

Queer Congruity and Emotional Verisimilitude in *Boys Don't Cry*

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This paper examines several deep and powerful themes, predominantly centred around gender identity, detestation for transgender people, societal dogmatism, inclination, ferocity. The film *Boys Don't Cry* explores all the compelling themes through Brandon Teena's and Lana Tisdell's cognitive and emotional effects as a consequence of loathe and incomprehension wretched metaphorically represented here. Beyond specific accounts, the story serves as an imitation to raise consciousness of the omnipresent problem in the society. This research paper also accentuates paramount missive to the society like approbation concession transgender identities, catastrophic embodiment of laddishness, endearment should not be provisory, call for magnanimity and humanization. The research paper delves into Brandon's swedge to inhabit veritably aggressive environment, his forage for endearment, affirmation and the callous repercussion he faces after his identity is divulged. Through a vehemently puissant narrative, Hilary Swank delivers an Academy Award-winning performance that enlightens Brandon's anecdote and brings attention to the real-life precariousness faced by transgender individuals. *Boys Don't Cry* serves as both a panegyric to Brandon's intrepidity and a cynical rebuke of a society that malfunctions to inoculate its most impuissant.

Keywords: Gender inequality, societal implications, boys don't cry the movie, gender norms, toxic masculinity, LGBTQI representation.

Introduction

Boys Don't Cry (1999), directed by Kimberly Peirce, is a trailblazing and high-octane American memoir drama that examines many concerns prevalent in the society like sexism, gender bias, disparity, intolerance and dereliction by the society, repudiation by the civilization. The film accentuates on the materiality of Brandon Teena, a transvestite man who was callously raped and neutralized in Humboldt, Nebraska, in 1993. Brandon's chronicle became the nucleus of the nation for deliberation surrounding trans rights, bias crimes towards transgender people, and the stark truth faced by individuals who call into question traditional gender norms in the society. Peirce's cinematic simplification not only perpetuate Brandon's scuffle and calamitous destiny but also vigour the cinema goes to square up to ingrained prejudices and

the reverberation of failing to cushion disempowered communities.

Hilary Swank played Brandon Teena, role for which she was awarded the Oscar for best actress in a leading role. The movie was made in 1999 when it was not accepted by the society to accept transgender people. The film is set in Falls City Nebraska, all the characters are white and heterosexual, but Brandon was a male. Once the friends get the hint that Brandon was a female, John Tom and Candace look for other clues that Brandon had female genitalia. Brandon tries his best through the movie to act like, look like and dress like a male to be accepted as one. But some scenes like one at the beginning of the film begins with, "Uh dang you have tiny hands" (small hands than other men), are one of the clues that help them to find about Brandon's identity. These differences led her friend to discriminate her.

Swank's performance is raw and real, encompassing the struggle of Brandon for love and acceptance by the society that could not – or does not want to – understand him. Chloë Sevigny also gives an immortal performance as Lana Tisdell, Brandon's girlfriend, whose own journey of cognizance and anguish adds profundity and spiritual intricacy to the narrative. The chemistry between Swank and Sevigny grounds the film in a tender humanity, even as the surrounding occurrences grow increasingly barbarous.

The movie deals with another evil of the society, class discrimination, before discussing gender discrimination, in the beginning of the movie. The film shows that Brandon the cost of the sex change is high. In the movie the cost of sex change is a metaphor which indirectly says only the middle and upper class can afford to become transsexuals and can resolve their issues. But, at the same time the working class suffer. For instance, Brandon has to deal with his gender melancholy as he cannot afford the sex change.

Boys Don't Cry courageously presents the harsh realities of Brandon's life, but rather enfolds them as a part of an indispensable head-to-head battle with the truth. The movie scrupulously demonstrates the exuberance Brandon feels when he is sanctioned a man and falls in love, also the trepidation and scepticism that emanate when his assigned sex is divulged.

Through its illustrations of Brandon's alliance and the pugnacious environment he inhabited, the film critiques the unbending confines of gender roles and the vicious

counterblast that can boil over when those boundaries are crossed.

Sexism

When talking about gender violence it is of supreme importance to contemplate the marshalling of gender practices inside the purview of toxic masculinity. Gender violence when effectuated by man are fundamentally to evince their vigour, ascendancy, and sovereignty over the other gender. In this day and age impregnable analogy which states that being a man is a synonym to be violent. Our society enforces the males to use hegemonic masculinity as a *modus operandi* to use forcefulness to gauge a complex problem.

A particular scene in the picture, where John and Tom unearth that Brandon is not a male biologically, coerce them to use sadism as a manner to postulate their robustness over Brandon. When Brandon is unmasked as a member of the fair sex, John and Tom brings her to a secluded locus where they maliciously pummel her and ravish her. In this scene the two antagonists use rape as a measure to dominate their masculinity over Brandon, which pressurises Brandon to take a tractable female role. Brandon's sexuality is discerned as a menace to the men's arrangement in the group and to bring the bear in terms of gendered violence helps them to stiffen their supremacy over women. The rape of Brandon is entitled as 'Corrective Rape' here by the two men which is delineated as the ravishing of a lesbian or trans women by the male to either penalize her or to correct her sexual deportment in the civilization.

Reckoning of Masculinity

At the onset of the film, we see Brandon driving on a dark, deserted road. Suddenly he is overtaken by a car, and the police sirens are seen in the distance. The scene starts to fade and merge with the sky. This scene is significant as it is a recollection of the rash events later in the film, where Brandon engages in a police chase, on the whim of John. The men throughout the film are shown to be irresponsible with cars. The masculine is linked to the car culture, whereby men are belligerent and aggressive drivers. This is indicative of the power play and hierarchy that is reinforced through car culture.

In the next scene we can see Brandon gets hair cut by his cousin in his trailer. This scene demonstrates the expectations of masculinity by the society which Brandon tries to maintain throughout the film. It is shown that Brandon tries to follow the vision of how a man looks, how a man dresses, how a man walks and how a man behaves. This shows the desire of Brandon to conform to socially constructed gender stereotypes of the male figure, Brandon's behaviour in the film is based on external suppositions of masculinity. In our society boys are taught at a very young age to be rigid and rough and not to cry because according to the society crying is associated with the females, they are always told *BOYS DON'T CRY* which clearly justifies the title of the film where Brandon must follow certain rules of the society, so the society accepts him like a male. The hankering to be in accordance with culturally influenced gender norms of the male figure, the character of Brandon

rightfully demonstrates what it takes to fulfil the urge to be a man according to the societal standards.

Commemoration of the Daring

There are many instances in the film which shows hegemonic masculinity, and it also shows that it is reinforced and celebrated also, like bar fight scenes, car chase scenes, self-mutilation smoking, drinking alcohol, aggression. To meet the standards of society to be a man, Brandon blindly engages himself in all the mentioned activities so that the two men John and Tom accept Brandon as a male. The film deals with emptiness, and it can be clearly seen in the poster of the film which shows the protagonist Brandon in a light faded away image in front of a deserted highway. Those who do not conform to the societal gender norms are not considered 'Real Man'. And the one's who do not fulfil the conditions of gender norms are termed as sissy, fag, wimp. In a particular scene where Brandon and John are sitting across firewood and John shows Brandon self-inflicted scars by a knife and urges Brandon to do the same. This demonstrated self-harm and violent behaviour are few of the gender norms by the society to confer oneself as a male in the civilization.

Desideratum to Classify Sexual Category

People often infer each other based on gender. And this gender is linked to biological sex of the person. People use superficial indicators to decide if someone is more tender or more red-blooded. Hegemonic masculinity consider itself superior and above all other types of masculinity and femininity. Because

of these men time and again use gender categories to juxtapose themselves with others to recognize their place in social groups.

In a particular scene where Tom and John take Brandon to the washroom and pull down his pants demonstrates the need to identify gender based on the biological sex of the person. After Brandon is raped by John and Tom, he flees away from both and reports to the local police station to file a complaint on the advice of his girlfriend Lana. During this scene when Brandon was interviewed by the Sheriff, the Sheriff asked impertinent questions to Brandon basically making Brandon to reminiscent his disconcerting experience. The authority shown by the Sheriff in this scene is that the Sheriff's questions could not have been more ignominious to Brandon's gender identity. The cinematography also throws light on the concept of authority as the Sheriff sits higher than Brandon on a desk and Brandon sat in the chair. The camera angles created the image that the sheriff was more formidable because of his stature and how he looms over Brandon, tyrannizing him.

The elucidation of rape and murder against Brandon

Sheriff: Why do you go hanging out with guys, you being a girl yourself? Why do you go around kissing every girl?

Brandon: I... don't see what this has to do with what had happened.

Sheriff: I'm asking you all these so that when I speak to the jury, they're going to want some answers, so I have to know exactly what is going on. Now, are you going to answer my question or not?

Brandon: I... have a sexual identity crisis.

Sheriff: You have a what?

Brandon: I have a sexual identity crisis.

The following are the dialogues between the Sheriff and Brandon after Brandon gets raped. The question why Brandon is raped and murdered by John and Tom lies in the way Brandon is portrayed in the film. John and Tom accept Brandon as a guy in their group because Brandon gets dressed and behaves like a guy. When they discover Brandon is a woman who considers herself a male John and Tom rapes Brandon under the definition of 'Corrective Rape'.

Conclusion

In the end *Boys Don't Cry* demonstrates the harmful consequences of a society that refuses to accept people who don't fall under their purview of traditional ideas of gender and sexuality. The story is not only about Brandon Teena who is struggling with sexual identity crisis, but it shows the cultural forces that made such tragedy possible. The film forces the audience to question themselves how far it is correct to impose societal norms on one's sexual identity. The movie is a prime example of powerful depiction of love, and the portrayal of a transgender male played by Hillary Swank correctly shows the struggle and hardship a transgender individual endures. The film is based on true story of love, violence, societal hardship and struggles of Queer community.

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