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NEW WINES INTO THE ANDROGYNOUS BOTTLE: ANGELA CARTER'S DISCOURSE ON ANDROGYNY IN THE PASSION OF NEW EVE AND ORLANDO, OR THE ENIGMA OF THE SEXES

Leandro Batista Stephan
Magister Scientiae

VIÇOSA - MINAS GERAIS
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LEANDRO BATISTA STEPHAN

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Adviser: Natalia Fontes de Oliveira

Co-adviser: Maria do R. Alves Pereira

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Assent:

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Leandro Batista Stephan
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Natalia Fontes de Oliveira
Adviser

For all bubbling wines.
May more bottles explode.

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"I fuck therefore I am."
(Carter, 2001, p. 26).

ABSTRACT

STEPHAN, Leandro Batista, M.Sc., Universidade Federal de Viçosa, October, 2025. **NEW WINES INTO THE ANDROGYNOUS BOTTLE: ANGELA CARTER'S DISCOURSE ON ANDROGYNY IN THE PASSION OF NEW EVE AND ORLANDO, OR THE ENIGMA OF THE SEXES**. Adviser: Natalia Fontes de Oliveira. Co-adviser: Maria do Rosário Alves Pereira.

The concept of androgyny has had many meanings through history, from a Platonic idea of androgynous dual bodies derived from sexual division to Foucault's conceptualization of modern homosexuality. In this dissertation, we argue that Angela Carter proposes a new meaning to this phrase by defining androgyny as a form of relation between individuals that overcomes the inherently oppressive terms of sexualized existences. We analyze Carter's novel The Passion of New Eve and her libretto Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes in order to theorize what we name relational androgyny. In order to do that, we use an archeological method, based on Foucault's The Archeology of Knowledge, and we develop analyses of Carter's essay The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography. We argue that, by introducing the relational factor into the discussion of androgyny, Angela Carter disrupts the concept of androgyny itself. That is to say, that by adding a new wine to an old bottle, she causes the bottle to explode.

Keywords: androgyny; Angela Carter; queer theory; English literature

RESUMO

STEPHAN, Leandro Batista, M.Sc., Universidade Federal de Viçosa, outubro de 2025. **NOVOS VINHOS NA GARRAFA DA ANDROGINIA: O DISCURSO SOBRE O ANDRÓGINO EM A PAIXÃO DA NOVA EVA E ORLANDO, OR THE ENIGMA OF THE SEXES, DE ANGELA CARTER**. Orientadora: Natalia Fontes de Oliveira. Coorientadora: Maria do Rosário Alves Pereira.

O conceito de androginia teve muitos significados através da história, desde uma ideia platônica de corpos duais andróginos derivados da divisão sexual até a conceituação foucaultiana de homossexualidade moderna. Nesta dissertação, defendemos que Angela Carter propõe um novo significado para esse sintagma ao definir a androginia como uma forma de relação entre indivíduos que supera os termos necessariamente opressivos das existências sexuadas. Analisamos o romance de Carter *A Paixão da Nova Eva* e seu libreto *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes* de modo a teorizar o que chamamos de androginia relacional. Usamos uma metodologia arqueológica baseada em *A Arqueologia do Saber* de Foucault e desenvolvemos análises acerca do ensaio de Carter *A Mulher de Sade e a Ideologia da Pornografia*. Argumentamos que, ao introduzir o fator relacional à discussão acerca da androginia, Angela Carter desmonta a própria ideia de androginia; isto é, ao adicionar um vinho novo a uma garrafa velha, ela leva a garrafa a explodir.

Palavras-chave: androginia; Angela Carter; teoria queer; literatura inglesa

SUMMARY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Angela Carter (1940-1992) was a British author who wrote throughout the second half of the twentieth century. She is mostly recognized for her rewritings of classic fairy tales, especially those in her anthology named *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). Beyond her narrative work, Carter wrote several dramatic texts. She published plays for radio and stage and also scripts for movies and television. Although she has only written two unfinished plays for the stage – *Lulu* (1988) and *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes* (1979) –, Carter was the writer of five radio plays which were broadcasted between 1976 and 1984: *Vampirella* (1976), *Come unto These Yellow Sands* (1979), *The Company of Wolves* (1980), *Puss in Boots* (1982), and *A Self-Made Man* (1983). Furthermore, her movie scripts include *The Company of Wolves* (1984), written for the screen, and *The Magic Toyshop* (1988), written for television. Moreover, she developed two movie projects that were never produced: *Gun for the Devil* (1987) and *The Christchurch Murder* (1988). All these writings were organized by Mark Bell in the book *The Curious Room* (1997), which was the first time Carter's dramatic work was officially published, including her unfinished projects.

Carter has frequently worked with themes of gender and sexuality in her writings. In a study done on the works of Marquis de Sade, she proposes two possible forms of feminine existence in the patriarchy. The first is Justine, the holy virgin, devoid of the possibility of sexual pleasure and thus constantly raped. The second is Juliette, who turns herself into an oppressive figure and utilizes her sexuality as a form of terrorism and yet lives under a system based on the unbalance of the sexes. Against this duality, Carter proposes true love and reciprocal desire as the utmost form of subversion. This true love, as we will argue, is related to a possibility of balance and pleasure for everyone involved in a sexual relationship, so that a woman and leave her idealized space of a merely open hole and finally come (alive).

This dissertation analyzes Carter's novel *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and her opera libretto *Orlando, or the Enigma of The Sexes* (1979). The novel depicts the character Evelynn who is forcefully turned into a woman and has to overcome both binary existences. The libretto follows Orlando, a character that lives as both man

and woman throughout several centuries. In her version of the story, Carter extrapolates Woolf's discussions concerning gender, as the concept of an androgynous mind was too aristocratic for her own Marxist view of the world and of politics. The hypothesis is that this view leads Carter into a comprehension of androgyny as a system of building relations between subjects rather than an identitary mode of existence.

The objective of this work is to analyze *The Passion of New Eve* and *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes* in order to comprehend *how* androgyny is present in the texts, basing ourselves on Foucault's archeological methodology developed on *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972). Firstly, we will demonstrate how Carter understands androgyny as a relational system using her theory on reciprocal desire presented in *The Sadeian Woman* (1978) and *The Passion of New Eve*. Secondly, we will summarize the ways in which Woolf writes about androgyny in both *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own* and, especially, how Carter read Woolf's novel. This analysis will serve as a tool to help us further comprehend Carter's libretto *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes* as a critic to Woolf's conceptions. In order to do that, we must understand *androgyny in Angela Carter* as a discursive system as stated by Foucault, that is, as a group of discourses which is not whole, but really derived from a specific choice of corpus that contains within itself similitudes that may be posited as an object of analysis.

In the words of Michel Foucault, "because statements are rare, they are collected in unifying totalities, and the meanings to be found in them are multiplied" (1972, p. 120), in such a way that the aim of our work is to "reveal a well-determined set of discursive formations that have a number of describable relations between them" (ibid., p. 156). That means that it is necessary to restrict a system of statements to some chosen parameters in order to analyze their individualities.

In the case of this dissertation, we have set our analysis on Angela Carter's creative works which might englobe the theme of androgyny, although, as it will be made clear through the text, we have come to the conclusion that *The Passion of New Eve* works on the idea of hermaphroditism rather than on androgyny. That difference will come from the idea that the narrative is deeply centered in a bodily existence rather than in some form of higher psychology. Also, we defend that *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes* posits explicit criticism to Woolf's theory of the androgynous mind, as Carter believed it to be too much of a bourgeois idea. In this

way, we will analyze how androgyny is built in each of these texts in order to identify "what special place it occupies, what ramifications of the system of formations make it possible to map its localization, how it is isolated in the general dispersion of statements" (ibid., p. 119).

The restriction of analyzed discourses to *The Passion of New Eve* and *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes* prescribes the exclusion of a series of other texts that might surround the theme of androgyny in Angela Carter's creative work. However, the novel and the libretto are the texts in which our theme of analysis is most explicit, and the reduction of our corpus to them is not conflictive with Foucault's theory in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, as the author states that the aim is "to describe a group of statements not as the closed, plethoric totality of a meaning, but as an incomplete, fragmented figure" (ibid., p. 125). Despite this reduced *corpus*, the history of the theme of androgyny itself is necessarily manifested in the analyzed discourses:

> Every statement involves a field of antecedent elements in relation to which it is situated, but which it is able to reorganize and redistribute according to new relations. It constitutes its own past, defines, in what precedes it, its own filiation, redefines what makes it possible or necessary, excludes what cannot be compatible with it. And it poses this enunciative past as an acquired truth, as an event that has occurred, as a form that can be modified, as material to be transformed, or as an object that can be spoken about. (ibid., p. 124)

This dissertation is first composed of an introduction, in which we will present the object, objectives, theoretical support and methodology of our research. Then, there are three chapters. In the first chapter, we will present a brief epistemological analysis of gender through bibliographic review, in order to outline a brief history of feminism and queer studies. In the second chapter, we will present Angela Carter and her work, giving special emphasis to two of her texts: the essay *The Sadeian Woman* and the novel *The Passion of New Eve*. In the former, the author will develop arguments on what concerns pornographic representations based on the works of Marquis de Sade, alongside her proposition that reciprocal desire is vital to subvert the patriarchic system. In the latter, Carter formulates the concept that there are no androgynous being, but rather androgyny exists as a form of reciprocal encounter between subjects, concept which we are calling *relational androgyny*.

In the third chapter, we will work with theories concerning androgynous

literature and understanding this phrase as a form of discourse. First, we present the idea of androgyny as orchestrated by Virginia Woolf in both *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own*. Next, we question some of the critiques made to the Woolfian essay as we understand the androgyny she works with as an existentialist paradigm. The goal of this analysis is not to propose a complex study of Woolf's works, but rather to set the basic paradigms against which Carter will position herself so that we may better comprehend Carter's libretto. Finally, we move onto the analysis of *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*, in order to discuss how the androgynous is present in Carter's libretto making use of the analyses which will have been presented thus far. When rewriting Woolf's novel, Carter subverts the author's original symbols and recreates the book's plot under a different perspective.

We demonstrate that, by creating an Orlando that does not write at all, Carter disconnects her libretto from Woolf's central argument. In fact, she sets her plot on the different ways gender roles affect one's life and even argues that the novel's discussions were too aristocratic and that the critiques Woolf made to male authors could be also applied to her. In doing that, Carter reminds us that she is "all for putting new wine into old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode" (Carter, 1998, p. 37). This quote is fundamentally what Carter does to the theme of androgyny and the reason why we have selected it as our title: by conceptualizing androgyny as a mode of relation, Carter puts a new perspective into an old phrase and explodes the identitary idea it commonly posits.

Thus, this research is relevant to the studies of Carter's works, which have been gaining more space in the academic world in the past few years. It is also helpful to the field of androgyny within the literary studies. Furthermore, Angela Carter's dramatic works are not frequently analyzed, even though they represent a big part of her production, especially between the decades of 1970 and 1980. In our research, we have only found two articles which have as their theme Carter's libretto: Hermione Lee's: *'A Room of One's Own, or a Bloody Chamber?' Angela Carter and Political Correctness*, (1994), and Maria de Deus Duarte's *"What a wonderful piece of work is a woman!": Orlando and The Enigma of the Sexes*, (2014). This lack of intellectual production around the libretto serves to argue for the importance of this dissertation and the possibilities of analysis it opens to both Carter's dramatic works and epistemological discussions around androgynous literature.

CHAPTER 2

FROM FEMINISM ONTO QUEER STUDIES

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 1953, p. 273). This formulation belongs to Simone de Beauvoir and it was first published in 1949. Its importance is related to it being a standpoint for a movement within feminism[1] towards an existential comprehension that concepts such as "man" and "woman" are derived from a historical and cultural process. This idea replaced the previous essentialist affirmations that believed the sexes to be eternal and unchangeable ontologies. Therefore, "man" and "woman", as we understand such phrases today, derive from history.

The distancing of womanhood to some form of natural manifestation had become vital to the feminist movement, as it was responsible for historicizing a system of oppression which had been naturalized. That is to say, if women are naturally so, then the oppression of one sex over the other might be just as natural, and there is, therefore, no hope for change. However, if womanhood itself is socially constructed, then there is nothing of natural in the concept of male superiority, then it may be subsided.

Breaking the idea that there would be any sort of ontology that defined womanhood, the existentialist principles defended that the feminine gender would be, in fact, built as an effect of cultures and values. Furthermore, according to Hollanda (2019, p. 13), "man" and "woman" are class categories, fundamentally related to politics and economy. The idea of a relation between sex[2] and class, which marked the Marxist feminism, is frequently used by Carter in her views on masculinity and femininity.

The idea that women have always been the oppressed groups arrives at contemporary thought through history. Patriarchy – which can be understood as a mode of political, ideological and economic organization based upon the submission

[1] We understand feminism as field of encounters between politics and the feminine, being the latter also a historical construction. According to Moreira (2022), feminism postulates new ways of interpreting the subjects, the sexualities and the modes of relations between individuals. In *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler also affirms that feminism has always been related to a political fight against patriarchic structures, and that in the twenty-first century it has moved past identity ideals of a fight for and by women into a political need to disrupt patriarchal norms of existence for all.

[2] For this dissertation, we will consider the terms "sex" and "gender" as identical and interchangeable, according to Butler's theories on *Gender Trouble* (1990/2006), in which she affirms that the idea of a division between an anatomical sex and gender as the way society reads such anatomy is but an effect of the systems of power that elaborate the concepts of gender themselves.

of femininized bodies to the male power – creates as one of its effects the notion of natural masculine superiority and the idea that power has always belonged to men. In a problematization of such belief, Lerner (1986) demonstrates how such system arises between the Mesopotamic and Babylonian societies, thus proving that it is not a natural occurrence, but a historically localized social construct.

Furthermore, what came to be known as Marxist feminism postulated that "man" and "woman" are not only historically built concepts, but are also responsible for postulating a division of classes in which men would occupy the position of power leaving the submissive role to women. This idea will deeply mark Angela Carter's writing, especially her understanding of pornographic depictions as discourses responsible for sustaining an idea of men as subjects who desire and women as objects who are desired, as we will demonstrate in the second chapter.

Within patriarchy, there is the consolidation of a gender binarity based on mutual exclusion. That means that there is an idea of subjective coherence based on norms of gender that presuppose the suppression of ambiguities and of characteristics related to the opposite sex; that is to say that "the idea of masculinity rests on the necessary repression of feminine aspects-of the subject's potential for bisexuality-and introduces conflict into the opposition of masculine and feminine" (Scott, 1986, p. 1063). Thus, in order to sustain the patriarchic system, it is necessary to maintain binary concepts of subjectivations that derive from a heteronormative order of sexual difference.

In *The History of Sexuality,* Foucault develops the idea that this bisexual logic is an effect of what he calls "disciplinary power". This mode of conceptualizing sex and sexuality would have risen in the amidst of the eighteenth century, through the overcoming of a sovereign power.[3] Up until the eighteenth century, there would have been a necropolitical power in which the image of the man is understood as superior based on its capacity of taking life. Then, sexual designation was much more connected to a social role than to an anatomy. It is important to highlight, nonetheless, that, as presented by Preciado in *Testo Junkie* (2008/2013), that did not mean that there was no difference between masculine and feminine, but that these

[3] In *Discipline and Punish* (1975/1995), Foucault argues that, up until about the half of the eighteenth century, society lived under what he calls "sovereign power", which means that the power was more directly connected to the figure of a person, such as a king, and that the punishment was much more explicit and over the body. The "disciplinary power" becomes much less external and much more internalized and develops itself constantly within every social stratum, in what he calls a microphysical power.

differences were not determinant to the processes of subjectivation.

During the eighteenth century, the disciplinary power would arise and, with it, a bisexual logic sustained by an anatomical differentiation of the sexes. The feminine sex, which used to be seen as an inversion of the masculine sex – the ovaries were thought of as internal testicles and the vagina as an inverted penis –, is henceforth seen as the different and opposite sex in relation to the masculine basis. Preciado (2013, p. 148) shows that, in 1767, a surgeon named John Hunter associated the testicles (a somatic element) to masculinity for the first time. This anatomical differentiation becomes a symbol to justify a sexual hierarchy, in such a way that the political power turns directly to the body. That is what Foucault calls “biopolitics”. It is therefore clear that the idea of “woman” derives from a historical process and that, since the ascension of the named “disciplinary power”, is connect to an opposite, different and submissive being in relation to the “man”.

Similarly, part of the lesbian feminism states that one of the jobs of the feminist fight should be related to the disintegration of the idea of “woman” itself. In stating that lesbians are not women, Wittig (1992/2022) demonstrates how the lesbian existence subverts a system that demands women to exist in (an inferior) relation to men. However, if a sex cannot exist without the other, but is created through an unbalanced relation of power, and if lesbians exist in relation to other women and not to men, then there must be a flaw to such system.

What follows is a new problem to the idea of women that had been proposed by the feminist movement up to that point. The category “woman” was not only a historically created class, but also an effect of the system of power it had set itself to destroy. That means that the proposition of this identity[4] was still submitted to the patriarchic system and should be problematized, in such a way that “feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of ‘women,’ the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought” (Butler, 2006, p. 54).

The next principle to be questioned is the idea of heterosexuality as a political system that depends upon an oppressive relation between sexes. Adrienne Rich (1980/2003) demonstrated how vital it is to “encourage heterosexual feminists to

[4] The idea of identity as processes of individual subjective constructions must also be problematized, given that what really exists are “identity categories that are in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin” (Butler, 2006, p. xxxi) rather than stable modes of identitary existence.

examine heterosexuality as a political institution which disempowers women" (p. 11). Beyond the identitary matter, heterosexuality must be analyzed from the ways social power restricts female liberty and submits it to its potential as an object of masculine desire.

On the theme of representation, Rich demonstrates how women are depicted – in both literature and pornography – as sexual preys. Thus, heterosexuality establishes a social way of thinking that affirms that men naturally have more sexual appetite than women and that, because of that, depictions and actions which should be seen as abusive (or as rapes) are merely portrayed as consequences of a naturally binary sexuality. Therefore, women in this system, notedly in economic disadvantage, "endure sexual harassment to keep their jobs and learn to behave in a complaisantly and ingratiatingly heterosexual manner because they discover this is their true qualification for employment, whatever the job description" (ibid., p. 21). Carter will agree with that argument in her essay *The Sadeian Woman* as we will present in the following chapter.

Around these discussions, what is known as "queer theory"[5] is formalized during the nineties, especially after the publication of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* in 1990. In spite of the historical mark of Butler's text, the ideas that compose queer theory had already emerged prior to it, in texts such as those by Teresa de Lauretis. The most important point to comprehend is the epistemological shift that marks queer thinking: the focus is brought onto the instability and the incoherence of systems of gender, sexuality, and desire, proposing an understanding of them beyond fixated parameters of normality and tensioning these concepts that were already being criticized by feminism. Henceforth, the studies start to emphasize how apparently stable and ontological concepts really derive from ideological parameters and should be destabilized. According to Pelúcio (2014, p. 33), queer as critical thinking does not propose to question the subjects which incarnate "identities", but the social and cultural order that prescribes certain identities as acceptable and others as pathological.

Similarly, Teresa de Lauretis argues that the idea of sexual difference creates

[5] The phrase "queer" acquires its relation to homosexuality during Oscar Wilde's trials at the end of the nineteenth century. Originally, it had an undermining and homophobic tone to it, but that was subverted by the queer community, who now uses it as a symbol of pride. The term "queer theory" was first used by Teresa de Lauretis in 1991 in reference to the book *How do I look? Queer film and video* (Berutti, 2010, p. 30).

a notion of man as universal parameter alongside an archetypical woman that would contain all women, reducing any individuality – or separation of race, class, and sexuality – to a same paradigm. Thus, according to Lauretis, gender would not exist on an individual level, but would be rather "the representation of each individual in terms of a particular social relation which pre-exists the individual and is predicated on the conceptual and rigid (structural) opposition of two biological sexes" (Lauretis, 1987, p. 5). Lauretis is defining through this quote a conceptual structure named "sex-gender system".

In developing her argument, Lauretis affirms that the sex-gender system extrapolates sociocultural terms and connects them to a semiotic factor. That is to say that gender is "*the product and the process of both representation and self-representation*" (ibid., p. 9), in such a way that the predilections of the system echo in and define the ways through which subjects may represent themselves and others in a process of interpellation, that is, "the process whereby a social representation is accepted and absorbed by an individual as her (or his) own representation, and so becomes, for that individual, real, even though it is in fact imaginary" (ibid., p. 12). This helps demonstrating that, although gender is understood at an individual level as a mode of existence, it is in fact nothing but the effects of a system that precedes the subjects acting upon them.

In her works, Judith Butler develops the theory of gender performativity, which breaks the essentialist idea of pre-discursive identities by stating that performativity "must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act,' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects it names" (Butler, 1993, p. 2). According to the theories of performativity, gender should be understood as a construct derived of a series of acts that, through repetition, reaffirm themselves perpetually, thus systematizing sexual differences, building principles of gender identities and prescribing abject existences: "as a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences. Discreet genders are part of what 'humanizes' individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished" (id., 1988, p. 522).

Butler nonetheless emphasizes that these performatives acts must not be understood as deliberate choices made by the subjects, but as the effects of a system of power acting over them. The author argues, in fact, that they are systems based on punishment where the subjects see themselves obliged to follow

determined norms of behavior in order to avoid social abjection: “the materialization of a given sex will centrally concern *the regulation of identificatory practices* such that the identification with the abjection of sex will be persistently disavowed” (id., 1993, p. 3). Therefore, femininity is

> not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment. Indeed, there is no “one” who takes on a gender norm. On the contrary, this citation of the gender norm is necessary in order to qualify as “one” […], where subject-formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms (ibid., p. 232).

In summary, what these affirmations provide is the understanding of a system of power that, through the repetition of its own effects, creates an imaginary origin of itself that is used to justify such effects. The identity that would derive from some imagined psychological level and simply manifest itself in terms of gender is actually nothing but the effects of the sex-gender system upon the subject’s understanding of self. There is, thus, no merely cognitive gendered existence, but rather every manifestation of gender happens from and on performative expressions. That is to say that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its result” (id., 2006, p. 34).

This system of gendering power echoes the theory Foucault presents in *Microphysics of Power.* The author states that power is not placed on an entity that *has* it, but, in fact, it is spread capillary in the whole of the social existence and constantly recreates itself through the social repetition of its own paradigms. Foucault’s emphasis was not in subjects who could in some way withhold power, but in the ways this power reaches individual levels, subjects’ bodies, discourses, and daily lives. Gendering norms are a great example for this microphysical power, since there is no specific entity that defines these norms – although there are institutions that help reinforce them – and they reach the individual level of human existence nevertheless.

When thinking of Butler’s aforementioned theory that inadequate performativities may lead to violence, it is also possible to highlight Foucault’s argument that, even though there is no subject that withholds power, it is clearly visible that there are those who do not have it. Thus, it is possible to think of what

Foucault names discipline and examination: while the first refers to a constant vigilance upon the subjects that prescribes people who are never truly free, the latter emphasizes how to regulate and classify subjects in order to make the best use of them in terms of maintaining the order. Through discipline and examination, individuality is reduced to a viable instrument for the power.

If performativity is a demanded repetition of acts that builds a false ontological identity, then it is clear that discipline has effects on every level of development of performative acts and examination demands the repetition of the same acts it presupposes through the creation of a fear of abjection. Therefore, this power is not only repressive, that is, it is not only responsible for the exclusion of acts as transgressive or of identities as abject. In fact, power is responsible for creating the imaginary heterosexist ontology that prescribes relations of gender and sexual difference: power is not only restricting; it is, by definition, creative.

Thus, it is possible to come to the conclusion that the theory of gender performativity demonstrates that sex itself is a fictious construction elaborated by a patriarchic and heterosexist system of power that prescribes a series of acts that must be performed by the subjects in order for them to escape an abjection as fictionally created as the system itself. The repetition of these acts builds and imaginary ontology that serves to justify hegemonic precepts through its own development. That is to say that

> identifying with a gender under contemporary regimes of power involves identifying with a set of norms that are and are not realizable, and whose power and status precede the identifications by which they are insistently approximated. This “being a man” and “being a woman” are internally unstable affairs (id., 1993, p. 120).

In 2008, Preciado publishes *Testo junkie: sex, drugs and biopolitics in the pharmacopornographic era*. In a dialogue with the aforementioned writings by Foucault and Butler, the Spanish author will argue that, in his conceptualization of sovereign and disciplinary powers, Foucault ignored significant changes to the elaborations of gender and sexuality that took place around the middle of the twentieth century.

According to Preciado, the rising of contraceptive methods, of political revindications of women and queer people, and of innovations in the study of hormones marked the decay of the eighteenth-century epistemology. Therefore, we

would no longer be the “post-Victorians” Foucault thought we were, but we would live in what Preciado named a “pharmacopornographic era”, marked by the use of hormones, the development of contraceptive pills, and the existence *biodrag* subjects.

The author argues that the use of hormones – developed between the decades of 1940 and 1950 – marks a fundamental change in the understanding of sex: transsexuality becomes no longer a system of “theatrical imitation”, but an effectively somatic matter. That means that, when it is made possible for trans people to change their bodies in a biochemical level and come closer to a biological idea of sexual binarism, it becomes possible to alter what is deemed natural. Furthermore, if facial hair and low voices derived from testosterone imply a possibility of being socially recognized as a man, the meaning of “man” is even furtherly destabilized, as it is detached from nature and systematized solely as a phenotype.

The contraceptive pills are used by the author to expand Butler’s theory of performativity and establish what he will name *biodrag*. Preciado shows how the creation of these pills was followed by a biological process that caused women not to menstruate – which, due to symbolically representing a distancing to the biologically conceptualized idea of womanhood, led into the development of pills that maintained the blood flow “as it should be”. The philosopher argues that this need to support a biological femininity on the bodies of cis women demonstrates how gender in the pharmacopornographic era is directly associated to a soma and to biochemical behaviors “that can create physical formations that become integrated with vaster political organisms such as our medical-legal institutions, the nation-states, or global networks through which capital circulates” (Preciado, 2013, p. 191).

Thus, trans women’s vaginoplasties would not be different from cis women’s siliconized breasts, as both would be applications of social concepts of femininity directly onto the body: somato-political processes that transform biological life itself, no longer serving only as a performative mask. Therefore, what Preciado names *biodrag* is precisely this “pharmacopornographic production of somatic fictions of femininity and masculinity” (ibid., p. 191).

The beginning of the twenty-first century marks yet another change in regards to the sex systems: the development of the Viagra and the penile reconstruction – beyond the failed attempts of inserting penises into transmasculine bodies – mark the possibility of creation of masculinity. There is, thus, a fundamental change to the

paradigms of heterosexuality: if up until the middle of the twentieth century sexual politics were associated to reproduction, to the control of population and to the power over the female body, the pharmacopornographic era creates as its heterosexual symbols a woman who is rather

> the techno-Barbie, remaining eternally young and supersexualized, almost entirely infertile and nonmenstruating but always ready for artificial insemination and accompanied by the sterile supermacho whose erections are technically produced by a combination of Viagra and audiovisual pornographic codes emitted through computerized digital channels (ibid., p. 220).

Given that, Preciado (2011) develops the idea of "queer multitudes", a principle of non-identitary political action. Queer multitudes would be proposed as an opposition to the so-called "straight bodies" – corporal constructions derived from a capitalist and heterosexist way of thinking in which the body is presented and given its existence through the functioning of its parts. After all, part of the heterosexual project involves the suppression of somatic sexuality to erogenous areas – namely, the vagina, the penis, and the female breasts.

The philosopher proposes that these bodies rearticulate and reappropriate the systems of knowledge and power so that they are no longer seen as abject identities and systemic effects, but rather as political potencies for action and change. Breaking the duality that orchestrates men and women in a relation of classes, queer bodies do not occupy a third paradigm, but rather demonstrate how there are many differences beyond the binaries derived from the sex-gender system. This leads into a rupture of ontological identity ideals, in such a way that there would no longer be any natural basis of women or men to lead political action, but a new sexual multitude that emerges as possible subjects of political action.

This brief historical analysis demonstrates how the idea of womanhood has stopped being understood as a natural factor and is rather seen as the effect of a system of powers that determinates its oppression as its own fundamental basis. However, in the last years, there has been the irruption of studies that long to deconstruct the idea of "woman" itself and propose new queer bodies that may be seen not as identities, but rather as forces of political action in the struggle against patriarchy and heterosexuality as a political system.

In the literary analysis field, there was, especially in the last hundred years,

strong movements to consolidate feminist literary criticisms. In 1929, Virginia Woolf publishes her essay *A Room of One's Own*, in which she argues that the intellectual, literary, and academic fields have always been closed to women. According to the author, there is a direct connection between fiction writing and material elements – money, health, housing. Furthermore, fiction expresses a social way of thinking which is, by definition, male. Thus, due to having been impeded of having a personal life beyond their living room and having been doomed to experience of motherhood, women have never been authorized to write and, consequently, there is no feminine literary inheritance.

Throughout the last hundred years, feminist literary criticism developed many theories. Some examples are Luce Irigaray's theory that women are always understood as a lack and, therefore, their literature is always gapped, as stated in *Spéculum de l'autre femme* (1974); the idea of écriture feminine, developed by Hélène Cixous in *La Rire de la Méduse* (1975), which argued for a specific trait of feminine writing bases on what is not explicitly manifested in the text; and Gilber and Gulbar's theory in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) of a dubious feminine language that combined an explicit expression and an implicit narrative. All these theories, nevertheless, argued for some kind of common principle to all women, which has already been problematized as aforementioned.

In opposition, Mary Ellmann argues that there is no reason for a sexual division of literary works: in contemporary reality, the author does not see a distinction between active masculinity and passive femininity that demands texts to be studied from a sexed perspective. Ellmann emphatically affirms that "sexuality is *not* visible at the level of sentence construction or rhetorical strategies" (Moi, 2002, p. 39).

Similarly, Myra Jehlen worries that the theory of specific traits to feminine writing could lead back into a biologizing of women. That means that "the feminist struggle must both try to undo the patriarchal strategy that makes 'femininity' intrinsic to biological femaleness, and at the same time insist on defending women precisely *as* women" (ibid., p. 81), given that they are oppressed for this femaleness imposed upon them. Thus, Jehlen argues that feminist criticism must focus on political paradigms that long to open up space for a feminine discourse in a hegemonically masculine world and not on identitary or methodological precepts.

Within the French feminist criticism, Julia Kristeva also opposes herself to the

idea of écriture feminine, stating that there is nothing specific in the literature made by women that would allow for such determining analyses. According to the author, what exists are marginalized languages, so that it is more important to break down the Saussurean paradigm which defines language as a monolithic system and begin understanding it as a signifying process in which each subject of the discourse exists and expresses oneself from specific combinations of contexts. Therefore,

> To posit all women as necessarily feminine and all men as necessarily masculine is precisely the move that enables the patriarchal powers to define, not femininity, but all *women* as marginal to the symbolic order and to society. If, as Cixous and Irigaray have shown, femininity is defined as lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos, darkness – in short, as non-Being – Kristeva's emphasis on marginality allows us to view this repression of the feminine in terms of *positionality* rather than of essences. What is perceived as marginal in any given time depends on the position one occupies (ibid., p. 165).

It is, therefore, clear that what begins as a construction of a specific literary ends up falling apart as there is not – and there should not be – a way to discriminate some type of feminine writing. In this line, it is possible to bring queer theory back to the discussion, as it has recently grown in sociological, anthropological, and philosophical analyses. However, one may ask: how can we apply it to literary analysis? As presented by Nodari (2019, p. 32) and according to Derrida and other poststructuralists, there is no final meaning to a text, in such a way that the literary canon is open to a process of queering, that is, to queer reading, to queer as a methodology of literary analysis.[6] It is important to notice that queer as a method for literary analysis does not look for a queer author or character. Rather, its focus is on the work itself, in such a way that queer reading is related to defying the supposition that there would exist stable sexual identities.

From this understanding, the author proposes three aspects of queer literary analyses according to André Martines (2018, p. 57-58). The first would be related to the narrators and the positions they take in relation to the dissident subjectivities in the text. The second concerns whether to these subjectivities it is given voice or not.

[6] It is important to highlight that Nodari was not the first to propose queer literary analysis in Brazil. In 2010, Berutti had proposed that seemingly heterosexual works could be analyzed through queer lenses: as heterosexuality is not an identitary paradigm but rather a political construction, relationships between a cis man and a cis woman may also be subversive. However, while Berutti focuses her text on analyses of mostly transsexual north-American works, Nodari focuses on the conceptualization of queer literature as a method for literary analysis. Due to that different emphasis, we have chosen to highlight Nodari's work in this dissertation, though we recognize Berutti's relevance and innovation to the queer literary studies in Brazil.

The third – which we believe to be specifically important in analyses of Angela Carter's works – studies the ways affirmations and systems of knowledge-power regarding gender, sexuality, and bodies appear in the fictional discourse, whether reaffirming conservative structures or deconstructing them.

These (de)constructions are our main focus of analysis within Carter's works, whether concerning forcedly transsexual subjectivation in *The Passion of New Eve* to critics of the aristocratic aspects of theories of androgyny in *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*. Throughout our analyses, we bring back concepts introduced in this chapter and we utilize them in order to discuss how the strategies of gender and power are formulated, destroyed, and reconstructed in the texts we analyze.

CHAPTER 3

THE SADEIAN WOMAN AND RELATIONAL ANDROGYNY IN *THE PASSION OF NEW EVE*

In this chapter, we present a review of Angela Carter's life and work. In the first part, we focus on her essay *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography*, in which she sets her theories on sexual difference and relations based on the works of Marquis de Sade. In the second part, we analyze her novel *The Passion of New Eve* in order to understand how the theories in her essay are fictionalized. In this analysis, we also develop the concept of *relational androgyny* as a form of relation between individuals that is able to surpass the oppressive nature of sexual division.

3.1 If only the Sadeian woman could come

Angela Carter stated that "a narrative is an argument stated in fictional terms" (Carter, 1997, p. 497). Highly influenced by the surrealistic movement and a self-declared defender of controversy, sexuality, and pornographic revolutions, Carter's works debated topics such as the existence of women in a patriarchal society as a desiring being and as the power of sexuality as a microcosm for a reality divided between sexes. Her writings were very versatile: *The Company of Wolves* is an example of the adaptation of a fairy tale into a horror-feminist aesthetic in which little red riding hood slept with the big bad wolf because she wanted to; *The Unicorn* is a poetic piece that argues on the strength of the *vagina dentata* against the phallic unicorn's horn; *The Sadeian Woman* is a theoretical essay on the ideology of pornography; and *Come unto These Yellow Sands* is a radio play on the life of a historical parricide.

Although Carter is mostly known for her narrative work and her short-stories in *The Bloody Chamber*, she has also worked with poetry and drama. *The Curious Room*[7] complies her dramatic works, which ranges from the script of the classic

[7] The title *The Curious Room* was used by Carter in a short-story named *Alice in Prague or The Curious Room*, which was included in her anthology *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*, published in 1993. This "curious room" referred to a place where feminine automatons were produced for the pleasure of an archduke. Beyond the argument of femininity as a construct for male pleasure, the author also presents a world in which, similarly to the paradigms stated by Foucault in *Untying the Text*, reality is built through language. Alice's name also echoes the principle of identitary fluidity, as it refers to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*" (the character's name was used yet again

werewolf film *The Company of* Wolves and her television movie *The Magic Toyshop* to her polemic and only play written for theater *Lulu*, and, of course, her only opera libretto *Orlando, or the Enigma of the* Sexes.

The first twenty years of Angela Carter's life were quite turbulent: she grew up alongside a very conservative mother, who repudiated her constant use of improper words. She dropped out of Oxford University in 1958 under the belief that only marriage could save her from a family she despised (which led her to marry Paul Carter, from whom she takes her artistic last name). Carter was then forced to become a journalist by her father – career with which she worked up until 1983, and that, according to Menino (2021, p. 23), was connected to her flourishing as both a feminist and a writer of texts about plays, books, and films. Nevertheless, it was in Oxford where she had contact with the poetry of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, which, afterwards, she affirmed having been her first influences to become a writer.

In 1962, Carter goes back to college, studying at the University of Bristol this time. In the department of Philosophy, she came in contact with works by Descartes, Hume, and Freud. Psychoanalysis has great influence in her artistic doings, especially in *The Bloody Chamber*. Her first great literary publication[8] was the novel *Shadow Dance* (1966), in which, inspired by an acquaintance with whom she commonly had extramarital relations, creates the fictionalized version of him she names Honeybuzzard, a polemic character who spends nights breaking into abandoned places in London (Werneck de Freitas, 2024, p. 6).

Her next novel is *The Magic Toyshop*, which Carter wrote during the summer of 1965-6 as a literarization of her adolescence, deeply stained with her sexual awakening and the oppressive figure of her mother. Furthermore, this work derived from her contact with the *Surrealist Manifest*, from which her aesthetic choices would henceforth drain much inspiration. The novel was turned into a television film produced in 1988 and its script was also writer by Carter.

In 1968, the author publishes her third novel, *Several Perceptions*, which wins her the *Somerset Maugham* prize and allows her a trip to Japan. As soon as she gets there, she falls in love with the country and meets Sozo Akari, with whom she keeps

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by Carter in *Wolf-Alice*, the last short-story in *The Bloody Chamber*). There seems to be no official explanation as to why Mark Bell has chosen that name for the anthology of Carter's dramatic works.

[8] The anthology *Burning your boats* presents three short-stories Carter would have written before the publication of *Shadow Dance*: *The Man Who Loved a Double Bass* (1962), *A Very, Very Great Lady and Her Son at Home* (1965) e *A Victorian Fable* (1966). Besides that, Werneck de Freitas (2024, p. 3) affirms that Carter's poetry preceded her narrative work, having mostly been written in the sixties.

another extramarital relation. However, after going back to London, divorcing Paul (who threatened her with forbidding the use of Carter as her artistic name), and going back to Japan, she does not find the magic she had discovered in her previous travelling. Thus, Carter publishes the novels *Heroes and Villains* (1969) and *Love* (1971), and goes back to London in 1972, year in which she publishes her sixth novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman*. In any case, Japan certainly kept on being a source of inspiration to the author, especially in her anthology of short-stories *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces*.[9]

Her next novel is *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), which she had begun sketching in January 1972. The book was originally named *The Great Hermaphrodite*, and its inspiration had come from when Carter got to know the myth of Tiresias, who was turned into a woman by Hera as a form of punishment. This romance will be analyzed in this dissertation due to its work with androgyny (or hermaphroditism, in Carter's phrasing).

A big part of Carter's ideals is in her self-proclaimed polemic essay on pornographic representations named *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography*, published in 1978. In the essay, Carter discusses the women present in Marquis de Sade's texts – a French author from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who wrote about many sexual adventures that involved rape, murder, necrophilia, and coprophilia, for example. In the beginning of her essay, the author highlights the possibility of understanding how Sade developed an important idea to feminism: female pleasure. However, in her conclusion, Carter demonstrates how he was not able to surrender enough power to formalize his theory.

Arguing for the idea of true love as a revolutionary perspective, Carter affirms that Sade builds his entire sexual freedom in connection to criminality, as the possibility of love – and, therefore, reciprocity – would mean the destruction of his masculine superiority. Thus, although he proposes some sort of feminine sexual freedom, it is by definition criminalized, as the fair reciprocity between the sexes is still denied by the French author (Carter, 2001, p. 147).

In her essay, Carter studies Sade's two main female figures: Justine and Juliette. These characters represent two opposite paradigms of possibility of female existence within the patriarchy: Justine is pure, enclosed in her femininity; Juliette is

[9] The texts that make part of this anthology were written between 1970-73, so that they englobe the period between the disenchantment of Japan and the return to London (Carter, 1996, p. 459).

the male woman, the oppressor, the murderer: “Justine is the holy virgin; Juliette is the profane whore” (ibid., p. 101).

“Justine has committed only one crime and that was an involuntary one; she was born a woman, and, for that, she is ceaselessly punished” (ibid., p. 39). Seeking Christian purity, Justine forbids herself of sexual pleasure, so that “Justine knows she is good because she does not fuck. When, against her will, she *is* fucked, she knows she remains good because she does not feel pleasure” (ibid., p. 47-48). It is therefore vital to Carter that the woman realizes herself as a desiring being rather than an object of desires, as “to be the *object* of desire is to be defined in the passive case. To exist in the passive case is to die in the passive case – that is, to be killed” (ibid., p. 76-77). Thus, “Justine marks the start of a kind of self-regarding female masochism, a woman with no place in the world, no status, the core of whose resistance has been eaten away by self-pity” (ibid., p. 57).

Juliette is a great symbol to Carter’s Marxist feminism, as the author proposes that gender relations work as a system of classes and that “a woman who acts according to the percepts and also the practice of a man’s world […] does not suffer. Instead, she causes suffering” (ibid., p. 79). However, even when taking the side of tyranny, Juliette is not able to thoroughly surpass her condition of submissive class: “even Juliette must die – in a world governed by god, the king and the law, the trifold masculine symbolism of authority, then Juliette knows better than her sister how useless it is to rebel against fate” (ibid., p. 80).[10] Therefore, Carter proposes that sexuality as submission nor as terrorism may lead to the end of gender oppression “Justine is the thesis, Juliette the antithesis; both are without hope and neither pays any heed to a future in which might lie the possibility of a synthesis of their modes of being, neither submissive nor aggressive, capable of both thought and feeling” (ibid., p. 79).

In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter echoes Hollanda’s point which we brought up in the previous chapter: the human being must be understood as a historical figure. The author affirms that the problem with pornography is not ontological, but it derives rather from the idea that it would be a “pictorial language of lust – or, rather, a

[10] The fact that both Justine and Juliette must die due to being unable of escaping their realities as women, whether as victim or torturer, brings within itself a perspective close to what Foucault conceptualized as necropolitics in *The History of Sexuality*, that is the way in which the sovereignty of power exerts itself in its right to provide death. Going beyond his previous take on biopolitics, in which power – that is not held by someone but exists microphysically in society – controls how people live, necropolitics affirms that the way people die is also a mode of control over human existence.

language we accept as universal because, since it has always been so, we conclude that it must remain so" (ibid., p. 4), being, therefore, vital that we understand that "our flesh arrives to us out of history, like everything else does" (ibid., p. 9). Thus,

> Pornographers are the enemies of women only because our contemporary ideology does not encompass the possibility of change, as if we were the slaves of history and not its makers, as if sexual relations were not necessarily an expression of social relations, as if sex itself were an external fact [...]. (ibid., p. 3)

In addition, Carter argues that the problem with pornography – which is but the metonymy of a social problem – is the reduction of beings to their anatomy. From it, emerges a second metonymy, in which the penis and the vagina not only diminish humanity to bestial aspects, but also prescribe a clear relation of dominance:

> the prick is always presented erect, in an alert attitude of enquiry or curiosity or affirmation; it points upwards, it asserts. The hole is open, an inert space, like a mouth waiting to be filled. […] man aspires; woman has no other function but to exist, waiting. The male is positive, an exclamation mark. Woman is negative. Between her legs lies nothing but zero, the sign for nothing, that only becomes something when the male principle fills it with meaning (ibid., p. 4).

In that way, Carter goes against the archetypical constructions of pornography, which not only devoid the involved people of individuality, but also reaffirm sexual stereotypes. The author defends that, although there may be genital differences, the behavioral modes associated to masculinity and femininity are cultural constructs regulated by History and Economy. To that, it is added that women's emotional dependence to men is but a myth created to perpetuate the theoretical need of economic dependence and an ideology of missionary sex, in which the woman "is most immediately and dramatically a woman when she lies beneath a man, and her submission is the apex of his malehood" (ibid., p. 7).

Similarly, in *Testo Junkie* (2012, p. 230), Paul Preciado states that sexuality is completely disassociated from biological paradigms, existing only as a function of pharmacopornopolitical[11] terms. When analyzing the possibility of chemical castration

[11] "Pharmaco" because the creation of sexualized existences is associated to the use of drugs, whether they be testosterone, estrogen, or even castrating substances; "porno" because the economic structure derived from the twentieth century works in a way very much alike the pornographic industry – in which bodies are divided between instruments that provide pleasure (or workmanship) and bodies that come – at the same time as the pornographic representation depicts frustrating expectancies of sexual performance; and "political" because it is from these pharmacopornographic terms that social

as punishment to sexual violators (understood here not only as sexual abusers, but as any existence that violates expected sexual behavior – Preciado uses Alan Turing as an example, a homosexual man who was castrated due to the understanding of his deviant sexuality as pathological in the twentieth century), the philosopher denounces an epistemological conceptualization that sees the erection as an "involuntary impulse" at the same time as it creates femininity "as a passive territory on which the violence of male sexuality is exerted".

Carter concludes her essay by stating that Sade was not able to completely subvert the paradigms of a system he set out to destroy because he could not thoroughly elaborate the possibility of female pleasure: the orgasm does not surpass the pain. Instead of sexuality as submission or tyranny, love – sexuality as reciprocity – may be the key to the eruption of a new system of relations. Thus, Carter concludes that, to Sade, it lacked overcoming the idea that the woman

> must never be allowed to come, and so to come alive. She cannot be corrupted into the experience of sexual pleasure and so set free. She is locked forever in the fortress of her flesh, a sleeping beauty whose lapse of being is absolute and eternal. If she were allowed to taste one single moment's pleasure in the abuses that are heaped upon her […], that would overthrow the whole scheme (Carter, 2001, p. 128).

Moving past the essay, Carter publishes in 1979 what would henceforth be known as her masterpiece: the short-story anthology *The Bloody Chamber*, in which she rewrites fairy tales and folk stories from a perspective of feminist horror. Not all tales which build it were originally published in the anthology. In fact, she had published *The Lady of the House of Love* in 1975, *The Erl-king*, *The Werewolf* and *The Company of Wolves* in 1977, *Wolf-Alice* in 1978, and *The Courtship of Mr. Lyon* and *Puss-In-Boots* at an earlier moment in 1979.

Carter's dramatic writing begins in 1976, when she turns her aforementioned short-story *The Lady of the House of Love* into the radio play *Vampirella*. In 1978, she writes the radio play *Come Unto These Yellow Sands*, which comes out in 1979, year in which she was invited to write the opera libretto for *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*.

The eighties were a decade in which Carter wrote a lot of dramatic pieces. In 1980, she turns her short-stories *The Werewolf*, *The Company of Wolves* and *Wolf-*

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relations derive, in a way that the instruments of power come from this system and work in order to constantly reiterate its conceptions.

Alice into the radio play *The Company of Wolves*. Between 1981 and 1982, she writes the radio play *A Self-Made Man*, which she considers an "artificial biography" of Ronald Firbanks (a British novelist). Also in 1982, she turns the short-story *Puss-In-Boots* into the radio play *Puss in Boots* (now with no hyphens) and starts the process of expanding the play *The Company of Wolves* into a film script with the help of director Neil Jordan.

In the first half of the decade, Carter also works on the script of *Gun for the Devil*, inspired by German folklore (the script was handed in in 1987, but never came to be produced, although it did become a short-story in her posthumous anthology *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders*). In 1985, Carter turns her second novel (*The Magic Toyshop*) into a homonymous film, under guidance of director David Wheatley. Between 1987 and 1988, she develops two projects which never surpassed their sketches: the script for *The Christchurch Murder* – a film planned by Andrew Brown of Euston Films on a real murder committed by two girls in New Zealand in 1954 – and the stage play *Lulu* – requested by Richard Eyre, the director of the National Theatre, and inspired by two plays written by Frank Wedekind.[12]

Alongside the drama, Carter also works on narratives during her final decade. Besides becoming a mother to Alexander Robert Pearce at forty-three (in 1983), she publishes the novel *Nights at the Circus* in 1984, the short-story anthology *Black Venus* in 1985, and her last novel *Wise Children* in 1991 – year in which she discovers the lung cancer that would kill her in February 1992.

Carter's texts, due to drawing inspiration from the *Surrealist Manifest*, are commonly associated to magical realism. Nevertheless, the supernatural elements that configure her texts are but allegorical representations of reality, in such way that her writings do not remain in the magical, but uses its resources to argue on a material reality and subvert established patterns and normative postulations on identity and subjectivity (Menino, 2021, p. 43).

3.2 *The Passion of New Eve* and androgyny as a relational paradigm

The myth of the androgyne has its formal origins in Plato's *Symposium* – although it had existed before then and in many different forms, as demonstrated by

[12] All these dates concerning the publishing of Carter's dramatic literature may be found on the "production notes", organized by Mark Bell in *The Curious Room* (Carter, 1997, p. 503-510).

Eliade (1999) –, in which the Greek philosopher presents this figure as a perfect creature which had both sexual organs. However, Zeus would have broken it in half, in such a way that both halves spent eternity looking for its complimentary piece in trying to return to a primal unity.

In *Androgyny in Modern Literature*, Hargreaves demonstrates how the androgynous went through various interpretations throughout history, many of which fused androgyny with the idea of hermaphroditism. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish these concepts in their origins. In the Classical Greek epistemology, the androgyne was seen as a model who could ritualistically fuse the magical and religious aspects of the sexes, whilst the anatomical hermaphrodite was seen as an aberration and killed on birth (Eliade, 1999, p. 56).

The discourse on androgyny also takes many shapes in contemporary times. In *The History of Sexuality,* Foucault demonstrates how the homosexual – a modern invention from the nineteenth century – moves past the sodomite (whose existence was associated to anal sex) into a subject whose identity is related to an androgynous soul. On another perspective, psychoanalysis will understand androgyny as a function of desire which precedes the Oedipus complex, in which the boy recognizes his mother's breasts, but imagines that she has a penis like his, so that the representation of the androgyne would be a sublimation of this fantasy.

Angela Carter has never directly worked with the idea of androgyny or androgynous literature (as postulated by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* as will be presented in the following chapter of this dissertation). However, Tracy Hargreaves (2005) associates the author's novel *The Passion of New Eve* to this literary approach. Our objective at this moment is to create a dialogue between Hargreaves' theory and *The Sadeian Woman* in order to defend the idea that Carter seems to understand androgyny not as an ontology but as a paradigm concerning relations, which we have named "relational androgyny".

The Passion of New Eve is Angela Carter's seventh novel, published for the first time in 1977. The plot follows Evelyn, an English professor who is obsesses with the image of Tristessa, a Hollywood actress who personifies a femininity which is expected and desired by men. From the beginning of the novel, Tristessa is associated with the maximum representation of womanhood and a constant state of sorrow and pain – a metonymy to what the feminine ideal would be to the male gaze.

Evelyn feels his illusion be broken when he sees a picture of the actress smiling while wearing no makeup. This moment illustrates how femininity is built as merely a performance and myth: “Tristessa. Enigma. Illusion. Woman? Ah! And all you signified was false! Your existence was only notional; you were a piece of mystification, Tristessa” (Carter, 1982, p. 2). It is important to highlight how Carter posits herself in an iconoclastic manner. Understanding that “our external symbols must always express the life within us with absolute precision […], since that life has generated them”, the sexual symbology is presented in the novel as a patriarchic system used to control women – a technologies of gender, in Teresa de Lauretis’ terms[13] –, and “a critique of these symbols is a critique of our lives” (ibid., p. 2). As aforementioned, much of Carter’s writings will focus on precisely this criticizing.

Evelyn starts his journey in the United States, more specifically New York, where a civil war is bound to happen. Due to the warlike situation, the professor loses his job and is led by a soldier to a room where there is the first image of a hermaphrodite in the novel: the picture “of a hermaphrodite[14] carrying a golden egg that exercised a curious fascination upon me, the dual form with its breasts and its cock, its calm comprehensive face” (ibid., p. 9).

Evelyn thus sees himself provided with a few weeks with no businesses at all to attend to in the United States. In addition, he soon sees himself seduced by woman with whom he has sexual encounters: Leilah, who is often referred to as his *prey*. They have a more erotic than romantic relation until she gets pregnant. As soon as they find out about the pregnancy, he loses all sexual appetite for her and she goes crazy and curses his masculinity. Then, Evelyn sends her to a dangerous abortion clinic, finds her thoroughly hurt and decides to abandon her and leave to the other side of the country.

In his way, Evelyn comes upon a desert on which he is attacked by a group of one-breasted warriors who take him to Beulah, an underground city governed by the Holy Mother, who has “has undergone a painful metamorphosis of the entire body

[13] Lauretis goes to Foucault for the idea of “sexual technology” – which she renames “gender technology” – in order to argue that contemporary social elaborations on gender and sexuality (and their consequential representations) derive from the bourgeois uprising in the eighteenth century, and its need to survive and dominate as a class, using, to this objective, a complex semiotic system.

[14] It is interesting to notice how, although she will work with the idea of androgyny as an existence beyond paradigms of sexual difference, Carter solely uses the term “hermaphrodite”. Being an author who often discusses matters of corporal existences, sexuality, and pornography, it is likely to expect that Carter will prioritize her androgyny in material terms, opposing herself from the Greek episteme that separated the androgynous mind experience from corporal existence.

and become the abstraction of a natural principal" (ibid., p. 46); after all, "in Beulah, myth is a made thing, not a found thing" (ibid., p. 53). It is therefore reinforced the idea that femininity is a construct rather than a given ontology – just like masculinity, given that "to be a man is not a given condition but a continuous effort" (ibid., p. 60). Sexual difference is but a myth.

In Beulah, Evelyn undergoes a forced process of transsexualization, which he sees as a punishment: "the plastic surgery that turned me into my own diminutive, Eve, the shortened form of Evelyn, this artificial challenging" (ibid., p. 68). In spite of that, to Mother, from Eve shall be born the messiah of a new era, as she will be a woman impregnated by the semen of her previous life as a man, creating the perfect androgyne: "Hail, Evelyn, most fortunate of men! You're going to bring forth the Messiah of Antithesis" (ibid., p. 64). It is ironic to notice that, although we understand that femininity is an effect of patriarchic power imposed upon women and exactly what Mother intends to disestablish, Mother exerts upon Evelyn the same oppression she longs to destroy: she is a Juliette, using sex, though the oppressed one, as a method of torture.

When she sees her new female body on the mirror, Eve does not recognize herself, but discovers that her clitoris causes pleasure. She also affirms: "I was the object of all the unfocused desire that had ever existed in my own head. I had become my own masturbatory fantasy. And – how can I put it – the cock in my head, still, twitched at the sight of myself" (ibid., p. 71). Therefore, Eve's sexual transition does not cause a replacement of desire into heterosexuality and, according to Concha (1993, p. 98), although within a female body, the narrative voice will remain male, in a way that this male mind will get to experience a world ruled by men from the perspective of a woman without ever fully becoming a woman.

After the organic processes, behaviors and feelings proper to women are taught to Eve. It is important to notice how this moment confirms the idea that the building of femininity is related to a process of biosynthesis associated with a psychic remodeling of Evelyn's thoughts in accordance to social expectations of female behavior. Womanhood thus exists as the fusion of a manufacturable biochemical system and a regimen of unnatural behaviors and feelings (the biochemical change does not cause a related and consequential behavioral change). This conception is similar to what Preciado defends in *Testo Junkie*: Butler was right in *Gender Trouble* in affirming that there is nothing natural to gender and

that it is related to a system of performativity which we have depicted in the first chapter of this dissertation; but beyond that, there are biochemical paradigms related to the making of maleness and femaleness, so much so that cis men use Viagra to reaffirm their masculinity (deeply condensed to their penises) and cis women have plastic surgeries to enlarge their female breasts – trans people that use testosterone or estrogen are also human realities that make use of biochemical factors to affirm gendered existences. Gendered bodies in the contemporary reality are represented by *biodrags*.

Eve, then, manages to escape Beulah only to be captured by Zero, a man who lived in isolation with his seven enslaved and submissive wives: “Zero is the unholy cross between the macho littérateur and Charles Manson[15], on whose domestic manners Zero’s treatment of his harem is presumably based” (Kaveney, 1994, p. 181). With Zero, Eve is introduced to her sex life as a woman: “He was the first man I met when I became a woman. He raped me unceremoniously […] I was in no way prepared for the pain; his body was an anonymous instrument of torture, mine my own rack” (Carter, 1982, p. 83). In that house, each woman willingly slept with Zero a day per week and there was no complicity between the wives – although they would frequently touch themselves and one another while listening to Zero as he had sex with one of them in another room.

In her relation to Zero, Eve echoes the need of erasure of male traits in the consolidation of femininity as presented by Hollanda: femaleness derives from the oppression of maleness. Thus, “Eve’s desperate fear that Zero might perceive her as a former man leads to an over-acting of the feminine that makes him worry that she is lesbian” (Kaveney, 1994, p. 181). Zero’s fear demonstrates how a perfect femininity must be detached from the real woman, and in this case understood as lesbian – we will develop this idea when we analyze his naming of Tristessa as “dyke of dykes” (Carter, 1982, p. 124).

To Zero, Tristessa was the utmost personification of women – and the person he hated the most. Eventually, he takes his wives to the house where Tristessa

[15] According to Mulvey-Roberts (2019, p. 157), there are documents in the British Library which indicate that Zero would have been inspired by Charles Manson. The similarities are many, given that Manson founded a sexual cult of women who were demanded to have sexual relations with him seven times a day. Furthermore, Mulvey-Roberts highlights the similarity between Manson’s plan that involved his cult going down into “The Hole” – a hypothetical place based on the biblical books of *Revelations*, and the underground city of Beulah. It is also important to point out that Carter was in the United States when the murders orchestrated by Manson took place.

lived, a mausoleum decorated with glass statues in the shape of tears. The tears probably refer to one of the first descriptions of Tristessa as an actress able to showcase a very specific pain felt by women and queer people: “the one woman in the world who most perfectly expressed a particular pain they felt as deeply as, more deeply than, any woman, a pain whose nature I could not then define although it was the very essence of your magic” (ibid., p. 1). The perfect woman is, therefore, associated to pain and hurt from the first scene of the novel.

Eve decides to protect Tristessa when they find her, but her body is lastly discovered in a hall filled with replicas of Hollywood actors[16] – she was but a representation, she “could never die, since she had never lived” (ibid., p. 116). This echoes the idea that perfect femaleness is impossible as a living figure, existing only as an icon. After all, to the male episteme, the perfect woman would be a corpse, something that may be raped without imposing any restriction or complaint – Carter depicts this image in her radio play *Vampirella* (1976).

Nevertheless, Tristessa reveals herself to be alive and tries to escape, but ends up captured. Zero intends on raping her before killing her: “‘I am the avenging phallic fire,’ he informed her. ‘I’ve come to fecundate your sterility, you dyke of dykes, you jamjar of infertility’” (ibid., p. 124). We can interpret Zero’s hatred towards this “dyke” through Wittig’s (1992) ideals that “lesbians are not women” for they subvert a system in which the woman may only exist as the object of desire to man, and therefore as his submissive. To a character who lives surrounded by women who exist virtually as his sexual slaves, the image of the best woman in the world depicted in Tristessa being intangible to him is a direct attack to the masculine force he consistently reaffirms himself to be. This intangibility removes her from the possibility of being seen as woman, so that she is posited as a dyke. Thus, Carter demonstrates that the male mind is so often surrounded by a ghostly affliction of possibility of losing status that it causes men to consistently rely on defense strategies that restate the oppression of women (Concha, 1993, p. 98).

The shock comes when Zero undresses Tristessa and finds out that she has a

[16] Mulvey-Roberts (2019, p. 161) states that the statues make reference to emblematic figures who had lost their lives because of their renown: James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, and especially Sharon Tate. Tate was a victim of Manson’s cult and the papers said that she had her breasts removed by the killers, which could be a direct inspiration to the one-breasted warrior from Beulah. Even though she as very devoted to cinema, Carter also understood the harms that the industry and the productions could cause to both spectators and actors. Tristessa is a grand representation of this icon the actor becomes: a public body that may receive love, hate, and death.

penis. She had transformed her life as an actress into an idea, in such a way that she was more real than any woman, given that femininity is but a construct – and in the real world, an imperfectly built construct: "how could a real woman ever have been so much a woman as you?" (Carter, 1982, p. 125) so that "Tristessa had no function in this world except as an idea of himself; no ontological status, only an iconographic one" (ibid., p. 126). In this way, Carter demonstrates that femininity is not only a performative system and that the recognition of this performance as truthful creates an illusory ontology that has never actually existed, but also that the epitome of womanhood is unreachable to real women: Tristessa only becomes this symbol because, as a man, she was able to create the image of a heterosexual object of desire, that is, the embodiment of male desire itself which is precisely the guideline to femininity.

Upon the discovery of Tristessa's penis, Zero demands that she marries Eve, which will become – without the knowledge of such by the harem's leader – a ritual between androgynes: a woman born a man who is not completely devoid of her masculinity and a "man" who became a woman but lives with his masculinized sex – "the implicit maleness it had never been able to assimilate into itself" (ibid., p. 124) – , in such a way that "both were the bride, both the groom in this ceremony" (ibid., p. 132). Eve and Tristessa become ideas, a woman built from a psychosomatic surgery and a man due only to his anatomy: "circumstances has forced us both out of the selves into which we had been born and now we were no longer human – the false universals of myth transformed us, … we were beings composed of echoes" (ibid., p. 132).

Eve and Tristessa manage to run away from Zero and his wives and to destroy the house, killing the harem. Together, they have a reciprocate and balanced sexual encounter, as if "out of those fathomless kisses and our interpenetrating, undifferentiated sex, we had made the great Platonic hermaphrodite" (ibid., p. 144-145).[17] We notice that, in this moment, none of the characters are exhibited as androgynous/hermaphrodite: Eve and Tristessa are trans women, the first victim of a surgery imposed by the Mother and the second fully a woman alongside her penis. It is through only their encounter that, back to the aforementioned myth in the *Symposium*, androgyny/hermaphroditism is created.

[17] It is curious to notice how Carter uses the phrase "Platonic" alongside "hermaphrodite", though such being was not fit for the Platonic philosophy, as aforementioned.

The relation founded on mutual desire between Eve and Tristessa echoes beck the possibility of overcoming Justine and Juliette's sadistic stigmas.

In spite of that, on a take that affirms that a patriarchal society does not admit mutual and androgynous relations, a group of kids finds them and kills Tristessa. Finally, Eve runs away, reencounters Leilah and discovers that she was also a daughter of Mother's. Eve returns to the esoteric world of Beulah and finds out that Mother was but a crazy old woman. This will echo in another statement Carter would make on *The Sadeian Woman*: the mystification of womanhood is as harmful to society as the patriarchic trifold of the king, god, and the law: "the goddess is dead" (id., 2001, p. 110). At last, Eve refuses to be either fully a woman or go back to being fully a man, understanding "the interrupted continuum" she calls herself (id., 1982, p. 163): her existence is not a rigid identity, but a continuous and fluid construction.

A few conclusions on how Carter understood gender and androgyny may arise from this discussion. To the author, there is no such thing as an androgynous being, because androgyny – just like any social designation – is necessarily created through social relations and processes of signification. Tristessa's image as a perfect woman through Hollywoodian lenses, a corpse in an abandoned house isolated from the world and a man when having his penis seen by Zero is a clear example of the idea of non-existence of isolated identities: "Tristessa is also the index of an aspiration that failed: the individual, we should infer, cannot singly embody the androgyne, not least because the androgyne is the trope of a union made redemptive through love" (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 144).

It is also possible to notice how, to Carter, identity only exists after it is read by the social scenario. After all, Eve and Tristessa's femininity and masculinity are not determined by the first's performance or the cock that exists in the latter's head, but by how they are read and inserted in the cultural system, so that

> During the course of Eve's narrative, we come to understand that the penis no longer functions as the sign of the guarantee of masculinity: the material referent is also, insistently, metaphorical. … How we might understand the body, then, is not through its materiality or even its psychology, but through its cultural signification, and in the absence of any totalizing grand narrative, signification, as Eve recollects of Tristessa, is false, and 'all of metaphysics' as Baudrillard puts it, 'is lost'" (ibid., p. 138).

Therefore, androgyny appears as a relational system: as a man (with Leilah)

and as a woman (with Zero), Eve/lyn's heterosexual encounters are based on control, male pleasure, and sexist paradigms. Only from the encounter of two beings who have experienced life as both man and woman (Eve and Tristessa) – which is deeply related to Virginia Woolf's discourse on androgyny, as we will present in the next chapter, although Carter's characters never find themselves fully defined in gendered term – is it possible to create a relation between equals. Diverging from Mother's desires, Eve and Tristessa's encounter does not produce any child, any messiah, any androgyne. Androgyny does not generate some sort of product, it is but momentary, the reciprocal encounter of two beings who are mutually and simultaneously desiring and desired subjects.

We therefore propose the concept of *relational androgyny*: to Carter, there is no such thing as an ontologically androgynous being, androgyny is rather connected to the possibility of a reciprocal relation. Whilst her theories on Justine and Juliette in *The Sadeian Woman* expose relational paradigms founded on oppression (being sex either the desecration of the temple or the torturous domination), *The Passion of New Eve* develops what Sade had failed on proposing: a relation between two beings that is not based on inequality but rather on mutual desire (and pleasure). In conclusion, beyond the possibility of an original androgynous being (the Platonic ontology) and the subjective development of an androgynous mind (Woolf's existentialism in *A Room of One's Own*), Carter understands androgyny as a relational system made possible by the encounter of beings who are mutually desiring and desired.

CHAPTER 4
ORLANDO BROWN-NOSING THE ARISTOCRACY

In this chapter, we discuss how the idea of androgyny is built in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and in Angela Carter's *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*. We demonstrate how Carter perceives Woolf's writing as "brown-nosing the aristocracy" because her androgyny comes from a deeply individualist view, focused on Orlando's existence rather than on the possibility of real change in the way the sexual division is socially structured. Carter subverts the plot and the imagery of the novel to propose an ironic reading of Woolf's work.

4.1 Androgyny in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*

The discourse on androgyny, which echoes back to Platonic philosophy, is remodeled by Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* (1928) and retheorized in *A Room of One's Own* (1929). As one of the objects of analysis of this dissertation is a libretto that rewrites *Orlando*, our objective at this point is not to propose a deep analysis of Woolf's texts, but rather to use their propositions – alongside some criticism around them – in order to formulate a horizon of expectations as to how the theme of androgyny could appear in *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*. We are not proposing ourselves to study Woolf's novel or to agree or disagree with the criticism related to it, but rather to set a base to comprehend how Carter seems to read the novel, as we believe that to be a fundamental tool in the understanding of the libretto.

Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* is a fictionalized biography of a character who experiences the world as both man and woman while writing a poem named *The Oak Tree*.[18] The first line of the novel introduces the poet and his sex: "he – for there could be no doubt of his sex" (Woolf, 1928, p. 13). As will be made clear, the novel will develop into a statement of an androgynous mind that surpasses the sexual ontology proposed by this introductory sentence, which helps advocate for the irony

[18] There was a big oak tree around the house where Orlando lived and under which he would frequently lie down to relax. In addition, when thinking about the boy, queen Elizabeth says that "he was to be the son of her old age; the limb of her infirmity; the oak tree on which she leant her degradation" (Woolf, 1928, p. 26). Furthermore, when Orlando is abandoned by Sasha, noises are heard "as of the tearing and rending of oak trees" (ibid., p. 61). The idea of the oak tree as a support (to both Orlando's tranquil isolations and the aging of the queen) may serve to show that the poem is an important support to Orlando, given that it follows the character throughout his/her entire life as both man and woman. Despite the different experiences each sex provides, the writing – the desire to write – stays with Orlando.

present in such proposition.

The novel sets Orlando at a young age taking pleasure in dressing up to live amongst the lower classes. In his adventures, he realizes that "women were scarcely less bold in their speech and less free in their manners than the birds" (ibid., p. 29). In this way, Orlando starts formulating to himself an idea as to what it means or should mean to be a woman that drives from his own perceptions and interpretations. This idea that male speculation defines womanhood is very similar to what was presented by Carter in *The Passion of New Eve* concerning what Evelyn and Zero thought of Tristessa.

As the novel presents, in the beginning, Queen Elizabeth is marveled by his presence and transforms him into her treasurer. However, she cannot bear seeing Orlando with another woman, and dies right after doing so. It is relevant to notice that in no moment is it mentioned that Orlando would have any sexual desire for the queen or that there would be some sort of romantic-sexual relationship between them.

In his youth, Orlando loves many girls and writes poems to many of them. In a certain moment, he becomes engaged to Clorinda but gets annoyed at her attempts to have him redeem himself for his sins. Afterwards, he becomes engaged to Favilla, with whom he breaks up after seeing her hit a dog almost to death, besides having ugly crooked teeth (ibid., p. 32). His next fiancée is Euphrosyne, the perfect woman to the court's eyes. Nevertheless, the Great Frost comes and the Thames River freezes over, and Orlando sees himself seduced by a mysterious figure whose sex he is unable do define: at the sight of their speed while skating, he assumes it is a boy, "and thus all embraces were out of the question" (ibid., p. 38); but, when he discovers the person to be a woman (Sasha[19]), he falls in love immediately. It is noticeable how much power compulsory heterosexuality has upon Orlando in this scene: he had already been seduced, but the desire may only be real as long as the figure who seduced him was a woman. Furthermore, this difficulty of Orlando's in identifying Sasha's sex establishes her as a first androgynous figure in the narrative: her sex is not as obvious as Orlando's from the first line of the novel and she has masculine traits in her, such as her speed skating.

[19] It is interesting to notice that Sasha is a nickname Orlando gives Princess Marousha Stanislovska Dogmar Natasha Iliana Romanovitch after a fox who had bitten him when he was young with such strength that his father had it killed. Similarly, Sasha will hurt him in a way he will never truly overcome.

To Orlando, Sasha represents true love for the first time. Nevertheless, he soon realizes how little he knows of the Muscovite, which upsets him greatly and leads to some manifestations of explicit wrath: “he would blaze out in such wrath that she did not know how to quiet him” (ibid., p. 49) – which never occurs to Carter’s Orlando. In love, the nobleman plans on running away to Russia alongside Sasha, but discovers her in the company of a sailor in a Russian ship. He forgives her and they schedule a date for the escape, but, on the set night, he sees the ship go away without him, and hurls at Sasha “all the insults that have ever been the lot of her sex. Faithless, mutable, fickle, he called her; devil, adulteress, deceiver” (ibid., p. 64). Henceforth, Orlando sinks in sorrow, and their servants blame Sasha for it.

Orlando tries to write but, upon meeting Nick Greene[20], an author whom he much admired, that begins to change. He discovers that Greene had soon come to write a satire on Orlando’s life and passion for writing. The young man, thus, loses his love for literature and for humankind and decides to henceforth isolate himself and write only for his own pleasure. These writings included his poem *The Oak Tree*, which he writes, erases, and rewrites often, never coming to an end. Thus, “this young Nobleman had not only had every experience that life has to offer, but had seen the worthlessness of them all. Love and ambition, women and poets were all equally vain. Literature was a farce” (ibid., p. 96). At this moment, Orlando, still a man, drifts away from formal literary work. He will remain so for years, only being able to complete his poem after experiencing life through the eyes of both sexes, as we will explain.

Furthermore, we are told that Green had hurt Orlando as much Sasha, which builds the relationship between the protagonist and the poet as an important element to the novel – which does not even exist in Carter’s libretto. The fact that Greene, who has a huge influence on Orlando and is even present in *A Room of One’s Own*, does not exist in the libretto helps to introduce the fact that androgynous writing was not a relevant subject to Carter. This argument will be further developed in the analysis of her text.

[20] Nick Greene’s name comes up twice in the novel and then back again in *A Room of One’s Own*. In *Orlando*, he is both a seventeenth century poet who writes a parody of Orlando and hurts him deeply, pushing him away from literature for a while, and a nineteenth century literary critic who helps Orlando finally publish his poem. In the essay, he is responsible for impregnating Judith – Shakespeare’s made-up sister Woolf uses to discuss female writing, as we will discuss later in the dissertation – and abandoning her, serving thus as one of the reasons for her suicide. As Greene does not exist in *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*, it is not this dissertation’s intention to dwell on the relevance of this character.

Next in the novel, the archduchess Harriet is introduced as an odd and strangely tall woman, who suddenly comes into Orlando's private room and asks him to forgive her intrusion "with a proper, but somewhat clumsy curtsey" (ibid., p. 114). The young man feels struck by a passion which could be love but, still traumatized by what had happened between him and Sasha, he merely asks to be sent to Constantinople.

The grand shift in the novel is when, during his trip to the Orient and after marrying Rosina Pepita, a dancer about whom not much information is given other than that their marriage was nulled once Orlando became a woman – and who also does not exist in Carter's libretto –, Orlando is visited by the ladies Purity, Chastity, and Modesty while under a deep sleep. They try to come close to Orlando and sing: "Truth, come not out of your horrid den. Hide deeper, fearful Truth. For you flaunt in the brutal gaze of the sun things that are better unknown and undone; you unveil the shameful; the dark you make clear. Hide! Hide! Hide!" (ibid., p. 136).

However, the Sisters are sent away by silver trumpets which declare that they shall leave and that nothing but the truth shall remain. Once awoke, Orlando is a woman: "he stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets paced Truth! Truth! Truth! we have no choice left but to confess–he was a woman" (ibid., p. 137).[21] The fact that the three figures exit demonstrates that the truth about women is not in any of them, even though they represent characteristics usually attached to womanhood. That means that, despite the socially expected – or socially imposed –, purity, chastity, and modesty are not the core of what makes a woman.

It is curious to notice that there is no change in Orlando beyond their sex: "in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity" (ibid., p. 138). Similarly, when Orlando goes back home, the servants did not show "an instant's suspicion that Orlando was not the Orlando they had known" (ibid., p. 170). This moment states that there is a disconnection between the mere genitalia and the social recognition of one as oneself. That is, in these passages, it is possible to notice Woolf's take on the idea that the "biological sex", or rather, genitalia, does not

[21] It is also important to highlight that, according to Pinho & Nogueira (2022, p. 103), Orlando's transition into womanhood at the end of the seventeenth century is also related to the moment in which women first entered the literary market, which is important as the text revolves fundamentally around the possibility of an androgynous writing.

prescribe any psychic manifestation by itself.

Although it may serve as an argument against sexual ontologies, it seems deeply optimistic – utopist even – to assume that the way one is recognized as oneself is not related to their sex. Looking back into Butler's and Preciado's postulations we have presented in the second chapter, it is clear that sex-gender is a fundamental part of the process of subjectivation of oneself. In *Precarious Life*, Butler even argues that these sexed subjects will be understood as human or not depending on how they perform they gender. Woolf was focused on an individual overcoming of sexual definitions, but seemed to disregard that sex is not individually but rather socially constructed. This is precisely what Carter would read as "aristocratic" in Woolf's work.

Orlando starts living with a group of gypsies and, as not many effects derived from sexual difference within that group, the transition does not affect her. However, once Orlando is back in England, she is forced to face her sex due to the clothes she is forced to wear and the way she is treated, which she used to believe were naturally connected to the female sex, but now realizes are impositions. This echoes the idea that sex has no effect on one's life apart from cultural impositions: culture reads the genitalia and *then* prescribes accepted forms of existence. There is no way of thinking that derives naturally from the sexed body – as we had seen in *The Passion of New Eve*. In fact,

> She remembered how, as a young man, she had insisted that women must be obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely appareled. "Now I shall have to pay in my own person for those desires," she reflects; "for women are not (judging by my own short experience of the sex) obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely appareled by nature. They can only attain these graces, without which they may enjoy none of the delights of life, by the most tedious discipline (ibid., p. 156-157).

Therefore, "Orlando's pleasure in sexual oscillation is interrupted by the oppressive social expectations […] forcing her into a pure femininity that requires the expulsion or denial of her masculinity" (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 86). This idea reaffirms Joan Scott's theory of the repression of the subject's potential for bisexuality we have brought up in the second chapter.

Noticing the number of things forbidden to her because she is a woman, Orlando notices how foolish men are, as they create false ideas of femininity and lose their minds over the sight of a female ankle. Before being a woman, the

character had not posed any questions onto masculinity, but this is the first moment in which she sees herself away from both sexes that are prescribed by the binary system and close to an androgynous existence: “she was censuring both sexes equally, as if she belonged to neither” (Woolf, 1928, p. 158).

Alongside the questioning of gendering norms, Orlando also faces a clear expression of her bisexuality, as the transition did not make her old feelings for Sasha vanish. It is also important to notice that, as a man, Orlando had denied the possibility of even hugging Sasha before acknowledging that she was a woman, but now there is not much thought regarding the feelings that have remained: as a woman, Orlando accepts her bisexuality better. Besides, Orlando now “enjoyed the love of both sexes equally” (ibid., p. 221).

Orlando, then, meets the archduchess once more, who assumed being actually a man: the archduke Harry. According to him, he had always been in love with Orlando and had dressed himself up as a woman in order to live this love. This emphasizes, alongside Orlando’s constant love for Sasha, the nonexistence of some sort of natural heterosexuality: Harry had always been a man in love with another man who had used performative resources to overcome the forbidding of a homosexual relationship. Besides, as he is still in love with Orlando after the transition, it is clear that his feelings have never been directly connected to the sexed body, but to Orlando as a subject, which dismantles the patriarchal theory that attraction is necessarily based on sexual difference. It is an important epistemological formulation to state that love is built between two beings independently from sexual prescriptions or accepted sexualities. This seems, actually, as a first step towards the non-identitary processes of subjectivation which Preciado would posteriorly name “queer multitudes”, as we have presented in the second chapter.

The archduke expresses his love for her, but Orlando finds his conversations utterly boring and plans a way to escape his seduction, as she wonders: “‘what’s the good of being a fine young woman in the prime of life,’ she asked, ‘if I have to pass all my mornings watching blue bottles with the archduke?’” (ibid., p. 182). After being left alone, she realizes that life and love were drifting away from her. The narrator states that it is possible to notice, then, a bigger difference between the Orlando prior to and the Orlando after Constantinople, in a way that she was starting to become more woman than man. Even so, Orlando never becomes purely a woman. Furthermore, it is later stated that Orlando alternated between male and female

clothes and had invented a cousin who was really herself in order to experience the world as both man and woman. It is, thus, clear that Orlando is never completely defined within the boxes of binary sexes.[22]

In an attempt to bring back to herself the joy of writing, Orlando becomes a good acquaintance of three writers: Mr. Pope, Mr. Addison, and Mr. Swift.[23] During big tea parties, each of them would say something that would be admired by all. In *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*, Carter will have the same lines said by the same men, but, as it will be demonstrated, she uses the sentences to mock the stupidity of the English bourgeoisie that presents itself as poetry:

> Pope: 'Whether the Nymph shall break Diana's Law,
> Or some frail China Jar receive a flaw,
> Or stain her Honour, or her new Brocade,
> Forget her prayers or miss a Masquerade,
> Or lose her Heart, or Necklace at a Ball – '
> (All applaud.)
> Orlando: What brilliance. What wit. … Yet, for all this brilliance, I feel such emptiness… (Carter, 1997, p. 172-173).

During her experience as a woman, Orlando takes a long time to go back to writing. That may echo Woolf's idea of "the angel in the house", which she would develop on her essay *Professions for Women* (1931). "The angel in the house" consists of a constant system of vigilance that forbids free feminine expression, a haunting that guides women into their proper behavior and lays her wing over a paper when women write saying "my dear, you are a young woman. … Never let anybody guess you have a mind of your own" (Woolf, 1978, p. 304). That means that, since the values of society are those prescribed by male power,

> The phantom of the Angel in the House provokes a state of constant surveillance and self-consciousness in women that is not likely to exist in men's minds. In this respect, men could move and express themselves more spontaneously, without having to verify, at each step, if what they say or do is in accordance with the standards proposed. Accordingly, the judgment of women's and men's writings has been quite different through time, men being endowed with more freedom in life and in writing. In short, male writers

[22] In this moment, it is important to point out that Paul Beatriz Preciado produced the movie *Orlando: my political biography* in 2024. In the movie, Preciado uses the imagery around the character of Orlando to depict non-binary existences, that is, lives which overcome the sex-gender system in its definitions of masculinity and femininity. The philosopher had already related his own life experience to Orlando's in his book *Apartment on Uranus*, in which he wonders: "what happens in the narrative of a life when it is possible to change the main character's sex?" (Preciado, 2020, p. 121).

[23] All these names refer to real British authors of the eighteenth century: Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, and Jonathan Swift.

> could move with less restraint and could count on a wider range of themes to explore (Kappke, 2018, p. 16).

Kappke, thus, demonstrates, how “the angel in the house” marks not only a haunting over women writers, but is also the echo of a literary system. That is to say, besides serving as a restricting force to women writers, the angel is also related to a material system in which women are restrained from exploring a life beyond their homes and their families. Being aware of these material restraints, women would self-consciously assume that they could not be as great as men in terms of writing.

Orlando, then, realizes that everyone now has a wedding ring, except for her. When she left looking for life and love, she did not expect to come back looking for a husband, but she does so. Not finding him, she isolates herself in nature and considers that, perhaps, death would be better: “I have sought happiness through many ages and not found it; fame and missed it; love and not known it; life–and behold, death is better. I have known many men and many women, […] none have I understood” (Woolf, 1928, p. 248-249). This melancholy that leads into thinking that death should be preferred will be read by Carter as an extremely sentimental and individual moment for someone who had lived beyond the idea of marriage. That is to say that Orlando surpasses definitions of manhood and womanhood only to end up longing for a partner, which Carter sees as an aristocratic stupidity.

In this melancholic moment, Shelmerdine, a man who rode by by horse, sees her and they soon get married. Even though everything happens very quickly, they seem to know all that matters about each other and they spend days talking. During a conversation they have alone in the woods, it is shown that they both have androgynous aspects, given that Shelmerdine has traits commonly associated to femininity at the same time as Orlando’s existence surpasses binary performativity paradigms:

> “Are you positive you aren’t a man?” he would ask anxiously, and she would echo, “Can it be possible you’re not a woman?” and then they must put it to proof without more ado. For each was so surprised at the quickness of the other’s sympathy, and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman, that they had to put the matter to the proof at once. (ibid., p. 258)

The fact that Orlando had characteristics usually seen in men and Shelmerdine had those associated to women may, at first, seem like evidences of existential possibilities beyond binary paradigms. However, this only reinforces the existence of these parameters (which Showalter would criticize, as we will demonstrate). Carter reads this moment as somewhat unimportant, as it has no real social effect: they still end up married; Orlando still ends up a mother. Besides, it is never truly explained why they wonder about each other's sexes other than the fact that they shared traits of both gender, which, again, denounces a binary and restricted idea of sexes.

Orlando only goes back to writing *The Oak Tree* once she marries Shelmerdine – and thus overcomes a social demand of the nineteenth century – and understands her existence as androgynous. Orlando had to adapt herself to the changes throughout the centuries, the crinolines and the way men treater her, but she finally realizes that "through all these changes she had remained, she reflected, fundamentally the same. She had the same brooding meditative temper, the same love of animals and nature, the same passion for the country and the seasons" (ibid., p. 237).

Thus, Orlando becomes a person "which is also composed not just of actions but of characteristics – snobbish, facile, glib, romantic, and so on – an identity that we would come to understand as performative – constitutive of the acts that iterate and enact it" (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 90). On the one hand, this marks an important statement, especially given that the novel was published in 1928, as to the fact that there are no personality traits directly connected to one's sex. On the other hand, from a Marxist point of view, this statement is very individualist and does not regard that one's existence is directly related to how society reads subjects and that social paradigms are still founded in binary ideals. This individual perception does not cause any effect on social levels, which would lead Carter into reading the novel as a "brown-nosing of the aristocracy" (Lee, 1994, p. 317).

Once the poem is written, Orlando meets Nick Greene once again, and he insists on the same pessimist discourse on literature he had in the seventeenth century. However, she now sees him through different lenses, and realizes that literature is not poetic and wild as she had expected, but rather "an elderly gentleman in a grey suit talking about duchesses" (Woolf, 1928, p. 280). This realization is an explicit critic to the literary canon being virtually completely

formulated by men and their discourses on women. This critic would appear again on Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own*.

Orlando's freedom to write which leads her into the publication of *The Oak Tree* is deeply associated to her dual experience as both man and woman: "Orlando had to detach herself from the social impositions upon gender. It is just then, when she balances both masculine and feminine forces, that she reaches androgyny, being able to finally complete her poem" (Kappke, 2018, p. 40).

Undermined by patriarchal paradigms, Orlando sees herself, surely, unable of writing anything of value – after all, anything she could possibly write would also most likely be ignored by the masculine canon. It is nonetheless important to notice that she wasn't able to finish the poem when she was a man either. In fact, the things he used to write were so highly belittled by Nick Greene that he came to a moment of deep sadness, as aforementioned.

Therefore, men are also suppressed by social prescriptions which create impediments to their complete freedom of expression – as would later be argued by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*. This leads us onto the conclusion that androgyny to Virginia Woolf is not an attempt of projecting the disturbing aspects of femininity onto masculinity,[24] but rather a freedom that may be reached by both men and women through possibilities of existence, psychic construction, and identity formulations that surpass the regimented sexual division, in such a way that writing may be free. As argued by Pinho & Nogueira (2022, p. 105), this idea of androgyny seems closer to a project of deconstruction of the literary doing rather than a mere identitary project.

Orlando has a child and, at last, finds herself in the present time: 1928. She goes to the department store Marshall & Snelgrove looking for bed sheets. There, she appears to see Sasha, but she had actually only mistaken some woman for her old lover. Finally, when asked if she wants anything else, she says she only needs bath salts – this line will be altered by Carter in order to create a different personality trait for Orlando. In the end, Orlando returns to nature, calls for Shelmerdine, who comes to her, and lies next to her husband and the oak tree.

The novel introduces an idea of androgynous existence that would later

[24] This line refers to Elaine Showalter's critic to Woolf's androgyny, as she affirms that "in Virginia Woolf's version of female aestheticism and androgyny, sexual identity is polarized and all the disturbing, dark, and powerful aspects of femaleness are projected onto maleness" (Showalter, 1999, p. 264).

appear in a more evident way in Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929). In the text, Woolf proposes to discuss the theme "women and fiction". Her main hypothesis is that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (Woolf, 2012, p. 29) – a metonymy to the argument that any person needs, at least, a salary and an isolated and peaceful place in order to write a novel. Thus, literary production is not isolated, but connected to the material reality: "fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners … and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in" (ibid., p. 57).

From the hypothesis of the existence of a direct connection between material aspects of life and literary works, Woolf highlights that writing is much harder for women than for men: while the latter not only received formal education but also had opportunities to travel and get to know the world, women were doomed to their living rooms. It is possible to notice, as argued by Pinho & Nogueira (2022), a direct relation between the essay and *Orlando* in terms of a theory on the androgynous, but also on the relation between money and writing: Orlando loses all her assets once she is discovered as woman, in such a way that the accusations against her stated "(Pinho; Nogueira, 2022, p. 1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (ibid., p. 2) that she was a woman. Which amounts to much the same thing" (Woolf, 1928, p. 168). Besides, literature echoed society's values, which were, by definition, male:

> And since a novel has this correspondence to real life, its values are to some extent those of real life. But it is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex; naturally, this is so. Yet it is the masculine values that prevail. […] And these values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction (Woolf, 2012, p. 80).

This take seems more socially englobing than the androgyny presented in *Orlando*. The idea that masculine values prevail socially and that is a reason for the undermining of female works marks an understanding of how gendering systems affect the literary field. The problem to critics like Showalter is not Woolf's understanding of the issue, but the imagining that individual androgynous existences would suffice to subvert this system.

On the third chapter of the essay, Woolf proposes an imaginary sister to Shakespeare named Judith, who would be as artistically capable as her brother.

However, due to the oppression against women in her day, she would never become a great author and would end up getting pregnant with Nick Greene's child, and finally kill herself. This idea of damned women led into suicide is one of the topic Carter criticizes in *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*.

On the last chapter, Woolf will present her theory on androgynous literature, affirming that the great minds are androgynous, given that "it is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine" (ibid., p. 97). In order to build her thesis, Woolf argues that, at the same time as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* loses some literacy when it emphasizes the anguishes of womanhood, the masculine work becomes tiring when it tries to exhibit its superiority, in a way that "it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex" (ibid., p. 101).[25] Thus,

> Woolf's engagement with the ideals (and imperatives) of androgyny also constitute a decisive shift in early twentieth-century representations, moving androgyny away from its pathologised, degenerative and decadent incarnations to consolidate instead a relationship with feminism, polymorphous sexuality, writing and a creative literary criticism (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 77).

The pathologizing of the androgynous in the nineteenth and twentieth century was presented by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*. The author argues that, in the nineteenth century, the homosexual became a subject for the first time, that is, the homosexual existence extrapolated the sexual actions. This subjectivation was used to send homosexuals to jails or asylums under the belief of an androgyny of the soul (Foucault, 1990, p. 43). Therefore, Woolf's positioning of androgyny as a good trait related to the overcoming of social impositions could serve to revert the medical systematizing of the term.

Contemporary critique was very harsh on responding to Woolf's theories. Elaine Showalter was one of the authors who positioned themselves strongly against her, stating that "the concept of true androgyny … is attractive, although I suspect that like all utopian ideals androgyny lacks zest and energy" (Showalter, 1999, p. 263). The author also states that "androgyny was the myth that helped her

[25] This idea is very similar to what the narrator says in *Orlando*: "'Praise God that I'm a woman!" she cried, and was about to run into the extreme folly – than which none is more distressing in woman or man either – of being proud of her sex" (Woolf, 1928, p. 160).

evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition" (ibid., p. 264).

Thus, Showalter argues that, apart from a literary theory, Woolf's androgyny would have been a way for the author to deal with polarizing forces on her personal life, sustaining herself upon the same gender stereotypes she longed to annihilate: "indeed, since masculine and feminine personality qualities are stereotypes to begin with, it is virtually a tautology to say that creative people are not limited to a set" (ibid., p. 284). Furthermore, Woolf would have failed on her idea of pushing away from sex-related themes, since the main argument of *A Room of One's Own* would arise from a feminine fear of her fury not being well seen by the same system it wanted to criticize.

In *Sexual/Textual Politics*, Toril Moi questions Showalter's arguments. To Moi, the aforementioned critique derives from a personal understanding that the text must be an authentic representation of the author's life and that political art is restricted to a fight against sexism, in such a way that the presence of strong women would be demanded from feminist writings. However:

> What feminists such as Showalter and Holly fail to grasp is that the traditional humanism they represent is in effect part of the patriarchal ideology. At its centre is the seamlessly unified self – either individual or collective – which is commonly called 'Man'. As Luce Irigaray or Hélène Cixous would argue, this integrated self is in fact a phallic self, constructed on the model of the self-contained, powerful phallus. […] In this humanist ideology the self is the sole author of history and of the literary text: … all art becomes autobiography, a mere window on the self and the world, with no reality of its own. The text is reduced to a passive, 'feminine' reflection of an unproblematically 'given', 'masculine' world or self (Moi, 2002, p. 8).

Defending Woolf, Moi affirms that the author presents a deconstructed writing, in opposition to the safety expected by Showalter. Therefore, Woolf's writing would be closer to a perspective of identity as an unstable system, such as elaborated by Butler and Derrida, and not as a dangerously essentialist precept as expected by Showalter. Thus, according to Pinho & Nogueira (2022, p. 104), Woolf's writing moves precisely towards a subject that never wants to be marked as a unity, but rather as a fragmented self.

This fragmented self seems linked to an individual that personally overcomes gender paradigms. Though this understanding is important to the conceptualization of the queer multitudes Preciado argues for – subjects that are not defined by identity

terms, but rather serve as a force against the heteronormative system – Woolf does not exceed the discussion to a social level. It is, nonetheless, important to notice Woolf's construction of the possibility of an identity that overcomes binary terms. To those regards, Moi concludes that androgyny to Woolf

> is not, as Showalter argues, a flight from fixed gender identities, but a recognition of their falsifying metaphysical nature. Far from fleeing such gender identities because she fears them, Woolf rejects them because she has seen them for what they are. She has understood that the goal of the feminist struggle must precisely be to deconstruct the death-dealing binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity (Moi, 2002, p. 13-14).

Our objective here is not to agree with Showalter or Moi, but to present how Woolf's texts and theories have been read through different viewpoints throughout the year. What is important for our analysis is to set the ground for how Carter would perceive Woolf's works: the author saw androgyny as an utterly aristocratic discussion, which was too focused on a bourgeois individualism to fit her own Marxist view of the world. Carter would emphasize how Woolf's discussions never extrapolated the self and reached the social, which is precisely the reason the author will call Orlando a work of "brown-nosing" the aristocracy. From this perspective, it will be possible to better comprehend the critics presented by Carter in her libretto.

4.2 Androgyny in *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*

Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes is an opera libretto written by Angela Carter and inspired by Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. The idea for the project came from John Cox, a director of the Glyndebourne theater and a friend of Carter's since 1971, as a request from Deborah Rogers in 1976. Carter was suggested as playwright by the musical composer Michael Berkeley in 1979, who knew her because of Rogers, his wife and Carter's literary agent since 1973. However, "partly for reasons of copyright costs, and partly because of Glyndebourne's current caution about new operas, the proposed production went no further than the second draft of the libretto" (Carter, 1997, p. 506). This draft was written in 1980 and is our next object of analysis.

It is important to highlight that Carter was not used to writing for the stage. Even though she would produce throughout her life five radio plays and two films, her two scenic works – *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes* and *Lulu* – were never

completed, as demonstrated in our introduction. Therefore, it is plausible to understand that she faced some technical questions or difficulties which would influence her writing. For example, “the outline included several grand schemes, such as a snow eagle that flies away, the arrival of Schelmerdine *[sic]* in a bi-plane, and the setting of the whole production ‘in the fabric department of Marshall and Snelgrove’” (ibid., p. 505). With time she became more acquainted with technical issues and proposed a few changes such as replacing the bi-plane with a parachute and eagle with a falcon – which was not much less problematic for the stage. Thus, it is clear that the libretto here analyzed is not a genre which Carter was used to writing.

The fact that Carter was not used to working with texts for the theater not only serves as an argument for the relevance of this dissertation, but is also an interesting aspect of analysis: Carter usually works with themes of gender and sexual relations, but how does she do that using a structure she is not familiar with? The author frequently uses supernatural figures and a lot of imagery to build her texts, but the stage only allows practical factors. Despite that, she is capable of creating a great argument on the theme of androgyny and questioning the individualist aspects of Woolf’s novel.

The opera begins with a prologue that was the last addition made to the text, in a moment in which “she had really begun to engage with Woolf’s material” (ibid., p. 506). The prologue is a dialogue between Orlando and his tutor, who would be responsible for introducing the theme of androgyny directly into the text. It is interesting to notice that, in the same way that Woolf’s novel begins with an assertion of Orlando’s sex, the first spoken line of the libretto is “when I was a boy” (ibid., p. 155). In this way, both texts begin by what would seem to be an affirmation of the character’s sex as something aprioristic.

The tutor explains that he has taught Orlando Latin and Greek and that, while studying Greek, they have read Plato’s *Symposium* – which mentions the myth of the androgynous. Then, he affirms that “no man nor woman ever / had understood Love and all its power” before introducing the myth: “once we were perfect and are no longer. / For then, in the beginning, / there were not two sexes, as there are now, / but one only – not men nor women / but one perfected nature, the union of man and woman, / the double nature” (ibid., p. 155).

The description of the myth goes on to say that Zeus would have punished the

beings for their pride and split them into two, which already predicts that human beings lack someone else in order to be whole: there is no possibility of fulfillment other than on finding the opposing being (of the opposite sex) that was once one's other half. The next description states Carter's fundamentally heterosexual construction given that "each sex as incomplete / as shadow without substance. / After this cruel division, / bereft, the crippled halves / each one desires the other" (ibid., p. 156). These verses not only foresee a compulsory heterosexuality, but also state an eternal longing related to desire, in a way that humans are looking for their completeness in the "opposite" sex: "and I do believe, said Aristophanes, / that if all our loves were perfectly accomplished, / each one returning to his primal nature, / […] then our race would be entirely happy" (ibid., p. 156).

This introduction – which postulates men and women as binary beings who live in search for one another – summarizes what will happen to Orlando throughout the opera, as the tutor says: "go, little soul, you must go on your journey, / you must learn all this again / through the years, through the centuries" (ibid., p. 157). This quote demonstrates how the myth has an oracle aspect to it: Orlando must experience life through the expectancy of finding the other person who may fulfill them. The political problem with oracles is that they admit no changes, the paradigm is set as eternal.

It is important to understand that Carter does not believe this regiment mode of existence, but rather states it as a mode of criticizing it: as we will demonstrate, she is reaffirming what she reads in (and how she reads) Woolf in order to subvert it. It is, thus, important to understand how Carter seems to read Woolf's novel: she does not take on the interpretation of a journey towards the possibility of an androgynous mind that might be able to finish writing *The Oak Tree*. In fact, she sees the plot as a binary search for the "the other half", as though the main point of the story is not that Orlando finishes her poem, but that she finds Shelmerdine, so that they can be "whole" again.

Although reciprocity is a vital theme to *The Sadeian Woman*, it is important to highlight that this ideal of love as an ultimate goal for the being is but a direct paraphrasing of the Platonic myth of the androgynous. As aforementioned, Carter's essay is a project of subversion of systems of understanding and dividing sexes. In order to comprehend Carter's irony, it's important to emphasize that the author often uses classic ideals precisely to question their precepts – although many critics who

are not used to her works tend to see them as conservative, ignoring the deconstructive processes that happen between the lines (Urbano, 2022, p. 17). It is precisely those hidden figments of irony that we want to unveil in *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*.

The first act begins with an introduction to Mrs. Grimsditch and Mr. Dupper – the housekeeper and the butler. Their wardrobe belongs to the twentieth century, as the first didascaly mentions that the year is 1928. It is important to highlight the presence of these workers. As presented by Lee (1994, p. 317), Carter did not like Woolf's work, and had even "appeared on a Channel Four *J'Accuse* programme attacking Virginia Woolf, and made a memorably satirical remark about *Orlando*'s 'brown-nosing' of the aristocracy". Hence, Duarte (2014, p. 31) demonstrates how "her opposition to bourgeois individualism led Angela Carter to include in her opera libretto an 'impossible' Woolfian set of subjects […] two good and faithful servants connecting past and present and opening all doors towards the future", in such a way that they are not represented as "the poor, suffering the extremity of want and servility", which marked "an innovation that establishes a profound gap between Woolf's novel, as her elegy for the English aristocracy".

The way Lee understands Carter's read of *Orlando* seems quite plausible. Not only does Carter herself state how she feels about the novel, but, as a Marxist, it makes sense that she would focus on social understandings of gender rather than on individual possibilities of overcoming paradigms. The insertion of the workers on the foreground is deeply connected to this Marxist view of the world: not only Carter criticizes the aristocratic aspect of individual possibilities, but she also refuses to give relevance only to the aristocratic characters. Thus,

> Where Carter alters Woolf's emphasis is in her foregrounding of Orlando's servants, who occupy central and crucial roles in the libretto as chorus, observers, and figures of stability and wisdom. […] Carter's *Orlando* is more emphatically egalitarian and democratic than its model (Lee, 1994, p. 318).[26]

Before the workers, it is possible to notice a contradiction: although the year is

[26] It is also important to highlight that Mr. Dupper was not a butler in Woolf's novel, but a chaplain, who is in fact responsible for marrying Orlando and Shelmerdine. Carter, who as an atheist that positioned herself against religion, removes two Christian elements from Woolf's narrative: the first is the chaplain, turned into a butler; the second, as we will demonstrate, are the silver trumpets that announce Orlando's sex change.

1928, there are on the stage the figures of Orlando as an Elizabethan boy and of Queen Elizabeth I herself. After a brief introduction sung by the servants, Orlando proposes an analepsis: once the boy states “Then I was young / When I was a young boy, / The age was different” (Carter, 1997, p. 159), the set is changed into an Elizabethan aesthetics, which is formalized by the chorus’ chant “Vivat, vivat, Elizabeth Regina! / The golden age, the age of Elizabeth!” (ibid., p. 160), which sets the play in the sixteenth century.

When meeting Orlando, Elizabeth is moved by his shyness, gifts him a ring, and names him her treasurer and her steward. With great admiration, he protects the queen and offers her tenderness before the weight of royalty. It is henceforth that the house prospers, and Mr. Dupper affirms that before Orlando lies London, the world, and “all your life as a man!” (ibid., p. 162). Some information has thus been established: Orlando is a shy *boy* who gets his fortune in the Elizabethan era after being named treasurer by Elizabeth I.

The second scene contains only two didascalies which explicit how Carter never finished writing the libretto. In words that are close to Woolf’s novel, it is pointed out that “Orlando, wrapped in his big cloak, describes the excitement of the great city for a country boy like himself. He explains his love of low company” (ibid., p. 162) – the specific lines as to how that happens were never written. Furthermore, it is affirmed that “it was, one memorable winter when the Thames itself froze right over, that, for the first time, he lost his heart” (ibid., p. 163), which foreshadows what will happen between Orlando and Sasha.

The third scene introduces the archduchess Harriet, “though I rather feel we should first be introduced to him as a man. The ARCHDUKE enters with a titter of whores” (ibid., p. 163). This didascaly marks an inversion in relation to Woolf’s novel, where the archduchess is firstly introduced as a woman. It is not clear why Carter makes that choice, but a possible interpretation is that she wanted to emphasize that the archduke’s desire for Orlando does not derive from some sort of compulsory heterosexuality: once he sees Orlando dancing, “the ARCHDUKE is immediately rapt” (ibid., p. 163). Thus, even if the duke’s desire was never heterosexual in the novel as we have previously demonstrated, presenting the character as male when he is first “rapt” by the sight of a male Orlando creates an explicit image of homosexual desire on the stage. It may also be interesting to realize that the fact that he performs femininity (presents himself as the

archduchess) in order to come close to Orlando not only demonstrates his acknowledgement of the social heterosexual norm, but also posits the idea that it can be disrupted.

The image of the whores who enter with the duke possibly symbolizes a sexual freedom that is still not real to Orlando. As we will demonstrate, the boy – unlike his Woolfian model – abides by his virginity. In order to understand why Carter saw prostitutes as modes of sexual freedom rather than symbols of oppressed womanhood, we must go back to *The Sadeian Woman*. In her essay, Carter postulates that the whores are not victims undermined by male pleasure, but rather subversive statements to the gendered system of power: the author affirms that Justine's purity and the idea of feminine good behavior is connected to the impossibility of female pleasure, which causes every sexual encounter to be abusive, given that "in a world where women are commodities, a woman who refuses to sell herself will have the thing she refuses to sell taken away from her by force" (id., 2001, p. 55). Also, given the patriarchal reality, Carter believes that

> in a world organised by contractual obligations, the whore represents the only possible type of honest woman. If the world in its present state is indeed a brothel – and the difference between selling one's sexual labour and one's manual labor is … an academic one – then every attempt the individual makes to escape the conditions of sale will only bring a girl back to the crib, again, in some form or another. At least the girl who sells herself with her eyes open is not a hypocrite and, in a world with cash-sale ideology, that is a positive, even a heroic virtue (ibid., p. 57-58).

Carter, thus, demonstrates how important it is for women to take over control of their sexual pleasure. However, this must not be read as an optimistic view on how it is thoroughly possible to overcome patriarchal paradigms: prostitutes are only heroic symbols because they acknowledge that refusing sexual relations will cause them to be raped, so they make money out of a system that will use their bodies whether they like it (or whether they profit from it) or not. It is not clear why Carter chose to include these characters in the libretto, but a possible analysis is that she wanted to showcase the archduke surrounded by sex figures that detach sexuality from feeling in the moment he falls in love with Orlando to create a juxtaposition.

Next on the libretto, we see Orlando as the queen's servant prepared to receive the gifts sent by the Russian ambassador, who comes out of the ship alongside the Russian princess Marousha Stanilovska Dagmar Natasha Ilian

Romanovitch, whom Orlando will soon call “Sasha. I shall call you Sasha. / It was the name of a fox, / a white Russian fox, / that my father gave me / when I was a boy […] / but it bit me so badly / My father killed it…” (id., 1997, p. 164). Sasha is, in this way, associated to an image of Orlando’s childhood, before the sex change, which is similar to Sasha’s introduction on Woolf’s novel.

“They sing a love duet, a winter love duet, the words of which I haven’t yet assembled” (ibid., p. 164) and, before Sasha can give him “the perfect love gift”, the ice on the Thames river breaks and she is taken back to Russia, releasing a white falcon into the sky. In notes sent to John Cox concerning the opera, Carter explains that the white bird Sasha releases refers to

> a Russian fairy story; the tsar asks the child to visit him ‘neither without a present nor with a gift’, and she brings a bird that flies away as she hands it to him. This seems to me the perfect image of a love-gift, and relates to the bird-like Shelmerdine’s winged apparition during the wedding scene (ibid., p. 506).

It is interesting to notice that, in Carter’s version, Sasha does not betray Orlando. In fact, she is taken back to Russia due to the ice breaking and not by will, leaving him the falcon as a “love-gift”. Orlando, thus, states: “The ice is broken! My heart is broken!” (ibid., p. 165). The first act ends with Orlando crying on his bed while Sasha sings about Russia offstage. The butler runs in and announces that the queen is dead. There is not, however, any connection between her dying and Orlando being with another woman (as it happens in the novel): even though it is clear that the queen really liked the boy, Carter does not provide this relation such importance as to it be related to the queen’s death. In fact, there is no evident romantic desire from either of them towards the other.

The removal of this relation may be due to two reasons. The first being that a novel allows for the development of many subplots, whereas the stage does not, so that Carter had to focus her action on the main events of the narrative, which do not involve Orlando’s relationship to Queen Elizabeth. The second option is that this relation was just not relevant to the statements Carter wanted to make in the libretto, although this reason is also related to the fact that a play does not allow as many details as a novel.

Nevertheless, the queen’s death helps mark the passage of time in the play: the second act begins in 1603 as the archduchess Harriet Grizelda of Finster-

Aarhorn (now a woman) enters Orlando's room. Mrs. Grimsditch does not like the way she comes in, because that is not proper lady behavior – this is the first time we have a glance of the housekeeper's traditional way of thinking. The archduchess starts flirting with Orlando, what embarrasses him. At the end of the scene, "the ARCHDUCHESS rises to her full height, which is not inconsiderable. She swoops in for the 'kill', like an enormous bird" (ibid., p. 166) and carries Orlando to bed while he complains. This introduces how Orlando feels about sleeping with archduchess, which leads into some considerations that will unroll in the following scene.

The following scene starts with the boy stating that he "must leave the country; compromised! / By a woman old enough / to be my mother! / Ruined!" (ibid., p. 166). A few considerations may derive from this part of the libretto. Firstly, there are the clear differences between Woolf and Carter's Orlandos: in the novel, he sleeps with many women and is never concerned about his chastity; in the libretto, he sees himself "ruined" for having slept with a woman. Also, Woolf's Orlando never sleeps with the archduke / archduchess. Next, the seduction scene seems similar to a scene in Carter's *The Company of Wolves* – short-story that is part of *The Bloody Chamber* – in which the woman takes on the role of the seducer, which causes the embarrassment of the male figure.[27] Finally, Orlando saying that he was ruined by a woman after sleeping with the archduchess seems like an incoherent construction: she was actually a man, the aforementioned archduke, and it would not be likely for Orlando to sleep with him/her and not realize that it was physically a man.

When considering the countries he might run away to, Orlando names two that may be analyzed here: the Virgin Islands – "unless this is a weak joke" – and "Turkey, where all the women go veiled and there is no temptation" (ibid., p. 167). The annotation on the Virgin Islands joke explicitly denotes how unfinished the text was, as she did not know if she should keep it. The second option, however, seems to contradict the previous scene: if Orlando was taken basically by force by the archduchess, why would he have to run away from temptations? It is only possible to speculate that, if the work had gone any further, the author might have solved this

[27] *The Company of Wolves* was based on the well-known fairy-tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*. According to Reid (2014, p. 6), the wolf in the tale would be a symbol for the male sexuality that literally eats the feminine figure. Little red would symbolize the chaste girl who should follow the path of chastity, keeping her red shawl (her hymen). Carter subverts that construction by creating a story in which, once the wolf starts seducing the girl, she starts seducing him right back, which destabilizes his power. This idea echoes what we have shown the author to affirm in *The Sadeian Woman*, as the mutuality of desire is responsible for destroying a patriarchal system in which the female sexual freedom symbolizes her being eaten by the wolf.

contradiction. In the version we have to analyze, nonetheless, Orlando's escape from temptations was not well-elaborated. Furthermore, even though he is a man, Carter's Orlando seems closer to Justine than Juliette, connecting his honor to his sexual life – which also depicts a different characterization from Woolf's Orlando.

Hence, it is possible to notice how, from the beginning, the libretto's character is not the desiring subject that wants the person riding the horse or many women he may bring to bed, but a desired object, ruined by the archduchess. Taking into consideration the Marxist feminism that echoes in Carter's *The Sadeian Woman*, then he is, from the beginning, set in a feminine position. Therefore, if the male Orlando in the libretto does not share the novel's character's sexual experience and is the object of desire of an actual male character, there is not much masculinity in him to begin with.

The beliefs that would be deconstructed with the sex change in the novel – his sexual freedom as a man, his existence as a desiring being, and the idea that women should be pure – do not exist in the libretto. This is a first important note on how Carter seems to read *Orlando*: he has never been a very masculine person in patriarchal terms, which is expressed in his relation to sex. If there is not much to overcome about his maleness, then something is lacking for the construction of his androgynous existence. With the development of the plot, Carter's take on the theme will be further explained.

In Constantinople, Orlando signs documents as the Ambassador of the Court of Saint James, while the secretary "discusses the instability and xenophobia of the Ottoman regime, the notorious propensity of the Turks for treachery and the stories in the bazaar of plans for a pre-emptive putsch against the foreigners, who are not sons of Islam" (ibid., p. 167). Although these political matters may directly affect – and even threaten, since there was the planning of "a pre-emptive putsch against the foreigners" (ibid., p. 167) – Orlando, he is more interested in natural aspects rather than political ones, distracting himself with sights of the Oriental landscape.

In sequence, Orlando is elevated into dukedom and a grand masquerade is organized for him. There is a short interlude and then three figures in white robes walk in, Purity, Chastity, and Modesty, the latter carrying his ducal regalia. The fact that Modesty is carrying the symbol of his dukedom is a very ironic representation of how Carter sees this emblematic scene of the novel as "brown-nosing the aristocracy": it is one of the figures of femininity that shall be cast away that brings

his sign of being an aristocrat.

The figures reveal that Orlando is asleep and chant that he shall never awake. However, their presence and efforts are detained by the figured of the goddess Venus covered in flowers and fruits who casts them way: “The truth! Avaunt ye, you weird sisters,[28] / you Purity, you Modesty, you Chastity! / What have you to do with my Orlando? / The truth!” (ibid., p. 169). Orlando rises, which causes his toga to fall: “Orlando is a woman!” (ibid., p. 170).

As aforementioned, this is another changer Carter makes to Woolf’s novel: in the narrative, silver trumpets demand the truth; in the libretto, they are replaced by the Roman goddess of love. Carter was against religious beliefs and saw them as part of the “male trifold of power” (id., 2001, p. 24) – the king, the law, and *god*. This scene in Woolf’s novel makes reference to a direct biblical passage: the silver trumpets are a calling for the people of god according to Numbers 10:2-10. Therefore, it makes sense for Carter to replace these Christian symbols for a feminine mythological entity.

The building of Orlando as a woman in this scene may seem like a paradox at first, since her womanhood is marked by the revelation of her naked body. After this moment, a set of technologies of gender – to echo Teresa de Lauretis’ term – will come along to help build Orlando’s womanhood. On a first view, it might seem like what is being postulated is an idea of pre-discursive sex: the existence of her vagina means she is woman. However, what is really being discussed is the idea that systems of performative gender derive from ways in which society reads certain anatomies, as we have previously demonstrated using Preciado’s analyses.

What takes place in the libretto is that Orlando is revealed as a person with a vagina. After that – and only after that –, a system of behaviors and dress codes will be imposed upon her to make sure she is living according to social definitions of femininity. Her naked body does not precede her existence as a woman: the womanhood that exists socially before Orlando’s revealing will be imposed upon her after her vagina is exposed before society. There is nothing of ontological in the way Carter formulates sex-gender in her libretto, even when it is fundamentally dependent upon anatomical terms.

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[28] The “weird sisters” are most likely a reference to the Fates who, in Greek mythology, traced the life, destiny, and death of human beings and gods. Thus, it is possible to interpret that, if Venus had not shown up, these three entities would guide Orlando’s entire existence.

The third act begins with Orlando alongside a sea-captain on a shipboard on his way to England. Eventually, “ORLANDO flirts gently with the sea captain and reflects on her changed stated” (id., 1997, p. 171). Firstly, Carter sets the idea of women as desiring beings rather than mere desired objects: Orlando does not oppress her desire due to being a woman but commences a game of seduction. Secondly, this marks an opposition from the female Orlando to the male Orlando: she does not hide her sexuality while he feels ruined for having slept with the archduchess. Not only does this mark an opposition to what is socially expected of men and women, but it also highlights a difference between the character in the libretto and the one in the novel: while Woolf’s male Orlando slept with many women but censored her existence as a woman, Carter’s male Orlando does not develop his sexuality until he becomes a woman. Finally, there is the phrase “state”: this term indicates something momentary and passible of ending – she does not reflect on her new eternal being, but on her current state. This helps emphasizing the aforementioned idea that Carter does not see sex-gender as ontological, but as the reflection of a mode of regulated gendered existence.

Next in the opera, time passes: “there has been a plague, there has been a fire. Now we have Saint Paul’s. There is a new spirit abroad; it is the age of wit and wisdom, it is the eighteenth century” (ibid., p. 171). In addition to this movement of time, it is also affirmed that Orlando is now thirty and, due to that, “it’s high time we had some / little masters and mistresses” (ibid., p. 172), in such a way that a certain age seems to determinate procreative expectations, which is a demand that comes from a political system of compulsory heterosexuality, as affirmed by Rich (2003, p. 18-19):

> Characteristics of male power include *the power of men* [...] *to command or exploit their labor to control their produce*-[by means of the institutions of marriage and motherhood as unpaid productions; […] male control of abortion, sterilization, and childbirth.

Rich, thus, argues how childbirth and motherhood are socially created as a method of restricting the lives of women. This, nevertheless, has been so naturalized that the servants speak of it as if it was a given fact that a certain age is related to bearing children. It is also important to note that the workers are not presented as devoid of sexist thoughts in opposition to the aristocratic way of

thinking, but rather that the heterosexual and patriarchic systems of thought echo through different social strata.

As the play continues, and similarly to what happens in Woolf's novel, Orlando meets Dupper and Grimsditch who state that "she hasn't changed" (Carter, 1997, p. 172). Thus, it is clear that there is a disconnection between the sexual difference and personality changes: the transition does not affect who Orlando is, that is, the genital mark has no direct effect over the being's personality or psychology.

Then, Orlando organizes a tea party for which she invites Mr. Pope, Mr. Addison, and Mr. Swfit – the aforementioned Woolfian characters based on real authors. However, they have no role or importance in the play other than a few literary lines. Although they each say something assumedly clever like they do in the novel, Orlando's reaction to their speeches is different from the ones in the novel. Mr. Pope's speech is interrupted in both texts, but, while Woolf causes an interruption in order for the narrator to develop an argument on artistic creation, in the libretto he is interrupted by applause and a comment from Orlando on his wit and brilliance. As aforementioned, Carter is a big critic of bourgeoisie and its values, and the author saw Woolf's work as a big ode to them. Therefore, this moment should most likely be interpreted as criticism to the fake wit granted by the canon to the big bourgeois authors.

Later in the scene, Addison affirms: "I consider woman as a beautiful, romantic animal / that may be adorned with furs and feathers, […] / and every part of nature furnish out its share / towards the embellishment of a creature / that is the most consummate work of it..." (ibid., p. 173). It is thus depicted the image a man would have of a woman (as an ontology). Once again, Carter is ironic as to the social concepts of womanhood. Orlando sees herself before the social (and masculine) take on what a woman would be, but, despite her vagina, she does not identify herself with it – "ORLANDO: (*Aside*) What a wonderful piece of work is a woman! / How well he puts it! / Strange how I never think of myself / in this way!" (ibid., p. 173). Thus, it is clear that the perceptions and expectations of femininity are not identical to real female existence, that is, the expectations around gender performativity and behavior are not directly connected to a genital marking. Furthermore, even though she does not agree with what has been said, Orlando exclaims out loud "Bravo, Mr. Addison!" (ibid., p. 173), what helps emphasizing once again the falsity of the bourgeois speech.

Mr. Swift's speech is interrupted by the arrival of the archduchess Harriet, who Orlando thinks might be "a sympathetic friend who will be able to initiate her in some of the more arcane mysteries of femininity" (ibid., p. 174). Thus, it is possible to notice that Orlando believes in some type of feminine mystique – a dangerous idea for the feminist movement, as it presupposed that there is something metaphysical to gender roles, which implies the possibility of denying that performativity is historically and socially constructed. Furthermore, when trying to prepare herself to meet the archduchess, Orlando "having trouble with her gender body language, strides forward to kiss the ARCHDUCHESS's hand, remembers her sex, converts the stride into a curtsey and takes a slight tumble" (ibid., p. 174). It is therefore clear that there are expected behaviors related to gender which are not naturally acquired, but socially constructed – what is also present in the building of Eve's psyche in Beulah in *The Passion of New Eve* – when Evelynn is turned into Eve, he goes through a somatic surgery in addition to being taught feminine modes of behavior and feminine ways of thinking.

Orlando leaves in order to grab the teacups and, while she is not looking, the archduchess' clothes and wig fall off and reveal the archduke. His speech is similar to the one in the novel.[29] Therefore, in a similar way as to what happens in the novel, it is possible to understand the archduke as an androgynous figure who plays with gender performativities – presenting himself as both man and woman – and whose desire is not restricted to sex: he falls in love with Orlando when he is still a man and remains in love once she becomes a woman.

Following the archduke's declaration of love, he asks Orlando to marry him. He soon, nonetheless, "explains how he will make their home a shrine for ORLANDO; she will sit in the nursey, rocking the cradle, waiting for him to come home… she will jump up for joy to hear his foot on the step…. Her little home, her world..." (ibid., p. 174). It is clear how oppressive this proposal is for Orlando; it is a clear heterosexual structure in which the man gets to live, work, and get to know the world, while the woman is doomed to the home and motherhood.

After hearing the proposal, Orlando asks "what has all this to do with love?" (ibid., p. 174). There is here, therefore, an echo of the true love ideal Carter has set

[29] "The ARCHDUKE explains how he was always in love with ORLANDO since the first moment at the ice-fair, how he pursued her through the centuries and the sexes, how Venus herself snatched her away from him in Constantinople yet now has brought her to him in her most perfect self, a woman, so that he can reveal himself as simply a man" (Carter, 1997, p. 174).

on *The Sadeian Woman*: desire must be mutual, but, beyond that, the sexual division in the familiar and work realms which expresses the submission of women to the household and family and the possibility of work only for the man is also part of the problem that impasses the realization of true love.

It is important to notice yet another difference between the archdukes: in Woolf's novel, Orlando finds his subjects utterly boring and plans a way to convince him that she is a bad person and give up on marrying her – that is, she does not make the decision directly by herself, but find ways to convince him into giving the idea up. In the libretto, nevertheless, she is the one who chooses not to marry, after understanding that the wedded life proposed by the archduke is utterly oppressive to women, which demonstrates that the archduke's androgynous life experience does not deprive him of a sexist understanding of marriage. He seems, in fact, able of jumping back and forth between male and female existences, but never to fully set himself in an androgynous space.

Thus, in the libretto, Orlando "explains that she does not want to marry; that she is rich, has a lovely home of her own, does not need another. Does not need a *husband*. A husband is the last thing she needs" (ibid., p. 175). Besides the affirmation that she, a woman, has the right to choose not to get married, this line expresses that Orlando possesses the two needed factors for female freedom expressed on *A Room of One's Own*: money and a house. It is also noticeable that she does not lose everything she possessed as a man due to her transition as it happens in the novel. It is more important to Carter that Orlando has the freedom to explore life as a woman than to emphasize the loss of rights due to her gender. It may be possible to think that this difference in focus derives from the fact that between the novel (1928) and the libretto (1980), the feminist movement acquired a lot of rights for women which were then still fought for. Whilst Woolf tended to emphasize that sexual difference inferred different lawful prerogatives, Carter seems to focus on the way the different genders experience the world.

In the following scene of the libretto, the archduke leaves, and Orlando grabs her cloak and leaves to London. The scene ends with a near repetition of the line Grimsditch and Dupper share on the first scene, but this time said only by the housekeeper: "you've got all your life in front of you. / Pretty girl like you, why shouldn't you have some fun! / Your whole life in front of you! / Your life as a woman!" (ibid., p. 175). This parallel structure – which is not an exact copy of the

first scene since the phrase “man” was replaced by “woman” – marks the beginning of a new life for Orlando and seems to demonstrate that Mrs. Grimsditch has a different perspective on femininity as the archduke. Furthermore, the fact that Mr. Dupper does not share this line with the housekeeper as he did on the first scene might indicate that women see female existence from a different – and less restrictive – point a view than that formulated by the male gaze.

The fourth scene[30] of Act III marks yet another time lapse into the “Age of Scandal” – probably a reference to T. H. White’s book *The Age of Scandal*, in which the author depicts the final years of the eighteenth century –, leading onto the “the French wars”.[31] In this moment, Orlando “will try being a boy again. She will go off to war” (ibid., p. 176). The following scene begins as Orlando enters “as a boy”, but soon “reveals herself as a woman” (ibid., p. 176). These moments demonstrate how Orlando was aware of concepts of gender, but only under a binary system: there is no intention to extrapolate the given parameters.

Since Carter never finished writing these scenes, it is only possible to make some assumptions and analyze their possibilities: if Orlando left for the war while male-presenting, then either gender is a mutable and recognizable choice or there was a process of gender performance – and not performativity – in which Orlando consciously posited herself as a man in order to go to war.[32] The first hypothesis seems weak: besides the conceptualization of gender as a free choice – as demonstrated by Butler (2019) and presented in our first chapter –, it would be demanded from everyone involved in the character’s going to war the acceptability of her self-definition of gender, which seems highly unlikely when taking into consideration the male way of seeing women as seen on the archduke’s proposal. Thus, what most likely has happened is that Orlando consciously and intentionally cross-dressed herself, which means that she has some level of conscience about the technologies of gender that surround her and use them in her favor.

The new era comes in at the end of Act III, and is marked by the arrival of a

[30] Although the libretto depicts it as “SCENE 3 BALLROOM”, it is the fourth scene in act III: it contains two “scene 3”s.
[31] The term “French wars” possibly longs to combine the French scenario of the end of the eighteenth century and beginnings of the nineteenth, which is marked by the French revolution, the Napoleonic wars and the so-called “revolutionary wars”.
[32] As demonstrated in our first chapter, in *Gender Trouble*, Butler develops the idea that performativity is related to social acts that take place daily in the construction of one’s gender as an identity. On the other hand, gender performance is a conscious playing with the social parameters, such as drag performers who take on the binary paradigms in order to subvert them.

black cloud: the nineteenth century, the “Age of Respectability”. Orlando goes back home still in her boy clothes from the eighteenth century and is soon informed that she must “put on three or four red flannel petticoats” and that “it isn’t right – it isn’t respectable – for ORLANDO to show her – cough, blush – legs. Indeed, a dressmaker, summoned by GRIMSDITCH, is waiting outside to fit ORLANDO for a crinoline, such as the Queen herself wears” (ibid., p. 178). Not only does this moment seem to describe a fashion that served to the restriction of female bodies, but it also denounces the sexualization of the flesh, represented by Grimsditch’s embarrassment at the sight of Orlando’s legs.

It is important to highlight how Carter is not referring to a mere fashion trend, but as to how clothes serve as an instrument for feminine discomfort, as “characteristics of male power include *the power of men* […] *to confine them* [women] *physically and prevent their movement*-[by means of […] high heels and ‘feminine’ dress codes in fashion” (Rich, 2003, p. 18-19). This proposition is emphasized when, after being visited by the dressmaker, Orlando stated that “the crinoline is a cage, a cage for her body, they are forcing her body into ever more and more ridiculous clothes… Even GRIMSDITCH is in the plot, too. Alone, ORLANDO weeps” (Carter, 1997, p. 178).

The inclusion of Grimsditch into this “plot” – it is her the one to call for the dressmaker – reveals Carter’s view that women, even those who imagine there is a “whole life ahead” for a young woman, may still serve a patriarchic system. This perspective had already been presented in *The Sadeian Woman*: whether through Justine as the passive and suffering victim or Juliette as the sexual tyrant, women may carry on the legacy of oppressive and unbalanced sexuality; each on their extreme, but none moving towards reciprocity. Justine, following the Christian precepts of virginity, does not allow herself to feel pleasure. Juliette, on the other hand, discovers her sexuality as a mode of torturing her partner, so that he will not feel pleasure either.

Mrs. Grimsditch and Mr. Dupper enter Orlando’s room to announce that they are engaged and ask Orlando if she has not yet thought about the fact that she is the only bachelor person in the castle. After hearing that question, Orlando cries “lonely… lonely… I need love… and a husband…” (ibid., p. 178). Solitude changes her perspective towards marriage, which, after her whole life experience, now seems like a good idea. This shift is most likely related to two main factors: marriage

in the nineteenth century does not mean the same thing as it did in the seventeenth, even though that change is not a theme in the libretto; and the fact that everyone now has a romantic mate, which, in consonance to the social idea that a woman of Orlando's age should be married and bearing children, leads her into wanting a regulated life for herself. This not only highlights the social pressure upon women of bearing children, but also posits a problematic romanticizing of marriage as the solution to every issue, which echoes the Greek myth that introduces the play.

Orlando goes to the garden, where we finally have a fundamental symbol of Woolf's novel: the oak tree. However, it is not a poem, but a real tree which Orlando considers using to hang herself on. This suicidal though seems to derive from two main factors: the social impositions on female existence which are repeatedly cast upon Orlando; and, most importantly, the impossibility of finding true love: although everyone is married, Orlando is still a lonely bachelor who does not want a heteronormative marriage like the one offered by the archduke. In fact, her disappointment in terms of love comes before that, since she never overcomes the loss of Sasha, affirming before the hanging oak tree: "love sailed away when the ice broke" (ibid., p. 179). Since the relations Orlando had were only between her and the archduke/archduchess and between her and Sasha, it is not hard to figure that, whilst longing for a partner, Orlando would romanticize her past with the Russian princess.

. Turning the poem into a suicidal element by also be a critic to Woolf's statements, especially ones made in *A Room of One's Own*. The author had argued that a woman who shared the talents and the era with Shakespeare would kill herself due to the female reality of the time. Thus, Carter seems to – once again in an ironic manner – create a direct dialogue to the modernist author not only by bringing the theme of suicide to the libretto, but to associate it to the element that symbolized the process of writing in *Orlando*: the oak tree was the consolidation of the androgynous writing and of Orlando overcoming the impossibility of writing as a woman.

The idea of the oak tree being related to the androgynous and also associated to suicide also seems to echo what we have argued for in our analysis of *The Passion of New Eve*: the only way to reach true androgyny is through a reciprocate relation. However, this idea is, in reality, unreachable: Tristessa is killed after consummating her relation with Eve. Thus, it is possible to notice how Carter

associates the image of the androgynous to death in both texts.

However, Orlando's suicide thoughts are interrupted by the arrival of Shelmerdine, who "has parachuted out of his bi-plane and engulfed ORLANDO in his fall" (ibid., p. 179).[33] The dialogue between them is thoroughly fast and echoes the way they talk to each other in the novel, but there never is any construction related to the possibility of an encounter between androgynous beings – or any conversation related to their union in any way:

> SHELMERDINE: Madame, you're hurt!
> ORLANDO: I'm dead, sir!
> SHELMERDINE: Will you marry me?
> ORLANDO: I already have!
> SHELMERDINE: Are you positive you aren't a man?
> ORLANDO: Is it possible you're not a woman? (ibid., p. 179).

This conversation seems sudden, but that is most likely Carter's intention. In the novel, Orlando and Shelmerdine soon have many conversations about every thing important about each other and create a great relationship that leads into marriage. None of that happens in the libretto. Combining the way the characters meet and Carter's statement on *Orlando* being a "brown-nosing of the aristocracy" (Lee, 1994, p. 317), it is possible to interpret that Carter wanted this dialogue to be sudden and meaningless as a critic to the futility of the bourgeois dialogue she finds in Woolf's work. Carter is placing Woolf right next to Pope, Addison, and Swift: a bourgeois author who writes fancy words about meaningless matters.

In addition, if Orlando and Shelmerdine were able of establishing the reciprocal relation they do in the novel, they might reach a relational androgyny. But what is different between them and Eve and Tristessa so that they would be allowed to survive? What causes Tristessa death is her abject anatomy and her non-normative sexuality: she will be killed by the social world for being a woman with a penis who creates a reciprocal relation with another woman. Orlando is biopolitically a woman, as Shelmerdine is a man, which would make it possible for them to create a relationship with less risks.

However, that does not happen either. In fact, they have a beautiful wedding in which Grimsditch affirms that she never thought she would see the day, and

[33] This is the entrance Carter referred to on her notes when mentioning that Shelmerdine's arrival was similar to the bird Sasha let go when the ice broke.

Orlando agrees with her, which helps demonstrating her loss of hope for love that had led into the suicidal thoughts. Suddenly, nonetheless, Shelmerdine "announces how the wind governs him and he must go where the wind blows, to all the corners of the earth" (Carter, 1997, p. 180), and leaves on his bi-plane, leaving Orlando alone weeping and laughing.

This conclusion of the fourth act also helps understanding why Orlando and Shelmerdine may survive: androgynous relations are not allowed to exist in the real society; however, that is not what happens between them. Shelmerdine is still a man who arrives out of the blue and then leaves Orlando, the woman, alone with the household. When they ask each other if they are sure they are not a man/woman in the novel, they are referring to the idea of knowing how each other surpasses the binary norms of gender. Carter reads that as an aristocratic image of metaphysical reaching that has no effect whatsoever in material terms: it is still a woman married to a man, in a relation where the man leaves to explore the world as the woman stays at home, which is virtually the problem Woolf attacks on *A Room of One's Own*. Although Carter's statement seems not to realize how the possibility of a gendered identity beyond binary paradigms was an important postulation to gender theory, she is not wrong in stating that Woolf's Orlando ends up a mother in a heterosexual marriage. This assertion helps restate the Marxist critic: an individual's existence beyond heteropatriarchal terms has no historical, social, or political meaning by itself and serves only to diminish the sufferings of an aristocracy that posits itself as revolutionary.

Like the end of the novel, the opera's epilogue marks the year of 1928. Orlando is at Marshall and Snelgrove buying new sheets when she affirms: despite the years that have passed "I don't feel a day older, / just the same as I did long ago, / when the Thames froze over… / and the Russians came… / and I fell in love…" (ibid., p. 181). In this way, it is possible to notice once again how Orlando has remained the same through the centuries and the sexes.

While in the novel Orlando goes through personality changes – that is, even though she never loses her taste for the people, for nature or for writing, the male Orlando that had sex with many women becomes the isolated female Orlando who wonders if she should even still write, haunted by the Angel in the House, until finally reaching her androgynous existence. The only shift Carter's Orlando seems to go through is towards the idea of marriage (which happens when she is a woman, that

is, there is no relevant difference in personality between the male and the female Orlandos).

Suddenly, Sasha walks into the store and Orlando calls for her, but, in response, Sasha says that Orlando must be mistaking her for someone, and "SASHA gives ORLANDO a look of gratuitous contempt and sails out. ORLANDO smiles; shakes her head to get rid of the memories" (ibid., p. 181). It is not explained why Sasha does not remember Orlando (or pretends to). In the novel, Orlando is actually only seeing a woman who reminds her of Sasha; in the libretto, nevertheless, it is Sasha herself. Two possible ways of understanding this are that, as she has remained a woman her whole life and had met Orlando as a man, Sasha does not recognize her now; or that, unlike Orlando, Sasha has let the past go.

The second option may be more likely to be the case since, right after this encounter, the salesman asks if Orlando wants anything else and she says she wants the past, but it is not for sale. The fact that Orlando wants her past back indicates that she has not reached some sort of higher ground like the androgyny existence in the novel would be, but rather that her past life as a man in love with Sasha was preferable to her womanhood and her marriage to Shelmerdine. Therefore, immerged in these aristocratic ideals of evolution beyond gender roles – and in quite a pessimistic view –, Orlando finds out that her experience in both sexes has nor led her into any sort of better way of living. To a materialist like Carter, there is no point in looking for an androgynous mind that overcomes gender roles if these roles will continue to exist and mold lives and societies.

At the end of the opera, Mrs. Grimsditch and Orlando sing together: "here I/you came as boy and woman, / here I/you lay as the west wind's bride, / the years have passed lightly over / here in this great bed you'll die…" (ibid., p. 182). Then, Orlando grabs a picture of Shelmerdine, who sings a lullaby offstage, kisses it, and lies down, as lonely as she was before the marriage if not for an idea of Shelmerdine, who has been away since the wedding. In the opera, Orlando's story does not finish amidst nature alongside her loved one as proposed by Woolf's novel, but in London with her housekeeper: her servants were the ones to stay by her side from her childhood to her death, which helps to highlight Carter's Marxist emphasis on the working class, as argued by Duarte (2014). Instead of dying away from society and next to her heterosexual male husband, Orlando dies amongst the real world and close to the people who will keep the world moving: the working class.

The opera is done without any mentions to Orlando writing at all. As aforementioned, *Orlando* maybe read as a fiction formulation of what Woolf would later argue on *A Room of One's Own* concerning androgynous literature. One of the main motifs of the novel is how the experience in both sexes affects the writing of the poem, which does not even exist in the libretto.

Carter's discussion on gender were not related to creative processes or to individual minds and ways of self-understanding – which she saw as bourgeois nonsense.[34] Thus, it would not make much sense for her to develop her opera emphasizing the poem or the possibility of overcoming gender norms in the literary process – "brown-nosing the aristocracy" (Lee, 1994, p. 317). Furthermore, Orlando's relationships never seem to reach a balanced stated – like hers and Shelmerdine's in the novel –: the possibility of relationship with Harriet is fundamentally based on a patriarchic sexual division that would reduce her life to her home. The relationship with Shelmerdine is not different from this either: she remains alone at home while he travels the world. This might also be one of the reasons why she remains attached to the past and to Sasha: even though they were never able to have a concrete relation due to the rupture of the ice, the "could have been good" seems preferable to the other possibilities Orlando came to have.

Henceforth, we will focus on the characters in the libretto and in possible understandings of them as androgynous. Firstly, Sasha's appearance does not make it possible for us to read her as anything other than the woman with whom Orlando falls in love. Although in the novel she is introduced as an androgynous figure whose gender Orlando is not able to define at first, in the libretto she is introduced merely as a princess who is taken away when the ice breaks.

Next, there is the archduke, who most likely seems to be an androgynous figure in the libretto, since he plays with systems of gender performativity and since his desire overcomes parameters of sexual definitions. Given that he is love with Orlando whether the character is a man or a woman, he must be read as a bisexual

[34] The idea that androgynous existences are bourgeois nonsense is also present in Preciado's work (2020, p. 166), as the philosopher defends that a focus on the gendering of individual subjects means ignoring the real political problems of the planet: "I could be making mistakes too, and be paying more attention to my testosterone doses than to subject transformation, focusing more on the translations of my books than on the necropolitical transformation of the planet". He also seems to share some of Carter's thoughts on Woolf, as he says that "she can sometimes be homophobic, often classist, constantly pretentious and arrogant" (ibid., p. 165). Both Preciado's queer postulations and Carter's Marxist feminism propose a focus on existences that are fundamentally political and oppose themselves to Woolf's "bourgeois individualism" (Duarte, 2014, p. 31).

figure. Beyond that, his “androgyny” is deeply marked by the way he cross-dresses in order to establish a game of seduction between him and Orlando: aware of the demands of a heterosexual system, he will change the way he presents himself in order to be allowed to follow his desires. However, his view of marriage is still highly binary and conservative, so that he seems to play with gender roles as long as the norm is not broken, which means that, although he is able to play with gender performativities, he never really presents himself as a truly androgynous figure.

If we take into consideration what Carter proposed in *The Sadeian Woman,* our analysis of relational androgyny in *The Passion of New Eve* and the way the archduke proposes to Orlando, we will see that, even though he plays with gender regulations, his mind is not androgynous, but simply manly: he still sees the world and the relation between genders in a patriarchic manner, manner which favors him. Therefore, even though a shallow first analysis of him might perceive the archduke as someone who has overcome gender regulations, he is in fact a bisexual man who plays with the sex-gender system in order to pursue his own desires. When he sees himself finally able to create something with the person he has been in love with for years, he is still a man who wants a regulated household in which he gets to go out and experience the world while his wife stays at home and bears children.

Shelmerdine is possibly the hardest character to analyze in the libretto, as we know nearly nothing about him. While Woolf presents a man with some feminine traits that despite traveling has long conversations with Orlando and helps her go back to writing, Carter simply depicts a man who comes out of nowhere, falls in love with Orlando without them actually knowing the first thing about each other, marries her and then leaves. His role is to serve to a social need of Orlando’s: she must find a husband. In doing this, Carter seems to create an ironic emphasis on the fact that, in the novel, Shelmerdine is almost a *deus ex machina* that shows up when Orlando is going through a melancholic crisis and helps her finish her poem by marrying her. Carter is, thus, criticizing this bourgeois ideal that proposes itself as subversive but reaches an end that is exactly what it had proposed itself to disrupt; after all, the institution of marriage is part of how the patriarchy works.

Lastly, there is the protagonist. On a first take, it might seem as though Orlando reaches for androgyny in moments in which s/he sets her/himself against technologies of gender that are not in consonance to his/her beliefs. There is what would usually be seen as a feminine relation between sexuality and honor when he

feels ruined by having sex with the archduchess as a man, and there are the fashion tendencies that oppress his body as a woman. Thus, there are aspects of Orlando that surpass binary impositions of masculinity and femininity.

However, to affirm that these inadequacies serve as an argument for his androgyny is a big stretch. Nothing good really comes from his possibility of experiencing life as both a man and a woman. In the novel, that was necessary for him/her to reach a position of androgynous mind and finish writing *The Oak Tree*. At the end of the opera, Orlando is just a lonely woman left by her husband who is traveling the world and who wishes to have the past back.

The prologue had postulated the platonic idea that androgyny could be found by the union of these two beings that have been split apart. If Shelmerdine was Orlando's other half, then she would not finish the opera desiring for the past and reaching for Sasha. Lying on her bed to die by Mrs. Grimsditch, Orlando is not an androgynous figure: she is a woman left by her husband who dreams of the past. Creating a big narrative to demonstrate how this heteronormative conclusion surpasses the systems it proposes to disrupt when it actually sets the paradigms it should destroy is but "brown-nosing the aristocracy". Or at least, that is how Angela Carter seems to read the plot.

As aforementioned, Carter seems to ignore how the possibility of existence beyond binary gender norms was a revolutionary view for the literature of the time. Based on *The Sadeian Woman* and *The Passion of New Eve*, it is possible to notice that Carter was also a pessimist – maybe too much of a pessimist even to declare herself a Marxist, as such philosophy believes in the possibility of change. Although Carter presents the idea of reciprocal desire, or true love, as a mode of subverting the system, she also kills Tristessa in her novel after the encounter between Tristessa and Eve as a statement to the fact that society does not admit this reciprocity of desire. However, Carter is not wrong is affirming that Woolf's focus is very individual and aristocratic, as it emphasizes an inner conceptualization of gendered existence without any real social or political effect.

The idea that the relation between Orlando and Shelmerdine is not androgynous is also aligned to what we have postulated in our analysis of *The Passion of New Eve*: a true androgynous encounter is not possible in a patriarchal society. As aforementioned, not Shelmerdine nor the archduke offer Orlando a possibility of reciprocal marriage. The only "could have been" is Sasha, who was

taken away by the melting of the Thames river. That might be the reason why Orlando keeps thinking of her even after being married to Shelmerdine: Sasha was the possibility for Orlando to find true love, but, as established on *The Passion of New Eve*, there is no real possibility of relational androgyny in a system that does not admit reciprocity: Tristessa must die; Sasha must go.

Although these two examples end in such fatalist terms, it is important to highlight that Carter did write many works in which the system was dissolved and/or an androgynous relation was conceived between characters. The most well-known example may be the short-story *The Company of Wolves* - later transformed into a radio play and a movie script – in which the mutual desire between the girl in the red shawl and the big bad wolf destroys the oppressive terms perpetuated by the grandmother. Her short-story *Puss in Boots* – also turned into a radio play – reveals a mutual desire between the protagonists as well, in such a way that their love is able to free the woman from an oppressive marriage. Similarly, Finn and Melanie's reciprocal desire leads into the burning of the patriarchic toyshop in her novel (and movie script) *The Magic Toyshop*. Finally, as argued by Stephan (2025), the love demonstrated by the Hero in Carter's radio play *Vampirella* (derived from her short-story *The Lady of the House of Love*) leads to the Countess' destruction only because she was an echo that could not outlive the overcoming of patriarchal paradigms. Thus, although the stories analyzed in this dissertation do not end in androgynous terms, Carter does create stories in which this possibility is concretized.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The theme of androgyny has had many functions through history, from Plato's *Symposium* to Foucault's *History of* Sexuality. The discussion arises in women's writing as a possibility of overcoming chains derived from binary propositions of sex. As stated by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, the possibility of androgynous writing would be related to a mind that could overcome sexual limitations to the creative process.

Angela Carter works with the theme of androgyny in her novel *The Passion of New Eve* and her libretto *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*. The author's fundamental ideas are set on her essay *The Sadeian Woman*, in which she basis herself on her Marxist view of the world and understanding that, in patriarchy, men and women exist as classes in such a way that men will always oppress women, which is perfectly depicted in the pornographic terms of the male pointing erection and the female empty vagina. True love, nevertheless, that is, the possibility of two desiring beings rather than a male desiring subject and a female desired object, may be the utmost weapon in the destruction of the unbalanced patriarchic paradigms.

In *The Passion of New Eve*, androgyny – though she prefers the phrase "hermaphrodite" – is only consolidated in the moment two beings who defy heteronormative paradigms (Eve and Tristessa) encounter. Echoing, thus, the possibility of subversion through reciprocity, Carter establishes that androgyny only exists as a relational paradigm: there is no androgynous being. Such individualism is too aristocratic for a Marxist like her. There is rather a possibility of reciprocal, androgynous relation: "out of those fathomless kisses and our interpenetrating, undifferentiated sex, we had made the great Platonic hermaphrodite" (Carter, 1982, p. 144-145). However, after that, Tristessa is murdered, because a patriarchal society does not admit a reciprocal relation, as that would subvert the fundamental class division that exists between men and woman.

Woolf's novel *Orlando* presents a character who experiences life as both man and woman. Throughout the narrative, Orlando tries to write her poem *The Oak Tree* many times but is only capable of finishing it once she has experienced life as both sexes and reached an androgynous existence. Thus, androgyny to Woolf is related to an existential possibility that echoes into a form of literature that overcomes gender barriers.

In 1979, Carter is invited to write the opera libretto *Orlando, or the Enigma of*

the Sexes, based on the Woolfian novel. As expected from such an ironic writer like Carter, she subverts lots of Woolf's constructions, many of which she considers too aristocratic. The author emphasizes how Woolf's writing looks a lot like the ones she judges. Just like Pope's, Addison's, and Swift's, there are beautiful words that speak of something utterly unimportant. Carter is much more interested in the social relations and strata, highlighting the constant presence of workers around Orlando, than on the possibility of individual overcoming of sexual paradigms.

A first read of the libretto may suggest that at least Orlando and the archduke could be understood as androgynous character, due to the ways in which they play with gender regulations and performativities. However, a deeper analysis of the text demonstrates how the possibility of living as both man and woman does not lead Orlando into nothing better than when she was a man; so much so that she ends up lonely at home in a heteronormative marriage and wishing for the past back. The archduke also plays with both sexes, but this acknowledgement of technologies of gender does not lead into any sort of "androgynous minds": once he has the opportunity, he proposes an oppressive marriage to Orlando, defined by gender rules that give the man the opportunity to travel the world while the woman stays at home, which is exactly what happens between Orlando and Shelmerdine.

When looking back at the idea of relational androgyny, one may wonder if it appears in the libretto. This dissertation argues that it does not. As aforementioned, the archduke proposes an unbalanced marriage and the relationship between Orlando and Shelmerdine is also unequally built. A possible interpretation is that Sasha could have been a reciprocal lover to Orlando, but, since society does not accept real relational androgyny, the ice must break. Similarly, Tristessa must be killed.

Angela Carter used to state that she liked putting new wines into old bottles, especially if the new pressure made the bottles explode, and that is exactly what she does in *The Passion of New Eve* and *Orlando, or the Enigma of the Sexes*. In regards to the theme of androgyny, these two works state very important things: the libretto posits the idea of androgynous mind as a bourgeois matter that has no real material effect and that is but "brown-nosing the aristocracy". In a society in which gender defines not only modes of existence, but division of labor, power, and violence, the fight for an individual's androgynous thinking drives one into looking for self-absolution than into fighting for social change. On the other hand, the novel,

supported by Carter's essay *The Sadeian Woman*, proposes that true androgyny – or hermaphroditism – is really a relational term that derives from an encounter between two beings who mutually desire each other. Androgyny as an existential term must be replaced by hermaphroditism as a relational paradigm that may actually influence the social relations and the system that depends on the unbalance of the sexes to remain existing. By putting her Marxist wine into the bottle of androgyny, Carter makes it explode and spills a hermaphrodite drink that may stain the assumedly black and white paradigms of heteronormative biopolitics.

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