



“Les Voir Venir,” a photographic subseries of the project *The Feminist Gaze*.

***The French subtitle “Les Voir Venir” translates to “See Them Coming” in English**

Virginie Foloppe

On February 28, 2020, I joined the demonstrators near the Salle Pleyel—the day of the César Awards ceremony where Roman Polanski was nominated for 12 awards despite multiple accusations of rape. I joined demonstrators again, on the evening of March 7, where we were violently repressed by the police, and I surprised myself shouting with the demonstrators as never before. Finally on July 10, we protested at Place de l’Hotel de Ville following the appointments of Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin and Minister of Justice Eric Dupont-Moretti, both accused rapists. During these three events, I took photos of the demonstrations as part of my project, *The Feminist Gaze*.

On March 6, 2021, the Feminist Committee of the University of Paris V called on the public to join them during a demonstration against sexual violence in education. I responded to this call, which took place in a context that is important to clarify.

Among the signatories of the call to demonstrate, there was the feminist collective organization Garçes, which was created ten years ago at Sciences Po, an international university for research in political science. Garçes’ mobilization efforts and actions in conjunction with other organizations resulted in the resignation of the director of their school, Frédéric Mion, on February 29, 2021. This resignation came directly after the publication of Camille Kouchner’s book, *La Familia Grande* on January 7, 2021.

In her book, the author, a professor at the University of Paris V, accused Olivier Duhamel of sexually abusing his stepson—Kouchner’s twin brother. At the time of publication, Olivier Duhamel was a professor at Sciences Po, and Frédéric Mion, the director, had known of his crimes for years. On January 6, 2021, one day before the publication of Kouchner’s book, Garçes tweeted a press release reacting to an article in the French magazine, *Le Monde*, where Frédéric Mion admitted to having been aware of the allegations against Oliver Duhamel as early as 2019. In their fight, Garçes was supported, among others, by Alice Coffin, a prominent feminist activist, elected ecologist at the Paris council, and author of the book *Le Genie Lesbien*.

In the wake of the successful sales of Camille Kouchner’s book, #MeTooInceste was launched by Caroline de Haas and Mathilde da Silva on January 16, 2021, following the tradition of the #MeToo movement that launched in the United States in 2017. Very quickly, testimonies from incest victims poured into social networks, tagged with #metooincest. Prior to the events of January 2021, Charlotte Pudlowski’s podcast “Ou peut-être une nuit” had also helped raise awareness of the extent of the devastation of incest in France in September 2020, emphasizing the widespread denial that accompanied those crimes.

It is, therefore, in this context of the expansion of the #MeToo movement, first initiated in 2006 by activist Tarana Burke, that the call for demonstrations launched by the students arose. I teach representations of rape at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University in Paris, and it was only after actress Adèle Haenel publicly spoke out against the film director Christophe Ruggia for sexual harassment and inappropriate touching on November 3, 2019, that I was able to affirm the inclusion of the word “rape” in the title of my course in cinema. I have always felt able to speak freely about the subject of rape in the class I teach. I first noticed an acute interest for the subject of incest from my students during my analysis of the film *Festen* in my first year of teaching the course. Outside my classroom, however, I faced perceptible resistance in the many refusals to my responses for calls to conferences when they dealt with the subject of rape or incest. It is, therefore, with gratitude and joy that I answered the call to resist and took these photos which testify to the vitality of the protestors’ commitment and the hope that the students give me/us.



This protestor holds a sign that translates into “lesbian, feminist, and angry.”



A non-binary protestor holds up a sign that reads “Enby dyke against the hetero patriarchal cis-tem.”



A protestor affirms that “feminism is not a fashion, but a revolution.”



At the appointment of Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, who has been accused of sexual assault, a protestor holds up a sign that reads “Darmanin resign” from the speech bubble with the caption “no to rape!!!”



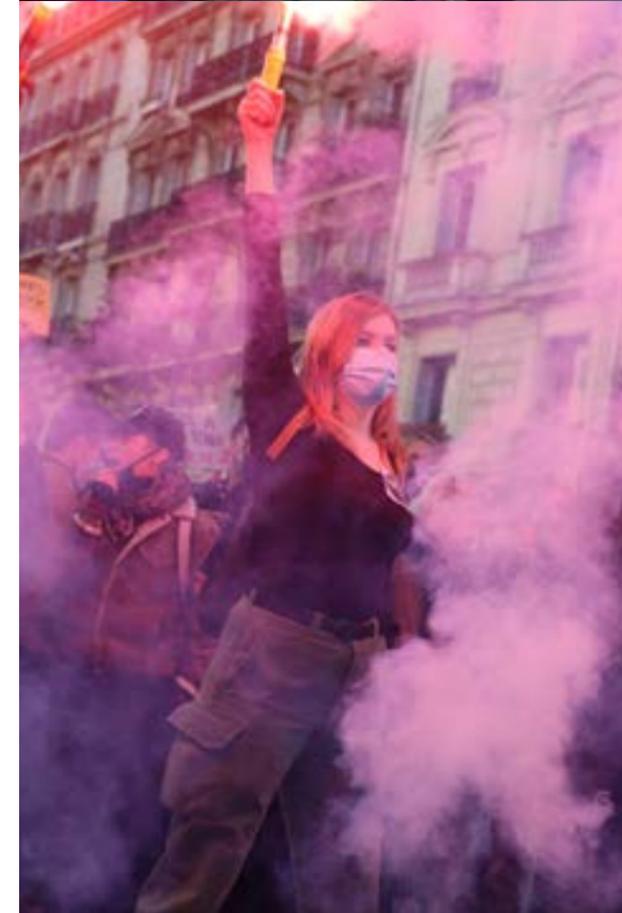
This protestor has written and crossed out the phrase “protect your daughters” and replaced it with “educate your sons” in bold lettering below.



The sign carried by the protestor reads “Silence = Complicity.”



A protestor holds a sign that reads “support for our community, victims of the law of silence.” Adelphe is the gender-inclusive French word for community.





Gender as a Continuous Becoming:

Exploring Drag Practices in Katarzyna Kozyra's *In Art Dreams Come True*

Maria Markiewicz

Abstract:

This article examines contemporary drag practices as performative spaces where gender norms are destabilized and subverted and where gender can be analyzed in its most complex form. Arguing that gender is a social construct and building on works by Judith Butler and Simone de Beauvoir, I propose to explore drag practices as performances that are inherently linked to the constructed nature of gender. I do so via a close analysis of one of the works by a prominent Polish contemporary artist, Katarzyna Kozyra, in which the artist is learning how to be “a real woman” from her drag queen master.

Yet I accept the idea that gender is an impersonation, that becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits.

— Judith Butler, *The Body You Want*¹

My body is a point of departure which I am and which at the same time I surpass.

— Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*²

Introduction

As Jack Halberstam once wrote, “It is remarkably easy in this society to not look like a woman, but relatively difficult, by comparison, to not look like a man.”³ As gender and queer theorists have also previously argued, “being feminine” is not necessarily ontologically related to being female and “being masculine” is not always “about men” (see for example Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick).⁴ Both femininity and masculinity are mythic constructions perpetuated through the performative repetition of acts, bodily gestures, and mundane movements. It is in those everyday acts that gender, understood herein as “a cultural construction imposed upon identity,” manifests itself in its purest form— as something we act, perform, appropriate, interpret, and then reinterpret all over again.⁵ Is gender performative? Is it subversive? Is it imposed on us or dependent on us? Since the notion of gender itself asks us to pose a vast array of questions, let us proceed

by looking at what might be seen as best depicting the ambiguity of gender: drag practices and how they pose a challenge to our beliefs about gender and sexuality, through a close reading of one of the works by a critically acclaimed, contemporary Polish artist named Katarzyna Kozyra.

Through exploring gender, drag and their depictions in contemporary art, this essay will argue that all gender is scripted, rehearsed and performed, building on what Butler wrote on its performativity.⁶ Gender is indeed a social construction, something that can be put on and then taken off, just like a drag queen's scenic image when she enters or leaves the stage. Moreover, through a close reading of Kozyra's multi-threaded and multi-part project, *In Art Dreams Come True*, focusing mostly on those parts that involve Kozyra working with Gloria Viagra, a Berlin-based drag queen, this text will attempt to show drag practices as not only sides where the notions of the "feminine" and the "masculine" are blurred and contested, but, most importantly, where the notion of gender itself is represented in its most complex form. First, this essay will briefly define the notion of gender as seen in different feminist writings and look at drag practices as subverting gender norms and revealing the structure of gender itself, rather than degrading women and appropriating their identities. Secondly, it will apply its findings to the abovementioned work of Kozyra, to radically conclude that gender can possibly shift from day to day, year to year, moment to moment, and that there is no such thing as "masculine" or "feminine." Perhaps there is not even such a thing as gender; instead, what remains is only a set of repeated acts, impersonations, and modes of how we decide to acculturate our bodies.

CHAPTER I: On Becoming One's Gender

"One is not born, but rather becomes a woman."⁷



Figure 1: Katarzyna Kozyra and Gloria Viagra performing in drag. Still from *In Art Dreams Come True*, 2006, 20'58". © Katarzyna Kozyra, courtesy Zachęta National Gallery of Art. Source: DigiBeta.

In Judith Butler's reading of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Butler acknowledges how the sex-gender distinction was a crucial part of the essentialist feminist effort to dispel the myth that woman's anatomy is her destiny.⁸ This is precisely when the division between the two concepts of gender and sex begins to be acknowledged by recognising sex as the factual aspects of the body and gender as the cultural meaning that the body acquires. However, we have to question if this distinction still holds true. As both Butler herself and Kosofsky

Sedgwick point out, being “female” and being “a woman” are “two very different sorts of being.”⁹ Therefore, it has to be acknowledged that a “biological” female who self-identifies as a woman, a masculine-identified “biological” female, a drag queen, or a male-to-female transsexual are all equally authentic and feminine (or masculine) as they ought to be, since gender is, by definition, “unnatural.” In other words, as Butler argues, rephrasing Simone de Beauvoir’s famous line, “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman,” “to be a woman is to become a woman,” and this becoming can happen through appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting certain gestures and acts.¹⁰

Hence, becoming one’s own gender involves an active process of constructing oneself— a process that results in establishing one’s identity that is no longer tied nor limited to anatomy. Since the process of becoming is never complete, gender is a very unstable identity, constituted and performed in regard to a certain time and space. According to Butler, how gender is constituted is similar to performative acts within theatrical contexts.¹¹ Whereas Butler calls to read gender as a performative act, Monique Wittig, on the other hand, calls for a utopian ungendered space, opposing the very categories of “woman” and “man.”¹² The disappearance of these categories would indeed make the “gender trouble” seem non-existent, but it would also leave it unresolved. By contrast, feminist theorist Marjorie Garber has argued for implementing a third term, providing a solution that would break us free from the binarism of gender, not gendering on its own.¹³ Undoubtedly, it can be argued that there is a third gender category already, which according to Caroline Hodes and Jorge Sandoval is the category of drag.¹⁴ Thus, in the next part of this essay, gender will be explored through the lens of performativity by taking Butler’s claims even further, acknowledging that gender is something that can be put on or off, adjusted, reinvented,

and then performed again, building at the same time on the notion of a “third gender” or a “third term,” that will be explored here as something especially present in drag practices and performances, which destabilize gender and create something new out of it. To put it in other words, drag practices give a space to experiment and to play—a space to truly become one’s own gender, even if it means doing so for the sake of performance.

CHAPTER II: Destablising Gender in Drag Practices



Figure 2: Michel becoming Gloria. Still from *In Art Dreams Come True*, 2006, 20'58". © Katarzyna Kozyra, courtesy Zachęta National Gallery of Art. Source: DigiBeta.

Some scholars view drag queens as reinforcing assumptions about the dominant nature of gender, while others go as far as to say that drag queening is a misogynistic practice embedded in masculine privilege. This

view has been present in Marilyn Frye and Janice Raymond's writings and more recently, in bell hooks' commentary on *Paris Is Burning*.¹⁵ They all agree that drag is inherently offensive to women and that it is an imitation based on ridicule and degradation. Queer theorists, on the contrary, argue that drag queen performances are transgressive actions that are about *destabilising* gender and sexual categories through presenting hybrid and minority genders and sexualities.¹⁶ They *cannot* imitate or appropriate women's traits or struggles, since drag is not intended as an imitation or copy of a particular gender. Instead, drag "enacts the very structure of impersonation by which any gender is assumed."¹⁷ Therefore, drag practices, whether involving drag queens or drag kings, can be perceived as a great way to destabilise the female-male binary and to demonstrate that there is no such thing as an "original" gender. However, this claim has some limitations; namely, the great ambiguity regarding what drag performances convey. As Butler demonstrates in *Bodies That Matter*, drag can be a site of great ambivalence.¹⁸ It can indeed be perceived as subverting the norm or perpetuating it through various detrimental stereotypes about women and femininity. Nevertheless, can drag queen performances really strengthen those gender stereotypes if they do not deal with women by definition, but rather with the disidentification of women? Drag queens are "disidentifying with not only the ideal of woman but the a priori relationship of woman and femininity that is a tenet of gender-normative thinking."¹⁹

Because Western culture is so deeply committed to the idea that there are only two genders, it is hard to imagine a world without this binary division.²⁰ However, such a world is possible on a smaller scale: the world of drag. Even though most drag queens are content to identify as male when they are off-stage, they often combine masculine and

feminine traits whilst performing in drag, which complexifies how they perceive their own gender and further illustrates that one's gender does not have to be a fixed state.²¹ "There are no direct expressive or casual lines between sex, gender, gender presentation, sexual practice, fantasy and sexuality," and drag queens and their performances embody this fact very clearly.²² There is no better place than a drag show if one wants to uncover the true meaning of gender—a meaning insisting on its performative and subversive aspects and a place where one can be a man, then a woman, and then a man again. Drag shows provide spaces where men are more "feminine" than many women will ever be, where there is no such thing as purely "feminine" nor "masculine," and where it all no longer matters or maybe matters more than anywhere else. This seems to be one of the conclusions that Kozyra draws in her project *In Art Dreams Come True*, where she wants to fulfil her dream of finally becoming a "womanly woman," and, to help her become one, she asks Gloria Viagra, a Berlin-based drag queen, to take the artist under her tutelage.

CHAPTER III: In Art Dreams Come True

Why 'being a woman' and 'being a man' are both "internally unstable affairs"²³



Figure 3: "Women's tutelage." Still from *In Art Dreams Come True*, 2006, 20'58". © Katarzyna Kozyra, courtesy Zachęta National Gallery of Art. Source: DigiBeta.

In Art Dreams Come True is a large-scale project that Katarzyna Kozyra started in 2003. It consists of thirteen different pieces, including performances, videos, quasi-theatrical productions and happenings. One of the immediate inspirations for the project was "the will to become a real woman."²⁴ For the project, the artist has chosen two guides who assist her in assuming her new role of a "real woman:" drag queen Gloria Viagra and voice coach Grzegorz Pitulej, who is known in the work as Maestro. Both of the worlds chosen by Kozyra, the opera and the drag

club, are in a way saturated with artificiality, imitation, and posing. So too are the roles she has chosen to immerse herself into whilst realising this project: a drag queen (or king?), an opera diva, a cheerleader, Snow White, and finally, a seemingly innocent girl.²⁵ In this chapter of the essay, I would like to focus especially on Kozyra's training to become a drag queen as well as on Gloria Viagra, through analysing two videos: *In Art Dreams Come True*, a short quasi-documentary under the same title, which tells the story of the project, and *Tribute to Gloria Viagra. Birthday Party*, documenting one of Kozyra's drag performances.

In *Tribute to Gloria Viagra. Birthday Party*, Kozyra makes an appearance as a surprise-girl for Gloria, acting as her lookalike. The video begins with the artist entering the stage hidden in a huge birthday box. Gloria opens the box and Kozyra comes out of it dressed exactly like her drag master. The music starts playing and Kozyra begins her show, performing a striptease to the delight of the crowd gathered in Berlin's gay nightclub, Big Eden. After taking off all her clothes, an artificial penis is revealed, which is then torn off by Kozyra in a triumphant gesture and put into her miniature purse.²⁶ During the performance, the artist seems to move freely from one gender to another, impersonating three different genders: feminine, masculine, and intersex. The performance showcases, as it were, that gender is no longer dictated by anatomy and that anatomy does not seem to pose any necessary limits to the possibilities of gender. Moreover, seeing the artist undress herself to become a man, who then undresses himself to become a woman, once again shows that, these days, the body becomes a choice, a choice that we consciously make every day, and a choice to be one thing or the other, none, both or more at the same time. The choice of unbeing and undoing the body becomes "a mode of enacting and reenacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh."²⁷

The other work that I want to analyse here is the quasi-documentary *In Art Dreams Come True*, which shows the behind-the-scenes of Kozyra's project. The film begins with Kozyra singing "Let Me Entertain You!" by Robbie Williams on the same night that her previous performance took place. It then unfolds by taking the viewer to Gloria's apartment, where she is now Michel, who prepares for his next drag show. We can see a glimpse of him transforming into another gender, and this in-between state, when he is no longer Michel, but also not yet Gloria, is really interesting to examine. Michel is shown in his bathroom engaged in the ritual of becoming his drag alter ego. He shaves and puts makeup on, and this is when we can observe how from minute to minute, he is less of a Michel, and more of a Gloria.²⁸ This becoming happens in front of our very eyes. His gestures change, his voice changes, the way he moves is also different, but it all seems very natural, as if he is not really aware of this transformation—as if this was happening independently of him.

After Michel transforms himself into Gloria, we are taken to one of Kozyra's singing lessons, where Maestro, Grzegorz Pitulej, trains her voice. Even though Maestro self-identifies as male, which we can assume from the rest of the quasi-documentary, he is captured here wearing makeup and is shown putting on a satin, body-shaping corset, to then ballet dance in front of a mirror. This again not only debunks the idea that gender is by definition fixed and predetermined but also calls into question all gender stereotypes and the gender binary itself. Pitulej here is not simply a man wearing makeup; he is very different than in those parts of the footage where he is shown as a "traditional male," as if we have missed something, as something has happened behind the scenes that we are not being divulged or told about. Kozyra's characters, and the artist herself, all move so smoothly from male to

female roles and then again from female to male ones, that they are almost critiquing the distinction between sex and gender. They are their very own creations and constructions; they are creating themselves anew; they are becoming. And they do so fluently and effortlessly that we begin to question if the distinction between gender and sex binaries exists after all.

Kosofsky Sedgwick once wrote, "I as a woman am also a producer of masculinities and a performer of them."²⁹ This is what Kozyra's imaginary world created through *In Art Dreams Come True* looks like. It is a world without the violence of a gender ideal, where one can choose to be both genders at once or none at all. Kozyra's dream to achieve what she calls "true womanhood" is deeply rooted in what Susan Bordo theorised as "docile female bodies," meaning the bodies that are "habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, and 'improvement'" and characterise the reality of women living in capitalist societies.³⁰ It is Bordo who, influenced by Foucault and Bourdieu, acknowledged how our bodies are "texts of culture," stating that when viewed historically, the female body has been an "amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control."³¹ Therefore, it is no wonder that Kozyra, presenting herself as rather androgynous, also felt the need to comply with traditional gender norms, at least once in her life. But she took that norm and turned it upside down, because instead of becoming "feminine," she became "hyper-feminine" as she performed drag. Gloria, Maestro, and the other characters from *In Art Dreams Come True*, although dramatically different from each other, have one thing in common: not agreeing with the gender norm and the binary division to the extent of dismantling them completely and creating a new norm—that there is no norm.

Conclusion

This essay has shown that femininity, like all genders, is something that can be taught and constructed. It is a continuous becoming, a process, an intervention, a space to redefine and rediscover oneself that transgresses all possible norms. It has also demonstrated how drag queen practices, which at first seem to reinforce the so-called hegemonic femininity, are in fact places where redefining and transgressing gender-related borders take place. Arguing that there are no direct expressive or causal lines between gender, sex, and gender presentation, this text has advocated for the performative reading of gender, which is a term in process, a constructing that has no beginning or an end. Therefore, the performance of drag is closely linked to the performance of gender. Through creating a certain picture of a “woman,” drag reveals the structure of gender itself, as well as its contingency. It shows gender as an identity constructed in time, as a stylised repetition of acts.

By analysing Kozyra’s *In Art Dreams Come True*, this text has emphasised why contesting gender norms is so important. It is important because it makes space for new constructions and becomings to emerge. It is important because it opposes the violence constructed through the gender binary and sex norms. There is no such thing as a natural sex, a natural woman, nor a natural man. They are all social fictions—phenomena reproduced over and over again to protect the local consensus on how the world is organised. But what if we do not agree with the current state of things? What if we do not fit into dominant societal norms? What if we do not want to succumb? Drag practices and their popularisation show that there might be another world underway: a world where women can be masculine and men

feminine and a world where people can be both genders at the same time or none at all, a world where the world can be constructed anew and reinvent itself like we all do, from day to day, moment to moment, year to year.

Notes

1. Kotz, Liz, "The Body You Want: An Interview with Judith Butler," *Artforum*, 1992, p. 85
2. Jean Paul-Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 329.
3. Jack Halberstam, "Bathrooms, Butches, and the Aesthetics of Female Masculinity," in *Rrose is a Rose is a Rose: Gender Performance in Photography*, ed. Jennifer Blessing (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1997), 179.
4. This is discussed more broadly in Sedgwick's brilliant article "Gosh, Boy George, You Must Be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity" and in Butler's equally interesting reading of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, in her essay "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*".
5. Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*" (Yale French Studies, 1986), 36.
6. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).
7. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), 301.
8. Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*" (Yale French Studies, 1986), 36.
9. *Ibid.*, 35.
10. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), 301.
11. Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal*, no.4, (1988).
12. Monique Wittig, "The Category of Sex," *Feminist Issues*, no. 2 (1982).
13. Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London: Routledge, 1992).
14. Caroline Hodes and Jorge Sandoval, "RuPaul's Drag Race: A study in the commodification of white ruling-class femininity and the etiolation of drag," *Studies in Costume and Performance* 3, no. 2 (2018).
15. Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (New York: The Crossing Press, 1983); Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1994); bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (London: Routledge, 2014).

16. Rupp, Leila J., Verta Taylor, and Eve Ilana Shapiro, "Drag Queens and Drag Kings: The Difference Gender Makes," *Sexualities* 13, no. 10 (2010).
17. Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 310.
18. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 2011).
19. Jose Esteban Munoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Colour and the Performance of Politics* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 108.
20. Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough," *Sciences* 33, 2 (1993).
21. Caitlin Graef, "Drag queens and gender identity," *Journal of Gender Studies* 25, 6 (2016).
22. Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 315.
23. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 2011), 126.
24. Hanna Wróblewska, *In Art Dreams Come True* (Hatje Catnz Verlag, 2007), exhibition catalogue.
25. Katarzyna Kozyra, *In Art Dreams Come True*, 2006, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.
26. Katarzyna Kozyra, *Tribute to Gloria Viagra. Birthday Party*, 2006, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.
27. Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*", *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986): 48.
28. Katarzyna Kozyra, *In Art Dreams Come True*, 2006, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.
29. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Gosh, Boy George, You Must Be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity," in *Constructing masculinity*, ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, Simon Watson, Carrie Mae Weems (New York: Routledge, 1995), 13.
30. Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight, Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 165.
31. *Ibid.*, 166.

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Vague Vagrant Vagina

Silvia Marcantoni Taddei

The male model I chose for this set is a nonbinary person, aged 47. I myself am a nonbinary person, aged 26. The model wanted to perform a virtual transition, and I wanted to help him/her through my own body and artwork. The model, pictured, is naked and wears a vagina drawn by me on paper. This drawing is an exact representation of my own vagina.

In this series of photos, the model holds two panes of glass in his/her hands. These panes of glass represent that his/her experience is hidden and revealed at the same time, like his/her own penis is hidden and revealed. The title is inspired by the very nature of the paper artwork: it's artificial (vague), it's movable and removable (vagrant), but it's a real vagina for the model.

Vague Vagrant Vagina (2021) wants to give dignity and visibility to the female state of mind of the model. Now that transgender and nonbinary rights are acquired in the Western world, the focus is to show individual identity and boost the personal way of living.







The Stylite

Dr. Susan Signe Morrison

Artist Statement:

Rooted in stories of religious solitaries from the Middle Ages, the stylite creates a feminist icon for all ages. Stylites were religious devotees who stood on pillars—sometimes for years—to demonstrate their devotion to God. Most of these named stylites were men, though anonymous women are said to have also performed these acts of spiritual and physical endurance. The female stylite imagined here elicits condemnation, only to ultimately triumph as a symbol of resilience and a source of inspiration. As figures for public consumption both in the past and present, women have been told to hide themselves away via clothing conventions or to silence themselves via shame tactics. Yet some defiant ones accept—even revel in—their roles as public spectacles.

Carrying her torso straight and fierce, she stands.

Her pillar, a column of independence, towers over the chaos of everyday life and the trials of the quotidian world. Not for her, the scurrying in alleyways to evade rats and snakes; not for her, the melting into shadowed doorways to escape panoptical forces; not for her, the anonymity to be found in swathed scarves and veils. Rather, the open sky is her roof—clouds her crossbeams and raindrops her canopy.

Under constant surveillance, she finds her freedom. With no obscurity, her secrets accessible to all, she delves within to foster a mysterious privacy cultivated by her will.

Defiant, silent, a rebel statue of insolence, she withstands shameless ocular intrusions. She learns not to flinch when attacked by rotten, decaying vegetables, moldy loaves of bread, and turned milk. She splashes on stinking garbage, chucked from below, like Eau de Cologne. Crumbled trash adorns her as haute couture.

People come—first singly, then clustered in dribs and drabs assembled in groups, then flocking in crowds. She galvanizes the community: a heroine of resolution, a demon of contagion, an effigy of ignorance. Each observer views her through their own image. The mother of compassion. The harlot of shamelessness. And, as time inevitably passes, the crone of knowledge.

They watch, hoping to spy on her moments of weakness. As she eats the edible food tossed up by sympathetic companions below. Shits as need be. Screams in pain. Sleeps in fatigue. Slaps mosquitoes. Shivers at glacial sleet. Laughs in joy at the covenant of rainbows.

Look as you wish. Can you see her change? Spy her wither? Her wrinkles crinkle up upon her smooth skin, reddened by the sun. Does she move? So slowly, you cannot stand long enough to see her tiny stirrings. You cannot be stagnant. You must realign and, in doing so,

miss the infinitesimal shift in posture when her elbow curves in, her chin tips a fraction of an inch, and her hip juts out in microcosmic repositioning.

You feel the pain of famine, you endure the agony of war, you expire with pestilence.

But she, implacable in the wake of heaving conflicts, apocalyptic terrors, and insidious disease, persists.

She digs roots in there above us. Her skin, toughened by the harshness of the elements, builds up a barky epidermis. Her arms rise up in branchy veneration. Her hair, tangled by eons of blustery gales and cushioned by tender zephyrs, blows in leafy abundance.

She perseveres despite it all—defiant to the end. And, when at last she must fall, her face glows with sweetness, sanctified by her ignominy. Smiling, she begins to die.

Through it all, she stands. Decomposing, she gently rots, perishing so that we may live sustained by her resilience.



The Lost Bride in the Broken Dream

Photo Exhibition by Rinat Zemach Levy and Mali Aroesti

This project is a series of photographs that presents the distance between the legendary image of a bride on her wedding day as opposed to the actual life of a woman as a wife and mother, the reality of which is complex and complicated. It deals with the myths of married life and family values.

The project presents various scenes from daily routine: preparing lunch, playing in the playground, and more. The gap between the magnificent, white dress and the true day-to-day actions of a woman creates a conflict between the dream of marriage and the life of the marriage itself. The exhibition is divided into four parts: the dream, the birth, the family phase, and finally, disillusionment.

In the first stage, the bride is presented in a dreamlike manner, laying with her eyes closed and surrounded by endless domestic objects. These objects represent the physical and emotional burden a woman has in housekeeping and raising children: toys, groceries, books, kitchenware, and clothing.

In the second stage, the bride is observed in the birthing process. This shows a moment of life and death for the woman: life in bringing a new baby into the world and becoming a mother and death in the metaphorical sense of the loss of her old and former identity.

The third part shows the day-to-day activities of the home and family maintenance. It shows the endless responsibilities: cooking, cleaning and spending time with the children. In this part the bride is no longer alone, as the children and husband are with her. The bride and her partner are no longer the same prince and princess who were dreaming of their future but two exhausted people lying down like two corpses on the bed, too worn out to even think of intimacy.

The last stage expresses the final station in life where there is disillusionment. She is observing what she has done, her mistakes and her past life. This phase expresses ending and separation, which are an integral part of the life cycle.

On the artists:

Rinat Zemach Levy, a multidisciplinary artist and art therapist (M.A.) talks about the decision to create the project: "I realized I was probably lost on the way to myself. I forgot to create and be present. I was focused outside and put my attention on being a superwoman and a good mother."

Mali Aroesti, the photographer of this series, has extensive experience in photography. She loves music, photography, and performance art. Mali talks about her connection to the project: "I remember myself as a child, dreaming about the whole package, but very quickly I realized that for me it does not fit. Therefore, I identified with Rinat and connected to the idea of breaking the dream."







Masculinity and Femininity:

Angela Carter's Concern About Patriarchal Representations in *The Passion of New Eve* (1977)

Dr. Yahyaoui Hanane

Abstract:

This paper attempts to demythologize patriarchal representations which corroborate certain images about masculinity and femininity. Through an analysis of Carter's novel *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) I try to question fixed stereotypes about masculinity and femininity and, therefore, argue that it is not biology which determines male and female identity so much as social and cultural constructions of it. In this way, Carter disrupts and subverts the idea of sexes which are perceived in binary oppositions and at the same time criticises the essentialist notions of patriarchy in which women are oppressed and relegated to a subordinate position. The paper eventually demonstrates that Carter privileges the concept of bisexuality in which both the male and female elements conflate to complement each other not only at the level of identity, but also at the level of representation, discourse, and language itself.

Angela Carter began for the first time to be read widely and internationally in 1979. This was considered as a turning point in her life as readers identified with her as a writer.¹ A most moving tribute was written by Salman Rushdie, reproducing his heartfelt statement from the *New York Times Book Review* when he acknowledged that "she was the most brilliant writer in England ... one of the best, most loyal, most truth telling, most inspiring friend anyone could ever have. I cannot bear that she is dead."² She is a writer, novelist, and critic; she wrote short stories, novels, and essays. She also wrote a volume of fairy tales for adults: "The Bloody Chamber" (1979). Carter also devoted a whole volume to *The Sadeian Women* (1979), written to the Marquis de Sade, whose discourse combined three main interests of surrealism: madness, sexuality, and transgression.³

Angela Carter's impulse to demythologize is one of the main features of her work. The thrust of Carter's demythologizing is powerfully apparent in *The Passion of New Eve* (1977). It is a science fiction text, a speculative fiction which uses myths to question male/female roles. Drawing widely on Greek mythology, Carter proceeds to deconstruct some of the mythical sources of European culture. The story is premised upon Evelyn's adventures and his encounter with Mother, an embodiment of the omnipotent "phallic Mother" which will lead to his castration in the matriarchal underground called "Beulah."

The action takes place in America, during the time when there was a war among blacks and whites and the guerilla groups that have taken hold of New York and California. So, areas were devastated and only some hidden communities managed to survive. In the novel, these communities are "Beulah," the underground realm dominated by Mother, and Zero's farm. Evelyn, the protagonist, is a young British man who arrives in New York and finds a city immersed in chaos. He undergoes

a number of trials and, therefore, learns the way that femininity and masculinity are socially constructed.

This paper attempts to deconstruct patriarchal representations which corroborate certain images about masculinity and femininity in *The Passion of New Eve* (1977). Indeed, I question these representations which construct absolute truth about gender identities and, therefore, depict the instances in which women are abused and disparaged by men. Carter develops cogently the idea that men's mistreatment of women is not an innate sexual drive, but is rather the result of how they have been culturally taught to view femininity. However, Carter disrupts and subverts the idea of sexes, which are perceived in binary oppositions, and at the same time criticizes the essentialist notions of patriarchy. In my analysis of the novel, I will unravel the constructed views behind Evelyn's myth, Zero's myth, Leilah's myth, and Mother's myth. I will also discuss the narratives of mirrors and the way it is oppressive to the characters. The paper eventually demonstrates that Carter privileges the concept of bisexuality in which both male and female elements conflate to complement each other.

In Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*, the main protagonist, Evelyn, is depicted as a male subject who is transformed into a woman and, therefore, should acquire femininity as a social construct.⁴ Before indulging in the discussion of the novel, I will start with a brief theoretical framework which shows the way the woman enters the realm of femininity.

In *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women*, Mitchell argues that the girl goes through two significant stages so as to enter the realm of femininity.⁵ The first stage starts with the child's initial relationship with the mother, which is characterised by the oral satisfaction gained by the sucking of the breast. In the second stage,

the child wishes to take the place of the father and thus to be her love object, in a perfect union with the mother. A third party, however, disrupts the mother-infant relationship when the girl is seduced by her father. Presumably, her love for the mother is transferred to the father. At that time, she becomes aware that she is castrated of the phallus. The girl learns masculine values which are essential to the development of her feminine subject. The crucial point is that at this stage the girl receives her identity as a feminine subject and is obliged to repress those aspects of her which are restricted to masculinity. In fact, both men and women behave according to their sexual identities and to the laws governed by their societies, which set up certain rules for masculinity and femininity. Consequently, the Oedipus complex is a patriarchal myth in which the boy learns the laws of the father and the girl is assigned to her feminine role: "Femininity is therefore a repressed condition that can only be secondarily acquired in a distorted form. It is because it is repressed that femininity is so hard to comprehend both within and without psychoanalytic investigation."⁶ It is interesting in this view that femininity is a cultural construct that the girl represses in her unconscious. She acquires her gender identity when she is first "seduced" by her father. She learns that she is castrated of the phallus and, therefore, the father who introduces to her this notion during the stage of the Oedipus complex. As such, the girl solves the dilemma of the Oedipus complex and enters the realm of femininity.

In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter inverts the symbolism and challenges Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the Oedipus complex so that it is a man who is castrated in order to acquire gender constructs of femininity. In fact, she demonstrates that patriarchal representations create fixed stereotypes about femininity and masculinity. In the novel, Carter reveals that Evelyn is overtaken by a mythical figure called

Mother and becomes a woman whose name is New Eve. The latter is the prototype of the ideal woman and the projection of men's desires. Eve, therefore, emerges as an incarnation of male sexual fantasy. However, Evelyn's metamorphosis from a man to a woman, New Eve, is undermined by the fact that, although he is surgically transformed into a woman, he tends to reproduce masculine values. This propensity in Evelyn's psychology stresses the fact that it is not biology which determines female identity so much as social and cultural constructions of it. Evelyn's transformation from a man to a woman emphasises that the being whom Mother produces is as artificial as the myth of femininity constructed by patriarchy.

The bisexuality inherent in New Eve serves to further emphasise the traditional notions of femininity and masculinity in which femininity is perceived to be a matter of flesh and masculinity a matter of *logos*. The term *logos* alludes to man's sensibility and rationality; in the novel, the reader is told that, although New Eve is a biological woman, there are still some male elements of Evelyn inside her.⁷ Indeed, Carter questions these fixed stereotypes and reinforces the belief that biology is insufficient to create a woman by demonstrating that it is not enough to have a woman's body in order to be a woman. Evelyn concedes, "I know nothing. I am a tabula rasa, a blank sheet of paper, an unhatched egg. I have not yet become a woman, although I possess a woman's shape. Not a woman; no, both more and less than a real woman. Now I am a being as mythic and monstrous as Mother herself."⁸ As the passage attests, Evelyn perceives himself as a "Tabula rasa" and a blank sheet of paper. Arguably, it is one's interaction as a social being within a given culture which makes a woman a woman. That cultural aspect reveals that although Evelyn is transformed into a woman he lacks the essential features which pertain to femininity. Toril Moi argues that femininity

is a cultural construct imposed on women by society:

Among many feminists it has long been established usage to make 'feminine' and 'masculine' represent social constructs (patterns of sexuality and behavior imposed by cultural and social norms), and to reserve 'female' and 'male' for the purely biological aspects of sexual difference. Thus, 'feminine' represents nurture, and 'female' nature in this usage. 'Femininity' is a cultural construct: one isn't born a woman, one becomes one, as Simone de Beauvoir puts it.⁹

Seen in this perspective, patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain standards of femininity on women so that they will conform to pre-defined patterns of femininity. Women who refuse to adhere to patriarchal codes are labelled "unfeminine."¹⁰ In the novel, Evelyn's new appearance should conform with the norms of femininity; Evelyn is constructed as a beautiful woman by Mother who upholds patriarchal ideology. Therefore, patriarchy has developed a whole series of feminine characteristics such as beauty, sweetness, subservience with which women should comply. These virtues are delineated, in the novel, as essentialist and oppressive to women in general and Evelyn in particular. In spite of her extreme beauty, Eve experiences torture and oppression under Zero, the image of the patriarch *par excellence*.¹¹

Evelyn's metamorphosis from a male character to a female figure enables him to experience patriarchy from a marginal perspective. Although he is physically a woman, Evelyn must acquire those aspects of femininity in order to be admitted in the phallogocentric order represented by Zero. Eve undergoes suffering under Zero, the archetype of masculinity and the essence of the patriarchal law of the father, as