Namaste (2005) goes on to say that while describing oneself as genderless, intergender, or postgender may work in a utopian world, it can't be applied to the contemporary social climate. She writes “To state that one is neither a man nor a woman...ignores the very fundamental reality of being in the world” (p. 22). As a result Namaste is hesitant about the practical relevance of post-gender theory.

2.3 Basic gender development and existence

Macdonald (1995) cites three theories about the existence of gender identity. The first theory is biological determinism. This idea suggests that physical (anatomical and biological) differences between men and women create inevitable behavioural (gender) differences. Macdonald considers this argument flawed by its scientific reliance on similarities between humans and animals and its refusal to acknowledge cultural influences. The second thesis is the social learning theory which suggests that masculine and feminine traits are learned through watching and imitating other people. This theory places large influence on the childhood and adolescent period but does not explain why children adopt some sets of skills over others. For example, Macdonald asks why it is that female children adopt the feminine skill set. The final thesis is cognitive development theory. This thesis posits that masculinity and femininity develop through a combination of life experience and “pre-structured conceptual thinking” (Macdonald, 1995, p. 16); in other words a combination of both biological determinist elements and social learning elements.

Godogh (2002) uses Sandra Bem’s theory of gender (from her work *The Lenses of Gender*, 1993) which states that Western gender discourse is founded on three lenses of perspective which allow the individual to comprehend themselves, their meaning and an understanding of other individuals. The three lenses are gender polarization, biological essentialism and androcentrism. Gender polarization creates a foundation for the species to socialise in by separating the sexes “socially, economically and psychologically” on a constant basis (Godogh, p. 27). This separation is also enhanced by biological essentialism - the argument that men and women are biologically different which results in natural and inevitable social differences. An

androcentric ideology claims that men are the primary sex to which females are secondary and resultantly inferior. Godogh claims these three perspectives have developed Western gender discourse into its 21st Century state.

Raewyn Connell considers gender is a “Western invention” and believes the East moves within a different “cultural formation” (1987, p.23).¹⁷ According to Connell most societies base (and have based) their understanding of gender on biological sex and the reproductive organs. This science-based belief continues to inform large populations and “for many people the notion of natural sex difference forms a limit beyond which thought cannot go” (ibid, p. 66). However, Connell believes gender is formed through two conditions; the first condition is the physical body and the second condition is the cultural and social environment the individual has lived in or lives in at that time. These two factors are complex and they combine to create an intricate, multi-layered individual. There are so many variables involved in the construction of gender identity that Connell refutes that only two options (male and female) exist.

Connell suggests there are three substructures in the super-structure of gender (1987). Most important is the understanding that none of the substructures work autonomously – they each depend on the others to continue functioning. The first substructure concerns the division of labour between males and females. Historically, men and women have held separate working roles – women looked after the house and children and men left the domestic zone to earn an income through their labour. The second substructure considers authority, control and the hierarchies of the state.

¹⁷ Denny (1997) sites the variety of non-Western cultures which have embraced the individual with non-traditional gender, often elevating this individual to a special place in the community. These groups include the Hijra (India), the Khushra (Pakistan), the Acault (Burma), the Xanith (Oman), the Mahu (Polynesia) and the Winkte or Berdache (North American Indian).

This structure oversees “institutional and interpersonal violence, sexual regulation and surveillance” (ibid, p.96) and encapsulates the way power contributes to a framework of personal, sexual and physical constraint. The final substructure looks at the function of emotion in personal relationships. Connell suggests the third substructure alludes to the hostility between hetero and homosexuality in society. She describes hatred for men or women, hatred for the self or the self’s sexuality and fear and distrust of anything other than patriarchy as the “antagonisms of gender” (ibid, p. 97).

A challenge to the super-structure of gender comes in the form of what Connell calls ‘crisis tendencies’. The four areas that need to be challenged for the institution to be considered in a crisis tendency are gendered separation between domestic life and the business world, the masculinization of core institutes, the state’s involvement in the legislation of sexuality and the general pattern that results from these points. For example, Connell states the family institute is experiencing a crisis tendency as seen through the “weakening of legitimate patriarchy as the form of authority within the family” (p. 159). Homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals and intersexual individuals can now create families. Any of these alternatives to the traditional gender binary is a challenge to patriarchy. A crisis tendency may also be observed in the arts with the growing availability of films including (or centred around) characters with non-traditional gender, films about non-traditional social arrangements and films by or about homosexuals.

2.4 An introduction to queer theory

This thesis does not enter deeply into queer theory because the chosen films primarily problematise gender rather than sexuality (although I acknowledge that queer theory

also philosophises about gender). Sexuality is also an important aspect of gender and a short discussion of queer film theory is therefore important.

2.4.1 Development of queer theory

Queer theory developed beside feminist theory in the 1980s and though there are some theoretical crossovers generally queer and feminist theory remain separate systems of thought. Essentially queer theory examines identity politics with particular focus on sexuality. Although several aspects of sexuality were previously considered taboo, Peter Stearns (2009) posits it is homosexuality which has emerged most slowly into the accepted mainstream of modern culture.¹⁸ Jagose (1997) considers the inclusion of homosexuality in modern culture is due to the mobilisation of the gay liberation, lesbian feminism and queer theory movements (although she also acknowledges the varied understandings of the term homosexuality).

Tim Edwards (1998) (like Jagose) attributes the development of queer cultural theory to Michel Foucault.¹⁹ According to Edwards queer theory can be primarily defined as an attempt to undermine traditional sexual identity categories and the rigidity of the homo-hetero binary.²⁰ Similarly Ellis Hanson (1999) suggests that amongst the key socio-political elements of queer theory lies a confrontation of stereotyping and representation.

¹⁸ It was only in 1973 that the American Psychological Association removed homosexuality from its list of possible mental disorders (Spitzer, 1981).

¹⁹ A more detailed discussion of Foucault's work is placed later in this chapter.

²⁰ Edwards actually critiques queer theory by stating that the academic theorising of sexuality (although a positive gain on empirical, scientific academia) does not necessarily connect with or reflect the experiences of those at 'grass roots' level. For example, he acknowledges Eve Sedgwick's analysis of relationships in mid 18th – mid 19th Century literary works but states her findings are not significant or relevant enough to apply to contemporary sexual politics. He also refutes Steven Seidman's suggestion that queer theory and politics is substantially different from identity politics. Instead Edwards suggests that queer theory be viewed as a kind of anti-identity politics that has developed alongside regular identity politics.

2.4.2 Academic positioning of queer theory

Essentially queer theory adds to the body of knowledge already developed by feminist psychoanalytic theory, substantiating the idea that there is more involved in the process of cinematic visual pleasure than a heterosexual paradigm allows for (Corrigan & White, 2009). Alexander Doty (2000) elaborates, saying queer theory is interested in non-normative expressions of gender and sexuality – a wider group than those classified as gay. Doty considers queer to be an umbrella term that encompasses gay, lesbian, bisexual and non-straight concepts of sexuality as well as the blurring of these sexualities into other possibilities. As a result modern queer theory suggests a reading of a text (not just outside the gender binary) but outside contemporary understandings of gay and lesbian sexuality, pushing the theoretical terrain into new space that is truly ‘queer’. Yet, when Doty considers the words that fit under the term queer he deliberately excludes ‘androgynous’, suggesting that androgyny is potentially a new starting point for another era of cultural analysis. He states, “(androgyny) will move film and popular culture criticism and theory beyond gender difference and orthodox sexual categories” (p. 151). Similarly some theorists feel transvestism, transexuality and transgender are outside of current gender concepts in the same radical way Doty posits androgyny is. Doty’s opinion on androgyny reinforces my earlier statement that this research is fundamentally about gender (rather than sexuality) and requires a theoretical framework beyond the confines of even queer theory where film characters may be regarded as androgynous, transgender or even post-gender.

2.4.3 Queer theory and cinema

According to Doty queer interaction occurs during the making of the film, the consumption of the film and the understandings taken away from that consumption. Halberstam (2005) suggests that heterosexual individuals adopt one of three modes when representing non-traditional sexualities on screen: stabilization, rationalisation or trivialisation. Stabilization establishes the narrative as strange making the on-screen 'queer' character more comfortable and normal. Rationalisation is a text which provides a justifiable reason for queer behaviour (such as cross-dressing [similar to Phillips' 'progressive narratives']). Trivialisation projects queer behaviour as generally unimportant and inconsequential within the overall narrative.

Suzanna Danuta Walters (2003) acknowledges the neglect of homosexual characters in early cinema. The absence of anything other than a heterosexual character and storyline prompted homosexual audiences to read between the cinematic lines with a queer lens. Danuta Walters notes that following this period of invisibility cinema then began to feature homosexuality through the use of crude stereotypes.

Having moved on from the outright neglect and stereotypes of earlier films, Susan Driver (in Mazarella, 2007) proposes that modern screen depictions of homosexuality are commercially motivated representations that "tend to fixate on abstract homogeneous images of sexual minorities" which are "erotic", "marketable", "palatable" and "intriguing to mainstream audiences" (p. 8, *ibid*). Michael Bronski (2006) considers films with homosexual central storylines (also referred to as the 'coming out' film) to be "innately political" and "overtly political" (p. 20) - a result of the stories often being told by (and also for) homosexual individuals.

In contrast Benshoff and Griffin (2006) believe that contemporary films dabbling in homosexual content are as much for heterosexual audiences as they are for non-hetero viewers. In fact they suggest that modern films can have queer theory applied to them on the basis of four elements: 1) either the writer, director and/or producer is gay; 2) the film features a prominent gay character who allows the audience to see through his/her eyes; 3) particular models of queer theory critique can be applied to almost any film (regardless of the content or intended audience); 4) a more psychoanalytic (or just psychological) reading of films allows for the exploration of previously unusual subjects such as female reproductive power, “monstrous sexualities” or meaning within same-sex friendships (ibid, p. 11).

2.4.4 Transgender theory in its own space

Susan Stryker (2006) defines transgender studies separately from queer theory and from general gender theory. She suggests that transgender studies, in its own right, emerged out of the intersection of queer and feminist studies. She also classifies transgender discussion as a post-modern phenomenon as its philosophy rebels against “modernist epistemology that treats gender merely as a social, linguistic, or subjective representation of an objectively knowable material sex” (ibid, p. 8).

Stryker states that at its core academic base transgender studies investigates difference (the differences between people in a gendered way) and also investigates how these differences are mobilised or transformed within social hierarchies. Stryker is interested in power relations. For example, rather than looking at the phenomenon of someone who is transsexual, gay or intersexual she is more interested in what these

phenomena reveals about the regular modes of operation, the unanalysed systems of structure and the supposedly normal ideologies of the mainstream.

Whittle (2006) believes that transgender theory and feminist theory have the same goal – the attempt to theorise beyond the nature/nurture debate and to reveal the gender binary system. He claims transgender theory is rooted in queer theory and suggests that transgender theorists need not necessarily count themselves as a different team to those who are feminist theorists.

Stryker and Whittle (2006) credit Sandy Stone's essay (2006) as one of the founding documents of transgender studies. Coming from a post-structuralist and post-feminist standpoint²¹ Stone suggests that there are more gender possibilities to come and they will arrive in ways more expressive than previous cautious manifestations of gender difference. One of the problems she illustrates is that when a transsexual person wishes to be heard they have to occupy a place somewhere within (or at least relational to) the traditional gender binary – thereby recognising and utilising the very discourse they are attempting to rally against.²²

While queer theory is not the theoretical framework I have chosen to use for this research I acknowledge its significance in the academic discussions pertaining to personal identity. Furthermore an understanding of queer theory adds to my ability to perform an analysis of non-traditional gender roles in four samples of contemporary Western screen media.

²¹ Stone defines herself as a post-transsexualist gender theorist - a space she occupies to distance herself from one branch of the radical feminist thinkers who proclaim that MTF transsexuals are an engineered product of patriarchy who commit rape upon entering the female body domain.

²² This is a concept both Michel Foucault and Judith Butler recognise. It will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

2.5 On to a cinematic analysis

Essential to this analysis of contemporary Western media is an understanding of the relationship between society and screen media (in this case cinema). Mark Cousins suggests that film projects the cultures of those who make it (Cousins, 2004) and this is the basic premise I am working from in this research. However, this statement is a simplified summary of the complex relationship between cinema and society. The following section of this chapter breaks down the process of representation in art (specifically filmmaking) to thoroughly analyse the link between cinema and society.

Cinema analysis can be approached using cultural studies theory, particularly contemporary fields such as postmodernism and poststructuralism.²³ Post structuralist philosophy suggests research can never be truly disinterested (an aim initiated by the structuralist thinkers who attempted to objectively examine the internal strata of society) (Briggs and Meyer, 2009; Macdonald, 1995). Total objectivity can never be achieved because all production is vulnerable to the subjectivity of cultural influence, life experience and ideologies (Callen, 1998; Hall, 1997b). Films then, are not ideologically neutral and portray society through a matrix of representational symbols which are encoded by the filmmaker/s and decoded by the viewer (Dyer, 1985 cited in Lacey, 1998, p. 131). This process is constant because the representations also rely on interpretations that are contestable so a final, absolute meaning can never be reached. Therefore sociological research of this nature is rich in data but forever “caught up in this circle of meaning” (Hall, 1997b, p. 42).²⁴

²³ Postmodernism embraces emerging technologies and the breaking down of previous binaries and traditional cultural conventions. Postmodernism (and all the fields it encapsulates including postfeminism) and poststructuralism appealed to scholars who were looking for something other than conventional analysis and empirical research (Glazer, 1996; Macdonald, 1995).

²⁴ It is therefore important for me to acknowledge that this research (my insight into the relevance of gender representation in film [and film in society]) is qualitative in the sense that it can not be seen,

Anthea Callen states that visual representations of the body are especially powerful because “their impact is direct and immediate” (Callen, 1998, p. 401). She goes on to write that the visually represented body is the “product of ideas that are culturally and historically specific” (ibid). Nicholas Green and Frank Mort (1996) define representation as “power relations (which) represent and reinforce power relations where origins lie elsewhere” (p. 228). This suggests that representations in visual culture reinforce existing social structures while rendering this act almost invisible.

The meaning of a representation gains depth when that image is consumed by the viewer and another layer of interpretation is added (Lacey, 1998). Increasing layers of interpretation signal that more than one reading of a film is possible and illustrate the presence of ideological frameworks in pieces of textual analysis (such as this research) (Driver cited in Mazarella, 2007).

2.5.1 The basics of representation

According to Stuart Hall’s more recent work culture is a circuit (Hall, 1997a). It is not a linear transaction, an equilibrium or even a cycle. Representation is part of that circuit, along with identity, production, regulation and consumption. Each of these elements interacts with the others in a constant and complex model. Several years earlier Hall stated that culture is multiple patterns of organization which formulate through human energy into identity, correspondence and relationships (1980).

touched or mathematically gauged and that my interpretation (my reading) of the signs (the cinematic elements in each of the film texts) is influenced by my age, gender, race, class and life experience. While this thesis attempts to be as academically grounded as possible I acknowledge that this research is primarily Laura Stephenson’s analysis.

Raymond Williams (1983) also emphasizes the complexity of the term ‘culture’ in the English language. He notes that some consider culture encompasses high-brow arts including music, literature, painting, theatre, film, philosophy and academia, while others think culture to be the tastes and trends of the masses (popular culture and folk culture). Williams argues that cultural theory should embrace both so-called high and low cultures of society (extraordinary and ordinary), for example film *and* television, painting *and* street art, classical music *and* pop music.

According to Hall culture is about shared meanings, and language is the medium through which people understand those meanings by functioning as a representational system (1997a). Therefore meaning can only be shared through a common language (Williams, 1988). Language can refer to a set of signs, symbols or codes expressed through a variety of media. This research uses the language of film to draw meanings about gender in contemporary culture. In this thesis a set of cinematic codes are analysed to understand the immediate text and the ideologies influencing the production of that text.

With specific regards to this research, I am going to analyse the editing, lighting, cinematography, soundscape, character appearance and script function of a non-traditionally gendered character in four Western films. These screen elements are the words (the signifiers) in the language of film, they are the tools for cinematic expression, but what lies beneath them (the signified) are the ideologies present in contemporary society (when and where the film was made). The language of film (those key cinematic elements) is therefore ideologically inclined and a valuable medium for the study of culture. In other words it is not simply that films are a

reflection of society but the elements which they are comprised of are influenced by society.

Hall states that the process linking “things, concepts and signs” is what we know as representation (Hall, 1997b, p. 19; Hall, 1980; Lacey, 1998). In relation to this thesis I can translate that representation is the process which links things (objects, events, actions) with concepts (the ideology and ideas about those things) through signs (the aesthetic and aural elements pointing to the concept).

There are three theories surrounding representation – reflective (also called mimetic), intentional and constructionist (Hall, 1997b).²⁵ When writing about representation in this thesis a combination of the reflective and constructionist approaches are used. The reflective approach suggests meaning resides in the real world object, person, event or action (Rayner, Wall and Kruger, 2001). However language (screen codes in this instance) function like a mirror – both simultaneously projecting and reflecting the meaning of the object, person, event or action (ibid). Therefore what appears on screen (as a symbol for the concept beneath) is only an imitation of what already exists ‘out there’ in society (Branston and Stafford, 2002). When one applies this theory of representation to cinema analysis it reveals that the cinema screen doesn’t construct ideologies but presents and absorbs what lays before it, already fully constructed, in society. The constructionist representation approach is also relevant to this research. Constructionists acknowledge that neither the speaker (of the language) or the actual things can possess meaning because meaning is socially constructed

²⁵ The reflective approach posits that language merely reflects true meaning which exists in the object, person or idea. The intentional approach bestows more power upon language by suggesting that the speaker/author’s words create meaning once expressed. The constructionist approach considers that objects (things) and language don’t mean anything until society constructs meaning through the use of codes and symbols (representation systems) (Hall 1997b).

(through the representational language system) (Hall, 1997b). Therefore, decoding the language reveals both the meaning conferred onto things and information about the culture that confers this meaning. The transition of meaning onto a subject can lead to mass assumptions (sometimes false) which academia names 'myth'.

2.5.2 Gender roles and stereotypes in representation

Roland Barthes (2012) considers myth to be the conceptualisation of a subject that is not necessarily linked accurately (or at all) with the reality. It was Barthes' attention to myth in the 1950s that interrogated the long held values and ideologies of bourgeois French society. Barthes' questioning of cultural myths lead him into semiotics (which he found a useful tool for myth analysis), moving him on from the structuralist theorists and into poststructuralist philosophy. According to Barthes, myth is evident in popular culture texts including advertising, television programs, song lyrics, mainstream works of literature and, of course, cinema.

The myth of femininity employed in media, for example, often portrays women as feminine, shallow, less ambitious and generally more nurturing than men (Macdonald, 1995; Branston and Stafford, 2002). It would seem at first that when media depict women in this stereotypical way they are being mis-represented. However because there are strong myths about gender in society (for example the ideology that women are the weaker, fairer gender) women are actually being represented accurately on screen in accordance with the real world myth. If the myth did not exist in society the depiction of women on screen as weak and less ambitious would be a mis-representation. This example highlights the reflective and constructionist representational nature of the film medium in society.

Representation in the media relies on stereotypes (Macdonald, 1995; Meyers, 2008). The depiction of that group in the media relies on the stereotyped attributes and traits (based on myth) which refer to a familiar, recognisable image (Rayner, Wall and Kruger, 2001). Jane Caputi concurs that stereotypical gender roles turn women into sex objects and men into naturally violent people as male representation in the media is often militaristic, physical and generally authoritative (Caputi, 2008). As a result men encounter social pressure to conform (as women do) to the constructed male stereotype of masculinity.

Debates around the 'normalcy' of heterosexuality and gender roles are not only reinforced through daily social interaction and written texts but through a range of visual codes. Green and Mort therefore feel that the weight of the hegemonic gender binary system was strengthened through fine arts of the time. "Visual material must be seen as integral to the functioning of forms of cultural power" (1996, p. 236). They note the presence of the 'male gaze' at the female form as far back as the Victorian period, where pornographic paintings were constructed for the scopophilic pleasure of men. Callen (1998) also uses examples from art history in the Greek and Roman classical era to illustrate the stereotypical characteristics associated with gender. The representation of the female aesthetic in these ancient times was notably more delicate, rounded and slender than the larger, rougher and clumsier depiction of men, thus tying notions of femininity and masculinity to biological sex (depicted through art) up to two millennia ago.

Judith Butler, whose work essentially challenges the stability and validity of gender identity categories, suggests gender is a social construct which takes place on the

body through a daily performance of masculine and feminine traits.²⁶ That gender construct is then imitated by cultural texts (films included) which both create and further reinforce the myth surrounding that gender. I posit this is why films with characters with non-traditional gender are rare and socially challenging – because the person on screen either a) doesn't conform to the myth of their gender role or b) does conform (performatively) but not anatomically.

If one takes the representational model one step further than a consideration of meaning and language to accommodate power relations they move into territory heavily covered by Michel Foucault. One could argue that Foucauldian representational discussion looks at an even bigger picture than semiotic analysis, for Foucault takes into account historical foundations giving his analysis greater contextualisation and deeper understanding of how and why meanings are formed.

2.6 An introduction to Foucault

Indeed it would not be possible to discuss theories about power and sexuality without acknowledging the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault, considered by some academics as one of the most prolific and influential thinkers of the modern era (Fillingham, 1993; Halperin, 1995).²⁷ Some feminists consider Foucault's work to be an intellectual middle ground between libertarian feminism (in support of transgressing gender and sexuality boundaries) and radical feminists (who are anti-patriarchy) (Sawicki, 1991). It is for this reason that Foucault's work on sexuality is

²⁶ A more in depth analysis of Judith Butler's work follows at a later stage of this chapter.

²⁷ Lydia Fillingham (1993) considers Foucault was an intellectual genius because he wrote (unusually) from the perspective of the patient, not the Doctor. As a youth Foucault attempted suicide more than once and was sent to several psychiatrists. His battle with depression (and his homosexuality) initiated and informed much of his writing on mental illness, institutions, truth, knowledge and normality (Fillingham, 1993).

especially relevant to this thesis; it is considered integral to progression in the fight for gender equality. Foucault writes about sexuality in relation to power, discourse and society (Foucault, 1981).

2.6.1 Foucault and sexuality

History of Sexuality examines gender roles, paying specific attention to women. Jose Merquior (1985) states Foucault's main intention for *History of Sexuality* is to highlight the discourse of 20th Century sexuality while Fillingham (1993) considers these works attempt to discuss sexuality more openly than previously. Barry Smart considers the central theme within *History of Sexuality* is the regulation of sexuality as a result of global industrialisation (Smart, 1985) to "constitute a sexuality that is economically useful" (Foucault, 1981, p. 37).²⁸ Essentially Foucault wanted to understand how sexuality was being experienced as a cultural, man-made thing - this is relevant to this research which examines the ways sexuality and gender can be constructed by the individual or the surrounding culture.

Foucault begins *History of Sexuality, Volume One* by acknowledging that since the Renaissance period Western society has attempted to implement concepts of morality through the body, condemning sexual and sensual pleasures as excessive,²⁹ and promoting the "heterosexual monogamous couple" as normal (Merquior, 1985, p. 123). A person's sexuality was perceived as representative of their general identity which would eventually surface in a display of supposed truth. However, Foucault attempts to debunk discourses which locate identity solely in the body of the

²⁸ Foucault disputes this argument by claiming that various 'perversions' have existed for some time without inhabiting human reproduction.

²⁹ Foucault uses the term "deployment of sexuality" with reference to the way sexuality is demonised by language, making it not only excessive but sinful, diseased or pathological.

individual (Halperin, 1995).³⁰ He rejects that sexuality is determined by the biological (born with) sex and instead considers identity is transient and somewhat socially constructed (Fillingham, 1993; Smart, 1985). Foucault suggests that sexuality and biology have been so carelessly (but significantly) linked because doing so conveniently connects the hard science of reproduction and the less defined, social science of sexuality (Merquior, 1985).

Foucault writes that differences in sexuality were due to the attempted control of the human body, so ironically power had created “a proliferation of pleasures and multiplication of sexualities” rather than succeeding in prohibiting them (Halperin, 1995, p. 97). Foucault states that after power relations produce multiple sexualities, society then either rejects or accepts them with regards to the norm (Halperin, 1995).

Consequently Foucault sees three central groups of people as the victims of “socio-sexual control” – women (classified as naturally hysterical and inferior to men), children (prohibited from masturbating) and the perverse adult (ostracised from society because of sexual tastes) (ibid, p. 121).³¹ These three groups are important to this thesis because they suggest how the non-traditionally gendered characters in these films may be treated. I hypothesize that several of them will fall into the ‘perverse adult’ group, some may also be considered a ‘hysterical woman’ and one other may be considered a ‘perverse child’. Recognising these non-traditionally gendered

³⁰ Critics of Foucault (such as Sandra Bartky and Jana Sawicki) suggest that moving too theoretically far from the body only succeeds in ignoring the various subjections that occur directly to the body, further creating and enabling power relations.

³¹ Foucault also acknowledges a fourth group affected by socio-sexual control although this is noticeably wider than the previous three – he refers to “populations and races” (ibid) but does not go into any detail at that point about what he means. In other works Foucault suggests that “the population” includes everyone in society and is distinctly different to “the administration” (who govern the populace). I interpret this fourth group affected by socio-sexual control to be society at-large – all those who come under the governance of the administration.

characters as victims of the regulation of sexuality already illustrates part of the social attitudes surrounding the making of these films.

2.6.2 Foucault, normality and abnormality

Large sections of Foucault's work examine the binary of 'normal' and 'abnormal' where Foucault explains that it is abnormality which defines normality (Fillingham, 1993). For example, I believe that the central film characters will be most identifiable by their differences from 'everyone else'. Foucault dislikes the authoritative role of the medical establishment in the 'treatment' of 'abnormality'. He is disdainful of the clinical surveillance imposed on sexuality and believes labelling a person as abnormal (whether it be sexually, mentally or otherwise) and confining them to an institution is a convenient way of removing less understood people from communities (Foucault, 1981). I suspect this mistrust of the medical fraternity will be echoed in the thesis films where any authority (medical or otherwise) is portrayed as the antagonistic force attempting to treat a (sexually) abnormal person.

A Foucauldian analysis would suggest intersexuals and transsexuals were for so long viewed unfavourably by society and as an abnormality to be fixed because they are people who are not likely to be able to reproduce (either by providing sperm or carrying a child). He states, "For a long time hermaphrodites were criminals" since their anatomy was an abomination which directly defied sex regulation (ibid, p. 38). They were often condemned to prison or mental institutions where they were sometimes referred to as suffering from "genital neurosis" or similar (ibid, p. 40).³² Furthermore homosexuality was seen as a pathological inverting and mixing of

³² Those who practiced adultery, rape, incest, sodomy, infidelity, bestiality, masturbation, sadism or homosexuality were cast in a similar light (Foucault, 1981).

masculine and feminine traits inside one individual.³³ The homosexual was perceived to have “a hermaphroditism of the soul”, what Foucault referred to as an “interior androgyny” (ibid, p. 43).

2.6.3 Foucault and power

In his own words Foucault has not tried to “analyse the phenomena of power” but his work enquires into the ways human beings are objectified into subjects – this considers the dimensions of power but not directly the essence of what power is (Rabinow, 2000, p. 326). Foucault’s philosophical standpoint on power is not so much about power as power relations. It is not a “unidirectional vector from oppressor to oppressed” (Halperin, 1995, p. 17) but fluid, all-encompassing and present in every social situation. However, he elaborates that power doesn’t exist until it is exercised by one party and “put into action” (Rabinow, p. 340). Foucault’s view of power can be considered ‘non-reductionist’ in the sense that it doesn’t conceive power to be linked with a particular group, act or material thing (Smart, 1986).

Power can be reduced to the simple definition “action upon the action of others” (Rabinow, 2000, p. 341) but when using this definition Foucault points out that power is only exercised over people with some aspect of freedom; he suggests the subject

³³ Seymour Rosenberg (1997) explains the important difference between multiple personality disorder and gender ambiguity, illustrating that transvestite, intersexual, transsexual or transgender individuals are not suffering from a disorder or a mental, psychological or physical illness. Rosenberg states that when the self becomes overly fragmented, perhaps with a predominant segment, and only subconsciously aware of the other segments, the individual has most likely developed multiple personality disorder. This disorder is rare however, and it is even more uncommon for the affected person to have both female and male segments of personality. People who possess both genders do not, in fact, exhibit any of the classic symptoms of multiple personality disorder (ibid). Likewise, Dan McAdams (1997) argues that multiple selves exist within one person frequently. He states, “perspectives from social psychology, personality and developmental psychology, sociology, contemporary psychoanalysis, and post-modern social theory tend to agree that the self is more multiple than unitary, and more so today than ever before” (ibid, p. 47).

(the oppressed) actually participates in his/her own repression, they do not merely suffer domination (Foucault, 1996). While the exercise of power is conditional on the presence of freedom it does not consume freedom – it requires its continued presence in order to remain power not domination. Essentially the empowered require the non-empowered to resist in order to maintain the power relations and remain powerful (Fillingham, 1993; Smart, 1985). The real essence of power is not “voluntary servitude” (Rabinow, p. 342) but the refusal to totally submit. It is this push-pull factor (what Foucault calls an “agonism”) which defines the struggles of individuals who don’t conform to the gender norm. The existence of agonism makes these circumstances even more painful (or agonising) for the individual, but without it they stop becoming the repressed and become the defeated.

However, Foucault also sees power as potentially productive and therefore potentially positive (Merquior, 1985), stating it needs to be considered as a productive network that exists in all of the social structure (Rabinow, 2000).³⁴ He also suggests that the power attempting to repress sexuality is weakened by its purely negative angle – this power only has the ability to set limits on sexual variation rendering it ultimately unproductive and what Foucault calls an “anti-energy” (Foucault, 1981, p.85).

Foucault surmised that power is a tactic used strategically in a sociological situation (ibid). Therefore power is neither a structure (suggested by Connell) or a possession imposed upon others through class and wealth (suggested by Karl Marx). Sawicki

³⁴ I think it important to note that Foucault’s examination of power has critics; Merquior, for example considers Foucault’s discussion to be incomplete and “unsatisfactory”, as it avoids how and why power is “conquered, employed or held on to” (Merquior, 1985, p. 118).

(1991) suggests that to locate power in a place or possession is too simplistic and ignores the power relations that Foucault thought so vital in the presence of discourse.

2.6.4 Foucault and power relations

Foucault considers there to be three types of struggles (power relations): 1) against domination (ethnic, social and religious), 2) against exploitation (using individuals for productive means) and 3) against subjection and submission (the beauty industry for example which turns women into submissive subjects by objectifying them) (Rabinow, 2000). The power struggle most relevant to this research is against domination – though a gender-dichotomy domination rather than an ethnic, social or religious majority. I think that domination may manifest in the films through medicalisation, social isolation or physical harm. Though violence and the obtaining of consent both play a role in power relations (sometimes together) Foucault believes they are “instruments or results” as opposed to the essential nature of power (ibid, p. 341).

Foucault’s work reveals that an increase in power (power relations) in society is not witnessed in the 20th Century by heightened force or harsher punishment but by more subtle modes of coercion such as advertising, propaganda and law reform (Smart, 1986). Foucault calls these new and emerging technologies of power to be either anatomo-political (related to the individual’s human body) or bio-political (relating to the individual or groups in a scientific manner) (ibid). Smart (1985) suggests Foucault was the first to acknowledge the role the physical body has in power relations – themes which emerge most strongly in *Discipline and Punish* (1976) and *History of Sexuality*. *Discipline and Punish* examines human existence as a lived experience

inside a physical body (rather than existence as the presence of the soul or mind residing in something physical) (ibid). Foucault believed sex to be particularly socially problematic (with regards to power relations) because it sits at the juncture of disciplining the individual body and controlling the wider population (Rabinow, 2000). This research aims to ascertain what happens when an individual resists the trend of the norm (the wider population) through their physical body.

Foucauldian theory suggests power can be performed on the body when channelled through disciplinary tools. These tools include hierarchical observation (a platform used for observing is empowering for its users – such as the Doctors who use a medical platform to discuss gender), normalizing judgement (those behaviours deemed negative [and unusual] are punished while those deemed positive [and common] are rewarded) and the examination (through which the hierarchical observation and normalising judgement are both used to classify the subject/person) (ibid). These three tools are relevant to this research as each is employed to classify sexuality, to reaffirm the traditional gender dichotomy and heterosexual norm and consequently to ostracise those who don't conform to the majority.

2.6.5 Foucault and knowledge

Foucault writes about knowledge and power as “knowledge/power” because he considers one can't be examined without the other (Couzens Hoy, 1986). The term “knowledge is power” can be explained quite simply - disciplinary power can be actioned on the individual through techniques such as surveillance and examination. These tools are used to gain knowledge about the subject from a platform where the observer is in an empowered position, the knowledge they receive from these tools

helps them analyse and categorise the subject (using their own system of assessment), empowering them even further (Sawicki, 1991).

Foucault's problem with discourse (among other philosophers) is that it claims to represent some utter truth and concrete knowledge, whilst itself being a construction of social power relations. To elaborate, those who sit in an esteemed position within society (politically, educationally, financially or otherwise) are able to impart their understanding of what is 'truth' onto others in less esteemed positions (Fillingham, 1993). Discourses are made dominant and indoctrinated by the people who possess power and benefit from them. For example Western discourses have always been given prominence over Eastern discourses in Western institutions (Foucault, 1996).

Smart (1985) states that the major impact of this theory is that what humanity considers to be "truth" is affected by power and therefore a "political field" (ibid, p. 76). This correlates with the assumption that only heterosexual, singular-gender people are 'normal' – this discourse is a result of power relations from patriarchy's gender dichotomy.

2.7 An introduction to Judith Butler

Judith Butler, like Foucault, considers oppression to be not a "self contained system" but a force that requires participants on both sides in order to exist (Butler, 2004a, p. 26). Butler suggests that the subject depends on power for its formation (Butler, 2004d) and (like Foucault) states that the subject remains bound to power, meaning the individual is partially defined by the limitations put on them. Butler considers this idea manifests in those who challenge the gender binary system – their identities are,

to some extent, dependent on the discourse which marginalizes them (ibid). Butler acknowledges that gender can be a choice, however the selection is a narrow range of predefined socially 'acceptable' options (Butler, 2005; Butler, 2004a). Like Foucault, Butler questions where these categories come from and concludes that they are the results of oppressive and regulatory discourses (Butler, 2004c).

2.7.1 Butler and essential concepts of gender

Sarah Salih (editor of *The Butler Reader* [Butler, 2004b]) and John Phillips (writer of *Transgender on Screen*, 2006) consider Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) to be her most important work and one of the most important works in the whole field.³⁵ In *Gender Trouble* Butler interrogates how gender is formulated and circumscribed onto the individual. She also aims to further identify the discourses which reinforce the established gender binary system (ibid).

Butler's theories are aligned with those of Simone de Beauvoir who argues that "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one" over time (de Beauvoir, 1989, p. 267). Likewise Butler believes that gender is a cultural construction in a society where one can not be outside of gender (Butler, 2005; Butler, 2004a). But while Butler believes people develop into a gender she also states that prior to having cultural constructions of gender placed on them, people are not 'without gender' either, therefore implying some sort of biological basis (Butler, 2005). However, in addition to this Butler does not consider gender has any specific origins or causes, nor does she perceive one's gender is ever finalised, stating that it is an ongoing set of behaviours which are fluid, variable and constantly changing (Butler, 2004b).

³⁵ According to Salih it is also considered a valuable contribution to assisting those who have lived in the sexual margins of society (ibid, p. 90).

Butler suggests that the concept of sex, sexuality and gender existed prior to the cultural engendering of the body, explaining that the body is a “passive medium” that is signified by the application of external forces (Butler, 2004b, p. 104). This theory is similar to Foucault’s when he suggests that the body is a space for cultural inscription, a surface for the display of events and meaning (ibid). Butler concurs with this by saying that history then is a “relentless writing instrument and the body is the medium...in order for culture to immerge” (ibid, p. 105). This notion is significant in relation to this research which acknowledges and explores the impact of society on the individual, both physically and internally.

2.7.2 Butler and the performance of gender

Arguably most well known of Butler’s work are her ideas about the performativity of gender, believing that “in some sense we construct ourselves” (Butler, 2004a, p. 23). Butler argues that though gender is a social construction, the individual reinforces this construction through ‘gendered’ behaviour (Butler, 1990). Butler points out that gender performance³⁶ is not learnt quickly or easily but “is a subtle and strategic project, laborious and for the most part covert” (Butler, 2004a, p. 26). I find her argument particularly relevant to this thesis when applied to transsexuals as the transition between male/female and female/male is lengthy and the individual may be rendered lonely through the rare and sensitive nature of gender change. In fact Butler posits that those who venture outside the traditional gender binaries are met with a sense of “radical dislocation” (ibid, p. 27) and even a diminished sense of existence,

³⁶ It is important to note that Butler is clear about the distinction between expression and performance. An expressive action suggests the outward execution of an internal state. A performative action suggests there is no pre-existing identity and there are no true/false, real/fake acts of gender.

potentially leading to depression and other psychological and emotional problems which can further isolate the individual from the community.

Although Butler argues gender is a performance rather than an innate status she emphasizes the individual is not granted the freedom to choose *how* that gender manifests (Butler, 2005; Butler, 2004b). Rather than the subject ‘doing’ (performing) gender, Butler suggests that gender (which is a social construct) ‘does’ the individual (ibid). Given the outward presence of gender (produced by the stylisation of the physical body) it seems logical that it be based on something internal. However, Butler claims this stylisation only creates an illusion of an “abiding gendered self” or initiating gendered soul (Butler, 2004b, p. 114). The action of doing (performing) is actually the effect of the surrounding relevant discourse though it (secondly) may also contribute to the discourse (ibid). This claim is pertinent in gender theory as it disputes gender is centred around internal identity roots (as earlier discourses proposed) and suggests gender is an external, constructed “social temporality” (Butler, 2004a, p. 114).

2.7.3 Butler and specifics of gender performance

To expand on the idea that gender is an act Butler states that performance requires repetition. The repetition has two functions: it a) re-enacts previous performances thus solidifying them further and b) is the re-experience of a set of meanings attached to that performance (ibid). Those meanings are already culturally well established. For example, if a female flicks her hair, she has done this many times previously so it is not a random movement but a regular action (although it may be either deliberate or involuntary) and the very action of flicking her hair carries cultural connotations that

she is female (with long hair being a traditionally feminine accessory). This action is enacted in private and public spaces making it not just a habit but a performance (Butler, 1990).

Furthermore, in *Bodies That Matter* (1993) Butler suggests the performance of gender (the stylisation of the physical body) is the expression of unresolved grief for the sexuality not embraced by the individual (Butler, 1993). She comes to this conclusion by linking the gender performance psychoanalytically with melancholia (which she defines as the unfinished process of grieving) (Butler, 2004d). In *Subjects of Desire* (1987) she writes that negation and melancholia are in fact preconditions required in order for the subject (the individual) to emerge (ibid). Therefore Butler is suggesting that the performance of gender is partly formulated by the sadness associated with the rejection of some sexuality and gender orientations during infancy. However, she claims without this melancholy the performance of gender would be less defined (ibid).

The stylisation of the body (acts, gestures and behaviour) give the illusion that they are springing forth from some organising interior element (the soul), making the soul gendered. However, theories that gender is individually located allow social politics (which actually create the link between anatomy and identity) to be displaced from view. Butler suggests that gender occurs through the individual wanting to feel a coherence with others by adapting and adopting particular behaviours (Butler, 1990). These behaviours then inform the internal parts of the individual (the soul), manifesting on the external (the body) (Butler, 2004d; Butler, 1990). The idea of the

interior, invisible soul “is signified through its inscription on the body” (Butler, 2004d, p. 109), a constant reminder that the body lacks a soul of its own.

Butler also maintains that individuals who don’t perform their gender ‘correctly’ are punished by society and the reason they are punished is because they have made the construction of gender visible (Butler, 2004b). Gender is a cultural construction but society does not want it to be identified as such, investing in the notion that it is naturally assigned. Society prefers this ideology because it further enforces the traditional gender dichotomy, “the restricting frames of masculinity, domination and compulsory heterosexuality” (ibid, p. 115). Those who are a potential threat to this system (transsexuals, intersexuals and homosexuals for instance) are punished by an act that renders them undeserving of genuine human experience – for instance they are labelled sick by the medical fraternity.

Butler also pays tribute to Julia Kristeva’s theories of bodily abjection from *Powers of Horror* (1982). Butler believes there is some truth to the suggestion that homosexuality and variations on the gender dichotomy are so threatening that society rejects them from the community in the same way that the body expels other bodily fluids which cause distress (vomit or pus for example) (ibid).³⁷

³⁷ Julia Kristeva is a Bulgarian-French philosopher whose work on feminism, the semiotic, abjection, intertextuality, linguistics and psychoanalysis have made her an important figure in the areas of critical analysis and cultural theory. As a structuralist philosopher Kristeva’s work often stands alongside theories by Roland Barthes, Claude Levi-Strauss, Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan, while her feminist writing sits alongside works by Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray (Leach, 1970). While I appreciate Kristeva’s contributions to the wider cultural studies field I do not find her work to be totally suitable to this research project - Kristeva’s analysis of bodily functions are insightful and unique but given the time and space constraints of this project it would be difficult to apply the depths of her psychoanalytic discussion here. In addition to this, the films selected for this thesis are centred around the physical body, however gender is the motivating factor, not the visceral response to horror and repulsion (abjection) that Kristeva’s work refers to.

Butler's theories on gender performance have drawn criticism from some. Judith Halberstam (2005) critiques Butler's theory of gender performativity by using the transgender or transsexual person as an example. She states, whilst acknowledging the work of Jay Prosser, that often these people desire to be rendered to something real and natural rather than something constructed or created or performed, flipping Butler's theory on its head. She states that transsexuals "do not want to represent gender artifice" (p.50). Likewise Susan Stryker (2006) comments that the heaviest critique of Butler's performativity theory comes from those who are transgendered and see their gender not as a something which can be chosen and manipulated from day to day, but as something which is utterly inescapable and deeply essential. Furthermore, John Phillips (2006) points out that the transsexual experience throws much of Butler's work on the performativity of gender into disarray because to move between one sex and another is done through physical/biological/anatomical means of hormone replacement and surgery. If a person can change their identity through the physicality of the body it suggests that gender is perhaps biologically rooted, or at least influenced, after all.

2.7.4 Butler, gender performance and sexuality

Butler's theories on cross-dressing (transvestism) and drag also have relevance to this thesis (given that two of the four central characters practice transvestism for the duration of the film). The idea of original gender identity (which Butler has now renounced) is parodied in drag. Some feminists consider drag and cross-dressing to be degrading to women. However, Butler thinks the relationship between the imitation and the original is more complex than mockery or subjection (Butler, 2004b).

At first it would seem that drag is about the clear distinction between the anatomy (reproductive organs) of the individual and the external performance of the opposite gender (a penis and testicles juxtaposed with the outward appearance of a woman for example). Butler argues instead that there are three dimensions to consider – the anatomical sex, the gender identity and the gender performance (ibid). If the anatomy differs from the gender identity and both differ from the gender performance then the act of cross-dressing signals discordance between all three dimensions.

Butler suggests drag highlights the artificial nature of gender by revealing the separate elements coming together in one person. This is especially relevant to this thesis because these ideas can be applied when considering *TransAmerica* and *Boys Don't Cry*, in which the characters are constantly cross-dressing. It could however, be argued that all four non-traditionally gendered characters within this thesis exhibit discordance between anatomy, identity and performance, regardless of whether they engage in cross-dressing. I think the discordance that Butler refers to between these separate elements is likely to inform the on-screen portrayal of two of the four central characters who challenge the male/female gender binary.

2.7.5 Critique of Butler - Acknowledging the unacknowledged

One of Butler's most frequent criticisms is the suggestion that she is motivated by the institution she works within and deeply interested in the theory but not the lived experience of transsexuals and transvestites (Namaste, 2005; Edwards, 1998). Both Namaste and Dean Spade (2006) acknowledge that while a large amount of academic material about transgender and transsexual people exist there is very little (almost no) inclusion of personal contributions from those who are living as

transsexuals/transgender people. This is why I am now going to include a section of personally based written items in the final section of this review of literature. I consider the lived experience of those who defy gender normalcy to be very valuable. For research purposes (a comprehensive range of material) and for a thorough, respectful understanding of the issue and the people involved, I now include a discussion on the experiences of writers who do not conform to the traditional gender norms.

2.8 The lived experience

The first of the writers I wish to acknowledge and include is Morgan Holmes, an individual who was born biologically intersexual and had her ambiguous genitalia operated on at a young age. She grew up as female and in her teenage years announced her bi-sexuality. Holmes feels the American medical profession encouraged the “mutilation” of her body:

I want to write about stolen physical potential, emotional harm, and the loss of years within a potentially legitimate identity/community of queer and intersex culture. It is a robbery and loss that I share with a mostly silent and invisible population (Holmes, 1998, p. 221).

Holmes refers to herself as an ‘intersexual’. Use of this term perhaps allows an intersexual to reclaim some control that was taken through non-consented surgery:

Having my genitals mutilated has made me no less intersexual; it has merely made me a mutilated intersexual – just as a woman whose genitals are mutilated is a woman, as a person who loses a limb is still a human being (Holmes, p. 225).

Holmes feels that her intersexual state was in fact her ‘true’ state of being, where she was whole. Having been operated on, her sense of self, safety and identity was lost a long time before, when others made the choice about who and what she was.

Cheryl Chase (1998) was born with both sets of genitalia and was surgically operated on at the age of 18 months. The operation determined that she would live as a woman. As an adult Chase (a lesbian) labelled herself an ‘intersexual’ to avoid the clinical term ‘hermaphrodite’ which she found ironic; “[The word] reinforces the notion that hermaphroditism is a fantasy, not your neighbour, your friend, your teacher, or – especially – your baby” (p. 206).

The process of becoming and existing as transsexual or transgendered is often isolating and lonely. Chase solidifies this observation when recalling her own life path:

I learned that other lesbians existed, that they somehow managed to live and love women. Somehow I would find them; there was a community where my lesbianism would be understood and welcome. No such help was available to reclaim my intersexuality. The only images I found were absolutely pathologised case histories in medical texts (p. 206).

Chase is not the only intersexual to receive such treatment - about one in 2000 infants is born with an “anatomy that refuses to conform to medical preconceptions of ‘male’ and ‘female’” (ibid, p. 208). The medical profession is rarely held accountable for the predicament of intersexual people, with Chase stating that, “silence has been considered evidence of patient satisfaction” (ibid, p. 209). Hence Chase’s experiences

informed her belief that “intersex is a humanly possible but, (in our culture) socially unthinkable phenomenon” (ibid, p. 212).

Diana Courvant (2000) embraced her transgender identity. She discusses her transition from male adolescent to female adult and also talks about her unique style and appearance which was troublesome for many around her. Courvant’s transition took years (this is commonplace) and during this time, as she sat between the gender binaries, she was made aware that society generally refuses to accept someone can be both genders simultaneously (even if the status isn’t permanent). Though she had breasts *and* facial hair, observers would choose to ignore one of these features thinking she couldn’t possibly possess both. Courvant’s story is slightly unusual in the sense that rather than ostracizing her, society chose to selectively acknowledge parts of her – perhaps to categorise and fragment people like Courvant in an attempt to keep the gender binaries intact.

Michael Hernandez (1998) presents a reverse scenario to Courvant’s. Hernandez was born biologically female and in adolescence came out as a lesbian. In his early 20s he crossed the gender lines of modern culture by experimenting with cross-dressing. With the help of hormonal drugs, Hernandez became a man in his 20s and continued to have relationships with women. He was unsure of whether this made him heterosexual, because though now physically male, emotionally and psychologically he continued to identify as being a lesbian woman. Courvant and Hernandez convey that moving between one gender and another (as a transsexual, transgender or transvestite) can be as emotionally alienating as sitting permanently between the two

(as an intersexual). Hernandez suffered hugely from body image issues and negative self esteem relating specifically to his trans-physique. He states:

When I did come to terms with the fact I was transgendered, it was primarily my physical appearance that proved problematic for me ... It was the total and complete dichotomy between how I perceived and felt about myself and how the world at large perceived me. It seemed that no matter what I did, bodies and body images remained constantly on my mind. It played a huge part in my metamorphosis...I worried that my hands were too small or that my hips were too wide (p. 202).

Society adds to the pressure of gender transformation by constantly portraying genders through an inflexible and ideal light. Even though the dominant hegemony refuses to accept individuals outside the gender norms, its rules about ideal physical appearance still extend to those it excludes.

2.9 A conclusion on the literature

The physical and emotional journeys of Holmes, Courvant, Hernandez, Chase and many other transgender, transsexual or intersexual peoples have been difficult. Where medical professionals and society ideally would have provided support, understanding or (at least) open-mindedness this has not always been the case. While the study of gender at a scholarly level in academic institutes is a sign of progress the ancient gender dichotomy remains active in society.

Gender is a problematic subject in theoretical writing because it is yet to develop a centralised and definitive glossary. The language used by one author may differ slightly or entirely from another, making a discourse analysis of gender theory even

more difficult. I started this chapter by acknowledging this issue and have attempted (within the time and space constraints) to generate a set of inoffensive but accurate definitions for this research. My search for definitions helped to clarify the difference between sexuality and gender and the various states of gender a person can occupy (androgyny, intersexual, transsexual, transgender, camp, butch, feminine and masculine for example). The inclusion of texts by Alexander Doty, Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle also illuminated post-gender possibilities through the exploration of queer theory, transgender theory and post-transgender theory. A consideration of the influential works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler formed the basis of my research into the essence of gender, its position in society, its relationship with performance and sexuality and, perhaps most importantly, its connection to power. I also acknowledged the complex interplay between real life (society) and screen media (film) through the system of representation that exists in contemporary culture.

Using the hypothesis that film presents the ideologies of the contemporary society an analysis of selected cinematic texts will reveal the relationship between society and the individual's gender. After reviewing the most relevant academic literature I believe that gender is more ambiguous than it used to be, more theorised than it ever has been and still widely problematic. Though the ideas of philosophers studying gender may contrast and even conflict, they concur that gender studies is a fundamental component of sociological research, a significant aspect of the human condition and a scholarly area of huge importance because gender is a human rights issue (Devine and Wolf-Devine, 2003; Root Aulette and Wittner, 2011).

This thesis examines a selection of Western cinema to reveal the social attitude towards people who have non-traditional genders. However, before moving on to discuss the films I need to outline the methods I will use to generate my data.

Chapter Three: Research Procedures

3.1.1 Methodology – Introduction

A consistent and reliable research project examines its own methods of enquiry. Academic works can be regulated and categorised in a number of ways. For example there are several analytical philosophy modes that could be observed in this thesis, including ontology (which is the study of being and existing and considers how to group entities), noology (which is the study of thought and thought processes) and phenomenology (which is the study of thought and experience through consciousness). The term epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge and separates opinion from valid and reliable research. It is therefore important to acknowledge which epistemological processes this research goes through in order to remain as valid, reliable and objective as possible. This section specifies which line of enquiry and intellectual reasoning is to be used.

3.1.2 Methodology – Line of enquiry

A qualitative line of enquiry is research that does not use statistical (or generally quantitative) means to generate data and create a conclusion (Richards, 2005). Instead qualitative research is usually used in social sciences where data of a richer variety is produced to draw conclusions about the human condition or “lived experience” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 11). Data may include information about feelings, behaviours and social or cultural activities and may be gathered through interviews or observations.

This project utilises qualitative research procedures and the analysis will generate qualitative data as the thesis conforms to the criteria for this line of enquiry: an artistic work (film) is analysed (the contents are interpreted) by a researcher (myself) in an attempt to better understand what the contemporary social attitude is towards non-traditionally gendered people (which is a sociological phenomenon).

3.1.3 Methodology – Intellectual reasoning

This research follows an inductive logic as it begins with specific observations, considers the emergence of patterns and then creates a general conclusion based on these findings (Tolich and Davidson, 2011).³⁸ This is opposed to deductive logic (also known as deductive reasoning) which first begins with a theory and then sets out to prove this theory through analysis. The analysis may or may not confirm the initial theory (ibid).

The inductive process is followed in this instance by first analysing four case studies (contemporary Western films) and recording specific details about the filmic representation of characters who are neither traditionally male or female. These details are then collated and reviewed to detect important themes and key insights, which can then be formulated into a conclusion and confirmation of a theory.

3.2.1 Method – Introduction

Case studies have not always been considered reliable methods of research - academics in the natural sciences have often found case studies to be an inappropriate primary framework for quantitative analysis (Simons, 2009). However, the arts and

³⁸ Sometimes inductive reasoning is referred to as posteriori or empirical logic (while deductive reasoning is also known as priori or non-empirical logic).

social sciences have found case studies to be an effective method, rather than merely a (secondary) confirmatory tool for another (primary) research method. Anthony Graziano and Michael Raulin (2010) consider the case study to be an adequate tool for social science research with a “good deal of flexibility to shift attention to whatever behaviours seem interesting and relevant” (p.44).

Case studies have been used across a variety of social science fields including sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, law and medicine (Simons, 2009) to gain knowledge into individual, group, social, political and/or artistic phenomena (Bickman and Rog, 2003b). According to Helen Simons (2009) a case study exploration considers the particulars of a single case while Leonard Bickman and Debra Rog (2003a) state the case study method is highly suitable when the “phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context” (p. 4). That is to say, a case study (in this instance an individual film) can be used effectively when investigating a social science subject (such as gender) in a complex environment (modern, Western society).

3.2.2 Method - Benefits and varieties of case study

The case study is suitable for a small sample group (four films in this instance) because of its ability to analyse deeply as opposed to broadly (Riessman, 2008; Simons, 2009).³⁹ Bickman and Rog (2003a) state that initially case studies can assist in the set-up of the research design by helping to define what is being investigated, by allowing easy application of theory and by providing an in-depth description of the

³⁹ Given the time and space constraints of this project I have chosen not to define this group of films more specifically than as ‘Western’ texts. Arguably these texts could be broken down into divisions of cultural, national or industrial subgroups but for a thesis of this size and scope I find it more appropriate to make the method (case study) slightly broader so that the analysis section is deeper (while still considering gender within the framework of Western society).

phenomena which, in turn, allows for an appropriate generalisation of results in the conclusion stage (ibid; Graziano and Raulin, 2010).

Bickman and Rog (2003a) also acknowledge that the rich detail of the context (for example a film) will produce multiple variables. A rational research design will therefore employ several case studies to produce evidence, as a single data collection effort is not reliable due to the diversity possible in just one example. For this reason I have chosen to include four case studies in order to generate reliable and valid data.

According to Bickman and Rog (2003b) case studies also assist with the five major components of a research design. A case study method can help to define a study's central questions, its hypothesis, the appropriate units of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions and the criteria for interpreting the findings (ibid). Case studies also assist in the process of analysis by categorising information, recognising patterns and frequency and ordering data in a sequential scheme (ibid, p. 111).

Simons (2009) also considers the ability to “document multiple perspectives” and aptly “(explore) processes and change” to be among the benefits of using a case study method (p. 23) while Riessman (2008) considers the “little things” can lead to “important insights” (p. 194). In other words, case studies are one of the more flexible and adaptable systems of research for social and/or artistic phenomena containing much detail and requiring deep analysis.

3.2.3 Method - Application to this thesis

The recent academic literature surrounding research methodologies suggests that more than one variety of case study research exists. However, there is no definitive consensus on how many or of what nature these varieties are. Simons, for example,

categorises case studies three ways; either they are intrinsic (for specific interest in that particular case), instrumental (where a case helps to explore an issue or gain insight into something else) or collective (where several case studies are investigated to develop a “collective understanding of the issue or question”) (2009, p. 21).

However, Simons also acknowledges the work of Bassey, Merriam and Yin who each consider breaking case studies into even more defined varieties including theory seeking, theory testing, story telling, picture drawing and evaluative (Bassey), descriptive and interpretative (Merriam), explanatory and even meta-evaluation (Yin) (which is the study of an evaluative study) (ibid).

This research uses a combination of Simons’ instrumental and collective case study sub-types. Case studies are used in this thesis to gain insight and understanding into the social status of non-traditionally-gendered people in modern Western societies (through their representation in screen media), making this an instrumental case study. However, several (exactly four) cases are used to generate data, contributing to a generalised analysis and collective understanding of the issue, thereby also making this a collective case study. To elaborate, each of the films in this thesis is an emblematic case study to which a formalist analysis (close reading) of the cinematic apparatus’ can be applied.

3.3.1 Research approach - Introduction

I will be using the close reading technique to approach these texts and in this section I will discuss why I have chosen close reading analysis in preference to other techniques.

Derived from early literary studies in the Soviet Union, close reading is now commonly used in film theory (Corrigan and White, 2009). Close reading technique comes under formalist analysis. Formalist analysis regards the form of the film (camera movement and angles, lighting, sound, casting, costuming and set design) as the principal indicators of overall meaning (ibid).

3.3.2 Research approach - Formalist theory versus other filmic analysis

Authorship (auteur theory) is one comparative method in which a film is considered to “bear the creative imprint of one individual, usually the director” (Corrigan and White, p. 464). Supposedly, auteur films project the intentions and opinions of the director. While this technique may be valuable for some analysis (such as for the films of Woody Allen, Quentin Tarantino or David Cronenberg, who are considered modern day auteur filmmakers) the texts in this thesis are the final product of a collaborative effort of many individuals working on the project in separate pivotal roles.

Genre theory is another filmic analysis which is a “fundamental way of classifying” films with similar structures and compositions (ibid, p. 469). The issue with using this method is that several of the films in this thesis do not sit comfortably into one genre; in fact the films could shift into a contestable new cinematic zone - a genre dedicated to gender. Admittedly some labels fit, such as ‘road movie’ for *TransAmerica*, but my fear in categorising these films via genre is that this will detract from the focus on gender.

Psychoanalysis is a major component of modern film analysis and developed from the foundations of psychiatric practise. According to McGowan (2010) its popularity grew, almost as a direct result of Laura's Mulvey's essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) before becoming predominantly intellectual territory in the 1990s. French psychiatrist Jacques Lacan (1901 – 1981) considered the human psychic experience to be divided by three sections – the imaginary (correlates with images), the symbolic (correlates with language) and the real (correlates with subconscious trauma) (Lacan, 1973/1994). Lacan believed the human mind processes visual material differently after having seen one's own infant image in a mirror. The mirror provides the infant with information about their identity (recognition of themselves), however it is also an illusion (misrecognition) as the reflection is just a mirror image of reality.

Psychoanalytic film theory believes watching a film to be a parallel experience to the mirror stage. Corrigan and White (2009) explain that audience members believe in the illusion of the created world on screen (rather than in a mirror) and develop an affinity with characters through a shared experience (p. 490). The complexity of psychoanalytic theory makes for a very deep analysis of the material. Given the time and space constraints of this project it is not practical to embark on a psychoanalytic path (as a close reading will also provide rich data and a detailed analysis).

A formalist study will allow me to interpret specific details and understand them in relation to the work as a whole. To conclude on how modern society deals with people with non-traditional gender, it is important to comprehend the process of representation each film exhibits (the transition from society to screen) and the final

result (the way the film portrays the central character, revealed through formalist analysis). Analysis is not necessarily the domain of intellectuals and academics, but an accurate and consistent analysis does require commitment to the process and an understanding of the technique.

3.3.3 Research approach - Why analyse?

Most viewers will engage in some sort of analysis when viewing a film but many viewers are unaware of the mental process of textual interpretation (Rossenwasser and Stephen, 2003). Close analysis involves becoming consciously aware of one's personal responses to the text while maintaining a degree of distance to observe detail. A close reading moves beyond personal taste into a more diagnostic area of critical response.

Rossenwasser and Stephen describe five steps in a successful close reading. The first step is the suspension of judgement, where they suggest viewers keep personal tastes on hold until they have understood the text with less subjectivity (although total objectivity is not possible and recognition of this actually contributes to greater objectivity) (Alcoff, 1991; Rosaldo, 1993).

The second step is the recognition of "significant parts" and observation of how these elements fit together (Rossenwasser and Stephen, 2003, p. 3). In the second stage the analyst must recognise that, for example, costuming and character function interact with each other, to contribute to the total meaning. Rossenwasser and Stephen also state that knowledge about the text offers deeper (and more accurate) insight. For this reason I have included a section in the analysis chapter which contextualises each film

by discussing financial details, casting, script history, shooting environment and public reaction to the film (by fans and critics).

Generally texts require some decoding of elements and Rossenwasser and Stephen suggest that the third stage of analysis involves turning implicit details into explicit factors. For example, a director (and the wardrobe department) may choose to allude to the ultra-femininity of a character by having them wear only pink, layered dresses. It is the analyst's job to recognise this stereotypical detail as a symbol and decode it.

The fourth step in the process is to look for patterns. To recognise what is significant Rossenwasser and Stephen recommend viewers look for patterns of repetition, reoccurring binaries or standout anomalies. For example, the reoccurrence of certain costuming styles signals a pattern with particular meaning. Finally, Rossenwasser and Stephen encourage analysts to consider different explanations and think it beneficial sometimes to take a step back from close reading the text and consider the 'bigger picture'.

There are arguments against cinematic close readings. These include the idea that close reading a film takes the enjoyment out of watching it, that close reading a film finds meanings which aren't actually there and, similarly, that some texts aren't designed to be analysed. In response to the first concern I believe that analysing a text leads to greater understanding of it and I find pleasure in both the process and the conclusion of analysis. Rossenwasser and Stephen state that believers of the second argument have trouble co-existing with a text which contains "non-tangible" elements and "in-direct" (though existent) themes (p. 13). I believe that film is subjective

because it is the interpretation of a situation by the creative side of a human mind. Consequentially there is potential for several valid interpretations. Furthermore, though seemingly shallow movies may have no original intention of passing on ‘deep’ ideas, if a viewer perceives these to be present in the film (and is able to justify it), this analysis is acceptable. Ultimately analysis does not discriminate between society’s classification of intellectually valuable entertainment (also known as low-brow or high-brow culture).

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined methodology (qualitative and inductive), method (case study) and research approach (formalist analysis through close reading of the text). I have specifically chosen these modes to fit within the time and space constraints of the project whilst attempting to generate the most accurate, detailed and insightful data possible.

The following chapter conducts an analysis of four films featuring characters who do not conform to the traditional gender binary. A close reading of each film will consider formalist elements including camera and lighting, sound, costume and script function to reveal the social and cultural position that a person with non-traditional gender occupies in society.

Chapter 4: Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies and analyses central cinematic elements within four films with characters of non-traditional gender. These elements include mise-en-scene (camera, lighting, costume, hair and make-up), soundscape (dialogue, foley and soundtrack), postproduction (editing) and narrative character function. I have analysed the films in order based on the central character's gender state. *Boys Don't Cry* and *TransAmerica* each feature a central character who is either a transsexual and/or is practising transvestism, and is in transition between genders. *XXY* and *Orlando* both have a central character who is biologically both male and female – Alex in *XXY* is born an intersexual and Orlando in *Orlando* is an immortal human who has separate experiences as a man and then a woman – changing genders suddenly, completely and mythically in the middle of the film. These two subsets structure the order of the analysis.

Before the analysis of each film I have also included a section which aims to contextualise the work in contemporary society. The first part of these sections includes information about the background of the film, the production details, financial earnings and casting process. The second part of the 'in context' section outlines how the film was received by professional critics, academics and also by fans. This feedback is mainly retrieved from online sources (academic e-journals, e-magazines, public discussion forums and fan websites) and provides a basic summary of the general critical response to the film. Essentially the 'in context' section before the analysis of each film is a broad foundation (which draws some attention to

Western ideologies about gender). This will allow me to place the data from the close-reading on this platform and then build an informed analysis.⁴⁰

4.2a *Boys Don't Cry* in context⁴¹

Background

Boys Don't Cry is co-written and directed by Kimberly Pierce. Initially released to limited screens in the United States in October 1999, and to Europe, the United Kingdom and Australasia in early 2000, *Boys Don't Cry* was placed in the crime-drama genre and rated R for violence which includes a brutal rape scene, physical violence, sexuality, language and drug use. It was initially given a working title of *Take It Like a Man* before being named after a song (*Boys Don't Cry*) by English rock band The Cure (IMDb.com, Inc. 2009b).

With a run time of 118 minutes *Boys Don't Cry* is a short look at the social difficulties people with non-traditional gender experience. The narrative is rough, unapologetic and painful – the central character does not triumph over adversity, making the promotional tagline, “A true story about finding the courage to be yourself” ironic. The message in this story is that in certain factions of society “be[ing] yourself” (if you are non-traditionally gendered) may result in several forms of abuse or even death.

⁴⁰ Before reading the analysis chapter the reader is also encouraged to refer to the appendix which contains a synopsis and more detailed plot breakdown of each film.

⁴¹ Based on the material in the literature review I think it most appropriate to respect each of these characters by acknowledging the gender they identify as/with. I therefore refer to Brandon Teena as “him” although he is anatomically female and I also use his preferred name ‘Brandon Teena’ rather than his legal name ‘Teena Brandon’ for the same reasons.

Production

Boys Don't Cry was critically acclaimed after its earliest screenings and was nominated for two Oscars in the 2000 Academy Awards. Chloe Sevigny received a nomination for her role as Lana in the Best Supporting Actress category, while Hilary Swank was nominated and won the Oscar for Best Leading Actress. Swank was also nominated for her performance as Brandon Teena by five other major awards bodies. Pierce picked up several nominations and wins for writing and directing *Boys Don't Cry* (ibid).

In mid 2000 *Boys Don't Cry* was released on DVD (distributed by Fox Searchlight Pictures and 20th Century Fox). In 2005 it was also released as part of the 25th Anniversary Sundance Film Festival Collection box set alongside other critically celebrated work such as *American Splendor* (2003) and *Real Women Have Curves* (2002). To be considered one of Sundance Film Festival's greatest entries recognises *Boys Don't Cry* as an artistically successful film (ibid).

Two other screened items exist about Brandon Teena – *The Teena Brandon Story* (1998) and an episode of the television investigative documentary series *American Justice* called *The Life and Death of Teena Brandon* (2000). However, neither of these was as critically applauded or widely distributed, as *Boys Don't Cry* (ibid).

The *Boys Don't Cry* shoot took place in Texas where several townships and cities were used. Filming ran between 19th October 1998 and 24th November 1998 (five weeks). Other than the actual circumstances of Brandon's last few months, Pierce is said to have been influenced by some scenes from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) –

particularly when Dorothy first leaves her house and enters technicolour Munchkinland. Pierce mimicked this transition by filming the *Boys Don't Cry* opening shots at the roller skating rink in similar aesthetic style (ibid).

Financial Earnings

Boys Don't Cry was produced on a humble budget of \$(US)2 million⁴² (ibid). Considering that the film played in few cinemas across central America, it was surprising that *Boys Don't Cry* grossed nearly a million dollars over one weekend (2nd April 2000) (ibid). In mid May of 2000 (approximately six months after the initial release) *Boys Don't Cry* had earned over \$11.5 million in cinema takings (ibid). While these numbers are minimal compared to those of blockbusters, *Boys Don't Cry* did financially well for a drama that problematises gender with no Hollywood 'A-listers' involved (although after its success Hilary Swank rose to superstardom).

Casting

Hundreds of lesser-known actresses were considered for the role of Brandon over the three-year casting period (ibid). Chloe Sevigny auditioned for the part of Teena Brandon before Hilary Swank won the role and Sevigny was cast as Lana instead (ibid).

Swank became dedicated to becoming Brandon and immediately started to adapt her physical appearance for the role. One month before the shoot started Swank started living as a transman by strapping her breasts down with bandages and putting socks down her pants to form the illusion of a penis (ibid).

⁴² All monetary figures in this thesis are in American dollars.

Critical Reaction

Judith Halberstam (2005) believes that discussions surrounding Brandon's experiences should be focused less on his individual story and more on the social structures of non-urban communities. She states that to understand the power-relations that occur in *Boys Don't Cry* (which is set in Falls City, Nebraska), an understanding of cultural hierarchy in regards to sexuality and gender is required. Halberstam's discussion of *Boys Don't Cry* considers numerous social elements – poverty and class difference, lack of education, unemployment, racism and sexism – to illustrate that Brandon Teena's story encounters more social issues than gender.

In 2005 David Mermelstein (of *Variety*), wrote that the film industry had become awash with stories about unconventional identities. However, he considers Swank's 2000 Oscar win for her portrayal as Brandon to be one of very few moments when a "hurdle" has been truly overcome. Mermelstein states that it is the storytelling of something non-mainstream to a mainstream audience which suggests Hollywood may have come to accept variances in sexuality. Consequently *Boys Don't Cry* garnered some very favourable reviews upon release and was labelled a "taboo-breaking" piece (Hoberman, 1999).

After viewing the film at the Toronto Film Festival, James Hoberman deems *Boys Don't Cry* to be a "violent nightmare of tabloid truth" based on the innocent beginnings of a "good looking stranger moving to a small town" (ibid). Hoberman notes the dominant use of night scenes that give the film both an inky, nocturnal feeling and what he describes as "velvet, honky tonk" and "glamorous". He describes

the script as “impressively lean”, yet encapsulating the horror of a Greek tragedy to to provide the viewer with a “thoughtful and visceral” cinematic experience..

Hoberman believes Swank provided “a fascinating double performance” as both Brandon in public (who is accepted as a male) and Teena in rare private moments (who doesn’t accept his female self). He also suggests that while Lana falls quickly for Brandon, she subconsciously knows that Brandon is actually a female, or at least, is not entirely male. Either way Lana becomes a symbol of liberal views. Hoberman calls the scene where Lana and Brandon “make love as themselves” a “transcendently sentimental” moment that could have become trite were it not for the meagre script and stellar performances of the cast. Both Lana and Brandon become martyrs for a gender revolution, where the rule breaker (Brandon) is consigned to temporary freedom and then death, and his lover is condemned to watch it.

Susan Stryker (2006) comments that *Boys Don’t Cry* has become “emblematic of the chronic undercurrent in our society of deadly anti-transgender violence” (p. 10).

John Phillips (2006) also acknowledges that this film is clearly more violent than most others which include a character with non-traditional gender. Phillips suggests that (kindled with the fact it is a true story) *Boys Don’t Cry* has “clear socio-political aims” (p.140) to illustrate deep social prejudice existent in small-town America.

After watching *Boys Don’t Cry* Viviane Namaste (2005) wrote a letter to the film reviewer of a local paper requesting that at the bottom of his review he provide the contact details of support organisations for trans-people. The film did get reviewed, the writer was disdainful of the way that Brandon was treated, but he chose not to

publish any details about local support networks. To Namaste this was a clear indication of how much society was willing to acknowledge trans people - they would watch a film about it and they would feel badly for the character who suffered but they didn't want to acknowledge non-traditional gender in their own town.

In 2001 Rachel Swan (of *Film Quarterly*) wrote she “fell in love with Brandon Teena from his first close up” and was probably not the only female viewer to see Brandon as a heartthrob, albeit one with “boyish geekyness”, counterbalanced by “male chivalry” (p. 47). However, Swan is aware there is a certain uncomfortableness in being physically attracted to the Brandon Teena character, considering that in real life and on screen Brandon is actually female. Swan thinks Brandon to be a very convincing male and this therefore throws traditional notions of gender and sexuality into a “flux” (ibid). Moreover, this performance raises the suggestion that gender is only “a dramatic persona” (ibid). Halberstam (2005) acknowledges that the essence of this character (the person which the audience identifies as the protagonist) is an identity formed in separation from the body. Part of that attraction stems from the audiences suspended disbelief that Brandon is male (knowing that biologically he is female) (ibid). Halberstam states that if the film were to show the cracks in his male gender performance then he would rupture the connection between audience and character. In this Butlerian sense safety is reliant on the ‘correct’ performance of masculine gender.

For some audience members the transcendence of genders is distressing and Swan states that one previous solution has been to place the individual into the role of “social misfit” (2001, p. 47). In *Boys Don't Cry*, Pierce avoids this option and instead

portrays Brandon as a likable, innocent character. It is then substantially more difficult for the viewer to see Brandon get hurt and he instead becomes a victim (Swan, 2001) and even a champion for those whose life has been affected by sexual and gender orientation (Halberstam, 2005).

Swan believes the ultimate price Brandon pays for his gender transgression is a symbolic castration where the masculine power (of his penis) is removed by force, condemning Brandon to become penis-less and powerless in his environment. She goes on to say that Brandon's ill treatment by local police authorities (surrounding the rape) is a second blow and subsequent castration for an American citizen supposedly protected by the rules of the state. The ultimate removal of power comes when Nissen and Lotter point a gun towards Brandon, and he dies, staring in the face of a weapon that doesn't discriminate between targets with traditional or non-traditional gender.

Fan Reaction

There appears to be a trend regarding public reaction to *Boys Don't Cry* where those who like the film are fans of Brandon's bravery. These viewers feel strongly about the moral content of the film and often write lengthy and articulate online reviews about social injustices. The other reaction to *Boys Don't Cry* is when the viewer doesn't (particularly) like the film and resultantly chooses not to write about it or engage with it beyond their first screening of it. Resultantly, the internet is full of generally positive reviews and personal responses to *Boys Don't Cry*.

Occasionally a fan talks about the "lesbian relationship" or "lesbian issues" which supposedly dominate the film. While personal interpretations of the text can't be

judged right or wrong, I do not consider *Boys Don't Cry* to be an essentially lesbian story and therefore consider these perceptions to be misunderstandings of the theme at the core of the text - gender.

On the online Internet Movie Database [IMDb] there are over 400 reviews from moviegoers globally who have been compelled to comment on *Boys Don't Cry*. Fan 'flickjunkie-2' from Atlanta describes the film as "poignant and powerful". They discuss the rationale behind the violent reactions of Nissen and Lotter, stating that the central characters were "left with no respite from the emotional vortex" surrounding their lives. Lotter and Nissen found it easier to destroy something (either a person or circumstance) in horrifying circumstances rather than confront their own inhibitions and insecurities about gender. They also believe Pierce to have captured "the essence of rural lower class" America and the raw, emotional drive behind the film (IMDb.com, Inc. 2009b).

Fan 'Dennis Littrell' (also on the IMDb website) is satisfied with Pierce's directorial choices and the emotional impact the film has on the viewer. Dennis Littrell discusses the ways *Boys Don't Cry* makes an individual think about gender, sexuality and human physiology and considers the content to be thought provoking. He speaks highly of the performances of the lead actors Swank, Sevigny and Sarsgaard and is adamant that Swank deserved the Oscar she received for the part. The recognition of the acting talent appears to be a sentiment shared by a number of film viewers regardless of how they felt about *Boys Don't Cry* overall. Dennis Littrell concludes his review when he voices that many audience members will feel uncomfortable watching *Boys Don't Cry*, but regardless it is a "story that needs to be told" (ibid).

On Flixtser.com there are 60, 000 ratings of the film and 85% of those users gave *Boys Don't Cry* a positive rating. Fan 'rayld02' considers it is "a movie worth watching for the younger generation" as there is a "big question of morality" beneath the surface (Flixster Inc., 2009). Rayld02 also states that the relationship between Lana and Brandon in *Boys Don't Cry* "cultivated the theme for self expression and human rights for the third gender" (ibid). Bearing these attributes in mind it would seem appropriate to say that *Boys Don't Cry* is more than a "story that needs to be told" (IMDB.com, Inc. 2009b), but is also a story that needs to be heard.

Conclusion on Reactions

The central theme which emerges in response to *Boys Don't Cry* is shock at the substantial amount of violence in the film. Professional critics, academics and fans appear to be genuinely affronted by the brutality inflicted on Brandon Teena. Few responses from professional critics and fans theorise on the reason for that violent reaction (although the consensus is that it is unjustified) and resultantly the social structures of power (such as patriarchy) are not revealed in many public forums relating to *Boys Don't Cry*. This film was an easy choice to include in the corpus – it covers transvestism, transgenderism and potential transsexualism while explicitly revealing one set of social reactions to non-traditional gender.

4.2b *Boys Don't Cry* - Camera, lighting and editing

Boys Don't Cry plays on the mystique surrounding gender ambiguity by opening the first scene with an extreme close-up of an anonymous person's eyes in the rear vision mirror of a car. The absence of makeup, the dark lighting and the tight frame mean

the viewer is unable to detect whether this character is male or female. Scene two depicts Brandon's boyish aesthetic through mid shots and close ups of his new haircut. These opening sequences set the foundation for the rest of the film where Brandon is almost always in a state of transvestism. Only scene 20 reveals how Brandon gets ready for the day by using close ups of him inserting a tampon, strapping down his breasts and stuffing his underwear. This is one of the few moments the audience is explicitly reminded that Brandon is *performing* as a male. Not only does this reference Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity but reinforces the lonely and secret existence Brandon has.

In scene 12 Brandon first sees Lana. The cut lingers on a close-up of Brandon's face as she walks past and Lana's point-of-view shot tracks past Brandon in slow motion. The editing here signals that this is an important moment – the meeting of the protagonist and his love interest. During the karaoke sequence the camera zooms slowly from a wide shot into a close up of Lana and the reverse shot of Brandon. The editing and camera work signals the relationship developing between these two characters (a relationship that may change some of the isolation Brandon feels). From scene 16 onwards mid and long shots capture Lana and Brandon in the same frame – creating an aesthetic couple out of them. Their romantic feelings for each other are visualised through framing which places them within close physical proximity. When Brandon leaves to go back to Lincoln, Lana wistfully watches him retreat, viewed through a long shot as he moves away back into his own isolated space. Upon Brandon's return to Falls City he stares up at Lana in the factory window (scene 31). The low angle of Lana and the high angle of Brandon suggest Lana's power over Brandon – as if he has been enchanted by her. However, the enchantment is reversed

in scene 32, when Brandon and Lana become intimate, where high angle shots and slow editing linger on Lana in orgasm. Their intimacy is renewed in scene 56 when they entwine in the back seat of a car. Both Lana and Brandon are viewed in close up, while Brandon maintains some control over the situation by being on top in the dominant sexual position – a suggestion perhaps that masculinity (even only the performance of it) is dominant in sexual relationships.

The final scenes of *Boys Don't Cry* present Brandon and Lana's relationship as something unique and mystical. Scene 79 starts with a wide shot of the outhouse that Brandon is sleeping in. The building is glowing white under the moonlight and Lana enters the doorway, half covering Brandon's lit body in shadow. The editing is slow and gentle as they have sexual intercourse and uses a cross dissolve to indicate the passing of diegetic time.

Moments of action and danger are depicted through specific camera techniques and editing style. For example, handheld camera shots are used for the fight in the bar (scene eight), the truck riding party (scene 14) and most effectively in the scene at Lana's house when the group has learned of Brandon's true identity (scene 59 – 62).

When the camera is handheld the constant movement reflects the anxiety Brandon feels within the situation. Brandon's anxiety is warranted given society's reaction to things which are different (including non-traditional gender). When Lana and Brandon talk quietly in the bedroom (scene 61) the camera's movement is considerably stiller but the movement becomes frantic again as John and Tom pin Brandon to the bathroom wall and expose him. Lana screams to leave "him" (Brandon) alone, followed by three still shots of Brandon in the target of a spotlight.

He faces the camera directly (breaking the fourth wall) thus emphasizing Lana's belief in Brandon's male identity as a momentous moment.

Arguments and danger are also emphasized through fast editing and camera angles. As John and Brandon begin to argue in scene 26 the editing speeds up to cut more quickly between close-ups of each character. John's rage (typical of his character) is portrayed through wide shots where he pulls each of his friends from the car. In scene 27 Tom and Brandon sit around an open fire. The conversation is caught through neutral angles before Tom stands threateningly over Brandon with a knife, Tom captured in a low angle and Brandon from a high angle to reveal the power inequality between them. Though this tense moment dissolves it foreshadows the power - through patriarchal violence - that Tom uses later in the film.

The final moments (scene 83) are also marked by symbolic editing choices and camera angles. Inside Candace's house Tom kills Brandon, shooting him at close range in the head. The action becomes slow motion as Brandon slides down the wall, leaving a trail of blood behind him. A high angle of Lana tending to Brandon's body on the floor portrays the absolute power John and Tom hold in that moment. They use this power to shoot Candace as well, before leaving the house. A Connellian analysis (1987) suggests that a deep, underlying fear of Brandon's non-traditional gender provoked this response.

Many scenes in *Boys Don't Cry* are also dominated by darkness. For example, the long shots in the alley retain the dark lighting that was present in the bar (scene nine), the darkness at the party is only penetrated by car headlights (scene 14) and the police

chase is done at night (scene 24 and 25). This persistent darkness creates intensity through a sense of claustrophobia. The darkness refers to an impending doom that film characters who defy the traditional gender binary encounter. Similarly, when Brandon is in trouble with the police (scene 33 and 44), the frame changes from a comfortable mid shot to a close up. The tightening of the frame symbolises the encroaching restriction from the law.

A combination of high angles and close ups are also employed to depict psychological trauma. Brandon tells the story of his rape in flashback from the police station; scene 65 shows Brandon leaving the house and being attacked by John and Tom on the lawn in a wide shot. The width of the shot reveals the scuffle and how overpowered Brandon is by two men. The camera work in these attack and rape scenes confirm Foucault's (1981) belief that violence is an instrument of patriarchal power. The camera moves into an extreme wide, high angle of the abandoned car park in which Brandon is raped. The camera work reveals the helplessness of a person with non-traditional gender when attacked by patriarchy's violent enforcers. The rape scene uses close up high angles of Brandon as he is raped by John on the back seat of the car. The camera stays in tight on Brandon's face as he experiences the pain and trauma of John entering him vaginally. Outside Tom bends Brandon over the car boot, pulls off his clothing and rapes him anally. Again the camera remains close to Brandon's face as he is repeatedly hurt by Tom's thrusts. The image of Brandon's face fades and is replaced by the mid close up of Brandon in the police station retelling the story.

A close-up of Brandon's back opens scene 74. His skin is bloody and dirty and the shot pulls out to reveal his whole body is in the same state. Scene 75 uses a close-up of Brandon to show a single tear on his cheek as he tells the police officer that he is having a sexual identity crisis. It would seem that close ups in these instances are deployed to emphasize the realism, fear and acute pain the individual who has non-traditional gender experiences. This is the punishment Butler refers to when the performance of gender is not adhered to (Butler, 2004b).

4.2c *Boys Don't Cry* - Dialogue and sound

Boys Don't Cry frequently utilises electric guitar and drums. The music varies from punk to country, pop and even 1980s techno, but it always maintains high volume and a steady beat. This type of music infuses well with the rough lifestyle depicted on screen and aurally works with foley such as flames crackling, car tyres and police sirens. The soundtrack is a mix of diegetic and non-diegetic songs. For example scene 12 has Lana, Kate and Candace singing karaoke of "The Bluest Eyes in Texas" which repeats in the closing credits of the film (out of the diegesis). Scene 54 links the film title with the soundtrack when it uses the song "Boys Don't Cry" as Lana and Brandon first begin to engage erotically.

However, scenes of particular emotional intensity (for example sex between Lana and Brandon, scene 79) avoid the use of music and instead use the tinkling of chimes. This noise projects a mystical quality and informs the viewer that something emotional, perhaps even spiritual, is occurring on screen. It's possible this noise also references Brandon's unique identity as a person of non-traditional gender. The rape (scene 69) is covered by low synthetic notes. These notes subtly underlie the trauma

of the event with repetitive minor-key tones which intonate sadness, fear and trauma. Likewise, the horror of scene 83 is aurally reinforced when Tom stabs Brandon repeatedly (already shot) with his knife. The sound of the knife entering Brandon's torso and Lana's guttural scream, are a disturbing soundscape in the final moments. This sound work reinforces Foucault's belief (cited in Halperin, 1995) that the perverse adult is punished under the regime of patriarchy.

Connell suggests that patriarchy fears and distrusts those who defy its hegemony. This fear (which manifests as anger) is evident in the dialogue of several characters in *Boys Don't Cry*. In scene seven several attackers run after Brandon yelling, "You fucking dyke! You freak!" before Lonny looks dubiously at Brandon and says, "You are not a boy, that's what went wrong!" Entire personalities change when the truth about Brandon emerges; for example Lana's mother (scene 59) voices her opinion of Brandon, "I invite you into my home and you expose my daughter to your sickness!" thereby confirming Foucault's theory (cited in Fillingham, 1993) that those who are different are not only ostracised but pathologised. In contrast, Lana reveals an accepting attitude when she finds out in scene 53 and says, "It's your business. I don't care if you're half monkey or half ape" and then proceeds to get Brandon out of jail. She also screams "Leave *him* alone!" at John and Tom in scene 62. This moment is very important as it signifies Lana understands that despite his female organs Brandon Teena is a male. Brandon becomes a martyr when he resolutely says, with a gun pointed at him, "You were right about me [John]. I just keep getting back up".

4.2d *Boys Don't Cry* - Costume, hair and make up

Throughout the film Brandon maintains the same hairstyle – a short back and sides with hair slightly longer on top. He wears no make up and only has small changes to costume. He wears straight denim jeans with a brown leather belt and a flannel shirt tucked in. This attire presents him in a genuine way – putting forth a stereotypical image of a decent young man from the Midwest. Brandon also wears plain white men's underwear rather than anything more fitted or effeminate. At several stages (after the bar fight and the rape) Brandon's face has cuts, scratches or bruising but he doesn't cover these up with make up and is actually proud of the initial black eye. While this costuming seems basic it actually contributes to Brandon's low-key, laid back performance of masculinity.

It is possible that Brandon's power is linked to his state of dress. For example, in an unclothed state Brandon seems to lose power when his biological identity is revealed beneath. Scene 20 shows Brandon leaving the bathroom with a towel around his body, then wrapping a wide bandage several times around his chest to flatten his breasts and inserting a sock down his pants to form the illusion of a penis. This scene highlights Brandon's vulnerability, as his identity (and safety) relies on this rudimentary daily process. In response Brandon's forced nakedness in the rape sequence contributes to his total loss of power. John pulls Brandon's jeans and underwear down in the backseat of the car and Tom pulls off his shirt and singlet before he rapes him up against the car. By the end of the rape he is laying, nearly naked on the ground, compared to Tom and John who are still fully dressed. Brandon is empowered through his ability to create his own identity, but that power relies on remaining physically covered and on keeping the knowledge of his identity a secret. In this sense

Foucault's thesis (cited in Sawicki, 1991) that knowledge and power are intricately linked (so much so that they can not be considered separately) is brought forth at this point in the text. Butler's assertion (1990) that failing to perform gender correctly will lead to punishment is also evident here – although it's not clear whether Brandon is punished for failing to perform as a woman or punished for being not quite male enough to match his masculine performance.

4.2e *Boys Don't Cry* - Script function

Boys Don't Cry alters Brandon's power depending on who is in the scene with him. The opening shot (eyes in the rear-vision mirror) suggests his unique and mysterious identity. Brandon is in control of his life (or at least his own appearance) in the opening scenes, giving him power and independence. Brandon exercises his ability to self-modify and dictates what other people see when they look at him, constructing his gender identity in a way that Butler would suggest is performative. This seamless performance (and therefore control) lasts two thirds of the film until his biological identity is revealed in scene 62. Furthermore Butler suggests that this revealing of Brandon's 'true' gender angers the surrounding society because it also reveals the performative nature of gender (in Brandon's case masculinity) and the existence of gender as a social construct.

Though Brandon is able to manipulate his body aesthetically he is still trapped within the confines of his female body. Despite this, or maybe because of it, Brandon is a skilled lover in scene 32 as he gets Lana to orgasm through oral sex. His pursuit of relationships with women also makes him the role of a dominant male seeking out female companionship. Brandon also performs as the traditional knight-in-shining-

armour when he comes to Candace's defence in the bar (scene eight). These characteristics also contribute to Butler's (1990) thesis that gender (male in this case) is merely a performance; Brandon performs masculinity through these acts so it is assumed by society that he is male in every regard.

Brandon loses power when he shares his knowledge about his identity in scene 53. Lana responds – not by taking that power – but by sharing it between them when she accepts and loves him. The rape sequence removes the freedom that Brandon possessed at the start of the film. The power of his disguise (kept intact through his secret knowledge) disappears in the violence surrounding his rape, so that he is spiritually and literally beaten by the dominance of Tom and John. Furthermore Brandon is maltreated by the police, increasing his trauma as he becomes the target of 1990s police naivety. Brandon is utterly vulnerable to the nurse (scene 74), as he appears emotionally and physically wounded. His function here is to convey the vulnerability of the human body and spirit and also to portray the suffering Foucault (1981) and Butler (1990) claim minority groups are subjected to. In scene 83, John is armed with a gun and Tom is armed with a knife, therefore retaining absolute power over the situation with physical force. This violence (a combination of masculine strength, patriarchal self righteousness and psychotic brutality) easily over-power Brandon and four other (female) characters, emphasizing again Foucault's belief (cited in Rabinow, 2000) that violence is just one instrument of patriarchal fear and anger.

Brandon's function in death (as a martyr and a champion for the trans community) is arguably more effective than his living goals (to live life independently and freely).

Through his death *Boys Don't Cry*, based on a true story, reaches out of the diegesis, revealing to the audience the suffering of those who are different – specifically those who don't conform to the hegemonic gender binary. Though the level of violence and trauma is considerably less so than in *Boy's Don't Cry*, *TransAmerica* (2005) also reveals the struggles of a non-traditionally gendered person living in modern American society.

4.3a *TransAmerica* in context

Background Information

Written and directed by Duncan Tucker, *TransAmerica* (2005) is rated R and spans several genres including comedy, drama and road movie. Supported by the small Hollywood company Belladonna Productions, *TransAmerica* was overseen by writer/director Tucker from pre-script to post-production stages. The initial idea came to him when he lived with intersex actress Katherine Connella for several months (IMDb.com, Inc. 2009a). *TransAmerica* is received best by an audience prepared to confront the film's gender issues, as well as sexual content, nudity, swearing and drug use.

Production

The shoot took place in Arizona and in New York. Closely placed locations and a domestic-only shoot allowed Tucker to maintain the \$1 million budget he'd been given (ibid). Usually film production companies will retain items of clothing or set design so that in the event the film becomes popular, those items may be sold (or kept by the production company) as valuable fan paraphernalia. It was assumed *TransAmerica* would not have an especially strong fan base or receive recognition

from an industry body as high up as the Academy Awards panel. As a result, when production finished most of the wardrobe and props were donated to charity or given to thrift stores (ibid).

Promotional items for *TransAmerica* feature the tagline, “Life is more than the sum of its parts”, encouraging viewers to consider their own realities (ibid). Distributed by the Weinstein Company,⁴³ *TransAmerica* was marketed to the independent movie lover - a small niche market of consumers who enjoy a challenging film that doesn’t necessarily prescribe to the happy-ending storylines of many contemporary American films.

However, the DVD promotion of *TransAmerica* is particularly revealing about the consumer market. There were two different DVD covers released in 2006 containing first the regular edition and then the wide-screen edition of the film. The original cover features a large, central photo of Bree (in character) with long, straight brown hair, conservative clothing, minimal make-up and an emphasis on the slightly masculine bone structure that helped make Huffman so convincing in the role. The second cover also features Felicity Huffman, although she looks very dissimilar to her *TransAmerica* character Bree, and more like her *Desperate Housewives* character Lynette Scavo. This second cover shows Huffman with blonde hair, earrings, make-up and a pink, low-backed, sleeveless t-shirt. At no point in *TransAmerica* does Bree have this physical aesthetic and yet the cover of the wide-screen DVD promotes this image as integral to the film. Potentially this suggests that the Weinstein Company

⁴³ *TransAmerica* was the first film that brothers Bob and Harvey Weinstein (who form the Weinstein Company) didn’t produce in association with production studio Miramax. Essentially this may be viewed as the first truly independent film the Weinsteins indorsed (The Weinstein Company, 2012).

felt a mainstream image was required to attract a mainstream viewer into purchasing a film about transgressing gender boundaries.

Financial Earnings

TransAmerica was allocated a budget of roughly \$1 million. Opening weekend in the USA (5th March 2006) earned \$1, 452, 303, equalling the budget in just two days and providing profit from then on (ibid). When in cinemas, *TransAmerica* usually played on several hundred screens across the country (such as on opening weekend) but was never allotted the 2000-3000 screens given to blockbusters. Also screening during the opening weekend were action movies *16 Blocks* (2006) and *Ultraviolet* (2006) (ibid). Considering the competition *TransAmerica* faced during the opening month, its eventual gross of over \$9 million is impressive for a dramatic, (dark) comedy about gender transgression.

Casting

Prior to winning the role in *TransAmerica* Huffman was a steadily employed actress, though not a well-known Hollywood name and was generally outshone by her Oscar winning husband, William H. Macy. Her roles up to that point had included several guest spots on television series including *Law and Order* (1992 and 1997), *Chicago Hope* (1997), *The West Wing* (2001) and *Frasier* (2003). However, it was Huffman's exposure to massive audiences in *Desperate Housewives* (2004-2012) and positive critical reaction to her *TransAmerica* performance that now sees her appearing on top rating celebrity talk shows *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* (2005-2009), *The Late Show with David Letterman* (2006-2009) and *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (2005-2008) as an 'A-list' celebrity (ibid).

Huffman worked hard to portray Bree with emotional and physical accuracy. Voice coach Andrea James was employed specifically to teach Huffman how to obtain the slightly monotone, compressed voice of a person half way between male and female vocal chords. James even encouraged Huffman to stay in her ‘Bree-voice’ all day while shooting (even in breaks and meal times) to maintain the sound or risk losing the accent during a take. The wardrobe department also made a prosthetic penis for Huffman to wear during filming to create the silhouette of a male body, although her angular facial structure and slim body also make her a convincing MTF transsexual. As with the voice training Huffman took the physical requirements on board wholeheartedly and nicknamed the prosthetic penis ‘Andy’ (ibid).

Critical Reaction

TransAmerica received a reasonable level of critical recognition amongst film reviewers and awards bodies. It was nominated for an Academy Award in the original song category (for Dolly Parton’s *Travelin’ Thru*) and for Best Actress in a Leading Role (for Felicity Huffman). There were 12 other nominations and 26 wins from various other awards bodies including categories for best independent feature, costume design and screenplay. According to Derek Elley (of *Variety*) *TransAmerica* was the “one standout” of the 2005 Berlin Film Festival (Elley, 2005) and opened to “rapturous reviews” (Ross, 2005).

Much of the praise surrounding *TransAmerica* is aimed at Felicity Huffman for her performance as Bree. Blair (2005) commented on the “Oscar buzz” surrounding her performance in the film, atop of the Emmy Award she had already received. Huffman felt that Bree was a “dream role” for exercising her acting talents but never relaxed

into the character and was constantly wary of “blow(ing) it on so many levels” (Blair, 2005). Perhaps Huffman’s determination to remain focused helped her engage with the role stating, “I read every article I could get my hands on, I saw every documentary I could and I read every biography and autobiography I could find” (ibid). She appears to understand the predicament transsexual or intersexual individuals face when she states, “Either you feel alienated from yourself or you actually do it (sexual reassignment surgery) and you’re alienated from society...the fact that there are two genders and you have to choose between them is ridiculous” (ibid).

Overall critics seemed impressed with the film. In a 2005 *Variety* review Eddie Cockrell described *TransAmerica* as the cross-country road adventures of a “persnickety transsexual” and her teenage son (Cockrell, 2005). Cockrell seemed amused and pleasantly surprised by the unpredictable tone of *TransAmerica*, calling it “tartly off-colour and ultimately touching” (ibid). What’s more, Cockrell suggested that writer/director Duncan Tucker take a “big screen bow” for the unlikely “genre bending” success of a film about gender. Cockrell suggested that Tucker’s talents lay in his ability to cast actors who fit the tone of the movie and then allowed them creative freedom to explore their character. He described Huffman as “spectacular” playing the “complex” role of Bree, while Kevin Zegers conveys a depth of character that other less able actors would have been able to bring to the “clichéd” troubled teenager.

Stephen Mooallem (2005) (of *Interview*) also gave high praise to the performances of Huffman and Zegers, stating that Zegers “turns in a complex portrayal” while

Huffman is “flat-out incredible...playing a prissy woman who just happens to have been born with a man’s body”. Ben Kenigsberg (2005) (of *The Village Voice*) stated Huffman portrayed Bree with “gusto” and thought Tucker did well not to fall into the “trannies-are-people-too message” (Kenigsberg, 2005). However, he comments that *TransAmerica* is pleasant “even without reaching much of a destination”, leaving the viewer satisfied but not entirely content with the plot ending (ibid).

Production and postproduction don’t go critically discredited with Crockwell commending Mark White’s production design, which “conveys the cluttered conservative charm of middle America” and David Mansfield’s musical score, which is reasonably varied, containing for example, Chopin pieces and tunes from *The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band* (Crockwell, 2005).

Cockrell was confident that *TransAmerica* would find success in the intellectually-elite global niche. In accordance with his prediction *TransAmerica* went on to be picked up by independent film finance company ContentFilm (Dawtre, 2006). ContentFilm had suffered a difficult economic period in the mid 2000s, but was boosted in 2005 with the reintroduction of various, seasoned directors and several dramatic, low budget storylines. Essentially *TransAmerica* was one of the independent projects to benefit from ContentFilm’s new energy and, in turn, inflated its reputation as a producer of quality, critically acclaimed cinema (Dawtre, 2006).

Rene Bastian and Linda Moran head the small film company Belladonna Productions that supports independent features such as *TransAmerica*. Moran made the comment that producing low budget, independent films “sure isn’t easy” but felt it helped to

work closely within a small, loyal team (Ross, 2005). After the release of *TransAmerica*, *Variety Magazine* rated Bastian and Moran as two of the top ten up-and-coming American producers. Duncan Tucker commented that Bastian and Moran were successful in the industry because of the “creative freedom” they grant the director while “still having a thorough knowledge of how a movie gets made” (Ross, 2005).

Finally, Nicole Gagne (2006) (of *Cineaste*) was also impressed with Huffman’s portrayal of Bree and Tucker’s treatment of the script. She does have doubts about some of the choices Tucker made in his script believing it was unnecessary to employ stereotypes such as Bree’s “controlling mother and ineffectual father” or the gay “hustling” son of a transsexual parent. Gagne feels that the film compromises on some of the most important themes. For example she thinks that Tucker is more interested in Toby’s acceptance of Bree, rather than Bree’s acceptance of herself (a notable observation in the context of this thesis). Gagne is of the opinion that the story has been told “from the outside in”, rather than from the inside out meaning the script was not written nor the film directed by a transsexual, although it was about one. Despite these criticisms she concludes, “*TransAmerica* is that rare accomplishment in American cinema – an entertaining and enjoyable film that treats its queer characters with affection and honesty” (Gagne, 2006).

Fan Reaction

Despite appealing to the minority transgender community, *TransAmerica* has not appeared to pick up any particularly stringent fan followings. While transsexual

peoples may be fans of the film, their interest is not exhibited in cyber space as most modern fan groups now choose to express their interest through.

Those people online who have written fan comments or reviews about *TransAmerica* do appear to fall into a similar bracket of strong intellectual ability (though none reveal themselves as transsexual or transgender people). Most positive reviewers of the film (who I will call fans) are able to articulate what they liked or disliked about the film and why this is important to them. Fan ‘gargamel0077’ from the CinemaClock website commented that, “Huffman is eerily brilliant in the film and touches on the awkwardness of family involvement and acceptance” (Cinema Clock Canada Incorporated, 2006). Gargamel0077 went on to say that *TransAmerica* is “a very intelligent film” and awarded it 8/10. Fan ‘killertomato23’ (also from the CinemaClock website) admired the emotional strength of the film stating, “*TransAmerica* succeeds because of the humanity of its characters” (2006). Killertomato23 gave *TransAmerica* 10/10 and vowed to buy the DVD upon its release later that year.

Essentially, fans of *TransAmerica* seem to enjoy the subtle humour, downplayed stylistic treatment of the script and the access the film grants into intelligent discussion about gender and sexuality. Beneath the plot about gender ambiguity is a story of someone who struggles for societal approval and self-acceptance, and to varying degrees each viewer can relate to it.

Conclusion on Reaction

Professional critics and fans concur on the excellent performance delivered by Felicity Huffman in *TransAmerica*. She is consistently praised for her dedication to accuracy and her honest portrayal of the transsexual existence. However, in the majority of these discussions regarding performance, barely any writers refer to the triple layered gender phenomena in *TransAmerica*; Huffman (a woman) is performing as a man (formerly Stanley) who is performing as a woman (Bree). Reviewers seem generally unaware this complex negotiation of gender portrayal makes Huffman's work particularly inspired and resultantly the implication of the performative nature of gender (as theorised by Butler) does not make its way into public discussions about *TransAmerica*. I chose to include *TransAmerica* in this research because it clearly covers transsexualism and provides an interesting comparison to *Boys Don't Cry* (which is notably heavier in tone).

4.3b *TransAmerica* - Camera, lighting and editing

The first shots of *TransAmerica* are a series of close ups with quick editing although the application of pink make up informs the viewer that this is a feminine beauty routine. Butler (1990) considers this regimen both a contribution to the performance of femininity (aesthetically revealed to the world later) and a performance in itself (as the routine is repetitive and undertaken everyday). Eventually Bree's face is revealed in the mirror - this first scene depicting the gender transformation.

Bree's performance of femininity is also depicted in wide interior shots of her pink-decorated house, her fake pink nails touch the record player in a close up (scene eight) and a long shot shows her moving daintily around men on public steps (scene nine).

Bree's preoccupation with her gender appearance is enhanced in the presence of male characters – highlighting further the performative nature of gender. For example in scene 65 as Toby and the hitchhiker run wildly into the lake, Bree is confined to a mid close up as she watches, unmoving, from the shore while the following morning a medium-long shot displays her body language as she waves girlishly at Calvin (scene 71) while before descending hesitantly into roadside bushes (scene 73). These instances all reinforce Butler's theory (1990) that gender is performed. In fact Bree seems to be 'over doing' her performance of femininity as she fears a less distinct display of femininity will reveal discord between her gender performance and anatomy.

The audience is reminded of Bree's MTF transsexual state when a long shot shows her readjusting her penis beneath her nightdress (scene four), when she sits down on Toby's bed with spread legs (scene 13) or when a child asks Bree what gender she is (scene 46). These shots instil an underlying sense that - as Butler posits (1990) - Bree (the female) constructs her identity (as female) through the performance of femininity. Butler also suggests that these three scenes are faintly comical because they reveal the discordance between gender performance, gender identity and anatomy – in other words Bree's performance is not quite seamless.

Bree's transformed aesthetic contributes to her power in certain relationships – as with Brandon Teena her secret knowledge of her identity provides her with some control over the situation. This observation also reinforces Foucault's theory that power requires a person to activate it and that power is actually about power relations (as cited in Halperin, 1995). For example, at Mary Ellen's house (scene 56 and 57)

Bree remains the focus of the frame, keeping her secret from Toby by maintaining the appearance. At her parents house Bree and Elizabeth engage in a fight where, for example, in scene 84, the viewer understands that Bree is more powerful as she enters the room, commanding a wide frame from a low angle. In the final scene the camera work portrays the fluctuating power between Bree and Toby; Bree moves a lot within the frame (making her proactive) while Toby is still in his seat. The camera follows Bree, from a suggestive low angle, when she berates Toby before departing with a neutral angle mid shot of them both.

The camera work and editing in *TransAmerica* also portray the mother-child relationship between Bree and Toby. When Bree first sees Toby (scene 11) a close up conveys her shock while in reverse mid close up Toby keeps his head lowered. These shots are symbolic of the relationship – Bree, able to see Toby clearly but Toby not seeing the true identity of Bree (who, as Foucault suggests, maintains power intrinsically through her unique knowledge [cited in Sawicki, 1991]). When Bree and Toby are travelling in the car they are often shot through the windscreen (in a mid two shot). This angle depicts the physical proximity between them and the nature of their interaction. For example, fast alternating close ups are used for an argument and then a mid shot when violence erupts between them (scene 35). A mid shot captures Toby leaning out the passenger window while Bree, in the driver's seat, tells him off (scene 53) and the following day a two mid shot (from the windscreen and the rear windscreen) creates the suggestion of unity and development in their relationship (scene 58 and 59). The same unity is shown in scene 66 when a wide shot depicts Bree and Toby sitting on the back of a truck together. Keeping Butler's (1990) theory of performativity in mind this camera work is ironic and revealing; it suggests a

growing mother-child relationship (while Bree is actually Toby's father) and also highlights that gender roles (such as the maternal role) can be performed if the body is culturally inscribed with maternal meaning (2004b).

Bree's increasing sense of responsibility as a mother is shown through lengthy close ups of her face. For example, when violence occurs between Toby and his stepfather the edit covers the action but also catches Bree's reaction as she realises her mistake. The same technique is used the following morning when the shot lingers on Bree as she realises that she must take some responsibility (scene 32), when Toby tells Bree he knows she is transsexual (scene 63) and when Bree hesitantly explains that she is his father (scene 90). This camera work is perhaps a reference to Sandra Bem's first lens of gender structure (polarisation) (1993) which states there is an inevitable difference between the sexes – that ultimately the female (whether biologically female or not) takes on the role of caregiver and nurturer in the domestic sphere. In turn this reinforces Butler's theory that gender is administered by the performance of it rather than biology or anatomy (1990).

The power struggle between Bree and the (Eurocentric) medical profession is also exhibited through camera work. Foucault's theory (cited in Rabinow, 2000) that the state uses hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and examination to enforce anatomo-political power is evident here. For example, scene three uses alternating close ups between Bree and the Doctor to assist the natural rhythm of the conversation, however Bree's anxiety is evident through close ups showing her sweaty skin – her fate depends on this Doctor's opinion. Similarly, in Margaret's office (scene seven) tension is boosted through fast alternating close ups and when

Bree is on the phone to Margaret (scene 15) the tension of the dialogue dictates the editing. Bree's nervousness and lack of control under the state medical system is also revealed through the mid shot where she fidgets with the phone cable. However, in the hospital (scene 96) an extreme long shot becomes long and then mid as Bree walks the length of the corridor towards the camera without an edit breaking the shot. Her unbroken movement reflects her control over the situation as the aesthetic (of her image) commands the frame and dictates the editing choices during that scene.

4.3c *TransAmerica* – Dialogue and sound

The soundtrack in *TransAmerica* is dominated by the country and western genre, utilising a lot of acoustic guitar and violin. This style of music fits the slightly offbeat charm of a road movie and the slightly offbeat twist of a person with non-traditional gender.

At home Bree chooses to listen to opera, signalling her education and her class and her dialogue reveals a dry sense of humour; she first introduces herself to Toby as a missionary of the “Church of the Potential Father” (scene 11) and later claims to have “convened with my immediate superior at the church” with regards to Margaret her therapist (scene 16). These elements are perhaps a small suggestion that being transsexual doesn't make her mentally incapacitated, lower class or devoid of regular human experience as Foucault (1981) and Butler (1990) state Western hegemony would have people believe.

In several other places Bree's intelligence and education is revealed through her dialogue. In scene three, though anxious, she asks her Doctor, “Don't you find it odd

that plastic surgery can cure a mental disorder?” indicating her knowledge of the discussion around gender dysphoria. Throughout the road trip she shares her vast knowledge, revealing that she’d been to university to study “French, cultural anthropology, archaeology, psychology, art history...” She is well read about gender stating, “Many societies throughout history have honoured and revered transgendered people...the Native-Americans call us two-spirit people...(scene 65) and recognises that Calvin’s Native-American ancestry uses the “matro-lineal kinship system” (scene 68). These examples contribute further to Foucault’s argument (cited in Fillingham, 1993) that individuals who are deemed abnormal are incorrectly ostracised (and sometimes criminalised or pathologised in the process), while in reality a transsexual individual can be as educated, as intelligent and as sane as the next person.

Bree’s dialogue makes a statement about who she is but her voice also provides information; Bree has the unusual monotone vocal sound of someone who doesn’t quite belong to either gender and is fundamentally different to most other people. She attempts to work on performance of femininity by feminising her sound through vocal coaching, as heard in the first scene, “This is the voice I want to use”. The fact that Bree is revealed practising her performance of femininity reinforces Butler’s assertion that gender (and the performance of it) is learned (Butler, 2004a). Her measured voice is also indicative of her strength of character. For example Bree empowers and protects herself in conversations with the family. In scene 79 she calmly corrects her father, “Bree. Sabrina. Claire. Osbourne” and to her sister Sydney, “I’m a transsexual, not a transvestite” (scene 82). In the final scene Bree is granted a personal sense of power (over Toby) and old-fashioned strictness when she reverts to her formal,

motherly tone and says, “Young man, if you think you can put your dirty tennis shoes on my brand new coffee table, you’re going to have to think again”.

4.3d *TransAmerica* - Costume, hair and make up

Bree’s costuming reflects the feminine gender role she is performing. Every day she maintains long pink nails, pink lipstick, earrings, mauve eye shadow, high heels and a handbag. Her hair is usually out, hanging to her shoulders with a fringe on her forehead. She constantly wears a scarf around her neck (or a high cut blouse) – this reinforces her prudishness and covers up her male laryngeal prominence (also known as an Adam’s Apple). Bree either wears pink clothes or outfits which contain pastel colours, floral patterns or a soft material such as merino knit. Though feminine, Bree’s clothes represent a formal-middle aged wearer where all skirts are calf length or longer and blouses are buttoned to the top. She maintains this femininity even when she sleeps by wearing a pink silk nightgown and black silk sleep mask. Bree’s costuming is hugely important in contributing to her gendered performance of being female. As previously stated Bree’s performance of femininity is almost ‘over the top’ – perhaps to compensate for the male anatomy she is so eager to disguise.

There are occasions where it’s important to note a change to Bree’s feminine attire as these moments signify the biological element beneath her outer constructed gender performance. For example, before her operation Bree wears the unisex trousers and t-shirt of the kitchen staff (scene 5) but after the operation she wears the peasant style top and layered skirt of the female wait staff (scene 104). In Toby’s presence Bree is always very covered (so that she continues her performance and maintains her control) although this does confirm she has something to hide. In scene 103 Bree is

finally shown naked, as post-operation she has nothing to hide beneath her clothes. Given her nudity, the audience is almost confronted by the overhead shot where the viewer sees Bree, unadorned and unobscured in the bathtub, in her new female body for the first time.

4.3e *TransAmerica* - Script function

At times Bree's script function highlights the conflict between people with non-traditional gender and the medical community – an obvious example of the state's involvement in the individual's body (what Foucault called an exercising of anatomico-political power) (Foucault, 1981). Bree's character is determined to have the operation and assert her right to change genders. She will not let the Doctor dissuade her with the suggestion that gender dysphoria is a mental condition and simply (but powerfully) states, "I will be a woman" (scene three). However, Bree's autonomy is attacked when a phone call puts her at the mercy of a wayward teenager and her therapist (scene six). The opportunity to have surgery is decided by her therapist, Margaret, who insists Bree must meet her son before changing genders. Resultantly Bree loses power to the medical profession which prevents gender orientation from being a personal choice. This is a clear example of the authoritative power Foucault suggests the state wields – where sexuality and gender are part of state legislation (Foucault, 1981), where what is perverse or abnormal is calculated by the medical profession (acting as an agent on behalf of the state) (cited in Fillingham, 1993) and where 'knowledge' is instated as 'truth' by the institutions who construct that knowledge (cited in Sawicki, 1991).

Essentially Bree is the object of her own script function, meaning that she is most interested in transforming herself (getting the operation, becoming anatomically female) and her trajectory in the narrative (her function) is driven by this goal. She drives the narrative forward for her own sake, only acknowledging towards the end that she also has responsibilities as a parent. However, Bree's control over her own life fluctuates depending on how much obligation she feels towards Toby. For example, in scene 30 when Toby's childhood abuse is revealed, Bree's drive for her operation is sidelined by the realisation that she can't offload Toby easily; her parental guilt and sense of responsibility emerge, splitting her script function between an individual striving for gender freedom and her role as a parent. She goes into her much anticipated surgery with a new vulnerability that comes with being a parent, strengthened by her determined spirit but weakened by the emotional demands of her relationship with Toby.

There are constant fluxes in power between Bree and Toby. Toby loses power when Bree rejects his sexual advances in scenes 22 and in scene 90 (when she also rejects his marriage proposal). However Bree loses power when Toby begins to matter to her and she becomes more sensitive to his opinions. For example she frets when he calls her "weird" (scene 23), or a "freak" (scene 63) and when he hits her and then runs away in scene 90 and 93. It is perhaps at this point (scene 94) that Bree's script function changes fully to concerned parent; though she tried to be rid of his company for days, when he finally goes, it is on his terms and he retains the power while she retains the guilt. Keeping herself separate from Toby enabled her to remain in control with her biological identity kept secret. Before Bree met Toby she was more isolated but her isolation actually enabled her safer emotional journey between sexes.

The strain between a person of non-traditional gender and their family is central to *TransAmerica*'s narrative. Tension between the central character and family is also approached in *XXY*, where the parents of a teenage intersexual feel confused and helpless (as did Bree's parents) about their child's gender transition.

4.4a XXY in context

Background Information

South American filmmaker Lucia Puenzo co-wrote *XXY* with Sergio Bizzio and went on to direct the film in 2006 as his debut project. The world premier in Argentina in June 2007 was followed by a USA release in May 2008. An American rating was not given to *XXY* although Argentina and New Zealand both gave it an R16 rating. *XXY* is classified as a drama, has a run time of 86 minutes and is filmed in Spanish with optional English subtitles. Because of the limited reception *XXY* received in the USA very little information exists about the making of the film or reactions to it (IMDb.com, Inc, 2009d).

Production

Despite being considered an Argentine film, *XXY* was shot in Maldonado, Uruguay where the storyline takes place in a small fishing township. It received primary funding from the production companies Wanda Vision and Pyramide Films and also received financial backing from the Historias Cinematografica Cinemania (Stories of Cinematography and Cinema). Film Movement Studio provided funding for the DVD release of *XXY* in October 2008 (ibid).

XXY received reasonable international acknowledgment. It was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2008 Academy Awards. This Oscar nomination was the height of recognition that XXY received from the Hollywood film industry (ibid). XXY was most successful at smaller, art house festivals, collecting a total of 20 wins and nine other nominations. The categories it was consistently nominated in included best actress, best film and best screenplay. Perhaps its most prestigious recognition was winning the Grand Prize at the Cannes Critics Week.

Financial Earnings

The USA did not embrace XXY (which was expected as it a foreign language film). On opening weekend (4th May 2008) in the USA, XXY ran on just one screen but earned a reasonable \$3, 241 from that cinema (ibid). By November 20th 2008 (the USA close date), XXY had appeared on just two screens and grossed only \$48, 334 – 1.8% of its total income (IMDb.com, Inc, 2009f).

Internationally however, film distributor agents and the public appeared to give XXY more of a chance. The final gross profit from countries other than the USA came to \$2, 680, 535 (92.8% of total profit).⁴⁴ XXY was most popular in Argentina at roughly \$500, 000 gross, Italy (roughly \$400, 000 gross) and Germany (roughly \$370, 000 gross) (ibid). Generally most South American nations screened XXY with reasonable favour, however poverty levels prevent high profits in areas such as Chile and Uruguay, which combined contributed just \$68, 350 to the global total (ibid).

⁴⁴ This means that globally XXY grossed \$2, 728,869.

Casting

Each lead actor in *XXY* is of South American descent and speaks Spanish in their native tongue. Central character Alex, played by Ines Efron, required the most careful casting choice. Physically the character of Alex required a young actor or actress to be plausible as male and female. Efron brings gender ambiguity to the role and is arguably indiscernible as either a young man or woman. Born in 1985 Efron was 20-21 at the time of filming. Her petite physical frame and low body fat make Alex a believable prepubescent boy or girl. Alex's gender ambiguity is helped in part Efron's relative anonymity, having only appeared in a small number of Argentine productions (IMDb.com, Inc, 2009d).

Perhaps the most accomplished of the *XXY* cast is Ricardo Darin who plays Kraken, Alex's father. Darin has a number of film and television credits to his name, mainly as an actor but also in directing roles. Opposite Darin is Valeria Bertuchelli as Alex's mother Suli. Prior to working on *XXY* Bertuchelli also worked extensively in the South American film and television industry (IMDb.com, Inc, 2009d).

Critical Reaction

Of the few film reviewers who did see *XXY* mixed responses have emerged. Howard Feinstein (of *Filmmaker*) placed *XXY* in his "uncategorizable-but-highly-recommended" section of his festival circuit report and called it a "finely drawn portrait about gender identification" (Feinstein, 2007, p. 28). Jonathan Holland (of *Variety*) called the film "penetrating" and yet "subtle" when exploring the psychological effects of non-traditional genders and sexualities (Holland, 2007, p. 26) (Alex is dealing with gender transgression but Alvaro also spends the film

discovering his homosexual orientation). According to Holland, these battles are “communicated with a minimum of stylistic fuss” through extreme long shots and outside sets which promote a greater atmospheric sensation (ibid).

Holland illustrates the binaries between the massive internal struggles of the two central teenagers Alex and Alvaro and the “petty rivalries” of the children’s parents. He states that much of the script looks into the troubled relationship between teenager and parents and yet manages to avoid becoming trite or stereotypically anguished. Despite what Holland describes as some “clumsy symbolism”, he thinks the director (Puenzo) accomplished the nuances of sensitive drama he set out to achieve (ibid).

Jim Fouratt (of *Framework*) is not so praising of *XXY* and instead calls Puenzo’s treatment of the subject matter “sensationalist” (Fouratt, 2008, p.47). Fouratt considers *XXY* a failed attempt to tell a “serious story” about identity conflict (ibid, p. 147) and feels the audience is unable to grasp the reality of life in a non-conforming body. According to Fouratt, Luenzo succumbed to “faux serious, middle-class” tendencies to sensationalise and normalise the unique in order for it to be accepted by mainstream audiences. He comments that in casting Ines Efron as Alex, Luenzo “accommodates the audiences desire for normalcy”, where the viewer can supposedly recognise the intersex character is a female actress and is not pushed into a cinematic experience they are uncomfortable with. Fouratt stated that *XXY* is “titillating” and “smart” but not “insightful” and incorrectly predicted box office success (ibid, p. 148). Notably he makes a comparison between *Boys Don’t Cry* and *XXY* and considers that, while not ideal, Puenzo did a more accurate job of conveying the life of an intersexual than Pierce did in conveying the experiences of a transsexual (ibid).

Fan Reaction

Again, because of the limited distribution of *XXY* it is hard to find a large number of consumer reviews. On Rottentomatoes.com (at the time of writing) 79% of reviews about *XXY* were positive (Imagine Games Network [IGN Entertainment], 2009a).

No particularly informed discussions are available online,⁴⁵ but generally audience reviewers seem to have enjoyed *XXY* and the subject matter it approaches. Fan ‘Blair K’ said it was one of the best foreign films he had seen in some time and thought the subject matter was covered with appropriate sensitivity. Both Blair K and Fan ‘Rthemovieguy’ appreciated the performances of the lead actors and consider it fortunate that actors and producers were committed to “get[ting] the story right” (ibid). Blair K expressed a wish that “more movies would be willing to deal with sensitive topics in the USA” (ibid).

Various viewers pick up on the generational binary between Alex and her parents. In what Fan ‘Harlequin68’ describes as a “highly provocative gender bender” she praises the portrayal of a dichotomy between Alex and her mother Sula. Harlequin68 concludes by saying that Alex would have done better in a large city with a diverse society instead of the “hyper masculine fishing village” (ibid). Whether Alex would have been less ostracised in the city is unknown but this comment suggests some viewers are aware of the gender alternatives blossoming in cosmopolitan areas of modern society.

⁴⁵ I acknowledge that there may be more fan discussions available online that aren’t posted in English.

Conclusion on Reactions

Given the limited amount of critical response to *XXY* it is hard to come to any definitive conclusions about how the film is received by contemporary audiences. While some viewers pertain to Alex's rare androgynous appearance, others (such as Fouratt) consider that Ines Efron is clearly a female actress (which detracts from the authenticity of the film). While I can't claim that viewers consistently refer to Alex's unique physique, I will propose a small theme emerges when several reviews acknowledge the esoteric remoteness of the whole film (through mise-en-scene and atmosphere). This at least suggests an understanding that the occurrence of an intersexual person is an uncommon and isolated phenomenon. I included *XXY* in this research because I thought it important to include a text about an intersexual individual who sits permanently between genders. *XXY* also broadens the corpus through its Argentinean roots (given my research aims to look at Western films it was important to have at least one text which was not produced in the USA).

4.4b *XXY* - Camera, lighting and editing

The camera work in *XXY* primarily depicts the loneliness and isolation Butler (2004b) claims to be inherent in anyone who has a non-traditional gender. Scene one begins with a tracking profile of Alex running through a forest, immediately depicting her⁴⁶ as alone. In contrast, in scene two, Alex is seen in a still mid close up beneath the boards of her house, smoking a cigarette. This is followed by a high angle of Alex looking up through the boards in the deck; her face largely obscured by the wood so

⁴⁶ As previously stated I wish to respect each of these characters by acknowledging the gender they identify as/with. In this case it is more difficult as Alex is intersexual and it is not so clear how to linguistically refer to the character. For ease of reading I will refer to Alex as 'she', as she was raised as a female child and also because the actor is female. However, I continue to acknowledge Alex as an intersex individual.

she appears as a frightened feral animal (scene seven). Several times over Alex's uniqueness and isolation are portrayed through the same camera work – scenes nine, 23, 41 and 61 use an extreme long shot of Alex walking away from other people, usually down a beach or foot-path. Scene 43 is the exception to this rule where Alex, in a moment of silent introspection, floats on water in a series of overhead shots. However, when Alvaro enters the water Alex runs down the beach in extreme long shots, as if she, desperate to maintain this isolation, pushes him from the frame. Alex's isolation is self imposed in most of the film but this doesn't suggest she isn't suffering. Alex could be in all three of Foucault's victim-of-patriarchy-groups (cited in Halperin, 1995) – as a woman, child and perverse adult.

Alex's sexual energy is often evident through camera work. For example, scene 10 shows her and Alvaro in the same frame, Alex standing behind Alvaro in a predatory fashion, watching his movements in the mirror carefully, while in scene 13 she again watches Alvaro through the bathroom door. Scene 26 emphasizes her sexual dominance further; extreme close-ups are used to convey Alex passionately kissing Alvaro before pushing him to the floor and restraining his wrist with her hand. Alex, lying on top, is captured in mid shot so that the viewer can see her pelvis thrusting into Alvaro. Butler (1990) may argue that Alex is a strong example of the performance of gender in these scenes – perceived as male here because of her traditional performance of masculine dominance.

Scene 45 is crucial within the storyline and uses a lot of camera angles and frame sizes to convey the heightened emotion of the situation (which is largely anxiety and fear). This entire scene is motivated by what Connell (1987) refers to as the

antagonisms of gender – fear, distrust and anger. Connell claims that distrust of anything which doesn't conform to patriarchy (such as Alex who has non-traditional gender) creates the heated emotion and violent action of scene 45, contributing to the superstructure of gender. At first Alex walks down the beach in a mid-close up, her approaching attackers in the background of the frame before the shot widens to reveal the boys reaching Alex and grabbing her. At the beginning of the attack the camera uses overhead, mid shots and close-ups to convey a claustrophobic sensation. Vando enters in the reverse low angle shot, running down the sand dune to Alex's aid. The central attacker is thrown backwards onto the sand and viewed from Vando's high angle point-of-view as he has lost power. The attackers leave and Alex is viewed from a high angle lying on the ground. Vando tries to enter the shot by pulling her jacket over her shoulders but she pulls away from him, essentially pushing him from her vulnerable personal space and her cinematic frame. Foucault's suggestion (cited in Rabinow, 2000) that violence is the instrument of patriarchy (not the manifestation of patriarchy itself) is relevant here. Alex's attackers use violence (of a physical and sexual nature) to strike back at something (someone) that threatens them because it doesn't conform to the hegemony which favours and empowers them (patriarchy).

Regardless of her vulnerability, Alex also exercises angry behaviour. For example, a confrontation occurs with Ramiro when Alex enters the kitchen in scene 15. The alternating close up's of Alex and Ramiro indicates their engagement in an informal fight, where they both struggle for power. This editing also highlights how the state is involved in governing the individual's body (Foucault, 1981) (by having the medical profession place pressure on individuals with non-traditional gender to conform to 'normality' through medical treatment) (Foucault cited in Fillingham, 1993).

Alex's anger at the way society treats non-traditionally gendered individuals is also evident in scene 17 where close ups of her are intercut with close-ups of Vando. While the rest of the wharf is bustling, these two characters are locked in a still and silent argument. Alex's face is covered in hair and shadow so that only her eyes gleam out at Vando menacingly. When she attacks Vando the frame becomes wide to capture her hostile movements and becomes handheld to reflect the angry emotion of the outburst.

However, the most intense fight is scene 30 where Alex confronts her own image in the reflection of a mirror. She is still for a moment, watching her naked form before a mid close up reveals tears in her eyes. Her frustration over her confusion is expressed within the long shot that shows her quickly dressing and leaving the house. Despite Alex's refusal to have surgery or take hormone pills (and her seeming preference for an intersexual state) she is deeply confused by who she is and what she wants in scene 30. The camera work which lingers on her reflection conveys that she is, after all, trying to determine her gender based on her naked physique, perhaps suggesting the role of biological determinism in the foundation of gender. However, Alex's nudity in this scene could also signify Butler's theory that the body is a canvas which an external force (such as culture) inscribes meaning on to (Butler, 2004b).

4.4c XXY - Dialogue and sound

XXY's sound-scape consists of three elements – non diegetic music, dialogue and foley. The soundtrack predominantly consists of pop songs with a South American flavour that feature acoustic guitar and soft drum beats. The music is non-diegetic

except for scene 20. Here Alex puts headphones on and the music becomes immediately audible to the audience; this technique is an indication that the aural diegesis is dominated by what Alex hears – reinforcing her as the central character.

The foley in *XXY* contributes to the film's scrutiny of biology in identity. For example, the opening title includes sounds of an underwater environment, reflecting the theme focusing on biology and living creatures. The crash of waves can be heard almost constantly, either close and loud or soft and distant. The ocean noise combines with the sound of wind whistling through the house, seagulls and occasional heavy rain to construct an aurally wild (and rural) environment.

The diegetic sounds also cast doubt over the gender identity of the central character. The opening titles intercut the underwater environment with sounds of Alex running through the forest; her rapid breathing and guttural cry as she slams a knife into the ground – in these scenes Butler (1990) would argue that she is not performing as a typical female. Alex's gender etherealness is audibly alluded to only once; scene 43 uses the intermittent plucking of a shrill and twinkling chime as Alex floats serenely on water – perhaps aurally referring to the mysticism ancient civilisations associated with those of non-traditional gender.

The dialogue conveys Alex as a blatantly open individual, living in the teenage years where the boundaries of appropriate social interaction are not fully understood. For example asks Ramiro (a surgeon), “Do you like cutting people up?” (scene 15) and refers to surgery as “butchering” (scene 19). Though she speaks bluntly the questions also outline Alex's Foucauldian ideology (cited in Fillingham, 1993) of the medical

profession's gender reassignment surgery – Alex refuses to be treated for what the state defines as abnormal as in her opinion she does not need treatment and just because she is different from most others does not make her abnormal.

The dialogue of other characters refers to traditional gender binary ideologies also. For example, Vando's father refers to her as an "endangered species" (scene 17) and Alvaro states, "You're not normal and you know it" (scene 26) before offering secret sex, "It'll be our secret. I won't tell anybody!" (scene 43). A Foucauldian analysis suggests that Alvaro is also afraid of being attracted to Alex as this would be viewed by the hegemony as perverse (cited in Halperin, 1995), making him liable to the same ostracism that Butler observes Alex is (Butler, 2004b).

4.4d XXY - Costume, hair and make up

At 15 years old Alex is a very petite boned and thin adolescent – she doesn't have typical female curves and resultantly her clothes (which are unisex) hang off her. Her clothing consists of a singlet or hooded sweatshirt with shorts and grey gumboots or sneakers. A non-descript chain around her neck does not heighten her femininity. To bed she wears only boxer shorts, revealing her torso to the camera, though her chest is so underdeveloped she has hardly any breasts to reveal. For the entire film Alex's hair hangs down untidily to her cheeks. Tucking it behind her ears makes her bright blue eyes stand out although she has a natural appearance and wears no visible make up. These costume choices and anatomical appearance make the actress (Ines Efron) a convincing intersexual character. They also emphasize the plausibility of Butler's argument (1990) that gender is performative; as Alex performs as neither a male or female through her aesthetic her gender ambiguity is all the more prevalent.

Alex's clothing is only affected by others during the assault (scene 45). Her singlet is twisted sideways, exposing her nipples, and her shorts are pulled down below her hips – which according to Connell (1987) is a result of fear. Alex is exposed again in scene 30 when she confronts her naked reflection in the mirror, attempting to determine what she is. These scenes suggest (as with Brandon in *Boys Don't Cry*) that Alex's power is linked with her state of dress (and freedom to dress androgynously) while nudity is a sign of vulnerability and exposure. A Butlerian reading of this scene also suggests the body is a passive surface (Butler, 2004b) which is only inscribed with cultural meaning when it performs gender through items such as clothing, hair style, make up and physical movement.

4.4e XXY - Script function

Alex's script function varies depending on who is in the scene with her. In scenes by herself she seems a free and wild individual, such as the opening scene where she is fit, energetic, and fierce. Alex also has an impulsive and aggressive nature which is not stereotypically associated with young women; she crushes a rare bug (scene 24), attacks Vando (scene 17) and physically pushes Alvaro (scene 43). With Alvaro or with her parents Alex is self-serving - she drives the scene forward through her behaviour and conversation. In scene eight for example she is very dominant when she approaches Alvaro, introduces herself, knows that he has masturbated and asks him if he would like sex. She also speaks her mind such as in scene 19 when she considers tampering with the human body to be "butchery" and exercises her right to refuse surgery and medication (scene 59). Her character function here is important for this film – it suggests that remaining intersexual is acceptable. She puts forth the idea that nature could take its course and they could let it, rather than interfering with

surgery or medication. In this sense Alex is advocating the thing that several trans writers (from the literature review) stated was important to them – freedom to choose and the right to be left alone. Alex's aggressive behaviour also contributes to her gender ambiguity as according to Butler (1990) these behaviours are more male performances than female.

Not only does Alex control her own destiny but her sexual dominance means she also dictates Alvaro's experience (scene 26). She commands him to join her in the barn, pushes him down, holds his wrists and enters him (rather than vice versa). Here she functions with animalistic and dominant force – akin to male stereotypical sexual behaviours – without actually changing gender. Alex's dominance is increased by Alvaro's submission and it seems the two have completely swapped what genders they at first presented to the other. This is another example of Butler's performance theory (1990) – gender is determined by the behaviour of the individual rather than the biological sex, allowing people such as Alex and Alvaro to change gender depending on their behaviour in that moment.

Alex is also depicted as a rare and hidden creature. For example, in scene two she sits alone and still under the house but it's unclear whether she has deliberately chosen this isolation. While Alex's function depicts the life of a typical rural Uruguayan teenager it also suggests there is something mysterious about this particular teen. The repeated use of long shot and extreme long shots of Alex highlight her rarity and the loneliness associated with being so different – another reference to the radical dislocation Butler (2004b) states people with non-traditional gender suffer from. The suggestion of a timeless and isolated individual is also put forward in scene 30 when

she looks deeply into her nude mirror image. She attempts to find understanding through her appearance – relying (in this moment) on the aesthetic of the physique to help her make a choice about her destiny.

Alex's uniqueness also makes her a target for the exercise of patriarchal power which Connell (1987) claims is part of maintaining the superstructure of gender. In scene 45 her role is deeply vulnerable, the target of someone else's hegemonic desires for power and dominance. Alex functions as a reminder of Foucault's argument (cited in Fillingham, 1993) that those who don't conform to the patriarchal hegemony not only suffer (emotionally, spiritually, physically or sexually) but are ostracised from community – a theme which emerges as strongly from the character Orlando, whose isolation from non-traditional gender identity transcends several lifetimes, leaving Orlando to outlive her⁴⁷ few companions.

4.5a *Orlando* in context

Background Information

Orlando began as a 1928 novel by feminist writer Virginia Woolf. In the late 1980s Sally Potter adapted the book into a screenplay and went on to direct the 93 minute film. After its initial successful release at the New York New Directors and New Films Festival in March of 1993, *Orlando* was released in the USA in mid 1993 to impressed art house audiences. Despite its intellectual niche market, the film struck a

⁴⁷ As previously stated I wish to respect each of these characters by acknowledging the gender they identify as/with. In this case it is difficult with Orlando who is both male and female and it is not so clear how to linguistically refer to the character. For ease of reading I will refer to Orlando as 'she', as the character leaves the story as a female (thereby narrating from a female voice) and also because the actor is female. However, I continue to acknowledge Orlando as an individual of both male and female gender.

positive chord with a number of critics and industry professionals who appeared to enjoy *Orlando*'s gender content and unusual surreal style (IMDb.com Inc, 2009c).

Though not a mainstream film, *Orlando* carried the technical specifications of many blockbusters. These aspects include the wide screen format (1.85:1), the Dolby Surround Sound and the PG-13 rating issued in the USA (most other countries including the United Kingdom and Australia rate *Orlando* as PG). Sony Pictures and Umbrella Entertainment continued to invest in *Orlando*'s earning potential by distributing it on DVD in 1999 and 2004 respectively (ibid).

Production

Potter filmed *Orlando* in three different countries over two months (February–April 1992). Shooting took place primarily in England in Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire counties, but also spanned out to Khiva in Uzbekistan and St Petersburg in Russia for several scenes. Adding to the multinationalism of the production is the use of both British and foreign crew and the inclusion of French and English language in the script. *Orlando* received two Oscar nominations at the 1993 Academy Awards for Art Direction in Set Decoration and Costume Design. Across the major global awards ceremonies it also received four other nominations and 12 wins (ibid).

Financial Earnings

Orlando had a humble budget of \$5 million (although this is not surprising given its lesser-known British cast and art house genre) (ibid). The film's budget was equalled and a substantial profit made with the final gross from the USA market at \$5,319,445 (IMDb.com, Inc, 2009e).

Orlando screened in a few central American cinemas (78 at its widest release point) and earned the majority of sales from small but steady weekend crowds. The opening weekend (June 11th 1993) produced \$107, 030 (ibid). This is not a large amount for an opening weekend, but the film only ran in three cinemas, meaning that each cinema produced an average of just over \$35, 000; this figure indicates a sizable audience per screening. Further to this, *Orlando* shared its opening weekend with some very big budget movies including *Jurassic Park* (1993), which took in over \$47 million on the same weekend and *Super Mario Bros.* (1993), which had a budget of \$48 million (IMDb.com Inc, 2009c).

Casting

Little information exists about the casting process for *Orlando*. Four characters form the most central roles, although Orlando is the only character who survives the duration of the film.

Billy Zane and Charlotte Valandrey seem to physically embody their roles as Shelmerdine and Princess Sasha with traditional gender stereotyping. This is not to suggest that either actor is bad in the role, but that Zane plays a heroic and charmingly masculine version of Shelmerdine while Valandrey plays Sasha with an equivalent amount of womanly charm and classically feminine beauty. Perhaps it is the portrayal of these two traditional gender representations that makes Tilda Swinton in the title role all the more androgynous. When Swinton engages in public events her appearance is often similar to Orlando's, where she wears minimal or no makeup and dresses in a unisex fashion. Swinton's high cheekbones, fair skin, ginger hair and lean body make her convincing as both a female and male onscreen.

Opposite Swinton is Quentin Crisp in the role of Queen Elizabeth I. In an ironic casting choice veteran actor Crisp was chosen to play the legendary English Queen. Not only does Crisp execute the role with believable femininity, but the gender crossing casting adds another level of depth to *Orlando's* overall statement about gender ambiguity.

Critical Reaction

Orlando was highly regarded by the majority of film critics who recognized the film as, at least, being a bold and topical piece of cinema. Edit Klara Godogh, author of *Onto a Reconsideration of Androgyny* confirms this when she states that *Orlando* was “quickly embraced by [its] audience and film critics soon after release” (Godogh, 2002, p. 13). She also believes that *Orlando's* popularity can be seen in the financial results from the attendance of each screening and in its continued popularity as a VHS or DVD rental (ibid).

Godogh admires Potter's ability to convert the Woolf novel into a workable and likable cinematic piece, stating the screenplay is shorter in length and more vague for the benefit of the film's dramatic fluency. The great time difference between book publication and film creation (64 years) posed various historical difficulties which Potter remedied by giving the film a more modern angle while remaining true to Woolf's intention for the original story (ibid).

Godogh claims that while *Orlando's* primary aim is to draw attention to gender, it also makes statements and raises questions about politics, wealth, class and nationalism (ibid). Orlando, the character, is similar to the classical notion of

androgyny in that she is the physical manifestation of two sexes and is also timeless (living for 400 years in the film) and spaceless (transcending various countries and cultures in both genders). Godogh explains that through the seven chapters of the film Orlando grows into one complete person rather than two genders sharing one body, ultimately reaching a heightened state of humanity in the final moments of the film. She concluded that Orlando was more “human[ly] whole” through androgyny, but given that Orlando is either male or female at any one time (not simultaneously) she claims *Orlando* is a gender-modern film with a post-modern take on androgyny (ibid, p.14).

One critic in favour of *Orlando*'s offbeat style was reviewer Jonathan Rosenbaum. After seeing the film at the 1992 Toronto Film Festival, Rosenbaum described *Orlando* as “sumptuous, painless and politically correct” (Rosenbaum, 1992, p58). Despite feeling that the film was a little “academic” in its attempt to highlight gender inequalities, he considered Potter and Swinton a powerful filmmaking team. Their dynamic execution of the script swayed Rosenbaum into accepting the “upscale Greenaway” style that he feels Potter indulged in.

In contrast Walter Donohue (of *Sight and Sound*) considers *Orlando* to be “Potter's first venture into more mainstream narrative” (Donohue, p. 10). He considers Potter's work on *Orlando* to venture into auteur ground, as she not only wrote the script, but directed the film, co-produced the production and co-scored the sound track. Having read the book as a teenager, Potter was able to visualise a cinematic adaptation and admired Woolf's ability to “find images for a stream of consciousness” (Donohue, p. 10). Potter reflected that the more she considered Orlando as man or woman, the more

“ludicrous” masculinity and femininity seemed (ibid). Eventually she concluded that Orlando was a person, a human, before being one gender or another, and that was the angle from which she constructed the filmic Orlando character – as a person who transcends the confines of gender and yet experiences both of them in their lifetime.

While Donohue toyed with the idea that Potter is an auteur filmmaker, Cynthia Lucia (of *Cineaste*) labels her a feminist filmmaker. In 2005 Lucia spoke to Potter about one of her more recent films *Yes* (2004) (a film about Potter’s personal perception regarding the fight between East and West post 9/11). While the body of the article discusses Potter’s work on *Yes* some interesting comments emerge regarding Potter’s reoccurring film themes (gender, identity, exile and mortality) and the influences that drive her (her background in dance and relationship with the English language) (Lucia, 2005).

As with Rosenbaum and Lucia, Suzanne Ferriss (of *Literature/Film Quarterly*) was impressed with the sheer aesthetic beauty of Potter’s work on *Orlando*. She describes the film as “strikingly visual”, “enlivening” and “imaginistic” (Ferriss, 1999, p. 110). Ferriss also praises the elaborate and historically accurate costuming throughout, the discerning camera work (which enhances the emphasis on gender identity) and the non-linear treatment of the script (ibid). She concludes that these elements push *Orlando* firmly into the realm of post-modern texts.

Sophie Mayer (2008) (of *Literature/Film Quarterly*) conducted her own close reading of *Orlando*. Mayer cites various intertextual references in the film and claims they heighten gender and identity themes existent in the original novel. She suspects that

Orlando heads into modernist fiction and science-fiction genre due to the physical metamorphosis present. No traditional science-fiction body horror takes place but the entire film experiments with destruction, reconstruction and transformation (ibid).

Mayer discovers women are both the spectator and lens in *Orlando*. She claims that typically women are either seen on screen or are members of the audience seeing, but Mayer finds *Orlando* exhibits both abilities where she watches others and the audience watches her. Mayer states, “spectatorship is gendered female”, whereas ‘the gaze’ is normally predominantly male, illuminating *Orlando*’s feminist standpoint (Mayer, 2008, p. 39). To further place *Orlando* in social context Mayer reflects that *Orlando* was released in the same year as another film about gender – Neil Jordan’s *The Crying Game*. *The Crying Game* is arguably more mainstream than *Orlando* but it is both an opposite and an equivalent. Where *The Crying Game* is a dramatic thriller which encounters violence and brutality, *Orlando* finishes with positive, feminist vibes.

Fan Reaction

In consumer reviewer site rottentomatoes.com the positive responses to *Orlando* outweigh the negative by a substantial margin (79% positive at the time of writing) (IGN Entertainment, 2009b). There seem to be two subgroups of people who have chosen to review *Orlando* on rottentomatoes.com – there are those who have stumbled across the movie unprepared with no preconceptions of the film, and there are those who’ve watched it several times over and originally purposely sought it out. In either case the response is generally positive, although sometimes confused, and

those who purposefully watched *Orlando* tend to be more articulate in their response to the text.

Fan 'Lotetaru' appears to be one such viewer who came across *Orlando* unexpectedly, stating it was "one of the weirdest films I have ever seen" but concluded his review by saying "I am deeply impressed with it" (ibid). Often consumer reviewers mention the cinematography in *Orlando*. Fan 'Yan D' even commented that he went back to the movie "again and again" because of the cinematography and Fan 'Cmarlow' also stated that the camerawork was "brilliant" (ibid).

It appears the most articulate viewers are the ones who have both read the book *Orlando* and seen the film *Orlando*. These people are able to have comparative discussions and resultantly create a more in-depth opinion of the film as both an adaptation and a stand-alone text. For example, Fan 'June1' said "This movie showed the solitude and loneliness [Orlando] experienced" despite being aware that large parts of Virginia Woolf's original novel (with abstract sections portraying isolation) were missing from Potter's film adaptation (ibid). Fan 'Othello' is able to draw final positive conclusions about *Orlando* because of his knowledge of the written text, "When all is said and done it doesn't seem to matter that Sally Potter discards so much of Woolf's novel...she so expertly nails the novel's spirit, [with] impeccable direction" (ibid).

Conclusion on Reactions

The dominant theme emerging in reviews (academic, professional and fan based) about *Orlando* is the portrayal of existential loneliness that haunts the text. While Orlando's sudden gender transition confuses some viewers the general response is still positive and understanding of Orlando's isolated existence prevails. Most professional critics seem aware that this isolation is referenced through the stylistic conventions employed by Sally Potter including minimalist script, slow tempo, soundtrack and lighting. *Orlando* is part of this research because it has a particularly unique non-traditionally gendered character (who is not only both genders but is also immortal). As a British text *Orlando* also widens the corpus of films beyond the Americas. As an art house text it provides more variation of genre in the sample group (which otherwise consists of two dramas and a road movie).

4.5b *Orlando* - Camera, lighting and editing

Camera work and editing technique maintain Orlando's mystery in the opening scenes. It is not until scene six that the audience has a clear view of the central character. Alternating close ups are used between Orlando and Queen Elizabeth to accentuate two people, years apart and genders apart.⁴⁸ The close ups of Orlando capture her flawless beauty and naivety while reverse low angles of the Queen assert her superiority. From scene 11 (after the Queen's death) Orlando begins to drive the script (and camera work more). Shots linger on her face when she first sees Sasha (scene 15) and talks with her (scene 16). Orlando and Sasha make an aesthetically beautiful couple, shown up close and in long shots, their mutual beauty

⁴⁸ This is an ironic moment as onscreen Orlando is male Queen Elizabeth is female. In real life (when filming) Orlando was a female actress and Queen Elizabeth was a male actor. This in itself refers to Butler's theory of gender performance (1990). The swapping of genders on set suggests that gender is an entire illusion based on external performative elements such as aesthetic.

complementing one another. While they present a high status, unified front (with use of low, wide angles) Orlando is always slightly in the foreground of the frame, signifying her dominance and contributing to her performance of masculinity. This depiction of their relationship is typically patriarchal (or what Bem (1993) and Goddard (2002) would call androcentric) with the male partner taking the primary position. It is not until scene 39 that Orlando relaxes by the fireside, embracing a new (Eastern) culture which displays Orlando's masculinity less explicitly.

Orlando's performance of femininity is also depicted through camera work. This begins in scene 50 with a close up shot detailing Orlando's corsetry followed by an extreme long shot of Orlando walking through a room carefully so as to avoid knocking furniture with her huge skirts (scenes 51 and 54). Butler's (1990) theory of gender performance is particularly relevant to this section of *Orlando*. After her gender change in scene 47 the aesthetic of her physique changes so minimally (only her breasts and genitals look different), but the aesthetic of her appearance changes so drastically (every part of her body is covered by something which contributes to her overt performance of femininity as opposed to her more 'natural' performance of masculinity).

At the Countess' party quick, alternating close ups of each character are used to emphasize the bigoted consensus of a hegemony which favours men (Bem, 1993), before Orlando looks directly at the camera aghast. Orlando's inferior position in society as a female is also highlighted through camera work in scenes with Shelmerdine; a wide shot shows Orlando kneel at his side to bathe his swollen ankle (scene 60). However, despite her inferior physical position the editing alternates

equally while both are lit by the firelight, reflecting the warmth growing between them. Scenes in the contemporary era use tighter frames to convey the power and autonomy of Orlando's modern feminine existence. For example, a close up shows Orlando's boot starting her motorbike (scene 69), a mid shot shows her looking at herself in a portrait (scene 70) while the final scene (scene 71) uses extreme close ups to capture her revelation.

Orlando's transition between male and female (scene 47) is a significant moment and, appropriately, the editing, camera work and lighting reflect this. Close ups of the water bowl, Orlando's face and reflection in the mirror convey the magic of the moment by depicting the sunlight and shimmering dust particles in the air. The edit lingers on Orlando's face before cutting to a long shot of her (new) female body in the mirror. Close ups are also used to depict her first experiences as a British woman where she learns how to perform her new gender (according to Butler, 2004a) by being tightly laced into a corset and walking daintily through a room for example.

It's also important to note that transitions between time zones are marked by specific filmic techniques. For example, Orlando usually turns to address the camera shortly before the era changes such as when he realises Sasha is not coming (scene 25), when she leaves the East (scene 47), and when she is insulted at the Countess' house (scene 54). Orlando also addresses the camera directly in scene 55, 65, 68 and 71. Her address to the camera in scene 55 is the precursor of great transition when she runs through the maze (scene 56), signalling a new era of strength and embracing of feminist values; this is the moment Orlando recognises how Connell's superstructure of gender (1987) benefited her as a male and disadvantages her as a female. A series

of tracking long shots and medium long shots with 10 quick edits make Orlando's angry transition into another time zone cinematically engaging. She appears from the maze in a long shot before racing across a field with the camera following behind, literally running into a new era.

Camera work also illustrates social power and status, although these techniques are used with more subtlety than those depicting changes to gender and time. Scene 29, for example, uses low angles of Greene and high angles of Orlando to represent the way Greene is (successfully) manipulating Orlando. Greene's status is further enhanced in the following scene when Orlando must run to catch up with Greene who is striding through the grounds, propelling the tracking camera with him. Equal power and mutual respect is established between Orlando and the Khan in scene 37; a wide and slow shot tracks continuously back and forth between the Khan and Orlando, the edit favouring neither. When Orlando drops to her knees the frame remains wide, conveying the physical and emotional closing of the gap as the Khan moves to sit beside Orlando in a gesture of support. Orlando's stress is generally conveyed through her movement and a sense of action. After being insulted in scenes 53, 54 and 55 her reaction to sexism is to physically move away. Predictably the camera and editing capture her movement with tracking, panning or wide shots.

4.5c *Orlando* - Dialogue and sound

Orlando uses a combination of classical instruments and synthetic sounds. The music tracks are relevant to the era in which the scene is set as well as contributing to the slightly surreal genre. For example, scenes in the 16th Century use string instruments, a harp, and opera from a male soprano. The quirkiness of *Orlando* and the

unusualness of Orlando are also aurally portrayed through occasional discordant notes (such as in scenes one, three and six); these sounds alert the viewer that the main character is not living a life considered normal by the surrounding hegemony (according to Foucault, 1981).

Narratively important moments are characterised by synthetic vocals. For example, scene 47 intensifies the gender change with synthesized female vocals, the tinkling of water droplets and an increase in volume while scene ten (when Queen Elizabeth bids Orlando “Do not fade. Do not wither. Do not grow old”) also features breathy female synths. Significant change to musical genre comes in scene 71 when a mythical figure sings a pop song, with reference to Orlando in the lyrics, “Here I am. Neither a woman or a man. We are joined, we are one with the human face”.

Foley contributes to the richness of the film’s various diegesis. For example, the sound of a 16th Century dining hall is projected through the clattering of plates and chatter in an echoing room. Scene 15 begins with the sharp sound of metal cutting through ice before visually revealing ice skating activity upon a frozen lake. The different atmosphere of an Eastern city is marked by the echo of camels hoofs on cobble stone streets (scene 35) and winds rushing over sand (scene 37). A new life era is announced in scenes 50 and 51 by the pulling of heavy thread through corset eyelets and the echoing of Orlando’s high heeled (female) shoes on the wooden floor. As previously stated, these things help inform Orlando’s performance as a woman. World War II is briefly marked by the sounds of an aeroplane overhead before Orlando moves into the next era (scene 68 and 69) where modernity is portrayed through the sound of faxes, phones, computers and traffic.

The dialogue in *Orlando* reveals details about the film's gender focus. Orlando's voice has a smooth, smoky tone making it credible that it belongs to a young man or woman. The initial voiceover sets up Orlando's character for the first half of the film when it says, "There can be no doubt about his sex, despite the feminine appearance that every young man of the time aspires to". At times Orlando's speech is abstracted and she addresses the camera, breaking the 4th wall and pushing the film into a post-modern genre. The post-modern style of filmmaking aligns with Orlando's (arguably) post-gender status. It seems appropriate that a film which presents a gender-queer character also pushes the traditional limits of genre.

Orlando's emotions are either stated through dialogue or direct address to the camera. Her hurt over losing Sasha, for example, is conveyed in the desert (scene 37) when he says, "They're [women] not like us fellows" and toasts "To the manly virtues – loyalty, courage". Her character development can be witnessed through repetition. For example in scene 20, she proclaims to own Sasha, "You're mine...because I adore you" while in scene 55 the situation is reversed when Archduke Harry believes he has a right to Orlando's companionship because "I adore you". This is also the moment Connell's superstructure of gender (1987) reveals itself to Orlando – when she realises it benefitted her as a male and disadvantages her as a female.

The customs of the era are also made clear through dialogue. In scene 53, for example her servant states (with regards to the Countess' invitation), "You could not possibly venture there alone". This is followed in scene 54 by remarks from Swift, Pope and Addison including, "The intellect is a solitary place and therefore quite unsuitable terrain for female[s]..." and "Frankly most women have no characters at all. [Orlando

stares back aghast] Oh, the lady is aflame and silent. Perfect”. Scenes 53 and 54 further highlight Bem’s theory of androcentrism (1993) which assumes that women are a secondary and inferior sex. This is followed again by Archduke Harry’s reference to a hegemony which doesn’t accept people outside the traditional gender binary, “With your history quite frankly who else will have you?”(scene 55).

The voiceover returns to frame the film in scenes 69 – 71. There are small but significant alterations to the original wording; “*She* [rather than ‘he’], for there can be no doubt about *her* [rather than his] sex...is tall and slim with a slightly androgynous appearance that many females of the time aspire to”. The narration also solidifies Orlando’s modern liberation by stating, “She is no longer trapped by destiny”.

4.5d *Orlando* - Costume, hair and make up

As with the soundtrack, the costuming for *Orlando* changes to suit the appropriate era. Orlando’s 16th Century attire alludes to her wealth and status. For example she wears brown and gold velvet tights and breeches with a matching tunic. At formal occasions a high ruffled collar and cuffs are added and one pearl earring in the right lobe. As a male Orlando has minimal makeup and naturally fair skin. In early scenes her hair is pulled back from her face in ginger waves. Each of these elements contributes to her performance of a male identity.

By the 1700s her outfit is less formal – a white cotton shirt with ruffles, an oversized white bow tie, black velvet waistcoat and breeches to match. Her hair has grown since previous sequences and it lies flat on her head down to her shoulders. There are some ‘feminine’ accessories present such as heeled shoes and large black ribbons on her

jacket shoulders. Scenes 32 – 39 reflect an opulent era where large hats and wigs, feathers, breeches, leggings, heeled shoes and several layers of coats were common. By scene 40 Orlando exchanges her British attire for traditional male Eastern dress which includes loose white linen pants and shirt, a turban and (for formal outings) a long silk jacket with gold sash around the waist. While these elements are arguably less masculine than in previous eras they continue to contribute to her performance as a man by inscribing her body with cultural insinuations of masculinity (Butler, 1990).

Orlando's gender change is emphasized through the dresses she wears in scenes 50 - 54. Here Orlando wears a boned corset, multiple hoops and underskirts and then a dress in silk and lace over the top. The dress creates the illusion of a petite waist and large hips, but is cumbersome to wear. At the Countess' house Orlando adds a decorative hand fan, a tall powdered blonde wig, earrings, a choker necklace and hair ribbons. She also wears make up in the form of a powdered and whitened face, red lips and brown shadow on her eyelids. Interestingly her performance (through clothing and accessories) of femininity is significantly more elaborate than her earlier performance of masculinity. This suggests that the sheer effort in presenting femininity is part of the performance of being female. After scene 55, Orlando's dress becomes less opulent and her make up more subtle. The dresses, for example, are still corseted but the hips are no longer accentuated.

It is Orlando's modern day attire that presents her most androgynously. She wears a white button up shirt and brown pants tucked into flat brown boots. She appears not to be wearing any make up and her long hair is in a singular plate down her back. To ride her motorbike she dons black helmet, goggles and a brown leather jacket, fitting

into the 20th Century with a style befitting a modern man or woman. In these final sequences Butler (1990) would argue her performance is simply less explicit than at other times.

4.5e *Orlando* - Script Function

Orlando has two functions in her male role and two functions in her female role. Orlando's power fluctuates depending on which role she is fulfilling and how other characters respond. Queen Elizabeth has the highest status and greatest power in scenes three to six. However, Orlando's power rises when the Queen bestows special honours upon her in scene 12. From then on Orlando's male function is domineering and predatory. For example, in scene 13 she stands stoically, before her fiancée Euphrosyne joins him at her side and she pursues Sasha as if she were an exotic object. Yet, she is hurt when Sasha declares herself an independent person and Orlando becomes confused about relationships and gender. Her script function changes here (scene 25) and she becomes less proactive and more reflective and sombre.

Orlando's secondary function (reflection and understanding) is illustrated by her interest in poetry and art as she seeks to heal through creativity. Her (male) gender and noble birth allow Orlando to remain independent and she moves away from England (scene 32). The Khan's understanding of Orlando's heartbreak establishes their equality and as Orlando adapts to Eastern life she exudes calmness and wisdom that further empowers her – essentially she achieves the peace of mind and understanding that she was previously looking for.

Orlando's newfound power is removed by outside forces when she becomes physically female (scene 47) and learns that though "there is really no difference at all" between sexes, society doesn't honour women with the same status it honours men. According to Butler (2004b) the meaning of her new female sex is inscribed on her body by surrounding culture and the meaning is inferiority. Her female role functions to reveal the patriarchy of 18th Century society. She is not well received by her servants (who find it uncomfortable that their Master is now their Mistress), nor is she well received by the men at the Countess' party who Foucault (1981) argues seek to suppress her through patriarchal ideologies (Foucault cited in Smart, 1986). Orlando goes from being an independent noble to a financially dependent citizen. When Archduke Harry offers to 'save' her by marrying her he further lowers her autonomy.

Scene 66 overlaps with her final script function – a feminist figure who refuses the restrictions placed on her by 19th Century patriarchy. Orlando's relationship with Shelmerdine supports her feminism, portrays their equitable lovemaking practices and intellectual conversations. In fact Shelmerdine's liberal views on personal identity sway Orlando into falling in love with him, illustrating that Orlando – the person – can be in love with women and men. Eventually Orlando has 400 years of life experience and knowledge. Having been both man and woman Orlando sits in a quietly superior position (so long as her true identity is kept secret), regaining the power she was stripped of previously. These final scenes outline the modern image of power – an androgynous looking woman, writing her own book, raising a child by herself and driving a motorbike. The last moments, when Orlando is happiest, suggest

success and power are found through experience, knowledge and the embracing of both genders.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has identified and analysed central visual and aural cinematic elements within the films *Boys Don't Cry*, *TransAmerica*, *XXY* and *Orlando*. Theories about gender and power by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler can be witnessed in the storylines of each of these films and informed my formalist analysis of the cinematic elements.

Each of these films features a character with non-traditional gender identity in a lead role. It is the variations on traditional gender (male and female) which directed the order that these films were analysed in. *Boys Don't Cry* and *TransAmerica* are both stories based on the experiences of a person practising transvestism while engaging in transgender (Teena Brandon from *Boys Don't Cry*) or transsexual (Bree from *TransAmerica*) life experience. *XXY* and *Orlando* feature a character who is intersexual (a person who is both male and female) although in *XXY* the character is both genders simultaneously while in *Orlando* the character is first male and then female. The analysis of several cinematic apparatus' now leads this research onto the following stage; a discussion of how these elements contribute to the overall treatment of the central character and a subsequent conclusion on how society feels about (and deals with) non-traditionally gendered people.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Prior to conducting analysis I had some ideas of what themes run through each of the films. However, it was not until close analysis that I was able to view the material less emotionally influenced by the narrative and with more objective attention to formalist detail. An in depth consideration of the key visual and aural elements of each film has allowed me to understand the film and central character's role more clearly.

5.2 *Boys Don't Cry*

Several key points emerged from the investigation into *Boys Don't Cry*. Findings were generally revealed through analysis of the filmic codes. For example, camera work and editing make statements about the metaphorical positioning of Brandon Teena within the script.

The connotations of the camera work first emerge in the relationship between Brandon and Lana. As they get to know each other they are often shot in tight frames from a high or low angle. Traditionally high and low angles convey status and power, but in early scenes between Lana and Brandon I perceive angled shots depict desire, infatuation and love. The increasing severity of the angles hint at the growing chemistry between the couple. Towards the end of the film Lana and Brandon are either framed within the same shot (indicating the intimacy between them) or in separate shots with a neutral angle (suggesting equal status and mutual respect). The connotations of this camera work signify moments when Brandon does not suffer

from the sense of dislocation that Butler (1990) claims people who change genders are subjected to.

The camera movement also depicts the emotional state of the central character. For example, handheld technique is used for fight scenes and dangerous situations where the shaky frame reflects Brandon's internal anxiety. When Brandon realises that his secret is out, the camera jumps between images of people's faces with jerky movement and no sense of visual structure. This aesthetic expresses the panic Brandon experiences as the surrounding hegemonic structure (as theorised by Foucault [1981] and Butler [1990]) reacts to his gender 'deceit' and employs various modes of punishment – violence, sexual assault, verbal abuse and ostracism in this instance. Handheld technique also employs the visual style most often found in documentary filmmaking which references the non-fiction foundation of *Boys Don't Cry*.

The editing in *Boys Don't Cry* doesn't particularly 'favour' Brandon despite being the central character. While this trend may (in some films) indicate Brandon is a less dominant protagonist, my conclusion is that the editing reveals that this is a story as much about the reactions of other people (the patriarchal hegemony) as the experience of the person who is non-traditionally gendered. This editing identifies how each character reacts to Brandon's difference and according to Foucault (cited in Fillingham, 1993) displays the punishment inflicted for defying the norm. By using equal footage of John, Tom, Lana and Candace, *Boys Don't Cry* provides a visual commentary on the opinions of society toward people with non-traditional gender.

In addition to the isolation Brandon suffered, Swank's performance also captured Brandon's youthful cockiness. The real Brandon Teena was of stockier build than Swank, however her tall, lean figure suggests a different sort of masculinity – a lanky, athletic build, just as effectively male as a more muscular version. Brandon was well mannered and cleanly presented but these elements didn't detract from the community's perception of him as male. Indeed Brandon spends the majority of the film fooling everyone around him that he is biologically male (through a masculine performance) while only he (and the viewer) knows the truth of his biological sex beneath the performance. This is an attestation to Judith Butler's theory (1990) that gender is a performance constructed through either masculine or feminine codes. In this case Brandon creates the masculine gender for himself through the combined performance of male clothing, bodily movement and vernacular.

While the clothing (jeans, boots and flannelette check shirts) project Brandon's male gender they are also symbolic of his power. When Brandon is fully dressed he is able to sustain his illusion, remain in control of his identity and direct his own life. When he enters a situation where his clothing is put in jeopardy he loses this control and is revealed as vulnerable. Even in initial intimate moments with Lana (whom he trusts) he will not undress, keeping his biological identity hidden. This finding reinforces Foucault's theory (cited in Sawicki, 1991) that knowledge and power are intricately connected. His secret and private knowledge of the situation enables safety and provides Brandon with this protective power. This power is removed in scenes where John and Tom (the film's representatives of patriarchy) forcefully remove items of clothing to reveal Brandon's female physique. His dignity and control is taken during these moments while Tom and John (who wield the hegemonic power) remain fully

dressed. Therefore Brandon's wardrobe not only helps his performance of masculinity but also keeps him safe from the repercussions of not conforming to the traditional gender binary.

Foucault's theory (cited in Rabinow, 2000) that violence is the instrument of a patriarchal institution enforcing punishment (for gender variation) is more evident in *Boy's Don't Cry* than the other thesis films. Given that *Boys Don't Cry* is based on a true story I perceive this punishment (sexual assault and murder) are particularly challenging for an audience as it is ruthlessly executed, graphically documented and a depiction of actual events from 1993. Connell (1987) may argue that this violence stems from (the first substructure of gender superstructure) a genuine fear, distrust and misunderstanding of things outside of patriarchy yet it remains deeply uncomfortable to watch the re-enactment of physical and sexual assault (regardless of the reasons for it). Perhaps in this way *Boys Don't Cry* has greater effect than the other films in this research. The trauma that Brandon experiences (because of his refusal to adhere to traditional gender identity) is horrific and far outweighs the moments of freedom and liberation he experiences with Lana.

5.3 *TransAmerica*

Various filmic conventions are employed in *TransAmerica* to express key ideas about gender and society. Though Bree's power status fluctuates depending on who is in the scene, her gender status is consistent throughout as a person in transition between male and female sexes. As Bree's process is incomplete she spends most of the film in a physically intersexual state (with some male and some female body parts) although she is clearly gendered female through out. I think Judith Butler's (1990)

theory of gender performance is more relevant to *TransAmerica* than the other thesis films given Bree's predominant performance of femininity constructed through her physical appearance (clothes, hair and make up), her vernacular, body movement and behaviour in general. In certain places this performance of femininity is assisted through Bree's use of mirrors - she uses these reflective surfaces as tools to aid in her deliberate construction of female identity.

The repeated use of reflective surfaces suggests Bree's gender identity is as dependent on her aesthetic as her personality (or at least this is how she feels) anchoring Butler's theory (1990) that gender is a construct of various performances. Bree relies on her feminine aesthetic to dictate her confidence as a transsexual woman every day. When she applies make up or checks her clothes her mood is directly related to the 'authenticity' of her feminine appearance in the mirror. For example, she panics when her penis is noticeable through her nightgown or when her makeup up has been smudged. A Butlerian analysis (Butler, 2004b) suggests Bree panics in these moments because her performance of femininity is not seamless which illuminates the cracks between her gender identity, gender performance and anatomy. She panics because in a wider context this not-quite-perfect performance of femininity also renders gender visible as a social construct (Butler, 2004b) not an inherent human condition. According to Butler (2004b) this is met with punishment from the hegemony which benefits from the illusion that there are natural and inevitable differences between men and women. In contrast when Bree applies night cream or lipstick she regains a sense of calm and control through the power she has over her appearance – referring again to Butler's theory that one's gender (and safety) is reliant on the effective performance of it.

As with *Boys Don't Cry* camera work transmits information about a character's mental state. Typically emotion is captured in close ups and action is captured through long shots. For example, wider frames are used when Bree is on the phone to her therapist Margaret allowing the viewer to see Bree nervously fidgeting with surrounding furniture. Had the camera used a close up, the viewer would not witness Bree's anxiety when conversing with her therapist. These shots have thematic implications; they reinforce Connell (1987) and Foucault's (1981) suggestion that gender and sexuality are controlled by the state (given Bree's sex reassignment surgery depends on the success of these conversations with her therapist). Eventually, Bree is operated on but not before she has to 'jump through hoops' to prove she is sane. Thus Foucault's (1981) insight into the presence of anatomo-political power in contemporary society becomes relevant; despite the matter being about her physical body the state becomes involved in governing her personal identity. In addition to this the medical authority acts as an agent for the state to reinforce the Eurocentric ideologies of knowledge/power (as theorised by Foucault in Fillingham, 1993 and Sawicki, 1991). It also reflects Foucault's belief (cited in Rabinow, 2000) that power is exercised on the body (by the hegemony) through three tiers of Eurocentrism – hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and the examination which utilises both of these.

Butler's argument (Butler 2004a; 2004d) that the individual remains bound to power also emerges here; Bree spends most of the film being 'nearly-a-woman' because the medical fraternity (led by her therapist) have requested she do certain things before having surgery. She therefore spends a majority of the film defined by the limitations of the dominant hegemony while attempting to resist it. A Foucauldian analysis

(Foucault, 1996) would also argue that in doing this (resisting the hegemony) Bree partakes in her own domination – by continuing to resist the force which requires her resistance to maintain a power struggle.

Bree's dialogue says more about her character and the genre of the film than the soundtrack. For example Bree's education and intelligence present through her vocabulary and wit. Several times Bree makes a joke that only she understands, revealing she holds some power through knowledge whilst also conforming to the dark comedy of the film's style. Bree's knowledge may also be considered somewhat ironic given Foucault's assertion (cited in Sawicki, 1991) that systems of knowledge (including things that are taught in educational institutes) are subject to discourses of power (such as patriarchy which doesn't recognise individuals outside of the traditional gender binary). Bree is therefore bound to the hegemonic structure which also constrains her identity.

Though Bree maintains a privileged position through the knowledge of her hidden gender identity it also makes her vulnerable. The secret gains its own power over time because of Toby's potential reaction upon finding out the truth – the longer she maintains the secret, the more potentially negative his reaction. With every day that Bree and Toby spend becoming closer, they each become more affected by the other's opinions and behaviour, leaving Bree 'in-the-know' but very vulnerable. This observation confirms a theme also present in *Boys Don't Cry* – that the non-traditionally gendered individual retains power (and subsequent safety from patriarchal retaliation) through social isolation. These films suggest it is the bonding between people which enables the potential for pain (physical or emotional).

It is evident in *TransAmerica* that the treatment of this character fluctuates depending on other characters. While at first she feels no responsibility for Toby she becomes more influenced by his mood swings and opinions. Her original distance from him (both geographically and emotionally) enabled Bree to live an independent life, fully in control of her direction. However, Toby's presence changes her priorities and her relationships with other people, giving him some power over her life simply through his existence as Bree's child. Bree's emotional reserve is challenged through the inevitable parental concern and responsibility she develops for Toby. His very presence in the world also reduces Bree's function to something more biological (raising a child) than self-actualising, reasserting some of the traditional biological essentialist arguments about reproduction.

5.4 *XXY*

The significance of cinematic elements within *XXY* are similar to *TransAmerica*; conventions such as camera and editing reveal details about character emotions and status within the society, while a fight between the person with non-traditional gender identity and the medical profession run beneath the plot.

The camera work in *XXY* portrays Alex as a lonely and isolated figure. This aligns with Butler's theory (1990) (and a number of writers who are of non-traditional gender such as Morgan Holmes, Cheryl Chase and Michael Hernandez) that being outside the gender binary norm is a deeply isolating, lonely and difficult experience. I perceive society's exclusion of a person with non-traditional gender is more evident in *XXY* than any of the other films studied in this thesis. Many scenes use long shots, wide shots or extreme long shots to capture Alex's literal and metaphorical movement

away from the group (into a unique social space that only she occupies). Her isolation as an intersexual, someone who is not part of the ‘normal’ group, is constantly referred to using this cinematography technique. The idea that anybody with non-traditional gender exists as a solitary soul is most evident in *XXY* (which to some extent also reinforces the classical myth surrounding androgynous figures as non-human individuals).

Foucault (cited in Halperin, 1995) argues that children, ‘perverse’ adults and women are the three groups which suffer most from hegemonic structures of power. It could be argued that in *XXY* Alex experiences the suffering of all three – as a minor (under the age of 18) decisions about her gender have been made by her parents,⁴⁹ as a person of non-traditional gender she is considered by the medical profession as an anomaly in need of treatment and by members of the community as freakish or perverse, yet presented as a woman she is also subject to the sexual attack of a group of heterosexual men. A number of themes rise up through this observation including the authoritative presence of the Eurocentric medical community and the non-traditionally gendered individual’s safety through the maintenance of personal isolation.

As with *TransAmerica*, *XXY* often includes a mirror as part of the set. When Alex looks into a mirror she uses the reflective surface to attempt to define her identity. This is particularly relevant when she stands naked in front of the mirror, in a state of emotional turmoil after unexpectedly taking the masculine position during sex. Her steady gaze at her reflected-self displays a yearning to understand her own identity –

⁴⁹ Fortunately for Alex, her parents didn’t agree to the operation proposed when she was born.

especially after she ‘performed’ as a male during intercourse, referring again to Butler’s theory (1990) that gender is performance based. The frequent inclusion of these reflective surfaces would also suggest that appearance is one of the key elements of the gender performance. In addition to this Alex’s nudity in front of a reflective surface also pertains to Butler’s theory (2004b) that the body is passive – a blank canvas – on which culture inscribes meaning (through performance).

The close analysis of several cinematic apparatus allows me to conclude that thematically *XXY* draws mostly upon the central character’s fight with the medical profession which insists intersexuals require fixing (which is part of the larger fight to be accepted by the hegemony and resist the prevalence of anatomo-political power) (as theorised by Foucault (1981) and cited in Fillingham, 1993). The medical discussion is indicated through the recurring biology theme in *XXY*. For example the opening shots depict undersea organisms, Alex reads a textbook on biology and anatomy and her father works at the marine biology laboratory that specialises in caring for turtles. These elements contribute to *XXY*’s general referral to the presence of biological essentialism in the gender debate (suggesting perhaps that as Alex was born biologically intersexual she can also be both genders). The presence of Ramiro (a cosmetic surgeon) represents the role of the state in these issues about gender and the personal body. Connell (1987) states that this anatomo-political power is one of the substructures of the superstructure of gender that must be challenged for a crisis tendency to begin.

While Alex is the central character *XXY* also considers how it feels to be the parent of a child with non-traditional gender. Though Suli and Kraken prioritise Alex’s

autonomy it is still painful for them to watch the daughter they love change into a son they don't (yet) know. *XXY* almost suggests that this process is similar to the death of a child, as one beloved image of identity fades (although another unfamiliar one develops). While, to some extent, this is the case with all children as they mature, the gap that the gender transition bridges (as Butler [1990] suggests) is more pronounced, more problematic and more painful than any other human transition.

XXY examines both Alex's gender identity and sexuality (which is irrefutably linked). As Alex begins to favour her masculine identity the question is raised about her sexuality; it is unclear whether Alex is straight, gay, bisexual or just sexually dominant. The film provides no answers to these questions and the circumstances of her gender ambiguity add to the confusion. The presence of an intersexual in a social group 'throws a spanner in the works' for numerous people – those who parent the child, those who love it or are attracted to it physically, those who befriend it and those who betray it. *XXY* reinforces Foucault's theory (cited in Sawicki, 1991) that the implications of an individual outside what those in power consider to be normal are far reaching – potentially incriminating the individual and those who are involved as pathologically sick, evil or criminal. Butler (1990) says this reaction renders the individual undeserving of genuine human experience.

This fight against an ideology based on gender binaries and patriarchal hegemony is most obvious in the attempted rape scene. Alex's gender non-conformity leads to an act of violence and sexual assault. Unfortunately the authorities (the Uruguayan police) sit within the same patriarchal ideology making victims, such as Alex, helpless within the justice system. This loophole within the law reinforces patriarchal

hegemony further and detracts power from individuals like Alex, reinforcing Foucault's theory (cited in Sawicki, 1991) that the domination of the minority by the majority is enabled through a self-honouring discourse of education, language and justice systems. This discourse is also responsible for the trauma Alex experiences in the attempted rape scene. Alex seems to recover quite well (reverting to her aloof teenage behaviour in the following scenes) but realistically the long term emotional implications of that day are devastating.

5.5 *Orlando*

This same self-honouring discourse of power is evident in *Orlando* and key to the character development of the main character. Of all the central characters in this thesis, *Orlando* is the most ethereal. This supernatural persona is enhanced by her immortality and conveyed using various cinematic conventions befitting of *Orlando's* art house stylistic conventions.

Orlando's surreal depiction is captured mainly through camera work and editing. Close ups of *Orlando's* face (as male or female) capture a bright gleam in her eyes and play on the unique physical beauty the character possesses. These shots are used frequently and contribute to the mystery the character exudes. Close ups also display an essential sadness about *Orlando* – the melancholy and loneliness of an individual with non-traditional gender as she moves through time in an extraordinary perpetual youth. Everything about *Orlando* suggests she is a solitary soul – living in the radical dislocation that Butler (1990) suggests haunts all individuals with non-traditional gender.

The portrayal of Orlando as inhuman and ethereal is also supported by the soundtrack. Sequences of deep revelation are emphasized with electronic synths. This noise has a breathy, eerie quality intensifying the moment Orlando is in and emphasising (as Butler believes) what a monumental thing it is to move between two genders. Butler's theory of gender performance (1990) also emerges in this film though more so with regards to Orlando as a female than a male. Not surprisingly Orlando's portrayal of femininity is considerably more detailed and explicit than his portrayal of masculinity, thereby suggesting that women work harder at performing their gendered state. The extent of this 'hard work' can be seen (as Butler suggests) in the clothing (layers upon layers of underskirts, faux hips and corsets, lace gloves and jewellery), the hair and make up (huge wigs, heavily powdered faces and painted features), the language and the verbal body language (the elegant walk, the way women hold their teacup and saucer, the refined hand movements with a small fan) and a number of other physical performances which undoubtedly construe the performer as female. Indeed Orlando's identity is constructed through her appearance – the visual image of herself. The sequence which shows Orlando's gender change in the mirror also reinforces Butler's (2004b) suggestion that the body is actually passive and the soul is essentially not gendered.

Orlando's experiences are less traumatic than those of Brandon Teena or Alex. Her fight with patriarchal hegemony lasts for longer (centuries actually) but she is not physically or sexually attacked at any stage. This does not mean that Orlando's struggles with the traditional gender binary are any less important. However it does promote Foucault's theory (cited in Smart, 1986) that hegemonic dominance (hiding behind supposed indisputable [Eurocentric] knowledge) manifests with more subtlety

than in previous Centuries (through the use of persuasive advertising, state legislation and medical law for example).

The power struggle between Eurocentrism and people with non-traditional gender is most evident when Orlando returns from the East and a number of her rights are immediately revoked because of her female gender. She is spoken down to at public engagements and is not legally allowed to own property, becoming dependent on a male companion or a male heir to financially support her. At this point Orlando is overpowered by the legislation of the era (another example of the state's involvement in gender), and her only ability to retain some autonomy over her life came with her refusal to marry. This moment signifies Orlando's experience of trauma – the realisation that her status as a human has been downgraded because of her female gender. Orlando's subsequent run through the maze shifts the film from one time zone into another, solidifying her transition into a feminist and echoing Virginia Woolf's ideology as a feminist writer and Sally Potter's reputation as a feminist filmmaker (both of whom resist the inferiority imposed on women and the interference of the state in matters regarding the physical body).

It was the suggestion that women could be 'owned' by men which enraged Orlando enough to run through a maze. Initially Orlando endorses this notion when she believes she is entitled to 'have' Sasha because she "adores her". However, Orlando's view changes when the Archduke Harry claims he is entitled to 'have' Orlando because he adores her. Orlando's response to this inequality, is to literally flee towards a preferable future without a partner and it is through this sequence that Orlando's greatest character development occurs; initially an enforcer of patriarchy

(and all of its limitations on gender) Orlando realises here that her previous ideology was only effective in rendering women undeserving of the same human rights given to men.

It is important to note that *Orlando* not only conveys the fight with gender inequality, but also features themes of racism and class bigotry. For example, Orlando is warned, by her peers, that marrying Sasha (a Russian princess) would lower her status in England. Evidence of racism also emerges when Orlando travels to the East and does not expect the Khan (an educated leader) to speak English, assuming that those in the East are ignorant of Western customs. The Archduke Harry's reaction to the East's customs, also indicate a racist belief in the natural superiority of Europe. For example, he can't understand why Orlando would choose to live so long in the East, adopting Eastern culture, when she could return to England's 'superior' customs at any time. Essentially *Orlando* reveals the arrogance and Eurocentric attitude which filled the English court with enough confidence to colonise a number of other countries. This theme, though separate to gender, reinforces (and is part of) the larger self-honouring discourse of power that Foucault analyses (cited in Sawicki, 1991). This convenient set up between those with 'knowledge' and those with power impacts negatively both on those who have a non-traditional gender and those with non-European (or even non-British) ethnic roots.

Finally, *Orlando* ends on a more philosophical note than the other films. The ending sequence, having experienced life as both male and female, declares that Orlando empowers herself by moving on from the past into a more liberal future. *Orlando* seems to suggest that despite the injustices of the past, a state of peace and autonomy

can be reached through a transsexual experience (as opposed to a singularly-gendered or intersexual experience). Only once Orlando experiences life as male and then female does she fully understand the gender binary and the social atrocities that come with it. However, this understanding comes at significant cost – Orlando is clearly portrayed as an isolated individual, a solitary soul making her way through the discourses of recent Western history, experiencing the radical dislocation Butler (1990) suggests people with non-traditional gender encounter. This chronic isolation from the rest of humanity could also be considered trauma in its own right.

5.6 Conclusion

Close analysis has allowed me to extract specific details from each of the four films. I was then able to draw conclusions based on this data. In each case an in depth consideration of the main visual and aural elements has revealed information key about society's treatment of people with non-traditional gender. The following chapter is now going to discuss the broader sociological meaning of these conclusions.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The controversy surrounding the traditional gender binary construct heightened in 2009 when athlete Caster Semenya was accused of not meeting the criteria to compete as a female. Semenya's dilemma prompted new discussion (based on previous discussions) about whether the essence of gender is more biologically or socially influenced and about how accurate physiological tests are in measuring a person's gender.

This series of events inspired me to investigate how modern Western society receives people who don't fit within (or choose not to fit within) the traditional gender binary of male and female. This interest, coupled with a personal history of anorexia nervosa (and the bodily obsession that comes with it) formed the basis of my desire to better understand the concept of gender.

Film, a medium which maintains a complex representational relationship with contemporary society, seemed the most suitable media material for an analysis of Western ideologies surrounding gender. Based on the premise that all art is influenced by the subjective life experiences and ideologies of its maker(s) and consumer(s), films are not ideologically neutral texts (revealing information about the surrounding hegemony through codes of representation and myth). Film analysis is particularly deeply layered because the process of analysing also relies on the subjective interpretations of the researcher. As a result the conclusions drawn from this research are obviously qualitative and clearly specific to my personal reading of each film as

an emblematic case study. I therefore acknowledge this piece of research to be a unique reading of the data and a (small) contribution to the wider academic discussion on gender and identity in a philosophical context; this is Laura Stephenson's analysis.

6.2 Previous literature

My enquiry was grounded by other literature pertaining to gender theory. I researched how personal identity is constructed and found a variety of opinions on the topic; some scholars (such as Butler) feel identity is developed through geographical location and social environment while others (biological essentialists or biological determinists) believe anatomy, physiology and genes to have more impact on gender identity. Many modern scholars including Connell, Foucault and Macdonald consider that gender identity is a combination of both elements, however no definitive consensus has been reached. I considered some of the theories about gender as a structural tool of power by briefly discussing Connell's theory of the superstructure of gender (and the three substructures beneath it) and the three-lens theory of gender popularised by Sandra Bem (based on biological essentialism, polarisation and androcentrism).

Using the writings of Doty and Stryker I looked into the role of sexuality with regards to gender (given that a character of non-traditional gender may also have non-traditional sexuality) and investigated whether individuals with non-traditional gender required an entirely new theoretical framework that pushed the boundaries of gender philosophy into transgender theory, queer theory or something that doesn't yet have a name in an academic context.

My review of existing literature considered gender as a social phenomenon, sometimes brought about by the fashion of the era or the values of the state whilst also acknowledging the views of the medical profession which identified non-traditional gender identity as a biological malfunction that could be medically and/or surgically treated. I turned to key theories by philosophers Michel Foucault and Judith Butler to investigate the relationship between an individual's (gender) identity and the treatment of them by society (and sometimes more specifically the state). Foucault was particularly instrumental in illustrating the power struggles between (gender) minorities and social hegemonies while Butler's theory of gender as a performance vastly contributed to my understanding of the central character's identities (almost all of whom turned to one of Butler's prescribed performance elements to deliberately construct their gender). Both philosophers provided insight into what happens when an individual does not conform to the traditional gender norm – punishment through ostracism and ridicule (Butler), pathologising of their state or forced institutionalisation (Foucault), removal of legal or personal rights and violence of a physical or sexual nature (Foucault). I also sought firsthand accounts by those who had been through a gender transformation and discovered (for most) the experience had been isolating, frightening and physically and emotionally difficult. Ultimately though, the right to personal autonomy over one's physical body was deemed deeply important by those who have been through the process.

6.3 Conduct of research

Other than basing my understanding of gender (and its relation to power in society) on a broad philosophical framework by Butler and Foucault I chose to conduct this research through the analysis of four separate case studies – four Western films

containing a non-traditionally gendered character in a central role.⁵⁰ Using each film as an emblematic case study allowed me to analyse deeply (within each film) and broadly (across four individual samples) to produce rich qualitative data. Each case study was examined using a close reading approach (of several visual and aural cinematic elements) to generate a formalist analysis.

6.4 Process of analysis

To investigate the representation of non-traditionally gendered characters in modern, Western film I analysed central cinematic codes within four films which featured such a character in the central role. The term ‘non-traditional gender’ is purposefully broad and, as stated at the beginning of this thesis, refers to a person who does not conform to the traditional definition of either male or female. *Boys Don’t Cry* and *TransAmerica* are both stories featuring transvestism, although *Boys Don’t Cry* is about a transgendered individual while *TransAmerica* is about a MTF transsexual. *XXY* and *Orlando* feature a character who is intersexual – a person who is biologically male and female, although the character in *XXY* is simultaneously both sexes while the character from *Orlando* is first one sex and then, instantly and mystically, another.

The cinematic codes studied were camera, lighting, editing, dialogue, sound-scape, costume, hair, make up and script function. The analysis of these cinematic apparatus developed into a discussion of how these elements contribute to portraying the central character’s treatment within the diegesis, as a representation of how real life society deals with people who are non-traditionally gendered.

⁵⁰ The corpus of films is deliberately described broadly as ‘Western’ case studies. This is done so that they (the case studies) provide a wide (Western) foundation on which to place conclusions about Western sociological phenomena and contemporary ideologies.

6.5.1 Summary of key findings - Introduction

My investigation sought to critically examine what contemporary Western cinema says about how society deals with non-traditionally gendered people. Through a close reading of four emblematic case studies, the generated formalist analysis reveals that the people with non-traditional gender identity (the minority) have wavering control and freedom depending on the behaviours of the traditionally gendered individual (the majority). This conclusion was reached through one of my first findings - that power is boosted through the presence of knowledge.

6.5.2a Power and knowledge – Situating the findings

Foucault insists that when discussing power one should in fact be discussing power relations as power is not active until it is exercised by someone (1981). In each of the films analysed power is employed (by either the person with non-traditional gender or someone else) creating observable cinematic power relations. Foucault also states that power and knowledge should be considered together in a philosophical context, because the two are so intricately linked in human discourse (cited in Sawicki, 1991). Foucault considers that power is enabled through knowledge because that knowledge is heralded as such by those who benefit from it (those in power). This is the relationship he refers to when he writes about knowledge and power (ibid). While the characters with non-traditional gender most often fall victim to this self-honouring discourse there are also moments in these films when the central character's unique (and secret knowledge) of the circumstances (their identity) gives them the upper hand in the situation.

6.5.2b Power and knowledge - Findings

In these four films the central character's most empowering knowledge comes from their awareness of their true gender identity. Brandon, Bree, Alex and Orlando are most powerful when they retain the secret of their biological sex and their power (which could also be called their control) drops when other people also learn of their true identity. Their hidden identity, vigilantly maintained, becomes common knowledge to the surrounding social group – and they lose power. Because the group's ideology (a patriarchal hegemony) regarding gender does not include the acceptance of people who have a non-traditional gender the immediate reaction to this new information is anger, fear, disgust and confusion. These emotions manifest through dominating behaviour such as bullying, intimidation or abuse, assault and removal of rights, making the individual further susceptible to attacks where knowledge of their identity (now shared around) is exploited over and over again.

I consider that knowledge empowers those who have it. However, power's loyalty is fickle; the moment the hegemony gains knowledge (through learning the character's true identity), they receive the power. As a result power changes hands at the same rate that knowledge does, making the two (as Foucault wrote in 1981) inextricably linked.

6.5.3a Power through isolation – Situating the findings

The second major finding from this research is the relationship between social connections and vulnerability. Foucault (cited in Sawicki, 1991) argues that those who are considered abnormal (as estimated by those with knowledge/power) are punished – either by being ostracised from society or by having their identity

pathologized. Similarly Butler (2004b) suggests that those who don't perform gender correctly (thereby being abnormal) are punished through the denial of genuine human experience (by being labelled inhuman or sick). While there is ample evidence from this research to suggest that people with non-traditional gender are ostracised there is also significant evidence that choosing to be isolated assists in the survival of the individual. In this sense control and power are maintained through isolation but punishment for non-conformity is also isolation. Either way it suggests the likeliness of a lonely existence for those with non-traditional gender.

6.5.3b Power through isolation - Findings

To some extent the strength of the non-traditionally gendered character depends on their independence and isolation. Vulnerability to hegemonic prejudice (Foucault, 1981; Butler, 2004b; Connell, 1987) increases when the character becomes closer to another human being. This vulnerability occurs through the exchange of knowledge (as previously stated) and the sharing of experiences, emotions or blood ties. For example, Bree's susceptibility to attack (physical or emotional) is greatly increased through the presence of her child; Toby alters Bree's singular, self-directed lifestyle into an existence where energy and emotion is divided between her and her child.

Romance also makes the character with non-traditional gender vulnerable - Brandon Teena and Orlando are both emotionally wounded by someone they are in love with and Brandon's life ends when his gender identity is outed. Potentially, Brandon's death could have been avoided entirely had he not been in love with Lana, keeping him drawn to a dangerously patriarchal community in Falls City. Orlando spends years nursing a broken heart from the first life cycle of her immortal existence with

Sasha. Orlando's youth, naivety and ethereal existence is more greatly affected by Sasha's betrayal, than by the death of her parents or her mentor Queen Elizabeth.

My analysis of these films suggests that even friendship increases the central character's vulnerability, as witnessed in *XXY*. Alex entrusted her secret with Vando (her best friend) who betrayed her by sharing it with others. The result of Vando's indiscretion is that Alex is sexually assaulted (nearly raped) and traumatised. Had Alex not been emotionally close with Vando, she would not have confided in him and been so deeply hurt when his reaction was antipathetic and damaging.

The key theme emerging here is that isolation, though socially unfavourable (to most), keeps an individual safe. To reveal, to entrust and to love makes a person vulnerable to emotional and physical pain and further forced isolation from society. Though seclusion from other people enhances the esoteric solitude the person with non-traditional gender possesses, the distance initially maintained between them and other people makes them a stronger, more focused survivor.

6.5.4a The authority of Eurocentrism – Situating the findings

Although each of the thesis films conveys the confrontation between the non-traditionally gendered character and mainstream society, some also specifically present the conflict between the mainstream (Eurocentric) medical profession and the human right to choose one's own physiological destiny.

Foucault's writing on power (relations) (cited in Fillingham, 1993 and Rabinow, 2000) discusses the involvement of the state in matters concerning the individual's

physical body. The Eurocentric ideology of the Western medical fraternity contributes a great deal to the dominance of the state in issues about the body (including gender). This anatomo-political influence is enabled through the intricate connection between knowledge and power; a mutually reciprocal relationship that Foucault argues (in Sawicki, 1991) enforces the authority of the other. In other words, the institute in power (the state) has restrictive legislation (they have power) over the individual's right to change gender (most prominent in *TransAmerica* and *XXY*). This legislation is put into place based on the medical 'knowledge' (which is Eurocentrically aligned) that the desire to change gender is a pathologically based, clinical disorder that can be treated. However, this knowledge is not founded by an independent party but by the same institution (the state) that is socially dominant, making its authority powerful but subjective (cited in Sawicki, 1991 and Rabinow, 2000).

6.5.4b The authority of Eurocentrism - Findings

TransAmerica and *XXY* are the strongest contributors to this debate. Bree's power is affected by her son Toby but also by the medical professionals who hold legal control over her surgery (and gender transformation). Bree is unable to have surgery until she meets the criteria set by the American health authorities. Despite attending regular therapy sessions, meeting routinely with Doctors and taking prescribed hormonal medication, Bree's final step into womanhood depends on the opinion of her Doctor and therapist.

To a lesser extent Alex in *XXY* is also made vulnerable through the authoritativeness of the medical community. The film tells that minutes after Alex was born the hospital wanted to operate on her, making her anatomically female regardless of her

actual gender orientation. Though her parents refused this action the pressure remains steady as Alex grows and the question about whether to operate hangs over her life. It is the opinion of Ramiro (a surgeon) that Alex should have the surgery, while Alex suggests that doing nothing and remaining intersexual is an option. This is not, from a Eurocentric view, a feasible option as Eurocentricity (the influence of Western medical discourse) promotes the traditional gender binary.

Within *TransAmerica* and *XXY* the central character must deal with the opposition of gender-traditional hegemony as well as the presence of the medical profession. Despite the perception that the fight against the medical profession is an additional problem for Bree and Alex, the conflict between the non-traditionally gendered person and medical profession, and the non-traditionally gendered person and mainstream society, is actually the same battle. This is because in both cases the hegemony is enabled through the same knowledge/power relations (Foucault, 1981). So while the Eurocentric medical community presents unique challenges in *XXY* and *TransAmerica*, I believe these plot devices to be further examples of Foucault's assertion (ibid) that society is reluctant to accept anything other than patriarchal hegemony including non-traditionally gendered individuals.

6.5.5a The solitary soul – Situating the findings

It is Butler who explicitly states that changing gender is a deeply isolating process (1990). Despite criticisms that Butler's academic work is out of touch with the subjects she writes about, numerous trans-writers (contributing to academic texts from a personal perspective) concur that moving between or living between genders is a painfully solitary experience. As previously stated sometimes that isolation is self-

imposed (enabling safety and survival) and other times it is the effect of being forcefully segregated from the community. According to Butler segregation is a form of punishment used on individuals who reveal the (usually) hidden nature of gender as a constructed performance (2004b). Ironically she also theorises that gender performance is fundamentally activated to feel a coherence with other people (1993), making the segregation of those who don't perform it 'correctly' even more sad.

6.5.5b The solitary soul - Findings

In support of Butler's theory of isolation (1990) each of the central characters is depicted as a person, who may not necessarily be lonely, but who is alone. The essential difference between these two words is that loneliness indicates a degree of unhappiness and a yearning for company. However, to be alone suggests that an individual is walking their life path separated from other people. To expand on this, each of the studied characters is depicted in at least one stage of the film as living in an isolated environment and experiencing events from an entirely unique standpoint.

The secret identity Brandon Teena maintains in *Boys Don't Cry* perpetuates her solitary experience of a sexual identity crisis. For a majority of the film, only one other character (Lonny) knows her biological identity. Brandon's gender lies initiate the sequence of events that lead to his death but (for a time) they also keep Brandon within a guarded and private existence where he dare not even allow his lover to touch his body.

Bree's isolation as a transsexual woman in *TransAmerica* is contributed to by the negative reactions of her family in a time before the film was set. As a result Bree's

gender transition is only known about by her therapist Margaret. She makes the huge physical and emotional metamorphosis between sexes largely by herself, with the supportive inter-social space usually filled by family and friends, deserted. Unlike *XXY*, *TransAmerica* does not use cinematography and editing techniques to depict isolation – but to reveal the construction of gender and the nature of its performance foundation.

Though Alex in *XXY* is the youngest central character in this research, her detachment from mainstream society is already established. At 15 years old she becomes a near recluse (even within a semi rural environment). Alex's isolation is a result of her gender condition which even when concealed for many years, created a sense of distance between Alex and other children. *XXY* portrays Alex's segregated existence through footage of her spending copious amounts of time by herself – on the beach, in the forest, under the house, in her room, contributing to the unshakable feeling that Alex is estranged from the rest of humanity.

Orlando's isolation is arguably less intense than that of the other non-traditionally gendered characters but more chronic because of its presence over many lifetimes. Orlando has several significant relationships; her romance with Sasha is brief but haunting, and Orlando retains the pain of her heartbreak for several centuries. This perpetual yearning for lost love confines Orlando to emotional pain and social retreat. Orlando's isolation is aggravated by her gender change and her exclusion from some aspects of society on the basis of her female status. Her refusal to wed the Archduke Harry further heightens animosity between Orlando and society, increasing her esoteric remoteness. Orlando does eventually find (temporary) companionship with

Shelmerdine and with her child although she will ultimately outlive her child and the distance (theorised by Butler in 1990) remains between Orlando and society anyway.

6.5.6a The construction of identity through reflection – Situating the findings

The loneliness of the central character is exacerbated through the struggle to sit confidently within a gender position. These moments of self-doubt are portrayed through the use of reflective imagery. The irony in this consistent use of mirrors within films about gender identity is the suggestion that something supposedly internally felt is still heavily reliant on the seamless performance of the external aesthetic. This references Butler's theory that gender is performed through a series of repeated behaviours and aesthetic stylisations (1990). The characters with non-traditional gender use the mirror surface as a tool for reassurance that they are performing their gender correctly, so that any discordance between their gender identity, gender performance and anatomy is not visible (and according to Butler visibility results in punishment) (2004b). These films suggest that the character's sense of identity (as either transsexual, transgender or intersexual) is internally, innately felt (an argument of Foucault [1981] and Connell [1987]) but reinforced, displayed and constructed through a visual performance (as stated by Butler [1990]).

6.5.6b The construction of identity through reflection - Findings

Mirrors are employed as props and furniture more than seven times in *TransAmerica* but they also appear to a lesser extent in *XXY*, *Orlando* and *Boys Don't Cry*. When Bree has moments of uncertainty she turns to the mirror (whether it be full length or inside a make-up compact) to reassure herself that her female appearance is credible and that other people won't suspect her of possessing male sex organs (which Butler

[2004b] suggests would result in punishment). Alex in *XXY* also stands fully naked before her mirror, attempting to determine her identity through her visual reflection.

The construction of gender identity is also shown with mirrors in both *TransAmerica* and *Boys Don't Cry*. Brandon Teena manipulates his female physique to appear masculine by strapping down his breasts, applying a prosthetic penis and wearing traditionally masculine clothing each morning. This routine is clearly depicted with many of the shots using the full-length bedroom mirror to capture the literal construction of Brandon Teena, the man. Likewise Bree manipulates her physical appearance from a male body into a female body every morning. Bree's routine of make-up application, underwear placement and gender-typical dress, occurs onscreen in the very first scene. As a result, the audience's understanding of Bree is always accurate – she is a transsexual woman awaiting the operation to remove her male sexual organs. The portrayal of Bree and Brandon's daily routine in front of the mirror also reinforces Butler's theory (1990) that gender is performed.

Despite films such as *TransAmerica* and *XXY* arguing that gender is emotional not biological, the central character continues to rely on the physical appearance to inform and express their gender. A Butlerian analysis suggests that this is because physique is part of the performance of gender (1990). Perhaps then it is worth considering that the physiques of these people are in fact the living and breathing versions of a mirror. The representation through clothing, hair, make up and body shape is indicative of who the central character is internally. In this sense the body becomes another reflective surface to project an image of the inner spirit, although admittedly this does

not adhere to Butler's thesis (2004b) which argues that the human soul is not gendered.

6.5.7a Trauma and liberation – Situating the findings

Within each of these films the central character experiences both moments of liberation and moments of trauma. The outcome of the trauma versus the outcome of the liberation reveals the film's statement about the treatment of people with non-traditional gender in contemporary society. There are differing levels of trauma within each film which a Foucauldian analysis (cited in Fillingham, 1993) suggests is the result of not conforming to the traditional gender binary (or being classified as abnormal by a dominant institute that classifies itself as normal) (ibid). Butler also states that when an individual fails to conform to hegemonic gender expectations there is punishment (2004b). Foucault (1981) and Butler (1990) both acknowledge ostracism from society as the most frequent punishment, although patriarchy (that Connell [1987] believes is motivated by fear and mistrust) will also use violence, sexual attack, abuse, incarceration and forced medical treatment. Despite this negative finding I think it is vitally important to recognise that these characters also have moments of freedom, liberation and triumph. These moments may not be key to analysing the ideology of the total film, they may be fleeting and overwhelmed by the negative experiences, but I believe they signify the beginnings of Connell's [1987] crisis tendencies – a small but significant contribution to the gradual overthrow of patriarchy's hegemonic rule.

6.5.7b Trauma and liberation - Findings

The trauma within *Boys Don't Cry* is perhaps the most disturbing; the level of violence and sexual violation surpasses the amount present in the other films and is more deeply troubling because of its non-fiction origin. Brandon encounters several events that could be considered assaults but the most physically and emotionally destructive is the scene where he is repeatedly raped and beaten by John Lotter and Tom Nissen. Brandon's moment of liberation comes when, several days after the rape, Lana and he make love, with Lana knowing about Brandon's gender identity, and fully accepting it.

Though Bree's ostracism from her family is emotionally painful, the moment Bree's trauma occurs in *TransAmerica* is when Toby, her son, hits her across the face and verbally denies the role Bree has in his life. Though she is continually affected by her separation from Toby, Bree experiences triumph when she lays on a hospital bed and is wheeled into surgery. In this moment Bree knows that her long-time drive for total gender transition is about to happen and a new stage of her life as a happier, more content individual is about to begin.

Alex's trauma in *XXY* is similar to Brandon Teena's, with marginally less violence and a fictitious origin. Alex suffers psychological trauma in the scene where three teenage boys attempt to rape her. Her moment of freedom and peace occurs just moments before the rape scene when she floats contentedly in the sea, seemingly unashamed and comfortable with her ambiguously gendered body. Orlando's first trauma occurs when, at the Countess' party, she is denigrated by her male company and moments later is told that as a female she can not legally own property. Her

moment of liberation comes when she achieves a book deal with a publisher and then rides her motorbike through central London in a symbol of independence and ability.

It is very important to recognise that in three of the four films physical or sexual violence are the methods deployed to hurt the character with non-traditional gender identity. *Boys Don't Cry* and *XXY* are films which contain both physical and sexual violence against the character, while *TransAmerica* contains just physical violence. Orlando's maltreatment as a non-traditionally gendered individual occurs through sexism in social interaction and gender inequalities within the law. This does not mean that Orlando suffered any less than the other characters, simply that her degradation occurred through a method that was socially acceptable, historically accurate and part of the subtle methods of power enforcement that Foucault (cited in Smart, 1986) theorises are used in more modern society.

The predominant presence of physical and sexual violence makes a strong statement about how gender-progressive individuals are received by mainstream society. This violence illustrates the deep fear society has about changes to the traditional gender binary and challenges to patriarchal hegemony. The physical act of violence and sexual assault is a direct representation of patriarchy's attempt to conceal its own existence (given that an individual with non-traditional gender exposes it [Connell, 1987]); it is not a coincidence that the persecutors in all four thesis films are men.

6.6 Directions for further research

My research exposes several areas of investigation that could logically continue on from this thesis. Directions for further research include an investigation into other

non-traditionally gendered figures in other creative mediums such as fine art pieces, television programming or print advertising. Similarly research could focus on gender portrayal (specifically non-traditional genders) in popular culture elements such as music groups, novels and fashion trends. I am also interested in researching the effect of psychological trauma on the physical body, with particular focus on characters who change their appearance after an encounter with sexual abuse or assault. This particular interest would most likely move away from formalist analysis and enter a psychoanalytic or post-feminist area of academic research.

One of the drawbacks I encountered with this particular research was a limitation on size and time. A larger thesis may enable me to perform a less restrictively cinematic (formalist) analysis and move into a study more grounded in cultural theory and discourse analysis. As it is, I acknowledge that this work is a detailed formalist examination of films about people with non-traditional gender – it sits in the academic field as a thorough content analysis of particular texts.

6.7 Conclusion

While each of the studied characters experiences both a moment of trauma and a moment of liberation, the ideology of the film depends on what fate lays ahead for the character. For example Brandon Teena survives his brutal attack, but is shot dead days later by his rapists. Bree succeeds in the sense that her gender transition is complete and she makes plans for a return to tertiary study. However, her future is now entwined with Toby's and as a natural effect of the child-parent relationship, Bree's fate becomes manipulated by his needs. Alex escapes a near rape (with help from a male companion) causing emotional distress and *XXY* suggests she goes on to

live as an intersexual, albeit within a society that is not accepting of her gender status. *Orlando* is perhaps the only one of the thesis films with a positive outcome. After suffering centuries of heartbreak, loneliness, grief and sexist degradation Orlando finally becomes successful in her female existence; she does not get her property back however and her future is marked by an existential loneliness that comes with being outside the gender binary norm and being immortal.

The ending of these films indicates how willing society is to accept people of non-traditional gender in the mainstream. Because, in a majority of the cases, the central character is killed, ostracised or marginalised I conclude that mainstream contemporary Western culture is unwilling to accept individuals who challenge the gender binary norm. Whether the person is transsexual, transgender or intersexual a broad Foucauldian-Butlerian philosophy suggests mainstream society will not allow them to live a free and autonomous life. It seems it is too soon for society to admire or even comfortably accept those who don't conform to traditional gender binary positions.

The aim of this research was to discover how such characters within these films were dealt with – to consider what their onscreen representations said about their status in society. Despite moments of freedom and liberation and despite the following of a select fan group, these individuals have not yet made it into the accepted wider human conscience. Those who die lose power, those who suffer lose status, but their presence in cinematic history helps carve the way for a new era, where hopefully, individuals with non-traditional can one day retain dignity, freedom and power.

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Appendix

Synopsis' and Plot Breakdowns

Boys Don't Cry Synopsis

Boys Don't Cry is based on the 1993 true story of transgendered American citizen Teena Brandon (Hilary Swank). As Teena embraces his own desire to cross the gender divide and live as a male, he moves to a small working class Nebraskan town called Falls City. Inverting his birth name and calling himself Brandon Teena, he becomes a liked member of a close-knit group of friends and family surrounding the Lotter and Tisdell families.

Brandon begins to date Lana (Chloe Sevigny) (a young female member of the Tisdells) and for some time their relationship thrives and Brandon's original gender remains unknown. Brandon's unusual manner and criminal past don't matter to his new friends but when the partying clan discover the biological nature of Brandon's gender and sexuality they feel deceived, manipulated and disgusted.

Totally misunderstanding Brandon's "sexual identity crisis", Lana's older friends [John] Lotter (Peter Sarsgaard) and [Tom] Nissen (Brendon Sexton III) pursue Brandon in search of revenge and answers. They brutally rape Brandon in an empty parking lot before fatally shooting him and another friend some days later in a farmhouse where he had been hiding out.

Boys Don't Cry* Plot Breakdown*1. Introduction Sequence**

A city at night time seen via a car on a motorway. The eyes of an anonymous person look in the rear vision mirror.

2. Haircut

Brandon gets a cousin (Lonny) to cut her hair short enough to look like a guy.

3. Car Park Reluctance

In the car park of a roller skating rink, Lonny tries to convince her not to go into a roller skating rink as a man on a date.

4. Out and About As a Guy

Inside the rink Brandon approaches a girl who she's organised a date with. They skate around and talk beneath the disco ball.

5. Kisses on the Doorstep

At the end of the date Brandon and her date kiss outside the girl's house. As the girl walks inside Brandon rejoices over a successful date.

6. Traffic

The night time clouds move over the sky as the traffic flows down the motorway and the city lights glare on.

7. Escape to the Trailer

Brandon runs ahead of three guys at night time and finds safety in Lonny's trailer. The guys are angry about Brandon having had sex with one of their sisters. Lonny demands she return him some money she owes and tells her she is no longer allowed to stay with him.

8. Drowning His Sorrows

Brandon sits at a dark, smoky bar drinking alcohol. A young, blonde woman starts a conversation up with him – her name is Candace. As Brandon goes to order more drinks a man approaches Candace at the bar and starts to trouble her. Brandon asks the man to leave her alone and a fight breaks out. A male companion of Candace's (John Lotter) comes to Brandon's rescue and they become allies.

9. Alleyway

Candace, John and Brandon run down a dark alleyway away from the sirens. They meet up with another young guy – Tom Nissen (who is graffiting a wall). They invite Brandon to a party.

10. Travelling

The four travel down a dark motorway to the party. Brandon sleeps some of the way.

11. In the Sticks

Brandon wakes up and finds himself in a small shack (out house). She's out in the country. She uses a phone to call her cousin Lonny who advises her to

come straight back to Lincoln without getting into trouble. Candace comes out and introduces her baby son Cody.

12. Grey Days

Later during the day, Candace is at work in the bar and Brandon walks in. She's organised a ride back to Lincoln with a customer. Brandon joins Tom and John at a game of pool and drinking. Candace, Lana and another friend (Kate) take the stage to perform karaoke. Lana notices Brandon sitting at the table with John and Tom.

13. Truck Stop

Lana, Tom and Brandon wait for Candace and some others to return at a truck stop. It's now late and the sky is littered with stars. The group convince Brandon not to go south with the bar customer and join them for the night. They drive away.

14. Raucous Partying

The group arrive at a clearing where others are partying. They drink and smoke. Brandon impresses the group by getting towed around on the back of a car with a rope. The group eggs him on but Lana is worried as she falls off repeatedly.

15. Crashing on the Couch

Brandon sleeps on Candace's couch that night then stirs and wakes up. She is thinking about Lana. She realizes that her period has arrived in the night and goes to the bathroom to quietly wash off her pants and search for a tampon.

16. Petrol Station

Brandon drives to the petrol station to buy tampons and sees Lana walking around the forecourt. She watches Lana from the car and then ducks inside to buy women's hygiene products. Lana enters the store but the clerk refuses to sell her alcohol. Brandon buys her some beers and catches her up outside. They walk away from the station towards Lana's home.

17. I Hate Your Life Too

Lana and Brandon enter Lana's house and get her drunken mother off the couch into bed. Brandon makes Lana drink some liquid before going to sleep. Lana lies on her bed and Brandon talks to her as she gets sleepy. Brandon turns off the light and leaves the house.

18. Breakfast at Candace's

Brandon wakes in Candace's house and has breakfast with her. She's prepared him juice and pancakes.

19. Breakfast at Lana's

John, Tom, Lana's mum and John's daughter April smoke and play cards over the table. A song comes on the radio that Lana's mum loves; she turns it up on

the stereo and starts to dance. Lana comes out of her room and gets angry about the music being so loud. The others try to convince her to dance but she pushes them away and storms back to her room. She critically examines her body in the mirror and then lies down on her bed.

20. Preparing for the Day

Brandon has just showered and is walking around her room at Candace's in a towel. She inserts a tampon, straps her breasts down with bandages and then inserts socks down her underwear. She examines her body in the mirror and combs her hair.

21. Meeting April

Candace and Brandon arrive at Lana's house. Candace continues inside and John introduces his daughter April to Brandon. Brandon and John sit outside the house and talk while smoking a cigarette.

22. Lies About the Family

Tom, John, Brandon and Lana's mum talk and smoke inside the house. Brandon tells them that her mother lives in Hollywood with her sister who is a model. Lana's mum examines Brandon's face up close.

23. Signs of Abuse

Later in the day John, Tom, April and Candace watch television while Lana's mum and Brandon talk in the living room. Lana comes to join them as Tom and John get April to drink beer. April accidentally wees on John and he walks

out the room in anger. Lana and Brandon walk outside and talk on the deck. Brandon follows her around the yard and tries to take her photo with a Polaroid camera. Lana's friend Kate comes out and tells Lana it's time to go to work for the night shift.

24. Dangerous Driving

The group (Lana, Candace, Kate, John, Tom and Brandon) leave the house in the car and head towards town. In town a group of girls pull up alongside them and insult them. The two cars drive off down the road racing alongside each other (Brandon is driving). A police car speeds up behind Brandon's car and instead of stopping he speeds up down the road. He veers off the road into gravel. The dust blinds the police car and they drop back. It seems that the group will get away but the police sirens catch up.

25. Pulled Up

The police have the group out of the car and are checking driver's licenses. The officer gives Brandon a ticket and a warning and leaves.

26. Unfair Blame

The group get back into the car and John reprimands Brandon for nearly getting him in trouble with the cops. Brandon disagrees with John and he responds by kicking everyone out the car except for Lana. He drives off into the dark and returns moments later to pick up Kate and take her to work. Brandon, Tom and Candace are left standing in the dark. They walk back towards the general direction of the road.

27. By the Fireside

Brandon and Tom sit beside an open fire in the dark. Tom shows Brandon some self- mutilated scars on his body inflicted by a pocket knife blade. He encourages Brandon to try it but he opts not to. The pair lie down beside the open fire and watch the night sky lighten up gradually.

28. Official Documents

Brandon receives the speeding ticket in the mail (addressed to Teena Brandon) and takes a check from Candace's draw. He writes a note to Candace about leaving for a couple of days. Lana comes to the door after finishing the night shift. The pair talk on the couch and then kiss briefly. Brandon asks if Lana had written to John in prison and Lana responds by saying that she was young. They kiss again and Brandon leaves the house with Lana watching him from the front door.

29. Back in Lincoln

Brandon arrives at Lonny's house in Lincoln. She asks to spend one night at his house. He is angry with Brandon for being irresponsible. He walks away from her but leaves the door open behind him for her to enter.

30. Court in Lincoln

Brandon sits in court waiting to be sentenced for grand theft auto but when the judge calls for Teena Brandon to step forward she is scared of being locked

up, so instead doesn't make her presence known to the judge and is marked down as failing to appear.

31. Back to Falls City

Brandon returns to Falls City on a dirt bike at night time. He pulls up outside the factory where Lana works the night shift. He watches Lana smoking from the open window of an upper floor. Brandon takes a Polaroid from the bike on the ground and catches her attention.

32. Intimacy

Lana and Brandon sit on a blanket looking at the factory and Falls City from a distance. They kiss and Lana begins to undress. Lying back on the blanket Lana is physically pleased by Brandon (it appears that she is providing her with oral sex).

33. Joy Riding

Kate, Lana, Brandon and Candace sit in a car at night time smoking and driving really fast down the road. They are having a great time.

34. Girl Talk

Lana, Kate and Candace sit in Lana's rooming smoking drugs. Lana changes her clothes and examines her body in the mirror while the other two try to get information from her relationship with Brandon.

35. Flash Back

In her mind Lana remembers having sex with Brandon and noticing her cleavage. She is confused and sits up. She places her hand on the outside of Brandon's jeans and feels for his penis. Satisfied that Brandon has a penis, they lie down again together.

36. Girl Talk Continued

Lana, Candace and Kate finish up the conversation on the bed. Lana signals that they did have sex but is too coy to talk about it in detail; she sits up off the bed and moves away from the others.

37. Birthday Celebration

Lana, Lana's mum, Candace, Kate and Brandon sit in the lounge of Lana's house smoking and celebrating Brandon's 21st birthday. Brandon blows out the candles on his cake and opens a present from Lana's mum.

38. Gate Crashing

Tom and John arrive at Lana's house. John walks into the house and then into Lana's room without knocking. They have a tense conversation about Lana's relationship with Brandon while Lana is wrapping Brandon's birthday present. Lana's mum enters the room when she hears raised voices. Lana leaves her bedroom.

39. Conditions of Gift Giving

Back in the lounge the group continue to party. John tells Brandon that he knows about his relationship with Lana. He says that he gives Lana to

Brandon as a birthday gift but that Brandon needs to remember it is John's house. Lana watches the conversation from the other side of the room.

40. Spinach Weighing

John watches Lana and Kate at work on the night shift at the factory. He stands on the ground smoking a cigarette as he watches the pair weigh spinach through a factory window.

41. I Quit My Evil Job!

In Lana's bedroom Lana tells Brandon that she quit her job at the spinach factory to go on the road to Memphis with Brandon. Brandon says that he was thinking about starting a trailer park in Falls City.

42. Brandon's First Pay Cheque

In the kitchen Brandon cooks breakfast at the stove while Lana and her mum wait. Lana's mum holds a letter from the Falls City Traffic Court partially addressed to Lana. She asks if Lana is in trouble again and Brandon quickly takes the letter from Lana's mum, claiming it to be her first pay cheque. Brandon tells them to sit down and she will bring breakfast over.

43. Down Town to the Court House

Brandon walks down a city street towards the court house building. Her voice over plays where she talks about how great the trailer park will be.

44. Caught Out

Brandon tries to pay a fine at the court house but the clerk responds by calling a police officer over. The officer shows Brandon a fax from the Lincoln Police who have listed all of Teena Brandon's legal misdemeanours.

45. What the Hell is This?

Candace approaches the clerk at the convenience store with the stolen cheque that Brandon took from her cheque book. She asks who wrote the cheque and the clerk responds that it was Brandon.

46. Behind Bars

Brandon sits writing behind the bars of a small holding cell.

47. Candace Looks for Answers

In her house Candace looks through her chest of drawers for some clues about the stolen cheque. Then she runs her hands under the mattress that Brandon slept on and pulls out a tampon applicator.

48. Writing to Lonny

Brandon sits on the cell bed in prison writing a letter to Lonny.

49. Starting to Understand

Candace finds a pair of blood stained jeans belonging to Brandon then a ticket in the rubbish bin with the name Teena Brandon on it.

50. Staying Tough

Brandon tells Lonny that he is staying tough and does press ups on the cell floor.

51. Candace Cries

Candace kneels by the rubbish bin on the bedroom floor, crying as she reads the ticket with Teena Brandon's name on it.

52. Getting High

Kate and Lana inhale drugs while spinning around a playground turn-about.

Candace approaches silently in the dark and is clearly upset.

53. I Don't Care if You're Half Monkey or Half Ape

Lana visits Brandon in the jail cell and Lana asks why Brandon is in a female prison. Brandon tells her that she is a hermaphrodite and was born with male and female genitals. Lana says she doesn't care and vows to get Brandon out on bail.

54. Running Free

Lana and Brandon run out of the prison together, both elated.

55. Come on Candy

John and Tom enter the bar where Candace works. They ask her where Lana is and what is going on. After a cigarette and more alcohol Candace agrees to tell them what she knows.

56. Sex in the Back Seat

Lana and Brandon get physically intimate in the back seat of a car at night.

57. Evidence in the Paper

John, Tom, Candace and Kate arrive at Lana's house and John shows Lana's mum the newspaper with Brandon's female name printed in it. John walks into Lana's room searching for information about Brandon. He finds Brandon's bag with information about his sexual identity crisis.

58. First Goodbye

Brandon and Lana kiss outside her house and Lana enters inside to pick up some clothes. Brandon waits outside.

59. Confrontation

Lana enters the house and sees the whole group waiting for her. She walks to her room and realizes that someone has been in there. She asks what's going on and her mum says they're worried about her. She tries to close the door on them. Brandon enters the house and the group moves back towards the living room. Lana tells Brandon to leave as John locks the front door. John and Tom confront Brandon about the lies she has told. Things start to get violent. Lana tells John that he'll take Brandon into her bedroom and see Brandon's penis to prove she's male.

60. I Was Born With This Weirdness

In Lana's bedroom Brandon tries to explain that he's biologically female but Lana refuses to hear it and states that she knows she is a guy. She says she doesn't need to see his penis to know she is male.

61. Speaking the Truth

Lana and Brandon stand before the group and Lana tells them she's seen Brandon's penis and she is male. Lana's mum shakes Brandon, as she doesn't believe Lana and John puts his hand around Brandon's neck. Tom and John pull Brandon into the bathroom.

62. Revealed in the Light

John pins Brandon to the bathroom wall while Tom pulls down her pants and reveals her vagina. Lana is made to enter the bathroom and forced to see Brandon's vagina. Lana's mum enters and tells John and Tom to leave the house, she closes the bathroom door and Brandon begs to be left alone.

63. I'm Waiting For Brandon

Lana and her mum are at the police station providing the police with information about Brandon. Lana wants to stay and wait for Brandon but the police officer and her mum insist that she leaves without her.

64. A Second Attack

Brandon sits in a police office trying to make a complaint about the assault on her by Tom and John. The officer in charge speaks negatively to her and

clearly doubts the seriousness of her attack. He asks her to retell what happened after the bathroom scene and Brandon left the house.

65. Rough and Tumble

Brandon remembers leaving the house and being jumped on by John and Tom on the lawn. He tries to get away but the pair drags him up towards the car.

66. A Second Attack Continued

The police officer doubts that John or Tom pulled her pants down but didn't touch her immediately with their hands.

67. Take It Like A Man

The car with Brandon, Tom and John pulls into an empty industrial area. John pulls Brandon out the car. John and Tom tell Brandon to undress. When Brandon doesn't undress quickly enough they get violent. They open the back door of the car and force her onto the backseat.

68. Police Interrogation Continued

The officer asks how Brandon was positioned on the back seat and where the attackers first penetrated her sexually. Brandon has flashbacks of the rape and states that her vagina was entered.

69. Rape

John lies on top of Brandon on the back seat and rapes her. He finished and leaves the car then encourages Tom to do the same thing. Tom tries to kiss her

and Brandon pushes him away. John punches Brandon in the stomach. Tom pulls more of Brandon's clothes off then bends Brandon over the boot of the car and rapes her from behind. John punches Brandon across the face and Brandon nearly passes out on the car boot. John and Tom rejoice.

70. Flashbacks of Brutality

Brandon remembers the incident from the police station.

71. Absolute Contrast

Brandon lies beaten and half naked on the ground. Tom throws Brandon's shirt over her and helps her off the ground and takes her back to the car.

Brandon sits between John and Tom and they threaten Brandon into not telling anyone about the rape and assault. They start the car engine.

72. Escape

At John's house, John and Tom sit on the couch drinking and smoking while Brandon pretends to clean himself up in the bathroom. Brandon escapes out the window and runs into the darkness.

73. Refuge

Brandon makes it to Lana's house and collapses on the doorstep. Lana tells her mother to call an ambulance and Brandon blacks out.

74. Calm and Clinical

At the hospital a nurse talks soothingly and calmly to Brandon as she attempts to clean her wounds and help her. Brandon understands that she has been raped and assaulted.

75. Admitting To a Sexual Identity Crisis

At the police station the unsympathetic officer demands some answers from Brandon about her behaviour and Brandon states she has a sexual identity crisis.

76. Apologies and a Shower

Brandon walks to Candace's house and apologises to her. Candace notices the scars on Brandon's face and asks Brandon to come inside. Brandon takes a hot shower in Candace's bathroom.

77. Burning Memories

Later that night Brandon burns photographs on a bonfire outside Candace's house.

78. Warning the Boys

Lana's mum stops by John's house to warn him about the rape report, which has been laid to the police. Lana's mum notices Tom washing his jeans in the bathroom and realizes that the pair is guilty. She leaves the house suddenly. The police ring John's phone and ask John and Tom to go into the police station tomorrow morning.

79. Moonlit Visit

Lana finds Brandon sleeping out in a farm shack. She sits down next to her on the couch and comforts him. Brandon corrects some of the lies she told Lana and Lana responds by kissing Brandon and becoming intimate for the first time as two women. After having sex the pair plan to leave for Lincoln that night. Lana leaves the shack and runs into the night.

80. Packing Up

Lana packs a suitcase in her room and prepares to write a note. Brandon enters her room through the window and tells her they should leave immediately. John enters the house through the front sliding door holding a gun and asking where Lana and Brandon are. Lana's mum tells John that Brandon is out at Candace's place. Lana watches the conversation then leaves her room via her bedroom window. She approaches John and Tom at their car outside the house and asks if they could go out for a drink. They take her with them in the car.

81. Waiting One Last Time

Brandon sits in Candace's shack fiddling with a ring. He's waiting for Lana.

82. En Route

John, Tom and Lana are in the car on the highway. John and Tom joke about mutilating Brandon's body and Lana sees that John has a gun.

83. Waiting For Death

Brandon sits in the shack waiting silently for Lana. He hears the sound of a car pull up outside. John, Tom and Lana get out the car. Lana begs John not to hurt Candace. He throws her to the ground and walks inside. Tom grabs Candace from the bedroom and John looks around the house for Brandon. Brandon sees what's happening from the door of the shack and walks inside to defend Candace. John points the gun at Brandon as Tom keeps Candace at bay. Lana enters the room and begs John not to hurt either of them. John shoots Brandon in the head at close range. Lana screams and cries and John drops the gun. He kneels by Brandon's head and puts his hand over the wound. Candace begs them not to hurt her baby. Tom picks up the dropped gun and fires it at Candace. She falls to the floor. Lana kneels by the doorframe and cries. Tom takes aim at Lana but John stands up and throws off his aim – the bullet hits the door and misses Lana by a few inches. John and Tom struggle for a moment before Tom pulls out a knife and begins stabbing Brandon's lifeless body in the torso. Lana runs forward and pulls Tom off Brandon. John runs forward and pulls Lana off Brandon but she won't leave his body. John shoots one last time but misses. Tom and John run out the door as Lana weeps beside Brandon and the baby (Cody) walks around the corridor crying.

84. Sunrise

Night turns to day outside and the sky lightens.

85. Gone

Lana has fallen asleep against Brandon. Brandon lies dead and a pool of blood is next to his head. Lana wakes and remembers what's happened. She kisses Brandon's body then takes a piece of paper from his pocket. Lana's mum comes to lift Lana from the floor and escort her from the house. Candace lies dead in the doorframe.

86. Words From The Letter

Brandon's voice is heard as Lana passes through the outskirts of Falls City and then goes onto an unknown highway in the night. It appears that the voiceover is the words from the letter that Lana received from Brandon's pocket. The highway merges through street lights and anonymous cities.

87. Real Life Information

Before the credits begin a black screen with white lettering informs the viewer that John Lotter was convicted of First Degree Murder and is currently appealing his sentence on death row. Tom Nissen cooperated with police and testified against John in court proceedings. Tom is currently serving back-to-back life sentences in prison.

TransAmerica Synopsis

TransAmerica follows a conservative transsexual named Bree (Felicity Huffman) who takes an unexpected road trip with her teenage son Toby (Kevin Zegers) across America. The story begins with Bree, who is highly educated, but living in a poor part

of Los Angeles and working two jobs to help finance the final part of her transformation – sexual reassignment surgery.

Born genetically male, Bree spent her childhood and adolescence as a boy and unknowingly fathered Toby when she was a young man. Toby has been forced to grow up in increasingly rough circumstances in New York, though Bree is not eager to intervene or help him change.

As a result Bree's therapist Margaret (Elizabeth Pena) withholds legal permission for the sex operation until she agrees to meet with Toby and face certain aspects of her personal history, including family life and upbringing. Reluctantly the pair takes a cross-country road trip from New York to Los Angeles where Bree hopes to leave Toby and resume her goals. In Los Angeles Toby is hoping to break into the pornographic film industry and continue looking for his father (unaware that Bree is his father). Neither Bree or Toby are prepared for the self-discovery and friendship that manifests with the revealing of difficult and unexpected truths during their time on the road.

***TransAmerica* Plot Breakdown**

1. This Is The Voice I Want To Use

The screen shows a directional video on how to achieve different voice tones. The anonymous viewer mimics the actions then gets dressed. That person applies make up, re-paints nails and brushes hair. The woman leaves a public toilet – her name is Bree.

2. Out In The Real World

Bree walks quickly down a path and narrowly avoids being hit by a ball. In the voice over a doctor is asking about Bree's medical history. She talks about the gender reconstruction procedures she has undergone. Bree waits by the side of the road with others for a bus.

3. Doctor's Office

The doctor and Bree have a discussion about Bree's gender. The doctor is reluctant to sign a consent form for Bree's sexual reassignment surgery.

4. Hormones And A Nightdress

Bree takes hormone medication in her house later that night. She stands in front of her dresser mirror and notices the shape of her penis protruding through the silk nightdress she wears. She swears, readjusts her garment and bids herself goodnight in the mirror.

5. Papi's Kitchen

The next day Bree is at work in the kitchen of Papi's Kitchen restaurant. Her male colleagues shout sexual remarks to another waitress and Bree looks on from the kitchen sink in jealousy.

6. Cold Calling

Bree sits in her home making telemarketing calls for the National Home Shopping Channel. The first person hangs up on her. The phone rings again and the person asks for Stanley. Bree tells the person that Stanley doesn't live there anymore and the

person on the other line says that Stanley is their father. She hangs up. Then Bree dials another number from her clipboard but that person hangs up too.

7. Therapist's Office

Bree's therapist (Margaret) welcomes her into the office and signs the consent form for her sexual reassignment surgery. Bree tells Margaret that a juvenile from the New York Prison system had called claiming to be Stanley's son. The therapist asks if the boy could be hers (Bree admits she did have sex once in college). The therapist asks her to get in touch with the mother and Bree says that she is apparently dead.

Margaret says she will not pass on the consent form to the surgeon until she meets with her son. Bree storms out the surgery and slams the door behind her.

8. Opera

In her house Bree plays opera on her record player. She sits down and uses the phone to ask for the number of the New York downtown lock up.

9. Approaching The Court House

In New York, Bree walks daintily down the pavement towards the courthouse entrance and steps around a cleaner on the concrete steps.

10. Change Of Identity

Inside, a police officer asks what relationship Bree is to the prisoner. She states that allegedly she is his father. The officer tells he was arrested for shoplifting a frog, for possessing drugs and for solicitation. Bree pays the \$1 dollar bail fee.

11. Meeting Toby

Bree applies more make up in a hallway and a police officer brings out Toby Wilkins. He introduces them but Toby doesn't realize Bree is his father. Bree tells Toby she is from the Church of the Potential Father.

12. In The New York Diner

Bree and Toby sit at a table. Bree makes up a pre-meal prayer. Toby asks if Bree has any pills on her. Bree says no and then asks Toby about himself. Toby doesn't want to talk about himself but Bree finds out he has no other family able to take care of him. They eat the meal. Bree pays and Toby thanks her for bailing him out of jail.

13. Toby's Apartment

At Toby's apartment he tells Bree that he's going to give up prostitution and claims he was holding the drugs for a friend. Toby wants to go to Los Angeles to get into the porn movie industry. Bree discourages him from hitchhiking there. She sees a photo of her former self with Toby's (dead) mother and asks where the ladies room is.

14. Dingy Ladies Room

Bree walks down the corridor to the ladies toilet but is so disgusted by its unclean state she doesn't go in.

15. Lying To The Therapist

Bree calls Margaret from a payphone and lies to her about how well the relationship is going between her and Toby. Margaret realizes she's being untruthful and asks for the real version. Bree admits the truth and says there may be a stepfather somewhere.

16. My Moral Duty

Bree goes back to Toby's room and tells him that her immediate superior at the church thinks it best that she take him away from New York.

17. Free Ride, Free Food, Free Motel Rooms

Toby sits in the back seat of a car telling a drug-dealing friend about his free trip to Los Angeles. His friend convinces Bree to take away his old car to sell in Los Angeles.

18. The Journey Starts

Bree and Toby are in the car travelling down the motorway. She sets some housekeeping rules for the car trip.

19. Refuelling

At the petrol station Bree refuels the car and they talk about the route they will take to get to Los Angeles. Toby asks for money to buy food from inside.

20. Deception

Inside the petrol station Toby takes the money Bree has given him for food and tucks it inside a book he's carrying. He turns around and doesn't buy anything (but has pretended to).

21. Gentle Travelling

The car carries on through the countryside during the afternoon and stops at a motel in the early evening.

22. Confined Space

In the motel, Toby lays out semi naked on his bed and attempts to seduce Bree. Bree (who has just showered) walks out the bathroom and gets a fright when she sees him lying on the bed. She ignores his body, puts her sleep mask on and gets into bed.

23. Early Riser

In the morning Bree is up early and she wakes Toby. He goes to the bathroom and she rechecks herself in the mirror.

24. Back On The Road

Toby and Bree are driving again. Toby is telling Bree about the places he has lived. Toby tries to convince Bree that *Lord of the Rings* had a gay subplot. She listens but corrects his grammar. Later in the day Toby is asleep in the back seat and Bree turns off to Calico where his stepfather lives. Toby wakes up, realises where they are and leaves the car. A dark skinned woman (Arletty) notices Toby and hugs him while Bree watches.

25. My Favourite Boy

Bree follows Toby and Arletty down a leafy road towards a house. Toby and Arletty sit on the couch and discuss how Arletty is one of Toby's old neighbours. She is also an electrolysist and offers to remove some of the hairs underneath Bree's nose.

26. Zapping

Arletty performs electrolysis on Bree's face while Toby eats a sandwich and Bree tries to convince him to visit his stepfather while he is in Calico. Toby leaves the

room with his food and Arletty looks on saying that Toby was always sensitive. Bree leaves the room for some air.

27. Sunset

An orange sunset reflects on the mountains and lake in the area.

28. The Stepfather

Bree knocks on the door of the stepfather and asks if he knows Toby Wilkins. She tells him that Toby is in Calico.

29. Building Cards

Toby and Arletty sit at the table while she does cross-stitch and Toby builds card castles. Bree opens the door and Toby's stepfather walks through afterwards and approaches Toby. He gives him a hug. Toby looks terrified and doesn't reciprocate. The stepfather claims to have missed Toby and Toby makes it clear he was sexually abused by him. The stepfather hits Toby. Toby falls to the floor and the stepfather hits him again and then continues to kick him. Arletty hits the stepfather on the head from behind with Bree's travel case and the man passes out on the ground. Toby runs out the room.

30. Shifting

Arletty and Bree carry the unconscious stepfather outside to a deckchair and leave him in it. Arletty goes back inside and Bree approaches the garage.

31. This Isn't My Fault

In the garage Bree finds Toby rifling through cardboard boxes. She tries to justify herself. Toby looks at her angrily and hurries out. Bree doesn't follow.

32. The Morning After

Arletty brings a breakfast tray out to Toby who has been asleep on the grass by the lake. He wakes up.

33. Revelations

Arletty returns inside to find Bree staring into the air. Arletty informs her that Toby is walking towards the highway to hitchhike to California. Arletty reveals that Toby disappeared after his mother killed herself. Bree is shocked to hear that Toby found her dead in the garage (gassed) when he came home after school one day.

34. Carrying On The Journey

Bree drives down the leafy road and picks Toby up who was walking along. They drive on.

35. Angry Car Conversations

In the car Bree tries to speak to Toby but he is rude to her. He takes out some drugs and she slams the breaks on the car. She tries to grab the drugs from him but he threatens violence and she lets him sniff the powder.

36. Another Awkward Meal

Bree and Toby sit at a diner. The waitress brings him a milkshake and Bree a coffee. Bree disapproves of Toby's table manners so gets up and sits at the booth next door.

37. More Driving

Bree sits in the front seat and takes a piece of gum from a packet. She offers some to Toby in the back seat but he declines.

38. Trading Post

In a service station Bree fills up the car. Toby sits outside eating. Bree wants to find a motel but Toby says they're camping out.

39. Shopping

In a supermarket Toby shoplifts some alcohol and Bree looks for a feminine sleeping bag.

40. Cooking By The River

In the evening Toby sits with his feet in the river. Bree asks what he wants for dinner. She swats at mosquitos and stands to go to the toilet. She returns a moment later to ask if there are snakes around.

41. Swatting At The Ground

Bree walks towards the woods swatting at the ground with a stick in one hand and a roll of toilet paper in the other.

42. Night In The Woods

Toby sits on the ground drinking from the stolen alcohol while Bree sits on her travel case. Toby lies about having the alcohol all along. Bree tells him about the Native

American tribes. Toby says his dad is part Indian. Bree takes more pills and tells Toby they are vitamins. She gives Toby a soft toy she found in his stepfather's garage. Toby looks pleased but he suddenly turns and vomits. He slumps on her lap in the dark.

43. Rise And Shine

Bree stands over Toby who is asleep on the ground. She wakes him up and suggests she could get him a job as a telemarketer.

44. The Benefits Of Telemarketing

In the car Bree tries to convince Toby that telemarketing is a good job. She asks what he wants in his life. He says he wants a job and kids then complains he's out of cigarettes. Bree says he's not getting anymore.

45. Gift Shop

Toby tries on a cap in a gift shop with a Native American Indian on it while a girl (Taylor) watches him.

46. Gender Confusion

Bree sits in the diner looking at the menu. A child stares across at her from another booth. The child asks if Bree is a boy or a girl. Bree doesn't answer.

47. Tears On The Telephone

Bree calls Margaret from a payphone and says she's can't handle the pressures of the trip.

48. Shoot Em Up

Toby plays a video game in the gift shop while Taylor looks on. She steps in and kisses him. Toby kisses her back.

49. Tears On The Telephone Continued

Bree is still on the phone to Margaret when she notices Toby kissing Taylor. She calls to Toby and asks who the girl is. Taylor's father then pulls her away from Toby. Toby walks away from the video game and Bree continues her call to Margaret.

50. Crunching Ice

Bree and Toby sit at the diner table. Bree says another pre-meal prayer. He asks for the baseball cap. She agrees to buy it for him on the condition he does no more drugs. He agrees and they shake on it and eat.

51. Drugs In The Bathroom

In the diner's bathroom, Toby wears the baseball cap and sniffs a line of cocaine from his hand.

52. A Present

In the car park Bree repacks the car and Toby approaches her from behind with a present. It's a baseball cap with the wording "Proud to be a Christian". Bree puts it on.

53. Joyriding

Bree drives down a country road while Toby hangs out the passenger door. He sits on the windowsill and Bree tells him to get inside the car. He gets back in the car.

54. Approaching Dallas

The road leads toward Dallas and Bree explains that they are staying with a friend of hers for the night. They walk towards a house and Bree tells Toby he should be on his best behaviour.

55. Big And Blonde

They ring the doorbell and a tall blonde woman (Mary Ellen) opens it and welcomes them in. They walk into the lounge where a number of people are sitting. One of the women makes a remark about another woman's vagina. Bree is shocked. Mary Ellen introduces them to the group (who are transsexuals). Bree wants to leave but Mary Ellen and Toby insists they stay.

56. Live Music And Dancing

Mary Ellen dances around the living room while someone plays country music on a violin. She talks to Bree about her upcoming sex operation. Bree warns that Toby doesn't know about her sexuality. Bree meets a gay transsexual couple. Toby socialises with a few other guests. When Bree is bored of the music and sexual conversation she leaves the room.

57. Toby The Snoop

Toby walks into Bree's bedroom. She's taking a shower in the en-suite. Toby picks up her nightdress and presses it against his body. Bree walks out of the shower

(hardly wearing any clothes), gasps when she sees Toby and retreats back into the bathroom. Toby hands her the nightgown through the door. Bree apologises for the transsexual women in the house. Toby talks about going to live with his father when he gets himself together. Toby leaves the bedroom and bids Bree goodnight.

58. Open Spaces

Bree and Toby drive through a barren part of the countryside. Toby asks what Bree studied in college. Bree tells Toby about the ancient geography of the land they are passing through.

59. Sunset Raspberries

The sun sets and casts a golden glow on the land Toby and Bree pass through in the car. Toby presses his arm to his mouth and blows on it making a raspberry. Bree pretends to smack him with her hand and they start play fighting in the car.

60. Nature Calls

The pair stop on the side of the road. Bree has to wee. She crouches behind the car and lifts up her skirt. A noise from the bush scares her and she stands up quickly with her penis hanging out of her underwear still. Toby looks in the rear vision mirror of the car and sees her penis. Bree gets back in the car and talks to Toby but he ignores her and starts the engine.

61. Passive Aggressive

In the motel room later that night, Toby and Bree sit in the single beds reading. Toby lights up a cigarette, Bree protests and he ignores her. The pair continues reading silently.

62. Ufology

The next day in the car Bree talks about how the area they are travelling through is the Ufology capital of the world for it's study of UFO's. Toby continues to ignore her. Bree gets frustrated and asks him to speak. Toby says he wants to go to Sammy's Wigwam.

63. Sammy's Wigwam

At a roadside stall Bree and Toby looks through the pieces of Native American Indian paraphernalia. Toby continues to ignore Bree. She tells him to behave better and he swears at her. Sammy the salesman tells Toby to be nicer to his mother. Toby reveals he knows about Bree's penis. Bree is shocked and walks back to the car. Toby follows her. They get into the car and continue arguing. A hitchhiker approaches the window and asks for a ride. Bree shakes her head but Toby welcomes him into the car.

64. Three's A Crowd

In the car the hitchhiker says he is a vegan and then offers Toby drugs. Toby smokes up. Bree winds down the window to escape the fumes. Toby tells the hitchhiker that Bree has a penis. Bree is embarrassed but the hitchhiker approves of transsexualism.

65. Skinny Dipping

At the edge of a lake, Toby and the hitchhiker strip off for a swim. Bree talks about how the Native Americans used to worship transsexuals. As the boys get into the lake naked, Bree sits on the rocks at the edge and talks to the hitchhiker. Toby tells Bree he doesn't think she is a freak anymore but that she is still a liar. They hear the car start up and realize the hitchhiker has taken the car and everything in it – including Bree's purse and hormones.

66. Walking Down The Road

Bree and Toby walk down the country road trying to catch a ride. Bree says she has to be in LA in two days. Toby pulls out drugs from his pocket and says he can sell them. A car drives past and stops to pick them up.

67. Riding It Rough

Toby and Bree sit in the open back of the car with some Hispanic farmers. The wind ruffles Bree's hair and she tries to contain it underneath a scarf.

68. Things For Sale

Toby and Bree enter a bar filled with locals. Bree goes to the women's restroom and Toby catches the attention of a male punter. Bree fixes her hair and make up at the sink. In the men's bathroom Toby is approached at the sink by the punter. Bree enters back into the restaurant, sits at a bar stool and notices cash on a table. She nearly takes it but is spotted by another drinker at the bar - Calvin. He asks if she's having a rough day. Toby takes the punter into his truck outside for a paid sex session. Bree says to Calvin that she needs to be in LA soon. He offers to take her to Phoenix and then buys her a burger.

Toby and the punter get naked and perform sexual acts in the truck. Bree chats to Calvin in the bar when Toby re-enters. Bree introduces Calvin to Toby. Toby walks away from the bar and Bree follows. Toby hands Bree the money from his sex work, which Bree believes to be from the sale of the drugs. The three of them talk some more at the bar.

69. Calvin's Place

Calvin takes Bree and Toby to his house in his car. Bree compliments Calvin on the property.

70. Night Time Serenade

Bree and Toby are in separate beds in a bedroom. Neither is asleep. Bree gets up and leaves the room. She walks outside to find Calvin strumming his guitar on the porch. The pair shares a drink and Calvin sings a song to Bree. Toby listens from the bedroom.

71. On The Ranch

The next morning Bree watches Calvin attending to the horses. Toby comes out and stands next to Bree. Bree is worried about the hormones she has missed taking and seems smitten with Calvin.

72. On The Road To Phoenix

Bree, Toby and Calvin sit in the cab of Calvin's truck driving down the highway. Calvin talks about his Indian ancestry.

73. Lunch On the Truck Tray

Bree, Toby and Calvin sit on the truck's tray with refreshments. Bree excuses herself to use the bathroom and walks across the road into the bushes. Toby insinuates that Bree is not being truthful about some things. Calvin doesn't seem to care.

74. On The Road To Phoenix II

The threesome continues on the country road towards Phoenix in the truck.

75. Farewell To Calvin

They arrive in Phoenix. Calvin stops the car. Toby seems anxious to get out. Calvin encourages Bree to stay in contact with him but also warns her that he has a chequered past. Calvin gives his spare cowboy hat to Toby and drives off. Toby asks where they are and Bree reveals that they have arrived at her parents' house.

76. Bree's Anxiety

Toby approaches the front door while Bree waits around the corner. He asks the woman who answers the door for Sydney (Bree's sister) and is told that Sydney is out. He walks away from the front door quickly and Bree follows once the door has closed.

77. Park Retreat

Bree and Toby sit next to a tree in a park area. Bree feels guilty and ashamed about not confronting her family. She swears and stands to go back to the house.

78. Bree's Parents

Bree rings the doorbell and her father (Murray) opens the door. At first he doesn't recognise her. Bree's mother (Elizabeth) comes to the door, hyperventilates and slams the door closed. Bree knocks on the door again. Elizabeth opens the door suddenly and pulls her inside. In the lounge Elizabeth is confrontational and tries to grab Bree's body to see if she is still male. Elizabeth gets upset when she feels Bree's breast and runs off. Murray thinks Bree has purposely upset her. Bree heads to the kitchen to get something to eat and drink.

79. We Love You But We Don't Respect You

As Bree prepares food at the kitchen counter Murray sits beside her and talks to her about her life. He says that he doesn't understand Bree, but still loves her. Elizabeth walks into the kitchen and says they don't respect her. They argue some more. Sydney walks through the door into the kitchen. She is shocked to see Bree. Bree reveals that Toby (outside) is her son. When Elizabeth realises that Toby is her grandson she gets excited and runs from the kitchen to find him. Bree follows behind her.

80. A Family Awakening

Toby is lying on the grass in front of a tree. Elizabeth runs up to him and greets him. Murray and Sydney follow behind her and meet Toby in turn – without revealing they are related. Elizabeth ushers Toby inside with the promise of food.

81. Defrosted To Perfection

Inside Toby eats at the table with Elizabeth watching on. They talk quietly. Toby leaves the table to watch television in the other room and the dog follows him.

Elizabeth asks what Bree intends to do about Toby. Bree says he will be respected and supported.

82. In The Walk-In Wardrobe

Bree and Sydney talk quietly in the walk in wardrobe. Sydney is having trouble getting used to Bree as a woman. Bree asks Sydney for money for an airfare home. Sydney does not have the money as she is a recovering alcoholic.

83. Pill Popping In The Bathroom

Bree applies cream to her face in the bathroom. She opens up the cabinet next to the bench and takes out several pills from a bottle with Elizabeth's name on it. She wraps them in a tissue, puts the tissue down her bra and continues applying cream.

84. Grandma's Grooming

In the lounge Elizabeth is disgruntled by how the dog's tail has been clipped and encourages Toby to come closer to her so she can comb his hair. He sits on the ground while she combs his hair. Bree walks into the room wearing a chiffon pink dress. Elizabeth responds angrily. Bree compliments Toby and he returns the compliment.

85. Out To Dinner

The family arrive at a nice restaurant and are seated. Elizabeth insists that Bree pull the chair out for her to sit down and then makes Toby sit beside her. She asks Bree to take a photo of them. Toby asks Sydney to take a photo of Bree and him together. The

family are seated and look over menus as a neighbouring customer mistakes Bree for being Toby's mother.

86. Grace

The meals arrive at the table and Toby bows his head and clasps his hands together in preparation for saying grace. Elizabeth is pleasantly surprised. Toby says a prayer. Elizabeth tells Sydney and Toby not to play with their food. Bree asks to borrow \$1000. Elizabeth asks her not to have the operation. Bree upsets her by saying she never had a son – just a daughter. The two argue and Elizabeth announces they are leaving the restaurant and will finish the meal at home.

87. Conditions Of A Loan

At the house Elizabeth takes \$200 cash from Murray's wallet and says Bree can have it (and another \$800) if Toby stays in Phoenix with her. She tries to tempt Toby into staying. He doesn't answer.

88. Swimming With The Dolphin

That night in the pool at the back of the house, Toby swims by himself. Elizabeth comes to the pool edge and hands Toby a blow up dolphin to play with in the pool. Bree watches from the window of another room.

89. Beauty Is Relative

Toby lies on a deckchair by the pool. Bree comes out to join him. Toby asks why Bree's family is being so nice to him. She asks if he wants to stay. She offers Toby a place to stay in Los Angeles. They talk about Bree's previous suicide attempt.

90. The Seductive Son

Bree is in bed reading. Toby knocks on the door and enters. Bree is self-conscious but Toby reassures her and sits on the bed. He takes her hand in his. Bree leans forward to reassure him and he responds by kissing her on the mouth. Bree pulls away quickly and Toby begins to undress. He tries to convince Bree that she'll enjoy sex with him. Bree doesn't want it at all. Toby feels rejected and turns away. Toby offers to marry her and then stands up naked and leans towards her again. Bree is shocked and dismayed. She orders him to redress. Toby puts his dressing gown back over his body and sits on the bed. Bree tells him that she is his father. Toby is silent but gets up and leaves the room quickly. Bree follows him through the house trying to talk to him. He turns around as she grabs him and hits her across the face. Bree falls to the floor. Toby leaves the room and Sydney and Elizabeth get on the floor and comfort Bree.

91. Toby's Pain

Toby sits on the bed in his bedroom, crying with his head in his hands.

92. Morning Colours

Very early the next morning the sun shines through the sprinklers on the lawn and the water in the pool.

93. Toby's Gone

Bree is applying make up in the bathroom when Sydney and Elizabeth come in and announce Toby has gone. They ask what Bree wants to do and for the first time they call her Bree of their own accord.

94. Police Involvement

Bree talks to a police officer at the car about Toby. The officer asks for his date of birth and relationship to Bree. She says the prognosis isn't good.

95. Farewelling The Family

Bree gets into an airport shuttle and says goodbye to her family. They wave her off down the road.

96. Hospital Corridor

Bree walks down the hospital corridor with her handbag and overnight bag on her shoulder.

97. Signed Consent

Bree walks into an office with a nurse and Margaret in it. Margaret stands and hands Bree the consent form with her signature on it.

98. Going Into Surgery

Bree lies on a hospital bed being wheeled down a long corridor towards surgery.

99. In Recovery

In the recovery ward Bree is woken by a nurse who says the surgery was successful. She lifts a hand to where her penis used to be.

100. Hospital Grounds

The hospital grounds in the earlier morning. A nurse wheels a patient through the entrance.

101. Hello My Lady

Bree gets out of bed and walks towards the drawers in her room. Margaret enters and greets her as a woman. Bree moves slowly back to the bed, sits down and pulls out the Christian hat. Bree feels guilty about how things happened with Toby. She cries and Margaret comforts her.

102. Toby At The Beach

Toby sits on some driftwood at a beach using the last of his drugs.

103. Bree In The Bathtub

Bree takes a bath and feels her new body parts (some time has passed as her new body has healed).

104. Back As A Waitress

At Papi's Kitchen Bree is working on busy Christmas tables. In the kitchen the Mexican chef speaks a sentence in Mexican which Bree repeats as she's walking out the kitchen.

105. Making A Porn Movie

Toby is on a movie set (designed as a classroom) and is acting in a gay porn movie with another man. The director calls cut and tells Toby off for not delivering the scene fast enough.

106. Floral Pants On A Floral Couch

Bree sits on her living room couch. There's a knock at the door and when she opens it Toby's on the other side. Toby is not ready to forgive Bree but wants to know if she had the operation. Bree invites him in and asks how Toby's life is going and he shows her a promotional poster for the porn movie he is making. Bree leaves the room and returns with a cowboy hat for Toby. She offers him a drink, Toby asks for a beer, puts the hat on and places his feet on the coffee table. Bree tells him off for having his feet on the coffee table. He removes them. They continue to catch up over a couple of beers.

XXY Synopsis

Alex (Ines Efron) is a 15-year-old hermaphrodite living as a female in a small fishing village in Uruguay, South America. Originally from Argentina, Alex's parents have chosen to settle in Uruguay to shield Alex from the bullying she received in Buenos Aires over her condition.

As Alex makes the difficult transition from child to adult, the village learns about her gender variation and hostility arises. Society demands Alex make a choice about her sexual identity and does not allow her to remain fluid between the gender lines. XXY examines the ways in which Alex negotiates her own dual sexuality and flexible personality.

During this period Alex is faced against a culture with non-budging traditional gender binaries and resultantly encounters acts of sexual aggression and violence ignited by her uniqueness and youthful vulnerability.

XXY Plot Breakdown

1. Opening Credits

Alex runs through the woods barefoot. Behind Alex is a girl (Roberta) with long hair following. These images are intercut by shots of a liquid environment. (The screen could either be showing deep waters under the ocean or the inside of a woman's womb). The names of the lead actors are shown on the screen for a few moments each. Alex keeps running through the trees, with a knife in her hand. She finally stops suddenly and swings the knife towards the ground.

2. Too Young To Smoke

Alex sits by herself in a dark room. She stares out the window and lights up a cigarette.

3. The Parents

Suli (Alex's mother) walks towards the marine biology lab where Kraken (Alex's father) is dissecting a marine mammal. She lets Kraken know that some people are coming to meet them. He tells Suli that he will pick up Alex and meet her back at home.

4. Leaving The Ferry

Two people (Ramiro and Erika) and a teenage boy (Alvaro), wait in their car to drive off a large ferry, which has just arrived at a fishing township. As they leave the dock Erika recognises her friend (Suli) and gets out the car to hug her. Suli also greets Ramiro and Alvaro when they get out of the car.

5. Seaside Discussion

Erika and Suli get into Suli's car and have a brief discussion. Suli tells Erika that she hasn't spoken to Kraken yet. Erika confirms that Ramiro hasn't told anybody the secret.

6. Father And Son Revealed

Ramiro and Alvaro drive along the coastline to a rural property. Alvaro (still with his headphones on) gets out of the car to open country gates for his father to drive through. The two do not appear to be talking to each other. In the car they are still silent and Alvaro stares out the window at the surrounding forest.

7. Arrival

Alex is finishing off her cigarette when she hears cars pull up outside. Suli and Erika get out of one car. Alvaro and Ramiro get out of the other car. Alex watches them move towards the house and for the first time it is revealed that she is actually sitting beneath the wooden veranda of the house. They meet Kraken at the doorstep and Alvaro is the only person to notice Alex beneath the wooden slats. Inside the house Alvaro looks at childhood photos of Alex. Suli shows Alvaro to the room he will be staying in. He notices numerous medicinal bottles on the drawers and Suli says they are homeopathic medicines that prevent fear. Underneath the house Alex continues to

listen to the sound of people walking on the floorboards and wipes a tear from her cheek.

8. Beach Meeting

Alvaro is writing on a notebook at the beach. Alex comes across from the house to join him. She greets him and sits down. She knows that Alvaro just masturbated in the bedroom. Alex says she masturbates every day as well. Alvaro looks confused. Alex reveals she is 15 years old. She asks if Alvaro would like to have sex with her and he doesn't respond. Alex walks off in the opposite direction.

9. Lunch On The Veranda

Suli, Kraken, Alvaro, Erika and Ramiro sit down to a meal on the veranda. Alvaro is vegetarian, which Ramiro seems to disapprove of. Alex walks over and greets them each. She pretends that she and Alvaro have not already met. Erika reveals that Suli used to want many children (but has had only one). Alex reveals that she got expelled from school on Monday for punching and breaking the nose of another student (Vando). Kraken asked what happened and Alex stands and leaves the table. Suli tells Erika that Vando used to be Alex's best friend.

10. Small Bathroom Space

Alvaro is brushing his teeth at the basin in the bathroom. Alex enters and brushes her teeth as well. There is very little space in the room and they both stand close together in front of the basin – Alex watching Alvaro all the time in the mirror.

11. Pillow Talk

Erika and Ramiro sit in bed in the evening. Erika rubs cream on her face. Ramiro writes notes in a file. Ramiro asks when Suli will speak to Kraken about something. Erika says tomorrow.

12. Working Late

Kraken works late in his office while Suli has a cigarette on the balcony outside.

13. Dawn

Day breaks through the clouds over the ocean. Alex wakes, rolls over in bed and retrieves some pills from her drawer. She plays with a pill in her fingers for a few moments before flicking it across the room. A lizard sits on her feet at the end of the bed. She takes a book from underneath her pillow and reads aloud from it (it is about gender and evolution). She closes the book, gets up puts a top on and looks in the bathroom door at Alvaro urinating into the toilet.

14. Still At Work

Kraken is in his office working. Suli enters and suggests they meet with Vando's parents and apologise for Alex's behaviour. Kraken declines. They notice that Ramiro is also up in the other room. Kraken asks Suli why she didn't tell him that Ramiro was a surgeon. They also discuss how Alex is no longer taking her medication. Suli leaves the room.

15. Breakfast

Ramiro slices prosciutto in the kitchen on a chopping board. Alex walks in and drinks straight from a carton of milk. Alex takes a piece of meat from the board and asks if Ramiro likes her house and his job as a surgeon.

16. Calling Alex

Alex hears Kraken calling her from outside. He is walking fast down the driveway and receiving information off a transmitter about turtles being taken into port. Alex runs out of the house, joins her father in the garage and jumps on the back of the car tray. As Kraken drives off Alvaro jumps on the back too. They drive through the countryside into the fishing village.

17. Unloading

Alvaro, Alex and Kraken enter the wharf, as fishermen are busy unloading catches. Kraken walks to a vessel with several large turtles in it. One of them has been injured after they were caught in fishing net. Alex stares across the wharf to where some other men are unloading from another boat. One of the young men (Vando) stares back at her. He has bruising on his face. Alvaro notices the tension between them. Kraken continues to talk to the turtle rescuers. The rescuers say there are more turtles in the boat that Vando is unloading from. Kraken asks for the remaining turtles and is met by hostility from another fisherman (who is Vando's father). Vando tries to approach Alex but she gets violent with him and is pulled back by Kraken. As they walk away Vando's father makes a cruel remark about Alex. Kraken turns back to threaten him before he and the group walk away and drive off the wharf area.

18. The Secret's Out

In the car Alvaro sits in the back tray with Kraken's marine biologist friend who splashes water on the turtles. In the cabin Kraken asks Alex who she told; she told just Vando. Alex wants to know why she can't talk about her unique condition.

19. Treatment At The Lab

Alex and Alvaro watch from a corner of the lab while Kraken and his colleague work on the injured turtle. Alex thinks that her father and Ramiro are both into cutting things up and operating. Alvaro and Alex walk through another room filled with huge sea skeletons. They each think the other is a freak. Alex asks if Alvaro has ever got to watch Ramiro butchering people at work. Alvaro considers surgery to be fixing not butchering. Alex makes a joke out of Ramiro's profession and Alvaro gets frustrated. He leaves the building but Alex follows him outside and they wander off.

20. Shoplifting

Alex and Alvaro walk past some roadside stalls. Alex picks something up and puts it in her pocket. She flicks through other pieces on the stands. Alex says she feels sorry for her parents as they are always waiting. She says she hit Vando because he deserved it but doesn't explain why. She takes a necklace from a jewellery stall and makes Alvaro pay for it. She's takes the headphones from Alvaro's ears and listens to his music for a moment. She gives them back to him but continues dancing to the tune.

21. Hitchhiked

Alex and Alvaro are riding home in the back tray of the car. They get out along the road and walk up to an empty building area beside the sea. Alex flips through a book

she bought at the market and then gives Alvaro the necklace she took from the stall. She takes the pendant off and replaces it with a tag that came from an African turtle. She is wearing one identical from a turtle that came from the same family. Alvaro thanks her but is not sure if he likes it very much and puts the necklace in his pocket.

22. Corticoid

In the bathroom later Alvaro takes a bottle from the medicine cabinet and Alex warns him against using any, as it is a hormone suppressant to stop her growing facial hair.

23. Stormy

The next morning is stormy and grey. Ramiro, Suli and Erika sit around the kitchen table eating breakfast. Ramiro offers to talk to Kraken for Suli so he can explain the procedure he could perform on Alex. Suli doesn't take up the offer and leaves the room with Erika. Kraken comes out to the kitchen and Ramiro follows after the women. Kraken watches Alex on the beach from the window.

24. Boredom

Alex walks across the beach waving a large stick backwards and forwards through the air. Alvaro is lying on the sand looking at a rare specimen carefully and drawing it on paper. Alex comes down to the ground to join him. Alex squashes the insect with her thumb.

25. Conception

Ramiro, Suli and Erika drive along the coast in the car. Suli tells them to stop and then points out the place where she got pregnant with Alex. She gets out of the car

and walks to the spot. The other two follow and she explains how she and Kraken came to have sex there. Ramiro tells Suli that if Alex continues not to take the corticoid she will turn into a male. It upsets Suli and she walks away.

26. Trying To Persuade

Alex and Alvaro are still lying on the beach. Alex tries to convince Alvaro they should have sex. Alvaro still declines. Alex insults him and Alvaro attacks by saying she isn't normal and pointing out there is something wrong with her. Alex runs away back to the house. Alvaro stares after her and then follows. She runs to an outhouse with an upstairs level. Alvaro follows her inside and goes up the ladder too. Alex asks him to stay. She kisses him fervently and they both start to undress. Alex stops and turns off the radio station. She starts to dominate him by holding his arms down and then enters him in the anus using her penis. Kraken stands at the door and sees what's happening. Alvaro and Alex notice Kraken watching. Alvaro jumps up, pulls jeans on and runs out the building. Alex lies on the wood hyperventilating.

27. Deep Thoughts

Kraken walks through the woods surrounding the house deep in thought. Alvaro walks through the same woods. He kicks at the ground and is crying. He stands behind a tree and masturbates.

28. Alex's Emotion

Alex is still lying on the floor in the outhouse. She has her clothes on but is very upset.

29. Other People's Stories

In his office Kraken goes through a pile of newspaper clippings about stories of other young people having sex change operations.

30. Stormy Night

It's dark and rainy outside the house. Suli, Ramiro and Erika are preparing to sit down for dinner. Suli calls for Alvaro but he doesn't answer. She calls again through the door for Alex. Alex is standing in her bedroom naked. She is looking at her body in the mirror and has tears in her eyes. Alvaro stands outside the house in the rain and watches Alex through the window. She notices him looking at her so turns the light off inside her room. Kraken sits on his bed staring into space. Alvaro enters the house and Erika tells him to get changed and then come to dinner.

31. Escape

Alex has put clothes on and leaves her bedroom via the window. She walks into the night towards the beach.

32. Table Conversation

At the dinner table Alvaro sketches a picture of Alex in his notepad. Erika asks what's wrong and he replies "nothing". Ramiro mocks Alvaro's pronunciation of the word. Kraken joins the table. There are awkward glances between Kraken and Alvaro. Ramiro is proud of the sketch Alvaro has done but he also bullies Alvaro into drinking alcohol. Kraken thinks Ramiro is a bully. The electricity stops and the room goes dark.

33. Shadows On The Wall

Alex has gone to her friend Roberta's house. Roberta is creating sex scenes on the wall with the shadow of her hands and fingers. Roberta reveals she has had sex multiple times with a cousin. Roberta's father enters the room and tells Alex to change out of her wet clothes into a dry garment. Alex changes and father says he'll put the spare mattress on the floor or Alex will have to go home.

34. Candlelight

Kraken stokes up the fire and then leaves to go to bed. Suli follows Kraken. Ramiro, Erika and Alvaro sit silently in the living area surrounded by candles. In the bedroom Suli asks Kraken what's wrong and he tells her about seeing Alex and Alvaro having sex. Suli becomes quiet and upset. Kraken thinks Alex can't stay as a woman. They argue about Alex having surgery. Kraken leaves the room.

35. Night Rider

Kraken drives down a motorway at night.

36. Understanding

Alvaro looks through a book of Alex's in her bedroom. There are many drawings of Alex's emotions about her mixed gender. Alvaro looks up to notice a toy doll with a makeshift penis stuck on.

37. Tired Kraken

Kraken arrives at a petrol station at night and gets the assistant to fill up the car. He watches the assistant closely through the window. When the assistant notices

newspaper clippings in the car, Kraken tries to hide them but the assistant already realises why Kraken is there. Kraken tells him he has a child.

38. The Intersexual

The intersexual petrol station attendant has poured Kraken a cup of tea in a kitchen. He adds some alcohol to the hot drinks and Kraken drinks quickly. He explains to Kraken that he has adopted a son and would like to adopt a girl as well. He shows Kraken a photo of himself at Alex's age. He explains the process he went through to become totally male. He also says that he had five operations prior to his first birthday, which were designed to fix him – but he felt castrated instead. He considers making a child fear the potential of its own body to be a terrible thing. Kraken nods in agreement and keeps looking at the photos.

39. Night Rider Returns

Kraken drives through the night, back down the motorway to his home as the dawn starts to come up over the sea.

40. Nail Polish Mistake

Alex wakes up in bed to find Roberta painting her fingernails. She is annoyed and immediately starts to rub it off. In the shower she keeps rubbing at her nails and cleaning her body. Roberta comes to join her in the shower. The pair shampoos each other's hair. There is a gentle and erotic moment between them before Alex leaves the shower quickly.

41. Talks With The Father

Alex leaves Roberta's house and notices Kraken's car outside. Kraken is sitting at a wooden bench looking at the ocean. Alex walks over to join him. She thinks Kraken is looking at her in a different way to usual. She feels she could have been told straight away why Erika and Ramiro were visiting. She decides to walk home rather than get a lift.

42. Broken Shell

Suli is sitting outside her house having a smoke. She hears a noise and walks over the sand dune to investigate. It seems a small boat with fisherman on it have dumped the shell of a turtle on the shore and taken its main body with them.

43. Weightless

Alex wears only her underwear and floats on the water with her eyes closed. Alvaro watches her floating from the shore and undresses to go in and join her. When Alex notices Alvaro approaching she gets out of the water and walks off into the woods to get away. Alvaro follows her through the trees. He catches up with her and raises his confusion about her sex. Alex says she's both genders and doesn't know if she likes men or women. She apologises for entering Alvaro from behind. He tells her he liked it and Alex says she enjoyed it too. When Alvaro offers to have sex again and to keep it a secret Alex pushes him and walks away.

44. I Told You Not To Come Here

Ramiro and Kraken are loading the car up when Vando cycles into the property and asks where Alex is. Kraken responds angrily as he had warned Vando about returning

to the house. Kraken tells him to leave and that his father is in trouble. Vando bikes away.

45. Attempted Rape

Alex is walking along the beach. A boat of young men pulls into the shore and they start to call to her. The four men jump out the boat and follow her. They push and pull her towards a sand dune at the edge of the beach. She struggles and tries to get away but they hold her down. She slaps out at one of them and he hits her back. She begs them to stop. They pull her shorts off and realise she has both genital parts. One of them tries to make her penis erect. Vando comes over the sand dune and pulls the main culprit off Alex. He tells them all to leave. They retreat and Vando gets on the sand to comfort Alex but she is very upset and doesn't want to be touched by him. Vando starts to cry as well. After a while Vando is able to hold Alex in his arms, but she continues to stare ahead of her and hyperventilate.

46. Shock

Kraken and Suli sit beside Alex in the house. Alex has a bleeding nose and is visibly shaken. They asks if she is hurt anywhere else and she says no, but she is clearly angry and in shock. Kraken leaves the room quickly.

47. Action

Kraken runs across the veranda towards the car. Ramiro and Kraken's biologist colleague get in the car with him and leave the property. Alvaro and Roberta watch Vando who is sitting in the dirt looking depressed.

48. Shock Continued

Inside the house Suli holds Alex tightly in her arms. Alex sobs on Suli's shoulder.

49. Stay Away From My Son!

The car with Kraken, Ramiro and the colleague pulls into the wharf. Kraken runs from the car straight towards the main young man who hurt Alex. Kraken grabs him by the throat and warns him to stay away from Alex. Ramiro tries to intervene but gets hit in the nose by Kraken, who also warns him to stay away from Alex. Kraken walks away, gets in the car and drives off.

50. Superficial Wounds

Suli chops up carrots in the kitchen. As Erika watches on, Suli cuts her self with the knife. Erika tries to convince Suli to agree to the surgery. Suli thinks that Erika is suggesting Alex is freakish in her current state. She rinses her finger under the water and leaves the kitchen angrily.

51. Sorrow

Alex lies on her bed with Suli caressing her from behind. Alex pulls a jar of pills from her drawer and empties the contents on the floor. She is tired of the disruption in her life.

52. Considering The Policio

Kraken drives by the police station. He stops for a moment and considers going inside (to report Alex's assault) but decides to drive on.

53. An Olive Branch

Kraken drives down a sandy rural road. He sees Ramiro walking along it and slows down to pick him up. Ramiro hesitates for a moment and then gets in the car. They drive off.

54. Peace In Sleep

Alex, Suli and Roberta sleep, entangled, on Alex's bed.

55. Explaining The Past

Still in the car Kraken tells Ramiro about the circumstances surrounding Alex's birth. She was diagnosed with being intersexual two months before birth; the hospital requested they film the birth for medical research purposes; the hospital wanted to operate on her immediately. Kraken convinced Suli not to allow the surgery as he felt Alex was perfect the way she was.

56. Thoughts By The Firelight

Vando, Alvaro and Alex sit on the beach at night next to a small bonfire. They are silent. They share a bottle of alcohol and a cigarette. Alex walks away from the fire to urinate by the shoreline. Vando tells Alvaro to forget about Alex, as she is too complex for him. Vando stands up and urinates beside Alex at the shoreline. Alvaro watches on.

57. Packing To Leave

In the bedroom Erika is packing her bag to leave. Ramiro sits on the bed and says he can't leave until he has spoken with "him". Erika insists they leave and instructs Ramiro to get Alvaro ready to go.

58. Getting To Know His Child

Alvaro is still sitting alone by the fire on the beach. Ramiro approaches from behind with a blanket for him and joins him on the sand. Ramiro is surprised to see Alvaro drinking alcohol but Alvaro replies that Ramiro forced him to. Alvaro asks if his father likes him as a person. Ramiro likes his son "kind of" but he does not think he possesses the talent that he has as a surgeon. Ramiro states they are leaving the house but Alvaro isn't ready to go. Ramiro is relieved to hear that Alvaro likes Alex, as he feared Alvaro was gay. He gets up to leave.

59. Paternal Protection

Alex is asleep on her bed. Kraken sits in her room watching over her. Kraken says he will look after her until she makes a choice. Alex wonders if she has to make a choice. She hands the book about gender and biology to Kraken and says she's finished with it. Kraken asks if the men at the beach hurt her. Alex says she wasn't and asks if Kraken went to the police. Kraken says that going to the police is her choice but warns her that people in the village will gossip. Alex seems not to care if people talk about her.

60. Leaving The Property

Two cars leave the property. Alvaro gets out the back of the car to close the gates. He gets back in the car and they keep driving. Each car is silent inside. Alvaro looks at Alex through the glass as they drive towards the dock.

61. Dawn At The Dock

The ferry at the dock blows its horn. The cars about to board move closer towards the ship. The parents exchange stiff farewells. Alvaro follows Alex along the boardwalk. They sit on some rocks at the side. Alex doesn't think they will see each other again. Alvaro shows her he is wearing the necklace with the turtle tag on it. Alex says she has fallen for him but thinks that Alvaro actually desires something/someone else. Alvaro leans in to kiss Alex but she pushes him away in anger. They hear Ramiro calling from above. Alex shows Alvaro her penis. Alvaro doesn't react but looks upset. Ramiro grabs him by the shirt and pulls him back to the boardwalk. Alex runs back to the pavement and walks beside her parents back towards the car.

Orlando Synopsis

Beginning in late 15th Century England, Orlando (Tilda Swinton) begins life as a young British nobleman, enjoying the perks and customs of the aristocratic court. Ruling monarch Queen Elizabeth (Quentin Crisp) commands Orlando to stay eternally young. Following this request Orlando never ages and outlives each of his contemporaries to bring in a new world era.

Through several lifetimes, various countries and two genders Orlando is revealed as a transcendent person – both male and female, and possessing androgyny in the truest

sense. Within each lifetime Orlando's experiences vary and include love, war, politics and sexuality from either male or female perspectives.

Orlando ends in modern day London where Orlando lives as a woman and an author with a child. Despite the closing of the film the audience is left with the strong impression that Orlando's life continues onwards indefinitely.

***Orlando* Plot Breakdown**

1. Poetry By A Tree

Orlando recites poetry as he paces back and forth beside a country tree. A voice over begins discussing Orlando's character. Orlando sits by the tree's trunk and considers writing a letter but doesn't put ink to paper.

2. Opening Credits

More opening credits continue on a black screen.

3. Sudden Awakening

Orlando wakes and finds he has fallen asleep by the tree trunk and it is now night time. He jumps up, spreading papers everywhere and takes off running towards the castle.

4. Preparing For Eliza

Guards, soldiers and other members of the royal court prepare the route to the castle for Queen Elizabeth. They light the way with flaming torches. Servants row Queen

Elizabeth down the river while a court entertainer stands on another vessel and sings about her approach.

5. Opening Credits Continued

More opening credits show on a black screen while the soundtrack continues as normal.

6. Nervousness

The Queen enters the building slowly and a man and woman (who are high up in the court and Orlando's parents) wait at the end of a large, decorated room. In his dressing room, Orlando is dressed hurriedly by servants and is panting. He runs quickly down the stairs and into the main room. As his parents bow before the Queen, Orlando takes a bowl of petals and water and presents it to the Queen who cleanses her fingers in it.

7. Subtitle – 1600 DEATH

8. Dining At The Feast

Many people dine at a long table eating dinner. Queen Elizabeth sits at the raised end. When she nods to Orlando (who is in the middle) Orlando stands and recites a poem to the Queen. The Queen listens for a few moments before silencing him and asking about the appropriateness of the subject. Orlando's father stands to defend Orlando's choice of poem before being seated and resuming the meal.

9. Garden Stroll

Orlando and his mother, the Queen and all her servants stroll through the gardens of the castle. Orlando walks arm in arm with the Queen before she is seated on the lawn. She bids Orlando kneel before her and present her with his knee. She ties an emblem around his knee and announces Orlando will remain with her in England as her favourite companion.

10. First Friendship By The Firelight

In the Queen's quarters her handmaidens help her to undress partially for bed. They assist her onto the bed and the Queen beckons Orlando in from the next room to join her. The maidens leave and Orlando hesitantly approaches the bed, The Queen ushers him onto her lap, where he kisses her hand. She then presents Orlando with a scroll of paper and places it on his leg underneath the emblem she attached earlier. The Queen has granted Orlando the property of the castle for himself and future generations. This gift comes with the condition that Orlando doesn't grow old.

11. By Moonlight

Later that evening Orlando lies on bed beneath the covers and stares ahead of him. He is startled by the gift he has been given. He turns and addresses the camera directly, stating that Queen Elizabeth is an interesting person.

12. Cold Funeral

Orlando leads a large group of funeral attendees through a snowy park. The coffin several men carry contains Orlando's father and it is also revealed that Queen Elizabeth has also recently died.

13. Portrait Painting

Back inside the castle Orlando stares at a large painting of himself and his father. His fiancée Euphrosyne comes towards him and puts her arm through his before they both turn and face the camera.

14. Subtitle – 1610 LOVE**15. Frozen In The Ice**

Several men stand over a frozen lake where a person had died inside and was still visible from above. The leader of the group stands and walks over the icy ground (several servants lay out cloaks before him so he doesn't slip). Several people skate on the ice rather than walking. Orlando skates beside Euphrosyne and his attention is caught by a beautiful, brunette woman (Sasha), skating beside her father. Orlando watches her and enquires after who she is. Sasha is the daughter of a Russian ambassador. Orlando continues to watch her.

16. Ice Dining

Later that night servants bring trays of food out of the frozen lake to the nobles who dine in a sheltered area. Princess Sasha is being introduced to the people at the table. She speaks several languages – including French, which Orlando communicates to her briefly. The English guests (aside from Orlando) are unable to communicate with their foreign guests and must use translators to talk over dinner. A wall hanging and identical tableau are set up on the ice for the guests' entertainment.

17. Wooing On The Ice

Orlando and Sasha skate together on the frozen lake with other nobles. Euphrosyne looks on resentfully from her seat at the side. She gets up to walk across the ice but slips and falls over. A group of lady friends come over to help her up. One of them tries to comfort her by being rude about Sasha and both Sasha and Orlando overhear the remark. Sasha shrugs her shoulders and skates off but Orlando looks very displeased.

18. Ice Dancing

Later that evening the nobles dance formally upon the ice as the Russian visitors watch on. Orlando declares he is interested in love when his friend warns against falling for Sasha. Euphrosyne listens in unhappily. During the dance Orlando's eyes stay on Sasha the whole time. He slides across the ice to become partnered with Sasha, leaving Euphrosyne solo. Orlando declares his love and commitment to Sasha as Euphrosyne listens on appalled. She approaches Orlando and tells him that he has betrayed her. As she walks away quickly, Orlando faces the camera and states that the marriage wouldn't have worked with her anyway.

19. Luxurious Life

Orlando and Sasha sit on a sledge and are pulled through a crowd of 'common' people by several servants on skates. They arrive at a clearing and Orlando points out the castle where he resides. Sasha ascertains that Orlando is an only child and Orlando finds that Sasha also has no siblings. Orlando kisses Sasha softly on the mouth. They turn and notice a person walking slowly across the ice with a huge bundle of wood on their back. The sight affects Orlando. Sasha thinks that Orlando is too serious and suffers from a melancholy that belongs to a future time.

20. A Stationary Ship

The servants take Orlando and Sasha to a large sailing ship on the ice. Sasha dismounts the sledge and gets onto the ship and Orlando is quickly driven away. He turns and notices she is intimate with a crewmember who helped her on board. Orlando runs back to the ship, climbs aboard and tries to fight the man. He pushes Orlando to the floor of the ship.

21. Lover's Bickering

Orlando and Sasha argue about the confrontation with the man. Sasha tries to convince Orlando that he imagined the intimacy between her and the sailor. Orlando is adamant about what he saw.

22. Don't Go

Orlando asks Sasha to stay with him. He asks her not to go back to Russia but Sasha doesn't believe that Orlando owns her even though Orlando feels their lives are linked and that he loves her. Orlando asks Sasha to meet him at midnight at London Bridge so that they can be together.

23. Night Fire Works

Orlando approaches an open theatre in a servant driven sledge. There are fireworks exploding all around. He looks on as the one of the final scenes of Othello plays out. After Othello commits suicide at Desdemona's deathbed, Orlando addresses the camera again and commends the play before walking off.

24. Midnight At The Bridge

Orlando waits at London Bridge at midnight with two horses. Thunderstorms and rain cloud up the full moon and Orlando realises Sasha is not coming to meet him. The horses run off into the night and Orlando lets the rain pour onto him.

25. Breaking

As Orlando admits that Sasha has not come to join him the ice cracks beneath his feet. He gets up onto the bridge and watches as people below struggle in the disintegrating Thames. He turns again and addresses the camera, feeling that he has been betrayed.

26. Dr's Visit

Orlando is in a deep sleep in bed when several servants are unable to wake him. They speak to him, sing to him and even bring dogs to him but Orlando doesn't wake. On the sixth day the Dr comes to examine him. The Dr declares that Orlando is sleeping. Orlando wakes up and sits up.

27. Subtitle – 1650 POETRY

28. Poetry In The Library

Orlando sits on a stepladder in a library, reading aloud from a book of poetry. He turns to the camera and speaks fondly of poetry.

29. A Visitor To The Estate

An anonymous man walks up the path towards Orlando's front gate. The guard dogs come out and jump around him. Inside the castle Orlando sits at one far end of the

table and the man at the other. He has to shout to the other end of the table to have a conversation with Orlando. The man is Nick Greene – a poet and publisher. They talk about poetry and a difficult life that a poet lives. Mr Greene talks about his physical ailments in an attempt to get some sympathy and a salary from Orlando to write poetry.

30. I Must Write To Eat

In the grounds of his home, Orlando pursues Mr Greene to ask for some assistance with his own poetry. Mr Greene agrees when Orlando confirms that he will pay him an annual pension. Mr Greene opens Orlando's parchment and wanders off while Orlando grins at the camera and then follows.

31. Poetry By River

As a friend rows Mr Greene down the river, Greene reads out Orlando's poem, 'Death of a Lover', and mocks it. Greene writes out a response poem, which Orlando reads aloud by a bonfire in his grounds. The poem discusses Orlando's inability as a poet. Orlando instructs his servant to get rid of the poem and to pay Greene's pension quarterly still before staring directly at the camera.

32. A Request For Leave

Orlando approaches King William of Orange and Queen Mary to ask for some time overseas in an Eastern country as ambassador. The King agrees on the condition that Orlando takes the foreign country some English tulips.

33. Subtitle – 1700 POLITICS

34. A Foreign City

Orlando rides through a foreign city on camel back. There are a lot of poor people in what seems to be a market place. Orlando follows a guide through a quieter part of the city and is approached by two small children who openly search his pockets for items of value. They run off down the road.

35. A Very Different Palace

Orlando is escorted into a large, dark castle where he meets the Khan (head) of that particular area of land. The Khan is suspicious of Orlando's visit and fears that as an English representative Orlando has come to "collect" his country.

36. Orlando's Rest

Orlando lies on his bed in his new quarters, staring ahead and thinking.

37. A Salute

Out in the desert, the Khan holds a cup of alcohol towards Orlando in a toast to England. He drinks from the cup and it is immediately refilled by one of his attending servants. Orlando, who faces him, drinks from his cup but chokes on the liquid. He finishes his drink and the servant refills it. He salutes the Khan's country and they both drink again. Orlando toasts the beauty of nature and the Khan toasts the beauty of women and joys of love. Orlando suddenly goes very still and quiet and looks sad. The Khan notices and understands that Orlando has come to his country as a "casualty of love". Orlando sinks to the ground on his knees, after stating that there are differences between men and women. The Khan tries to comfort him by talking about

the biblical history of men and women. Then he sits beside Orlando on the ground and they both drink to brotherly love and manly virtues.

38. Falcon

Orlando and the Khan stand in the desert and watch as a large bird approaches the Khan's wrist and lands upon it.

39. Eastern Song

In the desert later that night, Orlando sits with a number of others around a campfire. A native woman sings an Eastern tune. Orlando stares into the flames then takes his blonde wig off to reveal his copper hair beneath. He tilts his head back and looks at the stars in the sky.

40. Cleansing In The Sauna

Orlando sits in his bathroom/sauna room in traditional Eastern dress. He is sitting comfortably and thinking when he hears a strong English accent from the next room. An English nobleman (the Archduke Harry) comes through the door and is shocked by Orlando's appearance. He informs Orlando that his ten years as ambassador have been fully appreciated by the English monarchy and will be celebrated with a grand occasion and a promotion.

41. Party Preparation

Orlando and Archduke Harry walk through a city street as Harry discusses how they will celebrate Orlando's time as ambassador. Orlando greets the locals traditionally as they walk through the street.

42. Deeply Buried

Orlando spends a few moments searching through a trunk to relocate his blonde wig.

43. Courtyard Tension

In the courtyard with the other English nobles Orlando looks tense and walks to different spots wondering where the guests are and when they will be coming. The Archduke and Orlando walk up some inner steps to reach a high balcony from which the other English nobles can see them. The nobles clap politely as the Archduke presents Orlando with his award for services to the Crown. Suddenly Orlando is pulled from the balcony by two Eastern guards and taken before the Khan in the courtyard. The Khan voices his suspicion that the English are not truly on his side. The Archduke hurries towards them and Orlando introduces them. The Khan asks Orlando for personal help defending the city's walls against an enemy. Orlando instructs that the English weapons be distributed to the Khan's forces.

44. Fighting On The Walls

Orlando, the Archduke and the other English nobles find their way to the top of the city walls where the Khan and his people are fighting the enemy on the other side. The Archduke fires at a member of the enemy trying to get over the wall. Orlando runs to the man's side to comfort him as he dies but the Archduke encourages Orlando to leave him alone. Orlando stares straight at the camera.

45. Walking Through A War Zone

Orlando walks through a street filled with smoke and dust. Soldiers and guards run in the opposite direction towards the battle wall. Orlando looks tired and traumatized.

46. Hiding Under The Covers

Orlando appears to be asleep under his bed covers – with his blonde wig still on. An Eastern servant comes to observe him. He hears his heart beat.

47. Shedding The Skin

Orlando wakes from sleep and removes the wig from his head. His copper hair comes tumbling down. He goes to a basin over water and splashes his face with it. He turns to look in a full-length mirror in the room and realises that he has breasts and a vagina and recognises he has changed sexes during his long sleep. She concludes (by addressing the camera) that she is the same person as she was before but is a different sex.

48. Rider In Black

Orlando rides on camel back through a desert. She wears a black garment that covers her head and is led by an Eastern guide. The small group of people and animals progress through the barren land.

49. Back Home

Orlando walks the path on her estate towards the castle walls. Several confounded servants stand outside the gates looking at her as she announces her return.

50. Corseting

Orlando is laced tightly into a corset and huge tulle layered skirt by a handmaiden. She examines herself in a hand mirror and then stares directly at the camera and smiles slightly.

51. Covered Items

Orlando walks through a large room in her home where the furniture has been covered with large white sheets to protect it from dust and fading. She negotiates her way carefully around the furniture and a servant in her big dress, careful not to knock the items as she sidesteps past. She reaches a window and stares out at the grounds.

52. Subtitle – 1750 SOCIETY

53. Invitations

Orlando and a servant walk through the grounds of her estate. A gardener is pruning the trees and bushes. Orlando has received an invitation to attend a literary event. Her servant warns her against mingling with such literary types as a single woman.

54. An Aristocratic Gathering

At the Countess' home a tenor sings while the Countess has a conversation with three men. One of the men – the Archduke Harry, feels that science is a more proper occupation and more interesting than literature or poetry. Orlando enters the room and catches the attention of all who were talking. Orlando sits by herself and the Countess informs the Archduke that the woman who just entered is Lady Orlando. Orlando goes to sit with three men (Swift, Pope and Addison). They begin to discuss the

function of women in contemporary society. It is apparent that none of the three men are admiring or respectful of women. Orlando looks straight at the camera anxiously.

55. Surprise and Anger

Orlando has left the Countess' place and is walking through the ground of her estate in a hurry with the Archduke Harry. They are approached from behind by her head servant and two message bearers. They inform her that as she is legally dead and legally female she is not allowed to own property. They suggest she is still able to reside in the property "incognito". The Archduke offers to marry Orlando so that she may live with him. She declines the offer. The Archduke is offended and claims that as he adores her he owns her. She gathers her skirts and runs off. She turns to the camera and recites two of the words, which the Archduke said and which offended her.

56. Feminist Transition

Orlando (still with her huge skirt gathered in her hands) hurries off into the maze of hedge on her property. She turns numerous corners and time passes as she moves through the maze. She emerges from it wearing a different dress and different style of makeup and hair.

57. Nature, Nature I Am Your Bride

Orlando runs from the maze into a wide-open field that is filled with fog. She collapses on the ground and presses her face into the grass.

58. Subtitle – 1850 SEX

59. Hero And Horse

Orlando looks up from the ground to notice a man coming towards her out of the fog. He is riding a horse, which throws him off when he reaches her. He lands on the ground beside Orlando. He asks if she is all right and Orlando replies that she is dead and then asks if he'll marry her. The two ride the horse together through the fields (Orlando at the front with the reigns). She stops the horse for a moment when she hears the sound of a steam engine train through the fog.

60. Getting To Know Shelmerdine

In Orlando's house she brings Shelmerdine a bowl of milk and introduces herself properly. She bathes Shelmerdine's twisted ankle in warm water. He invites Orlando to join him in America. Orlando considers that Shelmerdine is a professional adventurer and traveller. Shelmerdine says he is in the pursuit of liberty. Shelmerdine thinks that Orlando doesn't desire a husband but a lover. She pulls Shelmerdine to her chest and addresses the camera excitedly.

61. Intimacy

In bed Orlando and Shelmerdine are naked. Orlando moves her hands over Shelmerdine's body softly before lying down upon his chest. They look at each other for a long time. She is awake during the night, staring ahead of her.

62. Morning Embrace

Orlando and Shelmerdine lie entangled in bed in the morning. She asks him to stay, before hearing a knock at the bedroom door. Orlando's servant says that an important letter has arrived from Queen Victoria.

63. The Spirit Of This Century

Orlando and Shelmerdine stand on the doorstep and read the letter, which has arrived from the Queen. Orlando reads the letter that states she will lose her property unless she has a son and then signs it. She feels that the times have broken her spirit as a person. Shelmerdine tries to convince her to go with him to America but she declines. She asks if he would have a child with her but Shelmerdine declines. The wind picks up and they kiss passionately.

64. Farewell To Shelmerdine

Shelmerdine rides off into the fog and distance on his horse. Orlando waves goodbye to him from the estate. The rain pours down on her and she closes her eyes.

65. Noises From Above

Orlando opens her eyes and looks at the camera. She hears a loud sound above her in the sky – the sound of an aeroplane.

66. Bombs And Mud

Orlando runs through a muddy field in the night. Overhead planes are heavily bombing the field and surrounding areas and she dodges the loud sounds and fires. She looks to be heavily pregnant. She keeps walking and the fog gradually clears.

67. Subtitle – BIRTH

68. Manuscript

Orlando sits in a publisher's office in modern times. A large manuscript sits on his desk. He praises Orlando on the manuscript and asks how long it took to write.

Orlando says nothing but looks shrewdly at the camera.

69. Modern Biker

Orlando starts up her motorbike – which also has a sidecar. In the sidecar is her daughter. They ride through central London and then out to the estate where Orlando used to live. The grounds are covered with white sheets. Her daughter runs along the ground and trips on one of the white sheets. Orlando walks along towards the entrance hall while a voice over, discussing her modern appearance, plays.

70. Looking Back

The estate has now become a tourist destination and there are visitors inside taking photographs. Orlando and her daughter look at a painting on the wall of Orlando from several hundred years ago.

71. Freedom Shots

The camera shows a collection of nature shots – taken in a video camera by her young daughter. They are both in the field where Orlando first began. Orlando sits by the tree and a single tear leaks from her eye. Her daughter asks why she is sad, Orlando says she isn't sad. She points to the sky where a man with wings is singing. Orlando looks levelly into the camera.

