"METHINKS I AM NOT WHAT I WAS, MY SOUL TOO IS ALL MAN:"

BREECHES AND TRAVESTY ROLES IN ENGLISH COMEDY, 1660 - 1737

by

Elizabeth Keenan Knauss

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

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Elizabeth Keenan Knauss

Approved: _____
John Ernest, Ph.D.
Chair of the Department of English

Approved: _____
George H. Watson, Ph.D.
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Approved: _____
James G. Richards, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed: _____

Matthew J. Kinservik, Ph.D.
Co-advisor of dissertation

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed: _____

Melissa J. Ianetta, Ph.D.
Co-advisor of dissertation

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed: _____

Donald Mell, Ph.D.
Member of dissertation committee

I certify that I have read this dissertation and that in my opinion it meets the academic and professional standard required by the University as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Signed: _____

Jennifer L. Airey, Ph.D.
Member of dissertation committee

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A NOTE ON PLAY EDITIONS

For the texts of the plays, I have used reliable, scholarly editions of plays whenever available. When no scholarly edition of a play has been available, I have used first editions of plays, or as close to first editions of plays, as found through scholarly databases such as *Early English Books Online* and *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.* These early editions rarely have line numbers, and sometimes do not have act or scene numbers. When this information has been unavailable, I have cited quotations from the plays with act, scene, and page numbers. For example, X.i (72) indicates a quotation from act five, scene 1, on page 72 of the text.

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ABSTRACT

By combining the fields of literary analysis, rhetorical studies, gender studies, and theatre history, this project argues for a comprehensive understanding of breeches and travesty roles in Restoration and Early 18th Century comic drama. The majority of the past scholars on this topic, from John Harold Wilson (1958) to Pat Rogers (1982) to Elizabeth Howe (1992), have argued that breeches and travesty characters of this time were one-dimensional roles whose only purpose was to sexually excite male audience members and thereby increase paid audience attendance. A closer examination of the theatrical costuming practices of this time, in conjunction with the persuasive language and actions of these characters and the actresses who played them, reveals a far more complicated situation. When dressed as women, these actresses and characters are frequently rhetorically impotent, unable to affect those around them in a way conducive to their own happiness. But when dressed as men, these women, both the actresses and the characters they play, become powerfully persuasive, thereby taking control of their own lives to ensure their future happiness.

Chapter One reviews current scholarship on this topic to demonstrate the serious lack of judicious evaluation of these roles. Further, Chapter One explains the rationale for a sophistic frame for rhetorical analysis, as well as the rationale for focusing on theories of gender performance. Chapter One also details the theatrical

costume history of the period and hypothesizes potential costuming choices for these characters. Chapter Two explores ten plays of this time period that feature unmarried virgins who cross-dress; typically, these heroines disguise themselves to ensure their domestic happiness and secure marriages of their choosing. An analysis of these roles reveals the importance of establishing a male friendship before a romantic attachment for these women. Chapter Three takes a similar approach as Chapter Two, but focuses on nine plays with women who have been seduced or women who are already married. In these instances, the societal constraints that were designed to protect these women have failed them, resulting in loss of reputation or desperately unhappy and sometimes dangerous marriages. These women cross-dress in order to regain control over their own lives despite their precarious positions. Finally, Chapter Four examines historically significant instances of travesty roles (roles that are male characters but have been performed by actresses, whether intended by the playwright or not). In addition to these travesty roles, Chapter Four also explores instances of all-female productions of plays; there is evidence of at least four all-female productions in London during this time, and speculation of more. Chapter Four argues that the decision to stage these plays with only actresses significantly impacts the production and meaning of these plays. Through analysis of cross-dressed casting, Chapter Four recovers the power the actresses had in the theater and their impact on London theatre history. By taking an interdisciplinary approach, this project corrects the historical narrative and asserts the possibilities of gender questioning and female empowerment on the Restoration and early 18th Century stage.

Chapter 1

THE RHETORICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF BREECHES AND TRAVESTY ROLES IN RESTORATION AND EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LONDON

Callis: What, go in Masquerade? 'Twill be a fine farewell to the world, I take it; pray, what would you do there?
Hellena: That which all the world does, as I am told: be mad as the rest, and take all innocent freedoms… Come, put off this dull humour with your clothes, and assume one as gay, as fantastic, as the dress my cousin Valeria and I have provided, and let's ramble.

-Aphra Behn, *The Rover*, I.i

"But as all is not Gold that glisters, so all Creatures in Britches are not Men"

-"The Counterfeit Bridegroom," Anonymous Pamphlet

Hellena, of Aphra Behn's 1677 comedy *The Rover,* is the quintessential Restoration breeches role. Lively, witty and gay, Hellena marries the man of her choice while escaping her brother's orders to join a nunnery, all by disguising herself as a man. This speech by Hellena at the beginning of the play explains how she can be successful in her pursuits – she becomes the clothing that she wears. When she instructs her sister to "put off this dull humour" with her clothes, the clothes and humor become intricately linked, creating ambiguity even in the pronoun "one" used to describe them. For Hellena, as well as Restoration and early 18th-century audiences, clothes dictate identity and behavior: when dressed in a gay and fantastic manner, Hellena is gay and fantastic. What, then, happens when she dresses as a man in Acts

IV and V, even remaining dressed as a man when she marries Willmore at the end of the play? What changes does any female character, and, by extension, any female actress, embody on the Restoration or early 18th-century stage while in breeches? This chapter will argue that the current scholarship on breeches roles is limited in quantity and scope; further, this anemia is a serious disservice to our field and scholars studying these plays, which are ripe with possibility for analysis and assessment. This chapter will then explain what methodologies will be used in the following chapters and argue for combined theory of critical assessment, which draws from the fields of sophistic rhetoric, gender theory, theatrical historiography, and new historical literary analysis.

Significance of breeches and travesty roles

John Harold Wilson calculates that, of the 375 newly produced plays between 1660 and 1700 in London, eighty-nine of them contain a breeches role.[1] Nearly a quarter of all new plays in a forty-year span portrayed a female actress masquerading as a man for some reason or other. These roles are incredibly diverse, ranging from brief stints as pageboys who are quickly discovered, to female characters masquerading as soldiers for much of the play, to actresses in travesty roles, male characters performed by women. Yet contemporary scholarship has only explored and analyzed these plays in limited and superficial ways.

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[1] John Harold Wilson, *All the King's Ladies: Actresses of the Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 73.

In scholarship on breeches and travesty roles, the works of John Harold Wilson, Pat Rogers, Jacqueline Pearson and Elizabeth Howe form the coterie of opinion from which most subsequent scholarship takes its lead, with little critical response or questioning. The first extensive scholarly examination of the breeches role and its implications occurs in fourteen pages of a chapter titled "In Petticoats and Breeches" of John Harold Wilson's 1958 *All the King's Ladies: Actresses of the Restoration*. Most scholars cite Wilson's previously mentioned statistic in their own analyses. Wilson's work, then, is undeniably foundational. But his analysis of those roles, beyond their sheer quantity, consists of claiming that the breeches role, like every female role, was primarily meant to display the physical charms of the women appearing on stage and to titillate the audience. This is the main argument of the majority of scholarship on breeches roles and the argument that this project seeks to expand upon and, ultimately, disprove. After pointing out that "immodest display" was one of the primary and obvious reasons for breeches roles, Wilson claims that,

> the immediate reason for epicene dress on the stage was the fact that at the Restoration the two patent companies inherited a number of older plays with romantic or comic plots involving a girl disguised as a boy. The role of the girl was originally designed, of course, to be played by a boy; now, with the substitution of women for boys in breeches parts, the hackneyed old plots took on new life. Actresses discovered a new freedom of movement, an additional opportunity for coquetry; dramatists found that the disguise formula, upon which they thought all the changes had been rung, now had a new appeal; and the male playgoer discovered that women had legs.[2]

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[2] Ibid.,75.

For Wilson, there are three components to the play: the actress, whose use for this new freedom of movement is better flirting; the dramatist, an obviously necessary component; and the single-minded male audience member, who appreciates the breeches part because it is sexually exciting. Wilson ignores the large female play-going population, and any effect these roles might have on them; further, he sees one advantage for a woman wearing men's clothes: flirting more effectively. Wilson's work focuses predominantly on women's clothing of the day and, specifically, what it would not have covered up; such a limitation suggests that there is still much to be explored in this area because of his focus on the physical elements of the performance, rather than anything verbal, cultural or historical.

For the three decades following Wilson's work, very little was said in academia about breeches roles. Historical overviews of drama of the Restoration and eighteenth century mention breeches roles in passing, generally citing Wilson's statistic, but without investigating the importance of these roles further.[3] Plenty of scholars published on these plays during these decades, such as Rob Hume and Judith Milhous, but their focus was on the political and economic impact of these plays, rather than social or gendered implications. The next major contribution to the scholarship on breeches roles was Pat Rogers' essay, "The Breeches part," published in 1982. Rogers draws upon Wilson's work and expands his argument in this essay,

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[3] John Loftis, Richard Southern, Marion Jones and A.H. Scouten. *The Revels History of Drama in English, Volume V: 1660- 1750.* (London: Routledge, 1976).

which is one of the most cited works on the topic. In "The Breeches Part," Rogers draws the basis for his argument from Charles Reade's Victorian novel, *Peg Woffington*, claiming that we can learn much about the breeches part from this "not… very good book."[4] Rogers uses a Victorian novel, written over 100 years after the death of Woffington, a mid-18th century actress popular in breeches, as primary evidence for his claims about breeches roles and Woffington's character and life. Rogers treats this anachronistic fictional account as primary evidence; this circumstance, and subsequent scholarship's unquestioning reference to this essay, is irresponsible. Rogers argues that any breeches role of the time would have appeared to audience as epicene, or gender neutral, and not masculine or feminine; this neutrality would "create a simulacrum of masculinity, without any disturbing threats of a subversive maleness," though he still posits that the breeches roles would have been sexually exciting for male audience members.[5] Rogers claims that only the most attractive actresses would have been given the breeches roles, and still would have worn feminine makeup to emphasize their womanly qualities, further removing them from a masculine appearance. The pants, the makeup, and the staging, Rogers argues, would all have contributed to the male audience member's appreciation of and titillation at the actress's exposed body. Rogers does allow that Charlotte Charke, the

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[4] Pat Rogers, "The Breeches Part," in *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain* ed. Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Manchester: Manchester UP: 1982), 245.

[5] Ibid., 247.

18th-century actress and "sad daughter of Colley Cibber," who cross-dressed on stage and off, would have had a more relaxed sense of sexual freedom.[6] Rogers' reading of Charke as "sad" suggests the ways in which Roger's readings frequently appear skewed. That is, because she has generally been maligned by theatrical history and she died relatively young and in poverty; a closer look at Charke's own writings, though, suggests that she was anything but sad, leading a creative, non-traditional and adventurous life that will be discussed later in this chapter. And even the maligned Charke is the only exception to Rogers' argument. Rogers pulls the majority of his evidence from a Victorian novel and comes to conclusions based on bad logic (all of the actresses would probably have been decently attractive, as actresses today must be to get work; all persons on the stage would have worn makeup). Yet due to the paucity of scholarship on the topic, his brief essay is cited in almost all subsequent research.

Elizabeth Howe echoes Rogers' sentiments in one brief section of one chapter in *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660-1700.* In this book, she provides an extensive study of English actresses between 1660 and 1700. Howe's book is an invaluable resource; she charts all the major actresses during this time and every role they performed. These charts also track which of those roles are supporting roles, breeches roles, roles that suffer rape, and roles that represent a "virginal or

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[6] Ibid., 251.

virtuous young heroine."[7] Howe lauds the coming of the actress, claiming that, in the best of plays, these actresses were able to "present and explore women's sexual feelings in important new ways."[8] According to Howe, the advent of the actress functioned on several levels, giving women a voice but also perpetuating gender stereotypes because the actresses themselves were controlled by the men of the theater. But Howe claims that, because of their access to the theater, women were better able to vocalize their desires for equality than previously, even if that equality was yet to be realized, by the end of the seventeenth century.

Certainly, then, Howe addresses the ambiguity of and potential for women on the stage. But her opinion on breeches roles is limited and does not account for the quantity and variety of these roles. Howe claims that "breeches roles seem to have been designed to show off the female body – there was no question of the actress truly impersonating a man."[9] Howe allows for no other purpose or effect of the breeches role other than displaying the woman's physique, even declaring that "once [the female character's] wishes are met, she almost invariably returns, like her Renaissance predecessor, to a conventional female role at the end of the play."[10] This statement is

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[7] Elizabeth Howe *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 178.

[8] Ibid., xi.

[9] Ibid., 56.

[10] Ibid., 59.

decidedly not true; quite a few female characters, such as Hellena of *The Rover* and Lucia of *Sir Anthony Love*, who do appear in Howe's charts as breeches roles, do not return to a "normal" female role, which suggests there is more to these breeches roles than Howe's argument would allow. While Elizabeth Howe's book is undeniably essential to the examination of breeches roles, her analysis is inadequate in its discussion of this phenomenon.

Jacqueline Pearson's book, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642-1737* extends Wilson's and Rogers' work by identifying more complexity and gender subversion in the actresses and female playwrights on the era. Pearson, who is concerned with women's ability (or, rather, inability) at this time to speak publicly, argues that the breeches role, while incredibly ambiguous and varied, at once confirms and subverts gender stereotypes. Although many plays represent potentially subversive or dangerous scenes, such as a female character falling in love with the transvestite heroine, as Pearson terms her,[11] none of these plays "ponders the implications."[12] Further, the transvestite is sympathetic to audiences because she must change her outward appearance in order to stay true to her own opinions and romantic attachments, even occasionally to her own detriment.

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[11] Pearson often terms the breeches roles as transvestites or drag roles. These terms have gained different meaning and complexity since Pearson's publications in 1988. For the purposes of this explanation, terms such as "transvestite" or "drag" refer to breeches characters.

[12] Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642-1737* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 102.

Ultimately, Pearson argues that the breeches role allows the actress a relatively safe space in which to better express herself, thereby subverting gender stereotypes without ill effect, at least in the cases of comedies. Pearson argues for a more complicated reading of the breeches part, and suggests that the women who performed these roles were liberated on and off stage because of their costumes.

The analyses of these four scholars can be, and should be, enhanced and expanded through a greater effort than has previously been made at recovering the historical realities of these roles. Too many comments from other scholars read like Lawrence Senelick's assessment: "one has to come down on the side of Pat Rogers and Elizabeth Howe; the breeches role was first and foremost an effective means of sexual display."[13] Senelick presents no further questioning or argument; no remark on the faulty evidence provided by Rogers and built upon by Howe. A closer examination of these plays reveals a higher level of complexity and significance to these roles than has previously been suggested. These roles, and the plays that contain them, do not exist in a vacuum. They are not merely words on a page that only exist when current scholars read them; nor are these roles simple, one-dimensional ploys meant only to attract contemporary audiences. Rather, they are roles and plays that have very specific, historical contexts; that historical context reveals an impact on their intended audiences that can and should be recovered for readers today. Previous scholars on this topic have seen the breeches and travesty roles as actresses performing

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[13] Lawrence Senelick, *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre.* (London: Routledge, 2000), 211.

heteronormative, female sexuality. As the following chapters will demonstrate, breeches and travesty roles present a forum for female agency, both in speech and action. Further, these plays represent the potential for gender questioning and subversive actions. Finally, these plays that feature breeches and travesty roles create a palimpsest of meaning to today's scholar. The first layer of meaning comes from the texts of the plays, which give us the breeches role itself, as the author wrote it; for the breeches character, the "audience" consists of the other characters of the play. The second layer of meaning comes from the historical context of these plays, which tells us that particular actresses performed these roles and made them their own; the audience for the actress consists of the original playgoers of Restoration and Eighteenth-century London. And a final layer of meaning is created by repertory performances in which stage managers, other actresses, publishers, and audience members changed or amended the performance traditions and expectations. The breeches role and the actress, while separate entities with different impacts, are indivisible. Any analysis of one is incomplete without the other. To clarify further, the breeches role and the actress have different audiences and different goals; but both the role and the actress make conscious moves to convince their audience of their purpose and, ultimately, the two cannot be treated completely separately. This project will address the persuasive strategies of both the actress and the character she plays while in breeches.

Method

In order for the breeches character to convince the other characters of the play that she is a man, and for the actress to convince the audience members in the theater to suspend their disbelief enough to accept her manliness, she would have to create a simulacrum of masculinity. For the purposes of this project, masculinity refers to the traditionally male characteristics, as they would have been perceived in Restoration and eighteenth-century London; these characteristics include, but are not limited to, foppishness, bravado, public speech, and swordsmanship. But simply dressing the part of the page, rake, or soldier would not have been enough, on its own, to be convincing. She would have also needed to act and speak like a man. In most cases of female theatrical cross-dressing from the Restoration to mid 18th-century, a female character cross-dresses to further some persuasive aim related to her goals in marriage or love; but in addition to changing their clothes, these women also change their persuasive speeches and actions, usually in a way that reflects the change in their performed gender. For the purposes of this project, the actress', and by extension, the character's, speeches, behaviors, and clothing, when taken as a whole, constitute her persuasive rhetoric. As such, each of these three elements will be explored and analyzed as they pertain to the breeches character and actress. Through the combination speech, behavior, and clothing, she seeks to persuade her various audiences, which include other characters, the audience of the theater, and the reader, of the actress' performed masculine gender.

Speech

The character's speeches, as written by the playwright and performed by the actress, are one of the main tools she has to convince her audience. The field of sophistic rhetoric provides a useful lens for understanding how the breeches character's speeches are effective in her persuasive goals. The connection between sophism and theatrical spectacle is a well-established one. John Poulakos points out that drama and rhetoric, particularly epideictic rhetoric, share many of the same characteristics, namely, "show, appearance, art, deception, imitation, illusion, and entertainment."[14] Both drama and rhetoric emphasize delivery and dramatic ability in order to be successful, and both are meant to influence large numbers of people in a public sphere through a pleasurable experience. Poulakos writes, "Thus if it is true that, as Nietzsche points out, the Hellenes went to the theater in order to hear beautiful speeches, it is also true that they attended rhetorical events in order to see spectacular theatrical performances."[15] We can extend this metaphor yet further to argue, therefore, that actors are rhetors and rhetors are actors, or in the case of breeches roles, actresses.

In addition to the theatricality of the sophists, the breeches actress has other similar characteristics as the sophists. Poulakos writes that the sophists were "faithful

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[14] John Poulakos, *Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 41.

[15] Ibid., 42.

to no singular perspective, loyal to no given institution, and committed to no specific political system."[16] The breeches actresses are the same: they break the expected social conventions by wearing pants, demonstrating that they can be both male and female, at least as far as the performance is concerned. They represent more than one perspective on gender. Poulakos posits that the sophists "lived and worked more according to the circumstances they encountered and less according to established customs or principle."[17] The actresses enact this sophistic way of life, turning opportunities to their advantage, regardless of expected social behavior, by using what costumes they could scrounge together and constantly responding, during performances, to the stimuli of the rowdy theater audience.

For the sophistic performance and the breeches character, there is no inherent or objective truth, either to what they are saying or what they appear to be. According to the sophists, "the world could always be recreated linguistically, restated in other words, and thus understood otherwise."[18] The breeches character's decision to dress and behave as a man, in order to change her proscribed destiny, marks her recreation of the world. She restates her identity in a different format, to be more acceptable and palatable to her audience. As Susan Jarratt and other scholars note, the Sophists did not believe in one, essential truth, as Plato or Aristotle did. Jarratt writes that the

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[16] Ibid., 25.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

Sophists "believed and taught that notions of "truth" had to be adjusted to fit the ways of a particular audience in a certain time and with a certain set of beliefs and laws."[19] For the actress who had to put on pants and convince the audience that she was a man, the truth of her physical sex was irrelevant to her professional goals. Further, the character she played also had to convince the characters around her that, not only was she male, but also that they should be persuaded by what she/he had to say. Ultimately, gender is performance and physical sex is never truly fully revealed on stage; we only have what the characters say and perform as evidence. Therefore, their truth, much like the sophists' truth, is elusive.

One foundational premise of first-wave sophism, which can help us to understand how the breeches character and actress function, is Protagoras' "man-measure:" "man is the measure of all things, of things that are as to how they are, and of things that are not as to how they are not."[20] Essentially, this statement claims that, while there is an objective truth, no person can know that objective truth; all we have is individual perspective and understanding, making that objective truth irrelevant to our actions and beliefs. The actress takes advantage of the audience's inability to know the objective truth of her physical sex; she presents herself as a man to her intended audience, relying on her performance to be convincing. She creates a reality

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[19] Susan C. Jarratt. *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991), Xv.

[20] James J. Murphy and Richard A. Katula, *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric* (Mahwah: Hermagoras Press, 2013), 27.

for her audience in order to manipulate her circumstances, in a similar way as the sophists did in persuasive speeches. The defining characteristic of both the sophists and the breeches character performance is "the fundamental belief that truth is subjective and relative to the situation."[21] By extension, the breeches character certainly manipulates the reality around her, convincing the other characters that she is a man because she looks and acts like a man. Again, objective truth is irrelevant; what matters to the characters is what the breeches character presents to them.

In addition to the "man-measure" theory helping to explain how the breeches characters function, extreme relativism of Gorgias also illuminate the workings of these roles. According to Gorgias, communication between two individuals will always be imperfect because nothing really exists. As Murphy and Katula explains, "we do not experience reality directly, only through the words we use to call reality into existence, and that since each one of us experiences the world uniquely and chooses words differently, it is impossible to communicate perfectly with others."[22] Each individual, then, creates his or her own reality for other people; those other people will not entirely understand that created reality. This is true of the breeches roles; these characters perform, through clothing, actions, and speech, their own reality as they hope those around them will perceive it. If they do a good job of it, then the audiences for that performance perceive it successfully, or at least as successfully as is

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[21] Ibid., 32.

[22] Ibid., 39.

necessary. The words, clothing, and actions of the breeches characters create a message for the other characters of the play and the audience in the theater; that message is not based on an objective truth and will never be completely communicated perfectly to that audience; but the breeches characters depend on that imperfection of communication in order to manipulate those around them to their own advantage.

Besides his theories on imperfect communication, Gorgias' understanding of the importance of style in persuasion also reflects the linguistic elements of the breeches characters. According to Murphy and Katula, Gorgias saw rhetoric as "the art of guiding and winning souls. To reach the soul, oratory must borrow rhetorical figures from the language of poetry to appeal to the audience's emotions."[23] The breeches characters give moving, poetic speeches, as written by the playwrights and as performed by the actresses in theatrically appropriate ways. The breeches character wins the souls of the other characters of the play while the actress wins the souls of the audience members. While dressed as men, the character and the actress employ poetic style to move those around them.

The final tenet of sophism with direct bearing on the language and actions of the breeches roles is the concept of making the weaker[24] argument appear the stronger.

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[23] Ibid., 41.

[24] The word "weaker" is a bit problematic. This theory is also translated on occasion as "the worse argument appear the better." Both of the words "weaker" and "worse" imply moral judgment, which would have been generally out of the purview of the sophists. Perhaps a better translation would be

It is crucial in the breeches plays of the Restoration and 18th century that the breeches characters successfully make the weaker argument appear the stronger, in order for the play to end happily. The weaker argument, in these cases, is that the characters in the play are men and should be treated as men and that the actress has done a convincing enough job for the theatrical audience to accept what has happened and even to applaud at the end. These women convince their audiences through intentional speech, linguistically creating an alternate reality in which they are men.

The "doctrine of general probability," supposedly taught by the unsubstantiated historical figures of Corax and Tisias, explains how the actress could convince her audience to accept her masculinity. This doctrine posited that "of two propositions, one is *more likely* to be true than the other one."[25] The skilled sophistic rhetor can persuade his or her audience of the probability of either side. This argument is not based on evidence, but on likelihood. The breeches character, then, must convince her fictional audience in the play that, in all probability, she is a man, and not a woman. She does this through her performance. If it looks like a man, and acts like a man, and speaks like a man, then it is probably a man. She relies on the audience's willingness to be guided by probability, and not on empirical evidence. Antiphon's theories of rhetoric suggest that an individual's experiences make up his or her

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"make the less likely argument appear more likely" or "make the less acceptable argument appear acceptable."

[25] Murphy and Katula, *A Synoptic History,* 24.

understandings of truth and the world. Experience creates knowledge. According to Murphy and Katula, "experience gives unity to what we know and past experience becomes our guide for future decision-making."[26] Because the audiences' experiences teach them that breeches and a masculine persona equal a man, the actress capitalizes on the fact that she will be perceived as male if she exhibits those same characteristics. She relies on the systems created by that knowledge and manipulates them to her own advantage.

The actress' and the character's success depends on her aptitude for eloquence. During the Restoration and 18th century, this eloquence would have been achieved through poetic style as described by Gorgias, Castiglione's *sprezzatura*, and the copia detailed in courtship manuals of the day.

The actual words created by the playwright and spoken by the actress convey the liminal message of the breeches character. The style of those words, though, creates the sub- and supra-liminal messages that the character relies upon to convince her audience. Gorgias relied heavily on poetics for his style. Matsen, Rollinson and Sousa explain that "Gorgias used metaphor and paradox heavily."[27] Gorgias concentrated predominantly on *schemata* or specific figures of speech.[28] Although the

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[26] Ibid., 44.

[27] *Readings from Classical Rhetoric,* ed. Patricia P. Matsen, Philip Rollinson, Marion Sousa (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1990), 33.

[28] Ibid.

speeches of the breeches characters do not go quite as far as Gorgias in their poetic style, their utilization of poetic conventions, hyperbole, metaphor, and musicality is evident and will be demonstrated in the close reading and analysis sections of the following chapters.

Baldassare Castiglione's 16th century *The Book of the Courtier*, which was well known in England and was the model for many English language courtier manuals, emphasizes just how important speaking well and appropriately to one's audience really is.[29]According to Castiglione, the perfect courtier does everything he undertakes, from sports to courtship to speaking, with grace and dignity. Further, Castiglione argues that the best way for a person who was not born with an innate sense of grace is through imitation of those who do have grace, just as the Sophists had their students imitate great speakers. But Castiglione emphasizes the importance of *sprezzatura*, or a nonchalance that disguises any art or method. Castiglione warns that one should "steer away from affectation at all costs, as if it were a rough and dangerous reef, and… to practice in all things a certain nonchalance which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or doe seem uncontrived and effortless."[30] This statement has resonance with Restoration and 18th-century comedy on two levels. First, many characters of these plays, such as Melantha of Dryden's *Marriage à la*

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[29] Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2001), 700.

[30] Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* trans. George Bull (London: Penguin Books, 1967), 67.

Mode, are criticized by other characters for being affected, or obviously contriving their character (the goal, for Castiglione as well as the sophists, is not to be uncontrived, but rather *to appear* uncontrived). Affectation is a characteristic during this time period that is undesirable and ridiculous, just as Castiglione argued150 years earlier. Second, Castiglione's suggestion that the great courtier, or in broader terms, the great orator, is a skilled artist who does not appear to be an artist, works well for the actress in breeches. To be convincing to her audience, both within the play itself and in the theater, she would have had to portray a masculine persona seamlessly, with *sprezzatura,* at least as far as the non-naturalistic acting style of the Restoration and early eighteenth century would allow. Certainly, there were actresses who played the breeches part ridiculously and affectedly to get a good laugh. Castiglione's arguments, however, suggest the possibility that the skilled actress, to achieve the greatest impact possible, would have strived to perform male roles in as realistically masculine a manner possible. Plenty of actresses of this time were well noted for the excellence in playing male roles, even being requested by the audience to do so, such as Susanna Mountfort and Peg Woffington.

Castiglione explains the need for the appearance of natural demeanor by citing the ancient Greek orators, explaining that they pretended to be illiterate in order to make the speeches more impressive, because had the populace known of their learning, they would have been distrustful of the orators. For Castiglione, "to reveal

intense application and skill robs everything of grace."[31] The good courtier, the good orator, and, by extension, the good actress, must appear in all things, even pants, natural and uncontrived, even if that means extensive study and practice in appearing natural and uncontrived.

Thomas Wilson echoes much of Castiglione's sentiments in his 1553 *The Arte of Rhetorique*, the first English-language rhetoric, which became the foundation for subsequent vernacular rhetorics. In this book, Wilson also emphasizes the necessity of gracefully pleasing one's audience. Wilson claims that "to delight is nedefull, without the whiche, weightier matters will not be heard at all."[32] For Wilson, then, pleasing style, or delighting one's audience, is essential in any persuasive context. Wilson defines this skill as making the audience "take pleasure, with hearyng of thynges wittely devised, and pleasauntly set further."[33] Wittiness and pleasing speech are essential components of Wilson's style; these two elements are highly emphasized in the plays of the Restoration and 18th century. Further, Wilson posits that the way to please the audience is through much practice and imitation of other speakers, without which, even the most naturally gifted orator cannot hope to be eloquent.[34] The actress would have aimed to delight her audience through delivery and action; the only way to

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Thomas Wilson *The Arte of Rhetorique* (New York: Da Capo Press: 1969), 706.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 706-707.

do so would be through practice and imitation, particularly of male behavior, in order to sell herself as a male character.

A little over one hundred years later, in 1658 and just before the Restoration of Charles II, Edward Phillips applied these rhetorical theories of eloquence to courtship and marriage in *The Mysteries of Love and Eloquence; or, the Arts of Wooing and Complementing*. This courtship manual went through four editions over the next 50 years, suggesting its popularity and wide readership. This book represents 17th- and 18th- century thought on not just courtship, but also style, seduction and persuasive speech, all of which, Phillips argues, are interrelated. Phillips situates his text as intended solely for men, because, according to him, women naturally have the gifts of eloquence and persuasion and do not need further instruction. Phillips defines eloquence as "a way of speech prevailing over those we have designed to prevail over."[35] Phillips goes on to say that eloquence, "is so ethereal, or rather I cannot tell, how Divine, that it depends not alone on the single Embroidery of words, but there must be somewhat more in it; an excellent knowledge of men, deep and studied acquaintances with their passions."[36] Audience awareness is essential for Phillips. Further, the suggestion that an orator must be as familiar as possible with his audience opens the door to the extreme persuasive powers for the breeches character, if not the

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[35] Edward Phillips *The Mysteries of Love and Eloquence,* ed. R.C. Alston (Menston: The Scholar Press Limited, 1972), a2.

[36] Ibid.

actress; the characters within the play develop a "deep and studied acquaintance with [the] passions" of the men they wish to influence by dressing and acting as men. The wearing of breeches not only gives the female characters greater status and access, but also greater knowledge of their intended audience within the proscribed world of the play.

The majority of Phillips' text consists of pre-written compliments and speeches that the reader can memorize and repeat to his mistress, or to use as a model for writing his own seductive speeches. These copia constitute the speaker's arsenal of persuasion. This method of developing oratorical skills comes as memorization of and modeling upon copia, as with the Sophists, Castiglione and Wilson; further, the actress would have followed the same system of reading lines, memorizing them, and repeating them, as appropriate (sometimes the actresses had to ad lib to respond to their changing environments) for an audience. *The Mysteries of Love and Eloquence* is a pivotal text for understanding the importance of copia, poetics, and the principles of persuasion that were valued at the time of these plays. In the plays of the Restoration and 18th century that feature breeches roles, style, wit, word play and general mastery of the language are highly valued among the characters.

The speeches of the breeches character and performed by the actress, as explained by sophistic rhetoric, constitute one element of the masculine performance within the world of the play and on the stage. The behaviors that accompanied those speeches are also an integral component of the successful breeches performance.

Behavior

Gender performativity provides another useful lens for understanding the breeches actress and character's persuasive actions. Actresses, particularly the first ones of the English stage, are unusually positioned within the gendered and rhetorical expectations of their time. Traditionally, men were the only persons who were permitted to speak and participate in public forums; women, on the other hand, were expected to remain domestic and private. But actresses are both feminine and public; prior to 1660, only men had been allowed to perform on stage, so there was no dissonance for female performers. But in the early years of the Restoration, women began performing on stage for the first time, encouraged by new legislation restricting men from performing female roles. But such a drastic change would not have eased anxiety about women entering such a public sphere, at least not instantly. As a result, many of the early actresses were considered to be immoral prostitutes, both literally and figuratively, as were the few female playwrights of the day; both were seen as selling their bodies for profit, though male actors and playwrights faced no such criticism.

The complex perception of the actress in the Restoration and the early 18th century is complicated further when those actresses cross-dress. The actresses in breeches utilize public speech in a variety of ways, doing important work in pushing and questioning gender norms. The fact that these actresses speak publicly and wear men's clothing has crucial cultural importance, especially when we reconsider how physical sex was understood during the Restoration and early 18th century. While we work from the scientific two-sex model, in which men and women are physically

different, Thomas Lacquer notes that Renaissance thinkers believed in the one-sex model, in which the male anatomy was considered ideal and perfected, while women were viewed as underdeveloped men who had internal male genitalia that simply had not descended due to poorly regulated temperature in the womb during gestation. Lacquer even shares the anecdote, as recorded by Montaigne, of Marie, a shepherd girl who was one day chasing some swine. She leapt over a ravine and landed rather hard, causing male genitalia to spring forth. After being examined by doctors, Marie lived as a man, changing her name to Germaine.[37] What is remarkable here is that no doctor or anyone else, for that matter, suggested that Marie-Germaine could have possibly been a boy all along. They simply accepted the spontaneous change from female to male. Although this is an extreme example, it does demonstrate that 17th and early 18th century audiences would have considered the *possibility* of changing from female to male, the very thing the actresses were representing on stage; such a spontaneous change would not have been out of the realm of possibility for contemporary audiences, though it would still have been fantastical.

As such, the possibility of a woman spontaneously becoming a man was not seen as out of the question and "gender" was signified through non-physical attributes, such as clothing and actions. Lacquer argues that gender was seen as a hierarchical spectrum, rather than a dichotomy. Adolescent boys and women were essentially on

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[37] Thomas Laqueur *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990).127,

the same level in this system and, anatomically, not dissimilar, according to the Renaissance way of thinking.[38] This difference in perceived gender has major implications for how we read these plays with breeches roles. The majority of scholars who have written on this topic have ignored this difference in gender perception and assumed that gender norms were the same then as during their own day (thankfully, society at large is moving towards a complex and broad understanding of the relationship between gender and individual identity). Current feminist scholarship on women's public speaking and gender identity offers a clear way to understand these issues.

In *Speaking Out: The Female Voice in Public Contexts*, Judith Baxter establishes three characteristics of gendered speech that should be considered in any scholarship on masculine or feminine speech. According to Baxter, masculine speech is traditionally powerful, public, and prestigious, occurring in culturally-valuable spaces, such as church, parliament or court, while feminine speech is historically powerless, private, and, when it is "public," not prestigious, occurring in undervalued spaces and media, such as parlor room gossip. Any female speech that subverts any of these three characteristics, then, subverts traditional gender barriers.[39]

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Judith Baxter "Introduction" in *Speaking Out: The Female Voice in Public Contexts* ed. Judith Baxter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), xiii – xviii.

The actress in breeches and the female playwright certainly speak publicly in the theater and in front of a large audience. Though not considered prestigious (some, such as Jeremy Collier, would even call it profane), the theater was at least popular and accessible to a large portion of the London public, and valued as an excellent form of entertainment. And the theater is certainly more prestigious than other public spaces that would have been accessible to women, such as ale houses or brothels. So the actress has access to a relatively prestigious public forum for her speeches.

In addition to the public nature of the actress, the speech of the fictional character she performs is frequently powerful; she usually takes control of her situation and shapes it in order to choose her own future, generally resulting in independence from restrictive male guardianship. In terms of public speech, the breeches role actress enacts masculinity, not femininity, and thereby claims greater male privilege.

While Baxter's postulations clarify the relationships between male and female public speech, Judith Butler's theories of gender performativity elucidate just how complex and related those relationships are with the female actress in 18th century England. Applying Butler's theories from *Gender Trouble* to these breeches roles helps us understand how gender functions in the plays of the Restoration and 18th Century. First, Butler's main argument is that "gender" is not an essential component of identity, but rather something one does or performs; this theory severs the tie between biological sex and gender in much the same way that 17th- and 18th- century scholars understood the relationship between sex and gender. For Butler, gender is

made up of actions, characteristics, clothes, and interactions, not biology. While the actress in breeches, therefore, is physically female under her clothes, the audience cannot see those parts and therefore only has her significations of gender to understand what she is presenting to them. For the audience, if an actress performs a masculine gender then, to some degree, she *is* masculine and is seen that way by her audience.[40]

Butler claims that, today, "under conditions of normative heterosexuality, policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality," or ensuring that heterosexuality remains the accepted norm.[41] This point is not only essential for Butler, but also for understanding more precisely the contemporary audience's reaction to the breeches role. "Normative heterosexuality" did not exist at the time these plays were first written and performed because people did not think in terms of "heterosexuality" and "homosexuality." Sexuality at this time was hierarchical, so the need to police gender was not nearly as prominent, allowing for greater flexibility and fluidity for gender performance. A woman becoming an adolescent male is not unreasonable or unscientific in this context. Heterosexuality did not need to be secured, therefore a woman performing masculinity and possibly seducing another woman or even a man while dressed as a man was not threatening to its audience, who most likely knows that the person on stage is actually woman anyway. A marked decrease in the popularity of the breeches role occurs around the same time that Dror

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[40] Judith Butler *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[41] Ibid., xii.

Wahrmann speculates that a shift in normative sexuality took place. According to Wahrman, in the mid-18th century, the English populace experienced a "gender panic" that resulted in modern notions of heterosexuality and subsequent policing of gender.[42] But it is essential, when reading and analyzing plays prior to this gender panic, that we not ignore the differences in how gender and biology were understood from today; doing so leads us to simplify the gendered performances and relationships of these plays and to disregard the importance of the breeches role.

Butler also explores the implications of cross-dressing in important ways for this work. Butler posits that cross-dressing highlights for the audience the discontinuities between physical sex and performed gender. Butler explains that there are, in fact, three, not two, "contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance."[43] For Butler, any disunity between these three indicates the "dissonance" between biology and identity and performance… Part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary."[44] In essence, the audience (and performer) takes pleasure from

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[42] Dror Wahrman *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004), 48.

[43] Butler, *Gender* Trouble, 175.

[44] Butler, 175.

recognizing that physical sex is not deterministic to identity. The breeches role, through its demonstration of the fluidity of gender, is not threatening because it delights the audience, which is, of course, a primary goal of theatrical entertainment; this is *dulce et utile* at its best.

The speeches and actions of the actress performing male identity form a palimpsest of meaning and argument. One body on the stage is simultaneously masculine and feminine, public and private, delightful and instructive. For this project, I will focus my close readings of the texts on speeches and actions that employ sophist and gender performance tactics. The character's linguistic creation of male identity and the actress' performance of that identity are what allow her to achieve her goals. Therefore, understanding the component pieces of these speeches and actions gives us a greater understanding of the subversive actions of the character, the actresses and the play.

Historical Clothing and Costumes

Baxter and Butler's theories reveal the complexity of these roles as performed, but the effect of these characters is also reliant on one more element of the masculine simulacrum: clothing. Costumes, which cannot be separated from the persuasive moves and strategies of the actress, are part of the rhetorical performance. An actress' clothing, both when dressed as a man and a woman, constitutes rhetorical choices and makes up a part of her rhetorical performance, which is inherently linked to her speeches and actions.

Previous scholarship on breeches lacks of any kind of discussion or analysis of what the actresses would have actually worn during performances. John Harold Wilson details extensively what the actress would have worn as a woman, down to her undergarments and orange water perfume, but is completely silent on the specifics of breeches costuming. Scholars have only addressed the sexualized impact the breeches would have had on male audience members, and do not allow for the liberation or more ambiguous responses felt by actresses and female theater goers. Further, a very real physical release would have occurred for the actresses who cross-dressed; taking off the encumbering trained skirts in exchange for pants and perhaps even loosening the tightly laced corset under a jacket specifically designed for horse riding and other physical activity must have induced a literal sigh of relief for the actress. A closer and more comprehensive look at the clothing and purposes of that clothing creates a multidimensional understanding of breeches and travesty roles.

The clothes of the Restoration and early 18th century were far more important and meaningful than anything we can conceive of today. Clothes made before the Industrial Revolution, and therefore woven and sewn by hand, were expensive and complex and made to last decades. Though sumptuary laws had been repealed by this time, clothes were still an important component of class identity. Pat Rogers argues that men's clothes were effeminate, but this is one more instance of his own contemporary gender perceptions clouding his analysis.[45] During this era, there were

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[45] Rogers, "The Breeches Part," 245

distinct and definite components of male and female dress. In Restoration and 18th-century England, clothing was inextricably linked with identity; clothes both created and expressed the person who wore them, particularly in relation to gender. Diana Donald points out in *Followers of Fashion: Graphic Satire from the Georgian Period*, that clothes were one way for people of the 18th century to recognize the character of others, and express their own.[46] Donald quotes Hogarth, "every part of dress is known to be a part of character… We know the very minds of people by their dress."[47] Women, in particular, were considered to be susceptible to changing identities based on what they wore. According to Alexander Pope's *Epistle to a Lady,* "Nothing so true as what you once let fall / 'Most Women have no Characters al all.' / Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear, / And best distinguish'd by black, brown, or fair."[48] Though Pope is being satirical with these lines, his argument that physical appearance is all that women have to form their identities would have been a generally held one of the time. Diana Donald further contends that the eighteenth-century view was that, "the essential nature of women was closely akin to the qualities of fashion itself: treacherously seductive, sensual, vain, irrational, capricious and fickle. Women put on different 'characters' with their clothes from day to day, because, unlike men, they had

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[46] Diana Donald, *Followers of Fashion: Graphic Satire from the Georgian Period.* (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2002).

[47] Ibid., 10.

[48] Alexander Pope. *Moral essays, in four epistles. By Alexander Pope, Esq.* Glasgow, MDCCLIV. [1754]. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library. 13 May 2014. Lines 1 – 4.

no fixed characters of their own."[49] 18th-century England was so convinced that women's identity was directly linked with their outside appearance, and their clothes in particular, then one has to wonder what happens, at least according to 18th-century mentality, when a woman disguises herself as a man.

Different types of clothing of this era, as with most eras, carry symbolic gendered meaning. Therefore, differentiating between "women's wear" and "men's wear" allows us to identify those very significant symbols of masculinity and femininity in the context of the plays, which frequently have stage directions about or reference to what the characters wear.

In 1660, at the Restoration of King Charles II, women's clothes consisted of two main elements – stays (or shirts with a corset structure built in) and skirts. According to Iris Brooke's *Dress and Undress*, "the real structure of women's fashion depended entirely on the stays – the new look for the `sixties was an extravagantly low point in front, and a curved line from heart to hip so that the bodice or waistcoat could be cut to curve out below the waist."[50] Stays, or what we would call corsets, were stiffened with whalebones and laced up the back, creating a very straight back and curved hips. The skirts of the time were quite full but not hooped. They were very long and trailed behind the wearer, sometimes being bustled up in the back. Under the

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[49] Donald, *Followers of Fashion,* 11.

[50] Iris Brooke, *Dress and Undress: The Restoration and Eighteenth Century*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1958), 11.

skirts and stays of the 1660's, women would have worn shifts, a garment similar to a night gown. The shift's neckline was adjustable to allow the wearer to decide how modest she would appear. Bare shoulders and incredibly low necklines, to the point of exposure of the entire bosom in the case of more daring women, was the fashion of the 1660's. Such attire drew negative criticism; in 1678, *A Just and Reasonable Reprehension of Naked Breasts and Shoulders* was published, demonstrating both the popularity of the clothing and the backlash against its extremes.

The clothes of the following decades built upon this foundation of stays and skirts. Gowns were introduced, lending another option to a woman's clothing repertoire. A basic gown had "a close-fitting bodice joined to a full gathered and trained skirt, open in front."[51] The bodice would have left an open V shape in front, which would have been filled with a decorated stomacher, held in place with pins or ribbons. The skirt of the gown would also have been open in front to reveal the often richly decorated petticoats underneath. One slight variation on the typical gown was the sack or sacque, which had untrained skirts and pleated back. The mantua, or mantle, which became popular in the early 1700's, was a more informal gown in the wrap style and more loose than a gown or sac. It had trained skirts that were not bustled.[52] Terms like "mantua" and "sacque" frequently appear in the stage directions

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[51] C. Willet Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Seventeenth Century*. (Boston: Plays, Inc, 1972), 175.

[52] Cunnington and Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume,*173-176; Brooke, *Dress and* Undress, 10.

of these plays when describing the female characters. Direction concerning costume occurs frequently, indicating that the authors had specific ideas in mind when it came to the clothing and, by extension, the gender performance of these roles. The tight stays and voluminous skirts of these female clothes inherently indicate the feminine persona of the characters who wear them. As such, any time they are mentioned, the audience can assume a feminine-gendered performance.

These gowns varied in styles, from straight skirts to largely hooped and padded ones. But the undergarments remained shifts, with stays and skirts, or petticoats as they came to be known, on top. The effect of these undergarments emphasized the bosom and the curves of the waist (even to the point of making it nearly impossible for the women to curtsey or bend) – creating Hogarth's S-curve of ideal beauty. Such contraptions that pushed and pulled and pinched and prodded the body into a particular form sexualized the woman wearing them. Certainly, the individual woman could choose to draw up her shift strings or wear a handkerchief around her shoulders, but the custom of the town allowed and encouraged women to be less modest. The woman wearing these clothes on stage, then, is inherently sexualized by them; that was their purpose. For many members of the Restoration audience, the woman on stage, despite what she was wearing, would have been an object of sexual desire. Putting on pants does not sexualize her more, just differently. But, more importantly, escaping the confines of feminine dress would have given the actress, the female character, and the female audience member who observed her, more opportunity for freedom, exploration, and rhetorical experimentation. This new freedom would not

have been used just for more flirting and coquetry, as John Harold Wilson suggests, but for greater self-analysis and development.

Men's clothes of the time were actually quite a bit more varied than women's, offering more options and combinations for personal expression. These items, at least for the wealthy, were made of richly embroidered fabrics and fine linens. At the start of the Restoration, male attire consisted of doublets (close fitting, shorter jackets closed with buttons), hose and breeches; this style remained similar for the first half of the 1660's. The doublet was replaced by jackets of a variety of styles, with linen shirts worn underneath. The breeches also went through a variety of styles. By several accounts, one of the oddest fashions was of petticoat breeches.[53] These breeches were about knee length and very voluminous, and therefore hard to differentiate from skirts. Samuel Pepys commented in his diary about wearing petticoat breeches himself, as well as the mistake his friend, Mr. Townsend, made in 1661 in that he "put both his legs through one of the knees of his breeches, and went so all day."[54] John Evelyn believed the petticoat breeches to be genderless due to their resemblance to skirts: "I would choose some fashion not so pinching as to need a shooing-horn… nor so exorbitant as the [petticoat] Pantaloons, which are a kind of Hermaphrodite and of

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[53] Cunnington and Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume,* 150.

[54] qtd. in Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion and Fiction: Dress in Art and Literature in Stuart England*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), 224.

neither sex."[55] In addition to the odd structures of these clothes, they were also decorated to an extreme degree. The style of men's dress of the day called for plentiful ribbons and lace and embroidery over every conceivable surface of the garments: the more ribbons, the more costly and, therefore, the more manly. With these breeches and jackets, most men would have worn boot-hose, made of linen and gartered at the top, with tall boots at first, and then lower shoes when they became more fashionable.[56] The boot hose would have been thick and the boots, early on, would have all but covered the leg. The breeches, at least in the first decade of the Restoration, would have disguised the wearer's figure considerably.

Charles II is credited with introducing the more modern suit, comprised of tighter fitting breeches, vest and jacket. Today's suit traces its heritage back to this style, which started in the mid-1660's. With this suit of clothes, the boot-hose were replaced by lighter stockings, usually in different colors. The jacket of this suit, made of rich fabrics, embroidered and beribboned, was also designed for utility. The jackets flared out at the hips, allowing for easier horse riding. The slimmer breeches allowed for greater mobility. The man of style could look good and get around town more easily than his female companion. While petticoat breeches went out of style pretty quickly in favor of the more fitted breeches, they would have been worn for quite

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[55] Qtd. in Cunnington and Cunnington, *Handbook of English Dress,* 150.

[56] Ibid., 129 – 169.

some time because clothing was so expensive to replace.[57] We can surmise that the theater of the 1660s and 1670s, which would have relied on clothing donations, would probably have been full of cast-off petticoat breeches.

One of the most symbolically male elements of dress is the wig, sometimes called a periwig or peruke. Women occasionally wore wigs, but not often and usually only if their own hair was unmanageable. Women also wore wigs sometimes when riding on horseback, an activity that often caused them to adapt various elements of menswear to their own needs. Men, however, wore wigs continuously through the era. Wigs were worn for utilitarian reasons but became fashion. Fear of lice was a major concern, leading men to shave their heads and wear wigs to cover their baldness. A variety of styles of wigs were popular and men who could not afford wigs would actually dress their own hair to look like wigs. The donning of a wig in any context, then, would be considered a signal of masculinity. Further, many plays with breeches roles include a gender reveal scene, which was often accomplished through a de-wigging of the breeches character; such a de-wigging would have been a symbolically powerful way to emasculate the character and attempt to reassert the normative roles and relations.

Many of the women who cross-dress in the plays of the Restoration and early 18th century often impersonate soldiers and join the army. Soldiers' clothing would have consisted of the same elements of normal, everyday male dress, but would have

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[57] Ibid., 151.

often been dyed to match the appropriate colors of the regiment. Soldiers were responsible for providing their own clothes, so the "uniform" of each soldier would have been consistent with what he (or she!) could afford.

Inferences about theatrical costuming

In general, the actors and actresses of Drury Lane and Covent Garden would have been expected to provide their own costumes, as long as the parts they were playing were contemporary, British roles.[58] But theatre companies would have also relied on donations from wealthy patrons for costuming more exotic roles. Charles II reportedly donated his coronation suit and the headdress that Anne Bracegirdle wore in Dryden's *Indian Queen* was supposedly brought to England by Aphra Behn from Surinam.[59] In the first decades after the Restoration, the majority of fancy or exotic clothes would have been cast-offs from wealthy patrons, meaning the fashions seen in the theatre would have been out of date by a few years. We have to assume that the theatres must have had an abundance of the ridiculously voluminous petticoat breeches, seeing as they went out of style so quickly. David Garrick, who became manager of Drury Lane in 1746, attempted to expand the theatre's costume holdings

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[58] Joseph Roach, "The Performance" in *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre.* ed. Deborah Payne Fiske (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 29.

[59] Ibid., 37.

by buying and commissioning more historically accurate costumes and more elegant contemporary clothes, but, according to Mark S. Auburn, "mixtures of periods and generic styles endured."[60] The costumes in every day use at the theatres in London would have been eclectic, at best.

Presumably, then, the actress who was to perform a breeches role was responsible for assembling her own costume. These costumes must have been a hodge-podge of whatever the actress could lay hands on, and would not have necessarily been in style or even matching. But, most likely, the actress in breeches would have worn a wig and hat (or styled her hair to look like a wig), a thick jacket of some sort that would have given her more room to move around and would cover her bosom, and some type of breeches and hose. Those breeches and hose, at least in the first few decades of this phenomenon, would have been loose and bulky, rather than tight and fitted. The clothing that an actress would have worn to symbolically represent a man would have sexualized her far less than the tight corsets and bustled skirts of her every day wear. Though radical and exciting in a theoretical sense, the breeches costumes, by their very nature, would have covered up and reduced the physical restrictions on the actress, rather than exposing her body and restricting her movements.

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[60] Mark S. Auburn, "Garrick at Drury Lane, 1747-1776," in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre: Volume 2 (1660-1895).* ed. Joseph Donohue (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 163.

The breeches and travesty roles of the London stage between 1660 and 1737 occur far more frequently and have much more significance than has previously been argued or allowed. Much of the research on this topic relies on incomplete and inaccurate foundations. As a scholarly community, we must gives these roles their due in order to better understand the plays in which they appear and the historical context which produced them. Without doing so, our appreciation of these plays is restricted and our teaching of these plays to younger generations careless and ineffective. The chapters that follow recover notable breeches roles and argue for their complexity and potential for canonical consideration.

The Possibility of Impersonating a Man

One essential question for this project is whether it would have been possible for an actress to realistically represent a man (as opposed to only a stylized masculinity or caricature of men) and even, perhaps, live outside the theater as one. One of the main critiques of breeches roles is that the actresses could not possibly be mistaken for men, nor would they want to; Rogers claims without evidence that the actress made "no attempt to portray anything other than a notional or stylised masculinity," leading Elizabeth Howe to her claims of it being impossible for the actress to convincingly appear as a man.[61] But the historical record shows that women, at least outside the theater, could and did successfully dress, behave, and even live as men. Though the majority of the audience members at the time would have

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[61] Rogers, "The Breeches Part," 249; Howe, *The First English Actresses,* 58.

been aware of the actress' true sex, this historical record does create the possibility of the actress convincing the audience members, even momentarily, that she was or might have been a man; the audience members could have experienced a temporary gender confusion about the sex of the performer in front of them. Further, this historical record allows for the mistaken identity to be plausible within the world of the play.

Significant evidence of the clothing of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and of female cross-dressing remains to us in a variety of media. When we take this textual and visual evidence into account, we find a very different story than what Wilson or Rogers suggest. Samuel Pepys recorded in his diary in 1666 an occasion in which he saw Catherine of Braganza and her ladies dressed to go riding, "in their riding garbs, with coats and doublets with deep skirts just for all the world like men, buttoned up the breast, with periwigs and with hats; so that, only for a long petticoat dragging under their men's coats, nobody could take them for woman."[62] Here, the typically straightforward Pepys takes the coats and wigs to be signals of masculinity. If it were not for the symbolically feminine petticoats, Pepys would not have known the difference.

Several portraits from this time period also suggest this possibility; and even if the viewer does not mistake these women for men, these portraits at least record that women, even powerful, aristocratic women, occasionally dressed in masculine clothes

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[62] Qtd. in Ribeiro, *Fashion and Fiction,* 266.

and were celebrated for it. In the 1660's, Samuel Cooper painted Frances Teresa Stuart, later Duchess of Richmond and Lennox, in a man's coat and shirt, and with her hair arranged as a wig (or with an actual wig).[63] The portrait only depicts the upper half of her body, not revealing if she is wearing skirts, fitted breeches, or petticoat breeches. Frances Stuart stands in a masculine pose, with one arm leaning against a piece of furniture and the other on her hip. She wears a distinctly witty smirk. Most notable, perhaps, is her lack of any cosmetics or patches. If the viewer did not know that this was a woman, one could easily mistake the sitter for an adolescent boy or young man.[64] Similar gender ambiguity exists in a portrait of Mary of Modena painted by Simon Verelst in the 1670's.[65] This portrait also cuts the sitter off above the knee, which is hidden by a long, richly embroidered coat. Mary of Modena appears to wear a long, curled wig, lace cravat, and sumptuous linen shirt. The coat she wears curves out at the waist, as was the style for men's riding jackets (the wideness at the hips allowed for easier horse riding). The effect creates Hogarth's S-curve of beauty, one that was desirable for both men and women. The male outfit flatters Mary of Modena's figure, but in the same way it would flatter a man's figure. Mary of Modena

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63 Samuel Cooper, *Frances Teresa Stuart, later Duchess of Richmond and Lennox*. Circa 1664. Royal Collection. Aileen Ribeiro *Fashion and Fiction: Dress and Literature in Stuart England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), fig. 169.

64 Rebeiros, *Fashion and Fiction,* 266-267.

65 Simon Verelst, *Maria Beatrice d'Este ('Mary of Modena') duchess of York*. Circa 1677. Royal Collection. Aileen Ribeiro *Fashion and Fiction: Dress and Literature in Stuart England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), fig. 171.

does wear some cosmetics in this portrait, for both her lips and cheeks are rosy. However, such an element does not automatically suggest femininity, because both men and women would have used such cosmetics at this time.[66]In both of these portraits of aristocratic women, the gender ambiguity is daring and conventional at the same time.

These portraits of aristocratic women dressed as men contrast sharply with portraits of other contemporary courtly women who held similar positions. Numerous mistresses of the king, such as the actress Nell Gwyn, among other aristocratic women, are represented for posterity in extremely and blatantly sexualized poses and clothing. Loose gowns, clingy fabrics, reclined poses and low necklines (with frequent exposed nipples) abound. These portraits clearly and intentionally sexualize the sitters; they are objects of desire and fecundity, and not much more. The portraits of women in men's dress, on the other hand, with their buttoned up coats and hidden hips, though sexually exciting in their unconventionality, do not sexualize the sitters in such an extreme and obvious way. In a society that adamantly celebrated the feminine form and sexual nature for all of posterity, these women who wear masculine apparel for their portraits are recorded as working outside the limits of their normal corsets and petticoats, representing the possibilities inherent in men's dress.

Finally, we have numerous accounts of real women between 1660 and 1800 dressing as and successfully living as men. In 1720, two women, Ann Bonny and

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[66] Rebeiros, *Fashion and Fiction,* 269.

Mary Read were tried and convicted for disguising themselves as men and living as pirates. The trial records note that they "wore Mens Jackets, and Long Trouzers, and Handkerchiefs tied about their Heads… They cursed and drank, stamping about the deck."[67] Kit Cavanagh and Hannah Snell were two other women who dressed as soldiers and joined the army during the first half of the 18th century. Cavanagh recorded in her memoirs how she bound her breasts and wore a man's suit of clothes; she served in the Dragoons, traveling around Europe, for 12 years. It was not until she suffered an injury to the head that a doctor discovered her secret and she was forced to leave the army.[68] Hannah Snell joined the army in search of her runaway husband, but enjoyed the life so much, she stayed in service for five years when she did not find him. She even was awarded a pension after leaving the marines, which she collected for most of her remaining life. Snell gave theatrical performances dressed as a soldier in which she described her adventures in service.[69] In addition to the accounts of these two female soldiers, an anonymous pamphlet titled "The Counterfeit Bridegroom," published in London in 1701 recounts the supposedly true story of a woman who was tricked into marrying another woman who had disguised herself as a man in order to get the dowry money. Although the veracity of this account cannot be proven, the fact

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[67] Qtd. in Jane Robinson, *Women Out of Bounds.* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2003), 63 – 64.

[68] Ibid., 99 – 100.

[69] Ibid., 101 – 102.

that this pamphlet was published and sold suggests the possibility of successful cross-dressing with real, monetary consequences (the female bridegroom ran off with the money).[70]

The most notable example of a woman dressing as a man successfully in public is Charlotte Charke, actress, breeches role performer, and daughter of Colley Cibber, the actor, stage manager and, most famously, the king of the dunces in Pope's *Dunciad*. Reminiscing about her time working as a cross-dressing waiter, Charke write in her autobiography, "At length, Sunday came, and I began to shake in my shoes for fear of a discovery… and, to my violent astonishment, not one soul among `em all that knew me."[71] This incident is not the only time that Charke dressed as and passed for a man. She did it quite often and for a variety of reasons, though she is purposely enigmatic about her initial motives for cross-dressing. She even lived with another woman for a time as that woman's husband. Certainly, Charke may have exaggerated some of these scenarios or her success in them in order to sell more copies of her *Narrative*, but the fact remains that she did live as a man, convincing those around her that she was a man. These historic women successfully donned breeches in real life, fooling others with their adopted masculinity. The possibility exists, then, that

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[70] Anonymous, *The Counterfeit Bridegroom, Being a Comical and Pleasant Relation of a young Woman in the Borough of Southwark, who being in wants of a Husband, by a strange mistake, married a young Woman in Man's Apparel, who having got her Portion of 200l. left her in the lurch.* London: 1701. *Early English Books Online*. Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014.

[71] Charlotte Charke, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (London: Whitaker, Treacher, and Arnot, 1830), 97-98.

actresses on stage could have successfully performed male characters; whether they did or not is a matter of speculation. But the most certainly could have, and very possibly did, depending on their goals for the performance of certain characters. Ultimately, the choice of whether to only nominally perform, satirize, or effectively imitate masculinity lay with the actress, giving her an opportunity to exercise non-traditional power.

Chapter Outline

Chapters Two, Three, and Four of this project will evaluate and analyze, in far greater depth than has previously been done, plays from 1660 to 1737 that feature breeches or travesty roles. By using rhetorical theory and costume history to enhance the literary analysis, this project argues that the female characters who choose to cross-dress, and the actresses who portray them, are rhetorically skilled. Further, this project argues that breeches and travesty roles were not merely cheap tricks to attract male audience members, but were real sites of gender exploration, excitation and revelation, whether momentary or permanent.

Chapter Two will focus on plays that feature unmarried characters who cross-dress. These plays will include such canonical texts as Dryden's *Secret Love* and *Marriage à la Mode,* Aphra Behn's *The Rover,* and Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer;* as well as lesser studied plays, such as Granville's *The She-Gallants.* In most instances of such cross-dressing, these women use breeches to avoid undesirable marriages, into which they are being pushed by their fathers, brothers, or other male guardians. The analysis of each play featured in Chapter Two will begin by establishing the personaof

the female who cross-dresses, by reading exposition scenes for demonstrations of that character's predicament. Based on when the play was written and/or premiered, this analysis will extrapolate what the costuming for the cross-dressing most likely would have been. Then this examination will focus on the type or types of persuasive rhetoric the character uses in order to further her ends, with special attention to instances of sophistic rhetoric, Eloquence, and gendered speech. This chapter focuses primarily on play texts for analysis. As such, breeches characters, as opposed to the actresses who played them, will predominantly be discussed, though actresses will be considered when information about them exists and is pertinent.

Chapter Three will focus on plays that feature wives and lovers who cross-dress. These plays will include such texts as Behn's *The Dutch Lover,* Durfey's *The Virtuous Wife*, and Southerne's *Sir Anthony Love.* Typically, these are women who have been abandoned or scorned by their husbands, or have lovers who refuse to marry them, leaving them without good reputations or support. These women use the breeches to amend their husbands' and lovers' behaviors, or to bring them to a reconciliation or marriage. The methodology for this chapter will be very similar to Chapter One. After establishing the personality and circumstances of the women, through literary analysis and historical research, the project will make suggestions for the types of clothes that would have been most likely used to make the woman appear male. This chapter will also provide a close reading of the speeches made while the actress is cross-dressed, focusing on the character's use of persuasive rhetoric. Finally, the chapter will make arguments for the impact and relevance of these types of roles.

This chapter also focuses mostly on female characters, but discusses the actresses as appropriate.

Chapter Four will explore two types of productions: productions that feature travesty roles, or roles written for men but often performed by women, such as Young Fashion in Vanbrugh's *The Relapse,* and Macheath in Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*; and all-female productions of plays, which were staged on a number of occasions throughout this era. Anecdotal evidence about the actual performances of these plays illuminates the historical context of the travesty performances, as does textual readings of pivotal scenes within those plays. By pointing to scenes from the play that shift meaning or significance when performed by all women, Chapter Four postulates audience response and possibilities for production. Further, historical clothing evidence and contemporary responses will further clarify how audiences could have responded to these productions. Chapter Four will explore the historical realities and reputations of the actresses who were best known for their work as breeches and travesty performers, such as Elizabeth Boutell, Susannah Mountfort, and Peg Woffington.

In these plays as well as within the society that produced them, the women, when dressed as women, are frequently unable to be rhetorically effective due to their gendered social roles. Yet when dressed as men, these characters become skilled rhetors. Looking beyond the confines of the text, these depictions of female rhetors in male garb can also be viewed as sites of education for the women of the audience about their own rhetorical situations – situations of, usually, rhetorical inability and

reliance on men. By juxtaposing literary scholarship with an understanding of the rhetoric employed by this on-stage cross-dressing, we can better comprehend the impact these plays may have had on their audiences; a focus on the rhetoric of these characters significantly enhances our understanding of characters, plots, plays, playwrights and their audiences by filling a gap in current scholarship. The actresses and their breeches characters persuade their various audiences through speech, action, and clothing to believe them, support them, and applaud them.

Chapter 2

ANY AVAILABLE MEANS: VIRGINS IN BREECHES

A Woman once vested in Authority,
tho' 'tis by no other than her own making,
does not willingly part with it.
-*She Ventures and He Wins,* Anonymous

The drama of the Restoration and 18th century is obsessed with power dynamics between women and men. Men, traditionally powerful in both public and private spaces, typically have authority over the women of these plays. But that does not mean these women willingly submit to the dictates of their fathers, brothers and husbands. As Juliana explains in the above epigram, women are just as interested in achieving and maintaining authority. The problem, though, is society's general unwillingness to allow them that authority. In situations where power and authority matter to these women, they must work outside society's norms to empower themselves. They frequently do so by cross-dressing and changing their persuasive strategies. This chapter will focus exclusively on female characters in comedies from 1667-1737 who are unmarried, who dress in men's clothing and who have not been seduced. Typically, these virgins wish to control their bodies, marriages, and futures; their desires often oppose their male guardians expects or demands. These characters proactively claim power over their own lives by dressing as men and employing sophistic rhetorical strategies.

As noted in Chapter One, Elizabeth Howe claims that breeches roles reinforced status quo of male power and, therefore, were only a means of sexualizing the actress. Howe posits that, "in most cases a woman dons male disguise as an unnatural action caused by some obstacle to her marrying her love or otherwise getting her own way. Once her wishes are met she almost invariably returns, like her Renaissance predecessor, to a conventional female role at the end of the play."[72] Despite the sweeping generalizations of this statement, it does provide a useful supposition against which to measure the breeches roles: if these characters return to powerless and voiceless positions at the end of the play, then Howe is correct in her assessment and breeches roles achieve nothing significant. If, however, these characters are somehow fundamentally changed or gain a voice or power, then the breeches roles are more subversive and complex than Howe allows. Howe's phrasings is ironic here. What Howe describes as the character overcoming an "obstacle or otherwise getting her own way" is actually the very thing that defines power. These female characters usually have no direct control over their fate; they are merely transferred, as property, from father to father-approved husband. But breeches characters *choose* to cross-dress in order to obtain control or agency.

Certainly, some female characters in men's clothing do return to submissive roles; Howe is correct that some plays use breeches roles to sexualize actresses to

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[72] Elizabeth Howe. *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 59.

attract more audience members. Melantha of Dryden's 1672 *Marriage à la Mode* is one such character.[73] Regardless of what is accomplished in the scenes of cross-dressing, by the end of the play, Melantha is exactly as she was at the beginning of the play. She is a ridiculous and "affected lady," as the *Dramatis Personae* terms her, with a particular fondness but ineptitude for fashionable French phrases. She and Palamede are not in love but are engaged so Palamede can please his father and inherit his estate. Although Melantha and Rhodophil plan several assignations during the play, they never (at least according to Rhodophil at the end of the play) consummate the relationship; Melantha is as pure as she ever was. Further, her re-engagement to Palamede occurs as a matter of course and with no real change in Melantha's character, whereas the three other main characters reaffirm and redefine their relationships. By the end of the play, Palamede feels affection for Melantha and has all but given up hope for a relationship with Doralice. To get Melantha's attention, Palamede uses her own affectations to woo her by singing in French; she is quickly persuaded:

> *Melantha:* Let me die now, but this singing is fine, and extremely French in him. (*Laughs).* But then, that he should use my own words, as it were in contempt of me, I cannot bear it…
> Let me but die, he sings *en cavalier*, and so humours the cadence…
> Well, I begin to have a *tendre* for you; but yet, upon condition, that… when we are married, you…[74]

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[73] The other breeches role of this play, Doralice, is a married woman and will be discussed in the next chapter.

[74] John Dryden, *Marriage a la Mode* in *The Works of John Dryden*. Ed. Edward Niles Hooker, H.T. Swedenberg, Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956) V.i.137-152.

In these lines, we see Melantha being persuaded (as opposed to doing the persuading) by Palamede to be his wife because Palamede knows his audience. By using French song, the very thing Melantha finds most appealing, Palamede is able to get what he wants. Further, he sings in French to gain the upper hand with Melantha. Philotis, Melantha's maid, advises Palamede that, "you must drown her voice; if she makes her French conditions, you are a slave forever." So Palamede sings over Melantha's list of demands for when they are married. When she asks "Will you hear the conditions?" Palamede responds "No; I will hear no conditions! I am resolved to win you *en francais:* to be very airy, with abundance of noise, and no sense." Melantha gives in, with "Hold! Hold! I am vanquished with your *gaiete d'esprit.* I am yours, and will be yours, *sans nulle reserve, ni condition!* And let me die, if I do not think myself the happiest nymph in Sicily."[75] In this scene, Melantha gives up all control to Palamede, who is only interested in her because of the financial security a marriage with her will provide.

Palamede takes away her voice and her power by singing over her, effectively silencing her. Palamede's disingenuous love is proven in the very next lines when Melantha goes off stage and Doralice enters. Palamede immediately tries to convince her to go with him "to the next room that has a couch or bed in't and bestow your

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[75] Ibid., V.i.152 – 160.

charity upon a dying man."[76] Doralice, a stronger and more complex character than Melantha, is able to refuse him. Ultimately, Palamede decides that he is attracted to Melantha, not because of anything she does, but because Rhodophil wanted her and, according to Palamede, "Here's an argument for me to love Melantha! For [Rhodophil] has loved her, and he has wit too, and for ought I know there may be a mine: but if there be I am resolved I'll dig for't."[77] Palamede needs to be convinced to be in love with Melantha; but the one capable of making that argument is Rhodophil, not Melantha. Further, Melantha really is not a part of this equation; she is off stage while Doralice, Rhodophil and Palamede negotiate and debate their love square. Doralice has agency in this scene, offering her perspective on how they can all remain friends, but Melantha is not present. The final time she appears, she superficially admires how nice the king looks; the conditions of her upcoming marriage to Palamede are not brought to her attention and she remains the affected and star-stuck fool of the beginning of the play. Melantha, then, is one of the characters Howe describes as not shaking the male status quo, but even as we grant this, we must bear in mind that the other breeches role, Doralice, is quite different from and more complex than Melantha, both in the context of her cross-dressing and rhetorical prowess and the resultant outcomes.

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[76] Ibid., V.i.187-188.

[77] Ibid., V.i.291-293.

Another breeches play which reinforces, rather than questions, gender stereotypes in the way Howe suggests is the 1674 *The Amorous Old-Woman: or, 'Tis Well if it Take*, attributed to Thomas Duffet. This play receives little scholarly attention, probably due to its undocumented but probably short run, use of lesser-known actors in its original cast, and clichéd plot. This play, though, is noteworthy for the extremes to which it takes generic expectations of Restoration comedy. Rather than a love triangle or even square, this play has a love hexagon. Constantia loves Amante; Amante loves Clara; Clara loves Honorio; Honorio loves Arabella; and Arabella loves Garbato who, thankfully, loves her back (though, of course, Arabella's father disapproves of the match and wants her to marry Honorio, whom she hates). The play consists of all the expected tricks and twists to get all the characters into the appropriate and socially acceptable three couples. It is worth noting, however, that the ultimate couplings reflect the women's desires, rather than the men's original infatuations, suggesting that women, not men, have more appropriate feelings when it comes to love and marriage.

The cross-dressing of the play is performed by Clara, who spreads a rumor that she has died in order to take on the masculine persona of Infortunio. As Infortunio, Clara acts as page to Arabella and delivers messages from Arabella to Honorio, which demand that he stop courting Arabella. Arabella comments on Clara's rhetorical abilities several times, saying, "Thou hast a moving language Boy, / And thy looks,

with me, have power to perswade / Beyond the Charms and Tropes of Rhetorick."[78] Arabella uses Clara both because of her persuasive ability or "richest eloquence" as she calls it, as well as her look; as a man, Clara is convincing and effective. Clara relishes this task because she herself is in love with Honorio and promises to visit him to comfort his heart sickness because, according to Honorio, "Methinks your Faces have such sweet resemblance / I cou'd delude my Passion, and adore / In thee my Arabella."[79] This statement is problematic because Honorio's infatuation with an apparent boy *because* he looks like Arabella suggests that the future coupling of Clara and Honorio is not based on Honorio's true love of Clara, but because she reminds him of his first love, Arabella, a rather unhealthy basis for any relationship, and one that figures Clara as a consolation prize. She also ends that scene by telling Honorio "You shall command me any thing," emphasizing her subservient role, both as a page and as a woman.

Although Clara worries, "I hope these breeches han't transformed me," thereby suggesting the possibility of physical transformation, any real threat to the natural order of things is eliminated by the male characters. [80] Honorio figures out the trick, at first stating, "The kindness of this Boy does puzzle me / For either I mistake him or

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[78] Thomas Duffett. *The Amorous Old Woman or, Tis Well if it Take, A Comedy.* (London: Simon Neale, 1674). *Early English Books Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014. II.i (18).

[79] Ibid., III.i (29).

[80] Ibid., IV.i (45).

he loves me, / In an extreame that misbecomes his Sex. / It must be sure some Virgin in disguise."[81] Honorio recognizes that Infortunio loves him romantically but immediately rejects the possibility of homosexual love. The only logical conclusion, then, is that it must be a woman. In the following scene, Honorio unravels the mystery further and, at the same time, disempowers Clara's masculine identity. He ponders, "It shou'd be Clara; yet she's too discreet / To trust her modesty to that disguise, / Yet she's a Woman, and moreover loves, / And few are known Lovers, and wise at once."[82] Honorio tells the audience that cross-dressing is dangerous and indiscreet and that women, particularly women in love, are irrational and therefore not accountable for their actions. He later criticizes himself for being foolish in believing her. He resolves that, "It must be Clara wandering for my sake / In that disguise, if so, it lyes in me / to marry her." Honorio assumes the responsibility of fixing Clara's mistake of cross-dressing, and reinforces the idea that she has no agency or direction with the word "wandering." Further, it is not love that compels him to marry her, but honor and duty.

Ultimately, all the main characters pair off to everyone's happiness because, as Honorio states, "Every thing [is] in its proper season." Clara is noticeably quiet in the final scene, a strong contrast to her rhetorical machinations throughout the play; Honorio addresses Clara, "You're now my lot, though not at first design'd / Fortune,

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[81] Ibid., IV.iv (51).

[82] Ibid., IV.v (53).

and Love, dispose of all mankind."[83] Such words, though on the surface good humored, mark Clara (and the other women) as second-hand property that adds to his "fortune" and is perhaps easily disposed of. Clara's silence and Honorio's assertion of authority reinforce the gender norms Howe believes exist in every Restoration play with breeches.

One of the plays that Howe specifically argues represents a woman's return to domestic subjugation after a ramble in men's clothes is William Wycherley's 1676 *The Plain Dealer*; if we judge Fidelia only on her last lines, this is true. Fidelia spends the entire play in man's dress, following the misanthropic Manly as his page both around London and to sea. Arguably, Fidelia's choice to go to sea with Manly marks her out as unusual and adventurous. But Fidelia represents everything a good wife should at the end of the play, according to traditional standards: money and loyalty. After Manly reveals he has lost much of his money, Fidelia comforts him with,

> I can give you back such a present as this, which I got by the loss of my father, a gentleman of the north, of no mean extraction, whose only child I was, therefore left me in the present possession of two thousand pounds a-year; which I left, with multitudes of pretenders, to follow you, sir; having in several public places seen you, and observed your actions thoroughly, with admiration, when you were too much in love to take notice of mine, which yet was but too visible. The name of my family is Grey, my other Fidelia. The rest of my story you shall know when I have fewer auditors.[84]

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[83] Ibid., V.vii (72).

[84] William Wycherley. *The Plain Dealer, A Comedy.* (London: James Magnes and Rich Bentley, 1676). *Early English Books Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014. V.iv (96).

Manly replies jokingly, “my friend here would say, 'tis your estate that has made me friends with the world.” In the end, Fidelia’s fortune is what allows Manly to retire from the world he hates so much and be a decent husband to her. What is of the utmost importance, at the time of their engagement, is her heredity, her father, her “admiration” for Manly, and her family name. “The rest” of her story can wait until much later and when she is no longer in a public environment with so many “auditors” – her access to the public, masculine domain is dissolved with her male identity. And although Manly jokes that it is her estate that he finds so wonderful, as well as her faithfulness to him, it is funny because, to some degree, it is true. Everyone, except Olivia, ends the play happily because Fidelia turns out to be rich and virtuous, the most important qualities in bride-to-be in the typical, male-dominated paradigm. In these ways, Fidelia, although momentarily a sea-going seducer of ladies, ends up reinforcing the gender stereotypes that Howe sees in all breeches roles.

Elizabeth Howe’s claims, then, are accurate in a few circumstances. But, after examining many other virginal breeches roles, I argue that the vast majority of these characters question typical gender roles rather than reinforce them; further, the majority of these female characters change fundamentally from who they were at the beginning of he plays. They do so either by accomplishing their goals in marriage or having gained new perspective on themselves or others. These breeches roles are all different, provocative and worthy of closer examination. The remainder of this chapter will explore the breeches roles who are unmarried virgins who use the crossing-dressing in conjunction with sophistic rhetoric to achieve specific goals. Each role and

each play is unique and, therefore, must be examined individually and analyzed closely. What emerges from these seven analyses is that these breeches characters are unique and represent different possibilities for gender questioning and power struggles. These breeches characters demonstrate several important characteristics of these plays. Perhaps number one among them is the importance and usefulness of male friendship for alleviating the fears and anxieties women had about marriage. These breeches roles also use their male personae to foster healthy competition between them and their lovers, which serves to undercut the male ego which affects courtship and foppishness. Finally, from these roles, the rhetorical disempowerment of women becomes apparent; the women of these plays are discredited and ignored until they wear men's clothes. Their cross-dressing represents an active seizing of rhetorical power from the men around them to ensure a happy future.

Because cross-dressing is inherently risky, I will present these roles in terms of the risks these characters take, which often include risk of life, limb, rape and substantial personal loss. But the first breeches role that I will address is Florimell of *Secret Love*, the first significant recorded breeches role of the age. Florimell, as a character, takes little risk to her person or her relationship. But For Nell Gwyn, the actress who premiered the role, to be one of the first women to spend a substantial amount of time on stage in pants would have been daring and exhilarating.

Secret-Love, or the Maiden-Queen was something of a 17th Century blockbuster. It was wildly popular, performed at least eight times the first season and

revived in almost every subsequent season for the following decade.[85] Charles II reportedly called it "His Play" and Samuel Pepys saw it repeatedly, commenting frequently about it in his diary.[86] It was one of the plays presented by the King's Company in 1672 with an all-female cast and maintained a good standing in the repertory well into the 18th Century.[87] The play presents two plot lines: the political story of the Queen of Sicily who must choose between love of a man and love of her country, and the love story of Florimell and Celadon. This secondary plot line cannot be taken out of the context of the Queen's Story, despite their seeming difference in themes.

As has been noted by previous scholars, theatrical representation of queens is difficult. Regardless of their personal circumstances, queens who are sole rulers represent a paradox: as women, they should be private and silent; but as sovereigns, they are inherently public and must speak. Jacqueline Pearson claims that *Secret Love* is unusual in that female characters speak more than half the lines of the play (only one other play of the 100 that Pearson examined does so). As she notes, "Both [*Secret Love* and *The Unhappy Favourite*] centre on queens who have to resolve

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[85] *The London Stage: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces, Together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment*. Part 1. Ed. William Van Lennep. (Carbondale: Southerne Illinois UP, 1965), 103.

[86] John Dryden, "Preface" to *Secret Love, or The Maiden-Queen.* In *The Works of John Dryden*. Ed. Edward Niles Hooker, H.T. Swedenberg, Jr. Vol. 9. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), 115.

[87] The all-female production will be discussed in chapter 4

contradictions between their private and public lives, between their female selves who, as women, should be subordinate and their public roles as rulers."[88] *Secret Love* depicts the struggle quite blatantly of one woman between her masculine and feminine halves; and because of these two halves of herself, she must be both woman and man, subordinate and powerful, silent and rhetorically active. The Maiden-Queen here represents one instance of what Jessica Munns describes as "double dressing." In describing Aphra Behn specifically, Munns claims "it is the doubleness of her claims and the doubleness of her vision that characterizes… her creation of a sexual space from which to speak."[89] For the queen, gender increases her wisdom and ability to rule. By the end of the play, the Queen chooses her country and rejects marriage. She maintains her power, but as a result, must reject love and, implicitly, her femininity. Florimell's choice to cross-dress provides a visual echo of the Queen's double dressing, but in a comic and non-threatening way. Unlike the Queen, though, Florimell is able to adopt male disguise for her own purposes and to stipulate the circumstances of her marriage to the man of her choosing. Florimell is unusual in that she is a ward of the Queen; she has no male relative to control her marriage or make decisions for her. She is mostly left to her own devices in finding a husband.

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[88] Jacqueline Pearson. *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642-1737.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 65.

[89] Jessica Munns, "I By a Double Right Thy Bounties Claims:" Aphra Behn and Sexual Space," in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660- 1820*, ed. Mary Anne Schoefield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio UP, 1991), 105.

Nell Gwyn and Charles Hart, who played Florimell and her lover Celadon, initiated a trend in the theater for the "gay couple," a set of comic lovers who use wit (and frequently, disguises and intrigue) to come to a mutually beneficial marriage contract. Celadon is a notorious flirt, moving his inclinations from one woman to the next without much thought. But Florimell is just as "wilde" as he is.[90] The two discover their similar personalities pretty quickly; Celadon compares himself to the sun because "like him, I would visit and away" to the next lover. Florimell finds this arrangement agreeable, saying, "For what an unreasonable thing it were to stay long, be troublesome, and hinder a Lady of a fresh Lover."[91] Their mutual attraction is established quickly and efficiently.

Celadon proposes to Florimell, but she declares her intention of testing him first, not to make sure he will be faithful, but to ensure the he really, truly loves her and will not tire of her. She devises several schemes to test his character and his dedication to her. As she explains to her friend Flavia,

> There's the more hope he may love me among the rest: hang't, I would not marry one of these solemn Fops; they are good for nothing but to make Cuckolds: Give me a servant that is a high Flier at all games, that is bounteous of himself to many women; and yet whenever I pleas'd to throw out the lure of Matrimony, should come down with a swing, and fly the better at his own quarry… A Bee may pick of many Flowers, and yet like some one better then all the rest[92]

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[90] Dryden, *Secret Love,* I.i.49.

[91] Ibid., I.ii.21-24.

[92] Ibid., III.i.298-318.

For Florimell, strict fidelity is not what she wants, but rather devotion and a marked preference on the part of her husband. Celadon the flirt is her perfect match.

Florimell appears "in Mans Habit" at the beginning of Act V. She does so in order to flirt with Celadon's other girlfriends in an effort to distract them from Celadon. But the disguise also gives her an excuse to mock male clothes and behavior. As Florimell explains:

> `Twill be rare now if I can go through with it, to out-do this mad Celadon in all his tricks, and get both his Mistresses from him; then I shall revenge my self upon all three, and save my own stake into the bargain; for I find I do love the Rogue in spight of all his infidelities… If cloathes and a *bon meen* will take `em, I shall do't – Save you Monsieur Florimell; Faith me thinks you are a very janty fellow, *poudre & ajuste* as well as the best of `em. I can manage the little Comb, -- set my Hat, shake my Garniture, toss about my empty Noodle, walk with a courant slurr, and at every step peck down my Head: -- if I should be mistaken for some Courtier now, pray where's the difference?[93]

If Florimell was really dressed as foppishly as she describes, then the actress Nell Gwyn was probably wearing the fashionable and voluminous petticoat breeches, a shorter jacket with a longer linen shirt underneath, hose and boots, and a wig and a hat. Her clothing would have been ample and beribboned. She would have been foppish, ridiculous, and most importantly, covered up from head to foot.

In order to take control of the situation with Celadon, Florimell must assume male disguise and identity and "out-do" her lover. Here, manhood is defined by how many women one courts, so Florimell's plan is to flirt with the other women Celadon

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[93] Ibid., V.i.1-13.

is interested in and, essentially, out-man him. Florimell also provides a clever commentary on the connection between identity and clothes and behavior. The way she dresses and the way she walks, talks and bows dictates her persona; and that persona is a ridiculous fop that satirizes his compatriots in the play as well as the men in the audience. As she suggests, there is no difference between her and any other courtier. Gwyn's performance here was quite successful, both in its execution and effect on the audience. Pepys notes, "But so great a performance of a comical part was never, I believe, in the world before as Nell do this, both as a mad girle, then most and best of all when she comes in like a young gallant; and hath the motions and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have. It makes me, I confess, admire her."[94] Pepys demonstrates Gwyn's ability to pull off both the female as well as male halves of her role. According to Pepys, her behavior and affectations perfectly perform real male behavior, which makes the performance all the more enjoyable.

Florimell flirts with Olinda and Sabina, who reject Celadon in favor of this "rarest Gentleman," as Olinda terms Florimell.[95] This scene is highly comic, with dancing and witty repartee, but the "reveal" of Florimell's gender comes quickly. While trying to prove a point (and his manhood), Celadon "Plucks off her Hat and Perruke, and discovers Florimell."[96] This physical de-wigging could be played in a

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[94] qtd. in *The London Stage,* part 1, 103-104.

[95] Dryden, *Secret Love,* V.i.76.

[96] Ibid., V.i.122.

variety of ways, but it represents Celadon taking back control of the scene and reasserting his manhood. But the very fact that he must take back that control suggests that Florimell had it in the first place. The characters laugh off the unusual gender dynamics that have just been performed when Sabina comments, "Well, if ever I believe a man to be a man for the sake of a Perruke and Feather again."[97] According to the other characters, it is possible to be genuinely misled by appearance and clothes.

By the end of the play, though, Florimell retains some of her adopted masculine persona and the power inherent in it. She promises to marry Celadon in her breeches, which she wears for the rest of the play, though with her hair, an incontrovertible gender marker, exposed. The final lines of the play present the traditional proviso scene in which the two characters make stipulations about their married life together. But Celadon and Florimell do not come to the expected agreement to be faithful and loving the rest of their lives, or the even more scandalous but common agreement to not marry and simply have a sexual relationship. Rather, as Florimell describes it, they decide to "love one another as long as we can; and confess the truth when we can love no longer." And because Celadon finds the words "Husband and Wife" annoying, they "will be married by the more agreeable names of Mistress and Gallant."[98] In this scene, Florimell takes an active role in the negotiations, making as many, if not more, demands as Celadon. Both parties are

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[97] Ibid., V.i.131-132.

[98] Ibid., V.i.534 – 552.

completely satisfied by the end of their conversation, suggesting that they have established a beneficial, honest and equal partnership. Arguably, Celadon loves Florimell from the very beginning of their relationship and, most likely, would have made a good husband. But Florimell insists on watching out for herself; as an apparent orphan and ward of the Queen, she has no father or brother to make that decision for her. It is only through the donning of pants, and male persona, that Florimell can make an informed decision and be secure in her lifetime commitment to Celadon. Not only does she exercise choice in the matter, but she also arranges the relationship so as to preserve her power and equality.

Gay demeanor and skillful wit are not limited to just Florimell, but are characteristics of many breeches characters, such as Charlot Welldon of Thomas Southern's stage adaptation of *Oroonoko,* despite Charlot's motvies for cross-dressing being quite different from Florimell's. Of all of the breeches roles, Charlot Welldon arguably risks the most. First produced around November of 1695 at Drury Lane, this play is unusual in its pairing of a highly pathetic tragedy and a comic sub-plot involving husband-hunting. [99] Southern is considered by many scholars to be one of the more sympathetic male playwrights to the female cause.[100] His heroines are often complex and many of them choose to cross-dress for a variety of reasons.[101]

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[99] *London Stage,* part 1, 454.

[100] Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse,* 113; Howe, *The First English Actresses,* 17.

[101] Southerne's *Sir Anthony Love* will be discussed in Chapter 3.

By all accounts, audiences preferred the tragic elements of *Oroonoko* and found the comic plot a little distracting; however, the play was enormously successful. Despite the highly comic action of the play itself and the light banter of the character, Charlot Welldon takes enormous risks both before and during the action of the play.

Charlot disguises herself as a man in order to chaperone her sister Lucy and herself from London to the Dutch colony of Surinam, in South America. According to the two women, there are not enough men left in London to provide decent husbands; further, there is a suggestion that the ladies may have ruined their reputations by trying to form intrigues with the men of London through the use of Vizards (though there is no explicit mention of them having gone too far). And so, because there are far more men than women at the colony in Surinam, the two unwed women travel there in order to find husbands. The taking on of a transatlantic voyage would be dangerous for anyone at this time in history; for two unmarried women to do so without a male guardian or at least a male relative to receive them would have been unheard of. Further, the two women travel to a colony in the midst of a slave rebellion that will eventually result in serious loss of life. For protection and ease of travel, Charlot disguises herself as a man and plots ahead of time, explaining to Lucy:

> I pass for your brother: one of the richest planters here happening to die just as we landed, I have claimed kindred with him: so without making his will, he has left us the credit of his relation to trade upon: we pass for his cousins, coming here to Surinam chiefly upon his invitation; we live in reputation; have

> the best acquaintance in the place; and we shall find our account in't, I warrant you.[102]

Prior to the action of the play, Charlot undertakes plots and plans that all depend on her identity as a man; Lucy even responds to this speech with "I must rely upon you," because she cannot manage for herself as a woman. She has managed to find a way to establish her and her sister's reputation, giving them credit to live on until they can find husbands. Ostensibly, there is a time limit on this charade – they must find and marry men before the other colonists realize what they are doing, but it does give them plenty of time to get their footings. Although this plot is meant to be comic relief to the Oroonoko and Imoinda plot, the fact that these two women actively fought for their futures by undertaking a transatlantic journey that left them in a completely foreign and hostile environment is significant. It is a dangerous course of action that could easily lead to a tragic outcome.

Charlot flirts with the Widow Lackitt, who is desperate for male attention, in order to manipulate Lackitt's son Daniel into marrying Lucy. Charlot herself "marries" the Widow in order to obtain some of the Widow's wealth. Meanwhile, she has told Stanmore, the real object of her affections, that her attractive, female cousin is soon to arrive in Surinam; as a man, Charlot cultivates a friendship with Stanmore while planting the idea of marriage in his subconscious. These schemes are complex and depend on many moving parts. Charlot demonstrates the ability to manipulate

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[102] Thomas Southerne. *Oroonoko, A Tragedy.* (London: H. Playford, B. Tooke, S. Buckley, 1696). *Early English Books Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014. I.i (3-4).

those around her for her own purposes. But one has to wonder what would happen if her plan did not work – what would happen if her gender were revealed before she was ready? Most likely, she and her sister would have ruined reputations. They would not be able to find husbands in Surinam and they would be left completely penniless. Unable to fend for themselves, they could possibly be jailed, or sent back to London where their prospects would be equally dim. Luckily, Charlot is a skilled rhetor, able to think quickly and respond to the needs of her audience.

The Widow Lackitt is more than eager to be married to the supposed Mr. Welldon, and begins to question Charlot's delay in accepting a marriage contract. Charlot is hesitant, of course, because she wants to make sure Lucy is married before risking the revelation of her gender; it can only be a matter of time after Charlot's marriage to the widow before the truth is discovered. Thinking on her feet, Charlot declares, "I am divided in my thoughts. My father, upon his death-bed, obliged me to see my sister disposed of, before I married myself. 'Tis that sticks upon me. They say, indeed, promises are to be broken or kept: and I know 'tis a foolish thing to be tied to a promise; but I can't help it. I don't know how to get rid of it."[103] This speech is clever in a number of ways. First, for the audience, it reflects the pathos of the rest of the play: "Mr. Welldon's" commitment to his father's death-bed wish is moving, at least when the audience suspends reality enough to believe it. But the speech is particularly noticeable for its manipulation of the widow. Her biggest concern is the

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[103] Ibid., II.i (17-18).

loyalty of her husband-to-be; on a number of occasions she mentions that she wants Welldon all to herself. Charlot questions the foundation of marriage here. Charlot claims to have made a promise to her father, which she would have to break to marry the widow so quickly. Further, Charlot claims to have never broken a promise before, which she would rather not do. If she breaks the promise to her father to marry the widow, then promises (such as promises of fidelity) are easier to break. Therefore, she convinces the widow to give her more time to find Lucy a husband so as not to set the precedent of promise-breaking, which could easily lead to disloyalty within marriage. Charlot's manipulation of logic is rhetorical skill at its finest. Charlot leads the Widow down an argumentative trail so clever, that the Widow can only agree with her.

After some debating and further discussion, the Widow agrees to allow her son, Daniel, to marry Lucy, and to give him half her estate, thereby securing Lucy a husband and an income. Daniel, meanwhile, is an idiot who knows nothing of women. Lucy has no say in the matter; Charlot exclaims, "I give my consent! I'll answer for my sister, she shall have him."[104] Charlot, as a man, gets the privilege of making and enforcing marital alliances. Lucy's main aim is to find a husband to preserve her reputation and to give her an income, so her goals are met. But Charlot's ability, while in breeches, to make family decisions is an important moment; she not only affects her own future, but that of her sister as well; her breeches have a lasting impact.

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[104] Ibid., II.i (18).

Charlot's ability to think on her feet and persuade the widow to wait a little longer is tested a second time. The widow again becomes impatient for a marriage to Welldon, and so Charlot tells the Widow that he already has a wife in London: "indeed I am married in England; but 'tis as if I were not; for I have been parted from my wife a great while, and, to do reason on both sides, we hate one another heartily. Now I did design, and will marry you still, if you'll have a little patience… I have a friend in England and I will write to, to poison my wife, and then I can marry you."[105] As Charlot expects, the widow finds this highly romantic and agrees to wait as long as it will take to send a letter to England and receive a reply. Charlot's ability to know what will convince the widow effectively buys her enough time to figure out the rest of her plot.

Charlot, as Welldon, goes through with the ceremony of marriage to the widow and then orchestrates a bed-trick with Jack Stanmore, Stanmore's cousin, who is already in love with the widow. The widow finds herself mightily pleased with whatever occurred in the bedroom with the supposed Welldon and, as a reward for his good work, gives Welldon gold and jewels that equal a thousand pounds. This amount of ready cash is enough to provide Charlot a dowry in marrying a husband, and so the final stages of her machinations are put into play.

As Welldon, Charlot gives the money to Stanmore for safe keeping, asking him to hold on to it for his cousin Charlot, who is supposedly arriving on the next

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[105] Ibid., III.iii (44).

boat. The looming slave rebellion gives Welldon enough context for asking this favor, telling Stanmore, "If any thing should happen to me in this bustle, as nobody is secure of accidents, I know you will take my cousin into your protection and care."[106] Charlot takes advantage of the opportunity afforded by the slave rebellion, one which she could not have predicted. Welldon ironically goes on to ask Stanmore to find Charlot a husband because "this is not a place for a single woman, you know," even suggesting that Stanmore would be an excellent candidate.[107] In this scene, Charlot as Welldon trades on their masculine friendship in order to enlist Stanmore as husband to Charlot as woman. Without that masculine persona, the marriage would be impossible to achieve. At this point in the play, when Charlot is planning to stage Welldon's death in the slave rebellion to make way for her arrival as Charlot, she believes the only way to achieve marriage is through Welldon's death. Further, it is only through male friendship that Charlot is really able to get to know Stanmore to be sure of his character and trustworthiness, which is why she can give him the thousand pounds without fear of him running away with it.

In the final act, Charlot reveals herself to Stanmore because she respects him too much to lie to him. Once he suggests marriage to Charlot (as Charlot), she asks him "If I should consent to the fine things you can say to me, how would you look at

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[106] Ibid., IV.i (56).

[107] Ibid., IV.i (57).

last, to find 'em thrown away on an old acquaintance?"[108] She then proceeds to tell him that she is Welldon. Interestingly, despite the fact that she is dressed as a woman, Stanmore persists in believing her to be male, asking, "But what service can you do me in petticoats, pray? …I have found my friend and lost my mistress, it seems, which I did not expect from your petticoats;" Charlot has to explain to Stanmore, "you have had a friend of your mistress long enough; `tis high time now to have a mistress of your friend…I might have married you in the person of my English cousin, but could not consent to cheat you, even in the thing I had a mind to."[109] She wishes to conflate the two identities of male friend and female mistress in order to achieve a match that is most to her liking. Both Stanmore and the Widow Lackitt struggle to understand how Charlot could be a woman, even when she is dressed as such; their inability to process this change demonstrates just how convincing Charlot was while dressed and acting as a man. Clearly, the power of clothes and behavior to deceive is strong.

If we take Elizabeth Howe's premise that the women who cross-dress return at the end of the plays to traditional domestic subservience, then we need to examine Charlot's end point, as well as her machinations before and during the play. Charlot takes an enormous risk in order to find a husband for herself and Lucy by cross-dressing and traveling across the Atlantic to a colony. Charlot's decision to be honest with Stanmore about her schemes could possibly disempower her – Stanmore has not

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[108] Ibid., V.i. (64).

[109] Ibid.

married her yet so he could abandon her at this point, leaving her far worse than the beginning of the play, with a ruined reputation and no money (Stanmore still has the thousand pounds). Stanmore, however, is so enthralled with Charlot, mostly due to their masculine friendship, that Stanmore stands by her, ostensibly ceding his power in the relationship to her, stating, "I like you so well, that I am afraid you won't think marriage proof on't: shall I give you any other?"[110] If Stanmore is worried about Charlot not being convinced of his affection for her, then she maintains the control of the relationship. Stanmore's deference is further emphasized by his relative silence through the rest of the comic scene, before it transitions to the tragic. Charlot also maintains her power over the widow, threatening to tell others of the widow's (unintentional) extra-marital affair with Jack Stanmore and her foolishness in marrying a woman, if the widow does not keep Charlot's secret. In these ways, Charlot maintains power over Stanmore and the Widow, two of the most powerful characters in the comic sub-plot.

Further, by the end of the play, Charlot maintains a public, political voice. Certainly, the political lines between public and domestic are blurred in a colony where governmental rule is distant and where women, particularly ones like the widow, have control over land and economic production. Charlot, despite having found a husband and given up her breeches, also gets to participate in the politics of the colony. When Oroonoko is arrested, Charlot and Lucy petition for him to have a

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[110] Ibid., V.i (65).

fair trial and not to be automatically hanged. Charlot later intervenes with the Governor, asking him to relinquish Imoinda for Oroonoko's sake. Although she is not successful, it is this interaction, which leads Blandford to suspect the Governor of ill-intent and to watch him for any questionable behavior. Without Charlot's interference, much of the rest of the plot would not occur, proving her power and rhetorical ability.

By the end of the play, Charlot and Lucy's comic sub-plot is much forgotten in light of the gruesome and tragic plot. Poetic justice, however, is served, partially due to Charlot's final interference with the Governor. Further, Imoinda takes a last stand at the end, proving herself stronger and more determined than even Oroonoko in that she must kill herself to avoid being raped by the Governonr; Oroonoko, though he tries to kill her at her request, cannot bring himself to do so. Imoinda leaves the audience with the impression of female empowerment that ultimately must fail in a patriarchal society but which sheds light on the odd use of the comic sub-plot. Imoinda, though strong and complex, must die to protect herself and her reputation. Charlot, on the other hand, must hide her true identity and take on that of a man to do the same thing.

Jacqueline Pearson sees the same problem of patriarchy which explains the parallel plots. For Pearson, Southern's *Oroonoko* is all about the buying and selling of bodies, slaves and wives. Pearson notes that Charlot cannot change the patriarchy of the colony, but "she can only choose to be buyer rather than bought."[111] According to Pearson, Charlot's choice to dress as a man is the same kind of rebellion as

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[111] Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse,* 114.

Oroonoko's choice to lead the slave revolt, making it even riskier than perhaps the text of the comic sub-plot would suggest. By the end, then, Charlot does not return to domestic servitude with the other women and slaves; rather, she marries an honorable man of her choosing; and she continues to participate in the colony's political process. The horrific deaths of Oroonoko and Imoinda cause the other characters and the audience members to experience a catharsis that must leave them fundamentally changed. There is no comedy at the end of the play, only reflection and growth.

The role of Charlot Welldon was originally performed by Susannah Verbruggen who was known for breeches parts, playing at least eight of them throughout her tenure with the King's Company.[112] Verbruggen established herself as a breeches actress well before Southern adapted *Oroonoko* for the stage. Colley Cibber wrote in his *Apology,* "nor was her Humour limited to her Sex; for, while her Shape permitted, she was a more adroit pretty Fellow than is usually seen upon the stage: Her easy Air, Action, Mien, and Gesture, quite chan'd from the Quoif, to the cock'd Hat, and Cavalier in fashion."[113] Several playwrights wrote breeches roles with her specifically in mind, such as Southern with *Sir Anthony Love*, Mountfort with

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[112] Ibid., 188.

[113] Cibber, Colley. *An apology for the life of Mr. Colley Cibber, comedian, and late patentee of the Theatre-Royal. With an historical view of the stage during his own time. Written by himself.* London, MDCCXL.[1740]. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library. 14 May 2014. 99.

Greenwhich Park and Powell with *A Very Good Wife*.[114] By the time Southern came to create the role of Charlot in *Oroonoko* he almost certainly must have had Vergruggen in mind for it, knowing that audiences loved her in such performances. Southern would have known that Verbruggen could successfully depict masculinity in a way that would appeal to audiences, allowing for the questioning of male and female power relations that the role does.

It is a bit difficult to hypothesize what Verbruggen would have worn for a costume to play Welldon as the setting of the play is in a colony and the character of Charlot is not particularly wealthy. If we assume, however, that Verbruggen would have been wearing whatever men's clothes she could have attained (actors being responsible for their own costumes), then most likely she would have worn fashions from the late 1680s to early 1690s. She may have even worn the same or similar clothes as she did for the role of Sir Anthony Love. These clothes would probably have consisted of a form-fitting jacket (but of sufficient weight and texture to disguise a womanly figure) with breeches to the knee, hose and short, ankle-height shoes, perhaps with lifts. The clothing that would have been worn by settlers or a new colony would have been loose fitting and not ornate, so if the theater company aimed for historical realism, the costume would have consisted of baggier breeches and thicker clothes. Granted, for a woman to have worn these clothes would have been exciting because the audience could clearly see the shape of her knees and legs. But we must

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[114] Howe, *The First English Actresses,* 83.

bear in mind that the jacket would be long, extending down to the knee, and that the chest would be fully covered. Such a costume is not more sexualized than a standard woman's dress of the time, which would have used corsets to create an amble bosom and tiny waist. Rather, the character is differently sexualized by her costume. Verbruggen, as Charlot, would have been an object of sexual excitement for some audience members whether dressed as a woman or a man; but being dressed as a man allows her character far more exciting possibilities and power than a woman enjoyed.

Another play of the same season, and therefore with similar costuming possibilities, is the anonymous *She Ventures and He Wins*, with Anne Bracegirdle playing the cross-dressing Charlot Frankford. It should be noted that the first name of "Charlot" is probably no coincidence in this play and the last. Many characters who cross-dress are named Charlot. The roots of the name trace back to the German *Karl,* also the root for Charles, which means "free man." It cannot have been a coincidence that so many of the cross-dressing women have Christian names that mean they are free as men. Possibly first premiered a few months before *Oroonoko* by the competing theater company at Lincoln's Inn Fields, the play proclaims itself written by a "young lady" who signs herself "Ariadne" on the preface. Gilli Bush-Bailey speculates that it may have been written by Elizabeth Barry because of the author's apparent familiarity with the theater and admiration for Aphra Behn.[115] Regardless of who actually wrote it, this play presents an unusual heroine in Charlot, who tests her suitor so many times

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115 Gilli Bush-Bailey. *Treading the Bawds: Actresses and Playwrights on the Late-Stuart Stage*. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2006), 120.

that he comes to the brink of suicide. In addition to the typical breeches role, this play also has an unusual occurrence of male cross-dressing. As with the few other plays, such as *The Virtuoso,* men dressing as women is used to humiliate a man who is acting inappropriately; in this case, Urania tricks the philandering Squire Wouldbe to disguise himself as a woman as punishment for his continued attempts to seduce her, even though they are both married. This low comic subplot has little impact on the higher plot of Charlot and Lovewell, but it does provide an interesting contrast to Charlot's cross-dressing, which she uses for nobler purposes but which still leads her a bit astray.

The cross-dressing of this play occurs only in the first act but is the motivating factor for the rest of the plot as it concerns Charlot and her suitor, Lovewell. Charlot, along with her cousin Juliana, cross-dress in order to find a husband for Charlot. Charlot fears marriage to someone who does not love her for the right reasons. She is both pretty and rich, so she worries that a beau and dandy will want her for one or the other, not her wit and intelligence. As she states,

> I'm not obliged to follow the World's dull Maxims, nor will I wait for the formal Address of some Ceremonious Coxcomb, with more Land than Brains, who would bargain for us as he would for his Horse…or else some gay young fluttering Thing, who calls himself a Beau, and wants my Fortune to maintain him in that Character… I'll have one who loves my Person as well as Gold, and please my self, not the World, in my choice.[116]

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[116]Anonymous, *She Ventures and He Wins, a comedy acted at the New Theatre in Little Lincoln's-Inn Fields by His Majesty's servants / Written by a young lady.* (London: Hen. Rhodes, J. Harris, and Sam. Brisoce, 1696). *Early English Books Online*. Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014. I.i (2).

This speech demonstrates a number of things about Charlot. First, she is clearly an independent thinker who does not worry about other people's opinions. This character trait is probably the result of not having oppressive parents but, instead, a liberal minded brother as her guardian, Charles. The similarity in their names as well as their temperaments suggests that they are, in many ways, the same person; two halves of one identity, a merging of masculine and feminine. Charles comments several times through the play that Charlot may do as she likes *because* she is rich and pretty and, according to Charles, intelligent enough to make her own decisions. In this way, she is similar to other witty and gay heroines, such as Hellena of *The Rover* and Sylvia of *The Recruiting Officer*. The difference, though, is that Charlot is not restricted in her choice of husband by a father or brother – Charles would support whatever marriage she chose. Charlot here is smart enough to know that she should not marry the first dashing cavalier or suitor to flatter her. She wants to get to know her husband more deeply than would be allowed by typical courtship. So she and Juliana dress as men in order to befriend Lovewell because male friendship, without the pressures of courtship and marriage, is the only way for a woman to truly know the character of her husband, as shown in *Oroonoko*.

All of Charlot's opening speeches emphasize choice. The choice of a husband is of the utmost importance to Charlot; because she is privileged enough to be able to make a choice, she plans on taking full advantage of that fact. Ultimately, she falls for Lovewell, a younger brother with only a small fortune who has a tendency to be rather

hard on himself. When Charlot and Juliana engage Lovewell in conversation, the ruse is similar to other such interactions: Charlot, as a man, claims to be related to a woman who has fallen hopelessly in love with Lovewell and asks him to meet her as soon as possible. Her rhetoric in this exchange is highly eloquent and borders on the sentimental. She tells him, while dressed as a man, "My future Happiness and all my Joy on Earth depends upon [your wellbeing], had I as many Lives as Argus's Eyes, I'd hazard 'em all for the preservation of yours." And when Lovewell is incredulous (because he does not believe himself worthy of such feelings), she tells him, "By Honour, Truth, and all that's Sacred, I'm serious."[117] Lovewell continues to be distrustful of them, and specifically, their rhetoric, saying, "for whatever Opinion you may have of your moving Rhetorick, you'll find it no easie matter to impose upon a Man, who has had more Experience on the Town than your Years will give you leave to know." Clearly, Charlot and Juliana do not know their audience well enough. Charlot tries to increase the pathos of her claims, declaring, "may all the Happiness I wish myself, prove endless Torments, if every Word I have said, be not sincerely true." But Juliana manages to convince Lovewell by asking, "Does our Habits or Addresses merit no better Opinion, that so sordid a Thought of us?" Essentially, Juliana points to her and Charlot's external markers of identity, clothes and speech. They look and speak like aristocratic young men, the most convincing rhetor to someone like Lovewell. Speeches imbued with pathos are not enough to convince

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[117] Ibid., I.iii (6).

Lovewell to believe the two young men; but when these speeches are given by respectable men, they are effective. And so Lovewell agrees to meet the love-struck woman with the intention of marrying her.

After Act I, the two women do not appear in breeches again; however, Charlot appears to lose some of that confidence she had when disguised as a man. She says to Juliana, when back in women's clothes, "Is it not better, thus, to chuse for One's self amongst a Multitude, than out of a few, whose Interest, more than Love, solicites me?"[118] Again, Charlot's ability to choose for herself is emphasized. But when once she meets Lovewell, as a woman, and he sees her face, she begins to fear that he only wants her for her beauty and money. She actually achieves the marriage with Lovewell by the end of Act II, an unusual plot progression for a play of this time. But it is only once they are married that Charlot decides to test his loyalty and love; arguably, she chooses to do so because she has already established a safety net by marrying him *and* because she has had some conversation with him while dressed as a man, thereby learning his true character: she knows, perhaps subconsciously, that she can safely test Lovewell. The text, though, does not provide a clear reason for Charlot test his commitment after their marriage is already achieved.

After Charlot and Lovewell are married, she puts her tests into motion by first making him believe that she is not actually rich, but rather a woman of ill-repute who needed a quick marriage to cover her bad behavior. When he is distraught, and hopes

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[118] Ibid., II.ii (12).

there has been some mistake, Charlot has her cousin Bellasira pretend to be the real Charlot Frankford, thereby confirming to Lovewell that he has married a "fake" Charlot. The real Charlot then sends a letter to Lovewell, supposedly from the Bellasira-Charlot proclaiming her love for him and offering marriage. At this point, Lovewell is distraught, but not because he believes that he is married to an imposter, but because he is so in love with her, which he mentions to Sir Roger, who relates such sentiment to Charlot. One would think this would be proof enough for Charlot, but she continues to push him. Charlot then arranges for Lovewell to be arrested for her supposed debts. Though the majority of these tricks and schemes are presented in a light hearted manner, the playwright here does subtly suggest a darker turn. At the point of Lovewell's arrest, Sir Roger says to Charlot, "'tis well if you do not repent it, for I left him in a desperate humour."[119] Such a statement, paired with Lovewell's dramatic melancholy throughout the play, suggest the real possibility that, if left to his own devices in jail to ponder his misplaced love, Lovewell could commit suicide, a grisly idea. Charlot quickly discounts such a possibility with "Good Heaven forbid!' and continues with her plot by having Bellasira go to Lovewell in prison to offer to run away with Lovewell without being married. At this point, Sir Charles really questions Charlot's motives, asking what she will do if Lovewell takes Bellasire up on such an offer. She explains, "why, I shall think him a Man: But if he can resist

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[119] Ibid., V.i (37).

Temptation, an Angel."[120] Clearly, Charlot has impossibly high expectations, wanting whomever she spends her life with to be "an angel." She is even willing to risk having her husband abandon her to achieve such a goal. Such extreme measures suggests a lack of control or reason in Charlot; the further removed she is from her masculine identity, the more irrational she seems.

Ultimately, all works out in the end. Lovewell resists Bellasira in favor of his bewitching wife, proving his worth to Charlot, who finally reveals her true identity, to everyone's relief. Charlot's retention of power over Lovewell is proven in the end, not so much by her statements, but by Lovewell's. He asks her "Why was I cull'd out to be your Property?" and "How can you distrust my love, who have given such evident Proofs of it."[121] At the end, the audience is left with the impression that Lovewell needs Charlot's approval and not the other way around; arguably, such an arrangement is only feasible because he is a younger brother and Charlot controls her own money going into the marriage. Typically, upon marriage, Lovewell would take control over her estate; but he concludes the play with "At last the Storm is over blown, / And on that happy Coast I'm thrown / Where all my Joys are laid in store, / Heaven cannot give, nor could I ask one more."[122] The use of the passive voice here tells the audience that Lovewell just happened to fall into Charlot's machinations (the storm) and,

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid., V.i (40).

[122] Ibid., V.i (44).

because she is happy, he can be too. He will not be asking for more than he already has. Again, the playwright leaves the audience with a subtle suggestion of darker implications for marriage but, at least on the surface, all of the main characters are happy with their marriages As Juliana notes at the beginning of the play in response to Charlot's breeches being so becoming on her, "a Woman once vested in Authority, tho' 'tis by no other than her own making, does not willingly part with it."[123] Though Charlot has given up her literal pants, she still retains control over her husband.

Bush-Bailey sees *She Ventures and He Wins* as a major turning point for women in the theater. She explains in her larger argument concerning the authorship of the play,

> *She Ventures and He Wins* can be seen not as a 'one-off' incursion into the world of the playhouse by a 'young lady' but an expression of a growing confidence and participation in the whole business of theatre by theatre women… The fusion of text and performance suggested by the creative engagement of an actress/playwright goes directly against a theatre history that continues to struggle with the implications of women as a central force in the public sphere of the playhouse.[124]

The "struggle" of theater history to acknowledge contributions of women that Bush-Bailey responds to is the same one that has limited our understanding of breeches roles. Through breeches roles and other plot devices, plays like *She Ventures and He Wins* actively and productively question gender boundaries and society's imposed restrictions on female voices.

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[123] Ibid., I.i (1).

[124] Bush-Bailey, *Treading the Bawds*, 122.

Authority and control are central themes in *She Ventures and He Wins*, which presents an unusual pairing of a rich unmarried woman with a poor younger brother. The woman has control of her property, and therefore herself, while the man has none. Lovewell is surprisingly comfortable with this situation; all he really wants is to be with Charlot, rather than control her or her money. Such is not the case with the jealous and controlling Don Gomez in Mary Pix's 1706 *Adventures in Madrid*. This play has much more explicit threats of violence for the character who cross-dresses and, in general, depicts the lack of power many women faced at the time. Set against the exotic backdrop of Madrid, this play foreshadows gothic tales with threats of murder and disfigurement, imprisonment behind tall garden walls, and incest and blackmail. The cruel Don Gomez, who has a penchant for violent fantasies, has blackmailed his half-niece Clarinda into acting as his wife (the actual act of incest was never committed) and has her locked up, with her friend Laura, keeping a jealous eye on both of them. The two women are only saved by their friend, Lisset, who disguises herself as a eunuch throughout the play.

In the opening scene, we learn that Don Gomez had Lisset arrested simply because he did not trust her and thought she was aiding Clarinda in getting out of the house; he plans to have her sent to the West Indies to serve time at a prison camp. Luckily, Laura was able to bribe the jailor into releasing Lisset, who then goes back to the house dressed as a eunuch to offer her services to Don Gomez. Lisset gains Gomez's trust with explicit and horrifying tales of serving in a seraglio in Tunisia, detailing the ways she kept the mistresses of the ruler in line. Lisset knows her

audience: Gomez loves hearing these stories and tries to think of ways to incorporate such strategies in Madrid. Lisset also knows that Gomez has all of the power in this situation and that she must gain his trust to get access to Clarinda and Laura, though she finds interacting with Gomez repugnant, both because of his love of cruelty, but also because he had her arrested and constantly talks about how he wishes to punish her with yet more violence.

In addition to Lisset's use of grisly tales of Tunisian harems, Lisset is able to trick Gomez for two other reasons: first, Gomez is partially blind, so he cannot see the details of Lisset's face; but, perhaps more importantly, Lisset is also quite skilled at word play. In response to Gomez's inquiries about her identity, Lisset responds, "What am I Sir – I am a Man and no Man, I bear the outward Figure of a Man, but in Reality am a Eunuch."[125] The word play is, of course, humorous; we all know that the "eunuch" is really Lisset. She acknowledges that her outward appearance is misleading, but Gomez continues to believe the rest of her story. For Gomez, and the plot of the play, outward appearance is all that matters; what is really beneath the breeches is of little consequence. Such a configuration echoes Horner's claims of impotence in *The Country Wife*, but in a much more grotesque way due to the necessary violence necessary to make a eunuch. Gomez is convinced and allows Lisset to supervise Clarinda and Laura.

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[125] Mary Pix. *The adventures in Madrid. A comedy, as its is acted at the Queens Theatre in the Hay-Market. By Her Majesty's Servants.* (London, [1709]). *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library. 14 May 2014. I.i (11).

Once Lisset gains Gomez's trust, she has free reign in orchestrating meetings between Clarinda and Laura and their English cavaliers, Gaylove and Bellmour. Further, Lisset is also able to keep an eye on her own beau, Gusman, who is distraught at Lisset's imprisonment and attempts to have himself imprisoned in order to be closer to her. Lisset's confidence grows after fooling Gomez and she declares, "I am resolved now I am got in Breeches, I'll make all the use I can of them; I dare venture any thing, my first Attempt succeeds so well."[126] Although cross-dressing is inherently risky, the alternative (of passively accepting Gomez's dictatorship) is guaranteed unhappiness and possible violence. Therefore, the breeches give Lisset the confidence she needs to take greater risks and "venture anything," which she does for the rest of the play.

The breeches certainly protect Lisset from violence, in very explicit, physical ways. If she had spent the entirety of the play dressed as a woman (but perhaps in another disguise) she almost certainly would not have the freedom to go and do as she wished; further, the chance of her being raped or caught are proven to be high in a scene with Gaylove and Laura. Lisset, as eunuch, contrives to bring Gaylove to Laura so they can pursue their relationship. But Gaylove is a typical cavalier, ready to bed anything that moves. When he complains of being whisked around town by his "little Ganemede," Laura comments "Nay, 'tis a Mad Rogue, that's the Truth on't, and had not Breeches secur'd her, I shou'd scarce have ventur'd her with you." Gaylove replies, "A Woman, Gad I mistrusted it, she was so pert and so pretty – woe had been

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[126] Ibid., I.i (15).

unto ye, if I had known it, when we were at Blind-mans Buff together just now."[127] Laura and Gaylove accept that it is the cavalier's prerogative to have any unaccompanied woman, whether she submits or not; such violence is not upsetting to anyone on stage (even Lisset comments that "your mighty Threateners seldom prove so terrible"). Regardless, it is the breeches that prevent any violence, not the man who is supposed to be rational and in love with another woman.

Just a few lines later, threats of violence to Lisset are again made explicit, this time by Don Gomez. When he learns that Lisset has escaped from prison, he says in front of her, "cou'd I but catch her, this Dagger shou'd Sacrifice her immediately; first I'de rip up her Face which she loves better than her Soul… Tear her Flesh with burning Pincers red hot, ay red hot, -- odso use Fire, Water, all the Plagues Mankind, or the Devil ever invented – you tremble Liscias."[128] This shocking description of Gomez's plans creates a vivid image in the audience's minds of the very visceral and physical torments Gomez plans for Lisset *as a woman*. It is only the pants she is wearing, and Gomez's poor vision, that protect Lisset from a very real and potent threat. Her physical response of shaking demonstrates her awareness of that danger. She is able to cover up her fear, though, by telling Gomez she is shaking with anger at Lisset, proving her quick thinking and audience awareness.

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[127] Ibid., III.v (57).

[128] Ibid., III.v (60).

In the final scene, when Gomez is brought before the Inquisitor and all is resolved to everyone's happiness (except Gomez's of course), Lisset reveals her true identity. Interestingly, she cannot do so until surrounded by men who will protect her. Gaylord, who earlier threatened to rape her, has to tell her, "I warrant thee no Danger, speak boldly" before she explains who she is. Gomez is surprisingly quiet after this revelation, being swept off stage quickly by the Inquisitor. Once all of the main characters are paired off, Laura reminds everyone to whom they owe their happiness: "What says Lisset? To her we are obliged for these Delights."[129] Lisset's response is rather telling of her final status at the end of the play: "Faith, Madam, I am in a high dispute with Gusman, I tell him I have gotten such a smack of Liberty, and such a Taste of wearing breeches, I shall never make a good Spanish Wife nor indure to be locked up." Clearly, the connection between freedom and male persona is distinctly felt by Lisset, who, without those pants, would have run enormous risk to both her happiness and her physical safety. Lisset has no intention of returning to Howe's "conventional female role" of domesticity. Gusman loves Lisset deeply and accepts her new penchant for liberty, saying "I am content to run the Risque of that and I think in Justice, I deserve you fair Maid." Gaylord is able to settle the matter to everyone's satisfaction, suggesting they all move to "Merry England, where there still lives Freedom, Pleasure and Smiling Joy."[130] The suggestion by the end of the play is that

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[129] Ibid., III.viii (69).

[130] Ibid.

England is the more civilized place and that English women are able to enjoy their liberty without male disguise. Everyone agrees to leave the uncivilized and cruel ways of Spain for the more liberal England.

The emphasis on the liberality and civilization of England, and the comparative degeneracy of other countries, is also present in Aphra Behn's *The Rover.* Like *Adventures in Madrid,* this play is also set abroad, this time in Naples, and features a set of English cavaliers on the hunt for female companionship of varying degrees. This play also presents a breeches role and explicit threats of violence to women, though in a different way than *Adventures in Madrid*. Originally performed in 1677 by the Duke's Company, the role of Hellena was created by Elizabeth Barry, one of the most popular actresses on the stage at the time, particularly in breeches. Because Behn had garnered a reputation for obscene plays by this point, *The Rover* did not have a very successful first run, but it was performed regularly in the repertory and at court.

Hellena is the quintessential roaring girl, full of wit and adventure. Throughout the play, she dons a variety of disguises, ultimately dressing herself as a page in order to follow and influence the man she has fallen in love with. Elizabeth Howe calls her "the most attractive heroine of the decade apart from Etherege's Harriet" and notes that Hellena, as one half of the traditional gay couple, provides "an important satiric means of conveying the female viewpoint in a relationship."[131] And Jacqueline

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131 Howe, *The First English Actresses,* 80, 175.

Pearson sees Hellena's cross dressing as an example of Behn's penchant to "allow male disguise to symbolize the strength and independence of women."[132] But little has been said about Hellena's disguises or breeches roles, specifically, and how they contribute to her lasting reputation as one of the most exciting heroines of the Restoration. It is worth analyzing Hellena's character, actions and choices to have a fuller understanding of her impact on literature.

Hellena faces a predicament similar to many heroines of these plays: her brother has decided that she should go to a convent and become a nun because she is the younger sister and the family cannot afford enough of a dowry to make her a good match. From the beginning of the play, it is apparent that Hellena is witty and curious and mischievous, prodding her more reserved sister Florinda to act on her own behalf rather than let her brother choose her husband. It is also apparent that Hellena's brother, the one man with any kind of power over her, does not take her seriously and does not listen to what she has to say. Hellena tries to convince Pedro that his choice of a husband for Florinda is unsuitable. After several of Hellena's speeches to Pedro, describing in vivid detail the horrors that await Florinda upon marriage, all Pedro says in response is, "Have you done yet?"[133] He dismisses her in this way several times, demonstrating that Hellena's most eloquent rhetoric will not be effective with her

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[132] Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse,* 157.

[133] Aphra Behn, *The Rover*, in *The Works of Aphra Behn,* Ed. Janet Todd. (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1996), I.i.106, 112.

brother; he perceives her as a silly young girl with no real knowledge of the world. Because Pedro will not act for his sisters' best interests, they decide to act for themselves.

The two sisters decide to go out in masquerade; Florinda to find the English cavalier Belvile, with whom she has fallen in love previously, and Hellena to find a man of her choosing the marry (thereby escaping the nunnery). Their first disguise is that of gypsies. The women secretly leave their house (Pedro having forbidden their participation in Carnival) in order to find their various love interests. The stage directions, and the text of the play, provide no other direction than, "Enter Florinda, Hellena and Valeria, drest like Gipsies."[134] Caspar Luyken's *Gallery of Late-Seventeenth-Century Costume* provides one plate that depicts a gypsy woman. [135] She wears her hair down, with a kerchief tied around her head. Her clothes are loosely draped lengths of fabric in no real construction. Her ankles and feet are bare, as is her upper bosom. Although not fashionable, this outfit is more revealing, or at least differently so, than the typical London women's wear of the day. Certainly, given that Hellena and the other ladies are dressing for Carnival, they would have been more stylized gypsies, with more glamorous clothing. But this disguise marks Hellena's first

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[134] Ibid., II.120.

[135] Caspar Luyken, *Gallery of Late-Seventeenth-Century Costume* (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc, 2003), plate 54.

foray into being what she is not. She also meets Willmore for the first time in this disguise and she seems to successfully convince him that she is, in fact, a gypsy.

Hellena uses her disguises to get to know Willmore, pretending to read his fortune in order to ask him some questions about his motives for participating in Carnival. Hellena uses this persona to overcome expected social formalities and establish a level of intimacy, much in the same way that other breeches characters use male disguise to befriend their men in a masculine form of friendship. The gypsy costume, however, is not as successful as a male one because Willmore still sees her as a sexual object, hoping to arrange an assignation with the little gypsy that will only last one night. When Willmore becomes too enthusiastic and demands to know where her lodgings are, Hellena is forced to ask, "Why must we be either guilty of Fornication or Murder if we converse with you Men – and is there no difference between leave to love me, and leave to lye with me?"[136] Hellena vocalizes the predicament of all unmarried women who wish to take control of their love lives – if they are forward with men and try to speak with them in order to get to know them, they are expected to be ready to go to bed, and if they do not, they are seen as tormenting prudes. In this system, because Hellena appears to be an unaccompanied, unmarried woman, she must have loose morals and Willmore never even thinks that she might be interested in marriage. She manages the scene so that Willmore is still interested and agrees to be faithful to only her and to meet her later.

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[136] Behn, *The Rover,* I.ii.181.

The next time Hellena encounters Willmore, the stage directions say that she and her companions are "in Antick different Dresses, from what they were in before."[137] By "Antick" Behn means that they are wearing old fashioned and outdated clothes. Because the women are going out in Carnival, they would probably appear to be dressing as historical figures. Certainly, the manager and actresses could do a variety of things with such a stage direction. What is most likely is that the women were wearing long, non-hooped skirts and stays, with linen shirts underneath. This ensemble would have been the style for the decades preceding both the 1670's, when the play was first staged, and preceding the Interregnum, when the play is set. While in this disguise, which also would have included a mask, or vizard, Hellena discovers that Willmore has been unfaithful to her by seeing the courtesan, Angelica, who is in love with Willmore. By this point, Hellena has revealed to her sister (and the audience, of course) that she has genuinely fallen in love with Willmore and is not just using him to save her from the nunnery. Willmore's inconstancy is therefore doubly hurtful because he broke his promise of staying faithful (Hellena's attempt at taking power over Willmore) and because her potential marriage to him is threatened and her incarceration in a nunnery more likely. But, being the good roaring girl that she is, Hellena forgives him and continues their relationship. It is in this scene, though, that Hellena first suggests marriage to Willmore, asking him, "wou'd you fall to, before a

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[137] Ibid., III.i.1.

Priest says Grace?"[138] Though Willmore jokes that marriage is old fashioned, he does not completely reject the idea either. He seems even more intrigued by Hellena and her offer when she takes her vizard off briefly to show him her face. As a result, she manages to illicit another promise from Willmore to not see any other women, particularly Angellica Bianca. He, of course, quickly breaks this promise, leading Hellena no other choice but to disguise herself as a man.

In Act IV, Hellena enters "drest in Man's Cloths" to Willmore and Angelica, who are discussing their relationship. Hellena claims to be the male relative of Hellena who has come to beg Angellica to relinquish her claims on Willmore. Both Willmore and Angelica are initially convinced by Hellena's disguise. Hellena reveals to the audience through several asides who she really is. Not until Hellena looks Willmore directly in the face for some moments does he realize who she is; Angelica never does.

Hellena's male costume at the time of the play's 1677 premier would have probably consisted of some sort of jacket, possibly the jackanapes coat, a very short, less fitted version of a doublet, loose and beribboned breeches, perhaps even the voluminous petticoat breeches, a linen shirt, thick boot-hose and tall boots.[139] Hellena's motives for cross-dressing at this point in the play are complicated. Her first reason for the disguise is to meet Angellica and convince her to relinquish her claims

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[138] Ibid., III.i.146.

[139] Iris Brooke, *Dress and Undress: The Restoration and Eighteenth Century* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1958), 4.

on Willmore. But when she meets Angellica and discovers that Willmore is with her, she decides to use her disguise for another purpose: "Well, something I'l do to vex him for this."[140] Hellena's goals, then, are two-fold: she wants to persuade Angellica to let Willmore go and she wants to tease Willmore as part of their gay couple courtship. Hellena's speeches in this scene, therefore, are full of double meaning. On the surface, Hellena's statements are sentimental and eloquent; she claims to be a young male relation of a woman who has fallen desperately in love with Willmore and who had been promised marriage by him. Hellena claims that this unnamed woman "strangely… loves him, at first sight she lov'd him, / But did Adore him when she heard him speak; / For he, she said, had Charms in every word, / That faild not to surprize, to Wound and Conquer."[141] Hellena emphasizes the importance of speech and the power of words, reflecting what she is trying to do herself. Angellica believes Hellena completely, realizing that Willmore has been untrue to her. Willmore, the real target of these speeches, goes through a series of misunderstandings. First he thinks Hellena is speaking of his "little gypsie," as he refers to Hellena. The fact that she is so in love with him is quite pleasurable to him and he considers going to her. But as Hellena describes this woman more, and refuses to say her name, he begins to think that the mystery woman must be some new love conquest and gets very excited at the prospect of a relationship with a third woman. Such a belief makes him very eager to

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[140] Behn, *The Rover*. IV.ii.285.

[141] Ibid., IV.ii.314-317.

leave both Angellica and the (apparent) young man to find this other woman. During this section of the scene, Willmore has no idea that the young man is actually Hellena. Both Angellica and Willmore are oblivious to who is speaking to them. The audience, of course, is in on the joke, heightening the comic effect of seeing the folly of the characters on stage. Such a situation creates an alliance between the audience and Hellena; they are both smarter than the foolish Angellica and the libertine Willmore.

But Willmore, as the hero, catches on eventually. When finally Hellena looks him directly in the eye, Willmore realizes his mistake, saying, "Hah! Do not I know that face - / By Heaven my little Gipsie, what a dull Dog was I, / Had I but lookt that way I'd known her. / Are all my hopes of a new Woman banisht?"[142] Because Hellena has so successfully vexed him, as was her plan, Willmore threatens to turn the tables on her by revealing her identity to Angellica. She begins to regret her decision to go in disguise but Willmore is good natured enough to play along. In this scene, Angellica realizes that Willmore will never be constant to her, which is something she cannot abidenbecause she has fallen irrationally in love with him. Such a situation results later in the play with her threatening to shoot him with a pistol. Hellena makes the same revelation about Willmore's character when she sees how excited he is about the possibility of a third woman. But Hellena's approach to love and marriage has always been more pragmatic and, it would seem, she went into the courting of Willmore with her eyes wide open. This revelation is not as shocking to her as it is to Angellica, so

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[142] Ibid., IV.ii.401-405.

she is able to take precautions to protect herself. It is only through the use of this disguise, then, that Hellena can both gain a better understanding of Willmore and to express to him how she really feels about him. All three members of this particular love triangle leave the stage with a better understanding of each other.

Hellena's male disguise, and the freedom of travel and movement it allows, serves as a direct foil to Florinda's predicament of being an unaccompanied female in the streets of Naples at Carnival. By the fourth act of the play, their brother Don Pedro has realized they are missing and goes hunting for them. Hellena and Florinda, then, become his quarry. Hellena is able to come and go as she pleases with little risk to herself because of her male disguise. But Florinda finds herself trapped and threatened with rape, and not for the first time in the play. True violence is avoided once Belvile and Willmore arrive, providing male protection, but the threats to Florinda's safety are palpable throughout the play. With Hellena's freedom to roam so blatant, one has to wonder if Florinda could have protected herself by donning pants too.

Hellena wears pants for the remainder of the play despite Willmore's discovery of her identity in Act IV; Hellena is even married in pants. When they meet again, Hellena makes one last effort to convince Willmore to marry her, but this time she levels with him, revealing her true opinion of relationships. He once again rejects marriage in favor of an unsanctioned, sexual relationship, to which she wonders, "what shall I get? A cradle full of noise and mischief, with a pack of repentance at my

back?"[143] Hellena vocalizes the predicament faced by woman who must decide whether or not to have a love affair. Although she may not be morally opposed to such a relationship, the ultimate result would be an unwanted pregnancy and abandonment by Willmore. Without reliable birth control, Hellena, as a respectable young woman, cannot enter into the type of relationship Willmore wants without the safety of marriage. Hellena's speech is unique to the female perspective, but she only has the opportunity for such a speech when dressed as a man. It is at this point that Willmore consents to marriage and they finally tell each other their names. Willmore calls himself Robert the Constant while Hellena styles herself Hellena the Inconstant. By the end of the play, the audience is left with the impression that they will continue their relationship as the gay couple and not fall into the expected drudgery of marriage. Hellena stays strong and powerful to the end (still in men's clothes). When Willmore asks her if she is nervous to be married, she responds, "No more than you have in an Engagement or a Tempest."[144] With this statement, Hellena reminds Willmore and the audience of her equality, courage and spirit, proving herself the opposite of Howe's expectations for a quiet return to domestic subservience.

Hellena's wit and claims of equality are echoed and reinforced by Silvia of *The Recruiting Officer* by George Farquhar. Premiered by the United Company at Drury Lane Theatre on April 8th, 1706, this play was enormously successful, running eight

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[143] Ibid., V.i.430-431.

[144] Ibid., V.i.541.

times in April alone with several more performances throughout the season.[145] The role of Silvia was created by Anne Oldfield, one of the most popular actresses of her day. Silvia dresses as a soldier in order to follow Plume, the man she loves who is also a captain in the army. Unlike many of these roles, Silvia is not prevented from marrying Plume by a father or other meddling male relative; her father states that "she's at her own Disposal, she has fifteen hundred Pound in her Pocket."[146] Rather, it is Plume's wish to be married *after* they have gone to bed together that stops Silvia from continuing their relationship. Plume's description of Silvia to his friend Worthy goes through an unusual evolution. Plume and Worthy are discussing seduction and the joys of sleeping with women when Plume says, "Tis true, Silvia and I had once agreed to go to Bed together, cou'd we have adjusted the Preliminaries, but she would have the Wedding before Consummation, and I was for Consummation before the Wedding; we cou'd not agree. She was a pert obstinate Fool, and wou'd lose her Maiden-head her own way, so she may keep it for Plume."[147] The beginning of this speech makes the audience think that Silvia (who has not been on stage yet) must be a prostitute, or at least a woman of loose reputation, if she and Plume were negotiating the terms of sleeping together. But as Plume explains that her hesitation had to do with

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145 *The London Stage: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces, Together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment*. Parts 2, Vol. 2. Ed. William Van Lennep. Carbondale: Southerne Illinois UP, 1965. 122 – 128.

146 Farquhar, George. *The recruiting officer. A comedy. As it is acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane, by Her Majesty's servants. Written by Mr. Farquhar.* London, [1706]. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library. 14 May 2014. II.i (12).

147 Ibid., I.i (7).

marriage, the audience's image of her changes: it goes from a prostitute to a husband-hunter. By the end of this speech, Silvia seems to be a woman only interested in the business end of marriage, and Plume even calls her a fool. Plume, too, seems completely unromantic and only interested in going to bed with her.

Plume's explanation, a few lines later, of why he wanted to sleep with Silvia before marrying her is unusual, and even foreshadows Silvia's decision to cross-dress. "I am resolv'd never to bind my self to a Woman for my whole Life, 'till I know whether I shall like her Company for half an Hour. Suppose I marry'd a Woman that wanted a Leg – such a thing might be, unless I examin'd the Goods before hand – if People wou'd but try one another's Constitutions before they engag'd, it would prevent all these Elopements, Divorces, and the Devil know what."[148] Two things are happening in this speech. First, Plume expresses the hesitations and concerns that many of the breeches characters feel throughout these plays – the fear of marrying someone they don't really know, either physically or emotionally. Plume, in the power position allowed him by his gender, can easily refuse to enter into marriage before getting to know the woman – female characters do not typically have that option. But Plume makes it evident that these hesitations are not just one sided. Second, Plume foreshadows the issue of skirts versus breeches, though jokingly. Plume cannot be sure that a woman has both of her legs because of her voluminous skirts. But when Silvia cross-dresses, both of her legs will be distinctly visible (even if Plume does not realize

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[148] Ibid., I.i (7).

they are hers). In this speech, Plume sets up the circumstances that would allow him to enter into marriage – he must know Silvia's character better and he must be assured that she has both legs (or has all her parts). Only through Silvia's cross-dressing can these circumstances be brought about.

Finally in this scene, Silvia's reputation is reinforced and her character illustrated. When Worthy suggests that Silvia might have a poor reputation, Plume gets very defensive, exclaiming "if your Town has a dishonourable Thought of Silvia, it deserves to be burnt to the Ground. – I love Silvia, I admire her frank, generous disposition – There's something in that Girl more than Woman, her Sex is but a Foil to her…. Were I once a general, I wou'd marry her."[149] In just a few lines of dialogue, Silvia goes from a prostitute to the perfect woman for Plume, and one who is better and more honorable than all the other women. Though Plume tries to present himself as a playboy, in reality, he respects and loves Silvia and it is his own lack of accomplishment that keeps him from marrying her. The audience sees proof of Silvia's character just a few lines later, when Plume learns that Silvia has sent money to the mother of Plume's illegitimate child, as well as offered to be the child's godmother. Plume sees this act as "noble, generous, manly Friendship" which makes him admire and love Silvia even more.[150] Plume respects Silvia for her "manly" behavior and cherishes their masculine friendship.

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[149] Ibid., I.i (7).

[150] Ibid., I.i (8).

Silvia's character is indeed proven to be "more than Woman," in the following scene which features Silvia and her cousin Melinda. Melinda, who clearly does not care for Silvia, comments that Silvia has "the Constitution of an Horse."[151] Silvia brushes off the insult and agrees, saying, "So far as to be troubl'd with neither Spleen, Collick, nor Vapours; I need no Salts for my Stomach, no Harts-horn for my Head, nor Wash for my Complexion. I can Gallop all the Morning after the Hunting-horn, and all the Evening after a Fiddle. In short, I can do everything with my Father, but drink and Shoot flying; and I am sure I can do every thing my Mother cou'd, were I put to the Trial."[152] Silvia combines the best qualities of men and women. She can do everything that a woman is expected to, but she can also participate in sports and entertainment, just like the men, without being afflicted by "typical" women's ailments. Silvia goes on to discuss all of the "manly" qualities she finds so attractive and admirable, such as "Bravery, Knowledge, Policy [and] Justice" and explains that she finds women generally to be simple and tiresome.[153] When Melinda jokes that "had'st thou been a Man, thou had'st been the greatest Rake in Christendom," Silvia responds, relatively seriously, "I shou'd have endeavour'd to know the World, which a Man can never do thoroughly without half a hundred Friendships, and as many Amours."[154] For Silvia,

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151 Ibid., I.ii (9).

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid., I.ii (10).

154 Ibid.

breeches are the key to fulfilling her desire to know the world more; without them, she is doomed to a domestic and stagnant life in Shrewsbury.

Both Plume and Silvia emphasize the importance of friendship in these opening scenes. Plume is pleased by Silvia's show of friendship by giving money and support to his child and Silvia notes that friendship is the real way to know the world and expand one's horizons. It is apparent from these assertions that Plume and Silvia share the same values and temperament.

Silvia takes her masculine personality to another level later in the scene, suggesting a duel with Melinda. When Silvia criticizes Melinda for how she has treated Worthy, she says, "if you don't use him better, I shall expect satisfaction," to which Melinda replies, "Satisfaction! You begin to fancy yourself in Breeches in good earnest."[155] Silvia's defense of Worthy, to the extent of proposing a physical fight, is only something one man would do for one of his male friends. Melinda sees this statement as part of Silvia's horse-like constitution and ignores it. But it does mark the point where Silvia begins to plan her scheme of cross-dressing as a soldier.

Silvia appears on stage in Act III, scene ii dressed as a man. She enters at a particularly telling and humorous point. Plume is goading the ridiculous Captain Brazen to fight over Melinda. They are comparing the lengths of their swords to determine who shall take Melinda when Silvia interrupts and distracts them. Silvia, as Jack Wilful, tells them she is a rake with no home who plans to enlist with whichever

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[155] Ibid.

officer can give her the best offer. When they fight over her, she exclaims, "I am a Free-born English Man, and will be a Slave my own way." Though this statement is said in a highly comic scene, it actually illustrates the oxymoronic conundrum facing Silvia and other rich, single women. Essentially, once they marry, all of their legal rights and power are absorbed by their husbands; for all intents and purposes, they are slaves to their husbands. So it behooves the women to make smart, informed choices before entering into marriage so they can be slaves their own way. Enlistment, marriage and slavery are all synonymous for women. After some bantering, mock-fighting and rather blatant sexual innuendo, Plume's assistant Kite carries off Silvia to be pressed into Plume's regiment. Although it is what Silvia wanted, this last act of actually restraining Silvia and carrying her off the stage reveals anxiety about the British army's reputation for pressing unwilling participants into service. Regardless of gender, officers in the army had the ability to essentially kidnap individuals.

By the next scene, Silvia is proud of herself for the way she looks and acts like a man. "Had I but a Commission in my Pocket I fancy my Breeches wou'd become me as well as any ranting Fellow of 'em all; for I take a bold Step, a rakish Toss, a smart Cock, and an impudent Air to be the principle Ingredients in the Composition of a Captain."[156] Not only do the breeches give Silvia the freedom to pursue the man she wants and knowledge of the world, they are also a vehicle for satirizing the officers who believe themselves fancier and more important than they really are. And Silvia

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[156] Ibid., IV.i (39).

plays the role to perfection, convincing the men and women around her that she is a member of the British army. The foolish Bullock accepts her disguise, saying "I presume that your Worship is a Captain, by your Cloaths and your Courage."[157] Clearly, clothes and behavior make the man.

At this time in British history, military clothes would have been the same as every day clothes that could be afforded by the individual, but dyed to match regimental colors. Silvia describes her outfit as the marker of her identity as a soldier, saying "I'm call'd Captain, Sir, by all the Coffeemen, Drawers, Whores, and Groom-Porters in London; for I wear a Red Coat, a Sword, a Hat bien trousse, a Martial Twist in my Cravat, a fierce Knot in my Perriwig, a Cane upon my Button."[158] There were several historical instances in which women supposedly joined the British army and served for many years without being detected or discovered. Kit Cavanagh and Hannah Snell are two such women; their portraits provide some clues as to how Anne Oldfield may have dressed at this point in the play. Cavanaugh, astride a white horse, wears a red, knee-length jacket with sashes across her chest and a rifle at her side. She also has thick boots and a tri-point hat. [159] The portrait of Snell, which is only from the chest up, also has a red jacket with gold buttons and a ruffled white shirt and black tie.

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[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid., V.i (56).

[159] "Kit Cavanagh – also known as Christian Davies (1717)," on "Women and Gender Studies: War," *Help for Researchers: British Library*. http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/refworks/women/womenwar/ womenwar.html. May 14, 2014.

She too wears a hat. [160] In neither portrait is it apparent that the sitters are female. They easily pass for male soldiers. Silvia's description matches these two illustrations. Most likely, Oldfield would also have worn tall, horse riding boots. Between the jacket and the boots, much of her figure would have been covered and concealed. Certainly, more of the actress's shape would be shown than when she was wearing skirts; but the standard military uniform would have covered and concealed much, making claims about the titillating aspect of these clothes less compelling. Kit Cavanaugh describes in her autobiography how she disguised herself: "I cut off my Hair, and dressed me in a Sute of my Husband's, having had the precaution to quilt the Waistcoat, to preserve my Breasts from hurt, which were not large enough to betray my Sex, and putting on the Wig and Hat I had prepared, I went out and bought me a silver hilted sword and some Holland shirts."[161]

Silvia's goal of getting to know Plume and better understand his behaviors is further accomplished in Act IV. Silvia and Plume are able to speak together, alone and without the repressive supervision of other relatives, for quite some time. They discuss love and honor, two topics very important to Silvia. But Plume reveals that he is not the philanderer Silvia thought him to be. When Silvia asks him if he would want to lie with a "common woman" he replies, "No faith, I'm not the Rake that the World

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160 "The Hannah Snell Homepage." *Hannahsnell.com*. 1997-2009. http://www.hannahsnell.com. May 14, 2014.

161 qtd. in Jane Robinson, *Women Out of Bounds.* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2003).99.

imagines; I have got an Air of Freedom, which People mistake for Lewdness in me, as they mistake Formality in others for Religion."[162] Plume has no reason to lie to the person he assumes to be Jack Willful here. Although not all has been explained, it starts to become apparent that, like Horner of *The Country Wife* and Melantha of *Marriage a la Mode*, Plume is using a misunderstood reputation for other means.

The townspeople of Shrewsbury believe Silvia's disguise to such a degree that they even accuse her of debauching a local girl, Rose. The Constable tells Justice Ballance (who also happens to be Silvia's father) "we took them in the very Act, *re infecta*, Sir."[163] Everyone on stage believes this statement to be true, even though the still-virginal Rose tells them, "he did me no hurt; he's the most harmless Man in the World, for all he talks so."[164] The audience, of course, would get a good laugh at this line, but Rose speaks the truth; despite the clothes, the actions and the speeches, Silvia is harmless as a man. It is everyone else's belief in her manhood that is dangerous.

The dangers of seeming become apparent by the penultimate scene, Silvia's trial for debauching Rose. She speaks with all the bravado of a Captain, insulting the justices of the bench. Justice Scruple deems him "a very impudent Fellow, and fit for a Soldier," while Scale says he is "a notorious Rogue, I say, and very fit for a Soldier." The Constable escalates the whole scene with, "A whore-master, I say, and therefore

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[162] Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer,* IV.i (41).

[163] Ibid., V.i (55).

[164] Ibid., V.i (56).

fit to go."[165] Obviously, none of these things is true, but if the judiciary members think so, they may as well be. Charges of rape are levied against Silvia and she is read the Articles of War by Plume, thereby making her legally bound to him in the army; all of this transpires in front of Justice Ballance, making him unwitting witness to his daughter's contractual attachment to Plume.

Ultimately, Justice Ballance figures out the trick and realizes that Plume, who remains ignorant until all is explained to him, is a respectable man worthy of Silvia. When Ballance offers Silvia in marriage to Plume, Plume does not take her from Ballance, but rather asks for her from herself:

> *Plume:* And are you Silvia, in good earnest?
> *Silvia:* Earnest! I have gone too far to make it a Jest, Sir.
> *Plume:* And do you give her to me in good earnest?
> *Silvia:* If you please to take her, Sir.
> *Plume:* Why then I have sav'd my Legs and Arms, and lost my Liberty… to your Love, Madam, I resign my Freedom, and to your Beauty my Ambition- greater in obeying at your Feet, than Commanding at the Head of an Army.[166]

Silvia's use of the third person here suggests that her male identity is acting as her guardian, rather than her father; the breeches (which she is still wearing) allow her to give herself, rather than be given, to the man of her choosing. And Plume's speech suggests that she will hold power over him in their relationship. Like Charlot in *She Ventures and He Wins*, this arrangement is more reasonable and palatable because of her wealth and his comparative lack of money. Regardless, their relationship is clearly

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[165] Ibid., V.iv (64).

[166] Ibid., V.v (69).

based on mutual respect and love, not simply on a mutually beneficial financial arrangement.

In the final lines, Silvia explains to Melinda, and the audience, why she chose to cross-dress, "Do you think it strange, Cousin, that a Woman shou'd change? But, I hope, you'll excuse a Change that has proceeded from Constancy; I alter'd my outside, because I was the same within, and only laid by the Woman to make sure of my Man, that's my History."[167] Silvia articulates the problem faced by many of these independent and intelligent female characters. To accomplish what is most important to them, when it conflicts with their fathers' or brothers' wishes, they must take control in the only way available to them: disguise through pants and male persona. In the end, Silvia marries the man she loves and manages to maintain a degree of power and autonomy, thereby remaining true to her character without hurting any of those she loves. By joining the army, ostensibly she risks active service. In reality, she risks being discovered accidentally and any physical violence which might result, though the play is not dark enough to hint at such a possibility. Silvia's risks are comparatively low, but she is remarkable in that she remains true to her passions, desires, and opinions throughout the play. Such an individual is unlikely to meekly return to the expected gender dynamics of marriage.

The theme of women cross-dressing and then flirting with and possibly even seducing women is one that appears in many of the plays of this time period. Women

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[167] Ibid., V.v (70).

seducing women in order to get to men is a central plot point to George Granville's *The She-Gallants.* This play, which probably premiered in December 1695 or January 1696 at Lincoln's Inn Fields by Betterton's Company, features not one, but two women who cross-dress; they do so for the two reasons most common to the unmarried virgins discussed in this chapter.[168] Angelica is in love with Bellamour, who is engaged to Lucinda; Angelica decides to cross-dress in order to "seduce" Lucinda's aunt, Lady Dorimen, and to use that relationship to end the match between Lucinda and Bellamour. In addition to all of this, Angelica also uses her male disguises to befriend and ultimately take revenge upon Sir Toby, her father who abandoned her as a child and who has led a notorious life as a pimp and low-life, an unusual plot for breeches characters. Meanwhile, Constantia cross-dresses as her brother in order to befriend and get to know Frederick, the man she loves. Both Angelica and Constantia cross-dress for different reasons but similar themes of male friendship and seduction of unwitting women emerge from both circumstances. But because the play features two women who cross-dress, it is important to look at them separately in order to analyze and understand their motives for cross-dressing and their general attitude to men and marriage; the penchant of scholars in the past has been to treat these characters as one (even conflating them into just one role as Jacqueline

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168 *London Stage,* 457.

Pearson does) but each woman (and actress who played her) is unique and should be taken separately.[169]

The play opens on Angelica and Constantia walking on the Mall already dressed as men. As this play was premiered in the 1695 – 1696 season, the costumes most likely would have been similar to those worn in *Oroonoko* or *She Ventures and He Wins.* It is worth noting that very few plays start with just the female characters; Angelica and Constantia hold the stage, alone, for almost the entire first scene, giving them a chance to complete the exposition of why they are dressed as they are. This unusual staging gives the actresses the opportunity to win the audience over and build sympathy between them. Angelica immediately marks herself as an educated and free-thinking young lady. She quotes both a contemporary play, Southerne's *The Wive's Excuse*, and Roman oratory. This familiarity with literature, particularly Latin literature, would have been highly unusual for women at the time. She does quote the oratory in translation, but any familiarity with it shows that she is more masculine than the other women in the play. Later in the play, she also discusses the art of writing, suggesting that she writes, despite it being "not a Talent for a Woman," as Lucinda declares.[170]

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[169] Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse,* 103.

[170] George Granville *The She-Gallants, A Comedy.* (London: J. Conyers, 1700.) *Early English Books Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014. III.i (38).

After discussing the difficulties of falling in love with men, the women discuss the possibility of living without them. Angelica claims that the men would have the harder time, suggesting that she really could do without a man in her life. Angelica tells Constantia, "Of all the Conquests I have made in this habit, that which pleases me best, is my Adventure with Lady Dorimen."[171] In this context, "conquests" simply refers to the women who have flirted with Angelica while she is dressed as a man. But her statement certainly has sexual innuendo, perhaps suggesting some sort of physical interaction because of the word "conquest." Further, by her own admission, Angelica enjoys playing the rake, taking pleasure from the great number of conquests she has made. Angelica reveals the rest of her plan to Constantia, saying "if I can but get into her Ladyship's Family, and have some power over her Inclinations, I hope to find an Expedient to break off a Match [between Bellamour and Lucinda], which, if concluded, undoes me."[172] There are two things worth noting here. First, Angelica's plan hinges on her getting into Lady Dorimen's family, which would imply that Angelica must marry Lady Dorimen. Second, Angelica has not actually fully planned out this scheme; instead, she will have to rely on her wits after marrying Lady Dorimen to figure out what to do next. If she does not bring the plot to a clean conclusion, she will be in a difficult position with Lady Dorimen and she will lose Bellamour, to her great unhappiness. Based on these statements, it seems Angelica

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[171] Ibid., I.i (2).

[172] Ibid.

enjoys playing the rake, but does so at great personal risk and potential embarrassment and unhappiness.

Constantia is much more realistic and cynical than Angelica. When Angelica suggests that men would have a harder time than women without each other, Constantia points out that men "have a thousand other Diversions: nor wou'd Love it self be altogether excluded; for in this Wicked Age, a young, spruce, handsom Fellow, is become a Rival for a fine Woman. And I'le pawn my Breeches, and all that belongs to 'em, if in this Dress we are not as much courted by the Men themselves, as when we appear'd to be Women."[173] Constantia realizes that men have much more access to the world and its entertainments than women do. Further, she knows, unlike Angelica, that they live in a liberal age when men can sleep with whomever they wish with little repercussions. Angelica remarks about this speech, "thy Breeches have made thee strangely extravagant," implying that Constantia's clothes have changed her character. This idea is further enforced by Constantia just a few lines later when she defines manhood: "to all outward appearances, as much a Man as the best. Any thing that's well Periwig'd and Powder'd, and Steenkirk'd, and Embroider'd, is a Man. Singing and Dancing, and Dress, is Breeding. Noise, Familiarity, and Impertinence, is Wit. Whistling to one's self – as thus – or taking Snuff gravely – as thus – passes for Thought, and serious Consideration: And all this put together, is a Man."[174] The two

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[173] Ibid.

[174] Ibid.,I.i(4).

women go on to mimic men, even swearing and admiring each other's legs. Constantia and Angelica mock the men of the age, but beyond that, they also illustrate their culture's gender mores. Clearly, at this time and in this play, gender and gender relations are in flux: anyone can be a man and a man can sleep with anyone.

Constantia's motives for cross-dressing are revealed in this same scene and it is evident that they are the result of her cynicism. After telling Angelica that her public hatred of love in general and Frederick specifically has all been feigned, she tells her, "I know what Dissemblers are Men, and am resolv'd to enquire thorowly into my Lover, before I discover my Inclinations. If I find Frederick loves me sincerely, and is a Man of Honour, I will then explain my self in his favour: But if I prove him unworthy, my Aversion, that is now but Pretense, shall be real, and he shall never so much as suspect that I have had the least good thought of him."[175] Constantia explains here a problem facing many women of this time period who are not content to marry whomever their fathers or brothers find for them. She knows a man that she likes, but she is not sure if she can trust him. Further, as an unmarried woman of quality, she cannot freely express how she feels because of the risk of losing her reputation. The rules of reputation force her to adopt an unorthodox plan in order to secure the man she wants without risk to herself. Therefore, she passes for her Brother Courtall and has established a friendship with Frederick. Only through this friendship can she assure herself that Frederick is a decent gentleman worth marrying.

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[175] Ibid., I.i (3).

Of course, pretending to be her own brother cannot be as straight forward or simple, as Constantia might wish. As a result of this disguise, Frederick asks Constantia (whom he thinks to be Courtall) to marry one of his four sisters, which means Constantia must feign courtship to not one woman, as Angelica does to Lady Dorimen, but to four sisters. But she does not mind much, for, as she tells Angelica, I "am hugely diverted; for, you must know, their Brother has strictly instructed 'em to be wanting in no kind of encouragement: I never rise in a morning, but I find my Toilette cover'd in Presents, Rings, Bracelets, Perfumes, and a world of find things."[176] For all her joking and cynicism, Constantia's risk is not negligible. She explains, "if I fail in my Ends, I'll be bound to renounce my Petticoats for ever, and never to find any thing more substantial in Breeches than what you can give me."[177] This is perhaps the scene which, according to the stage prompter, "offending the Ears of some Ladies who set up for Chastity" caused the play to end its run early.[178] Despite their wit and good humor in this scene, and the liberality of their age, these two women risk their reputations if they get caught in male attire and if the men they love do not end up marrying them.

Angelica's disguise gives her the opportunity to learn the truth about Bellamour's feelings towards her in no uncertain terms. She has a conversation with

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[176] Ibid.

[177] Ibid., I.i (4).

[178] John Downes. *Roscius Anglicanus* Ed. Montague Summers. (New York: B. Blom, 1968), 45.

Bellamour alone in which he explains why he stopped loving Angelica and moved on to Lucinda. He tells her (believing her to be the male cousin of Angelica) that a two year absence made him stop loving her, but he admits he still thinks her beautiful and witty. He is very blunt in this description, but he also demonstrates care for her. When Angelica asks, "is this the best Answer she is to expect from you?" Bellamour responds, "It is. Yet, if you please, you may give it some kinder turn: I would not deal too roughly with one whom I had once lov'd, and whose Beauty and Virtues I still admire."[179] Bellamour is completely honest with Angelica when he believes her to be a man, demonstrating the privilege of male friendship and the dishonesty inherent in romantic courtship. Bellamour even says that he would not tell Angelica the harsh truth if it were up to him and would rather she be let down gently, suggesting Angelica lie about the reasons.

Angelica, set on revenge rather than renewed love after hearing this, manages to destroy the relationship between Bellamour and Lucinda by telling her, as well as Sir Toby, that Bellamour made a secret contraction with Angelica, which he broke. Lucinda is offended that Bellamour could treat love so casually, and ends their relationship. Sir Toby is offended that Bellamour dishonored his family, despite all of Sir Toby's own poor behavior. Lady Dorimen also dismisses Bellamour from her company. It is only as a man that Angelica can command the attention of the necessary characters, namely Lucinda, Sir Toby and Lady Dorimen. If she had made

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[179] Granville, *The She-Gallants,* II.i (21).

the same accusations while dressed as a woman, she would have been dismissed as a jealous or irrational country girl. But as the well-steenkirk'd gallant, Angelica has more credibility and is successful in this first half of her scheme. But, also as a result of her male identity, Bellamour has no qualms about challenging Angelica to a duel, which, realistically, could injure or even kill her. Ever the rake, Angelica accepts him, planning to "conquer him; lay him groveling at my Feet, Panting, and not able to stir a Limb."[180]

After an incredibly bawdy scene in which Lady Dorimen practically throws herself at Angelica, and in which Angelica barely manages to avoid discovery, Angelica brings her schemes to a beneficial conclusion for herself and Bellamour. After receiving a challenge to duel and a threat to cut her throat, which Angelica sees as perfectly reasonable, Angelica meets Bellamour dressed as a woman, but wearing a mask. Dressed as herself, she irritates and annoys Bellamour, refusing to leave the space where he plans on having his duel. He tries to make her leave by preparing for the duel by undressing (if anyone is being sexualized in this scene, it is Bellamour). After what amounts to a verbal duel in which Angelica yet again reminds Bellamour of his unfair treatment of her, Bellamour finally repents, and announces that he is ready to even die for his behavior. Once she reveals her identity, Bellamour kneels before her, just as she predicted he would, and the two agree to forget the past and be married, a happy ending to what could have been a disaster.

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[180] Ibid., IV.i (47).

Angelica's plots with Sir Toby also succeed. When Angelica explains that, due to Sir Toby's abandonment of her, "I had no other way to do myself right, but by this manner of proceeding," he responds, "why this was such a hocus pocus, to make thy old Daddy at his years and experience, not to know a Man from a Woman. To Pose him in his Rudiments, in the Macsulin and Feminin Gender. Adzooks I'll Double and Treble thy Portion for thy Wit."[181] The theme of gender confusion is here reinforced; but ultimately, Angelica's cross-dressing proves not only successful, but also profitable. Because she did what she had to in order to accomplish her own goals, her absentee-father increases her inheritance to right his past wrongs. Not only does Angelica get the man she wants, she also gets the fortune she needs to make the match even better.

Angelica closes the play, getting the privilege of not only opening the play, but also speaking the final lines (and Anne Bracegirlde, who played Angelica, speaks the epilogue). Her final lines comment upon the misleading nature of appearances and the risks in love. Her final two couplets compare love to captivity, claiming, "Whom Irons Clog, we may 'ore take with Ease / None can be free, unless the Victors please."[182] In this instance, Angelica is the victor, having reminded Bellamour of his first love for and duty to her, and having turned her father into the respectable parent she needs.

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[181] Ibid., V.i (70).

[182] Ibid., V.i (75).

Constantia also is a victor in her own intrigues, ultimately marrying Frederick after determining he is a respectable, worthy man. She, like Angelica, has several humorous scenes in which she is meant to be courting the four sisters of Frederick. They, of course, become very jealous of each other and keep trying to outdo each other. Constantia's part of the play is not as prominent as Angelica's, but her final schemes do reveal more of her character and wit, as well as the predicament women face. After having spent more time with Frederick, she determines that he is the man she wishes to marry. But while courting his sisters, Constantia plays a trick upon them, which leaves them all feeling jilted and Frederick angry at the person he believes to be Courtall. To bring the plot to a fortuitous end, Constantia brings her brother in on the trick and convinces him to marry one of the sisters to placate Frederick. But first they bring Frederick to the breaking point.

Constantia and Courtall, both dressed as men, meet with Frederick, who is confounded by these apparent twins and cannot tell which of them was courting his sisters. When Frederick asks them, "what are you? Men or Devils?" Constantia has to respond, "Not Men, Sir, I assure you."[183] Though this comment is meant to be comic, it does suggest an interesting dichotomy. One must either be a man or a devil, making all women devils. Frederick does not even consider the possibility that one of them might be female. As a result of this arrogance, Frederick draws his sword, and both Courtall and Constantia must do the same, creating a stand-off between the three. As

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[183] Ibid., V.i (61).

with Bellamour's threats of cutting Angelica's throat, the physical danger to Constantia is very real here.

Constantia demonstrates real courage in this scene, courage typically befitting a man in these plays. While Frederick is distracted, Courtall tells Constatia to escape and leave him to duel with Frederick. She responds, "What, leave my Friend in danger? Fie, I'll bring off all yet."[184] Who the "friend" here is ambivalent; Constantia does not make it clear if she wishes to make sure her brother is safe or if she wants to protect Frederick, with whom she has established a male friendship, from the sword of her brother. Either way, it is friendship and not romantic love that pushes her to bravery and her declaration of who she really is. When Frederick is about to charge them with his sword, Constantia stops the action by laughingly asking, "what! Draw upon a Woman – upon your Mistress too – for shame – you a Man… Love they say is blind, have Lovers too no Eyes? Is it possible, that you cannot discover Constantia thru any Disguise?"[185] With this, Constantia defuses the situation for the time being, showing her control and power.

By the end of the play, Frederick better understands the trick that has been played upon him and both he and his four sisters are furious. In the final moments of the play, the stage directions read, "Enter Courtall Fighting and retreating before Frederick, Constantia, her Perruque off, and her Hair about her Ears, pull'd in by

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[184] Ibid.

[185] Ibid., V.i (62).

Diana, Melissa, Dorinda, Miranda."[186] The image is at once funny and threatening, particularly given Constantia's ambiguous gender here. She is still dressed as a man, but her hair gives her away as female, another, very visual example of Munns' "double dressing." Frederick is angry that he has been "Fool'd, Cheated, Abus'd" and the sisters plan to "Pull [Constantia] to pieces – to Pieces, with this Succubus – this she-Devil."[187] But Frederick and his sisters agree to an exchange of prisoners: Courtall is given to the ladies to do what they will with him (and he does not seem to mind too much) and Constantia is given to Frederick, who promises to "so sweetly revenge" himself.[188] Although these final suggestions are latent with violent and sexual innuendo, Constantia still ends the play exactly as she wanted. She admits from the beginning that she and Frederick have an adversarial relationship and she takes pleasure from it. This arrangement between them is perfectly in line with what she wants in a marriage, particularly given their now-established friendship and Constantia's assurances from their friendship that Frederick is a worthy man who will treat her as she wishes to be treated. Though both Angelica and Constantia enter into traditional marriages at the end of the play, they maintain their power and get exactly what they set out to do, educating the men of their choosing along the way. Jacqueline Pearson even sees this play as a "radical criticism of sexual stereotyping," which

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[186] Ibid., V.i (74).

[187] Ibid.

[188] Ibid., V.i (75).

allows a productive questioning of gender.[189] Angelica and Constantia do no fit the typical female stereotype as, perhaps, Lucinda does. Instead, they attain the marriages of their choice through male disguise and machinations.

The She-Gallants ends with a conversation that foreshadows the problems of marriage. Lucinda and Lady Dorimen note that a woman's revenge can be truly awful, but also that women who are treated kindly by their husbands have no need of revenge. Lucinda claims, "If you examine strictly into the miscarriages of most Wives, you will find 'em grounded upon the neglect of their Husbands, and the Ill Usage they receive, more than their own Inclinations to Evil."[190] Such neglect and ill-usage often causes these wives to don pants to take that revenge and, as Angelica notes, "When we are injur'd, we are no longer our selves," suggesting that new identities emerge from both poor treatment and cross-dressing. These scorned and neglected wives and lovers will be examined in the next chapter.

After reviewing these seven plays thoroughly and in-depth, it becomes glaringly apparent that these breeches roles are far more complex than has generally been allowed in previous scholarship. What emerges from this analysis is the lack of any trend or definable theme. Some of these characters share character traits or motivations for cross-dressing. Some, like Florimell or Hellena, are wild rogues just like the men they court. They may be concerned about the characters of the men they

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[189] Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse,* 110.

[190] Granville, *The She-Gallants,* V.i (71).

will be joined to for life, like Constantia of *The She-Gallants* or Charlot of *She Ventures and He Wins*. Or they may be taking very active control of their destinies or the destinies of their friends, like Charlot of *Oroonoko*, Lisset of *Adventures in Madrid*, and Angelica of *The She-Gallants.* These characters use breeches to bond with their lovers through male friendship or to foster a healthy competition which ultimately illustrates the value of these women to their men. Regardless of their motives for cross-dressing, what becomes apparent is the predicament that many of these women find themselves in. They feel and love and think for themselves, but are constrained by familial and societal expectations and dictates. The only way to achieve what they want is to adopt any available means necessary – male disguise and identity – and operate outside of those expectations and dictates. By employing sophistic tactics in their speeches and actions, these women empower themselves and control their futures.

The trend in previous scholarship has been to lump all of these characters into one group of "breeches roles." These characters have not been seen as diverse or unique but merely as stock characters whose only purpose was to attract audience members through spectacle. But when examined more closely, and individually, these virgins in breeches prove to be doing much more interesting work in terms of questioning and satirizing gender roles and stereotypes. They enact their own desires by taking control of their own fates, thereby providing some sort of sense to the women (and men) in the audience of the possibilities.

Through cross-dressing, these women are able to accomplish what their society decided women should not. They accomplish acts of power and speech and control. They accomplish male friendship, without which they cannot truly know the men they are to marry. They, and the actresses depicting them, accomplish public status and recognition. In some cases, they accomplish self-preservation from rape and violence; they accomplish ownership of land and means of production; they accomplish military feats and supposed bedroom conquests. They accomplish all that men are expected to and then some, for they also accomplish (presumably) happiness and felicity after the play ends. These characters are the locus of possibilities for their fictional selves, the women who performed them, and the women who witnessed and read them. As such, we cannot lump them all together into one broad category, but as literary scholars and teachers, must treat and analyze them individually and seriously.

Chapter 3

FOR UNIVERSAL EMPIRE:

LOVERS AND WIVES IN BREECHES

Toby: Yes! Hang't I will marry – I fancy there's a great deal of pleasure in't. First, to command a Family, and sit at the upper end of the Table. Then to make my Wife serve instead of a *Vallet de Chambre*, and never pay her no Wages neither: Then to command her this way; that way, t'other way, and every way; for this thing, that thing, t'other thing, and everything: Udshash 'tis very pretty.
-*Madam Fickle,* Thomas D'Urfey

While Toby of *Madam Fickle* can look forward to marriage, the picture he paints for his future wife is less appealing. Though the majority of plays discussed in Chapter Two, in which young, unmarried women cross-dress, end in happy marriages that are beneficial to both the husbands and the wives, there are many other plays that depict less-tha-ideal marriages. As Lucinda in *The She-Gallants* predicts, not all marriages end happily. Further, not all of the plays of this era depict virginal heroines who attain the marriage of their choosing. This chapter will focus on those female characters who have been seduced and women who are married; these characters cross-dress for very different purposes than their virginal counterparts and, as a result, employ different rhetorical strategies. In the majority of cases in Chapter Two, the main goal of the cross-dresser is to attain a marriage of her choosing; the women of Chapter Three, however, cross-dress for reasons which are so varied as to be

impossible to categorize. To do so would be to unfairly generalize and ignore the unique possibilities of each of these roles.

Pat Rogers, whose essay "The Breeches Part" serves as the foundation for much recent scholarship on breeches roles, argues that breeches characters are shallow and utilitarian, whose only dramatic purpose is to sexualize the actress and attract more audience members. While I argue that this statement is categorically untrue and that Rogers' claims are completely unsubstantiated due to his primary use of a 19th century novel depicting one Restoration actress, his essay does provide a useful measure for how we might prove that these characters are complex. He claims, "What is missing in eighteenth-century accounts [of breeches roles] (and so may or may not have existed, we cannot be sure) is a sense of the discovery of a new self through disguise."[191] If, after closer examination of these roles, we can prove that some sense of self-discovery is achieved (such as a better understanding of who one is, what one wants, or what went wrong in a relationship) then Rogers' claim is untrue and the breeches roles accomplish something more than sexual excitement. As such, I will use Rogers' assertion to measure the accomplishments and impact of cross-dressing female characters who are seduced or married.

This chapter will examine three plays that depict women who have been seduced and then abandoned or disowned by the men who seduced them: *The Dutch Lover*, *The Counterfeits* and *Sir Anthony Love*. The female characters of these plays

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[191] Pat Rogers, "The Breeches Part," in *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Paul-Gabriel Boucé. (Manchester: Manchester UP: 1982), 254.

are complex because they are imperfect and damaged women who seek some form of redemption or control. In each instance, these women have not been protected by their guardians and taken advantage of by other men. Their seducers often employ persuasive speeches against these women, demonstrating the destructive power of persuasive speech used for nefarious purposes. Wearing breeches is often the only way these women can successfully recuperate their reputations or regain respect. Their tragic counterparts from the tragedies of the time, cross-dressed or not, often have no other recourse but death to escape their ignominy. Breeches, when used appropriately, are the only means available to these women in their pursuit of a positive, happy life that does not end in tragedy.

After examining the seduced women, this chapter will analyze four wives who wear breeches in *Madam Fickle, The Woman Captain, The Virtuous Wife,* and *Marriage à la Mode*. Based on the principles of the day, the married women should have everything they need to be content – husbands and homes. But such is not the reality for many wives, for many are abandoned or abused by their husbands. As with the seduced women, these wives assert their own power and authority in response to bad male behavior. Their husbands are implicitly and explicitly figured as tyrants, thereby justifying the wives' crossing of gender boundaries for their own purposes.

These seven plays, which were produced throughout the period in question, demonstrate the complexity of breeches roles. Each character is unique and deserving of separate, dedicated analysis. There are many other roles from this time period that also question and challenge gender lines, as these seven plays do. And then there are

others that do not, and probably were written or performed to attract audience members. What is important is that we do not generalize about breeches roles and believe that what a few of the plays do is the same as what the rest of them do. Each play and role demands its own analysis. What follows is a suggestion for how we can read these plays, and the possibilities that many, but not all, of them represent for unorthodox gender representations.

There are some plays, certainly, that depict cross-dressing seduced women who really do not achieve any kind of new self-discovery or understanding, as Rogers argues. *The Debauchee*, thought to be written by Aphra Behn, or possibly Behn and Thomas Betterton, is one such play.[192] *The Debauchee* was performed by the Duke's Company in 1677, having been licensed in February of that year.[193] The breeches part is that of Clara, who disguises herself as Bellamy, a page. Though she acts in order to help other characters and herself while dressed as a man, ultimately, by the end of the play, she loses her identity and her voice because of that cross-dressing.

Clara explains to the audience that she was seduced by Lord Loveless, who then deserted her. As a young woman of good family, Clara has little recourse after losing her reputation. As she explains, "I am well born, and but for his flattery, had still remain'd with Honour and in Virtue: but his bewitching tongue wrought on my

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[192] Janet Todd, *The Works of Aphra Behn,* Vol. 5. Ed. Janet Todd. (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1996), 389.

[193] Ibid.

easiness, and rob'd me of my Fame."[194] Clara was not driven by sexual desire, but by Loveless' persuasive rhetoric; his powers of persuasion are what caused her fall, not her own inclinations or wishes. Further, this speech demonstrates her predicament as a "well born" woman; without her virginity, she has no honor or virtue and therefore no hope of a decent marriage. To rectify this situation, she dresses as Bellamy, page to Loveless, which allows her to be near him and avoid her own family. But doing so is not easy for her because of the duties she is expected to perform. As she explains, "What a cursed office is this, to play the Pander for the man I love… `tis this – that keeps me too, conceal'd, from the false Loveless, who takes me for a Boy, and makes me do what even in this bold shape, I am asham'd to act, to Pimp for him."[195] Loveless uses Bellamy to arrange assignations with other married women, an act that Clara finds repugnant. But in the position of page, Clara is able to manipulate the relationships and interfere with Loveless' trysts.

By the end of the play, though, despite Clara's efforts to affect the other characters in a positive and moral way, she loses her own identity and voice once her disguise is discovered. She tells Loveless of her real motives for cross-dressing: "Being by you undone..I did assume that Masculine habit, to let you see that I had rather live but by your sight along, than be my self in any other part o'th'world; and

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194 Aphra Behn, *The Debauchee* in *The Works of Aphra Behn,* Ed. Janet Todd. (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1996), II.i.91-94.

195 Ibid., II.i.90-97.

by your sight alone, cou'd better contain my self, than she, the Mistris whom you so admir'd could, with the dear possession of you."[196] This speech accomplishes several things. For one, it shows that Clara still very much loves Loveless, despite his mistreatment of her. But more importantly, it shows that she has completely given herself over to love of Loveless, abandoning any other identity or definition of self that she may have had previously. She even says that she wanted to give up any of her self and devote herself completely to Loveless rather than be herself somewhere else. Her servile position as page further emphasizes the hierarchy of their relationship; Loveless is the powerful man who gives or dismisses love, and Clara is there whenever he wants her. Within this play, seduction robs Clara of any right to or belief in her own identity, and marks her as Loveless' property; she only adopts masculine disguise in order to serve him in a way that would not be irritating to him.

This speech is also Clara's last of the play. Loveless agrees to marry her and save her tarnished reputation and the other characters make some concluding statements. But Clara does not speak again, allowing Loveless to have the last lines, further demonstrating that, without a masculine habit, Clara has no voice and nothing to say, and so she defers to Loveless. Clara does not find a new identity and does not discover a new self; for her, cross-dressing represents the absence of a self, or a place to hide from a bad reputation. As such, then, *The Debauchee* portrays the type of breeches part that Rogers argues for. But many other plays, even other ones by Aphra

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[196] Ibid., V.i.298-303.

Behn, contain breeches parts that accomplish more than this play, and which represent women and their difficult predicaments in complex and interesting ways.

The basic plot elements of Behn's earlier play *The Dutch Lover* are similar to *The Debauchee*. A young woman of a good family, Hippolyta, has been seduced by a man, Antonio. He then refuses to marry her and leaves her with a ruined reputation. But *The Dutch Lover* explores the implications of extra-marital sex, both for the participants as well as their families, far more than *The Debauchee* does. Hippolyta is also a more complicated character than Clara; she spends much of the play trying to understand her own feelings and to rectify the wrongs done to her and by her.

Unlike Clara, Hippolyta's situation is far more dangerous. Antonio does not seduce her out of love or even lust, but only because he hates her brother, Marcel, and wants to torment him. Further, Hippolyta's loss of reputation signifies a loss of familial bonds; her brother disowns her and demands her death as the only acceptable penalty, while Clara's family has a minimal role and never threatens to harm her. Marcel declares, "Oh Hippolyta! Thou poor lost thing, Hippolyta! / How art thou fallen from Honour, and from Vertue, / And livest in whoredom, with an impious villain? / Who in revenge to me has thus betray'd thee. / Keep thy self closer than thou'st done thy sin; / For if I find thee out, / by all that's good, / Thou hadst more mercy on thy slaughter'd honour, / Than I will have for thee."[197] Not only has

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[197] Behn, *The Dutch Lover,* in *The Works of Aphra Behn,* Ed. Janet Todd. (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1996), I.ii.107 – 115.

Hippolyta lost her virginity to a man who hates her brother and cares nothing for her, but her brother openly declares his intentions of killing her should he ever see her. This predicament is exacerbated by the fact that Antonio works fervently to tarnish Hippolyta's reputation all over Madrid, having her stay in a brothel and spreading rumors about her. Hippolyta's situation is dire, at best

Hippolyta herself gets very little stage time in the first two acts of the play; instead, the audience only hears of her through reports and accusations from other characters. When she is finally on stage for any substantial amount of time, she gives a lengthy monologue in which she contemplates what to do about her situation. Antonio sleeps next to her in this scene, completely vulnerable to the murder she considers. She sees the death of both of them as the only way to absolve their sins. But she realizes that she loves Antonio too much to hurt him, even though he has been terrible to her: "No, I must still love on, in spight of me, / And wake him quickly, lest one moments thought / Upon my shame should urge me to undo him."[198] At this point in the play, it is clear that Hippolyta has no power over Antonio; he controls her completely and, though Hippolyta is capable of thinking for herself, she cannot act for herself or against Antonio. Later in the same scene, Antonio uses cunning flattery and persuasion to get a dagger away from Hippolyta. As soon as he has the dagger, he pushes her away, declaring, "Stand off false woman, I despise thy love."[199] Antonio

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[198] Ibid., III.iii.36 – 38.

[199] Ibid., III.iii.71.

tells Hippolyta of his trickery and hatred for her and her brother, explaining that everything he did was to increase her shame. As a result, Hippolyta has no recourse; if she goes home to her brother, he will kill her. If she stays with Antonio, her reputation will only get worse and he threatens to rape her. Either way, she faces violence. It is the realization of her predicament, and the trauma that awaits her wherever she goes, that spurs her to action. But when dressed as a woman, she is not an effective rhetor or even in control of her own emotions.

Hippolyta makes her escape and appears later dressed as a man, the only identity that can protect her from violence and a tainted reputation. She disguises herself as the foreigner Alonzo, to whom she was betrothed before being seduced and whom she has never met. She picks Alonzo's identity for a very particular reason – she plans to avenge her own honor by challenging Antonio to a duel. She explains to the audience, "Revenge has took possession of my soul, / And drove those shadows [of love] thence; and shows me now / Love, in so poor, so despicable a shape, / So quite devested of his Artful beauty, / That I'm asham'd I ever was his votary. / Well, here's my challenge to Antonio."[200] By dressing as a man, and challenging Antonio, Hippolyta literally takes her reputation into her own hands. She cannot rely on Marcel, her brother; though he would certainly kill Antonio, he would also kill her. And though she declares that she would be satisfied if she died in the duel, she wants to have a hand in it, rather than letting Marcel do it for her. For Hippolyta at this

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[200] Ibid., IV.ii.7-12.

moment, death is inevitable; but she wants to maintain control over that death, much in the same way many rape victims of classical literature commit suicide as a way to reclaim power over their own bodies. Because she loses her fear of death, she is able to go to the extreme measure of cross-dressing and reforming her identity; she has nothing else to lose.

What is most striking about Hippolyta's disguise, though, is her declaration that it has changed her fundamentally. "Methinks I am not what I was, / My soul too is all man: / Where dwells no tenderness, no womanish passions. / I cannot sigh, nor weep, nor think of love, / But as a foolish dream that's gone and past."[201] Hippolyta faces the reality of her situation. She was fooled into thinking Antonio loved her, and sees that her actions were reckless and mistaken. As a result, she sees herself now as mature and less ignorant, which aligns her with masculine rationality rather than (supposed) female passion and emotion. She wants nothing more to do with love, a woman's domain, but only seeks revenge, a man's traditional arena. With this speech and her disguise, Hippolyta discovers her capabilities and her reason, thereby creating herself anew. By dressing as a man, Hippolyta has formed her own identity in a more masculine shape. According to Dror Wahrman, the early 18th century self was "predicated on a looser and more mutable sense of what a person's identity was to

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[201] Ibid., IV.ii.2-6.

begin with."[202] Hippolyta's identity was nebulous prior to this point of the action; but once she puts on pants, and determines what she wants to do about her situation, her identity takes shape and gains strength. Most of the women of this chapter are on a quest of identity formation in the wake of their previous identities being stolen by the seducers or subsumed by their husbands.

Hippolyta is convincing in the role of a young man. When she approaches the real Alonzo to ask him to deliver her challenge to Antonio, he says to her, "I'm pleas'd to see this gallantry in a man so young."[203] Clearly the other characters do not suspect that the young man is really a young woman. Alonzo's comments give her confidence, which reaffirms her decision and deathwish: "To kill, or to be kill'd, I care not which, / So one or both expire; be strong my soul, / And let no feeble woman dwell about thee. / Hence fears and pity, such poor things as these / Cannot the storms of my revenge appease: / Those showres must from his treacherous heart proceed. / If I can live and see Antonio bleed."[204] Hippolyta wants to stay strong long enough to fight Antonio and wound him in some significant way, even if it means she must die too. Such resolve is markedly different from Act III, when she was not able to stab him while he slept defenseless beside her.

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[202] Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004), 176.
[203] Behn, *The Dutch Lover,* IV.ii.127.

[204] Ibid., IV.ii.152 – 158.

The confrontation between Antonio and Hippolyta emphasizes the importance of persuasion and deception. Antonio explains to Hippolyta, believing her to be Alonzo, "I know of none [injuries] you have receiv'd from me, / If on Hippolyta's account you fight, / She lov'd me, and believ'd, and what dull Lover / Would have refus'd a Maid so easily gained?"[205] According to Antonio, the relationship was simple: he knew that Hippolyta loved him, and so he played to his audience and seduced her easily, without much work. He claims that it was only natural for him to sleep with Hippolyta when she was such an easy target. Hippolyta tells a different story, though: "But why should I expect a truth from thee, / Who after so much time, so many vows, / So many tears, despairs and sighs, at last / Didst gain a credit with this easie fool, / Then left her to her shame, and her despairs."[206] Hippolyta claims that Antonio was much more conniving and manipulative in his persuasions, declaring himself in love with her first. The word "vows" even suggests some form of clandestine marriage, which would have been legally binding. Further, her hyperbolic description of tears and sighs employs poetic language, appropriate for a sophistic speaker. Her words begin to affect Antonio and make him realize that he does, in fact love her. Such feelings are proven just a few lines later, when Hippolyta is wounded during their duel.

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[205] Ibid., IV.iii.159 – 162.

[206] Ibid., IV.iii.170 – 174.

While the characters on stage tend to the wounded Hippolyta, her identity is revealed. When Marcel realizes who the wounded young man really is, he threatens to kill her with "Hippolyta! Thou wretched wicked woman: / Thus I reward thy sins," but Antonio stops him.[207] Within these few lines, Antonio has a change of heart and declares to Marcel (and the audience), "Hold, Sir, and touch her not without my leave, / She is my wife; by sacred vows my wife."[208] Hippolyta's assertion earlier in the scene that the two had exchange vows, then, is confirmed. Antonio did promise marriage in order to seduce her, which would have been a binding, legal marriage contract. When Hippolyta faints from all the drama, Antonio tells her, "Oh stay Hippolyta and take me with thee, / For I have no use of life when thou art gone," showing that he truly has changed and wishes to be her partner, even in death. Such a revelation is only possible because of Hippolyta's cross-dressing and persuasive words earlier in the scene. Her physical wounding and near-death experience pushes Antonio to a realization of his true feelings, but only in conjunction with her eloquent words.

Hippolyta goes through a major evolution through this play. The audience witnesses her go from a powerless, weak woman who is unable to act for herself to a woman with strong resolve and principles. Her statement of "Methinks I am not what I was, / My soul too is all man" demonstrates that she does, in fact, discover a new self through her disguise. Her clothes allow her to take control of her own destiny and

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[207] Ibid., IV.iii.247 – 248.

[208] Ibid., IV.iii.250-251.

redeem her own reputation, as her brother or father would have been expected to do. These actions and decisions could easily have resulted in tragedy, and do result in her injury. But Antonio's change of heart, as initiated by Hippolyta's actions while in disguise, redirects the play so that the two can have a happy ending. Not only does Hippolyta discover a new self that can act and be powerful, but Antonio also discovers a new self that can overcome hatred of Marcel and instead can focus on love of Hippolyta. These discoveries would not have been possible without Hippolyta's cross-dressing at the end of the play.

Hippolyta is not the only seduced breeches character with an overprotective brother. John Leanerd's 1678 *The Counterfeits* presents a similar scenario in which Elvira has been seduced and abandoned by her lover, and her brother Antonio plans to kill both her and the man who seduced her. But this play is remarkable for the length of time Elvira spends cross-dressed as well as the form of Elvira's cross-dressing. Jacqueline Pearson argues that the Duke's Company, which produced *The Counterfeits*, was inclined to produce plays with breeches roles like Elvira because Lady Davenant had such a strong managerial role at the time; Pearson counts *The Counterfeits* as one of those "plays with strong, often transvestite heroines" in which the Duke's Company specialized.[209] Elvira is not a particularly strong character during

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[209] Jacqueline Pearson. *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642-1737.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 33.

the first few acts of the play. It is only after masquerading as a Knight of Malta and assisting other characters that she finds her own voice and power.

The play opens with Antonio's passionate and vitriolic statements about his sister's seduction. In no uncertain terms, he makes it clear that he hates her, has disowned her, and will kill her to save the family's reputation. In response to a friend's pleading that Antonio should be kinder because Elvira is his sister, Antonio declares, "That's it that makes my Hell: were she as far from my Bloud, as to my Love, she might, if possible, out-sin her Sex, and never injure me. But to call me Brother, and be pointed at for Whore; were the Lives of all our Family twisted up in hers, nay, should all Posterity perish with her, she dies."[210] Antonio's rage does not stem from Elvira herself or her actions, really, but from her lost reputation. He is offended that she is known to be his sister and is "pointed at for Whore." Her shame represents his failure to protect her. But Antonio is not actually concerned with her actions per se, but with her reputation, and its impact on him.

Elvira flees her brother's house in order to pursue her seducer, a man she believes to be named Vitelli, but who is actually named Peralta. In order to do so, Elvira dresses as a man and travels with her maid, Clara, who also cross-dresses. But Elvira does not dress as just any man, but as a Knight of Malta, a member of a religious order tasked with protecting and giving shelter to pilgrims traveling to

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[210]John Leanerd. *The Counterfeits, A Comedy.* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1679). *Early English Books Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014. I.i (1).

Jerusalem. Elvira's choice to dress as a Knight of Malta is significant because other characters seek her assistance for a variety of problems; her costume marks her as a humanitarian whose mission is to help the downtrodden. Her clothes also mark her as masculine and strong, because the Knights of Malta were a military order; she would have traveled with a sword and been expected to participate in whatever duels or fights she found along the way. Her costume would have been bulky; Knights of Malta traditionally wore a long cape or cloak that would have covered the majority of her figure. She also would have been wearing traveling clothes, which would have been thick, loose and not close fitting.[211] Such a costume would have covered the body of Mary Lee, the actress who first performed Elvira, more than any women's clothing of the time, assuming she replicated their uniforms.

When Elvira first enters the stage, she is overwhelmed at the prospect of acting like a man, feeling that she will surely fail because of her emotions. She asks of her companion, "are we alone, Clara? Each step I take I feel a Dagger at my heart. Wretched Woman, how am I fall'n!... Am I not a Monster branded for my Infamy? Slave that I was to perjer'd false Vitelli!"[212] Based on this statement, we are to assume that they have been traveling as men for some time. While Elvira bemoans her fate

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[211] Charles Moeller. "Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 7. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. www.newadvent.org/cathen/07477a.htm. 14 May 2014.

[212] Leanerd, *The Counterfeits,* I.ii (3).

and tries to curse her seducer, Clara attempts to cheer her up with some bawdy suggestions about the effects Elvira's costume will have on any ladies they meet. But Elvira is beyond help at this point and, in response to Clara, gives the following monologue with illustrates her identity crisis:

> Ah, Clara! Hadst thou seen his pale and ghastly Looks, but heard his Sighs and Vows. Then would he kneel, and weep, and press my Hand; then rise and swear again with such dreadfull Imprecations, nothing that was Woman could resist. I'm sure I did not; false to my self and too-too-loving Brother. Would I had ne'r been Woman: nor would I yet be Man, for I should be still far worse, and still more false. Yet would I were any thing but what I am.[213]

This speech is important for several reasons. First, it details Peralta's skill at persuasion and seduction. He knows exactly what combination of "sighs and vows" and actions will work on Elvira. He can act and pretend exceedingly well, which is demonstrated when it is revealsed that he has been masquerading as Vitelli in order to steal Vitelli's inheritance. Peralta is a dangerous seducer who is skilled at deception. But this speech also shows the audience Elvira's current state of mind. She acknowledges that her actions were not true to her character; as a well-bred woman, she should not have been seduced before marriage. She knows that her actions also affect her brother and family. And finally, at this point in the play, she is caught between identities. She lost her own identity when she was seduced; but she does not feel right dressed as a man either. Because this speech comes at the beginning of the play, it signals that Elvira's actions through the rest of the play will serve as a means

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[213] Ibid., I.ii (5).

for her to find her "new self," the new self that is post-seduction but pre-vindication. That new self can only be found through the disguise of a Knight of Malta, defender of pilgrims who also seeks self-definition and completion through a religious experience. Though Elvira is overwhelmed by her emotions and lost reputation, she is also a skilled actor, just like Peralta. As soon as she is required to act as a man, she does so. No other characters suspect her true gender, and she behaves convincingly as a knight.

Elvira, as a Knight of Malta, stops the real Vitelli from killing his servants who have failed to recover his lost belongings. When he threatens them with his sword, Elvira declares, "Pray, sir, give me leave to advise." Vitelli immediately trusts Elvira because of her clothing, saying, "that Cross [of Malta] you wear declares your obligation of succouring the Distrest: and if you will so much relieve my Sorrow, as to hear my Story, I would beg your Company in my Chamber."[214] Vitelli is not necessarily convinced by Elvira's words or actions, but by her clothing, which Vitelli says speak for her. Elvira's clothing gives her access to the one man who can assist her in a non-violent way; they also give Vitelli the opportunity to right his own wrongs. Peralta, Elvira's seducer, has stolen Vitelli's portmanteau and is pretending to be him in order to take his inheritance and fiancé. In searching Vitelli's belongings, they also discover that Peralta murdered an Ensign in his military regiment and needs protection from a Marquis. Peralta, then, is not only a seducer, skilled actor and thief, but also a murderer. This discovery has a strong effect on Elvira. She states, "`Tis from these

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[214] Ibid., I.iii (7).

thoughts the wretched Elvira falls to be a Lump of black Despair."[215] Although Elvira is far from happy, she has at least found some semblance of identity in her despair. That despair consumes and defines her, but it does represent something palpable, because she is a "lump" or physical manifestation of it. And, as despair is the extremity of hopelessness, she can only now progress in the other direction, towards a more positive identity and happy ending.

Up to this point in the play, Clara controls Elvira's actions, advising her how to act and what to say. Clara, as a witty servant, relishes her chance to dress as a boy and have all the liberties that come with that disguise. But she is Elvira's servant and once Elvira regains her confidence and forms her identity, she must take over her own actions and reassert her authority over Clara. By the third act, she does so with a simple statement to Clara, "I am now resolv'd; therefore without disputing about what I commanded you."[216] This statement marks a turning point in the play; from this point forward, Elvira acts for herself and Clara only does what Elvira directs her to do. After directing Vitelli how to act, she leaves the stage and does not appear in men's clothes again. By the next act, Elvira reassumes women's clothing, but still uses disguise. Only through her male clothing is Elvira able to gain the confidence in herself that is necessary for taking control of her future.

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[215] Ibid., I.iv (12).

[216] Ibid., III.ii (29).

Elvira pretends to be a woman named Mariana, and tells Don Gomez, the father of Violante, Vitelli's fiancé, that she is from Mexico and that Vitelli seduced her there. Once in the room with Peralta, as well as Don Gomez and Violante, Elvira accuses Peralta of all of his misdeeds and, in the process, reasserts her own identity: "Consider, Sir, I had no other means but this Pretence to get him from your House, and save your Daughter from Ruine. I freely confess I am not Mariana, nor a Mexican: nor is he Vitelli, or an Indian; but Peralta, a Captain of Flanders, who in his Journey hither stopt at Valentia, merely to destroy the wretch'd Elvira."[217] Elvira must assert what she and Peralta are not, before she can declare who they are. Because she is reforming her own identity, she must first go through a process of negative self-definition, which is also an engaging rhetorical device. Finally she concludes with her own name and adjective, the "wretch'd Elvira."

The other characters, though, do not believe her and Peralta refuses to admit his real identity. In desperation, Elvira appeals to Violante with, "learn of her that teaches by Experience, not to trust those Angel-like bewitching Lips which with such power move, they might intice a Nun professing at the Altar; yet are full as false and treacherous as you think me."[218] In this moment, Elvira acts as teacher, hoping to save an unfallen woman from the same fate. Violante believes Elvira, but declares she must do as her father wishes; she is another woman with no power over her own fate who

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[217] Ibid., V.ii (47).

[218] Ibid., V.ii (48).

accepts her father's will as law. Elvira's avowal of who she is for didactic purposes marks her transition to a position of rhetorical power; she has experience and wisdom and, though she may be beyond hope, she wishes to educate those around her; to do so, she must build her own credibility as a rhetor by detailing her own tragic experiences. Violante is convinced, but simply has no power to make her own decisions.

Elvira's final declaration of identity comes at the climax of the play, when all of the characters are trying to prove who is really Vitelli. Peralta's uncle enters the scene and Elvira says to him, "if you call him Nephew, as certainly he is, you must own me for Neece, for ten thousand times he has call'd be wife."[219] This statement is the first time that Elvira says she is Peralta's wife, marking her new found identity. Based on this assertion, we can assume that Elvira and Peralta, like Hippolyta and Antonio, had a clandestine marriage, even if Peralta had no intention of owning it. But here Elvira asserts herself as Peralta's wife, with all the rights to his person and fortune. In the final lines of the play, with a promise of a sizable income from his uncle for doing the right thing, Peralta owns his true identity and asks Elvira to be his wife openly. All is happily resolved with Elvira's declaration publicly that she is Peralta's wife; Antonio agrees not to kill her or Peralta if they live as husband and wife. But only through a disavowal of her own identity and the assumption of several false ones, including a male one, can Elvira achieve this status. Through her use of

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[219] Ibid., V.ii (50).

several disguises, Elvira discovers her own strength of character, which she had questioned and dismissed earlier in the play, as well as her ability to influence other people around her in order to accomplish her own goals, thereby avoiding a tarnished reputation, abandonment by the man she loves, and possible violence and even death at the hands of her brother. Her disguises are the only way she can do so, and therefore represent her discovery of a new self.

The final play that features a "fallen" woman that will be discussed in this chapter is Thomas Southerne's *Sir Anthony Love; or, The Rambling Lady*. This play has been discussed extensively by critics and is generally seen as offering a liberal and sympathetic representation of women. Of both this play and *Oroonoko*, Pearson writes that "Southerne shows himself unusually sympathetic to the woman forced by a brutal society to adopt brutal methods to gain what she wants, and in both plays, the sharpest image for this is the adoption of male disguise."[220] Pearson's argument here suggests that the use of male disguise is "brutal;" that it represents a trauma to the character's psyche and threatens her physical safety. Implicit within this argument is the suggestion that a female character would not take on male attire lightly: it would have to be for a very good reason. Pearson goes on to argue that the play presents a satire of male behavior, but that Sir Anthony is still a character in search of "emotional and economic independence" and who is "impelled by inescapable social pressures."[221]

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[220] Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse,* 115.

[221] Ibid., 115-116.

Sir Anthony, then, is the epitome of all breeches characters who are in some way oppressed by agents of patriarchal society.

Elizabeth Howe takes a slightly less sympathetic view of Sir Anthony Love. While she admits, "this play most obviously supports arguments in favour of the subversiveness of Restoration breeches roles," she concludes that Sir Anthony "offers no real threat to the established social order" because she is "an amoral trickster and prostitute, exploiting the corruptions and deceptions of society in her favour."[222] This reading of her character seems blatantly unfair, particularly given Sir Anthony's depth and development of character, as well as her desire to help other characters and right the wrongs done to herself and others. Further, based on both Howe's contention that breeches roles are only subversive if those characters do not return to a traditional domestic role, and Rogers' claim that disguise is significant when it leads to a "discovery of a new self," Sir Anthony Love is the very definition of subversive, exciting, and the locus of possibility for questioning gender roles for the character, the actress and the female audience member.

The role of Sir Anthony was first performed in 1690 by Susanna Mountfort, who came to be known for her breeches roles, gaining recognition from audiences and theatrical personalities like Colley Cibber. The play was very popular, running for at

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222 Elizabeth Howe. *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660-1700.* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 59-60

least six nights and having a minimum of two benefit performances for Southerne.[223] Further, the play was often referred to as "the Lady's Play" because it was so popular with female audience members, suggesting some special resonance or significance for the female population.

There are a few circumstances worth mentioning about this play. The first has to do with the publication. Typically, when a play with a breeches role is printed, the female character who cross-dresses is still listed among the women, in the second half of the dramatis personae. With this play, Mrs. Mountfort is listed at the top of the men's roles and is only identified as Sir Anthony Love, not as Lucia, her given, female name. Further, in the text of the plays, normally the breeches character is represented throughout the text with her female name listed before her lines; in this play, even when Lucia is dressed a woman, she is listed as "Sir Ant." Although this may seem like a minor detail, it is quite significant because it departs so radically from how plays are normally printed. Such a printing practice suggests that Lucia's character has more fully transitioned from distinct female status to something more masculine than her breeches compatriots in other plays, at least in the mind of the author or printer.

The other note is about the other female characters. There are only three other women in the play, as compared to the eleven named male characters (Sir Anthony not included). Further, no other female character appears on stage until well into the

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[223] Robert Jordan and Harold Love, *The Works of Thomas Southerne Ed. Robert Jordan and Harold Love.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 161.

second act, which is rather unusual; though most plays start with the male characters, women usually appear on stage at some point in the first act. So Sir Anthony is the only woman depicted in a distinctly male environment, further emphasizing her ambiguous and highly masculine identity.

At the beginning of the play, Sir Anthony has established herself in Mompelier as a libertine cavalier. She has a reputation for fighting men and seducing women, which she discusses with her confidant, Wait-well. He tells her, "You're a pretty proficient indeed, and so perfectly act the Cavalier, that cou'd you put on our Sex with your Breeches, o' my Conscience you wou'd carry all the Women before you."[224] And, though Sir Anthony clearly enjoys mocking male behavior and courting all the women, she seems to want more than just amusement. She declares

> And drive all the Men before me; I am for Universal Empire, and wou'd not be stinted to one Provicne; I wou'd be fear'd, as well as lov'd: As famous for my Action with the Men, as for my Passion for the Women… Why, `tis only the Fashion of the World, that gives your Sex a better Title then we have, to the wearing a Sword; my Constant Exercise with my Fencing Master, and Conversation with men, who make little of the matter, have at last not only made me *adroit*, but despise the Danger of a quarrel too.[225]

This speech demonstrates that Lucia has taken her male disguise to an extreme rarely seen with breeches roles. She has been living as Sir Anthony for some time, at least long enough to have courted many women and developed sword fighting skills. Not

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[224] Thomas Southerne. *Sir Anthony Love* in *The Works of Thomas Southerne*. Ed. Robert Jordan and Harold Love. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), I.i.7-9.

[225] Ibid., I.i.11-14, 17-21.

only is she proficient at fighting, she has also taken lessons from a fencing master, a distinctly male activity. Finally, Lucia acknowledges what she has yet to accomplish her goals. She wants "Universal Empire" over men and women. To her, this means seducing the women and fighting the men in order to perpetuate her reputation. She wants fame and recognition, not to settle down into domestic obscurity.

Of course, this play would not be a Restoration comedy without some love plot. Lucia loves the cavalier Valentine and, as she admits, it was for his "dear sake I first engag'd in the Adventure… and under thy discretion came a Collonelling after him here into France."[226] Lucia's predicament is more complex than what she admits here. In fact, the play later reveals that her guardian aunt sold her as a mistress to Sir Gentle Golding at too young of an age for her to stop the transaction. To escape being Golding's mistress she steals money from him and runs away in order to reestablish her life. The starting point of such a move, as the only available option, is to dress as a man, due to her tarnished reputation and complete lack of male protection. Lucia must dress as a man for her own security and to attain any sort of happiness.

When Wait-well asks her why she does not simply throw herself at Valentine to have the adventure concluded, Lucia's response further illuminates her difficult situation: "Thou wou'dst have had me, with the true Conduct of an English Mistress, upon the first inclination, cloy'd him with my Person; without any assurance of his relishing me enough, to raise his appetite to a second taste: No, now I am sure he likes

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[226] Ibid., I.i.44-47.

me; and likes me so well in a Man, he'll love me in a Woman."[227] This speech echoes the sentiments of many other breeches roles and their motives for cross-dressing; without male identity, these women cannot establish friendships with their chosen mates in order to really understand their characters. Further, these women are left to wonder if these men actually care for them or if they have ulterior motives. Through male identity, women are able to create unique bonds with their men that are mutually beneficial and ensure felicitous marriages. Lucia is unusual, though, in that she has already established this friendship with Valentine by the start of the play; in most plays, much of the plot centers around the breeches characters meeting and befriending the men they wish to marry. The starting point of this play, then, is at the point when Lucia needs to bring her machinations to a conclusion and achieve her goal.

Later in this same scene, the audience witnesses the male camaraderie that Lucia has established with Valentine and the other men. When Valentine and Ilford enter, Sir Anthony beats Wait-well for no good reason. She explains her behavior with, "but I had not fought a great while, my hand was in, and I was pushing at Reputation. For, I Gad, I look upon Courage to proceed more from habit and practice, than any virtue of the Mind."[228] Here, Sir Anthony appropriates and mocks male behavior. Her comment about courage pokes fun at dandies who think they are brave

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[227] Ibid., I.i.49-53.

[228] Ibid., I.i.99-102.

but who would run from a fight. Such mockery is highlighted by the fact that the "courageous" one is a woman; a woman can be as brave as a man. More importantly, a woman, or anyone, can become courageous through practice: gender does not matter in such a paradigm. Elizabeth Howe reads this demonstration as proof that Sir Anthony does not actually achieve anything significant in men's attire because, after all, she is all talk and bravado and no real action.[229] But this scene is more productive when read as a succinct satire of male behavior. Men have lost their nerve, and women have gained some, thereby blurring the gender line and offering possibilities for both sides to do more than the norm. Further, it is not female behavior that is being mocked, but male; if satire is criticism with the goal of emendation, then Sir Anthony accomplishes much in a few short lines in terms of teaching the men in the audience about their own gender. The scene between Sir Anthony, Valentine and Ilford continues in the same way, with Sir Anthony acting excessively masculine, discussing his fights and conquests among the ladies, thereby further emphasizing her satire of men.

After Sir Anthony leaves the stage, the other men discuss their opinion of "him:"

> *Val.* He lives like a Gentleman, has all things as well about him; is as much respected by the Men, and better receiv'd by the Women, than any of us.
> *Ilf.* He's a pretty Womans Man indeed.
> *Val.* And a merry man's man too, Sir; for you must own, he has a great deal of Wit.

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[229] Howe, *The First English Actresses,* 60.

> *Ilf.* Pretty good Natural Parts, I confess; but a Fool has the keeping `em, no Judgment in the world… He flies too much at Random to please any man of discretion.[230]

Overall, the gentlemen accept Sir Anthony as a man. Ilford's ambiguous comment about Sir Anthony being a "pretty Womans Man" can be read as Sir Anthony being a pretty man who likes women, or as Sir Anthony liking pretty women. Either way, at the end of the sentence, it is clear that Ilford believes Sir Anthony to be a man. Valentine and Ilford also admit that he is witty (an important characteristic for a man) and has good, masculine parts that appear to be natural. Sir Anthony, then, has done a good job at replicating male behavior, attire and even, somehow, physical attributes, according to the other men of the play.

But Sir Anthony does not limit her actions to just false bravado and manipulating those around her to get the man she wants. She assists the other women of the play achieve their goals in marriage when they run contrary to their fathers' wishes. She manages things so that Charlott can marry Ilford, rather than Count Verole, her father's choice. Further, she even works out the relationships so that Floriante marries Valentine, the man she prefers (but who Sir Anthony also loves). Sir Anthony forgoes a traditional marriage with Valentine that would have saved her reputation so that another woman can benefit from a socially acceptable marriage. Finally, Sir Anthony's machinations are not limited to just playing matchmaker; she has a darker side too. Throughout the play, she punishes Sir Gentle Golding for his

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[230] Southerne, *Sir Anthony Love,* I.i.333-344.

misuse and abuse of her. Although revenge is not her main goal, she becomes incensed against Sir Gentle when he lies about the circumstances of her stealing from and leaving him. She says in an aside, "You shall pay as round a Sum, for the Lye, before I part with your vanity."[231] Although she is a "fallen" woman with a bad reputation, she still cannot abide lies about herself; revenge, then, becomes a part of her overall goal in cross-dressing.

By Act IV, Sir Anthony puts her final plans into motion. While dressed as a woman, but masked, she arranges an assignation with Valentine. She reveals her identity; the exchange between the two is incredibly telling of each character's opinion of the other, and their shared history:

> *Val.* I am confounded indeed! But are you Sir Anthony Love?
> *Sir Ant.* All but my petticoats.
> *Val.* And are you sure you're a Woman?
> *Sir. Ant.* Are not you sure of that, Sir?
> *Val.* I am; and charm'd with the certainty – Now every pleasure past, comes o're my thoughts:… Now I remember, you father'd a Bastard for me, at Paris –
> *Sir. Ant.* I had the reputation of it, indeed; and shou'd have had the Cow with the Calf, for her Father pursu'd me to marry her, thro' all means of Accommodation, into the strait at last of confessing my Sex to the English Embassador… [who] by his generosity and good usage, … press'd me so very far, that not being able to answer the Obligations I had to him, (having you in my head at that very time) I was forc'd to run away from him, to get rid of him.[232]

The first lines of this exchange are entertaining and humorous because Valentine, who knew Sir Anthony previously as Lucia, and has known her for some time as Sir

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[231] Ibid., II.i.610-611.

[232] Ibid., IV.ii.44-66.

Anthony, cannot make sense of who she is. The definitive use of the "to be" verb, though, suggests that Lucia is both Lucia and Sir Anthony at the same time. Valentine does not ask, 'but *were* you Sir Anthony' or 'are you sure you are now a woman?,' but rather asks "are you Sir Anthony" and "are you sure you're a Woman," suggesting that two states of being exist at the same time. Once again, we have an explicit example of Jessica Munns' "double dressing;" in this version, it is obvious that Sir Anthony has worked diligently and consciously to create "a sexual space from which to speak."[233]

Further, Valentine depends on her assertion of identity, rather than any external markers of gender, to be assured of who she is. He only believes her when she mentions their past sexual relationship, which proves beyond a doubt for him that the person in front of him is a woman. But that claim of identity is immediately subverted when Valentine recalls that Sir Anthony "father'd a Bastard" for him back in Paris. Clearly, Sir Anthony took responsibility for Valentine's seduction of a Parisian girl. But instead of stating, "you helped me out by telling people you had done it rather than me," Valentine instead gives all responsibility, even for the physical act, to Sir Anthony by using the verb "fathered." The dialogue between the two still firmly places Sir Anthony within male parameters. It is not until Sir Anthony details an occurrence when the English ambassador tried to seduce or possibly rape her that her dialogue becomes distinctly feminine.

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[233] Jessica Munns, "I By a Double Right Thy Bounties Claims:" Aphra Behn and Sexual Space," in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660- 1820*. Ed. Mary Anne Schoefield and Cecilia Macheski. (Athens: Ohio UP, 1991), 105.

From their conversation, it is evident that Valentine and Lucia truly love and care for each other. Valentine is perhaps the only male character who respects Lucia for herself and not as Sir Anthony. He even offers to marry her, which in a traditional play, would be the resolution. But Lucia does not want marriage; she explains to Valentine, "Floriante, I grant you, wou'd be a dangerous Rival in a mistress… and you might linger out, a long liking of her, to my uneasiness, and your own, but Matrimony, that's her security is mine: I can't apprehend her in a Wife."[234] Sir Anthony knows Valentine too well; he is a self-acknowledged libertine who will never be monogamous. Floriante loves Valentine, but her primary goal is an agreeable marriage to a man that will provide for her. Sir Anthony is more interested in being Valentine's primary mistress and, therefore, his greatest love. As Valentine's mistress, not wife, he will love her longer and better. So Sir Anthony has Valentine marry Floriante so she can remain Valentine's mistress. This love triangle is complex and many scholars have read it as a negative comment on libertinism and fallen women. Elizabeth Howe claims that Sir Anthony is Machiavellian in her love and unfair to the innocent Floriante, who will be married to a philanderer.[235] To a degree, this is true. But Southerne works actively to build sympathy for Sir Anthony; she was abused earlier in life and left to her own devices to achieve some kind of happiness and independence, even if it is untraditional and requires the sacrifice of another woman's perfect

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[234] Southerne, *Sir Anthony Love,* IV.ii.77-82.

[235] Howe, *The First English Actresses,* 62.

happiness (though Floriante will still have the benefit of marriage, reputation, and income, something Lucia never did). Yes, Floriante will not have the perfect ending in this arrangement, but she is not the primary character; Sir Anthony is the one the audience is meant to care about. After the play is over, it is Sir Anthony that we remember, not Floriante, or even the other characters.

By the end of the play, Sir Anthony accomplishes all she set out to do. She dupes Sir Gentle Golding into marrying her. Because he is horrified at the trick, he agrees to live separately from Lucia and give her an allowance of 500 pounds a year, as long as she does not get pregnant and pass off the child for his heir. Lucia has achieved her goals: she is married and, therefore, has a secure reputation so she can live as a woman. Further, she has a title and a generous income, so she can live comfortably. Finally, she has secured the long-term love and affection of her preferred man, Valentine. Pat Gill argues that Sir Anthony is never able to achieve the goal of marriage that is, as he suggests, central to *every* Restoration comedy because of her "gender misconduct."[236] But the reality is that Sir Anthony gets everything she wanted, including marriage, even if that marriage is for economic gain and social reputation.

On the surface, Lucia is substantially changed from the beginning of the play: she is dressed as a woman, rather than a man. She had to disguise herself as a man to

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[236] Pat Gill, "Gender, Sexuality, and Marriage," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre,* ed. Deborah Payne Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 193.

protect herself and secure her future. Only through disguise is she able to discover a new self: a female self that is safe in openly admitting her gender. Further, by the end of the play and as a result of her disguise, she gains a title and an income, which raises her in her society's estimation from a fallen prostitute to someone deserving of respect and affection.

Sir Anthony is perhaps the most untraditional of the breeches heroines, rejecting traditional marriage in favor of continued autonomy and love outside the strictures of monogamy. She does so because she knows that marriage is no guarantee of continued happiness and faithfulness. While most of the plays discussed so far figure marriage as the safe haven that all women, pure or fallen, want to attain, there are other plays in which marriage is not that happy ending. Sir Anthony is the most explicitly aware of this contradiction and actively works against falling into the trap of "happily ever after" at the altar. Quite a few plays depict what happens after the wedding and, in many cases, cross-dressing is still necessary for the women to maintain control over their own lives; the use of theses breeches by married women shows that, despite the perceived loss of power for women after marriage, these female characters, and perhaps their real world contemporaries, continued to think and act for themselves. Becoming a man's wife does not necessarily mean losing all other markers of identity for these women.

One play in which a wifely breeches role is performed but to no real end in questioning gender norms is Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, as Pearson has noted.[237] Another similar play is Farquhar's *Sir Harry Wildair*. Both of these plays are worth examining in order to show the diversity of wives who cross-dress and that these types of roles do not fit into a particular mold or trope; there are weak, uninteresting cross-dressing wives but there are also a multitude who stand for themselves and seize power for and over themselves. Rogers' claims apply to some of these roles, but not all: and that is an important distinction.

The biggest difference between Mrs. Pinchwife's cross-dressing and that of all other breeches roles, married or not, is that Mrs. Pinchwife is not the one who decides to wear breeches; it is her husband's idea. If Mrs. Pinchwife is only acting as her husband requests, then she is not controlling the power dynamics of the relationship. By the end of the play, Mrs. Pinchwife has been seduced by Horner, of course, and taught how to lie by the other women. At the beginning of the play, Mrs. Pinchwife is foolish and innocent; by the end, she is no longer innocent but she is still foolish, almost revealing to her husband that she has slept with Horner. Ultimately, the breeches in this play are just a device used by Wycherley to get Horner closer to his goal of seducing Mrs. Pinchwife; they are not actively used by Mrs. Pinchwife to further her own agenda.

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237 *The Prostituted Muse,*106.

The original production of Farquhar's *Sir Harry Wildair* also supports Rogers' claim that breeches do not inherently change the female character or allow her a discovery of a new sense of self.[238] Angelica is the abandoned wife of Sir Harry, who left her because she was too clingy. She followed him to Europe and then faked her own death, to which Sir Harry responded by dressing dandily and impregnating six nuns at a convent. Sir Harry is the epitome of an unrepentant rake. During the course of the play, Angelica cross-dresses as Beau Banter, Sir Harry's younger brother. As Banter, Angelica critiques the state of marriage and men in general, but her cross-dressing is not actually effective. Sir Harry continues as he ever was. Angelica resorts to scaring him by pretending to be her own ghost, bent on revenge from beyond the grave. This act catches Sir Harry's attention and they are reunited.

But Angelica does not seem to have moved beyond her petty, cloying ways. Her final speech demonstrates that she has learned little and not managed to truly change Sir Harry:

> The great Secret for keeping Matters right in Wedlock, is never to quarrel with your Wives for Triffles; for we are but Babies at best, and must have our Play-things, our Longings, our Vapours, our Frights, our Monkeys, our China, our Fashions, our Washes, our Patches, our Waters, our Tattle, and Impertinence; therefore I say `tis better to let a Woman play the Fool, than provoke her to play the Devil.[239]

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238 There were, however, performances in repertory in which actresses took on the role of Sir Harry. These productions will be discussed in Chapter Four.

239 George Farquhar. *Sir Harry Wildair: being the sequel of The trip to the Jubilee. A comedy.* (London, 1701). *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library. 14 May 2014.

V.vi (48).

It is apparent that Angelica will be the same as she was, just as Sir Harry will continue as his old self; the only difference is their level of mutual acceptance and tolerance. Sir Harry concludes the play with his list of attributes that a good wife should be, including "beautiful to a wonder" and willing to use "all Arts to please her Husband."[240] Clearly, the cross-dressing of the play does little to alter these characters or interrogate gender roles and relations in any serious or productive way.

The theme of a wife abandoned or treated poorly by her husband, as seen in *Sir Harry Wildair* and *The Country Wife*, is found in many other plays of the time period. But in the majority of these plays, the wife who-cross dresses manages to accomplish something more than reconciliation with her husband. Most times, she gains power over her husband or otherwise orchestrates affairs to be more equal or beneficial. Usually the husband admits his fault and gives money, power or both to the wife.

Madam Fickle, the title character of the play by Thomas D'Urfey, has been abandoned by her husband much in the same way as Angelica. But rather than simply cross dress to follow her husband around, Madam Fickle vows revenge on all mankind. As she explains to the more rational Silvia:

> `Twas my unhappy Fate some three years since to fall in love,
> To give away my Heart, and throw my self into the Arms of
> One of mean discent – and also slender Fortune: Yet had Destiny
> So link'd my Soul with his, that each kind glance
> Shot from his darting Eye, me though went through me.
> I lov'd, nay and ador'd with so much zeal,

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[240] Ibid., V.vi (48).

> I cou'd have dy'd – nay willingly been tortur'd:
> I thought he could not wrong my Innocence; for then I
> Swear I was so innocent I knew not what sin was;
> Yet this deluding Wretch! This base Seducer, although
> I slighted all for him, laught at my fervent
> Passion, scorn'd and left me, and when I thought his Heart
> Was mine for ever, `twas then most treacherous, and farthest
> From me: Therefore I've made a strict and solemn
> Vow, on the whole Sex to execute revenge – Flatter, and
> Wheedle all I can, and ever.
> To practice to ensnare – but to love – never.[241]

Madam Fickle's state of mind and backstory explain her motives. Where Angelica does not speak much, and does not describe her feelings or desires, Madam Fickle details her emotions passionately. Her marriage was not one of financial gain and cool feelings; rather it was one of love and companionship; she even admits that he did not have money or standing. Madam Fickle also comments on the cunning of men. She was fooled by his protestations of love and his skilled acting, a predicament many of the women of this chapter find themselves in. A good actor, it seems, can easily seduce or marry the woman of his choosing. Madam Fickle also blames him for her current sins, claiming that he is the one who taught her how to deceive and to hurt people. And so she decides to make as many men as possible fall in love with her and then abandon them. Typically, this plan for revenge would end in tragedy and death for many. But D'Urfey manages to bring about a happy ending, although not before much use of disguise and cross-dressing throughout the play.

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241 Thomas D'Urfey. *Madam Fickle, or, The Witty False One, a Comedy.* (London: James Magnes and Rich. Bentley, 1677). *Early English Books Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014. II.ii (12-13).

Madam Fickle is a skilled performer who reads her intended audience easily. She knows that, to make every man fall in love with her, she must act as the woman he most desires. When Manley comes to woo her, she says to Silvia:

> this is my passionate Lover; one that Wooes by Method, and speaks blank Verse. Now must I change my temper suitable to his Tone, and speak in the same stile: let me see; *When Sapho lov'd! Oh Heaven! What throngs of woes oppres'd her harmless Breast?* Very well – I have it rarely. Now to my Posture – This Book – Languishing Eyes – So – And necessary Handkerchief to wipe Imaginary Tears off – The Devil's in't if this is not Melancholy enough.[242]

Madam Fickle is a true sophist here, preparing herself for the audience she must persuade. She knows what speeches and what actions, what tones and props will be effective, and she has no qualms about employing them to achieve her goals. Manley, of course, quickly falls in love with her because of her rhetorical skills. Madam Fickle employs the same method with all of her suitors: identify which persona will be most appealing to each, and perform that persona. As she explains to the audience, "My Panthers Breath shall draw `em to the Snare; my Tongue shall Charm; my Smiles Kindle Loves Fire in their amorous Souls, till they'r scorc'd severely; then forsake `em Whilst in my Breast, my Heart obdurate Flint Shall hear, and yet not pitty. / Thus all shall know that were like me refus'd / No Serpent like a Woman when abus'd."[243] Madam Fickle's speech could be directly out of a tragedy. She is hell-bent on revenge

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[242] Ibid., II.ii (17).

[243] Ibid., II.ii (20). [sic]

at any cost and seems to have barred herself from any real emotion. She plans to accomplish that revenge through sophistic rhetoric and acting.

Once Madam Fickle has a number of men desperately in love with her, she decides to take the plot to its apex through cross-dressing. She spreads a rumor that she has left town because she is too heart-sick to see one of her lovers; she then arranges a banquet for all of her suitors where, disguised as a man, she teases them and turns them against one another. She exclaims:

> Now am I in my opinion a second Machiavil, my Wit has finish'd Works as strong and great as Hercules 12 labours! Oh I cou'd hug my self for my inventions – they are so prosperous, as if Fate meant to make my Wit a Miracle for Men to wonder at. To betray in me's a Virtue, being first betray'd. The thought of which does like an eating Canker prey on my heart and vitals. Therefore sweet Revenge Thou art my Darling. Thus I'll blind their eyes, `Tis on the neck of Wit Revenge must rise.[244]

Previous to this scene, Madam Fickle plotted her revenge through the use of very feminine, though Sophistic, ploys. Flirting, tears, poetry, languishing, and coyness have been her main modus operandi. Now that she has assumed male costume, she associates herself with the most masculine of men, Machiavelli and Hercules. These men represent strength, power and control, all of the things that Madam Fickle so desperately wants after being abandoned by her husband. Further, this speech represents a transition in Madam Fickle. She now embraces her abandonment as the motivating factor for helping her discover her true self, as dictated by "Fate:" she feels complete when plotting her revenge on other men.

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[244] Ibid., V.i (53).

Madam Fickle's male persona, like Hercules and Machiavelli, is aggressive and macho. Depending on how Mary Lee played the role, Madam Fickle could be a caricature of male bravado, or a poignant commentary on masculinity. When Madam Fickle goes to the banquet with her suitors, dressed as a man, she tells them that Madam Fickle has fallen in love with him and hates all of the other men: "she had deserted Sir Arthur's house, only to be rid of your troublesome impertinences; she also did me the favour to desire me to give you this assurance, That she hated you all three, and her former proceedings with you, have been only to divert herself with your ceremonious Addresses."[245] Madam Fickle, in her male dress, speaks truth: she does hate them all and has been toying with them for her own amusement; she loves her self more than she loves anyone else in the play, except her estranged husband. As a woman, she could never express this blatant truth. But in the guise of a man, she can say exactly what she feels. She quickly becomes aggressive in this scene. When challenged to a fight, she declares, "I scorn to win a Lady of her perfections, with the loss but of a drop of blood, a River full I say, my veins drawn dry, and on the active gore fierce atoms darting to win my Love through streams of Death and Horror. I'll bathe my Lips in gore, kiss bleeding Wounds, cleave Helmets… I'll exhaust a Flood, turn Earth to Chaos, Oceans into Blood."[246] This speech continues on in much the same manner. But the imagery here is striking and horrifying. This play is meant to be

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[245] Ibid., V.iii (63).

[246] Ibid.

a comedy, but Madam Fickle is ready to spill rivers of her own blood and kiss gory wounds. Her masculine persona dominates this scene with its heavy and threatening speech, showing just what a woman scorned is capable of.

Madam Fickle's estranged and jealous husband, Friendlove, who has been masquerading as the servant Dorel for much of the play in order to observe his wife, steps in to prevent the three-to-one duel, which could only be Madam Fickle's suicide mission. Friendlove earlier in the play admits complete guilt for abandoning his wife out of unjustified jealousy. He steps forward and announces that the young man is actually a woman and the whole plot is discovered. Madam Fickle admits her real identity and explains her need for revenge on mankind. Friendlove admits that he was the one at fault. To his wife he says, "Consider humane frailty, and forgive my Crime of too much Jealousie… I swear I have been cruel to thy Virtue."[247] By asking for Madam Fickle's forgiveness in front of the other characters, Friendlove publicly gives her power over their relationship. Further, he also openly re-enters into their relationship in order to establish a more stable relationship. Though Madam Fickle'e behavior was outlandish and verged into tragic territory, it is clear at the end of the play that she was not at fault and that her adoption of male disguise was necessary for fixing her broken domestic situation. One of her suitors even states that, "I see she had some reason for what she did."[248] Reason, one of Machiavelli's ideals, was often

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[247] Ibid., Vi.iii (64).

[248] Ibid., V.iii (65).

considered the domain of men at this time, so none in this play could attribute Madam Fickle's actions to womanly irrationality. In the end, Madam Fickle forgives her husband because of her deep love for him. They presumably enter into a new relationship based on trust, respect and love, rather than jealousy and secret plots.

But Madam Fickle's forays into power do not end with the play. With the final lines, before the epilogue, she empowers the women of the audience. She tells them, "I have been false to night, and purchast hate, / But Ladies, on your smiles depends my fate: / Let me then gain one happy glance from you, / And th'Witty False One shall be ever True."[249] Though asking for the audience's applause or sanction is a common trope, the focus on the women's acceptance is notable. Madam Fickle's decision to lead a quiet and happy domestic life depends not on the men of the play or the men of the audience, but the women and their approval of her actions. As it turned out, *Madam Fickle* was successful, going through several printings after its initial performance and being requested at Court. The edition of 1677 records, "that its only good Fortune was, in being the Subject of the Courts Diversion, where the Noble Clemency and Good Nature were extremely requisite, in covering its defects from the too Censorious; His Majesty, according to His accustomed Royal and Excellent Temper, was pleas'd to descend so far as to give it a particular Applause, which was

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[249] Ibid., V.iii (66).

seconded by your Grace [The Duke of Ormond]."[250] So we can assume that Charles II enjoyed *Madam Fickle*.

Madam Fickle focuses on an abandoned wife who turns to revenge. Friendlove disowns their marriage and, therefore, Madam Fickle is justified in her actions. This scenario is common in other plays: the husband in some way violates the marriage contract and the wife must take drastic measures, usually ones that involve cross-dressing, to reform her husband's behavior. But, upon closer observation, it becomes apparent that these plays actually revolve around social contract theory. Though Locke published his works nearly a decade after many of these plays were performed, the connections between his theories and the language employed by these wives cannot be ignored. While *Madam Fickle* implicitly suggests a violation of contracts, *The Woman Captain* and *The Virtuous Wife* are far more explicit in their arguments.

Mr. Gripe of Thomas Shadwell's *The Woman Captain* is another jealous husband, but far more monstrous than Friendlove or Pinchwife. The *dramatis personae* describes him as "A miserable Wretch, that denies himself all Necessaries, very Jealous of his Wife."[251] Mrs. Gripe is also an object of desire to other men.

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[250] Qtd. in *The London Stage: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces, Together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment*. Part 1. Ed. William Van Lennep. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1965), 251 – 252.

[251] Thomas Shadwell, *The Woman Captain, A Comedy.* (London: Samuel Carr, 1680). *Early English Books Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014.

Bellamy, Wildman, and Sir Humphrey discuss Mrs. Gripe and her stingy husband in the following exchange:

> *Bell.* This damn'd Usurer has a pretty Wife, I have a devilish mind to her; but she's kept so close, though I have gone to borrow Money when I have no need on't, I cannot get access to her; the Rogue suspects every Male, from a Prince to a Kitchin-Boy.
> *Sir Humph.* She's so pretty on my Conscience, none would refuse her; I have set snares for her, she can never be seen but out of a Window, which is no bigger than the hole of a Pillory.
> *Wildm.* He locks her up, and always carries the Key about him.
> *Sir. Humph.* Nay, at Night he sows his Shirt and her Smock together, that upon any violent motion the twitch may wake him: There's a Horn-preventing Design.[252]

This dialogue is revealing, not only of Gripe's jealous behaviors, but also of the way the men view Mrs. Gripe and seduction. To them, Mrs. Gripe is an object to be had or prey to be snared. All three men want her, but her feelings on the matter are irrelevant. She is pretty and forbidden and that is enough to make her desirable. As far as these men, and the audience who is listening to them, are concerned, Mrs. Gripe is another woman with no agency, at the will of her husband or whatever man happens to be near.

Mr. Gripe is no better than these men in how he views his wife. Not only does he refuse to let her leave the house or receive male visitors, he also refuses to give her a sufficient amount of firewood or candles and only feeds her the cheapest and most basic food. When she complains and accuses him of tyranny, Gripe merely replies that all of these things are good for her constitution. To the charge of needless jealousy, he

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[252] Ibid., I.i (6).

tells her, "'Tis nothing but my love, my great love. Dost thou think I do not love my Money – why I am Jealous of that, and lock it up as I do thee – I know what a Treasure thou art."[253] By comparing his love for money with his love for his wife, Gripe highlights the fact that, to him, marriage is a financial arrangement. His claims of love are undercut by his very obvious greed and miserliness. Further, his statement, once again, figures Mrs. Gripe as an object to be had and kept shut up in a box, much like coins or currency.

Mrs. Gripe, though, is no Margery Pinchwife, doing as she is told and accepting what everyone tells her. From her first appearance on stage, her rhetoric is strong and rebellious. She asks her husband, "Will this Tyrannie never be at an end? Must I be always thus abrig'd of Liberty? A cram'd Fowl has a better time on't, for that's fed well; but I am coop'd up and starved."[254] Mrs. Gripe's word choices of "tyrannie" and "liberty" show that she is aware of her unjust treatment, unlike Margery Pinchwife. She demands some form of justice, even if it is just decent food and less supervision. At this point in the play, Mrs. Gripe has no plans for extreme revenge, but rather requests more liberty. In addition, the comparison to prey and food from the first scene is continued, only Mrs. Gripe considers that a caught and "cram'd" bird is better off because it is fed decently. She feels herself to be "coop'd up and starv'd," trapped as well as mistreated. This self-awareness of her own difficult

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[253] Ibid., I.ii (11).

[254] Ibid., I.ii (10).

situation is more than many female characters can boast and becomes crucial in her efforts for a better and more tolerable life.

Mrs. Gripe's language, as well as her resolve to change her situation, becomes more fierce and defined as the play continues. When once again she begs for a decent supper and Gripe tells her their strict diet is for her health, she declares, "I can endure your dissembling no longer. `Tis for the love of vile Money, and not care of my Health. I have born thy Tyranny too long."[255] Whereas in the first act, Mrs. Gripe asked how much longer the tyranny would last, in this statement, she declares it has lasted too long. She has moved from questioning to declaring. She also shifts from declaring that her liberty is being abridged, or limited, to claiming that she is a slave: "my Mother betray'd me in my Youth to the slavery of thy Age. Thou didst promise to be a Father to me; thou canst not be a Husband, and wilt not be a Father – cruel Tyrant."[256] Mrs. Gripe is desperate in her pleas for more freedom. Her situation is intolerable and her rhetoric reflects how oppressed she feels. She swears to "henceforward… be a Tigress" to her husband and tells him that her soldier twin brother, whom Gripe has never met, is coming to town with an army to avenge her.[257] She also declares that Gripe is violating her "Christian Liberty" and her rights as "an

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[255] Ibid., II.ii (21).

[256] Ibid.

[257] Ibid., II.ii (22).

English Woman."[258] Mrs. Gripe's language is proto-Lockean, social contract theory. Gripe has violated their agreement to treat Mrs. Gripe kindly, like a father. As such, she feels her rights have been taken away and that she is justified in rising up against him. She even tells him that her brother is raising a "supply [of soldiers] from Flanders" against him. Interestingly, Mrs. Gripe knows that, as a woman, she has no martial power against her husband and must rely on this "twin brother" that Gripe has never met.

Gripe does not respond well to this declaration of liberty and rights and the scene quickly turns violent. He threatens to beat her with his cane (a legal act if the cane was thinner than his thumb) but she "wrests it out of his hand," showing that, as a much younger individual, she is physically stronger than her captor.[259] When she refuses to go to her room when visitors arrive just a few lines longer, he declares, "In, in, or this knife shall be embrued with thy Blood."[260] This violent response reflects Gripe's disintegrating sense of control. He senses that Mrs. Gripe has hit her breaking point and will not respect the rules of marriage. Still she remains strong, declaring, "Help! Help! I will not go in." Though she is frightened, her resolve holds strong. The physical threat here is a powerful demonstration of just how much power a husband had over his wife, in general; but with both threats, Gripe's impotence is confirmed,

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[258] Ibid.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid.

first when Mrs. Gripe overpowers him and then when the guests arrive, saving Mrs. Gripe from a bloody, violent death.

Mrs. Gripe's plan to assert her independence and gain control over her life becomes apparent at the end of Act III, and her threats are not idle ones. She enters the stage "like a young Officer" accompanied by her brother's serjeant.[261] Mrs. Gripe's costume is both convincing and flattering. When she asks the serjeant if she can pass for a young officer, he replies that the clothes, "become you admirably; you are as brisk, as fierce an Officer as the best of `em; and so like your Brother, `tis amazing, had not I been privy to your Design and his, I should have sworn you were my Captain."[262] He even tells her that she "strut[s], cock[s], and look[s] fierce enough" to pass as a man. Here, the serjeant tells Mrs. Gripe, and by extension, the audience, that she looks like a man, but in an attractive way. She can pass for a man, looking exactly like her twin brother; but he also tells her that her clothes become her, or fit her well. Elizabeth Barry, as Mrs. Gripe, is able to walk the fine line between looking like a man while retaining her attractiveness. To become too masculine, at least for the audience, would have been too dangerous for what Mrs. Gripe plans to do with her husband.

Mrs. Gripe explains her design to the serjeant, becoming more impassioned as she goes:

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[261] Ibid., III.ii (39).

[262] Ibid.

> I'll have him under my Command now, or press him for Flanders… I'll teach Husbands to provoke their own Flesh… I'll make him such an example. I'll make all Husbands have a care, how by Injuries they sower their Wive's love into revenge, or their meekness into rage. I know he's a Coward, as all Tyrants are; and I'll make him e're I have done, as dearly as he loves his Money, part with a good Sum for fear of his life… Do you find him out, and get him to a private place, and let me alone.[263]

Mrs. Gripe is not working merely for her own liberty and revenge, though that is certainly part of it. She is aware that many other wives in England are oppressed and abused. She wishes to set an example for other husbands that, if they treat their wives poorly, their wives are justified in fighting back. Her speech here highlights the potential for power that women have, which they allow to simmer just under the surface. According the Mrs. Gripe, tyrannical behavior and oppression convert "love into revenge" and "meekness into rage." Love and meekness are, of course, the expected characteristics of a wife. But again Mrs. Gripe invokes social contract theory: when the husband does not hold up his end of the contract to be fair and kind, love and meekness are replaced by revenge and rage, very serious and aggressive emotions. Her final command to the serjeant to "get him to a private place, and let me alone," is quite threatening and foreboding. If the roles were reversed, and she was really a man and Gripe was a woman, the implied violence would be shocking. As it is, she has already physically overpowered him once and stood up to his threats of stabbing, so clearly she has some physical ability. But what exactly she plans to do at

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[263] Ibid.

this point is left ambiguous, leaving the audience on edge. As she explains, "a desperate ill, must have a desperate cure."[264]

Mrs. Gripe quickly takes her revenge, at least on a temporary and superficial level. When Gripe accuses Mrs. Gripe of being a whore, she (dressed as her brother) strikes him and declares, "Villain! Thou ly'st – I know her virtue; all thy damn'd Generation put together, have not half her Honesty."[265] Here she gets the satisfaction of hitting him and abusing him verbally. She also gets to practice her swearing skills, which she feared earlier in the play would not be sufficient for a captain in the military. She acts the man perfectly, chivalrously defending her own honor, hitting Gripe, and swearing.

Gripe fears this captain, trembling and begging before 'him.' His cowardice is further proven when Mrs. Gripe threatens to kill him, much as she predicted earlier. He confesses to many crimes, including wronging his wife, when faced with the possibility of death. But instead of killing him, Mrs. Gripe and the serjeant "list" Gripe:

> *Serj.* Hear me, good Captain, your Recruits are not yet full: he seems to be a lusty old Fellow, and can carry Arms yet.
> *Mrs. Gripe* Say you so?
> *Gripe.* What a Devil does he say, Arms? That's as bad [as death]!
> *Mrs. Gripe.* If you think so – take him to your Custody. When he is in Flanders, if I hear not of my Sister in a reasonable time I'll kill him. In the mean while I'll put him into the Van on all occasions –

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[264] Ibid.

[265] Ibid., IV.i (43).

> *Gripe.* Sir, sir! Why Captain, Noble Captain, I am a most hideous coward, I shall run away, and spoil all your Men.
> *Mrs. Gripe*. If you do, I will hang you. No resisting, here take a shilling.
> *Gripe.* I must confess I have a great respect for a Shilling, and never could refuse one in my life.[266]

Gripe believes that, if he does not agree to join the army, the "captain" will kill him. But joining the army is as terrifying, if not more so, than immediate death. Mrs. Gripe even promises to kill him if he runs away. Death seems inevitable to Gripe. But it is the shilling, the necessary exchange of money to make the listing contract sound, that convinces Gripe of what to do – as he says, he cannot resist a single shilling, even if it means facing his biggest fear.

Mrs. Gripe proves her strength and ability to perform masculinity throughout this scene. She is knowledgeable in military procedure: she knows the listing officer has to give a shilling to the man she lists; she knows the penalty for desertion is hanging; and she maintains strong, active language throughout; her credibility as an officer and a man is beyond question. The real demonstration of masculinity, though, comes when she speaks Latin, an unusual feat for a woman. When Gripe threatens that he has the law and friends on his side to prevent his listing, she tells him, "You lye Sirrah, you have no Friend; and for Law, I'll make you know that *Inter arma silent Leges."*[267] This Ciceronian statement that the laws are mute in times of war not only demonstrates Mrs. Gripe's familiarity with a traditionally masculine language as well

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[266] Ibid., IV.i (44).

[267] Ibid., IV.i (45).

as military history, but is also a serious threat that the government will not protect Gripe. Men were frequently pressed into the military against their will at this time, and Gripe is well aware of that. Further, the claim that the government will do nothing for Gripe is particularly cogent for Mrs. Gripe. As a woman and a wife, the law does not protect her from her husband's oppression. She has no legal standing of her own; she cannot enter into contracts or make money. In order to even eat or have shelter, she must put up with her husband's caprices. It is because the law falls silent in the war of marriage that she must resort to the extreme and unusual tactics of dressing as a man to change her husband's behavior, rather than simply leaving or divorcing him. [268]

This potent scene is followed quickly by one of comic relief. The very men who had been scheming to seduce Mrs. Gripe at the very beginning of the play, invite the "captain" to dine with them and offer anything at their disposal, including "a fresh hansom Wench."[269] Mrs. Gripe claims that would be most welcome after being in camp for so long and declares herself "a Man at Arms in all points -- ."[270] She then goes on to kiss and flirt with the mistresses of the play, Phillis, Celia and Chloris. Two of the women fall desperately in love with Mrs. Gripe and, of course, hilarious

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[268] The fact that her mother made her marriage arrangement, and that Gripe promised to be a father to her, suggests that Mrs. Gripe's father must have died, so Mrs. Gripe cannot return to her father's house for protection; and clearly she does not trust her own mother. She can depend on the protection of her brother, but he is a captain in the army, so does not have an established home or probably enough income to support himself and his sister.

[269] Ibid., IV.i (46).

[270] Ibid., IV.i (46).

assignations and mistaken identities ensue. These standard plot devices are necessary to make Mrs. Gripe's challenges to traditional gender norms less threatening. She explicitly declares her rights to liberty and to freedom from oppression; she compares being a wife to being a slave and implicitly accuses the government of not protecting her. These strong opinions would have turned off the audience, if not drawn the attention of the censors, if left undiluted. These very bawdy and comic scenes with the low prostitutes help diffuse the tension built up by the Gripes; but Mrs. Gripe's declarations cannot be completely ignored or forgotten.

Mrs. Gripe spends much of the rest of the play physically and mentally abusing her husband by "training" him for the military. She has the serjeant teach him drills and marching forms. And whenever Gripe performs these things incorrectly, Mrs. Gripe yells at him or hits him; whenever he talks back to her or acts cowardly, she punishes him with threats of torture and death. She has full leeway to exact her revenge. She canes him several times, just as he would have done to her earlier in the play. Eventually, he calls her a "tyrant" exactly as she called him.[271] By the end of the act, Mrs. Gripe tricks three other men, all of whom are drunken debauchers and bullies, into enlisting with her. Sir Humphrey, who would have ensnared her with seduction earlier in the play, tells her "You may command all my House, and I beg of you to make it your own while you stay in England."[272] By the end of Act IV, Mrs.

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[271] Ibid., IV.i (53).

[272] Ibid., IV.i (54).

Gripe has enlisted four men, all of whom are in need of correction, and gained power over a landed English aristocrat and his home. Mrs. Gripe has the upper hand and a tremendous amount of power, all due to the use of breeches and convincing, masculine rhetoric.

Mrs. Gripe manipulates this power to make herself safe and secure. Throughout the fifth act, Gripe fantasizes about different ways to kill his wife once he gets her home. Strangling, smothering, opium and a knitting needle under the arm all make the list of possible death scenarios. This scene of Gripe plotting his wife's murder is a dark reminder of what Mrs. Gripe faces if she does not pull of the plot successfully. According to Gripe, all of his schemes would be undetectable and he would get away with the murder. At the end of the play, Gripe's villainy is absolute.

Ultimately, with the threat of being sent to Flanders, Gripe signs the deed that gives Mrs. Gripe her original jointure back and an annual allowance. With that, Mrs. Gripe can live on her own safely and so she reveals herself, which she does with a simple statement, not an elaborate de-wigging or majestic re-appearance: "And now good Mr. Gripe, your much abus'd Wife is free, and thanks you for her liberty."[273] Here, she concisely restates the argument of the play: when a woman is "abus'd" she has the right to free herself from the marriage contract in order to gain her liberty. Mr. Gripe slinks off the stage with a simple, "Am I thus Cozen'd – I'll go home, and starve

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[273] Ibid., V.i (72).

to Death. The Devil take you all – and so farewel --."[274] For all his threats and plans, Mr. Gripe is once again proven impotent and weak. The other men who have been abused by Mrs. Gripe are not so feeble in their responses, though they are equally unable to exact any real revenge:

> *Sir Chr.* Cudgel'd and beaten thus damnably by a Woman! I hope She-Captain, you will release us now…
> *Blund.* `Sheart! Were ever men so dishonour'd as we!
> *Heild.* Beaten and bruis'd be a Woman!

These men, when they believed Mrs. Gripe to be a man, went along with the abuse (mostly to avoid criminal prosecution for their drunken debauchery). They willingly signed up for her "service" thinking they would get out of it quickly and avoid jail. Though they complained about being put through training, they went along with it to put on a show for the authorities. Ultimately, the result for these men is the same – they will not be taken to jail for property destruction and disturbing the peace. But once they find out that a woman, and not a man, beat and abused them, they become enraged and ashamed. Their shame demonstrates just how much power Mrs. Gripe was able to accrue. If they had simply brushed off this incident, then we could assume that Mrs. Gripe was ineffectual. But their strong response suggests otherwise.

Mrs. Gripe once again reminds the audience of the importance of social contracts and the power that women have when they are abused. She ends the play with, "Now all ye Husbands, let me Warn ye! / If you'd preserve your Honours, or

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[274] Ibid.

your Lives, / Ne'r dare be Tyrants o're your Lawful Wives."[275] Throughout the play, Mrs. Gripe emphasizes her position in her marriage as oppressed, enslaved and abused, which justifies the extreme measures she goes to, such as cross-dressing and beating her husband. By the end of the play, she is at liberty to do as she pleases, except re-marry. But she can live independently and not fear being murdered by the one man who was supposed to protect her. But in addition to these things, Mrs. Gripe also discovers a new sense of her power and ability. When she first dressed as her brother, she feared she would not be able to curse and swagger and dictate military drill. In the last two acts, the audience witnesses her confidence increase with these manly tasks. The audience even sees her successfully flirt with and woo two ladies. By the very last lines on stage, when Mrs. Barry gives the epilogue, still in a captain's uniform, she even threatens the audience with a duel, stating, "The Devil's in you all, if this don't hit: / Yet after all, if any one there be / So careless of his Life to anger me, / In daring to dispraise the play, or Action, / There take my Glove, for I'll have Satisfaction."[276] Certainly, this is a humorous threat, not meant to be taken seriously. But the audience still leaves the play on the words of a woman threatening to do to them what they just witnessed her do to the men of the play if they do not act appropriately. Such an implication of violence must have been felt to some degree.

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[275] Ibid.

[276] Ibid., "Epilogue."

The Woman Captain premiered in the fall of 1679 by the Duke's Company, probably in September. The Duke's Company premiered another play in the same season, also probably in September, which features an odious husband and resourceful but honorable wife who chooses to cross-dress. Thomas D'Urfey's *The Virtuous Wife* depicts an even more disturbing marital arrangement. Before the action of the play, Mr. Beverly duped Olivia into marrying him by pretending to be Beauford, Olivia's absentee fiancé. After their wedding, Beverly confessed to Olivia and begged her forgiveness; Olivia, disgusted with Beverly, does not forgive him, but she accepts their marriage. Beverly, up until the action of the play, has been cavorting with his mistress, Jenny Wheadle, and giving her money and jewelry. Though Olivia is not in love with Beverly, she is the "virtuous wife" of the title, and disapproves of Beverly's very public extramarital relationship.

The Virtuous Wife is rife with disguises. Almost every character at some point dons a different hat or coat and is mistaken for someone else. Some of the characters use this fluidity of identity to their own advantage, promoting their plots and machinations. Other characters, when mistaken for someone else unintentionally, find themselves beaten and abused. This play is highly concerned with the ability of an individual to become someone else, simply through disguises and acting. Fluid identity is the basis of Beverly and Olivia's marriage and it drives the plots and sub-plots of the play. This issue is most explicit with the character of Lady Beardly, one of the rare instances of male cross-dressing on the Restoration Stage. Lady Beardly is a three-time widow with an insatiable sexual appetite. She is a vulgar and comic

character, but by the end of the play, she is beaten on stage by her new husband for her transgressions. The violence of this scene is only mitigated by the fact that she was played by a man, Mr. Nokes. Mr. Nokes' ridiculous cross-dressing as Lady Beardly is a direct contrast to Olivia's dressing as a man at the end of the play in order to reform her husband. While Lady Beardly serves as comic relief, Olivia serves as astute social commentary on the position of women. Pearson notes that, "these [gender] reversals stress the frailty or folly of the play's men and the strength of the virtuous wife, who contrasts so forcefully with the immorality or monstrousness of so many of the play's male characters."[277] Olivia emerges at the end of the play not only blameless, but also strong and powerful.

The confrontation scene between Olivia and Beverly, when Olivia discovers for sure that he is keeping a mistress, echoes the marital contract theories found in *The Woman Captain.* When she suspects Beverly's transgressions she tells him, "now I am too sensible of your lewdness and ingratitude, and be confident I'll be revenged at full – for from this moment, the duty of a Wife, and the reserved behaviour incident to that name, shall be as far from me, as Constancy from thee. Now by yon sky it shall, I have sworn it."[278] Olivia breaks off their former contract and establishes a new one. Her poor behavior will be proportional to his inconstancy. Therefore, if he wishes her to

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277 *The Prostituted Muse,* 106.

278 Thomas D'Urfey. *The Virtuous Wife, or, Good Luck at Last, A Comedy.* (London: R. Bentley and M. Magnes, 1680). *Early English Books Online*. Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 16, 2014. II.ii (24).

behave decently, he will have to remain faithful. Beverly, the consummate philanderer, admits all and suggests Olivia simply "wink" at his indiscretions. But he takes a different tone when she threatens to have an affair of her own. "Is it possible that I can be patient, and hear this Madam? Do not presume too much upon my temper; for assure yourself, since you have thus far provok'd me; your Insolence has taken away all guilt on my part, for whatever priviledge I take, I am sure you plead by a contrary Charter, and must own bondage."[279] In this pompous speech, Beverly sums up the double standard many married women faced with unfaithful husbands. The men, who control the money and the house and the property, can pretty much do whatever they please. But the wives "must own bondage" if they wish to have a house and food. Olivia, though, rejects this arrangement, telling him, "Bondage – I laugh at it – no Sir, you cancell'd your right in that, when you broke your Marriage vow."[280] Olivia's laughter at his ideas of bondage demonstrates an exciting strength of character and, more importantly, an awareness and knowledge of how contracts work. Although she will have to pursue unusual tactics to reform her husband, Olivia believes herself justified in doing so. Olivia does not, however, want to completely break with Beverly; she does not plan to trick him into giving her a settlement of money or to live separately. Her goal in the play is to change Beverly for the better; at her very core, she is the virtuous wife and will fulfill that role entirely. As she

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[279] Ibid.

[280] Ibid.

explains, she was "taught Virtue from my Cradle, practis'd it, supply'd the office of a Wife with credit, and ne'r did action that could taint my Innocence."[281] Her virtue and commitment to her unwanted role as Beverly's wife is an essential component of her identity.

Olivia's plan to reform her husband is two-fold. First, she wants to make him jealous of her, as she is of him. Second, she wishes to break off the relationship between Beverly and his mistress so that he will have no one but Olivia. The first half of her plan is accomplished with the well-timed arrival of Beauford back to Chelsey. Beverly knows that Olivia and Beauford were engaged and found each other attractive the one or two times they met. So Olivia uses that knowledge to her advantage. Olivia feigns an assignation with the easily-duped Beauford. Beauford would like nothing better than to actually cuckold Beverly, because not only is he attracted to Olivia, he is also angry at Beverly for cheating him out of a wife. But Olivia only manipulates the situation to make Beverly believe she is having a relationship with Beauford. Beverly, though, through use of disguises and tricks, thwarts all attempts for Beauford to be alone with Olivia; as a result, he does not feel the jealousy that Olivia hopes will reform him. Instead, he feels confident and victorious. The only avenue left to Olivia, to change her husband while still remaining virtuous, is to change her own identity to a man and seduce Jenny Wheadle away from Beverly.

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[281] Ibid.

Olivia first appears in men's clothes in the fourth act. She explains to her sister-in-law Lidia that, by leaving her husband's house (something she can only do in male disguise), she hopes to impact Beverly: "`tis only the loss of my company, can make him sensible of the blessing of it, for the value of a Wife, as of all good things else, is best known by its want."[282] Jealousy has not worked, so Olivia hopes her absence will cause Beverly to soften.

She next appears in men's clothes to Beverly and Jenny Wheadle while they are fighting. It is revealed that Beverly, who actually was very much in love with Jenny initially, has tired of her, which he seems to do a lot with women. When Olivia enters the stage dressed as a man and calling himself Dangerfeild, Jenny feels rejected and unloved by Beverly; this is perfect timing for Olivia's plans. As a woman, Olivia knows exactly what other women want to hear when being courted. She addresses Jenny with, "Heavens! What strange barbarity is this? Can any man be so destitute of Nature, Reason, and Humanity, to draw Tears from so incomparable a Beauty? Ah, charming creature, to pretious for mankind, since us'd so cruelly! What adoration can attone this crime? Life is too poor, to mean a Sacrifice."[283] "Dangerfeild" continues on in the same vein, emphasizing how beautiful Jenny is and how unmanly and cruel Beverly is. Not only does Olivia quickly convince Jenny to abandon Beverly with her

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[282] Ibid. IV.i (40).

[283] Ibid. IV.iii (46 – 47).

eloquence, but she also emphasizes Beverly's faults and crimes, against both Jenny and Olivia. Jenny is immediately enamoured with the poetic young man.

Olivia promises Jenny the one thing she, and by extension, most women of these plays, want: marriage. "Dangerfeild" exclaims, "in stead of his base impure love, I'le greet your beauty by the name of Husband; I'le cure your mangled fame; So well I love ye, I'le Marry ye."[284] As a fallen woman, Jenny's hopes of a decent marriage are slim. Beverly is already married and has just been arguing with and abusing Jenny. So for Jenny to receive an offer of marriage at this instance is the best she can possibly hope for in life. In addition, though, Olivia gives voice to a deep desire. Her declaration, false though it may be, of "So well I love ye, I'le Marry ye" seems to be what she most wants from Beverly: to be *well* loved; not tricked, not cheated, not cheated on, but well loved enough to enter into a socially sanctioned marital contract. It is what Jenny wants to, so she quickly agrees and goes to fetch her jewelry to give to "Dangerfeild" as a dowry.

Jenny's quick desertion of Beverly pushes him to hate Jenny and by the end of the play, he has publicly announced the end of their affair. Jenny gets a raw deal, being dragged in front of the other characters, including the disguised Olivia, while wearing a "mean Countrey-Habit" and having Beverly declare that she, "this piece of Countrey dirt was once my Mistress, Lady of my Heart, of all my Love, my Honour,

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[284] Ibid. IV.iii (47).

whose face made me forget a virtuous Wife."[285] But this action represents Beverly's reformation and realization that he has done wrong to his own wife in a number of ways. When "Dangerfeild" reveals her true identity, Beverly tells Olivia, "from this moment, all base drossy thoughts, that soil'd the life and lustre of my Judgement, shall vanish; and instead of those, thy Beauty, Love, Constancy and Wit, shall crown my heart – blot from thy breast my faults, and let our union teach the Wild, Roving, and inconstant world, how they should Live and Love."[286] Beverly has been reformed, but only as a result of Olivia's cross-dressing and seducing Jenny. The pair agrees to renew their marriage contract and Olivia goes so far as to say to him, "Whensoe'er yours was, this is my wedding day," demonstrating her recommitment to their marriage and her forgiveness of Beverly.[287]

Olivia claims to be changed by the experience as well. When she reveals herself to Beverly and assures him that it is possible that Dangerfeild and herself are the same, she claims to be, "one that to farther her revenge, has so long worn these fortunate breeches, that she can hardly consent to return to *quondam* Petticoats again; one that has cur'd your jealousie by giving the cause to be so, and lastly won your Mistriss in spight of your Sword, and Policy."[288] Olivia's use of the third person here

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[285] Ibid. V.i (63).

[286] Ibid., V.i (65).

[287] Ibid.

[288] Ibid.

suggests that she has found a new identity through Dangerfeild, one that will stay with her after her renewed vows with Beverly. Olivia draws strength and independence from the knowledge that she can survive without her petticoats and can manipulate her situation to an acceptable conclusion. While at the beginning of the play she was a frustrated and vexed wife with an inconstant and obnoxious husband, at the end of the play, she has asserted her power and established a new marital contract with her husband. But Olivia only accomplishes such a kinetic change through the use of breeches and disguise.

The theme of reaffirming original marriage contracts and rediscovering a spouse's value is also found in Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode.* The context of the cross-dressing and its relevance to the plot of the play have been discussed in Chapter 2. What is important to assess now is the complexity of Doralice's character, her specific motives for cross dressing, and how she is changed by the end of the play by her time spent in pants. From the very beginning of the play, Dryden establishes that Doralice is a complex character who is more prominent and developed than Melantha. Dryden even has Doralice open the play by singing a song about how love fades after marriage; opening a play with a female character was very unusual at this time and indicates the importance of that character.

Doralice's distinct and non-stereotypical personality is further demonstrated when she meets Palamede for the first time. He attempts to flatter her in order to seduce her quickly and move on. But Doralice resists his compliments, asking him, "how many more of these fine things can you say to me?" and asserting that, "this

[conversation] will not give you the reputation of a wit with me. You traveling *monsieurs* live upon the stock you have got abroad, for the first day or two; to repeat with a good memory, and apply with a good grace, is all your wit."[289] Doralice quickly recognizes his artifice and ascribes to him the qualities of Castiglione's courtier. She knows that Palamede is full of empty rhetoric and only has one goal in mind. Once he gives up the empty flattery, she starts to admire him, but confesses that she is virtuous and married, and therefore their relationship is doomed.

Despite being witty, clever, and virtuous, Doralice is trapped in a loveless marriage with Rhodophil. His mistress, Melantha, is engaged to Palamede, forming a neat love square. Rhodophil seems to truly despise Doralice, imagining the day she will die and planning to "make one Holy Day in the almanac;" he declares, "setting my victorious foot upon thy head, in the first hour of thy silence… I will swear by thy ghost, an oath as terrible to me as Styx is to the gods, never more to be in danger of the banes of matrimony."[290] Doralice, though, gives as good as she gets, and spars eloquently with her husband. Further, when he tells her that he has tried to make their marriage work by "fanc[ying] thee all the fine women in the town" in order to find her attractive so he can stomach the idea of sleeping with her, Doralice gives vent to the feelings that many of these rejected wives experience. After Rhodophil has left the stage, Doralice soliloquizes:

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[289] John Dryden, *Secret Love, or The Maiden-Queen*, in *The Works of John Dryden*. Ed. Edward Niles Hooker, H.T. Swedenberg, Jr. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), I.i.29 – 34.
[290] Ibid., III.i.47- 54.

> `Tis a pretty time we women have on't, to be made widows while we are married. Our husbands think it reasonable to complain, that we are the same, and the same to them, when we have more reason to complain, that they are not the same to us. Because they cannot feed on one dish, therefore, we must be starved. `Tis enough that they have a sufficient ordinary provided, and a table ready spread for `em: if they cannot fall to and eat heartily, the fault is theirs; and `tis pity, methinks, that the good creature should be lost, when many a poor sinner would be glad on't.[291]

Here, Doralice is offended by Rhodophil's dissatisfaction. Rhodophil rejects her, not because she is ugly or dumb or annoying, but simply because she is his wife. To Rhodophil's mind, the bonds of matrimony are enough to ruin his feelings for Doralice, and he feels justified in pursuing another woman. Doralice sees the disparity between Rhodophil and herself; while it is socially permissible for him to look for variety, she cannot. She is not permitted to publicly complain that her husband is always the same, as he complains the she is. Frustration with this poor treatment and inequality pushes Doralice to take advantage of Palamede's attraction and manipulate Rhodophil into being jealous of her.

In Act IV, Doralice dresses as a boy in order to escape her own house and get to Palamede. But she takes advantage of the situation to test Palamede and demonstrate her own wit and control of the situation. Palamede supposes the youth before him to be some misguided boy who is trying to keep him from Doralice. Palamede is so oblivious to Doralice that he even believes the boy to be making homosexual advances on him, declaring, "a very lewd wicked boy! O' my conscience

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[291] Ibid., III.i.74 – 81.

thou wouldst debauch me, and hast some evil designs on my person."[292] Doralice, in response, draws Palamede into a logical trap. When he complains he wishes to leave "the boy" to go to his mistress, Doralice suggests that the mistress might already be out "to go in masquerade as well as you; to observe your haunts and keep you company without your knowledge."[293] She goes on to claim, "if I were she, I would disguise on purpose to try your wit; and come to my servant like a riddle: *Read me, and take me*."[294] The audience, this whole time, is in on the joke, of course. All Palamede has wanted for the entirety of the play is to "take" Doralice. Here, she presents herself to him, telling him exactly what is going on, and he is oblivious. He even claims that, "I could know her in any shape: my good genius would prompt me to find out a handsome woman."[295] With this statement, Doralice's wit and aptitude for disguise are proven; she has clearly outsmarted Palamede.

Later in the same scene, Rhodophil and Melantha enter the stage with Melantha also dressed as a boy. Melantha's cross-dressing serves as a foil to Doralice's. While Doralice is confident in male disguise, Melantha fears she will be discovered. She fears to participate in the conversation or drink with the other men, where Doralice embraces the male bravado. Doralice even engages in a battle of wits

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[292] Ibid., IV.iii.21-22.

[293] Ibid., IV.iii.41-42.

[294] Ibid., IV.iii 45-46.

[295] Ibid., IV.iii 47-48.

with Melantha, whose ridiculous and affected mannerisms give her away. The scene is bawdy and suggestive, but Doralice comes out the ultimate winner. Other than Melantha, the three characters on stage are delighted by what is transpiring, quite enjoying the transgressed gender boundaries. Kristina Straub argues that, "the cross-dressed actress of the early to mid-eighteenth century seems to constitute a historical possibility for pleasure in sexual and gender ambiguities."[296] This scene in *Marriage à la Mode* presents that very pleasure for the audience's amusement. The characters on stage are thoroughly enjoy this interaction; the audience, by extension, must also have found it comic and entertaining. This scene, while bawdy, is not primarily about showing off women's legs; it is about being funny and making the characters and the audience laugh.

After the battle of the wits, the scene ends with a marked assertion of Doralice's strength and independence. When the men are called off to help the more serious characters of the play, they want to house the two "boys" together for safe keeping. Doralice rejects this suggestion, declaring, "Pish, take no care for us, but leave us in the streets. I warrant you, late as it is, I'll find my lodging as well as any drunken bully of `em all."[297] This statement reveals Doralice's comfort in men's

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[296] Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), 127.

[297] Dryden, *Secret Love,* IV.iii 167-168.

clothing and her dislike of any male patronage. She feels confident she can fend for herself, even in the dangerous streets.

By the end of the play, Doralice accomplishes what she had set out to do: she reforms Rhodophil, who comes to love her again. In the process, she also discovers a renewed love for him and she emerges as the only true voice of reason in the play. When Rhodophil and Palamede begin to fight over their poor behavior, Doralice declares, "Hold, hold! Are not you two a couple of mad fighting fools, to cut one another's throats for nothing?... But can neither of you be jealous of what you love not."[298] Her admonition that the men cannot be angry because they do not love the right women is what causes Rhodophil to realize that he is jealous of her and, therefore, that he loves her. It takes Doralice's simple analysis of the situation to show each man what he truly wants. Further, Doralice participates in a negotiation scene with Palamede and Rhodophil about how the two couples will continue their friendship without falling in love with the wrong people again; Melantha is not included in this conversation. When Rhodophil suggests that they "make a firm league not to invade each other's property," Doralice includes a condition: "that whoever breaks the league, either by war abroad or by neglect at home, both the women shall revenge themselves by the help of the other party."[299] With this proviso, Doralice ensures Rhodophil's faithfulness through a mutually assured destruction clause.

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[298] Ibid., V.i.280-284.

[299] Ibid., V.i.319-326.

Though extreme, it is effective and the play ends with a renewed marital contract for Doralice and Rhodophil. Doralice discovers in herself the ability to love Rhodophil again and be a contented and virtuous wife; she reforms Rhodophil and, to the very end, maintains her self-valued virtue by rejecting Palamede, who happily marries Melantha. Social order is restored, but not without the reasoned actions of a cross-dressing and rhetorically powerful woman.

In all of these plays, the women, whether fallen or married, are justified in their extreme actions; the plays emphasize their dire circumstances and the wrongs that have been committed against them. The social system, which is supposedly designed to protect the best interests of these very women, has failed them in numerous ways. These instances of social failure are not few and far between; rather, the plays of this era are filled with them, demonstrating that it is a bad and oppressive system. The fallen women and wives discussed in this chapter choose to violate the rules of the system that has failed them by working outside those rules. Social mores dictate that women must do certain things; when those certain things are no longer sustainable, these characters put on pants and bypass those rules entirely. Doing so is the only way for them to defend their honor and their rights and ultimately find happiness. These characters in breeches, and the women who played them, are not merely eye candy; they are apt but entertaining commentary on a flawed social system.

Chapter 4

WHAT IMPUDENT BOLD THINGS:

TRAVESTY AND ALL-FEMALE PRODUCTIONS

What think you Sirs, was't not all well enough,
Will you not grant that we can strut, and huff.
Men may be proud, but faith for ought I see,
They neither walk, nor cock, so well as we.
-Epilogue, Spoken by Mrs. Reeves, to *The Maiden Queen*

Many scholars who discuss breeches and travesty roles, such as Rogers, Howe, and Senelick, argue that actresses could not possible have been truly convincing as men. The historical reality, though, is that many women outside the theater successfully dressed and lived as men, going undetected for years, during this time period, as well as others. The actresses of the theater very possibly could have done the same for the few hours they were on stage. Besides dressing as men, the actresses, as suggested in the above epigram, could be perfectly proficient at acting as men, even excelling at it when needed for satire or mockery. Beth Friedman-Romell claims that audience members of this time, while being fully aware of the gender of the person performing on stage (and their name, the socio-economic standing, the gossip about them), would "willingly and pleasurably [give] themselves over to the illusion. While on some level, spectators always 'knew' they were watching travesty, they often believed and desired the performer anyway, a desire complicated by each audience

member's individual subjectivity."[300] The audience wanted to see illusion, spectacle, and costuming. They wanted to participate in what Coleridge would later describe as the willing suspension of disbelief. And the theater managers, playwrights and actresses played into that willingness. During the years of the Restoration and early 18th century, the London theaters frequently staged productions in which actresses took male parts or performed entire plays. This chapter will consider three types of cross-gender casting that are all different from the traditional breeches roles discussed earlier. The first type is the intentional travesty role, which features a male character which the playwright wrote to be performed by an actress. The second type is the unintentional travesty role, a male character taken over by an actress in repertory. The third type that will be considered is the all-female cast, performances in which women played all of the roles in a revived play from the repertory. Although this dissertation argues that breeches roles, as written by playwrights, represent gender-questioning and subversive acts, these breeches roles are still primarily the acts of the authors (some of whom were female, but many of whom were male) and the theater managers who produced the plays. But the cross-dressing represented by travesty roles and all-female productions requires more agency on the part of the women wearing the pants, not the men who put them there. By examining these particular instances of cross-dressing, it becomes even more apparent that breeches and travesty roles are not *only* about

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[300] Beth Friedman-Romell, "Breaking the Code: Toward a Reception Theory of Theatrical Cross-Dressing in Eighteenth –Century London," *Theatrical Journal* 47.4 (Dec. 1997): 467-468, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3208987.

attracting male audience members and showing off female bodies. Rather, in addition to the sexual nature of the theater and the actress, the power and potential of the female performer becomes clear when she dons pants in non-male-dictated circumstances. These instances represent a spectrum of female agency; we can never know for sure how a woman in pants, or the audience who saw her, felt about that cross-dressing. And we can never know whose idea it was first, or the intent behind it. But all of these instances of breeches roles, travesty roles, and all-female productions taken together create the possibility for female power and subversive gender performances.

Travesty roles, or male roles performed by women, occur a number of times between 1660 and the early eighteenth century. In at least two cases, Dryden and D'Avenant's adaptation of *The Tempest* and Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*, the playwrights intentionally included travesty roles, as proven through paratexts and dramatis personae. In other instances, actresses took on male roles in plays that had been in the repertory for some time. Both instances offer exciting possibilities for gender questioning and satire of male behavior.

The first recorded instance of a travesty role occurs in Dryden and D'Avenant's musical adaptation of *The Tempest*. Originally performed by the Duke's Company in November of 1667, this adaptation was highly successful, running eight

times that November.[301] Dryden and D'Avenant, though, made some significant changes to Shakespeare's original, and not just by adding music and simplifying the language, as was frequently the case in Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare. In order to bring balance to the plot, the adaptors added the role of Hippolito, a man who has never seen a woman (Dryden and D'Avenant also add a second daughter, Dorinda).[302] According to Prospero, Hippolito is the orphaned Duke of Mantua who was left to Prospero's care before Prospero was banished to the island. The authors cast an actress, Jane Long, play Hippolito. According to the prologue, the casting was the result of a limited amount of young actors: "Who by our dearth of Youths are forc'd t'employ / One of our Women to present a Boy."[303] This claim seems a little forced, though, in light of the litany of jokes throughout the play about Hippolito's lack of masculinity. Further, the prologue highlights Jane Long's ability to act exquisitely as a boy while still maintaining her feminine qualities off the stage. When writing of using a woman to play a man, the prologue claims: "And that's a transformation you will say / Exceeding all the Magick in the Play. / Let none expect in the last Act to find / Her sex transform'd from man to Woman-kind. / Whate're she was before the Play began, / All you shall see of her is perfect man. / Or if your fancy

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301 *The London Stage: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces, Together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment*. Part 1. Ed. William Van Lennep. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1965), 123-124.

302 John Dryden and William D'Avenant, "Preface" to *The Tempest, or, The Enchanted Island, A Comedy.* (London: Henry Herringman, 1670). *Early English Books Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014.

303 John Dryden and William D'Avenant, "Prologue" to *The Tempest.*

will be further led, / To find her Woman, it must be abed."[304] Elizabeth Howe reads this prologue as distinctly bawdy, and as only functioning to eroticize the role of Hippolito before the action of the play.[305] But Howe only considers the final couplet of the prologue. When taken in the context of the preceding six lines, the prologue is actually applauding Long's acting ability, likening it to "Magick." The audience expected plays with breeches roles to end with a gender reveal at the end, which might be sexually exciting to some audience members. But here, Dryden and D'Avenant actively work to forewarn the audience that this cross-dressing role will not do the same thing; the audience will not see Long transformed from a man to a woman. Yes, the final couplet is sexually suggestive. But the real argument here is that only those lucky few who are intimate with Long will know her true gender; for everyone else, she will appear a "perfect man."

Hippolito is hilariously naïve. Prospero has kept him isolated for his entire life; he knows only what Prospero has taught him. So when he learns of women and other men during the course of the play, he no longer understands himself or his place in the world. His language reflects this new uncertainty, but also plays on the fact that Hippolito is really a woman in pants. When Hippolito speaks to Dorinda for the first time, he tells her, "I must confess, I was inform'd I am a man, But if I fright you, I

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[304] Ibid.

[305] Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 55-56.

shall wish I were some other Creature."[306] Upon meeting Dorinda, Hippolito questions the validity of everything Prospero has told him, so he questions if he truly qualifies as "man." He even suggests that he could be something other than what he really is, "some other Creature," much as Jane Long is while performing this role. The implication that one can easily become something else highlights the ability of acting and disguise that is so crucial for cross-dressing roles, while humorously alluding to the performer's true gender.

The linguistic jokes about Hippolito's gender continue when he encounters Ferdinand. When Ferdinand tries to befriend Hippolito, he asks him what he is. Hippolito is confused and explicitly questions Prospero's teachings, responding, "I well hop'd I was a man, but by your ignorance Of what I am, I fear it is not so; Well, Prospero! This is now the second time you have deceiv'd me."[307] Ferdinand quickly assures him that "there is no doubt you are a man." This exchange is comic and reminds the audience of the female actress performing a male role in front of them. Hippolito's naivety and Long's satire of male behavior is furthered just a few lines later when Ferdinand reveals to Hippolito that there are other beautiful women in the world besides Dorinda. He exclaims, "I will have all of that kind, if there be a hundred of `em… they are things I love, I cannot be without `em; O, how I rejoyce! More

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[306] John Dryden and William D'Avenant, *The Tempest,* II (29-30).

[307] Ibid., III (48).

women!"[308] Hippolito plans to have all the women, even if there are hundreds or thousands of them, despite Ferdinand and Dorinda's assurances that each man should only have one woman. This desire to have all women mocks the cavalier attitude that was so popular at the time, suggesting that a desire for so many women must be the result of ignorance if Hippolito, the uneducated and misguided, desires such a thing. However, Hippolito's speeches here serve as gentle mockery, rather than blatant satire, because they are presented by an actress, thereby making the speeches humorous because the character does not represent any real threat. Hippolito's hypocrisy is further demonstrated when he first tells Dorinda about his exciting discovery of more women. She, understandably, is jealous and displeased. But he tells her that she must love him because, "one [love] is enough for you, but not for me."[309] Again, Hippolito implies a double standard for men's love and women's love, but the use of a female-man to represent it makes it funny. Hippolito quickly becomes defensive, though, when Dorinda threatens to like other men. He lies to her, telling her that other men are far too terrifying for her, claiming that Ferdinand is, "the man of whom your Father warn'd you: O! he's a terrible, huge, monstrous creature, I am but a Woman to him."[310] Not only is Hippolito a hypocrite and a liar, but at the same time, he is telling the truth. Compared to the actor playing Ferdinand, Hippolito really is a

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[308] Ibid., III (49).

[309] Ibid., IV (56).

[310] Ibid., IV (57).

woman, Jane Long. Finally, the implicit suggestion of this exchange is that feminine men are better suited to innocent women and that truly manly men will only scare them. In this world, the possibility of too much manliness is a real threat, particularly for women who have never seen men; a gentler touch is necessary for real love, at least for Dorinda.

Hippolito's ignorance of appropriate male behavior is brought to its apex when he fights with Ferdinand. The two quarrel over the women and Ferdinand gives Hippolito his sword, deciding to use an old rusty one he found. Hippolito knows nothing of sword play but feels that he will be successful in fighting Ferdinand because, as he believes, his instincts and inclinations must be right, for they are all he has ever known. Predictably, Ferdinand wounds Hippolito, then begs him to end the fight. Hippolito, not knowing what blood and pain are, insists on continuing, and eventually faints from blood loss. The other characters believe him to be dead. His apparent death is the direct result of his ignorance of masculinity; this ignorance, in the context of the play, is the fault of Prospero. But in the context of the theater, this ignorance can be traced to the fact that a woman, and not a man, is playing Hippolito. Hippolito's false bravado leads to his death (in this scene at least) and therefore serves as mockery of feminine and ignorant men.

By the end of the play, Hippolito's character reforms because of his near death experience, and because he meets Miranda and does not think she is as beautiful as Dorinda. Hippolito gains knowledge and maturity and does not ever act out his fantasies; his character is a commentary, rather than assault, on male libertine

behavior. And, of course, at the end of the play, his marriage to Dorinda is assured and the play ends happily. As Dryden promised, the audience never sees Jane Long's true gender; however, it is ever present and alluded to on a meta-theatrical level. Therefore, Jane Long, in this travesty role, is able to be both male and female at the same time, thereby safely satirizing male bravado and libertinism.

Another instance of an author writing a male role to be performed by an actress is Young Fashion of John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*. This play was premiered by Rich's Company on November 21st, 1696 and ran for at least five more nights. The *Dramatis Personae* of the print edition for this play from the following year lists Mary Kent as playing the role of Young Fashion. Both the production and the print history of this play raise questions about the role of Young Fashion, the actress who played him, and certain decisions of later stage managers and publishers which affected the production history of this play.

Scholars have argued different reasons for having Mary Kent play Young Fashion. Obviously, breeches roles were popular at the time. But travesty roles do not occur all that frequently. There is some speculation that Vanbrugh originally planned to have Hildebrand Horden play Young Fashion, but when he was killed in a tavern brawl in May of 1696 Vanbrugh had to make an emergency casting. This claim of an emergency casting seems unlikely, though, as the premier of the play was six months later, in November. Certainly, actors and actresses were scarce for Rich following the split of the United Company – many actors had been wooed by Betterton to leave Rich. But six months would have been plenty of time to find a suitable male

replacement. Jacqueline Pearson argues that Vanbrugh cast Mary Kent as Young Fashion to alleviate the homosexual implications of several scenes in which Coupler bawdily flirts with Young Fashion.[311] Such an argument, though, begs the question of why include Coupler at all? Or why make him homosexual when such a characterization is irrelevant to the plot? As such, the play presents to its audience an elderly man attempting to seduce a young woman in pants – quite a good laugh for the audience who is in on the joke. It is feasible that Vanbrugh used both the travesty role of Young Fashion and the sensational, if controversial, character of Coupler to stir up business for the playhouse. Rich's company was facing bankruptcy in the 1696 – 1697 season and only survived because of the enormous success of a few plays, *The Relapse* among them. Judith Milhous even attributes the survival of Drury Lane to the popularity of *The Relapse*.[312] Perhaps the surprising but hilarious pair of actors was a contributing factor the public's desire to see the play. If nothing else, the bawdiness, which attracted the criticism and censure of Jeremy Collier, does not seem to have deterred too many audience members.

The Relapse continued to be relatively popular, usually appearing in the repertory at least once a season. In some seasons it was even performed upwards of four or five times, particularly in the early 1700's. Mary Kent performed the role of

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[311] Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 29.

[312] Judith Milhous, *Thomas Betterton and the Management of Lincoln's Inn Fields 1695 – 1708* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1979), 105.

Young Fashion for all of these productions, except for one performance in 1709 when Isaac Bickerstaff took on the role. As more and more time elapsed between the original premier and later productions, the theatrical managers began to take more liberties with the play text. In some performances, they eliminated the character of Coupler. Sometimes they took out the entire Young Fashion sub-plot or severely cut the lines of Coupler and Young Fashion. There seems to be a growing anxiety into the 18th century about these characters and what they represent, which corresponds with the "gender panic" identified by Dror Wharman. [313] Randolf Trumbach posits that the year 1700 marks a shift in British society from a two-gendered system of sexuality based on age differences and hierarchy to a three-gendered system of sexuality based on physical, sexual difference, which essentially formed modern notions of homosexuality. Such a shift in normative sexuality deeply impacted society's perceptions of gender dynamics and, therefore, serious emendation was made to the plays that had delighted in gender play and exploration when first written.[314] By 1715, the role of Young Fashion was taken over by an actor, Mr. Walker.

This production trajectory corresponds with an even more unusual print history. The fact that Young Fashion was originally performed as a travesty role seems to have been erased from the print editions of the play, though whether intentionally or

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[313] Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004), 48-58.

[314] Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution: Volume One: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4.

unintentionally is unclear. The two editions published close to the original premier of the play, both printed by Samuel Briscoe, list an entire cast list in the *Dramatis Personae*. In both the 1697 and 1697 editions, "Mrs. Kent" is listed with the other men, as playing Young Fashion; she is the second entry, just under "Mr. Cibber" who played Lord Foppington. The edition of 1708, though, printed by Richard Wellington, is odd – it has a smudge on the spot where the 's' in Mrs. Kent should be, making it impossible to tell whether or not it was printed as "Mr." or "Mrs." The spacing would suggest that it was printed as "Mrs." but someone, perhaps the printer, smudged it out. Though this may have only occurred on one copy of one edition, it does suggest the possibility of anxiety about cross-dressing performance. Mary Kent was still actively playing the role of Young Fashion in London, and continued at least into 1710, so this smudge seems accidental, rather than intentional, if we assume that the printer would have been aware of what was happening in the theater.

This instance of one smudge on one printing of a play would seem a mere glitch, but by the 1719 printing of *Plays Written by Sir John Vanbrugh, in Two Volumes*, by JD for J. Tonson and M. Wellington in London, a "Mr. Kent" is listed as playing Young Fashion, while the rest of the cast list remains identical to the 1697 and 1698 printings; there is no record of an actor named Kent during this time. A 1725 edition reflects a new production, with an entirely new cast listed, but two years later, Richard Hames and Bethel Wellington print *The Relapse* with the original cast list, but again list "Mr. Kent" as the actor for Young Fashion. All subsequent printings of this play continue to mistakenly attribute the role to an actor who never existed. By 1726,

Vanbrugh was dead and Mary Kent was no longer active in the theater, so no one with a vested interest was present to correct the mistake. Clearly, some publisher or type setter along the way, either of the 1708 edition or the 1719 edition, thought that the original setting of "Mrs. Kent" was incorrect and, essentially, changed future readings of the play.

Later printings of the play take even more liberties with the text. Two editions were printed in 1795, by the same printer and publisher. It appears they were published in conjunction with a new production of the play. One edition follows the text of the play as it was performed in 1795, while the other follows Vanbrugh's original text. Any material from the original that was excised in the 1795 performance, however, is placed in single quote marks in this latter text. Many phrases or scenes that could be considered objectionable are placed in these single quote marks; almost the entirety of the first scene with Coupler is taken out, which must have made for a very strange and abrupt performance of the scene.

The performance and publication history of *The Relapse* is not simply one of odd textual anomalies and casting choices that occurred in a vacuum. Rather, these changes reflect a change that was occurring during these years in England and abroad. In 1696, Londoners' attitude towards non-conventional sexual relationships was generally more liberal than later in the 18th century. But as those attitudes shifted, and a "gender panic" took hold, as Dror Wahrman describes it, the stage managers and printers worked to make their products more palatable to their audiences, either

consciously or unconsciously.[315] It is no coincidence that the popularity of breeches roles also drops off into the mid- 18th century and that the Licensing Act of 1737 seriously limits what is performed and printed.

Hippolito and Young Fashion are two examples of popular travesty roles that were originally written by the playwrights with the intention of having an actress play them. Such casting choices were relatively popular, particularly in tragedies. Elizabeth Howe calculates that at least 14 plays between 1660 and 1700 had such roles.[316] In addition, actresses began to take over male roles of repertory plays, often to great applause and success. The issue of roles passing from one performer to another is notable in general due to the possessiveness of actors over these roles. New roles were written with specific actors in mind and other actors only took those parts when the originator died or retired. So the passing on of roles was a tricky endeavor and any new performer would have to be adept and creative at taking on old roles that "belonged" to someone else, if they hoped to be successful with audiences. Further, the three most famous roles that actresses took on in these years were even more connected with specific individuals. Susannah Mountfort took on the role of Bayes in the 1687 production of *The Rehearsal*; not only was this part associated with its originator, John Lacy, but it is also specifically meant to be a satire of John Dryden, so Mountfort had two male identities to contend with in her portrayal. The role of Sir

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315 Wharman, 48-58.

316 Howe, *The First English Actresses,* 57.

Harry Wildair, taken over by Peg Woffington in the 1740's, was written specifically for the popular Robert Wilks. And the infamous Macheath, performed by both Woffington and Charlotte Charke, comes from the single most popular stage production from before the Licensing Act; as a result, audiences would have been very familiar with the original production and actor. When actresses take over a male role in the repertory, they are not just taking on the role as written on paper; they are taking on audience expectation and memory. They at once have to make the roles their own (which is inevitable given the difference in gender) but they also have to please the picky audience who came to see them. Such a performance implicitly amends the text of the play and affects audience perception.

George Villier's farce *The Rehearsal* was first produced in 1671 and was meant as a satire of John Dryden and his fellow pretentious playwrights and their emotional tragedies. In its first run, it was popular and successful. It appeared in repertory performances every so often, possibly in 1675, the 1682 – 1683 season, and certainly in 1686, though the cast is not known. In January 1687, the United Company staged *The Rehearsal*, and it may have been in the January 3rd performance that Susannah Mountfort appeared as Bayes. Colley Cibber records in his *Apology* that "People were so fond of seeing her [Mrs Mountfort] a Man, that when the Part of Bayes in the *Rehearsal* had for some time lain dormant, she was desired to take it up, which I have seen her act with all the true coxcombly Spirit and Humour that the

Sufficiency of the Character required."[317] Cibber's note about Mountfort's popularity in male garb demonstrates several things about the theater of this time. First, theatrical productions were fluid and flexible; stage managers could and would change the texts as necessary to appeal to audience members. If the audience wanted to see an actress in breeches, that is what they would be given. Second, Cibber's statement suggests a complexity and depth to Mountfort's acting ability not limited to her sexuality or feminine shape. Cibber saw her performance as "coxcombly," a distinctly male attribute. This critique is not gendered female or sexually nuanced; it is a simple accolade for a well-respected performer. Mountfort would go on, after her portrayal of Bayes, to perform some of the most notable breeches roles of the day, including Sir Anthony Love.

The text of *The Rehearsal* is, of course, all parody: parody of the theater, parody of the patrons and, most importantly, parody of John Dryden. When it was first produced in 1671, Dryden was poet laureate and an increasingly popular and prolific playwright, poet and public figure; therefore, he was an object of derision and ridicule to some. By the time of this reimagined performance in 1687, Dryden was a well-established author and literary figure, and still poet laureate, though the court was going through an upheaval and he would soon fall out of favor. By 1687, he was more

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[317] Colley Cibber. *An apology for the life of Mr. Colley Cibber, comedian, and late patentee of the Theatre-Royal. With an historical view of the stage during his own time. Written by himself.* London, MDCCXL. [1740]. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library. 14 May 2014. 99.

focused on poetry for the court rather than contributions to the theater, so a parody of his theatrical style seems out of fashion. Further, at this time, there was only one theatrical company, the United Company, so there was no competition for plays, performers, or audience members. The United Company could produce Dryden's plays, as well as plays by his opponents and critics. By all accounts, then, the decision to produce *The Rehearsal* with Mountfort in the role of Bayes really seems to have been motivated by audience desire.

Some of Bayes' lines take on a bawdier and suggestive tone when spoken by a woman. For instance, when describing his new play to Johnson and Smith, Bayes tells them, "but I have a new one, in my pocket, that I may say is a Virgin; 't has never yet been blown upon… though, perhaps, it may blush, I shall not be asham'd to discover its nakedness unto you."[318] Having a woman on the stage, who was married to another actor (and therefore presumed to be sexually initiated), discuss discovering a virgin's nakedness to an audience would have been exciting and humorous to the audience. Further, Mountfort is in on the sexual suggestions and knows what she is saying, rather than just parroting what the text says.

Other lines of the play take on new meaning beyond the bawdy, though. When explaining his writing process to Johnson and Smith, Bayes tells them that he often changes prose to verse or verse to prose, which Johnson names "transprosing." Further, Bayes also admits to plagiarizing and stealing ideas from wits in the coffee

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[318] George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. *The Rehearsal.* (London: Thomas Dring, 1672). *Early English Books Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014. I.i.(3).

house. He explains that people do not know he has done these things because "the world's unmindful: they never take notice of these things."[319] This line could easily be played as a joke about Mountfort's portrayal of Bayes. She has "transprosed" the gender line and stolen the role from a traditionally more appropriate male actor. But she hopes that the audience will not mind or "take notice." By Cibber's account, Mountfort's performance was exceptional, and so audiences must have been satisfied. Soon after this performance, specific breeches roles were written for Mountfort, indicating her success as Bayes/Dryden/Lacy. Further, the concept of a female Bayes must have stayed in the popular conscience to some degree. In the 1750's, Kitty Clive wrote and produced the afterpiece *The Rehearsal; or Bays in Petticoats.* Mrs. Hazard, the female equivalent to Bayes, is affected and demanding, as well as a plagiarist and inadequate poet, much like the original character. Perhaps Mountfort's portrayal of Bayes was ingenious enough to inspire such a new take on the plot many years later.

A discussion of breeches and travesty roles on the Restoration and early 18th century would be incomplete without acknowledging two remarkable women who made careers out of breeches and travesty roles: Peg Woffington and Charlotte Charke. Although their careers reached their apex after the Licensing Act (and therefore after the frame of this project), their legacies have informed current scholarship on breeches roles so extensively that they have to be considered. Further, they are both famous for their performances in plays that were written before the

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[319] Ibid., I.i (4).

Licensing Act. Peg Woffington has served as the catalyst for much scholarship and many assumptions about Restoration and 18th century breeches roles in general. As mentioned in Chapter One, Woffington is the subject matter of a Victorian novel by Charles Reade, which served as the basis for Pat Rogers' foundational article "The Breeches Part." This article is the locus classicus for all subsequent scholarship on breeches roles. It is unfortunate that the one piece of breeches scholarship on which all other scholarship is based is an analysis of a Victorian novel, a fictional account of a woman who had been dead for close to a century by the time it was published, and not on documentary or even contemporary literary evidence. Charlotte Charke, on the other hand, has been maligned by and ostracized from traditional theatrical history, but was such an unusual and dynamic individual that scholars are now recovering her contributions to literary history in earnest.

Peg Woffington began her acting career in Dublin around the age of 10. In 1732, when she was 12, she travelled with Signora Violante's group of Irish teenagers to London and performed in a production of *The Beggar's Opera*. This introduction to the London stage, at the New Haymarket Theater, was particularly notable. She performed three roles in this production: Mrs. Peachum, Diana, and, most importantly, the dashing and madcap Macheath. This production lasted four nights, an impressive run.[320] Her performance as Macheath, at age 12, has gone down in history as proof of her remarkable ability in breeches.

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320 *The London Stage,* Part 3, Vol. 1, 231 – 232.

The role of Macheath, like that of Bayes, comes with certain audience expectations and preconceived notions. *The Beggar's Opera* was the single most successful premier in London up to that point, initially running for over 60 nights. Further, *The Beggar's Opera* was performed in repertory almost every single season, often by competing theaters, for years to come. By 1732, when Woffington made her London debut, anyone who had ever been to a theater would have been familiar with the production. More importantly, they would have been familiar with Macheath's originator, Mr. Walker, who performed in all of those 60 original performances, in addition to many more repertory performances.

We have to assume that audiences enjoyed Woffington's performance as Macheath in 1732; otherwise, the play would not have been staged four times (not to mention the fact that it had a successful run in Dublin before the London premier). We can only imagine what a 12-year old girl could bring to the role known for waggish adventures and seduction. Macheath leads a gang of robbers and woos Polly, barely escaping from jail and hanging, despite having impregnated a half dozen women. Having a troupe of young performers represent robbers and ne'er-do-wells would have been highly entertaining; but having Woffington as Macheath would have brought yet more nuance and possibility, as well as comic implications, to the performance. Her performance could have mocked the libertinism of the highwayman; or it could have suggested that the great, manly Macheath was no more threatening or virile than a 12-year old girl. Either way, the performance must have been novel and thrilling for the

audience who saw and remembered Woffington when she returned to London several years later.

Woffington returned to London eight years later, when she first joined John Rich's company at Covent Garden. In this premier season (at least, as an adult), she first played the breeches role of Sylvia in *The Recruiting Officer,* a role she would repeat on many occasions. But early in that same season, she took on the very popular character of Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar's *The Constant Couple*. She was so popular in this role that she performed it at least 15 times that season, and continued to do so throughout her career.[321] Farquhar's play of 1700 was enormously popular at its premier and in repertory and Robert Wilks, the original actor, was famous for the role. Wilks and Farquhar were close friends, and Farquhar wrote the role specifically for him. Farquhar even wrote in the preface to the third edition that "Mr. Wilks's Performance has set him so far above competition in the Part of Wildair, that none can pretend to envy the Praise due to his Merit. That he made the Part, will appear from hence, that whenever the Stage has the Misfortune to lose him, Sir Harry Wildair may go to Jubilee."[322] Wilks played Sir Harry for at least 30 years and would have been well ingrained into audience's memory as the epitome of all that is Sir Harry: witty,

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[321] Ibid., Part 3, vol. 2, 861 – 867.

[322] Farquhar, George. "Preface" to *The Constant Couple, Or, A Trip to Jubilee, a Comedy*. London: Ralph Smith and Bennet Banbury, 1700. *Early English Books Online.* Gale. University of Delaware Library, May 14, 2014.

dashing, philandering. Sir Harry was so popular that Farquhar wrote a sequel featuring him, *Sir Harry Wildair.*

For Peg Woffington to take on Wilks' role in the 1740 – 1741 season, soon after her professional arrival on the London stage, and to such applause must have been quite the accomplishment. Any performer attempting this role would have to capture the spirit of Wilks while bringing something new to the role to be successful; simple satire of male behavior would not have been enough to make Woffington's performance as popular as it was. During its initial run with Woffington, the production was commanded on November 25th by the Prince of Wales and on November 27th by the King himself. The production of December 20th was done "By desire."[323] Audiences were enamored with Woffington as Sir Harry, demonstrating her acting ability and power to please, all while performing a male role for the entirety of a play, never once relying on a typical "reveal" scene to highlight her femininity.

The London theaters of the Restoration and early 18th century also have a history of producing plays with all female casts. At several different times during these years the patent theaters decided to cast only actresses in plays such as *The Parson's Wedding*, *Secret Love*, and *Psyche Debauched*. Many scholars have identified these productions as desperate attempts to attract audience members through whatever means possible to the struggling theaters; such a claim is not necessarily untrue. Marketing is always a concern for competing theater companies. But such a

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[323] *The London Stage,* Part 3, Vol. 2, 867, 868, 875.

motivation does not exclude the possibility of gender exploration and questioning; such a radical departure from traditional theatrical casting must be significant for the actresses involved and the audiences who watched the plays.

The first recorded instance of an all-female production of a play occurred in October of 1664. The King's Company, under the management of Thomas Killigrew, staged Killigrew's own play *The Parson's Wedding* with an all-female cast. Little is said in contemporary scholarship about this particular production, but its veracity is well established. Samuel Pepys mentions it in his diary, writing on October 4th, 1664, that he has heard of a new production of "*The Parson's Dreame,* acted all by women."[324] A few days later, on the 11th, he writes of how bawdy the play is and that it "is acted by nothing but women at the King's house, and I am glad of it."[325] And according to Langbaine, Killigrew added a new prologue and epilogue, which were given by Rebecca Marshall in breeches.[326] Montague Summers claims that this production was "such a remarkable success as to be the talk of all London."[327] Several circumstances are worth noting about the timing of this production to fully understand its significance. The first circumstance is the general anemia of the 1664-1665

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[325] Samuel Pepys. *Pepys on the Restoration Stage.* Ed. Helen McAfee. (New York: B. Blom, 1964), 168 – 169.
[326] Ibid.

[327] Montague Summers, "Explanatory note to *Covent Garden Drollery.*" (London: The Fortune Press, 1927), 97.

theatrical season. According to *The London Stage,* there were not many plays performed during this season because of the ongoing problems with the plague that London was suffering through.[328] *The London Stage* records only about a dozen different productions during that season, so certainly the two theater companies would want to make sure that when they did put on a play, it was popular and profitable, even if that meant experimenting with casting. *The Parson's Wedding* ran two nights with its all-female cast, perhaps more. Killigrew may have been preparing another of his plays, *Thomaso*, for a similar casting, though there is not any evidence that it was actually performed.[329] Clearly, Killigrew was trying what he could to attract audience members.

Another interesting circumstance, in terms of experimental casting, is simply the fact that, as of 1664, actresses had not been on the stage for long. The last time *The Parson's Wedding* was performed, it would have had an all male cast, before the closing of the theaters. In these early years of gender regulation on the stage, Killigrew may simply have been curious to see the effect of reversing his old casting of all men. Certainly, this is speculation, but Killigrew may have been interested in the possibilities of such a casting. Such comparisons between the pre-Commonwealth stage and the Restoration stage are made later in the period when a series of plays in 1672 are presented with only actresses. Having all one gender on the stage for a play

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[328] 81.

[329] Ibid., 84.

was not unnatural to Killigrew or the audience; they were well used to all male-productions. So, with the novelty of women on stage, it would not be a far leap for Killigrew and his associates to try the reverse with women.

Finally, the publication history of the play cannot be ignored here. Though written some time in the 1630s and first performed in the 1640s, *The Parson's Wedding* did not appear in print until 1664, the same year as this production. And it only appeared in Killigrew's collected works, rather than being published on its own. Killigrew's decision to stage the play, particularly with such an unusual cast, cannot be unconnected to the play's first appearance in print. Staging such a bawdy and exciting play in a particularly non-traditional manner could have helped increase sales of Killigrew's plays.

An anomalous all-female production of a play cannot simply be written off as a base and superficial attempt to attract only licentious male gawkers who want to see women in tight fitting clothing (and the male clothing of 1664 would have been anything but tight and revealing; most likely, the women would have been dressed in doublets and pantaloons or petticoat breeches and boots). This production would have been one of the earliest instances of women cross-dressing on stage; but it would have been done at a time when a single-sex cast was not extraordinary or odd; such normative casting would require members of one sex to don the clothes of the opposite sex. Such costuming was not unusual; it may have felt more comfortable to some performers and audience members than a mixed cast. Further, at this time, perhaps more so than at others, real-world concerns outside of the theater were impacting

theatrical choices. Plague was assaulting Londoners; booksellers were trying to sell play collections; and the two theatrical companies were fighting to stay alive. These circumstances make this all-female production in October 1664 of a bawdy and comic play more powerful and significant than has previously been suggested. Relying on a an all-female cast to accomplish what Killigrew needed to suggests that actresses were not only attractive in the theater as objects to ogle, but also as agents of casting experimentation, marketing promotion, and theatrical advancement. Actresses had the power to keep theaters alive.

Eight years after this atypical production of Killigrew's *The Parson's Wedding*, the King's Company once again decided to use all female casts, but this time for three different plays during June of 1672. *The Parson's Wedding* was once again performed with all women, but so was Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* and Dryden's highly popular *Secret Love*. But once again, the circumstances surrounding these productions cannot be ignored. Killigrew was facing ruin during this season and had to, once again, use unusual and experimental theatrical choices to save his company.

On January 25th of the 1671-1672 season, the Bridges Street Theater of the King's Company burned down, destroying sets, costumes and props, as well as killing one actor of the company.[330] Montague Summers places the property loss at

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[330] Ibid.,185.

£20,000.[331] It took about a month for the King's Company to start performing again; the company moved into Lincoln's Inn Fields, the former theater of the Duke's Company. The Duke's Company at this time was doing well, putting on popular new plays at a brand new playhouse, and expanding its theatrical offerings; as a result, more theater patrons were supporting them, and abandoning the floundering King's Company. Loss of business was a significant problem for the King's Company because they could not replace everything they had lost in the fire, or compete with new play offerings.[332] Therefore, Killigrew had to use what resources he had to attract paying audience members to his theater, which had neither fancy sets, new plays, or dramatic costumes. He chose to rely on the talented actresses of his company, such as Elizabeth Boutell, Elizabeth Knepp, and Rebecca Marshall.

Killigrew probably suspected that productions featuring his actresses would be popular among audiences. Earlier in the same season, possibly sometime in April, the King's Company premiered a new play by John Dryden, *Marriage à la Mode.* As has been discussed previously, this play, which was popular at its premier and in repertory, features two engaging breeches characters, Doralice and Melantha, who were performed by two of the most famous actresses of the time, Rebecca Marshall (who appeared in the 1664 all-female production of *The Parson's Wedding*) and Elizabeth Boutell, respectively. *Marriage à la Mode* has a substantial female cast,

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[331] Ibid,, 97.

[332] Ibid., 185-6

besides these two, at least by Restoration standards, with an equal number of male and female parts. The success of that play, and the critical response to Marshall and Boutell, may have prompted Killigrew to retry his gender experiment of the last decade by relying on these actresses to carry the show. By all accounts, Rebecca Marshall was the real comic heroine, being given the prologues and epilogues for two of the three plays, which she performed in breeches.

Killigrew's decision to stage not one but three plays with an all-female cast suggests that this experiment was, to some degree, successful. Though existent contemporary response to the productions is limited, we can assume that, if the first production did not work, Killigrew would have tried something new or different to improve attendance. And, again, real-world factors had to be considered in casting. All of the costumes and props of the King's Company were destroyed; costuming through whatever men's clothes could be gathered in a short amount of time would have been easier than replacing the collections of gowns or costumes the company previously held.

These three plays, taken together, create an unusual, but dynamic, trilogy. *Philaster* and *Secret Love* are both tragicomedies set abroad in Sicily; both feature strong female characters torn between political duty and romantic love; these plays also feature secondary female characters who disguise themselves with breeches to pursue the men they love. *The Parson's Wedding*, on the other hand, is a domestically-set, bawdy sex comedy with a dark outlook on marriage and love. *Philaster* and *The Parson's Wedding* both significantly predate the Restoration (*Philaster* may have been

written as early as 1608) while *Secret Love* was written and performed in the first decade of the Restoration. What all three plays share, however, is their immense popularity with audiences. *Philaster* was performed regularly up until the closing of the theaters and went through seven print editions before 1672. It was revived in the repertory between 1660 and 1672 at least seven times before this all-female production, if not more. The plays of Beaumont and Fletcher were sure-fire hits in the theater, so it is no surprise that Killigrew would look to one of these plays to bolster revenue. The popularity of Dryden's *Secret Love* is well established. Incredibly successful in its premier season, this play was performed in repertory at least once a season (most seasons) between 1667 and 1672. *Secret Love* was a favorite of Samuel Pepys', who saw it several times. The popularity of *The Parson's Wedding* after the Restoration is harder to establish. It was performed a number of times in the 1640's. However, it seems that it was only produced one time in 1664 with an all-female cast. Killigrew's decision to stage it again, in the same manner, though, must suggest some confidence on his part that doing so would attract an audience.

The epilogue written specifically for the 1672 all-female production of *The Parson's Wedding* responds to criticism of the loose morals of such a production, but also blatantly acknowledges that the goal of the production is to raise money for a new theater. The epilogue begins by pointing out the perverse nature of a single-sex theater. In response to claims (real or assumed) that an all-female cast or theatrical company will open the door for unnatural acts, or that actresses in general are too sexually available, the epilogue explains that, "When boys play'd women's parts,

you'd think the stage, / Was innocent in that untempting Age. / No: for your amorous Fathers then, like you, / Amongst those Boys had Play-house Misses too: / They set those bearded Beauties on their laps, / Men gave `em kisses, and the Ladies Claps."[333] This statement is a straightforward albeit lewd acknowledgement of the corruption (both past and current) of the theater. The epilogue argues that at least the actresses remain women, even after leaving the "tyring room." Such an argument suggests the possibility of gender transformation, at least within the theater. In the world created by the theater, the clothes one wears dictate one's gender. What is behind the skirts or pants does not matter to the men and women of the audience who want to be sexually involved with the performer. The speaker of the epilogue concludes that the audience will be paid back for their attendance: "if you grant, and fill our house each day, / We will return your kindness this way: / We'll build up a new Theatre to gain you, / And turn this to a House to entertain you."[334] The contract between theater company and audience is clear: if the audience keeps coming to the productions at the old-fashioned Lincoln's Inn Fields, including the all-female productions, then the company will use the profits to build a new and modern theater. The author and the actress do not hide the fact that they need money; they honestly explain to the audience what they need to be successful. But the fact that Killigrew decided to use this production, via an epilogue spoken by an actress, to explain the company's predicament to the audience,

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[333] *Covent Garden Drollery*, 4.

[334] Ibid.

suggests the persuasive power of the women of the theater. They are not begging, they are not destitute, but the actresses have a proposal for the audience in which they willingly sell their performances (the allusions to prostitution are blatant and comic) for a stated goal, that will ultimately benefit the audience. If given to an actor, such a plea would probably not have been successful. Killigrew needs the actress to state the theater's cause.

The epilogue to the all-female production of *Philaster* furthers this request for audience support of all-female productions (and therefore revenue for the theater). Mrs. Marshall, who was assigned the epilogue, argues to the audience that "your Fathers with one sex made shift / Sure our's of Pleasing; has the better gift. / A bearded Princess their concern could move, / Why may not now, a beardless Prince make Love, / Nor should soft lines; for youth and beauty meant / Be on Men's blew, and wither'd faces spent."[335] This epilogue refers to the time when only men were on the stage, suggesting that having all women is not so unusual, and actually more entertaining because women are more attractive than men. The argument for an all-female theater is compelling and is continued in the lines, "We have all that Modesty pretends to prize, / And what we want, is hid from vulger eyes. / It is all one to us, but `twill appear, `Tis much your cheapest way to keep us here."[336] These lines address the issue of seeming and reality. Everyone in the theater knows that the people on the

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[335] "Epilogue spoken by Mrs. Marshall to Philaster" *Covent Garden Drollery.* 16.

[336] Ibid.

stage are all women; but these lines argue that the reality does not matter because it is hidden. All that matters is what they appear to be, at least in the world of the theater. Gender and clothing and what they perform is "all one," so why not support them in their theatrical representations?

As was discussed in Chapter Two, *Secret Love* is a particularly interesting play in terms of gender relations and power. The split plots of the play, one comic and the other serious, work to echo and reinforce each other's arguments about the power (or lack thereof) women have and the choices women are faced with. Unusually, *Secret Love* features an unmarried female ruler as the main character and the rest of the action of the play centers around whether or not she will marry, and subjugate herself to her husband, or stay unmarried and autonomously in control of her own country. The comic subplot of the roaring girl Florimell, who cross-dresses in the latter half of the play, and her attempts to establish a beneficial and equitable marital relationship with Celadon, demonstrates what length women, whether rulers or not, must go to in order to make their own life decisions. A cast made up entirely of women would have an enormous impact on this play, which is not simply comic, bawdy or satirical, like *The Parson's Wedding*. *Secret Love*, though fun and lighthearted, deals with heavier material. The choices of the individual actresses, particularly those playing the male roles, could either lighten the play to the point of mockery, which seems unlikely due to the popularity of the play; or those choices could emphasize the political disparity between the genders. For instance, if the actress playing Celadon heightens his foppishness, inconsistency, and penchant for flirting with many women, then

Florimell's plight of wanting to be his favorite mistress becomes more acute. More importantly, an actress's portrayal of Philocles, with whom the Queen is in love, could possibly highlight the power of the Queen, through contrast. Or an actress's portrayal of Philocles could emphasize the equality between the Queen and her fellow "men," the traditionally powerful. But it is worth noting that *Secret Love* only has three named male characters, though there are eight named women in the play. The balance of power is already in favor of the women of the play; having the three male characters performed by cross-dressed women would have emphasized that point even more.

The prologue and epilogue written by Dryden for this particular production of *Secret Love* reveal much about the gender dynamics of such a casting. These two pieces address the fact that women and men will respond differently to what they see, but treat both reactions as central and significant to the work of the theater. Most theatrical scholarship, particularly pertaining to breeches and travesty roles, only ponders and suggests male response; the women of the audience are often ignored. But this prologue and epilogue discuss both genders of the audience. Dryden writes in the prologue of the male experience first, declaring "there's not a fop in town but will pretend, / To know the cheat himself, or by his friend."[337] Here, clearly, is a sexual allusion to the idea that all of the actresses were sexually available and that many men had been with them. But Dryden, via the acting of Elizabeth Boutell (who gave this prologue) points out that these fops around town only "pretend" to know what is really

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[337] John Dryden, Prologue to *The Maiden Queen*, in *Covent Garden Drollery*, 1.

below the breeches. In reality, no one can totally be sure. Boutell/Dryden goes on to undermine the credibility of the men by explaining, "Then make no words on't, Gallants tis 'e'ne true, / We are condemned to look, and strut, like you. / Since we thus freely our hard fate confess, / Accept us these bad times in any dress. / You'l find the sweet on't, now old Pantaloons, / Will go as far, as formerly new Gowns, / And from your own cast Wigs, expect no frowns."[338] In the first two lines, Boutell suggests that acting as a man is distasteful and that she would rather be a woman. But the reality of the King's Company comes to light in the next lines, with the implication that the men must help the actresses on stage. The King's Company is in dire straits, having lost a theater, props, and costumes. Boutell claims that the acting ability of the women will be so good that a lack of beautiful costumes will not matter. As the epilogue for *The Parson's Wedding* argued, the theater company needs the audience, specifically the male audience, to look past the costumes and even the casting in order to help build a better theater.

This prologue switches tone, though, when discussing the reaction of the ladies of the audience as well as what the actresses can offer those ladies. Dryden/Boutell acknowledges that the women of the audience are more skeptical: "The Ladies we shall not so easily please. / They'l say what impudent bold things are these. / That dare provoke, yet cannot do us right, / Like men with huffing locks, that dare not fight."[339]

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[338] Ibid.

[339] Ibid.

Here the perceived criticism is that the actresses, disguised as men, do not sufficiently represent either gender; they act as men, but will not fight as men. Boutell expects that the ladies will find such a production displeasing, but offers the following consolation: "Ladies in us, you'l Youth and Beauty find, / All things but one, according to your mind. / And when your Eyes and Ears are feasted here, / Rise up and make out the short Meal elsewhere."[340] The implication, of course, is that the cross-dressed actresses are more aesthetically pleasing men that the women of the audience can hope to find in London; that they are more handsome and visibly masculine than any other men, but are just missing one crucial element. Boutell suggests that the ladies work up their sexual appetites in the theater and then go home to their husbands or lovers for satisfaction. What is most fascinating in this prologue is not only the acknowledgement or female sexual desire, but the encouragement of it. As mentioned many times before, most of the scholarship on breeches roles supposes that they were single mindedly meant to focus on male sexual desire; but this prologue distances the actresses from the men of the audience while encouraging sexual fantasies among the women. Dryden points out the benefit of attending this all-female performance for both men and women, but ultimately, it is the actress, who represents both male and female, who is the necessary component for success.

The epilogue to this production, spoken by Anne Reeves, makes very similar arguments, but much more blatantly and, more importantly, in a way that further

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[340] Ibid.

equalizes men and women. After asking the audience if the actresses did not perform masculinity perfectly, Reeves asks, "Why should not then we Women act alone, / Or whence are men so necessary grown, / Our's are so old, they are as good as none."[341] Here is the suggestion of an all-female theatrical house, something that the epilogue claims will benefit everyone. Reeves claims that the men of the King's Company are too old to be useful to anyone, so why not rely on just the women who have, supposedly, just done an excellent job on their own with *Secret Love*. Women, Reeves claims, can do it all: "Oh would the higher Powers be kind to us, / And grant us to set up a female house. / Wee'l make our selves to please both Sexes then, / To the Men Women, to the Women Men. / Here we presume, our Legs are no ill sight, / And they would give you no ill Dreams at night. / In Dream's both Sexes may their passions ease, / You make us then as civil as you please." Once again, the suggestion is that both the men and women of the audience can find pleasure in an all-female production. These lines, unlike the prologue, discuss both the men and the women in the same sentences, rather than treating them differently. Dryden and the actresses acknowledge that men and women have sexual desire and that the theater can assist them. Reeves asks that both the men and the women dream of what they have seen and "make us then as civil as you please" – though it is only in dreams that Reeves allows the actresses will be "civil." Finally, the epilogue concludes with a reminder of the reality of the theater and the possibly bankruptcy it is facing: "this would prevent the

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[341] John Dryden, "Epilogue to *The Maiden Queen,"* in *Covent Garden Drollery,* 2.

houses joyning two, / At which we are as much displeas'd as you."[342] Dryden's argument here, and by extension, the King's Company's and actresses' argument, is that the sexual fantasies aroused in both the men and the women by the actresses performing male and female roles serve a very real and necessary purpose: to save the King's Company. If the fire, loss of properties, space, and patronage ruins the company, then they will have to join with the Duke's Company, reducing the number of theaters in London to one. Such a merger would mean no competition in offerings, only one theatrical offering a day and every other negatives associated with a monopoly. This prologue and epilogue, through bawdy suggestions and sexual implications, make it apparent that Killigrew is relying on the actresses to save his theater and, therefore, the integrity of theatrical offerings in London. These productions are not just about attracting male audience members who want to see legs (though that is part of it), as suggested by previous scholars. The very survival of the King's Company depends on the audience members, both male and female, going to see Killigrew's all-female productions.

Killigrew's tactics, apparently, succeeded, for the King's Company stayed alive and independent for another decade. Further, the practice of using all-female productions continued in London, though not regularly or with any discerning pattern that history has recorded. Pearson notes that Congreve's *Love for Love* was produced

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[342] Ibid.

at least four times between 1705 and 1706 with an all-female cast.[343] Pearson also claims that romantic pastorals, such as *The Constant Nymph*, *The Fickle Shepherdess* and *Pastor Fido*, were produced somewhat regularly in the first decade of the 1700's with all-female or nearly all-female casts. According to Pearson, these plays "creat[e] worlds of shifting and unstable identities which would be enhanced by cross-casting."[344] The theater has always been a place to experiment with and explore identity and transfiguration. Only in the theater can a poor man be a king or a vixen be a virgin. In the Restoration and early 18th century, that experimentation extended significantly to gender and sexuality. The theater of these years, for the first time, at least in London, offered women the opportunity to experience the power of men as well as the possibility of satire to attempt correction. And the theater offered both the men and women of the audience the chance to see, ponder, and imagine the possibilities and prospects beyond their physical sex.

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[343] Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse,* 29.

[344] Ibid.

EPILOGUE

The Licensing Act of 1737 had significant consequences for the theaters of London. By requiring official, governmental approval for all staged plays, this act effectively censored new plays and severely limited theatrical experimentation. The number of newly produced plays after 1737 significantly dropped and the number of repertory performances increased. Although the Licensing Act was a political response to political plays, it still served to curtail the gender exploration that had been accomplished through breeches and travesty roles. In addition, the mid-18th century saw a shift in sexual understanding and attitudes, what Dror Wharman has called a "gender panic." With greater understanding of the anatomical human body came greater attempts at policing those bodies. As a result, the popularity of breeches and travesty performances declined, though it did not entirely die.

Since the Licensing Act, a perfect storm of censorship, shifting sexual mores, and irresponsible scholarship has obscured our understanding of the plays from 1660 – 1737. Our understanding of breeches and travesty roles has suffered severely in this process, as have the reputations of some of the actresses who performed them. These roles represent great possibility, both for the characters within the plays and the

actresses who performed them. They push their limitations, question the patriarchal system in which they live, and imagine themselves in new realities.

Charlotte Charke serves as a great example of how and why we have lost much of this time period and these roles. Charke founded her theatrical career on her ability to play men on stage. Much of this career relied on parody of male behavior; specifically, parody of her father and brother. Inadvertently, this is what led to her "illegitimacy" in the theater, and her infamous reputation today. While working with her father and brother at Drury Lane, Charke was offered a variety of non-leading roles; he gained popularity as saucy servants and non-leading women. But Henry Fielding, Cibber's arch nemesis and the manager of the Little Haymarket, offered Charke leading roles, specifically ones that mocked her father. By moving to the Little Haymarket and taking these roles, Charke effectively burned any bridges she had with her family. As it was a direct attack on Field, the Licensing Act ended Fielding's run at the Little Haymarket. Spurned by her father, Charke was left with no access to the legitimate theater and had to find her own way, leading her down a path that resulted in our misunderstanding of her today. But scholars are now recovering Charke, as well as other figures, in earnest. One has to wonder who and what else has been lost to us due to misunderstanding the past. But we can keep working to recover much from this time, such as the breeches and travesty roles discussed in this project. Breeches and travesty roles and actresses deserve the same time, energy, and attention as the other characters and theatrical figures of this time period, if not more.

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