



GENDER THEORY AND FEMINIST DYSTOPIA IN THE GRAPHIC NOVEL SLEEPING BEAUTIES BY RIO YOUERS, ALISON SAMPSON AND TRIONA FARRELL¹

Claudinéia Caldas Pereira²

Ana Lília Carvalho Rocha³

RESUMO: Distopias feministas têm se consolidado como poderosas ferramentas críticas ao denunciar as desigualdades de gênero e os perigos do autoritarismo patriarcal, revelando estruturas de opressão e sugerindo possibilidades de resistência (Atwood, 1985; Sarmento-Pantoja, 2005; Bosi, 2002). Este trabalho tem como objetivo analisar *Sleeping Beauties* (2021), de Owen King e Stephen King, adaptada para graphic novel por Rio Youers, a partir da perspectiva da literatura de resistência, distopia feminista e da teoria de gênero. A obra retrata um cenário em que as mulheres são afetadas por um fenômeno misterioso que as faz adormecer, envoltas em casulos, tornando-as inacessíveis ao mundo masculino. Esse evento desencadeia uma série de reações que evidenciam as tensões de gênero, a violência estrutural contra as mulheres e as dinâmicas de poder nas sociedades patriarcais. A pesquisa adota uma abordagem qualitativa e bibliográfica, realizando uma análise crítica da narrativa com base em estudos sobre distopia, literatura de resistência e teoria de gênero. A adaptação gráfica intensifica as discussões sobre misoginia, violência de gênero e resistência feminina, utilizando elementos visuais para reforçar a crítica social presente no texto original. A análise revela como a obra dialoga com o gênero distópico e distopia feminista, literatura de resistência e questões de gênero, propondo reflexões sobre o papel das mulheres e a desconstrução de normas de gênero.

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² Discente do curso de Letras Língua Inglesa. Faculdade de Línguas Estrangeiras (FALEST). Universidade Federal do Pará, campus Capanema. E-mail: claudineia.pereira@braganca.ufpa.br

³ Doutora em Estudos Literários pela Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA). Professora do Programa de Pós Graduação em Linguagens e Saberes da Amazônia - PPLSA - (UFPA). Coordenadora do Projeto de Pesquisa de Iniciação Científica Configurações de Resistências em Narrativas Anglófonas Contemporâneas (CRENAC). E-mail: liliarochaufpa@gmail.com

Palavras-chave: Sleeping Beauties. Graphic Novel. Distopia Feminista. Literatura de Resistência. Teoria de Gênero.

ABSTRACT: Feminist dystopias have established themselves as powerful critical tools by denouncing gender inequalities and the dangers of patriarchal authoritarianism, revealing structures of oppression and suggesting possibilities of resistance (Atwood, 1985; Sarmento-Pantoja, 2005; Bosi, 2002). This study aims to analyze *Sleeping Beauties* (2021), by Owen King and Stephen King, adapted into a graphic novel by Rio Youers, from the perspective of resistance literature, feminist dystopia, and gender theory. The work portrays a scenario in which women are affected by a mysterious phenomenon that causes them to fall asleep, enveloped in cocoons, making them inaccessible to the male world. This event triggers a series of reactions that highlight gender tensions, structural violence against women, and power dynamics in patriarchal societies. The research adopts a qualitative and bibliographic approach, conducting a critical analysis of the narrative based on studies of dystopia, resistance literature, and gender theory. The graphic adaptation intensifies the discussions on misogyny, gender violence, and female resistance, using visual elements to reinforce the social critique present in the original text. The analysis reveals how the work engages with the dystopian genre, feminist dystopia, resistance literature, and gender issues, proposing reflections on the role of women and the deconstruction of gender norms.

Keywords: Sleeping Beauties. Graphic Novel. Feminist Dystopia. Resistance Literature. Gender Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, literature has been a critical space for societal reflection, functioning both as a mirror of existing structures and as a tool for contestation and resistance. In the context of dystopian literature, this function becomes even more evident, as dystopian narratives project scenarios that expose and question inequalities, oppressive systems, and the dangers of authoritarianism. In the case of feminist dystopias, these works stand out by exploring power relations, gender dynamics, and the impacts of women's marginalization within repressive social contexts.

This study aims to analyze the graphic novel adaptation of *Sleeping Beauties* (2017) through the lens of feminist dystopia and gender theory. The work portrays a scenario in which

women are affected by a mysterious phenomenon that causes them to fall asleep, enveloped in cocoons, rendering them inaccessible to the male world. This event triggers a series of reactions that highlight gender tensions, structural violence against women, and power dynamics in patriarchal societies.

The choice of *Sleeping Beauties* for this study was motivated by several reasons. Firstly, I am passionate about horror literature, and Stephen King is my favorite author. The work is extremely interesting and rich in themes such as gender roles, violence against women, and resistance. Initially, I intended to work with the novel, but after a conversation with my advisor Ana Lília, we discovered the graphic novel, which captivated me even more, leading me to choose it as the focus of my thesis.

This research focuses specifically on the graphic novel *Sleeping Beauties* (2021), adapted by Rio Youers, illustrated by Alison Sampson, and colored by Triona Farrell, based on the original novel by Owen King and Stephen King. The choice of this version is justified by its visual approach, which intensifies the representation of female marginalization and resistance. The graphic language reinforces power dynamics and structural violence against women, aspects that are central to the analysis from the perspective of feminist dystopia, gender theory, and resistance literature.

The concept of feminist dystopia will be used as a key framework to examine how the graphic novel represents a society in which women are oppressed and subjugated, while simultaneously finding ways to resist and assert their autonomy. Through its diverse female characters, the work questions power structures and emphasizes women's struggle for freedom, identity, and recognition. The violence depicted in the novel is not limited to physical harm. Still, it extends to the barriers imposed by patriarchal society, which seeks to silence women and hinder their ascension in a male-dominated world.

In addition to feminist dystopia, this research will explore the intersection between resistance literature and gender theory. Resistance literature, more than a literary genre, aims to give voice to those silenced or marginalized. *Sleeping Beauties* aligns with this proposal by highlighting the female experience in a world disproportionately controlled by male figures. Additionally, gender theory offers valuable insight into how social and cultural norms influence and constrain women's roles. These norms, often presented as natural or inevitable, are confronted by the characters' acts of defiance throughout the narrative. Analyzing the novel through this perspective allows for a deeper understanding of how literature can challenge dominant ideologies and open space for narratives of empowerment and resistance.

Ultimately, the choice of the graphic novel *Sleeping Beauties* as the object of study is justified not only by its thematic content, which directly engages with contemporary debates on resistance, dystopia, feminism, gender, and power, but also by its mode of production. Although the original work was written by Owen King and Stephen King — both male authors — the graphic adaptation was carried out by Rio Youers, with illustrations by Alison Sampson and coloring by Triona Farrell, both women. This collaboration significantly expands the interpretative possibilities of the work, offering a visual perspective that reimagines the narrative through a female lens.

The presence of these women artists in the adaptation adds symbolic and aesthetic layers that reinforce the critical content of the narrative, particularly in terms of the representation of women, the denunciation of patriarchal structures, and the construction of complex female characters. In this way, the graphic novel becomes a space for dialogue between different voices, where the contributions of women in the visual language function as a creative reappropriation of the text, strengthening its critical power and its place within the field of feminist dystopias.

To achieve these objectives, this research adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on the critical analysis of the graphic novel *Sleeping Beauties*, adapted from Owen King and Stephen King. The studies will be conducted through the lens of dystopia, feminist dystopia, gender theory, and resistance literature, with the objective to understanding how the work represents power dynamics and issues of oppression and female resistance.

According to Linda Hutcheon (2012), adaptations are not mere copies but reinterpretations that bring new perspectives to the original text. This notion is crucial for analyzing *Sleeping Beauties*, as the transition from novel to graphic novel introduces visual elements that reshape the narrative and its social critique. The interaction between text and images in graphic novels allows for a deeper engagement with themes such as gender oppression and resistance, reinforcing the dystopian critique present in the original work.

To support this investigation, theoretical references on dystopia, resistance literature, and gender theory will be utilized. Studies on dystopian fiction, such as those by Tânia Sarmiento-Pantoja (2005) and Patrick Mooney (2004), provide insights into how this genre critiques power structures and warns against the dangers of social control. The perspective of feminist dystopia, explored by authors such as Margaret Atwood (1985) and Lucy Sargisson (1999), will be essential to understanding how *Sleeping Beauties* engages with narratives of feminist resistance. Additionally, the theory of gender performativity, developed by Judith

Butler (1990), will serve as a foundation for analyzing the representation of gender roles and the mechanisms that perpetuate the subordination of women.

Furthermore, Alfredo Bosi's (2002) analysis of resistance literature will be employed to explore how *Sleeping Beauties* fits within a broader tradition of literary works that challenge dominant power structures. The graphic novel will be examined both in its narrative and visual aspects, considering how the illustrations contribute to reinforce or challenge social norms and gender roles. As Hillary L. Chute (2016) argues, the graphic novel format has a unique capacity to represent trauma and resistance, making it particularly effective for feminist and dystopian storytelling.

Additionally, a bibliographic review of studies on dystopian literature, feminism, and gender theory will be conducted to support the critical interpretation of the work. This approach will allow for an in-depth examination of *Sleeping Beauties*, highlighting its contributions to contemporary debates on gender, oppression, and resistance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of this study aims to present and discuss the key concepts that underpin the analysis of the graphic novel adaptation of *Sleeping Beauties*, originally written by Owen King and Stephen King, and adapted by Rio Youers, with an emphasis on themes of resistance, dystopia, and gender theory.

Resistance literature is a field that explores different ways literary narratives question, challenge, and oppose oppressive systems, such as political, social, or cultural ones. The concept is deeply connected to power relations and how people confront oppressive forces. It goes beyond just opposing; it includes ethical, political, and social dimensions. In literature, resistance plays an important role, serving as a tool for writers to express their opposition to dominant structures that try to silence or control them. In this way, these narratives not only shows these conflicts but also suggests new ways to think and act against forces that limit individual and collective freedom.

According to Alfredo Bosi (2002), "resistance is a concept that is originally ethical, not aesthetic. Its deeper meaning appeals to the force of will that resists another force, external to the subject. To resist is to oppose one's force to an external force"⁴ (Bosi, 2002, p. 11, own

⁴ "resistência é um conceito originariamente ético, e não estético. O seu sentido mais profundo apela para a força da vontade que resiste a outra força, exterior ao sujeito. Resistir é opor a força própria à força alheia"

translation). From this definition, we can see that resistance literature is not just about artistic creation, but about translating, through words and narratives, the opposition to oppressive regimes and ideologies. Thus, the literary text becomes an ethical and political platform where individuals or social groups can express and confront injustices. Therefore, resistance literature goes beyond aesthetics to become an ethical act of struggle and social change, enabling critical reflection on the forces that shape reality.

However, when we observe the unique language of graphic novels, we perceive a complementary, albeit distinct, path from the one proposed by Bosi: in this format, resistance can emerge precisely through aesthetics. Through illustrations, colors, and visual compositions, the graphic narrative builds a powerful critique that directly engages with social and political issues. In *Sleeping Beauties*, for instance, the visual elements intensify the perception of gender inequalities and structural violence, turning the aesthetic experience into an act of protest. This form of storytelling demonstrates how, in graphic novels, aesthetics do not oppose ethics but rather become allies in constructing narratives of resistance. As Ana Lilia Carvalho Rocha and Tânia Sarmiento-Pantoja (2021) argue, “aesthetics takes on an ethical face to counter hegemonic discourses, generating resistance”⁵ (Rocha; Sarmiento-Pantoja, 2021, p. 148, own translation). This view reinforces the idea that, especially in visual narratives, form and content act together in subverting dominant structures.

Additionally, resistance literature not only represents themes of oppression and struggle, but also reveals itself through narrative processes that challenge established norms. This form of literature can manifest itself in various ways, covering both theme choices and the construction of the narrative itself. From this perspective, we can understand that resistance unfolds as a movement that connects content and form, revealing the complexity of human experiences in difficult contexts.

Bosi (2002) also states, “the idea of resistance, when combined with that of narrative, has been realized in two ways that do not necessarily exclude each other: (a) resistance occurs as a theme; (b) resistance occurs as an inherent process of writing”⁶ (Bosi, 2002, p. 13, own translation). This duality highlights the importance of narrative not just as a way to criticize society but also as a practice that offers creative alternatives to oppression.

⁵ “a estética assume uma face ética para se contrapor aos discursos hegemônicos, gerando resistência”

⁶ “a ideia de resistência, quando conjugada à de narrativa, tem sido realizada de duas maneiras que não se excluem necessariamente: (a) a resistência se dá como tema; (b) a resistência se dá como processo inerente à escrita”

In this sense, resistance literature not only denounces injustices but also proposes new ways of seeing and experiencing reality. Resistance, therefore, does not emerge merely as a theme to be explored but as a vital process that transforms writing into a tool of struggle and freedom. Thus, literature becomes a space where critique and creativity converge, allowing historically silenced voices to be heard.

As Tânia Sarmiento-Pantoja (2023) observes, “resistance art always questions permanence, repetition, and, at the same time, opens itself to the possibility of questioning itself as language”⁷ (Sarmiento-Pantoja, 2023, p. 174, own translation). This self-reflexivity is especially relevant in dystopian literature, where narratives not only critique oppressive structures but also interrogate their own forms of expression, proposing new ways of thinking and acting against domination. By incorporating resistance into its very form, literature disrupts traditional storytelling methods, creating a space where critique and creativity intersect.

This connection between resistance and narrative is particularly clear in the dystopian genre, which reflects oppressive social and political realities. Dystopian works, often set in dark futures, explore the consequences of power and control that surround human life. In this context, literature of resistance plays a crucial role, as it not only critiques current conditions but also presents possible scenarios that warn of the dangers of ignoring injustices.

As Margaret Atwood (2005) observes, “Dystopias are often more like dire warnings than satires, dark shadows cast by the present into the future. They are what will happen to us if we don’t pull up our socks” (Atwood, 2005, p. 102). This perspective highlights how dystopian narratives serve as cautionary tales, urging readers to recognize and resist emerging forms of oppression before they become reality.

Dystopia can be seen as an extension of resistance, offering visions of what can happen when ethical values and social struggles are ignored. Just like in resistance literature, dystopian narratives often depict individuals or groups rebelling against totalitarian systems, using their voices and actions to challenge oppressive forces.

As Edward Said (1994) states in *Culture and Imperialism*, literature has the power to resist dominant ideologies by giving voice to marginalized perspectives— a characteristic frequently found in dystopian works. Through these stories, authors explore the consequences of a future dominated by oppression and invite readers to reflect on their own realities and the importance of resisting such forces before they become real.

⁷ “a arte de resistência sempre questiona a permanência, a repetição e, ao mesmo tempo, se abre à possibilidade de questionar a si mesma como linguagem”

Thus, the transition between resistance and dystopia in literature allows for a deeper understanding of the relationships between individuals, society, and power, emphasizing the need for awareness and action against threats to freedom and human dignity. This connection between the two concepts is essential to understanding how literature not only represents but also challenges dominant narratives, promoting ongoing discussions about the human condition and the possibilities for social change.

A dystopia is a representation of an imaginary society or reality that is oppressive and terrifying. It is often characterized by future scenarios where life is dominated by authoritarian regimes, extreme control, inequality, or environmental disasters, resulting in an inhuman environment of suffering and injustice. According to Tânia Maria Pereira Sarmiento-Pantoja (2005), dystopia can be understood as “the situation or place where the conditions that guide human relations may appear as adverse due to being deteriorated, inhospitable or mutable, or even subject to a sense of paralysis”⁸ (Sarmiento-Pantoja, 2005, p.111, own translation). This definition highlights the essentially negative and degraded nature of the dystopian environment, where social and human structures are in a constant state of deterioration or stagnation, reflecting an environment where order and stability are perpetually threatened.

In literature, this dystopian vision finds space to develop its social critiques. Dystopia is a powerful tool for questioning power structures, social repression, and forms of control. These narratives speculate about possible futures, imagining the impacts of authoritarian regimes, invasive technologies, and dehumanization. In Sarmiento-Pantoja’s analysis, dystopian literature frequently explores the degradation of humanity, focusing on the relationships between power, language, and individuality. Citing Patrick Mooney’s interpretation, she highlights that “most dystopian novels, when bringing about becoming, consider the relationship between experience and humanity’s degradation vitally important, and therefore often direct their speculative focus to the constitution of relationships between power, language, and individuality”⁹ (Mooney, 2004, p. 2; Sarmiento-Pantoja, 2005, p. 71, own translation). These novels explore how power is exercised and how it affects freedom of expression, personal identity, and social relationships.

⁸ “a situação ou o lugar em que as condições que orientam as relações humanas podem se apresentar como adversas devido a serem deterioradas, inóspitas ou mutáveis, ou mesmo sujeitas a uma sensação de paralisia”

⁹ “a maioria dos romances distópicos ao fazerem emergir o devir consideram vitalmente importante a relação entre a experiência e a degradação da humanidade, e por isso costumam direcionar seu foco especulativo para a constituição das relações entre poder, linguagem e individualidade”

Works like *1984* (1949) by George Orwell and *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley are classic examples of how dystopia in literature questions the role of institutions and technology in controlling the masses. In many of these narratives, speculation about power may be represented by an authoritarian ruler, a coercive government institution, or a controlling corporation. The dystopian genre thus offers a critique of the present by imagining the effects of societies governed by extreme surveillance, manipulation of truth, and suppression of rights.

Through these representations, dystopian literature invites readers to reflect on the consequences of certain policies and ideologies, showing what can happen when the pursuing of a “perfect” society gets out of control. More than simple entertainment, literary dystopias function as warnings about the future, encouraging resistance against regimes that put freedom and human dignity at risk.

This intersection between dystopia and social critique is particularly evident when analyzed through a feminist lens. The dystopian genre not only reflects social and political oppressions but also reveals the patriarchal structures that perpetuate women’s subordination. Feminist dystopian works, set in dark futures, explore the consequences of the loss of reproductive rights, the repression of female autonomy, and the control over women’s bodies. In this context, feminism within dystopia assumes a crucial role, as it exposes the power dynamics that oppress women and projects scenarios that warn of the dangers of ignoring the fight for gender equality.

Feminist dystopia, can be seen as an extension of resistance, offering visions of what might happen when feminist values and women’s rights are neglected or reversed. Much like in resistance literature, feminist dystopian narratives often portray characters who rebel against totalitarian systems that seek to control not only society at large but specifically women. Through these stories, feminist authors like Margaret Atwood discuss the consequences of a future dominated by patriarchal oppression, inviting readers to reflect on the real threats to women’s freedom and autonomy.

In this way, the transition between dystopia and feminism in literature allows for a deeper analysis of the relationships between gender, power, and society. This connection between the two concepts is essential to understanding how feminist literature not only denounces existing oppressions but also challenges dominant narratives, promoting a continuous dialogue about the conditions of women and possibilities for social transformation.

Feminist gender theory, developed from these reflections, seeks to dismantle the social constructions of gender that sustain oppressive hierarchies and are widely explored in dystopian narratives. For this theory, gender is understood as a social construction, rather than a fixed

biological factor. This means that gender identities are shaped by social, cultural, and political norms, which can be deconstructed and transformed. Simone de Beauvoir (1949) reinforces this idea in *The Second Sex*, asserting that gender roles are not inherent but socially assigned. In the literary field, feminist gender theory challenges traditional representations of masculinity and femininity, questioning gender roles that reinforce women's subordination.

In the literary field, feminist gender theory challenges traditional representations of masculinity and femininity, questioning gender roles that reinforce women's subordination. By problematizing gender-based power relations, this theory not only seeks to understand oppression but also to create paths to emancipation and equality. This makes feminist gender theory an essential tool for interpreting dystopian narratives that address the oppression of women and resistance against patriarchy, revealing possibilities for transformation both in stories and in real life.

Furthermore, gender theory, developed by thinkers such as Judith Butler, provides conceptual tools to deconstruct the gender norms that sustain these oppressions. By understanding gender as a social and performative construction, gender theory allows us to analyze how feminist dystopias denaturalize gender roles and propose new forms of resistance and emancipation.

Gender theory is a field of study that explores how gender identities are socially and culturally constructed, questioning the idea that gender is an essential and natural characteristic. Contrary to the traditional view, which links gender to biological sex, scholars like Judith Butler argue that gender is not an expression of an internal essence but rather a performative construction that materializes through repetitive acts and gestures that are socially reinforced.

In her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Butler describes gender as "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler, 1990, p. 61, own translation). From this statement, she proposes that gender is not something that "is," but something that "does." This challenges the idea that male and female are fixed and natural categories, showing that they are, in fact, social constructions that become seemingly stable through the constant repetition of behaviors, clothing, and attitudes considered appropriate for each sex.

This concept of gender performativity suggests that, instead of existing naturally as immutable categories, gender is, in reality, a set of practices performed within a social context that imposes and reinforces certain expectations. Butler emphasizes that gender is an "action" carried out through stylized repetition, which creates the illusion that gender is an essential characteristic when, in fact, it is the result of cultural norms and expectations.

Moreover, Butler argues that the categories of sex, gender, and desire are not natural but rather “effects of a specific configuration of power” (Butler, 1990, p. 53, own translation). The imposition of these categories is linked to a system of heteronormative norms that not only regulate gender expressions but also marginalize people who do not align with these binary expectations. This imposition is reinforced by various social institutions, such as the family, school, and mass media, which play a crucial role in constructing and maintaining these norms.

Therefore, Butler’s gender theory not only seeks to understand the social constructions involving gender but also provides a basis for questioning and subverting these norms. By highlighting the performative nature of gender, the theory opens space for resistance and new forms of identity expression. From this perspective, subverting traditional gender roles—such as through the adoption of clothing or behaviors considered “inappropriate” for a given gender—can serve as a way to destabilize social norms and create new possibilities for expression and freedom.

Gender theory, by questioning the social norms that define masculinity and femininity, is also reflected in literary adaptations, as in the case of the graphic novel *Sleeping Beauties*. The combination of text and image in this format allows for a more visceral representation of gender oppression, expanding the feminist critique present in the original work. The choice of colors, facial expressions and composition of the comics can, for example, highlight the symbolic violence suffered by the female characters, reinforcing the political dimension of the narrative.

The graphic novel, as a form of literary adaptation, offers a unique approach by combining text and images in a way that both complement and enrich the narrative. This format allows the story to be experienced more immersively, using illustrations not only to illustrate but also to interpret and expand the original content of the literary work. The fusion of words and images creates a new reading experience, where the work is not a simple transposition but a reinterpretation that gains new meanings.

As Linda Hutcheon (2012) explains, “adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication” (Hutcheon, 2012, p. 07). This means that while an adaptation maintains ties to the original work, it does not replicate it exactly. Instead, it offers a new perspective on the content, re-creating it in a way that provides something original, while still preserving the essence of the initial work. This creative approach allows the graphic novel to become an independent and unique work, while also paying homage to the source material.

In the case of *Sleeping Beauties*, originally written by Stephen King and Owen King and adapted into a graphic novel by Rio Youers, the graphic adaptation keeps the essence of

the literary work but changes the way the story is told. The interaction between the text and images not only broadens the understanding of the plot but also reveals emotional and psychological dimensions that would be difficult to convey with words alone.

Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993) emphasizes that comics, as a visual medium, have a unique ability to depict nuances that transcend language, allowing for the portrayal of emotions and psychological states through color, facial expressions, and panel composition. He also highlights how choices in layout, transitions between panels, and the manipulation of time and space can shape the reader's experience and interpretation of the story. In *Sleeping Beauties*, these elements are especially relevant: the careful use of color, the emotional expressiveness of the characters, and the deliberate pacing of the panels intensify the narrative atmosphere, guiding the reader through the unfolding events in a visceral and immersive way that goes beyond what prose alone can achieve.

The choice of Alison Sampson's artistic style significantly contributes to the tone of the story, reflecting the tensions, emotions, and nuances of the original text. The graphic novel, therefore, is not limited to a superficial adaptation but offers a new perspective on the work, where images and text interact to create a richer and more dynamic narrative.

This format not only reinterprets the original work but also provides an experience that is only possible through the combination of words and images. The graphic novel, thus, stands as a valid and powerful form of literary adaptation, standing out for expanding the limits of narrative and offering a distinct way of telling stories.

OVERVIEW OF THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

The graphic novel *Sleeping Beauties* is an adaptation of the homonymous work written by Stephen King and Owen King. Published in 2017, the novel originated from an idea by Owen King, which he shared with his father, Stephen King, this resulting in a collaboration that blended the style of both authors.

The story is set in a small town called Dooling, where a mysterious phenomenon causes all women to fall asleep, encased in cocoons. If anyone tries to wake them by force, they become violent and murderous. This event triggers the collapse of society, exploring issues such as misogyny, gender violence, and the fragility of patriarchal structures. The plot raises discussions about the women's role and the effects of their absence in a male-dominated world.

Meanwhile, an enigmatic figure named Eve appears in a women's prison. She seems immune to the disease and possesses supernatural abilities, provoking divided reactions among

the characters. Some see her as a possible savior, while others believe she is responsible for the phenomenon. The conflict surrounding her reflects social tensions and power struggles in a world on the brink of collapse. In parallel, the sleeping women awaken in an alternate reality, where they have the opportunity to rebuild society free from the oppression and violence they faced in the world of men.

The graphic novel adaptation, written by Rio Youers, illustrated by Alison Sampson and colored by Triona Farrell, was published by IDW Publishing, with the first volume released in April 2021 and the second in July 2022. The transformation of the narrative into a graphic format was an effective way to intensify the central themes of the original work, such as the role of women and gender tensions, using visual elements that enhance the atmosphere of mystery and tension.

The use of dark colors and cinematic compositions helps create an immersive and visceral experience, making the adaptation visually compelling. *Sleeping Beauties* received positive reviews and was recognized for its cultural and literary impact, winning the Goodreads Choice Award for Best Horror Book in 2017. The graphic novel adaptation further broadened its audience, offering new layers of interpretation and making the story more accessible to different readers.

By transforming the narrative into images, the graphic adaptation emphasizes the emotional and symbolic weight of the events. As a result, the work stands out within the dystopian genre, feminist dystopian literature, and resistance literature, offering a profound reflection on gender roles, patriarchal structures, resistance, and female autonomy.

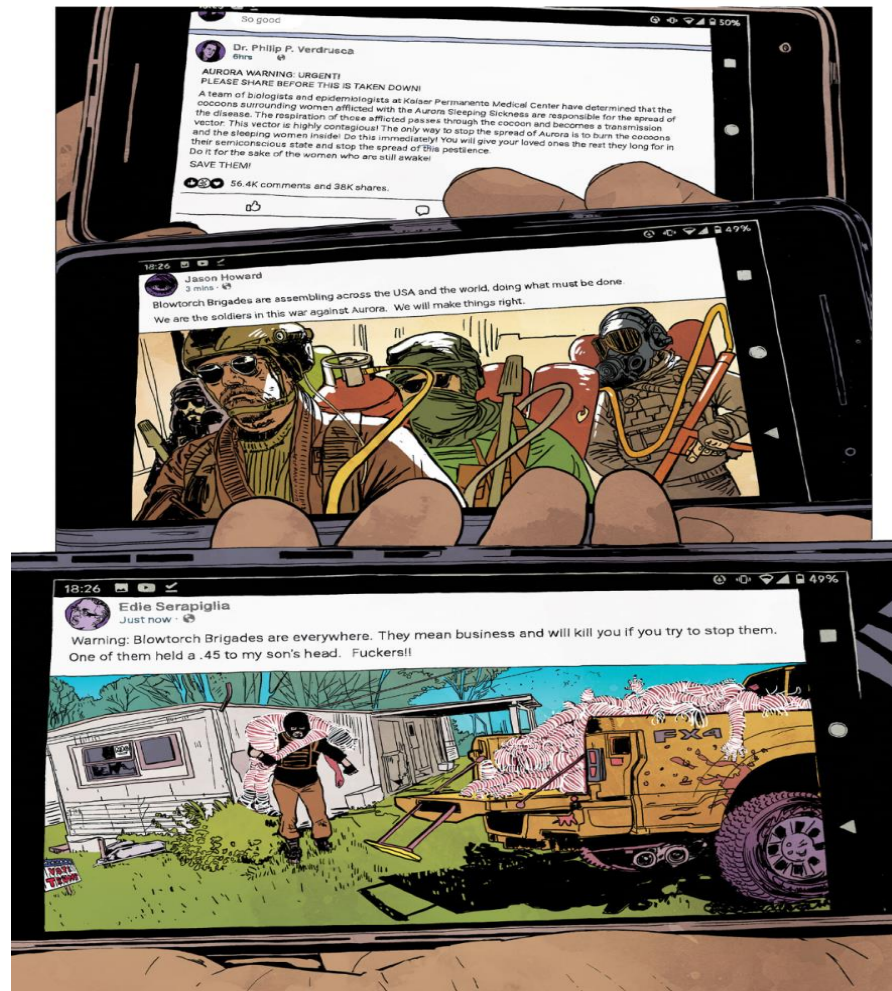
GRAPHIC NOVEL ANALYSIS

Dystopia is a literary genre that depicts imaginary societies defined by oppression, totalitarian control, and the degradation of human life. According to Sarmiento-Pantoja (2005), it can be understood as a place or situation in which the conditions governing human relationships are adverse, deteriorated, or marked by a sense of paralysis. Such narratives often envision future scenarios where individual freedom is suppressed and institutions of power exert absolute control over people's lives.

As Margaret Atwood (2005) points out, dystopian works often act as warnings, reflecting the inequalities and issues present in society today by using exaggerated visions of the future. These narratives suggest the consequences of unchecked oppression and serve as a

cautionary tale, urging readers to recognize and challenge emerging dangers before they become a reality. This is illustrated in the following image:

Image 1 - The blowtorch brigade removing the cocooned women from their homes to be burned.



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¹⁰ Transcription:

Aurora Warning: Urgent!

Please share before this is taken down!

A team of biologists and epidemiologists at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center have determined that the cocoons surrounding women afflicted with the Aurora Sleeping Sickness are responsible for the spread of the disease. The respiration of those afflicted passes through the cocoon and becomes a transmission vector. This vector is highly contagious! The only way to stop the spread of Aurora is to burn the cocoons and the sleeping women inside! Do this immediately! You will give your loved ones the rest they long for in their semiconscious state and stop the spread of this pestilence.

Do it for the sake of the women who are still awake!

SAVE THEM!

Blowtorch Brigades are assembling across the USA and the world, doing what must be done.

We are the soldiers in this war against Aurora. We will make things right.

Warning: Blowtorch Brigades are everywhere. They mean business and will kill you if you try to stop them.

One of them held a .45 to my son's head. Fuckers !!

Fonte: KING, Stephen; KING, Owen; YOUERS, Rio. *Sleeping Beauties*. Vol. 1. [s.l.]: IDW Publishing, 2021. Disponível em: Kindle edition. p. 95.

This scene illustrates the classic characteristics of a dystopia, where society is in collapses and power structures are in crisis. The chaos in Dooling reflects the degradation of human relationships and the loss of control over social order. The violence of the men in the Blowtorch Brigade and the passivity of the cocooned women symbolize the oppression and dehumanization that are central to the dystopian genre.

This scenario serves as a critiques of patriarchal power structures, highlighting the potential consequences of a world where freedom and autonomy are suppressed, as Atwood warns. In this sense, *Sleeping Beauties* acts as a warning, showing us the dangers of a future that echoes present-day inequalities and the oppressive forces that continue to shape our society.

However, violence is not the sole focus of the narrative. The graphic novel also highlights female resistance, a theme that resonates strongly with the foundations of resistance literature. Drawing on the ideas of Alfredo Bosi (2002), resistance can be seen as an ethical response in which individuals confront oppressive forces that seek to control or silence them. This opposition may appear not only in the themes explored by the narrative, but also in its very structure and mode of storytelling — making literature a space for both denunciation and transformation. In *Sleeping Beauties*, this resistance takes shape in the actions of the women, who, even in the midst of chaos, find ways to defy the systems that try to suppress them. This can be seen in the following images:

Image 2 - Lila Norcross fighting to maintain order.



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Fonte: KING, Stephen; KING, Owen; YUERS, Rio. *Sleeping Beauties*. Vol. 1. [s.l.]: IDW Publishing, 2021. Disponível em: Kindle edition. p. 62.

Image 3 - Women resisting amidst the chaos.

¹¹ Transcription:
 Come quick!
 She's **killing** him!
 Police! get out of my way!
 Watch out, sheriff! she sure does look **ray-bid** to me.



45

12

Fonte: KING, Stephen; KING, Owen; YOUERS, Rio. *Sleeping Beauties*. Vol. 1. [s.l.]: IDW Publishing, 2021. Disponível em: Kindle edition. p. 45.

These scenes illustrate female resistance within a dystopian context. In one image, Lila Norcross, positioned as a figure of authority, embodies the struggle of women to maintain order in a collapsing world. Her resistance is both physical and symbolic, as she challenges traditional gender roles by assuming leadership in a male-dominated space. The violence of male characters, on the other hand, exposes the persistence of patriarchal oppression, which seeks to reassert control even as women are disappearing. This defiance, however, is not limited to direct confrontation. Once cocooned, the women are transported to an alternate world — one without men — where they establish systems of cooperation, education, and survival. There, resistance

¹² Transcription:

“These graphic shots from moments ago as protestors clash with police outside the white house.

“Authorities are urging people to stay in their homes as they work to maintain order across the capital.

“We are getting reports of multiple casualties and fatalities, and as many as 200 arrests, with even larger numbers coming out of los angeles, chicago, and new york city, the nation's final tally is set to be sobering indeed.”

takes on a constructive dimension, as the women begin to imagine and build new forms of collective life beyond patriarchal dominance. In *Sleeping Beauties*, resistance emerges both in the fight against oppressive structures and in the creation of alternative, emancipatory ways of being. As seen in the following images:

Image 4 – Women organizing into hunting, agriculture, and education groups.



13

Fonte: KING, Stephen; KING, Owen; YOUERS, Rio. *Sleeping Beauties*. Vol. 2. [s.l.]: IDW Publishing, 2022. Disponível em: Kindle edition. p. 06.

¹³ Transcription:

"But we can only concern ourselves with **our** time, and **our** place. and ladies, I declare we are making strides.

"We have formed a hunting and gathering group, as well as groups for farming, construction, healthcare, and education.

"Magda Dubcek has some experience as an electrician and was able to resurrect a solar-powered generator at the olympia diner.

"Talking of oldies ... a mimeograph machine was unearthed in the basement of the high school, and some remarkably patient and inventive women gave it the tlc needed.

"A few of us ate cooked rabbit and had ourselves a time dancing to the oldies on the rock-ola jukebox."

"They also helped young Molly Ransom make fresh ink from swamp red currants, and Molly has since founded our very own single-sheet newspaper **dooling doings**."

Image 5 – Women harvesting pumpkins and expressing happiness in their new society.



14

Fonte: KING, Stephen; KING, Owen; YOUERS, Rio. *Sleeping Beauties*. Vol. 2. [s.l.]: IDW Publishing, 2022. Disponível em: Kindle edition. p. 09.

In **Image 4**, the women are shown collaborating in various essential tasks: organizing hunting groups, agricultural activities, educational initiatives, and even repairing equipment like the generator. After completing these tasks, some of them enjoy dancing to the oldies on the Rock-Ola jukebox. These actions symbolize the establishment of a self-sufficient, cooperative community, where the women reclaim control over their own survival and well-

¹⁴ Transcription:

How are you finding it here, Essie?

Things are better. I have my very own house, not that crumby old lean-to.

My girls like it, too. Their names are jingle, pingle and ringle.

I'm happy, Essie. Happy for you.

Sheriff. A word.

being. This scene is pivotal because it reflects the broader theme of resistance as a form of constructing new systems of life, not just fighting against existing oppression. The creation of the Dooling Doing newspaper is a further example of how the women take charge of their narrative, asserting their autonomy over information and communication within their society.

In **Image 5**, the women's agricultural work culminates in a moment of shared joy and satisfaction as they harvest pumpkins together. Although their smiles are not as prominent, their expressions reflect a deep sense of fulfillment in their collective task. This image encapsulates the idea of resistance, not only as the rejection of patriarchal oppression but also as the active creation of a new, more just world. The women's joy, immersed in the act of building something meaningful together, demonstrates how resistance can be a source of empowerment, shaping a future where autonomy and solidarity thrive.

These images reinforce the multifaceted nature of resistance. It is not only about fighting against oppression but also about claiming autonomy and imagining alternative futures. As Sarmiento-Pantoja (2023) and Said (1994) argue, this act goes beyond denouncing injustices; it is about creating new realities and resisting the silence imposed by dominant structures. The formation of new structures in this parallel world, where the women organize and cooperate, emphasizes their refusal to accept the limitations imposed by patriarchal control and their determination to shape a reality founded on mutual support and equality.

In *Sleeping Beauties*, resistance is not an isolated act but a continuous process unfolding in various forms: whether through direct confrontation, perseverance in the face of violence, or the creation of new possibilities beyond the dystopian constraints. Bosi (2002) reminds us that such efforts, both thematically and narratively, involves transgressing imposed boundaries and creating alternatives to the status quo. This ongoing struggle for autonomy and freedom is intrinsically connected to gender theory, which critically interrogates the social norms that restrict female identities.

Gender theory, developed by thinkers such as Judith Butler (1990), provides conceptual tools to deconstruct the gender norms that sustain oppression. Butler (1990) argues that gender is not a biological essence but a performative social construction, materialized through repeated acts and gestures that are culturally reinforced. This perspective allows for questioning gender norms that limit women's freedom and autonomy, proposing new forms of existence and resistance. In *Sleeping Beauties*, this theory is reflected in the figure of Eve Black, who challenges gender expectations and represents a new possibility of existence. As seen in the following image:

Image 6 - Eve Black, the only woman who does not fall asleep.



15

Fonte: KING, Stephen; KING, Owen; YOUERS, Rio. *Sleeping Beauties*. Vol. 2. [s.l.]: IDW Publishing, 2022. Disponível em: Kindle edition. p. 17.

This scene illustrates Judith Butler's gender theory, which argues that gender is a performative social construction rather than a biological essence. Eve Black challenges gender expectations by existing outside traditional norms, proposing new forms of resistance and emancipation.

Her presence in the narrative challenges the notion of gender as a fixed and natural category, while also suggesting new possibilities for existence. In the image, Eve Black stands barefoot, wearing an oversized, bloodstained flannel shirt. With short hair above her shoulders and a defiant expression, her hands rest on her hips. The combination of masculine and feminine

¹⁵ Transcription:
“... the avon lady killed them.”

traits in her appearance and posture reinforces the idea that gender is fluid and performative, challenging social norms that seek to control and limit gender identities. As a disruptive figure, Eve Black embodies resistance to gender norms and the potential for a new social order in which women can exist freely, unburdened by the constraints of patriarchy.

This idea resonates with Simone de Beauvoir (1949) argument that gender identity is not a natural or predetermined attribute but is instead shaped by the social and cultural context in which individuals live. According to de Beauvoir, women are not born with a fixed identity; rather, they are socially constructed through the roles and expectations imposed upon them by society. Like Butler, de Beauvoir emphasizes the role of society in shaping gender, and in *Sleeping Beauties*, Eve Black exemplifies this by resisting the societal expectations placed upon her, ultimately embodying the possibility of “becoming” outside traditional gender roles.

Both Butler’s and de Beauvoir’s theories converge in *Sleeping Beauties*, where Eve Black’s refusal to conform to traditional gender norms embodies a powerful form of resistance. Her defiance presents an opportunity for the characters, and the audience, to imagine new forms of gender identity that are not confined to patriarchal structures. Through Eve, the narrative explores how resistance to normative gender expectations can lead to the creation of new ways of living, free from the constraints that have long defined women’s roles in society.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The adaptation of *Sleeping Beauties* into a graphic novel reinforces the symbolic and critical layers already present in the original work, intensifying the dystopian and feminist narrative through a striking visual language. By transforming words into images, the adaptation amplifies the atmosphere of tension and enhances discussions on misogyny, gender violence, and power dynamics in a patriarchal world.

By applying the theories of Scott McCloud, especially his ideas on how comics combine text and image to create a unique narrative experience, we can observe that the *Sleeping Beauties* adaptation fully exploits this duality. McCloud (1993) argues that comics are a visual language that, by uniting images and words, creates a synthesis capable of conveying more complex meanings than either element alone. This approach is essential in understanding how the work creates an emotional and intellectual connection with the reader, which is reinforced in the graphic novel adaptation through the visual construction of scenes of tension, resistance, and social transformation.

For example, Scott McCloud's concept of the "panel-to-panel transition," in which the reader is invited to mentally fill in the gaps between images, is crucial for understanding how the *Sleeping Beauties* graphic novel actively engages the audience in the construction of meaning. This technique is particularly effective in illustrating the women's process of resistance and transformation. However, this transition is not presented in a linear or immediate fashion. Instead, the structure of the two volumes mirrors the fragmentation and reconstruction of the world itself.

In the first volume, the narrative immerses the reader in the collapse of the male-dominated world — a space of chaos, violence, and patriarchal disorder. In contrast, the second volume introduces the reader to the alternative world of the women, where the atmosphere shifts dramatically. The color palette becomes brighter and more vivid, symbolizing a break from the previous oppressive structures and the beginning of a new social experiment.

Through this visual and narrative contrast, the transition between the two worlds is mediated not only by the plot but also by the graphic language. The interplay of panels, color shifts, and composition invites the reader to experience, rather than simply observe, the emergence of a more inclusive and egalitarian model of existence. McCloud's insights help illuminate how this transformation unfolds subtly across the visual grammar of the comic, reinforcing themes of resistance, identity, and reconstruction.

The analysis of the work through the lenses of dystopia, resistance literature, and gender theory highlights how *Sleeping Beauties* transcends mere apocalyptic fiction and establishes itself as an instrument of social critique. The absence of women in society and the male reactions to the "Aurora" disease phenomenon expose the fragility of patriarchal structures and question the naturalization of male dominance. Furthermore, female resistance, represented by characters like Lila Norcross and Eve Black, underscores the importance of women's agency and the possibility of new modes of existence and social organization.

By drawing on theorists such as Scott McCloud, Alfredo Bosi, Simone Beauvoir, and Judith Butler, this analysis demonstrates how the narrative of the graphic novel engages with fundamental concepts of resistance literature and feminist theory. The performative nature of gender, the deconstruction of oppressive social norms, and the struggle for autonomy are central elements that give the work significant value within the dystopian genre.

Sleeping Beauties not only denounces the structural violence that affects women's lives, but also imagines alternative scenarios that suggest paths toward resistance and transformation. Within the dystopian context, the narrative positions itself in what Marc Augé (2020) defines as a "non-place," where identity, history, and social relations are emptied—particularly in the

chaotic world that emerges after the outbreak of the “Aurora” sickness. This space, dominated by a collapsing masculinity, reveals the fragility of patriarchal structures when deprived of women’s presence and labor.

On the other hand, the new world experienced by the women is not portrayed as a stable utopia, but rather as a space of experimentation, transition, and reconstruction—also a “non-place,” in the sense that it remains a space in formation. It is free from the old paradigms, yet still without a definitive form. It is a world of possibilities, where women rehearse new ways of living, resisting, and organizing collectively.

However, the women’s final choice—to return to the world of men—adds a layer of complexity to the narrative. They do not choose to remain in an idealized, separate space; they choose to return to the real world, with all its imperfections, in order to transform it from within. The opportunity offered by *Eve Black* to live in a world without men is not rejected out of fear or submission, but out of courage: the courage to face the world as it is, carrying with them the experience of freedom, solidarity, and the potential for a new form of existence.

Thus, *Sleeping Beauties* not only offers a critique of structures of domination but also presents a model of resistance that is not limited to escape or isolation, but instead grounded in conscious and transformative action. The work affirms the fundamental role of speculative fiction in social critique and in imagining possible futures—even if those futures demand a return to the present in order to be realized.

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