



The Travesti (Travesti (Transvestite)) Body in the Anthropocene: Cultural Intersections

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Abstract

When we consider it as a cultural element, the body assumes a myriad of new social and political meanings in contemporary times. The progressive destruction of the planet, the deep inequalities and the complex class relations are inscribed in the body, by the body and with the body. We see these intersections in an especially relevant way when we consider the existence of travesti (Travesti (Transvestite)) s, people aligned with the feminine whose body exists at the border of the cultural constructions of sex and gender, and more specifically travesti (Transvestite) sex workers in Brazil. It is intended to theoretically elaborate some of the ramifications of this chaotic scenario and its links with the cultural production of the body, with emphasis on the travesti (Transvestite) body. For this, we will articulate the cyborg theory, by Haraway (2009); of rubble and contamination, by Tsing (2019) and the ethnography of Anjos Neto (2019).

Keywords: Travesti; Anthropocene; Body

Introduction

In the contemporary setting, the body emerges as an element of deep cultural significance, carrying with it a myriad of social and political issues. From this perspective, the presence and influence of the urgent and complex problems that permeate our society becomes evident, such as the destruction of the planet, the deep inequalities and the intricate class relations. These issues are intertwined with the body, establishing a constant interaction, in which the inscription of these challenges is present “in the body, through the body and with the body” [1].

In this context, it is especially relevant to turn our gaze to the existence of travesti (Transvestite) s, individuals who identify with the feminine and whose body inhabits the

border of the cultural constructions of sex and gender. The presence and experience of these people point to a series of essential reflections in the understanding of contemporary body culture. As Butler [1] points out, “the existence of travesti (Transvestite) s reveals the complexity and fluidity of social constructions of gender, challenging binary and normative conceptions.”

As we enter the neighborhood of Atalaia, in Aracaju, we highlight the group of travesti (Transvestite) sex workers as a focal point for our analysis. Their experiences in the exercise of this occupation reveal, in a forceful way, the interface between body, culture and power. As Kulick [2] notes, “travesti (Transvestite) sex workers constitute an emblematic example of how corporeality and gender identity are influenced by power relations and marginalization.”

Therefore, this article has as its central objective to explore the intersections between body, culture and power in the contemporary context, with a specific focus on travesti (Transvestite) sex workers in the neighborhood of Atalaia, in Aracaju. For such an undertaking, key concepts proposed by prominent theorists, such as Butler [1] and Kulick [2], will be used, which provide an analytical and critical perspective in the understanding of these complex relationships.

Decolonizing the Body

Judith Butler's [1] queer theory plays a key role in addressing the social constructs of gender and the performativity of the body. Butler argues that gender identity is not fixed, but rather a continuous process of performance that is influenced by culture and social norms. This perspective allows us to understand how the travesti (Transvestite) body challenges binary notions of gender, destabilizing the norms and limits imposed by society.

Another important contribution is the performative body theory proposed by Judith Halberstam [3]. Halberstam explores the forms of resistance and subversion present in gender performances that challenge established norms. In the context of the travesti (Transvestite) body, these performances reveal strategies of resistance against oppression and marginalization, enabling the construction of dissident and plural identities.

Postcolonial studies are also relevant to our understanding of the intersections between body, culture, and power. The work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak [4] highlights the importance of considering the relations of power and domination present in the processes of colonialism and decolonization. By applying this perspective to the travesti (Transvestite) body, we can analyze how colonial and neocolonial structures influence the experiences and identities of these marginalized bodies.

Finally, intersectional feminist theory, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw [5], allows us to understand how the intersections of gender, race, class, and other forms of oppression intertwine in the travesti (Transvestite) body. This approach recognizes that oppressions are intertwined and that the struggle for social justice must consider the multiple dimensions of identity and experience. By applying this perspective to the travesti (Transvestite) body, we can analyze how the experiences of these individuals are shaped by the power structures that operate at different levels.

When we consider these theoretical approaches, we realize that the travesti (Transvestite) body reveals itself as an agent of subversion and resistance. Their existence challenges gender norms and breaks with the oppressive

structures that try to control and discipline bodies. In this sense, the construction of the travesti (Transvestite) body as a cyborg becoming and the performance of these bodies in social ruins show the potentiality of transformation and emancipation present in this intersection between body, culture and power.

Although we go through a variety of concepts and authors, we are based on the idea of interconnected becomings. This interconnection is present in the very idea of contamination, arising from the understanding that everything is composed of multiplicities in movement, or dance. We seek to understand, from this, in what ways this contamination influences the construction of the identity and travesti (Transvestite) body, in what ways their social positions, their places of devastation and their relations are associated.

We argue that this becoming carries with it a potent subversion. The travesti (Transvestite) body is a crumbling of the dichotomous rigidities of the West, using its own gender terms to turn them upside down. This allows us to elaborate approximations between subversive images, such as that of the cyborg (HARAWAY, 2009), which moves between the ruins of the society that created it, reformulating the divisions of culture and acting on its potentialities of emancipation.

The decolonial theory of Frantz Fanon [6] is a fundamental reference for the understanding of the travesti (Transvestite) body in the context of decolonization. Fanon explores the complex interactions between race, colonialism, and identity, highlighting how the colonized body is subjugated and dehumanized. By applying this perspective to the travesti (Transvestite) body, we can analyze how colonial oppression influences the experiences of these marginalized bodies, reinforcing the need for decolonization in both the social and individual spheres.

Another important voice is that of Bell Hooks [7], whose work in black feminism challenges the power structures that perpetuate oppression and exploitation. By addressing the intersection of gender, race, and class, hooks invites us to rethink conventional notions of femininity and masculinity, making room for the diversity of gender experiences, including for travesti (Transvestite) bodies.

It is also important to mention the influence of trans feminist theories, represented by authors such as Julia Serano [8] and Sandy Stone [9]. These theories highlight the importance of recognizing and respecting self-declared gender identities, offering an inclusive and respectful perspective for understanding the travesti (Transvestite) body. They invite us to rethink binary notions of gender and to value the autonomy and authenticity of Tran's experiences.

By integrating these diverse theoretical voices, we can further enrich the understanding of the travesti (Transvestite) body as a place of struggle, resistance, and transformation. Through the decolonization of the body, we can pave the way for building a more just, inclusive and respectful society, where all bodies and identities are valued and celebrated.

Final Thoughts

The analysis of the intersections between body, culture and power in the context of the travesti (Transvestite) body leads us to a broader understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by these marginalized individuals. By considering the theoretical contributions of Judith Butler, Judith Halberstam, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Kimberlé Crenshaw [1,3-5] and others, we were able to explore the various dimensions of the travesti (Transvestite) experience, as well as the mechanisms of oppression and resistance present in this context.

By decolonizing the travesti (Transvestite) body, we recognize the importance of challenging binary social gender norms by breaking with the oppressive structures that attempt to control and discipline these bodies. Through queer, per formative, postcolonial, and intersectional theories, we understand the fluidity of social constructions of gender, the resistance present in gender performances, the influence of colonial and neocolonial structures on travesti (Transvestite) experiences, as well as the intersections of oppressions that shape their lives.

The idea of becoming, cyborg, proposed by Donna Haraway [10] and the notion of ruins and contamination presented by Anna Tsing [11], allow us to explore the possibilities of subversion and transformation present in the travesti (Transvestite) body. By challenging gender norms and reconfiguring cultural divisions, the travesti (Transvestite) body emerges as an agent of resistance and emancipation.

However, it is important to emphasize that the decolonization of the travesti (Transvestite) body cannot be achieved only through theoretical discourse. A practical and political commitment is needed to combat the discrimination, violence and exclusion that these individuals face on a daily basis. This involves creating inclusive policies, supporting travesti (Transvestite) organizations and movements, as well as educating and raising awareness of society as a whole [12].

By recognizing and valuing the diversity of experiences and identities, we can build a more just future where all bodies are respected and celebrated. The decolonization of the travesti (Transvestite) body is an invitation to

rethink power structures, question entrenched norms and prejudices, and seek to build a truly inclusive and egalitarian society [13].

On this journey, we must amplify the voices and experiences of travesti (Transvestite) bodies, recognizing their agency in the construction of their own identities and fighting alongside them for social justice and emancipation. Only in this way can we dismantle oppressive structures and create a world where all people can live fully, freely and equally.

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