Volpone's queer interlude: Ben Jonson as a rewriter of Lucian of Samosata's work

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to consider Ben Jonson's (1572-1637) position as an adaptor or appropriator of the Classics, situating his practice in the context of early modern theatre and its production, as well as looking more closely at Act 1, Scene 2 of *Volpone, or The Fox* (1606) as a case study. To do that, it will make use of Queer Theory (Butler, 2007 [1990]; Carroll, 2012; Sullivan; 2003), considering non-conforming characters and/or situations, as established by the cis-heterosexual matrix; Early Modern Studies (Bentley, 1971; Orgel, 1991; Masten, 1997; Smith, 2022), delineating the different understanding of authorship during the period, compared to today's; Translation Studies (Lefevere, 2016 [1992]), considering the creation of an image of a given author in a given polysystem; and Adaptation/Appropriation Studies (Hutcheon; O'Flynn, 2012; Sanders, 2022), contrasting the fields' current understanding of adaptation and appropriation and, consequently, of authorship, and the early modern period's. Act 1, Scene 2 of *Volpone* features an interlude by the main character's so-called "bastard children" — Androgyno, Castrone and Nano — and is a scene that is commonly cut from recent productions of the play. This paper intends to underscore this scene's queerness, both in and of itself, but also in Jonson's practice as a rewriter, questioning whether he adapted or appropriated Lucian of Samosata's work in 1.2 of the play.

KEYWORDS: Ben Jonson; Queer theory; Appropriation; Early modern studies.

O interlúdio queer de Volpone: Ben Jonson como um reescritor da obra de Luciano de Samósata

RESUMO

Este artigo busca considerar a posição de Ben Jonson (1572-1637) como adaptador ou apropriador dos clássicos greco-latinos, situando a sua prática no contexto do teatro do início da modernidade e de sua obra, assim como analisar mais detidamente o Ato 1, Cena 2 de *Volpone, or The Fox* (1606) como um estudo de caso. Para tanto, o artigo fará uso da Teoria *Queer* (Butler, 2007 [1990]; Carroll, 2012; Sullivan; 2003), considerando personagens e/ou situações não-normativas, perante uma matriz cisheteronormativa; os Estudos acerca do Início da Modernidade Inglesa (Bentley, 1971; Orgel, 1991; Masten, 1997; Smith, 2022), delineando o diferente entendimento de autoria durante o período, em comparação ao corrente; os Estudos da Tradução (Lefevere, 2016 [1992]), considerando a criação de imagem de um dado autor num dado polissistema; e os Estudos da Adaptação/Apropriação (Hutcheon; O'Flynn, 2012; Sanders, 2022), contrastando o atual entendimento dos campos acerca de adaptação e apropriação e, consequentemente, de autoria, ao do início da modernidade. O Ato 1, Cena 2 de *Volpone, or The Fox* conta com o interlúdio dos "filhos bastardos" do personagem principal — Androgyno, Castrone e Nano — e é uma cena comumente cortada de encenações contemporâneas da peça. Este estudo busca ressaltar a *queerness* dessa cena, tanto constante nela mesma, quanto também aquela produzida por meio da prática de Jonson como um reescritor, questionando se ele adaptou ou se apropriou da obra de Luciano de Samósata em 1.2 da peça.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ben Jonson; Teoria *Queer*; Apropriação; Estudos acerca do Início da Modernidade.

1. Introduction

This paper intends to consider *Volpone, or The Fox*'s (1606) queer interlude — Act 1, Scene 2, henceforth 1.2 — considering more specifically how Ben Jonson adapts or appropriates Lucian of Samosata (c. 125-180 AD)'s text, *The Dream or The Cock*[1]. To do this, the study will explore early modern theatre's understanding of authorship, especially when it comes to its theatre, as opposed to the contemporary understanding of it. Moreover, it will consider how Jonson dealt with this matter throughout his career. This exploration will also discuss the practice of *imitatio* in relation to what we now understand as adaptation and appropriation. The idea of early modern playwrights as adaptors or appropriators is, of course, an anachronistic view, but it encourages us to consider these writers as active participants in the process of choosing and using a given source text to write a given play — as rewriters.

2. Literature review: Queer Theory, Adaptation, Appropriation and Authorship

In order to develop its analysis, this paper will adopt an interdisciplinary approach, making use of Queer Theory, Adaptation/Appropriation Studies, Early Modern Studies and Translation Studies. For the scope of this paper, it is important to expand on what queer(ness) means in the context here discussed. Although pinning down a definition of queerness has been seen

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[1] *The Dream, or the Cock* was probably composed in the 2nd century AD, though the exact dating is uncertain.

as "a decidedly un-queer thing to do" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 43), one can say that "Queer Theory is concerned with questioning the binary structures by which sex, gender and sexuality are conventionally understood" (Carroll, 2012, p. 6), highlighting then the goals of the theory itself. Thus, exploring/understanding queerness in the scope of this paper means considering the characters and/or situations that challenge the normative behaviour expected of women and men by the patriarchal society of the early modern period. When it comes to 1.2, that would mean focusing on the title character's so called "bastard" children — Androgyno, Castrone and Nano — all non-normative in some way, as well as considering how Jonson worked with his source text to develop this scene of his play.

Adaptation and appropriation are key concepts for this study, particularly in comparison to authorship, as understood in the early modern period and today. This study makes use of Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn's (2012) and Julie Sanders' (2022) understandings of the concepts of adaptation and appropriation, respectively. Even though Sanders also discusses both concepts in *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006), we are more inclined to agree with Hutcheon & O'Flynn's broader approach when it comes to adaptation and Sanders' updated understanding of appropriation, delineated in the 2022 chapter.

In Hutcheon & O'Flynn's perspective, adaptation is "an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art" (2012, p. 170), establishing a clear relation with its source text. Moreover, and an essential aspect to consider Jonson's position as an adaptor or appropriator, the scholar highlights that "what is involved in adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interests, and talents. Therefore, adaptors are first interpreters and then creators" (Hutcheon; O'Flynn, 2012, p. 18). This idea of adaptors as "first interpreters and then creators" will be key to discuss Jonson's use of Lucian's text in 1.2 of *Volpone*.

Jonson is certainly rewriting his source text in 1.2, but one key question to this paper is whether Jonson is adapting or appropriating his source text with this scene. What even is the difference between these two concepts? According to Julie Sanders' (2022) latest understanding of the concept, which is more in tune with Appropriation Studies,

> Shakespearean[2] appropriation might alternatively be described as the umbrella term for works, responses and versions that actively make visible post-colonialism, feminism, LGBTQ+ positionalities, critical race studies (sometimes captured in the social media shorthand of #Shakesrace), gender and transgender studies, and ecocritical and social justice frameworks for understanding Shakespeare (Sanders, 2022, p. 58).

In this way, this definition of appropriation, given this paper also makes use of Queer Theory, is essential to understand how rewritings can be political, which is going to feature in our arguments during the analysis. Adaptations and appropriations are both examples of what André Lefevere considers as rewritings, a concept which appears in *Translation, Rewriting, and*

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[2] In this paper, we are considering Shakesperean in its most expanded understanding to discuss the theatre produced during the early modern period.

the Manipulation of Literary Fame (2016 [1992]), a work that is monumental for Translation Studies. Lefevere asserts that it is through rewritings that literature endures through time, translations being prime examples of that. Moreover, and especially important for this paper, the scholar defends that "rewriters create images of a writer, a work, a period, a genre, sometimes even a whole literature" (1992, p. 5) in a given culture and time, which is precisely what we will be trying to decipher here in this paper, working with Jonson as a rewriter of Lucian's work and the image Jonson creates of himself with this rewriting.

3. Collaboration and theatre: authorship and the early modern period

Plays are constitutively collaborative endeavours, given they are built polyphonically by the many individuals involved with its staging, such as the actors, musicians, costume designers, directors, playwright(s) and others (Bassnett, 2011). Early modern theatre took theatre's collaborative aspect to another level with its intense repertoire system, in which new plays were staged almost every day in the playhouses of the time with little time for rehearsals and, therefore, were dependent on the actors' ability to creatively improvise and adapt the playtexts in stagings. Thus, plays had to be written at a fast pace, and collaboration[3] helped achieve that agility. As pointed out by Ian Donaldson, "dramatic authorship was an unglamorous, largely anonymous, and often collective affair" (2012, p. 107).

Indeed, collaboration was early modern theatre's dominant textual form (Masten, 1997). It is believed that out of all of the plays written by professional dramatists in the period, at least half of them were written by more than one individual (Bentley, 1971). Stephen Orgel offers a thorough explanation of the processes a play went through in the period, from its writing to its staging, stating that:

> the creation of a play was a collaborative process, with the author by no means at the center of the collaboration. The company commissioned the play, usually stipulated the subject, often provided the plot, often parcelled it out, scene by scene, to several playwrights. The text thus produced was a working model, which the company then revised as seemed appropriate. The author had little or no say in these revisions: the text belonged to the company, and the authority represented by the text — I am talking about the *performing* text—is that of the company, the owners, not that of the playwright, the author (Orgel, 1991, p. 83-84, author's highlight).

Thus, the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods (1558-1625) were moments of transition when it comes to authorship, especially its theatre. The men[4] writing plays at the time had been given an erudite education in the grammar schools, where translation was one of the activities used to learn the Classics, given how imbued the Humanist movement was in the educational system

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[3] In this paper, we are considering collaboration broadly, integrating not only the writing and staging of plays, but also other processes.

[4] Here we are being deliberately excluding, given there weren't any women working as *professional* playwrights at this time, as far as we are aware.

of the period. However, the insertion of these men in the job market was hard, for, as Andrew Gurr (2009) points out,

> The grammar schools set up in the sixteenth century were producing scholars for whom there was no work. […] The theatre's appetite for plays was the most obvious source of income for anyone who lacked income and did not want to enter the church, talented dramatist or not (Gurr, 2009, p. 28).

In this way, even though the theatre was the space which made writing as a profession possible during the Renaissance, it was also, on the other hand, a place where matters of authorship were especially difficult to define, as we have been delineating. Therefore, theatres' collaborative culture was even more intense during the early modern period, with its different understanding of the very concept of authorship, with *imitatio* and the practice of collaborative writing so common at that time.

The collaborative setting in the theatres of the time, from the writing of a play to its staging, was something Ben Jonson never fully embraced. On the contrary, Jonson seems to have deliberately distanced himself from this collaborative culture right from the beginning of his career[5] through the publication of his plays, not only reaffirming his individual authorship — making a point of adding his name in the quartos, already naming himself the author, and, ultimately, with the publication of the 1616 *Folio* — but also reestablishing his authority over the works, which, given the context of the time, had been lost once he sold a text to a theatre company. It was precisely during the sixteenth century that the idea of a text as property started to appear (Feather, 1999), and Ben Jonson certainly has a part in this for, as attested by Gregory Chaplin, "Jonson's development as an author […] cannot be divorced from his contributions to the development of the concept of authorship itself" (2002, p. 57-58). With this scenario in mind, let's examine the practice of *imitatio* and how/if it compares with what we now understand as adaptation and appropriation.

3.1. *Imitatio*, adaptation and appropriation

If, on the one hand, Jonson was concerned throughout his career about reiterating his authorship in terms of property and authority over his works, as well as in regard to his individual writing; on the other hand, he made use of *imitatio*, which challenges all of these practices, in our, we could say still Romantic, understanding of authorship. *Imitatio* — which consisted in the study and subsequent use of the style and content of the Classics in the construction of one's own texts — was a very common practice during the early modern period that began at the grammar schools and is evident in the works of all of playwrights' works from the period, including Jonson's.

Adopting an anachronistic approach, one can say that the practice of *imitatio* falls somewhere between adaptation and appropriation, depending on the political agenda of each given

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[5] He collaborated with other writers to write plays very few times during his career, most of them when he was still establishing himself as a playwright during the Elizabethan era.

rewriting. However, if we are now very much tied by the constraints of copyright laws, writers from the early modern period did not have such concern, especially in the context of the theatre, as we delineated above. That means writers did not feel the need to disclose their sources or inspirations, and plagiarism certainly was not a concern. On the contrary, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the practice of *imitatio* was regarded as a form of reverence and erudition in relation to the Classics, a humanist way of writing, and, therefore, rewriting.

As pointed out by Emma Smith, "to be a writer in the early modern period was to be an adaptor" (2022, p. 25). Ben Jonson himself, as defended by Smith in the same article, with his background as a bricklayer, thought of his writing not in terms of invention, but as something to be built, as elaborated in *Discoveries*: "The congruent and harmonious fitting of parts in a sentence hath almost the fastening and force of knitting and connection; as in stones well squared, which will rise strong a great way without mortar" (*Discoveries*[6], 1892, p. 62). One of the most interesting aspects regarding this view of early modern playwriters as adaptors is to understand exactly how these authors adapted or appropriated their source texts, which is precisely what this study intends to do by looking closely at 1.2.

4. Jonson's *Volpone, or The Fox* and Lucian's *The Dream: or The Cock*

Before we delve into the exploration of the scene in question, let's discuss *Volpone* as a whole and its relation to *The Dream: or The Cock*. *Volpone* was almost certainly first performed in 1606, integrating Jonson's Jacobean canon and being one of the playwright's overall most successful plays. The play is set in Venice, Italy and, in terms of plot, follows Volpone, a very rich Venetian man with no heirs who tricks many characters throughout this play who are after his fortune, with the help of his servant, Mosca. It is a play inspired by the Italian *commedia dell'arte* and also the Classics, being even dedicated to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, to whom it was performed in the seventeenth century. It adheres to the Aristotelean unities of time, space and action, in which a play must happen in one single day — *Volpone* begins with "Good morning" and at the end of the fourth act we know it's night; in one single place — the whole work takes place in Venice, even if in different parts of the city; and must follow one plot only — this is where Jonson somehow deviates from the norm as he adds a subplot which acts almost independently from the main one. It is a comedy that deals with greed with a very satiric tone.

The extract in question in this paper, 1.2, consists of a sort of mini performance, an interlude, by the so called "bastard" children of Volpone: Nano, a dwarf; Androgyno, said to be a "hermaphrodite", which is considered an offensive term nowadays and should be addressed as an intersex individual; and Castrone, described as an "eunuch" and who has almost no lines in this scene.

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[6] Available at: https://archive.org/details/timberordiscover00jonsrich/page/62/mode/2up?q=stones+well+square. Accessed on: 22 jun. 2025.

The scene's main classical source is *The Dream: or The Cock* by Lucian, a Syrian satirist, poet and philosopher who wrote in Greek. In Lucian's text, a man, Micyllus, has a dialogue with a rooster, a cock, who claims to have inhabited many different bodies, including Pythagoras's, for example, in a process of "transmigration". The point of the text, however, seems not to be the detailing of this soul's path through all of these bodies — as is *Volpone*'s 1.2 — but rather almost a defence for poverty or, at least, a defence that riches do not equal happiness.

The text begins with Micyllus, a cobbler, being woken up in the middle of the night by a rooster and complaining that "even at night you won't let me escape my poverty, which is much more of a nuisance than you are"[7] (p. 173), as at least in his dreams he "was rolling in wealth" (p. 173). As the Cock talks back to him, he is astonished and they struck up a conversation that begins with how and why it can speak, but eventually goes back to Micyllus's poverty. At some point, the Cock poses the following question to Micyllus, one that could very well be asked to all the characters from *Volpone*: "Are you such a lover of gold and of riches, Micyllus, and is owning quantities of gold the only thing in the world that you admire and consider blissful?" (p. 197). The Cock criticizes Micyllus for his high regard for riches, saying "Micyllus, you have gone just as far astray as most people in regard to the rich. Take my word for it, they live a much more wretched life than we. I who talk to you have been both poor and rich repeatedly, and have tested every kind of life" (p. 201-203). In this way, Lucian's text seems to be quite moralistic regarding people's obsession with being rich, which makes it a very intriguing text to choose as a source text for *Volpone*, a play whose protagonist begins the play talking to his gold.

Volpone's Scene 2, on the other hand, already begins with Nano talking about how this soul that inhabited Pythagoras's body and the Cock's, in Lucian's text, is now in Androgyno's, saying:

> For know: here is enclosed the soul of Pythagoras,
> That juggler divine, as hereafter shall follow;
> Which soul, fast and loose, sir, came first from Apollo,
> And was breathed into Aethalides, Mercurius his son,
> Where it had the gift to remember all that ever was done.
> From thence it fled forth, and made quick transmigration
> To goldilocked Euphorbus, who was killed in good fashion
> At the siege of old Troy by the cuckold of Sparta. (*Volpone*, 1.2.6-13[8])

And so Nano continues to discuss the path of transmigration taken by this soul that ended up in Androgyno's body, which, differently from Lucian's text, seems to be the point of this scene. The text does make a point to mention that "From Pythagore, she went into a beautiful piece / Hight Aspasia, the meretrix;" (1.2.18-19), which seems to be what connects Androgyno's queerness with the source text, the fact that this soul has inhabited the bodies of both men and women.

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[7] All of the quotes from Lucian's *The Dream: or The Cock* are taken from Volume II of The Loeb Classical Library edition of Lucian's work (1960), translated by A.M. Harmon.

[8] All quotations from *Volpone, or The Fox* are from the 2024 edition of the play, edited by John Jowett and part of the Arden Early Modern drama series.

These three characters seem to occupy the position of the fools, with Nano taking the lead, who were usually played by specific actors in the early modern troupes. However, given their queerness, one can wonder whether these characters could have been played by boy actors, male actors who performed the female roles of the texts, with their already sexually charged position in the theatres of the period. John Jowett — the editor of the latest critical edition of *Volpone*, part of the Arden Early Modern Drama series — emphatically defends that "as imagined roles for staging, they are, however, clearly parts for boy actors" (2022, p. 28, our emphasis).

5. *Ars Poetica*, Lucian and *Volpone*

The first key aspect of Jonson's position as rewriter we would like to mention is the almost didactic aspect of his writing which, in our view, influenced his choice of source text when it comes to 1.2. As attested by Horace (c. 65-8 BC), a very influential figure to Ben Jonson's writing, in *Ars Poetica* (c. 19 BC), "poetry aims at both instruction and pleasure" (Horace, 1926, p. 447). Given the point of Lucian's text is more a defence for poverty than the path of transmigration taken by the soul who inhabits the Cock, this elicits the following question: is Jonson focusing on the objective of instruction when choosing to work with *The Dream: or The Cock* in this interlude?

Taking into consideration the discussion around poverty vs. riches in Lucian's text is not mentioned in Jonson's scene 2, that means that probably only very learned readers or members of the audience would have picked up on this relation between the two works. As pointed out by Jowett, while 1.2 stays very close to its source text, "scholarship is not needed to make sense of the rest of the play, which, despite its classical allusions, is starkly intelligible on its own terms" (Jowett, 2022, p. 23). Moreover, discussing Lucian's influence in Jonson's work, Jowett asserts that Jonson is a Lucianic writer and that "though Jonson himself paraphrases him repeatedly, his debts arise in the drama written for elite audiences, particularly in court masques" (Jowett, 2022, p. 24), corroborating our argument. This leads us to consider another aspect related to this scene: when was it inserted into the play? Jowett discusses this very topic in an article from 2022. The scholar believes that "*Volpone* begins with a discontinuity" and that 1.2 is "a scene […] that has nothing to do with this plot, and indeed in terms of plot exposition is virtually without function" (Jowett, 2022, p. 21). In his perspective, this scene was a later addition to the play, another example of Jonson working as both the author, editor and reviser of his own works. Jowett discusses two hypotheses for when 1.2 could have been added to the play: (i) for the publication of the work in quarto, in 1607; or (ii) for the performance of *Volpone* to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Both of Jowett's hypotheses would corroborate our previous comment about the target audience and its relation to Jonson's choice of source text, given both the playwright's readership and the attending audience at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge are likely to have picked up on the not-so-obvious intertextuality between the works.

5.1. Androgyno, Castrone and Nano: Queering Lucian?

It is impossible to ignore the queerness of Act 1, Scene 2 of *Volpone*, with three queer characters in their own way: Androgyno, Castrone and Nano. As pointed out by Sarah Mayo, "Androgyno and Castrone, then, become theatrical reflections of our understanding of sexual otherness" (Mayo, 2015, p. 31). Mayo goes into the history of eunuchs in continental Europe, but, in terms of his body, acknowledges that:

> If Castrone is indeed a character who has had his testicles removed, he may be physically androgynous: the loss of the testes meant, of course, a loss of testosterone, which might result in a man losing body hair and muscle mass while accumulating body fat and a more rounded, feminine silhouette (Mayo, 2015, p. 32-33).

For early modern audiences, then, this created an ambiguity in terms of the character's body, a clash with the binary of sex so stratified in that moment. This stereotype when it comes to castration no longer applies, and this leads to a conundrum when depicting this character in modern productions of the play, given Castrone was originally meant to challenge the norm, the binary.

As for Androgyno, Mayo reminds us that the English understanding of hermaphroditism was tied with Ovid's tale in *Metamorphoses,* very popular at the time in the English translation by Arthur Golding, about Selmacis and Hermaphroditus, in which the first, a nymph, wanted to be eternally united with the second through the joining of their bodies, creating then the first hermaphrodite. As pointed out by Mayo, "since, at this time, hermaphrodites could not be made surgically to conform to one sex or another, they were forced to do so legally and socially" (Mayo, 2015, p. 36), discussing the position of intersex individuals in the early modern period. Even dwarfs, represented here by Nano, were also quite sexualized individuals, as portrayed in Book XXIII of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516) with the affair between a queen and her dwarf, for example.

However, there are no queer characters in Lucian's *The Dream: or The Cock*. The only mention of a possible queerness is the fact that the soul that ended up in the Cock has also inhabited the bodies of men *and* women before, as mentioned previously. This means Jonson actively made this scene queer by putting not only this soul in the body of an intersex individual, Androgyno, but also adding two other queer characters to the scene — Castrone and Nano.

In this way, his choice of adding three queer characters to a scene seems quite intentional and political, given this is a scene that, in all its other aspects, is very much tied to its source text. This takes me back to the question in the title of this paper — is Ben Jonson an adaptor or appropriator of Lucian's work? — to which we would say he is definitely an appropriator, if we follow Sanders' (2022) understanding of the concept. For whatever reason he added these three queer characters to 1.2, the fact of the matter is that he seems to have done so intentionally, and that choice is political, especially since the theatres were already spaces so charged with tension when it comes to matters of gender and sexuality by the mere presence of the boy actors on stage.

Nevertheless, the subject matter of this scene is not these characters' queerness, but the path of "transmigration" taken by the soul, as mentioned before. This to us means that the queerness of these characters is left to be performed by the other language prevalent in any sort of play: body language. Of course, this is a huge problem for a researcher in the 21st century, given there's scarce information about how this play — or any play from the period really — was performed and how/if that could have accentuated this scene's queerness. However, what can be at least somewhat traced is how this queerness has been depicted in productions since then, and Sarah Mayo (2015) does an incredible job of uncovering part of this stage history.

6. Androgyno, Castrone and Nano in Modern Productions of *Volpone*

As attested by Mayo (2015), Jonsonian scholarship has pretty much overlooked these three queer characters of *Volpone*, and the same seems to have happened with modern stagings of the play. *Volpone* is held as "the most performed of all early modern plays in the twentieth century, saving only those of Shakespeare" (Assaf; Dutton, 2012, p. 1), so that means there is a lot of stage history to go through. The 1926 adaptation of the play by Stefan Zweig, one of the most influential rewritings of the play, is a great example of how this scene was simply left behind from modern productions, translations and adaptations of *Volpone*. In Zweig's adaptation, not only is the scene cut from his text, but the characters as a whole vanish from the play. This is also important to consider when it comes to examining Jonson's afterlife in Brazil, given Zweig's adaptation is used as the source text in almost all stagings of *Volpone* in Brazilian Portuguese.

However, there have been productions that maintain the scene and highlight its queerness, as underlined by Mayo (2015). A few examples are: (i) Clifford Williams's production at Yale University, in 1967; (ii) Tim Luscombe's 1991 staging for the English Shakespeare Company; (iii) Greg Hersov's production at the Royal Exchange Theatre, in 2004; (iv) the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2015 production of the play, directed by Trevor Nunn; and others. This shows that this can be done and, in our eyes, should be done, resignifying these queer characters in performance.

7. Final remarks

This paper aimed at discussing Jonson's position as rewriter, more specifically to consider whether he is an adaptor or appropriator of Lucian's work with Act 1, Scene 2 of *Volpone, or The Fox*, one of his most successful plays. As asserted by Emma Smith, "to be a writer in the early modern period was to be an adaptor" (Smith, 2022, p. 25), but the exercise proposed here was to discuss how Jonson went about doing that with the interlude in 1.2. Although the concepts of adaptation and appropriation are anachronistic when it comes to early modern England, contrasting our current understanding of these concepts to early modern England's

forces us to reflect on the different understanding of authorship in both time periods. The practice of *imitatio* is a great example of that, given it consisted of what we currently would consider to be plagiarism, but was then considered an erudite and reverential way of writing, a humanist way of writing.

The theatres were spaces where the idea of authorship was especially difficult to define because, once sold to a theatre company, plays did not belong to its author(s) anymore, but to the company which bought it, and collaboration was early modern theatre's dominant textual form (Masten, 1997). Jonson seemed to go against both early modern practices — publishing his own works in altered versions, reclaiming thus his authority of his own texts; and reiterating his *individual* authorship of his works through the publications of his plays in quarto and, ultimately, with his 1616 Folio — in which he acted as author, revisor and editor of his own works.

Making use of Hutcheon & O'Flynn's and Sanders' understandings of adaptation and appropriation, respectively, this paper defends that, when it comes to 1.2, Jonson was actually an appropriator of his source text, given the political implications of adding not only one but three non-normative characters to his scene, when his source text does not feature even a single queer character. Given there's scarce exploration of queerness in Jonson's plays, it feels incredibly important to explore a scene in which the author purposely added queer characters, effectively queering his source text.

This paper is not only an exploration of Jonson as a writer who appropriated and queered Lucian's work with 1.2 of *Volpone* but it is also a sample of how Jonson can be appropriated by Queer Theory, and how this same theory adds to the understanding of rewritings, as understood by André Lefevere. Moreover, it is a testament that the statement by Sanders *et al.* (1998) that Jonson is perhaps the queerest of all Renaissance writers, since there is not even an effective normative heterosexuality in his works, is still worth exploring. While Early Modern Studies and Queer Theory have collaborated since the 1990s, Jonson's works are yet to be fully explored with a lens that focuses on gender and sexuality beyond the binaries, but hopefully this paper has proven his works to be a productive topic for such type of analysis.

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Amanda Fiorani Barreto, Conceptualization, Research; Original draft; Review and editing.
Leonardo Bérenger Alves Carneiro, Conceptualization, Research; Original draft; Review and editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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