Gay subjectivity, ethical education and recognition from Amarelo manga

Subjetividade gay, educação ética e reconhecimento desde Amarelo manga

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Abstract

This article conducts an analysis centered on the meanings of the film Amarelo Manga, focusing on the character Dunga and the possibilities of thinking about the production of an ethical learning process for recognition through queer cinema. In this sense, the objective of the article is to analyze how it is possible to construct alternative ethical social learnings through queer cinema in general, and through the analyzed film in particular. The discussion addresses the issue of homophobia and insult as limiting factors for the expression of homosexual desires, subsequently advancing toward the production of gay subjectivities in their potentialities within relationships with subversion, which demands space for a logic of recognition. The article concludes that queer cinema can provide a social learning tool for an ethics of recognition, notably due to its ability to engage those who come into contact with its works.

Keywords: Queer cinema, Constitution of Subjectivity, Social learning, Education through Cinema

Resumo

Este artigo realiza uma análise centrada nos sentidos do filme Amarelo manga, com foco na personagem Dunga e nas possibilidades de se pensar a produção de um aprendizado ético para o reconhecimento a partir do cinema queer. Nesse sentido, o objetivo do artigo é analisar como é possível construir aprendizagens sociais éticas outras a partir do cinema queer de forma geral, e da obra analisada especificamente. Discute-se a questão da homofobia e da injúria como elemento limitante para as expressões dos desejos homossexuais, posteriormente avançando-se em direção à produção das subjetividades gays em suas potencialidades nas relações com a subversão que pede espaço para uma lógica de reconhecimento. Conclui-se que o cinema queer pode oferecer uma ferramenta de aprendizagem social para uma ética do reconhecimento, notadamente devido à sua capacidade de engajar as pessoas que entram em contato com suas obras.

Palavras-chave: *Cinema* queer*, Constituição da subjetividade, Aprendizagem social, Educação pelo cinema*

Introduction: queer cinema and homosexuality

If literature has already demonstrated the educational foundations of cinema in general (Almeida, 2017), queer filmography tends to be more widely used within activist circles. In light of this, one may pose the question: does queer cinema also have an educational potential regarding reflections on normativity processes and the inclusion of subaltern groups? Indeed, both queer aesthetics and politics are grounded in tensions related to social normativity and subalternity. In this sense, queer appropriates the margins to establish different relationships with processes of subalternity, no longer from an assimilationist logic but rather a contestatory one (Miskolci, 2012). Consequently, in the field of cinema, the expression of deviation—particularly from norms of sex, gender, and sexuality—becomes a defining feature of a body of works that challenge the logics of replication of the heterosexual regime (Wittig, 2004) in hegemonic cinema when portraying distinctly homoerotic narratives.

Queer cinema thus establishes itself as a counterpoint to the increasing emergence of LGBTQIA+-themed works based on an assimilationist logic, which imposed the construction of a positive vision of gender and sexuality dissidents while reinforcing heteronormativity (Borden, 2017; Rich, 2013). This process, which became consolidated in the early 1990s, shifts from a dynamic that sought validation through adherence to social normativities to a logic that demands space for differences, whether in life or in artistic-narrative expression (Rich, 2013).

Thus, audiences emerge that do not identify with traditional narratives, either in their forms or their meanings. The queer audience, following the productions of what has been termed New Queer Cinema in the U.S. context (Rich, 2013), rejects easy identifications and assimilationist clichés of genre or LGBT cinema. In this sense,

> The role of New Queer Cinema, unlike an identity politics approach, is not to defend either positive or negative images, as both are equally prone to becoming clichés through the simplistic repetition of reality. Its significance lies in the pursuit of plural images that represent a true democracy of diverse subjects and bodies. It seeks to provoke controversy and bring uncomfortable topics—or those considered outdated by traditional activism—back to the forefront of the struggle. Why should viados, bichas, sapatões, queers and other terms deemed pejorative be read as such? Through cinema, the aim was, in fact, to reclaim pride in their own deviant images—deviant from a dominant norm—and precisely for that reason, unique, original, and beautiful (Lopes & Nagime, 2015, p. 16).

These can be considered general characteristics of this type of cinema, even though defining what constitutes queer cinema can at times be a challenging task. This difficulty arises from the often divergent and frequently unstable characteristics of the works that may, to varying degrees, be classified as queer. It is important to note that, rather than attempting to define a genre, the discussion around queer cinema primarily concerns a queer practice in filmmaking (Borden, 2017), as its works do not adhere to specific narrative structures or technical forms that would constitute a distinct cinematic genre. In this sense, the aesthetics and politics of these films take precedence in both their production and analysis.

In Latin America, queer cinema also emerges with significant strength and, at times, with distinct nuances due to its strong dialogue with the social realities it seeks to portray (Brandão & Lira, 2015). It can be said that the roots of Latin American queer cinema lie in New Latin American Cinema, which emerged in the 1970s with the intention of engaging politically

with the realities of oppression experienced primarily as a result of the hardships of neocolonialism and the dictatorial regimes that took place in various countries (Podalsky, 2011).

he cinematic agenda of this period, initially more homogeneous and based on the idea of class awareness (ibidem), became more diverse starting in the 1980s, a period in which queer-themed productions became increasingly frequent. These works emerged as a way of questioning conventional cinematic standards, both narratively and aesthetically. Thus, the complex dynamics of relations with alterity were exposed in Latin American queer films as a way of complicating the narratives and views concerning the subjectivities they present (Rich, 2013).

Within the Brazilian cinematic context, this movement also took place. Therefore, scripts and characters were created—whether intentionally adhering to queer politics and aesthetics or not—that represented queer experiences through various nuances, breaking with simplistic stereotypes or assimilationist logics.

Notable within this circuit is a series of productions from Pernambuco starting in the 2000s, often categorized as part of the New Pernambuco Cinema (Novo Cinema Pernambucano), These films frequently feature queer characters in their narratives in a disruptive manner, both aesthetically and politically, as seen in works such as *A Febre do Rato* (2011) and *Piedade* (2019) by Cláudio Assis, as well as *Tatuagem* (2015) and *Fim de Festa* (2019) by Hilton Lacerda.

It is through the narrative arc of this "bicha maldita" that this article analyzes, from a queer perspective and focusing on the meanings produced by the film's narrative, aspects related to gay subjectivities, homophobic dynamics, and the possibilities of envisioning an ethics of recognition of differences, using cinema as an object that enables the exercise of ethical learning. Amarelo Manga was chosen due to its disruptive potential in portraying homosexuality in cinema, allowing for a non-normative perspective with subversive potential and implications for the possible construction of alternative ethical social learnings based on the analyzed work—an issue that drives this text. To this end, theoretical frameworks are put in dialogue with selected scenes from Amarelo Manga (Cláudio Assis, 2002), in which the primary narrative focus is on Dunga, the film's gay character.

Initially, the discussion focuses on the issue of homophobia, with particular emphasis on reflections regarding insult as a limiting factor for the expression of homosexual desires. Following this, the scope of analysis is expanded to consider the production of gay subjectivities not only within the strict framework of homophobia but also in their potentialities within relationships with subversion, which demands space for a logic of recognition. This, in turn, is explored in the following section of the article, emphasizing the need to reconfigure the contemporary ethical landscape. Finally, the article concludes that queer cinema can serve as a social learning tool for an ethics of recognition, particularly due to its ability to engage those who come into contact with these cinematic works.

This learning process takes place within the social contexts in which films circulate, meaning it is not necessarily linked to learning structured by formal education but rather to everyday life and the social engagements of the works and the audiences who experience them in various cinematic settings. In this sense, the perspective adopted here pertains more to the category of learning through social engagement rather than learning in spaces where there is an instructor following a structured curriculum with specific methods designed to achieve pedagogical goals. Thus, the scenes analyzed here serve to illustrate a form of learning, particularly when considered within non-formal educational spaces, which, in most cases, are not tied to pedagogical mediation in a strict sense.

From a methodological standpoint, the analysis is conducted through the Foucauldian genealogical perspective applied to queer cinema (Paiva, 2021). The objective is not to perform a technical analysis of the film but rather to focus on the narrative meanings that expose the distributions of power throughout the cinematic production process, as well as their relevance for critically reflecting on contemporary society. Thus, the film is understood primarily as a social production that, to some extent—and without any intention of fully encapsulating the social reality with which it engages—can illustrate power relations and thereby enable a critical interrogation of reality.

Homophobia and insult: tensions in gay sociability

In the first scene in which Dunga appears, he is wearing short denim shorts—women's cut, a signature element of his wardrobe throughout the film—and a sleeveless T-shirt with cut-off sleeves. He is sweeping the reception area of the Texas Hotel, where he works, while Aurora, a middle-aged woman, sits on a sofa doing her nails, and Seu Bianor, the hotel owner, searches for something at the reception desk.

Dunga asks what he is looking for and helps him find a key, making playful remarks about his boss's eyesight. Throughout the film, he maintains a good relationship with Seu Bianor. The phone rings, and Seu Bianor answers—it is someone looking for Isaac, a hotel guest. The hotel functions as a sort of boarding house for some long-term residents. Dunga is asked to go to Isaac's room to inform him of the call, to which he replies, "I'll go, but you know how he gets. Like a wild beast. That Papangu face!".

Dunga knocks on Isaac's door, and upon waking up, Isaac becomes irritated. When informed about the phone call, he asks whether the caller is waiting. As Dunga does not immediately respond, Isaac snaps, shouting, "Go fuck yourself!" and "Answer me, viado! Is he waiting?" The use of the term "viado" in a derogatory manner within this scene explicitly demonstrates Isaac's attempt to insult Dunga. The audience is directly exposed to an overt expression of homophobia.

Homophobic insults are a constant reality in the lives of individuals perceived as homosexual. In this sense, it can be said that insult constitutes both the social and psychological experience of homosexuals, as they exist within a heteronormative society. Didier Eribon (2004) highlights how insult emerges as the primary factor marking the vulnerability of homosexual expressions, shaping the relationships between individuals presumed to be homosexual and their surrounding social environment.

It can be said that insult enables the construction of a socially inferiorized identity, making the insulted subject aware that they are not like the others. As Eribon (2004, p. 16) states, "The insult lets me know that I am not like others, not normal. I am queer: strange, bizarre, sick, abnormal". Thus, insult functions not merely as a localized act of aggression confined to the moment of its utterance but as a performative act that creates an identity, positioning the insulted subject within the group of those marginalized by social normativities:

Insult is a linguistic act—or a series of repeated linguistic acts—by which a particular place in the world is assigned to the person at whom the acts are directed. This assignment determines a viewpoint about the world, a particular vision. Insult profoundly affects an individual's consciousness through what it says: "I assimilate you to this," "I reduce you to this" (Eribon, 2004, p. 17).

Insults like the one directed by Isaac at Dunga—and which can be identified in the lived experience of any homosexual man whose gender performativity (Butler, 2008) is even minimally marked by femininity—reveal a mechanism of categorization that frames their experience as inferior in relation to dominant discourses and practices regarding gender and sexuality. This dynamic strips homosexual subjects of autonomy in the sphere of representation, subjecting them to the stigmatizing discourses embedded in everyday language through the consolidation of a symbolic order of heterosexual domination (Eribon, 2004).

This symbolic order, according to Mott (2015), traces back to the long Judeo-Christian tradition. As the author states:

We, the peoples mythologically descended from Abraham—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—are the typical heirs of a pro-natalist demographic ideology, in which religion and morality teach that sex is primarily intended for reproduction, based on the divine command of the Creator: "Be fruitful and multiply". (Mott, 2015, p. 18).

Thus, even though other religious traditions—originating from Indigenous spiritualities and African diasporic religions—are present in Brazil's cultural formation, the processes of colonization and enslavement imposed Christianity as the dominant religion. This has profoundly shaped Brazilian cultural identity and significantly influenced societal attitudes toward homosexuality. Since homosexual practices do not fit within a reproductive sexuality model, those who engage in them have historically been condemned—initially as sinners and, following modernity, as either diseased or criminal (Borrillo, 2010). As a result, the conditions for maintaining social hierarchies that marginalize homosexual practices and subjects through prejudice against homosexuality remain intact (Prado & Machado, 2008).

Homosexual desire, or any expression that alludes to it, becomes the target of social educational mechanisms designed to eradicate it from the social fabric from childhood onward, shaping the entire existence of individuals (Louro, 2010). These mechanisms operate through both the heterosexual nuclear family and the school system, imposing the fabrication of what is

considered the normal world. In this sense, the sphere of desire—marked by its potential for multiple productions and creations—becomes subordinated to the logic of reproductive familial sexuality. This dynamic explains the normative paranoia surrounding expressions of desire that refuse to conform to repressive mechanisms (Hocquenghem, 2009).

One of the primary ways this control over desire has been enforced is through the reinforcement of gender roles and a rigid sexual division, present since the earliest records of Judeo-Christian traditions (Mott, 2015). The identification of, and the means by which, normative education of desire has been imposed operate through the regulation of gender expressions. As a result, those who do not conform to these roles—such as Dunga in the narrative of Amarelo Manga, whose manner of speaking and moving aligns far more with femininity than masculinity—become the targets of insults and various other forms of homophobic violence.

Regarding homosexual men, femininity plays a crucial role in understanding the place that social normativities occupy in shaping their subjectivities and in the social interactions they experience. When a homosexual man challenges established gender roles through a feminine or androgynous performativity, he comes to be perceived as a threat to the traditional separation of masculine and feminine roles (Mott, 2015). This highlights the impossibility of considering constructs of sexuality in isolation from the social construction of gender and the power relations that stem from it (Parker, 2002). In this sense:

> The male who adopts a passive, female posture, however, whether in sexual intercourse or social interaction, almost inevitably undercuts his own masculinidade. By upsetting the culturally prescribed fit between biological sex and social gender, he sacrifices his appropriate categorization as homem and comes to be known as a viado (...) or a bicha (Parker, 2002, p. 56).

This antagonistic relationship is thus produced between the real man, marked by virility, and the bicha, whose gender performance deviates from traditionally recognized masculine traits. As a result, heterosexuality is established as the norm through the devaluation of homosexuals and the inferiority ascribed to the femininity associated with them (Borrillo, 2010). At this point, gender and sexuality markers intersect, reinforcing the sex-gender hierarchy characteristic of the binary logic inherent in heteronormative dynamics (Butler, 2008).

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The contrast between heterosexual masculinity and the femininity of bichas is illustrated in a scene from Amarelo Manga in which Dunga encounters the butcher Wellington, for whom he harbors a passion that, as will be explored in the next section, drives much of his narrative arc. Wellington embodies the opposite of Dunga: a virile man with a rough appearance and demeanor, whose suspicion toward Dunga's feminine mannerisms serves as a typical marker of sexual differentiation.

In In this scene, Dunga is in the hotel kitchen when Wellington arrives carrying a large piece of meat slung over his shoulder. He eyes Dunga suspiciously, while Dunga, seemingly anticipating his arrival with some excitement, feigns concern at Wellington's gaze. After the butcher greets him, Dunga asks, "What? Are you looking at me funny?" and instructs him to hang the meat near the sink. Dunga leans against the sink, eyeing Wellington mischievously as he trims the excess fat from the meat. Smiling, Dunga provokes further suspicion from Wellington, who remarks, "You being around, Dunguinha? Any moment now, you might pounce." With a hint of irony and locking eyes with him, Dunga replies, "Oh, but don't be afraid. If you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to fear." After watching the butcher carve the meat for a while, Dunga picks up a box of powder and tosses it at Wellington, who now irritated, snaps: "Goddammit, fuck! Oh, Dunga, for fuck's sake! Why don't you go shake that shit on the whore who had the misfortune of giving birth to you, huh?! Shit! Every damn day, this viado throws this crap on me! Listen here, Dunguinha, one day I'm gonna fuck you. I'll fuck you!" Dunga steps back, wary, and in a lower tone responds, "Of course." After this tense exchange, he shifts the conversation to ask about Dona Kika, Wellington's wife, easing the mood and prompting the butcher to drop his defensive stance.

This scene highlights how relationships with homosexuality—particularly within the complex social contexts of Brazil—are not strictly defined by homophobia but fluctuate between homophobia, varying degrees of tolerance, and even recognition. According to Trevisan (2018), this tolerance shifts across different historical periods and social contexts, often being opportunistic and largely dictated by the extent to which homosexuality is perceived as a threat to social hegemonies. Addressing this paradox, Parker states:

Precisely because the bicha violates traditional expectations about masculinidade in popular culture, s/he is at once rejected and necessary. S/he is subject to violent discrimination, and frequently direct physical violence, especially in the impersonal world of the streets, yet s/he is also accepted as a friend and neighbor, integrated into a network of personal relationships in traditional culture and in highly personalized social relations that in Brazil, as in other parts of Latin America, are described as the classes populares (Parker, 2002, p. 63).

The complexity of these relationships reveals the tensions between the acceptability and rejection of homosexual experience, with the degree of possible assimilation into the heteronormative order often serving as a criterion for tolerance. In this sense, since the potentially threatening nature of homosexuality was identified early on (Mott, 2015), homophobic attitudes continue to prevail, restricting more dissident expressions of gay sexuality. For this reason, it is necessary to move beyond the social normativities that produce homophobic violence toward a perspective that deepens the understanding of the construction of gay subjectivities—an essential step toward overcoming mechanisms of subjugation and fostering a relationship with homosexuality grounded in an ethics of recognition.

Processes of Gay Subjectivation and Subversion

Examining gay experiences through the lens of subjectivity production allows for a more complex understanding of these relationships. This approach not only reveals the ways in which identities are constructed within homophobic dynamics but also creates space to challenge these dynamics and the restrictive processes they impose. According to Parker (2002, pp. 52–53), this happens because:

Sexual experience, and homosexual experience in particular, always take shape (in Brazil as elsewhere) within limits—within a complex field of power and domination, in which the possibilities for transformation, the freedom of movement experienced by individuals or groups, the choices or options opened up by different cultural systems, are simultaneously shaped and molded by relations of force.

It is always within this field that subjectivities are produced, in a complex interplay between subjugation and practices of freedom that emerge from both the repressive and productive logics of power. In this sense, a subject is always shaped both through subordination

to norms and through their subversion, leading to the intricate movement between the reproduction and reinvention of subjectivities (Foucault, 2016).

This dynamic allows for the understanding of gay identities not as fixed constructs but as heterogeneous processes of production. Such a perspective enables a break from rigid frameworks that impose a singular form of expression onto gay experiences, facilitating the questioning of hierarchies through the collective reinvention of power dynamics. What is often imposed as a fixed identity is, in reality, a historically constructed and redefinable category (Eribon, 2004).

The reduction of gay experiences to a singular identity fails to account for the complexity surrounding gay lives and desires, since,

> In reality, male gay desire encompasses a kaleidoscopic range of queer longings—of desires, sensations, pleasures, and emotions—that exceed the boundaries of any singular identity and extend beyond the specificities of gay male existence (Halperin, 2012, pp. 69-70).

This perspective allows for the questioning of many aspects of gay experiences, from expanding the concept of identity—often understood through an individualistic lens, in which each person either conforms to or does not conform to an identity, and is consequently included in or integrates themselves into it—to political dimensions, as it challenges many of the assumptions upheld by hegemonic gay politics. These politics frequently rely on a generic notion of identity to construct a homogeneous political identity, thereby rendering invisible the expressions that do not fit within the group-based model (Halperin, 2012, pp. 69–70).

This complexity disrupts the notion of good gay representations in cinema, as outlined in the introduction of this article. The queer subjectivation of gay experiences creates space—even in cinema—for the portrayal of complex characters who often challenge the very idea of identity and confront the audience with less palatable expressions of gay existence.

This is evident in *Amarelo Manga* through the schemes Dunga devises in his attempt to win over the butcher Wellington. In one scene, Dunga is seen through the window overlooking the kitchen of the Texas Hotel. While cooking, he speaks to himself, occasionally breaking the fourth wall. In this monologue, he plots a way to get Wellington by removing both his wife, Kika, and his mistress, Dayse, from the picture:

Tonight, I'm going to the terreiro! [...] I'm gonna have Kanibal right at midnight. I've already started the spell, and now I'll only stop when that bastard is right here—in my hands. Go ahead, go! Stay there with that clueless Kika and that filthy Dayse, go ahead! [...] Ah, I'm gonna pull the rug out from under both of them. [...] Honey, bicha wants it, bicha gets it. Me, stay quiet? Only when I'm six feet under. Do I look like a woman who doesn't get what she wants? I get it! Look, God forgive me, but I'll do whatever it takes... I'm not joking around. Meanwhile, that other one just goes on with "Jesus is love… salvation"… my ass. And Dayse?! Dayse is nothing but nasty, rubbing thighs… a woman addicted to married men [...] Are you kidding me? Like hell! I'll make it happen [knocks three times on the wooden table]

After the monologue, Dunga is interrupted by Aurora entering the kitchen, asking him when lunch will be ready.

This scene reveals a logic of queer subversion, as Dunga expresses himself in a way that is anything but restrained, directly opposing what might be considered a good representation of a gay character. This allows for the visibility of gay ways of life that break away from the conventional portrayals seen in pre-New Queer Cinema films, which oscillated between well-behaved and comedic models. It becomes evident that the officially accepted gay figure—whether in cinema or everyday life—is challenged in its claim to universality.

With Dunga, *Amarelo Manga*'s filmic discourse challenges the exclusion of other modes of gay expression, allowing for a glimpse into the multiplicity of experiences. It exposes and subverts the logic—often embraced even by gay movements—that gay people are just like everyone else (Halperin, 2012), instead prioritizing a conception that highlights the queer aspects of these experiences. In a context where "no gay man acquires social or erotic status by appearing as a show queen" (Halperin, 2012, p. 95), Dunga's presence, in all its complexity, serves to subvert the boundaries of what is considered acceptable—precisely by provoking a certain discomfort in the audience.

This discomfort, rooted in heteronormative logic, arises primarily from the unifying political focus that gay movements have established at the expense of subverting subjectivities. In this regard, gay liberation movements

sought to make the world safe for lesbians and gays by focusing on the politically acceptable category of gay identity and diverting attention away from the unsettling and potentially discrediting details of gay subjectivity. The goal was to distract heterosexuals from anything about gay culture that might make them uncomfortable, suspicious, or alienated from it and to get them to sympathize with our political demands (therefore, less viscerally disturbing ones) for equal rights, social recognition, and procedural justice (Halperin, 2007, p. 5).

Dunga stands apart from this perspective. By embodying a feminine gay identity, he challenges gender constructs while also subverting the binary between good and bad gay characters, pushing the boundaries of proper gay representation in cinema through his provocative demeanor. This aspect is once again highlighted in another scene: In it, Seu Bianor answers the phone at the hotel reception and calls Dunga, informing him that the call is for him. On the other end of the line is Dayse, asking him to notify the pai de santo of the *terreiro* they both attend that she will not be able to make it that day. Dunga, with a mischievous tone, questions her about the reason for her absence. She reveals that she is meeting with Wellington that day to end their relationship. Dunga then tries to extract the time and location of their meeting. He later uses this information to execute his plan to have Wellington single—writing an anonymous letter to Kika exposing the affair and instructing her to witness the proof of her husband's betrayal by showing up at the exact time and place Dayse had disclosed over the phone.

This is not to suggest that the film's discourse constitutes pure subversion, as, as previously noted, the production of subjectivities always involves a complex interplay between adherence to established norms and their contestation. Subversion always occurs partially, within the power struggles that define subject positions, structured across various hierarchies that shift and distribute both agency and vulnerability (Eribon, 2004).

The subversive nature of Dunga's character is closely tied to how he expresses his gender performativity (Butler, 2008), as it is through this expression that masculinity—central to our culture's value system (Halperin, 2012)—is called into question. Understanding how this subversion operates requires a more nuanced perspective on the expression of femininity within gay subjectivities, moving beyond interpretations that exclusively associate femininity with women.

Rather than merely reproducing stereotypes or simulating womanhood, the feminine gay man embodies a distinct form of femininity. This perspective allows for the inclusion of camp and queer as legitimate modes of expression, challenging homophobic prejudices that simplistically reduce gay femininity to a binary model—one that fails to recognize the existence of feminine expressions in bodies designated as male.

Gay femininity must be understood as a unique phenomenon—one that is, of course, related to femininity as a broader category but which develops its own nuances and articulations within gay experience. Recognizing this distinction disrupts heteronormative logic not only in the broader context of social relations but also within gay sociality itself, which remains deeply permeated by heteronormative structures (Halperin, 2012).

Femininity can manifest as a defining feature of the queer aspect of gay existence, marking a non-standardized gender experience through the presence of feminine traits. When expressed as it is in the case of our character in *Amarelo Manga*, this femininity becomes the most visible—and perhaps, for that very reason, the most powerful—marker of gender dissidence in its intersection with the social construct of sexuality. In this sense, "gay subjectivity will always be shaped by the fundamental need of gay individuals to make heteronormative culture queer" (Halperin, 2012, p. 457).

The confrontation between the queer nature of gay subjectivities and heteronormativity is evident in the film's discourse in a scene where Dunga walks through the streets of the city. He leaves the Texas Hotel and strides with confidence, drawing varied reactions from passersby—likely due to his expressions of femininity. In a later scene, we see the conclusion of his walk as he meets a young boy and hands him an envelope. The boy runs off, while Dunga remains, visibly anxious. The envelope contains the letter meant for Kika, in which Dunga, posing as a friend, exposes Wellington's affair with Dayse.

Dunga's desire leads him to dream of possessing Wellington, positioning himself anonymously in a competition between women, through a femininity that does not equate to the experience of womanhood. His desire allows for a becoming-feminine—an invention of a uniquely gay mode of existence. In this sense, the scene in which he moves through the city serves as a metaphor for his navigation of gender and sexuality, producing what Trevisan (2018), in his discussion of homosexuality, termed an itinerant identity.

This creative way of existing aligns with the flows of freedom that dissident experiences dare to produce—always permeated by other desires. As Foucault (2004, p. 262) argues:

> One of the factors of stabilization will be the creation of new forms of life, of relationships, of friendships within societies—the art, the culture of new forms that emerge through our sexual, ethical, and political choices. We must not only defend ourselves but also assert ourselves, and not merely as identities, but as a creative force.

In this sense, "we must, above all, create a gay way of life. A becoming-gay" (Foucault, 2004, p. 261), as only becoming can establish new relationships with homosexuality—ones that challenge and transcend the rigid ethical framework of homophobic relations. This movement toward recognition is exercised in the filmic discourse of *Amarelo Manga*, supporting the argument that, through engagement with fictional works, it is possible to construct alternative ethical social learnings.

An instructive scene in this regard takes place during the wake of Seu Bianor, whom Dunga found dead in his chair at the hotel reception upon returning from his walk through the city to deliver the letter. In this scene, Dunga speaks with the local priest—a frequent visitor to the hotel for meals—about Seu Bianor's death and the future of the Texas Hotel, expressing his concerns about where he will work next. The following dialogue ensues:

> Dunga: *Father, do you think that for love, one should do anything?*
>
> Padre: *One can. There is no wrongdoing when one loves. Love is above all else..*
>
> Dunga [ironically]: *Even killing?*
>
> Padre [showing surprise]: *I avoid thinking about killing, but it's not an entirely bad idea.*
>
> Dunga: *You really don't exist, do you, man? Damn, what a funny priest!*

Dunga expresses concern over his own actions in the name of his love for Wellington—though, as throughout the film, he never explicitly names him. What makes this scene emblematic is that this reflection occurs in conversation with an unconventional priest. This dialogue challenges the social framework in which we are taught to see a contradiction between what is considered sacred in Judeo-Christian traditions and the experience of homosexuality.

Based on this premise, the homosexual is framed as a threat to dominant sexuality, which is presented as homogeneous, suppressing its inherently heteroclite nature (Hocquenghem, 2009).

In this context, if the direct expression of homosexual desire is to acquire a social meaning, it is evident that it will not be in this society, which is based on the reign of anti-homosexual paranoia (Hocquenghem, 2009, p. 89). Thus, as demonstrated by Dunga and the priest, breaking with social hegemonies is necessary so that homosexual desire may, instead of encountering resistance and denial, find social recognition.

Ethical learning for recognition through cinema

One could argue that the possibilities for recognition of divergent experiences of sex and gender are established in a contested field concerning the social order and its norms. These disputes occur both in the realm of rights (Prado & Machado, 2008) and in the everyday production of subjectivities (Halperin, 2012). In both cases, there is a search for forms of legitimacy and social intelligibility that transcend the limits of established norms, thus configuring a reinvention of the social.

In this process, the dynamics of otherness and identification come into play in the relationships subjects form with each other. These relationships can range from a desire for the annihilation of the other to their recognition as an indispensable part of one's subjective experience of self (Butler, 2004; Hegel, 2014), reinforcing the idea that, with respect to recognition, there is a tension in defining the limits of recognition and its expansion.

This tension can be illustrated by a scene from Amarelo Manga, in which Wellington—who, as previously described, has a tense relationship with Dunga—seeks him out to share recent events in his life, unaware that they were largely caused by Dunga's actions, through the anonymous letter sent to the butcher's wife.

In this scene, Dunga is in the reception area of the Texas Hotel, which is closed due to Seu Bianor's wake, held in the hotel's living room. Dunga is surprised by the appearance of Wellington, knocking on the door, visibly distressed. Dunga asks what happened, and the butcher tells him that Kika had caught him with Dayse. At this moment, Dunga conceals his satisfaction that his plan has worked, feigning surprise. Dunga invites Wellington to sit on the reception sofa and asks for details about what occurred. Managing his anxiety and contentment,

Dunga listens to the story and slowly moves closer to Wellington, placing his hand on his shoulder and later caressing his arm and head. Wellington cries, and Dunga consoles him, pulling him closer to his chest. Dunga invites him to his room, claiming he will prepare sweetened water for him to rest. Wellington looks at Dunga with some suspicion but eventually rises and follows him.

As Dunga and Wellington pass through the room where Seu Bianor's coffin is placed, the butcher asks what's going on, and Dunga calmly informs him of his employer's death. However, Wellington quickly heads for the exit, stating that he won't sleep in the same place as a dead body. Despite Dunga's attempts to stop him and convince him to stay, Wellington curses him, shoves him onto the sofa, and leaves the hotel. Enraged, Dunga returns to the room where Seu Bianor's body lies, shouting towards the corpse, "You see, Seu Bianor? You see? Is this the day to die?".

When seeking Dunga as a trustworthy person to share his experience and seek comfort, it is apparent that Wellington's movement is directed towards a logic of recognition. Despite the differences and divergences between them, these do not erase or prevent the non-denying contact with the other. An intersubjective logic is established between the two characters that transcends the perception of the other as an object or someone of lesser value.

Wellington's ambivalence, instead of representing a refusal of recognition, exposes a characteristic of intersubjective dynamics. This occurs because the contact with otherness and its differences brings a sense of risk to the subjects involved. In this sense, perceiving the other requires a movement of self-awareness, which may even lead to self-questioning. As Butler (2004, pp. 147-148) asserts, "the price of self-consciousness will be self-loss, and the Other presents the possibility both to guarantee and to undermine self-consciousness. What becomes clear, however, is that the self never returns to itself free of the Other, whose 'relationality' becomes constitutive of who the self is".

Hegel (2014), in his discussion of recognition in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, presents two moments of attempted consolidation of recognition. The first is characterized by a life-or-death struggle, where one self-consciousness seeks self-determination through the denial and elimination of the other. However, since recognition only occurs mutually, both self-consciousnesses must remain alive, which renders the life-or-death struggle impotent in achieving recognition.

The master-servant relationship emerges as a potential second moment in the attempt to consolidate recognition. In this dynamic, the master, as self-consciousness, seeks to establish an immediate relationship with himself and a mediated one with the servant, through the servant's instrumentalization. However, by not recognizing the other as self-consciousness but merely as pure objecthood through domination, a contradiction arises in the master's aspiration for recognition, as he is only recognized by a consciousness that he considers insignificant. The paradox of the master is that he gains recognition from a servant whom he deems inconsequential. Thus, from the master's side, recognition does not materialize, as he fails to recognize the servant, being only recognized by him (Hegel, 2014).

Building on Hegel's discussions (2014), it is possible to see how homophobic dynamics are produced both through the desire to eliminate the other and by constructing a hierarchical relation of domination with otherness, akin to the master-servant relationship, thereby rendering recognition unfeasible, as described in Hegel's moments.

Butler (1987, 2004) deepens the discussions initiated by Hegel. Like him, the philosopher argues that self-consciousness contradicts itself in an attempt to explain its ontological difference from the world. This movement triggers the first form of desire—the desire to consume and destroy the other. This leads to a proliferation of objects, culminating in the progression of the life-and-death struggle and the master-servant dialectic.

From the relationships of self-consciousness with otherness, the issue of recognition takes shape and complexity. This is because only in a relationship with the other that does not eliminate or dominate him can the true satisfaction of desire be found. Ultimately, this desire becomes the desire for other desires. According to Butler (1987), it is the trajectory of desire that allows for the affirmation of the ambiguity of self-consciousness. This ambiguity arises both through self-determination and through the ecstatic (ek-static) experience of otherness. With recognition, the initial desire for the affirmation of self-consciousness as pure abstraction is abandoned, making way for a relationship that allows for a singular movement between autonomy and alienation from oneself.

The paradox of recognition, for Butler (1987, 2004), lies in the constitution of a self that is also this relationship with otherness, so that recognition affirms, before closing the experience, its opening—like Wellington's action in seeking Dunga—always pushing subjects

into a relationship of ambiguity with a "self-consciousness that is both ecstatic and self-determined" (Butler, 1987, p. 50).).

It is thus evident that both subjects and social contexts do not return the same with each encounter with otherness. One could then argue, as Butler (2005, p. 28) does, that

> Recognition is an act in which the "return to oneself" becomes impossible. An encounter with another brings about a transformation of the self from which there is no return. What is recognized about a self during this exchange is that the self is the kind of being for which it is impossible to remain within itself.

Probably for this very reason, the recognition of differences is constantly obstructed, given the inherently risky and deterritorializing nature of contact with the other. While in the last scene described, there is an encounter that transcends the logics that prevent recognition, in another scene we observe how the limits of recognition—likely due to its potential to destabilize the idea of oneself—encounter resistance.

In this scene, which takes place shortly after Seu Bianor's death, Dunga goes to Isaac's room. Upon waking up, Isaac grumbles his way to the door and asks Dunga what the call is about. Dunga informs him of Seu Bianor's death, to which the guest responds, "And what do I have to do with that?" Dunga shares that he doesn't know what to do about buying the coffin, as he doesn't know where the boss's money is kept. The following dialogue ensues:

> Isaac: *Go check if the old man didn't keep the money in his dick. Go on, Dunga! Stick your hand in the old man's dick and see if a rabbit comes out of that bush. Or go look for a councilman. Isn't there a councilman around who gives coffins to poor people?"*
>
> Dunga: *You're really a piece of shit, huh, Isaac? Not even helping a dead man!?*
>
> Dunga exits the scene, and Isaac mutters: *You're the piece of shit, you fucking viado,* and curses Dunga for interrupting his sleep.

The appearance of the insult at the end of the scene highlights how Isaac's character refuses to establish a relationship with Dunga based on a logic that transcends the dynamic of the other's inferiority. Through this, we can see how the production of hierarchies can be reactivated, leading us to the need to always articulate the issue of recognition with the political debates that shape the field of human communication and its demands.

Dunga's gesture of seeking Isaac during a moment of difficulty can be seen as an attempt at recognition through a communicative process. In this sense, in order to move beyond the stages of struggle and servitude, it is essential that desire culminates in a practice with the other that allows for the development of recognition as an ongoing process, which can never be understood as something permanently achieved.

What will govern this dynamic are the social conditions through which an individual or group can or cannot be recognized as part of a collective. It is these limits that introduce violence into the ethical sphere, as they serve as a tool for defining the very idea of collectivity (Butler, 2005). Thus, violence, as expressed in the final scene described, is often tied to an anachronism that insists on making itself present.

It is evident that "ethos refuses to become past, and violence is the form through which it imposes itself on the present. Indeed, it not only imposes itself on the present, but also seeks to eclipse the present—and this is precisely one of its violent effects" (Butler, 2005, p. 5). Isaac, bound to the anachronism of homophobic expressions, reactivates through violence the boundaries of collectivity by excluding Dunga—an act of contemporaneity that demands recognition and, consequently, an update of the social conditions for the distribution of recognition.

The heterosexist and homophobic hostility present in our society highlights the urgency of thinking about alternative forms of ethical organization that allow queer resistance practices more space for their processes of subjectivation (Vidarte, 2019). For this to happen, it is essential to break with the hierarchical logic surrounding expressions of desire and to invest more in the construction and affirmation of singularities (Trevisan, 2018). The struggle over the normative markers of what is considered legitimate experience becomes a matter of life and death, as the transformation of these markers makes possible the expansion of the human sphere of intelligibility (Butler, 2005).

Instead of a universalist ethic, which has thus far been configured as heteronormative, extremely exclusionary, and violent, specific ethics are proposed—both in terms of their scope and their capacity for modification in response to the emergence of new processes of difference production. In the specific field of gender and sexuality relations, Paco Vidarte (2019) proposes a *bixa* ethic, which emphasizes the queer potency of the term and the experiences tied to it, as well as the dynamics of violence that must be confronted, when possible, at the intersection

with other social markers of oppression. Regarding this ethic, its necessity, and its dissemination, the author states:

> Perhaps it would be good to have something like an ethic to be taught in schools or learned by those who, like me, grew up learning and internalizing ethics invented by and for heterosexuals. Our value system, our conduct codes, everything we do and think—whether we want to or not—we always measure it according to heteronormative ethical approaches and proposals, originating from such homophobic spheres as the Church, religion, philosophy, school, university, politics, political parties, culture, cinema, and all the moral discourses proclaimed by institutions, which gradually permeate people from a very young age, (Vidarte, 2019, pp. 19-20).

The ethical agency of oppressed experiences would then emerge not through official learning paths but through the gaps in social experiences. Hence, cinema is highlighted by us as an important tool for queer social learning. Another poetics of the self can emerge from this movement. This poetics is linked to the practices of critique that "expose the limits of the historical scheme of things, the epistemological and ontological horizon within which subjects come to be" (Butler, 2005, p. 17).

Through this poetics, the struggles around living conditions can exercise agency, thereby reconfiguring the form of human collectivity. Through critique, the dispute would be redirected towards a logic of recognition, turning struggle not into a means of producing death or servitude, but a way to create spaces always open for communal living with non-violent ethical intentions (Butler, 2005).

Final scene: engagement through queer cinema

From the scenes and discussions undertaken in this article, it is evident how cinema can instruct on the possibilities of recognizing gay experience, its struggles, and victories. In this sense, cinema can help reframe the ethical issues that permeate the social field, calling for its transformation.

This arises from cinema's ability to engage those who come into contact with it. Thinking about engagement in and through cinema highlights how social and political issues, in dialogue with contemporary subjectivities and subalternities, can be brought to the discussion through cinematic discourse when encountering their audiences. Thus, as can be seen in queer

cinema, the tradition of prioritizing aesthetics in film analysis and critique is disrupted (Cesar, 2017), because engaged cinema allows for a deeper critique of the present and a freer imagination for the future.

This cinema has the capacity to affect reality and challenge the social. In this sense, engaged cinema represents a possibility for learning and the reconstruction of the political, as it does not focus solely on aesthetic elements or a limited set of themes, but engages in a fruitful dialogue with contemporary subjectivities and subalternities in their multiplicities. Thus, engaged cinema creates a complex community between the film and its audience, where the film weaves narratives from its technical resources in alignment with the aesthetic and political goals of its editing and distribution. Meanwhile, viewers engage with this collage based on their own conceptions and interpretations of reality, which can, in turn, be altered towards social and political transformation in alignment with the engaged filmic discourse (Lima, 2017).

Affection is essential for cinema to produce a shared experience between the work, the audience, and society, establishing an emotional connection between the film and its spectators (Lima, 2017). In summary, engaged cinema presents itself as a powerful tool for social and political critique, capable of transforming reality and engaging the audience in the creation of a more just and equal future (Cesar, 2017). This transformation can culminate in an ethical recognition of differences, as seen in the scene that inspires us in Amarelo Manga, with which we choose to conclude this article, in order to highlight the desire for a less violent social reality for gender and sexual dissidents.

In the scene, Dunga finds himself in the room where Seu Bianor's body is still lying on the sofa. Dunga cries intensely, and one of the residents of the Texas Hotel offers him a glass of water with sugar, saying that these things are really complicated, referring to the necessary arrangements for the wake and burial of the hotel owner. Dunga gets irritated, saying, "Don't make me more upset than I already am! Oxe!" and leaves for Dona Aurora's room to inform her of her boss's death, stopping briefly before Seu Bianor's body, saying, as he cries, "Oh, Seu Bianor, even in death you're giving me trouble".

In Aurora's room, where she is sitting on her bed, Dunga throws himself at her feet and, crying, tells her what happened. Aurora gets up, lamenting the death, and lights a candle. Dunga shares his anxieties about the necessary arrangements. Aurora mentions the priest, whom Dunga calls crazy and of little use in the moment. The guest then says that it is necessary to buy the

coffin, to which Dunga responds, "With what money am I supposed to buy the coffin?", adding that Seu Bianor had money saved, but he didn't know where it was.

The two characters interacting with Dunga in the scene relate to him through a logic in which the difference of otherness does not prevent a non-violent relationship. Thus, considering the other scenes discussed in this work, and the debates undertaken, it becomes clear how in the conflicts between a process that enables recognition or impedes it, there is a struggle—not the life-or-death struggle of Hegelian scenes—but a struggle for the possibility of existing, without the desire for annihilation of otherness.

This dynamic is what this work sought to highlight, through a progressive path that allowed us to visualize, with the aid of Amarelo Manga's filmic discourse, the processes of homophobic production; the escapes created through gay subjectivation; the struggles for recognition; and the possibilities that queer cinema presents for new ethical learnings. The aim was not to establish cinema as the privileged space for overcoming homophobia or other social oppression logics, but to highlight the potential of this art within these domains. Social learning through cinema has possibilities and limitations that are often difficult to determine exactly, which may explain both its greatest strengths and weaknesses. In this process, many issues remain open, such as those related to the reach of the works in a context where access to cinema is still limited by class issues, as well as the question of who the audience for these works is, in the sense of whether they truly reach people who have not yet been sensitized by the ethical themes at hand. Despite this, as we have outlined in this article, it is still possible, within the field of struggles, to count on cinema as one of the tools for constructing a society based on an ethics of recognition.

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