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# AN ANALYSIS OF THE PORTRAYAL OF THE GENDER PERFORMANCE OF VIOLA IN TWELFTH NIGHT AND SHE'S THE MAN

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**2022**

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**Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado na Faculdade de Letras Dalcidio Jurandir da UFPA como requisito básico para a conclusão do curso de Letras Licenciatura em Língua Inglesa**

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**Altamira - PA**

**2022**

**ABSTRACT**

Cross-dressing in both media and real-life has been around for ages, but it has often been regarded as something shameful. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the theme is approached differently as it is birthed out of the need to survive of its main character. This work intends to analyze both the play and its film adaptation *She's the Man* and point out similarities and differences between the main characters' motivations, how they, each in their own way, defy the patriarchal society they are inserted in, through their cross-dressing, and how the concepts of masculinity and femininity influence their gender performance. It proposes the use of critical thinking regarding these themes that, according to many, rarely occur nowadays, and how works can have the same root problems even being more than four centuries apart.

Keywords: literature, gender performance, gender roles, crossdressing.

## RESUMO

O Travestismo existe há um longo tempo tanto na mídia quanto na realidade, mas comumente é tratado como algo vergonhoso ou ridicularizado. Na peça *Twelfth Night* de Shakespeare, o tema é tratado diferentemente já que nasce da necessidade de sobrevivência de sua personagem principal. Esse trabalho procura analisar tanto a peça quanto sua adaptação cinematográfica *She's the Man* e apontar similaridades e diferenças entre as motivações das personagens principais, como elas, de sua própria maneira, desafiam a sociedade patriarcal em que estão inseridas, através de seu travestismo, e como os conceitos de masculinidade e feminilidade influenciam sua performance de gênero. Ele propõe o uso de pensamento crítico ao tratar desses temas cujas ocorrências, de acordo com muitos, são raras nos dias atuais, e como esses trabalhos têm os mesmos problemas enraizados mesmo tendo mais de quatro séculos de diferença.



**Palavras-chave: literatura, performance de gênero, papéis de gênero, travestismo.**

**SUMMARY**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Justification

To say that Shakespeare, his works, and the adaptations that have stemmed from them have been thoroughly studied is to downplay the extent of his influence. However, oftentimes movie adaptations that are targeted towards teens are overlooked, unless if, as in the case of hits such as *10 Things I Hate About You,* they do incredibly well and end up with such as cult-like status. In English-speaking countries that study English literature, the inspirations for these movies may be obvious, but for others it may come as a surprise. Nonetheless, seeing as old literature pieces, they often come across as tiring to read and just too “old" to most young teens. It is an interesting approach to make these stories come across as more approachable and closer to their reality.

*She's the Man* is a 2006 film adaptation of Shakespeare’s 1623 *Twelfth Night* which, other than keeping the basic structure of the story and the characters' names, does a pretty good job at transposing all the play's assets into a 21$^{st}$- century reality. This topic was chosen because of the appeal of thoroughly analyzing an otherwise seemingly very basic plot, regarding themes that have been around for long and are still present in society. While much has changed regarding women's rights and freedom, many of the same ideologies and ideas are still the source of many of the problems women face today.

## 1.2 Objectives

### 1.2.1 General

To analyze separately and compare the undertones and portrayals of gender role subversion and performance by Viola in both Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and its 2006 movie adaptation *She’s the Man.*

### 1.2.2 Specific

This work will analyze the present themes of defiance of gender roles and gender performance of the main character Viola in both the famous play by Shakespeare and its 2006

teenage movie adaptation, taking into consideration disparities between the eras and the reasons for the characters' actions.

It also intends to touch upon themes regarding sexuality and gender inequality, along with the concepts of masculinity and femininity and the pressure to perform them properly and accordingly.

By the end of this work, it will hopefully have made concise points and traced meaningful connections between the two works, which consist of such different media with different purposes, but still propose these same important issues.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This comparative analysis was conducted through qualitative research, of a basic nature, since it aims to understand the nuances and portrayals of the proposed topics, without proposing applications other than to expand knowledge. It is based on explanatory and descriptive research, as this topic is broken down and analyzed from different angles and points of view.

The procedures used in the production of this article are bibliographical and documental, such as book, movie, and several related previous publications. They were all necessary to properly address the analysis of themes and characters from both medias.

## 3. SUMMARY AND COMPARISON OF THE WORKS

*Twelfth Night* does not only focus on Viola's story, but for the sake of this work, only the instances regarding her will be taken into context. The play starts with Viola finding herself stranded in the kingdom of Illyria after a shipwreck. She believes her brother to be dead, and the sea captain who rescued her is her only company. He tells her about the duke, Orsino, and how he is pining for lady Olivia, whose mourning for her brother leads to a refusal to pay any mind to any marriage prospect. This also makes it so that Viola wouldn't be able to work in her home, therefore, the only other option she can muster is to disguise herself as a man, Cesario, and go work for the duke.

Viola/Cesario becomes favored in duke's eyes, as well as his confidant. In the openness she sees in him, she begins to fall in love. Orsino, however, is in love with lady Olivia, who has been rejecting him for quite a while. He then sends Cesario to deliver his message once again to her, and Olivia, who before would reject any and every man who tried to woo her, becomes interested in him. Viola's brother, Sebastian, is indeed pretty much alive, but he also believes his sibling to be dead. He arrives in Illyria with the friend who has taken care of him since the accident, Antonio. His arrival coincides with the challenge to a duel that Sir Andrew, a man who's taken to Olivia, proposes to Cesario, and he is the one that ends up in the fight. Olivia sees this and, thinking that Sebastian is Cesario, asks him to marry her. Because of her wealth and beauty, he accepts even without knowing her. While this is happening, Antonio is arrested by Orsino's officers and asks Cesario to help, believing him to be Sebastian, but Viola in fact doesn't know him so he is taken away. He says that Sebastian has betrayed him, and Viola starts to think her brother may as well be alive.

In the end, Viola/Cesario and Orsino head to Olivia's house, where she talks to Cesario as his recently turned wife. Orsino is angry at the betrayal, but when Sebastian shows up and all is revealed, Orsino professes his love for Viola, asking her to become his wife.

In *She's the Man*, Viola Hastings is a slightly tomboyish, soccer-loving girl. The girls' team ends up being cut from the school budget, and both her coach and her boyfriend, who has previously complimented her skills publicly shame her and the others. When she gets home, her mother once again brings up the debutante ball she wants Viola to take part in, and when she goes to her room, her brother Sebastian calls her to say that he's going to London to play music and asks her to help cover it up.

She then has the idea of posing as her brother so she can join his school's team and compete in the upcoming tournament, and to make her over, her two girl friends and friend Paul

help her to achieve the perfect disguise, and thus “Sebastian” heads out to Illyria High. She then meets Sebastian’s roommate, Duke, and his friends, and through the first soccer training session and the hazing of the new students, she soon learns that pretending was going to be even harder than she thought.

She learns that Duke is infatuated with their classmate Olivia and agrees to help him ask her out in return, receiving soccer lessons so she can join his team. She soon begins to fall for him. Olivia, however, becomes interested in Viola as Sebastian for both her openness and delicateness and the emotional lyrics she reads (that come from the real Sebastian). The love triangle, however, comes to be in the film’s carnival scene, where Duke meets Viola as herself for the first time, and as she covers for Olivia in the kissing booth, ends up sharing a moment with her. He later expresses interest in her to “Sebastian”, who of course actually being a pining Viola, encourages him to try things out with her. Olivia, however, ends up putting a stop to her plans as she asks Duke out in hopes to make Sebastian jealous.

Viola confronts Olivia as herself in one of the debutante meetings and learns the truth about her plan. Olivia says to her that the next time she sees Sebastian, she will tell him how she feels and will kiss her. They are interrupted so this becomes a backseat concern to Viola, but when the real Sebastian arrives at the school, with no knowledge of his sister’s entire list of shenanigans, Olivia comes up to him and kisses him, thinking him to be Viola’s Sebastian. Duke sees this and feels betrayed, being rude and angry at Viola when he sees her, but she has no knowledge of what has transpired, of course.

The big day when they’ll play against her old school comes, and she and Sebastian go through a montage of swapping in and out of the field, and when this proves to be hindering the game, the time for the big revelation comes. Both come out with their secrets in shocking public displays of genitalia/breasts, and the game resumes, with Viola poetically beating her ex-boyfriend with her final goal score. Sebastian and Olivia are formally introduced by Viola, but Duke, however, is still mad at her. This is resolved at the debutante’s ball, where he comes to her, they make amends and then proceed to attend as a couple. The movie ends with the team playing in another match with Viola as their new addition and Duke’s girlfriend.

*She's the Man* is of course not the first Shakespeare teen adaptation to the silver screen, most famously having been preceded by the 1999 now cult classic *10 Things I Hate About You. 10 Things*, being inspired by his *The Taming of the Shrew*, follows a very loose likeness to the play, taking in a more feminist approach to its main character Kat and her relationships. *She's the Man*, however, albeit different in terms of setting and motive, follows a very similar storyline to the original story. The original motives that push Viola to dress as a man stem from

their inability to reach their goals as women because of those around them dictating as such, in *Twelfth Night* as an underlying societal belief, and in *She's the Man* as constant reminders from male characters.

However, the works treat the cross-dressed Viola in different lights. Although they show her feelings of inadequacy and "monstrosity" in both stories, *Twelfth Night* takes a more serious and less ridiculing approach to her than *She's the Man*. The movie takes the liberty to make grand gestures out of nothing, very much in line with the usual teen American comedy style, which is something that will be addressed later in this work as well.

Alfred Hitchcock, in the 1967 interviews with François Truffaut, spoke of how suspense portrayed in the film depends on how emotions are built up and portrayed. "A playwright (...) is used to the building of successive climaxes. Sequences can never stand still; they must carry the action forward, just as the wheels of a ratchet mountain railway move the train up the slope, cog by cog" (HITCHCOCK, 2015, p. 117), and "there must be a steady development of the plot and the creation of gripping situations which must be presented, above all, with visual skill" (HITCHCOCK, 2015, p. 118) are some of the wording he uses. Leitch (1985) believes that in the same way the level of suspense would be raised as any action occurs when an audience is waiting for a catastrophe to happen, once the audience is in wait for a comic payoff or gimmick, the repetition of their failures becomes funnier each time. This is of course very well exemplified in the carnival sequence in the movie, which is fast-paced, chaotic and shows one thing going wrong after the other.

In this manner, unlike in the play, Viola from the movie plays the role of a fool to the viewer. Their entertainment comes from seeing her struggles and how difficult it is to maintain the facade of a man and a feminine woman seeing she isn't either of those. In *Twelfth Night*, Viola's main character arc is focused on the misunderstandings her very effective disguise causes with Olivia and how she longs for Orsino in silence, and we sympathize with her and her dilemmas. While much of this original work was preserved within the adaptation, the goal is entirely different.

## 4. HISTORICAL, LITERARY AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Dolan (2003) points out how in late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries France, Spain and Italy were already employing women with speaking parts in the theater while England was still predominantly practicing cross-dressing on stage (p.9). That being said, the practice was not without controversy surrounding it. Early modern transvestite stage was somewhat brought to an end after the reopening of theaters with Charles II's restoration mid-seventeenth century, she mentions, which brought women onto the stage as actors. That caused some questions and even more worries to arise regarding the former practices and the effects of cross-dressing. Garber (1997) argues, however, that cross-dressing theater recognizes all of its actors as impersonators, so in other words, there is no character in Shakespeare's plays that is not already cross-dressed.

Regarding that reaction, Charles (1997) cites Stephen Orgel's claims of how homosexuality in the Puritan culture of England may have seemed to be less threatening than heterosexuality displayed on stage for it avoided the real fear of a women's sexuality (p. 126). By trying to avoid giving women liberties, society was not comfortable allowing them to act on stage, so they instead would cultivate this homosexual aspect to the theater. That being so, Charles comments on how even with the culture and rhetoric of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries being more patriarchal, homophobic, and misogynist than current western culture, it masks the anxiety gender fluidity would bring. (p. 124).

To Dollimore (1990), the antitheatricality discourse on the fear of sodomy being encouraged by the on-stage crossdressing was in fact because of the underlying fear that gender difference would be broken down, and the fear that beneath the actor's costume and disguise there would not be anything, or worse, according to Laura Levine (1986), that there would be "something foreign, something terrifying and essentially other" (LEVINE, 1986, p. 135). Dolan addresses this double fear by bringing up a similar question with "Perhaps, instead, early modern culture was afraid both of secret transactions between men and those between men and women. Perhaps the threat was intimacy and secrecy as much as anything else" (p. 12). That is to say that both sceneries made spectators face uncomfortable truths, it was only a matter of which one of them was the lesser evil to be portrayed: homosexuality or full-fledged and dynamic women?

Rose talks about how at the beginning of the sixteenth century, women dressing in men's clothes seemed too farfetched to even be something to fear, as exemplified in Vives's 1529 Instruction of a christen woman: "A woman shall not put on mans apparell:for so to doo

is abhominable afore God. But I truste no woman will doo it, excepte she be paste both honestee and shame" (VIVES, 1988, p. 67) However, by 1620 women in men's clothes were not such a rare sight anymore, so much that King James I instigated preachers around London to protest against "mannish women". J. Chamberlain, in a follow-up letter to Sir D. Carleton, mentions that if the warnings of God and the church kept falling deaf to ears, these threats would instead fall upon their husbands, parents, or any men that had power over them.

Howard (1988) mentions Benbow's findings in which, between 1565 and 1605, many of the women apprehended in men's clothes were accused of prostitution. She mentions that most of these appear to be unmarried women of the servant class, some recorded to work under London tavern keepers and traders, while some may have dawned such clothing for protection when traveling around the city; to some it may as well have been a sign of their sex worker status, having been led to such life due to economic necessity (HOWARD, 1988, p. 420).

According to Sedinger (1997), the term crossdressing in Modern England is used to talk about both the women wearing specific items of clothing associated with men and the ones who did so intending to disguise themselves. In 1620, two pamphlets, Hic Mulier and Haec-Vir, began circulating. In Hic Mulier, the anonymous author coaxes the cross-dressed woman to remember how God has made distinct "coates" for both mother and father, and to switch them would be "to undo the work of heaven" (LONDON, 1629 apud. HOWARD 1988, p. 422). The crossdresser woman then not only marks the breakdown of the gender system and its hierarchy, but also the transgression of class. Howard (1988) argues that the pamphlets' calls for controlling women's freedom also were in regard to the freedom city women had in regard to pleasures such as theater and commodities derived from trade, as exemplified by wives or widows that would work in their husbands' shops (HOWARD,1988, p. 426).

Dollimore (1990) inserts the question of whether the Hic Mulier's claims of equality all while cross-dressed as a man is a situation of self-oppression as she can only think of women as equal by taking a masculine role, or as the only way she can make her exact point of sexual indifference and roles subversion (DOLLIMORE, 1990, p.483). Howard (1988) argues that seeing from multiple varying discourses of gender in the Renaissance era, the culminating point is that the era needed the idea of two genders where one was the other's subordinate, "to provide a key element in its hierarchical view of the social order and to buttress its gendered division of labor" (HOWARD, 1988, p. 423). She points out that Greenblatt's discourse on gender difference, which poses women as weaker and incomplete men, leads to the possibility that this difference and hierarchy had to be produced and secured not necessarily on biological difference but on ideological interpellation: "If women were not invariably depicted as

anatomically different from men in an essential way, they could still be seen as different merely by virtue of their lack of masculine perfection" (HOWARD, 1988, p. 423).

In a research conducted with secondary school girls in 2005, Adams et al. show the point of view that these girls go through in the lens of sports. Their teams are given less importance than the boys', and in the case they are given some sort of relief from discrimination, the praise is still in patriarchal fashion, as seen in "many of the girls said that the biggest compliment they can receive about their athletic ability is "hey, girl, you play like a dude"" (ADAMS, 2005, p. 26).

It is part of their role as women athletes to highlight the fact that occupying such a masculine position doesn't make them lesbians. This way, Adams (2005) says that Festle (1996) argues they can take part in the athleticism and publicly display it as long as they also display traditional notions of femininity. Adams (2005) argues that these feminine markers are important to reassure not only these athletes that they are indeed females, but also others that they are in fact heterosexual. This line of thought implies conflates gender identity and sexual identity, which to Adams (2005) is central to the disciplining of the female body.

In her analysis of cinematic adaptations of Twelfth Night, Osborne (2008) mentions the context the movie chosen as object of analysis in this book was born in, regarding women's sports and their accomplishments.

> "Between 1985 and 2006, United States women's sports became markedly more high profile and professional. For example, Viola's soccer ambitions follow the United States Women's National Soccer Team winning the gold medal, significant endorsements, and public attention at the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games. Some of Viola's characterization, like the fact that she is almost always holding a soccer ball, is specifically drawn from research on female soccer star Mia Hamm (DV special materials). In this same twenty-one year period, women entered formerly male professional sports. The WNBA's first professional season began in June 1997, and equal financial support for women's sports has become a legal issue, as more and more challenges to university sports practices have been lodged under Title IX." (Osborne 2008, p.26)

Bourdieu (2001) adds that giving women access to power of any kind poses a double threat: if they behave like men, their femininity may end up being at risk; if they behave otherwise, they then prove themselves to be incapable of performing men's tasks (BOURDIEU, 2001, p. 67-8).

To Halberstam (1998) "tomboyism" is considered normal when enacted upon as a child and is tolerated, but as the girl matures and becomes adolescent, it poses a problem that threatens the bounds of gender conformity. This gender conformity is pushed upon all girls, and at the period of adolescence "represents the crisis of coming of age as a girl in a male-dominated

society” (HALBERSTAM, 1998, p. 6). For her, while adolescence for boys is considered to be an ascension to some type of social power, for girls it's a period of repression and restraint, and it's where the tomboy aspects of their personalities are made compliant to femininity. Carr (1998) also points out how many authors agree that the tomboy is associated with the subversion of gender roles and the perpetuation of an oppressive gender system.

Connell (2000) says that with the more high-profile aspect of boys’ sports in the cultural life of schools, their coaches occupy a place with a culture of conventional dominant masculinity, normalized as natural and good, and unquestioned. Bourdieu (2001) then puts physical manliness and virility as indissociable from the point of honor and the principle of conservation expected of a "real man". Thus, the manifestations of such virility add up to the idea of prowess, as he puts it, which gives the man in question honor.

He, however, counters that thought by arguing that to define masculinity as something inherent to what men are is to rule out that masculine or feminine actions and attitudes might come from anyone or any gender.

## 5. UNDERTONES AND PORTRAYALS OF GENDER ROLES AND PERFORMANCE SUBVERSION

Marjorie Garber (1997) comments on how many of the cross-dressing stories in literature or film follow a progressive narrative. The characters are made to do this by either necessity of a job, to escape repression or gain political freedom and such. Transvestism comes as the last resort, essentially, and it comes to a halt once the character needs to unmask, usually coming from a heterosexual necessity. She points out that to society, from what can be analyzed in this pattern, cross-dressing can be functional and understandable as long as it has a finish time, and after the need for such practice is over, the character resumes their "normal" life. That is true to both versions of Viola.

> "As Edmund Tilney asserted in a piece of advice that quickly became a Renaissance commonplace, the best way for a woman to keep a good name was for her to never leave her house. When women took men's clothes, they symbolically left their subordinate positions. They became masterless women." (Howard 1988, p. 424)

Howard's point about a woman's name is relevant as Twelfth Night's Viola exhausts her options of survival as soon as she hears Olivia won't be of help to her in the first act of the play. She has been left with no father, believes to have lost her brother, and has no other masculine figure in her life that could possibly take care of her. If it came to having to integrate in society as she was, she would be seen as a woman with a tainted name and reputation, no matter her class.

What she does, instead, is decide to play the part of a eunuch, more specifically a castrato, as indicated by "It may be worth thy pains, for I can sing/And speak to him in many sorts of music/That will allow me very worth his service." (Shakespeare, 16--, 1.2.60-63). That way, any doubts that could arise regarding both her physical attributes and voice being too feminine for a man would have a justified reason to be so.

However, Elam (1996) argues that there are two other possibilities for why she chose to portray a eunuch: Viola chose to play the part for that it would embed in her a level of being untouchable that no one would dare to question or violate, for the pity of the eunuch's loss and the belief in their impotency would keep people with odd intentions away. In this way, Viola, hiding both her femininity but also her "wounded" masculinity, would be safe from the sexual danger she would face in Orsino's court otherwise, for that a lone woman, with no father, brother or friend to protect her, would be sure to be in great danger of facing.

In regard to the theme of the eunuch, he argues that Twelfth Night approaches it in a more civilized and less mocking way than the usually violently sexual and socially preoccupied way plays before it would do, and that shows in the way she expresses her being unfit to fight in place of her brother: "Pray god defend me! A little thing would make me tell them how much I lack of a man" (Shakespeare, 16--, 3.4.307-9). Antecedent plays that contained a eunuch character often would ridicule and undermine such characters' humanity, as he points out that her gentle allusion to her lack of phallus "suggests the sophisticated self-awareness of her discourse compared to the heavy sexual allusions of the play's forebears" (ELAM, 1996, p. 30-1).

Charles (1997) argues that the gender ambiguity Viola possesses opens the possibilities for the representation of a ramification of desires: "homoerotic attraction between Orsino and Cesario, heterosexual attraction between Orsino and Viola, and lesbian attraction between Viola and Olivia" (CHARLES, 1997, p. 133). That is shown in her given task to woo Olivia in Orsino's place, as Viola manages to awaken Olivia's interest with the disarming charm and appearance the Duke himself ambiguously compliments as in:

> "For they shall yet belie thy happy years
> That say thou art a man. Diana's lip
> Is not more smooth and rubious. Thy small pipe
> Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
> And all is semblative a woman's part." (Shakespeare, 16--, 1.4. 32-37)

Pequigney (1992) comments on how even if Orsino somewhat seems to perceive Viola's true gender in Act 1, Scene 4, his clear infatuation with his new servant "may do less to establish his heterosexual credentials than to symptomatize homoerotic proclivities." (PEQUIGNEY, 1992, p. 207). He also adds that when later in the play he professes his love and asks for the hand of Viola, the end revelation of her true gender could not have spontaneously and easily changed his mind about her/Cesario; if it exists then it might as well have existed back when she posed as Cesario.

Elam (1996) argues that despite the recent commentary on Orsino's speech stressing out his interest in Cesario's androgyny, Orsino's dubiosity regarding his manhood can also be regarding the "transitional adolescent state" Cesario seems to be in, which is also pointed out by Malvolio's line in "Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy," (Shakespeare, 16--, 1.5.158-59). Charles (1997) argues that in the twice androgynous situation of a male actor playing a woman who's playing a man, Viola's success in passing as Cesario points at the performative character of gender.

Pequigney (1992) also comments on how critics have argued that the trouble regarding gender subversion and identity problems caused by Viola's disguise is undermined by her "heterosexual aim" (PEQUIGNEY, 1992, p. 135). Viola challenges plenty of standards and cruises the veiled line of fluid sexuality through the story, but in the end, her desire still is Orsino, and to become his wife. Butler (1988), however, challenges this with her stating that Foucault and others have argued that associating sex with a specific gender and with a natural attraction to the opposing sex is a social and cultural construct with the final goal of reproduction, as it can be observed in the excerpt below:

> "My point is simply that one way in which this system of compulsory heterosexuality is reproduced and concealed is through the cultivation of bodies into discreet sexes with 'natural' appearances and 'natural' heterosexual dispositions." (BUTLER, 1988, p. 524)

Butler (1988) deduces that gender is not a stable defined identity, for it is an identity which becomes with time through the repetition of acts (BUTLER, 1988, p.519). That can be seen in Act 5, when Orsino tells Viola she will be his mistress and queen as soon as she changes attire, which to Pittman (2008) implies that the concept of selfhood is not derived from the essential physical facts, such as biological sexual features, but on the constructs of other's perceptions and something as fleeting as the manipulation of attire. She then adds:

> "if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief." (PITTMAN, 2008, p. 520)

This is relevant to *Twelfth Night*'s Viola and her performance as Cesario. Her outside appearance, actions and behaviors as a man are disconnected from her "feminine thoughts" as seen in her monolog in Act 2, Scene 2, such as in "In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!/Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we,/For such as we are made of, such we be." (Shakespeare, 16--, 2.2.30-32) and "As I am woman, now, alas the day,/What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe!" (Shakespeare, 16--, 2.2.38-39). This shows that while her internal thoughts and general awareness of the situations are incompatible with her current outside appearance and social presentation, her social interactions flawlessly come across as successfully male, which weighs heavily when perceiving gender.

However, Butler (1988) points out that "indeed, the transvestite's gender is fully real as anyone whose performance complies with social expectations." (BUTLER, 1988, p. 527) That makes Cesario as much of a real man as Viola is a real woman. Cesario is as dimensional and

real as she is, as unintentional as that may have been on her part. Viola comments, as well, on her own performance right after Viola realizes Olivia has just subtly professed her interest in Cesario in Act 2, Scene 2, that: "I am the man: if it be so, as 'tis, / Poor lady, she were better love a dream" (2.2.25-26). That is, her one worry regarding it is that she has succeeded to a degree so high that she has made a woman fall for her.

In S*he's the Man*, Viola spends the entirety of the movie struggling with her gender performance, be it either in the scenes she has to perform as Sebastian or the extremely feminine version her mother wants her to be. It proposes the same predicament of crossdressing *Twelfth Night* does, but it approaches the gender-bending plot point with reinforcing the gender and sexual conventionalities, "by constantly reminding us that Viola is in fact female, through flaws in her performance of masculinity", according to Clement (2008, p.14). "Her performance of "Sebastian" is marked by a hypersexual masculinity that is far removed from Shakespeare's Viola's construction of an androgynous persona that draws on both masculine and feminine gender stereotypes" (Clement, 2008, p. 16-17).

This shows that Viola believes the approach to take her mission head-on is to embrace hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell (2005), it can be defined as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy" (CONNELL, 2005, p. 77) and it guarantees that men are dominant, and women are their subordinates. The dominant group in this school, much like in her old one, is the soccer team. They are loud, boisterous and womanizers, so that is why Viola believes acting like that will help her not to be detected by anyone. She, however, takes on an aggressive act that is pretty much over the top and ends up making her seem more suspicious.

Viola's slips as Sebastian end up reinforcing the movie's message of "essential gender roles", according to Clement (2008), such that she "is so fundamentally a girl that she cannot maintain the 'Sebastian'' act consistently" (CLEMENT, 2008, p.18). However, it would be rather important to remember that this adaptation is a comedy movie (in which the main comic display is through physical comedy) targeted towards teenagers. It will rely on cheap and easy jokes, such as the awkwardness and uncomfortable display of male performance Viola experiences, blowing them to a very unrealistic and exaggerated degree.

Whenever she makes an aware effort, she ends up trying to prove her "manhood" by doing the most stereotypical and insensitive acts amid her desperation. Such is that that at the 54-minute mark, even Duke, someone who along with his friends had earlier responded to Sebastian/Viola talking of herself as having a "great personality" with "ew", confronts her about

how she always talks about girls in a sexual or disrespectful way, and that she "has issues" regarding them.

Osborne (2008) argues that Viola's constant anxiety that her disguise is not working is fueled by the high physical stakes of her endeavor, with her almost getting caught with her non-binded chest, or the hazing she narrowly escapes where she would need to take off her clothes, which ties in with Butler's argument that performing as a gender in a wrong way gives way for both direct and indirect punishments, and performing it right "provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all" (BUTLER, 1988, p. 528). To Osborne, she faces the necessary social and physical challenges her gender competition imposes but does not face the systemic problem of competition for resources between them.

Sebastian staying with his overbearing girlfriend because "it's a guy thing", and Duke accepting Olivia out with the sole justification that "she's hot" proves that her misogynistic portrayal isn't actually too far off not only from the group of boys she intends to trick and be a part of, but also the men in her own personal circle. So, in the scene where Viola plans with her friends to act as if they were madly in love with "Sebastian", her turning them down, hitting their backsides and breaking up with her brother's actual girlfriend ends up establishing Viola (as Sebastian) as this hero of masculine prowess who is even above the other guys in her company, and thus making her be accepted in the friend group.

It might be relevant to add as well that any of the same-sex readings made of Twelfth Night are shut down by the movie. Klett (2008) points out that whenever characters get too close to each other, such as in the scene where Viola as Sebastian "pretends" to be a girl, the film adds in comic relief bordering slapstick comedy to relieve the tension.

*She's the Man*'s Viola, however, has an interestingly added dynamic. While the original Viola is never shown sporting women's attire after the first act, not even as Orsino and her profess their love to each other, the modern Viola is shown to be, while portraying her normal self, a tomboy who is very athletic. Her feminine performance, then, already doesn't subscribe to the usual gender norms. This creates a conflict when her mom makes her attend debutant classes containing etiquette classes and such, which makes her feel like her own gender's performance is unfit, even if she's not overly masculine in her way of acting - it's simply that in that ambient, even the slightest bit of deviance from extreme femininity is considered to be inadequate.

Butler (1988) states that following Simone de Beauvoir's line of thought in *The Second Sex*, being a "woman" (or any gender in fact) bears a historical and cultural meaning rather than natural. A point can be made then about how Viola must feel being deemed unfit not only for

acting as a man, but also being forced to perform in the feminine way and rules that her mother tries to push on her at all times. To Pittman (2008), in the dream sequence where Viola is shown to try to play soccer in a frilly dress, her search for self-expression is confined by the "trappings" of her mother's kind of femininity. She has to constantly put up the act and perform actions both her mother's circle of friends and her Duke admire.

That is not to say that her mother's extreme femininity is the wrong way. It simply is one of the facets women can be like, which is not what Viola wants as her own reality. Through her "unladylike" manners and interests she presents, she challenges the expectation of what a modern girl should be like. For Butler, it's important to understand the nuances and ways that gender is established and instituted, but also to pay attention to the moments where the binary of gender is challenged and the delimitations are questioned, and as well where the social aspect of gender "turns out to be malleable and transformable." (BUTLER, 2004, p. 216). However, Pittman (2008) points out that "Mrs. Hastings serves as a red herring - a mode of femininity to mock and against which to paint a picture of the film's heroine" (PITTMAN, 2008, p.128).

Osborne (2008) comments that "although he (Sebastian) has the little thing that Viola lacks as a man" (OSBORNE, 2008, p. 30) he can't compete with her sports skills, and even though the movie follows the same model as other movie adaptations of the same story, She's the Man inverts the scenario poised in Cesario being challenged to a duel and feeling inadequate for lacking what "makes a man truly a man", as Sebastian also faces tests to his masculinity and does in fact fail at them, while Viola succeeds.

She also points out that She's the Man puts the revelation of Viola's true self more in her hands than in Twelfth Night. In the play, she is forced to explain herself but no proof of her womanhood other than her and Sebastian's word is required, but still, Orsino finds himself believing her and asking for her hand in marriage. In the movie, however, not only her but Sebastian also has to prove himself. In fact, he does so first, by lowering his pants and proving he is in fact, a penis-having man. Viola then takes off her wig, sideburns and eyebrows while confessing her true feelings, but Duke follows this up by saying that even so, wearing a short wig and secretly having long hair doesn't make her a woman. She then lifts up her shirt, proving to the audience she is a clearly breast-having woman. Their reunion, as well, is not nearly as swift and understanding as the play's, with Duke feeling betrayed and angry at Viola's lies. They makeup at her debutante ball, but only after a heartfelt talk about their feelings.

At the end of the movie, we can see Viola openly playing in her all-men team, all while running around with her long flowing hair in the wind (something that any slightly long-haired sports person would agree is terribly inconvenient), and openly being Viola. Connell (2005)

says that "the dominance of any group of men may be challenged by women" (CONNELL, 2005, p. 77), and Viola has clearly done this and disrupted their views of women playing sports. But it is interesting enough to point out that at the beginning of the movie, when the girls' team is dissolved, she displays annoyance and anger at the inequality between girls and boys, yet we don't see her contesting her new school's lack of a team for girls. She proves herself after winning the game but seems content enough to just take the team's acceptance as it is, and be the odd one out in their dynamic. Meyer (2011) points out that when Viola's new coach proclaims that their team doesn't discriminate against gender like the other school, this indicates to the audience that the sexism she has suffered from both the old coach and the other boys' team is an isolated and unique occurrence that will never happen in the new school, so the movie ends with an "all is well" type of ending. But not only does the school continue to have just an all-boys team with her as an exception, but she is also the only exception. There is not a single other girl in the team, which really serves to make the viewer reflect on how little has changed.

Abowitz (2000) comments that the basis for resistant actions can come from the person's consciousness of occupying subordinated and lesser status due to features that are within the category of independent variables such as gender. She corroborates with Leblanc's (2006) assumption that the appearance of resistance comes from various factors such as consciousness of the oppressive conditions, and the motivation to oppose them, along with taking actions to express this motivation. But in her review of She's the Man, Martindale (2008) points out that basing her gender-bending in her desire to prove herself to be better than boys and to beat them (her ex-boyfriend included), "does not represent a plausible scenario of female defiance" (MARTINDALE, 2008, p. 138). She also goes on to reinforce the point that Viola's actions do not manage to prove women's soccer deserve as much attention and support as men's, so much so that it makes the feminist premise of the movie not as persuasive and believable. Pittman (2008) also agrees that the movie's devices "revert to conservatism because the film never allows Bynes's gender switch to become so convincing that it destabilizes long-held categories of difference" (PITTMAN, 2008, p. 123). According to Osborne, however, based on Adams's suggestion that "over a period of time counter-discourses provide openings to challenge dominant ideologies and rewrite cultural scripts" (ADAM, 2008, p.27), She's the Man's counter discourse in women athleticism rewrites the "cultural script" of Twelfth Night.

Even though there is plenty of criticism on how in the end sequence of the movie Viola ends up going to the debutante ball she initially didn't want to go to in a dress and heels, it is important to remember Viola is an underage teenager who is not in complete control of her life.

Also, at the end of the game in which she wins the final score, her mom expresses admiration towards her, which may have as well made her feel like she had to reciprocate the feeling somehow. Carr (1998) points out that some researchers such as Hemmer and Kleiber (1981) suggest that some tomboy girls adopt a more feminine performance when faced with peer and familiar pressure, while still, in their attitude and interests, retaining plenty of their tomboy attributes. According to Butler:

> "Identifying with a gender under contemporary regimes of power involves identifying with a set of norms that are and are not realizable, (...) are always beset by ambivalence precisely because there is a cost in every identification, the loss of some other set of identifications, the forcible approximation of a norm one never chooses, a norm that chooses us, but which we occupy, reverse, resignify to the extent that the norm fails to determine us completely." (BUTLER, 1993, p 120-1)

That being said, Viola identifying as a woman who possesses masculine traits cost her the appeal of being attractive and proper in the eyes of those who propagate a normative view of femininity, but her acquitting with those views costs her the freedom of expressing herself in the way she wants just to please others, which shows that in current times, like Butler commented, there is a cost in every identification.

## 6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

While set more than 400 years apart, both works here analyzed have issues that stem from the same root: patriarchal societies, policing over women's mannerisms, attire, and actions, and the belief in gender inequality. Both Violas' situations are born out of desperation; while She's the Man Viola might not have been in survival danger like her predecessor, she is a teenager who sees no other choice other than to cross-dress her way out of the slump she's stuck in. Much like in the Modern English setting, not one single thing can change the mind of the men in control around her, not her words, not her skills. It's only after she displays an overcompensating amount of ability she's accepted, as long as she doesn't go too far on the "wanting men's places" road and starts wanting to be a man herself.

Despite all odds, however, it is heartwarming to see the protagonists climb their way up social ladders that have everything working against them and prove that their womanhood is enough to be equal to the men in their lives, not only in femininity, but also their masculine side. The deriving analyses that point out the performative side of gender as they perform their way around something they are not and have never been shown that not everything is like the essentialism black and white view: many of the aspects that are imposed to us because of our gender are what makes us, but are not who we are, as performances can be overthrown and adapted. Both Viola's prove, especially when their performance comes naturally, that someone can pretend to be something, and it does not necessarily define their true self.

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