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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

“And all is semblative a woman’s part”: Phenomenology and Gender in Early Modern English Drama

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Drama and Theatre

by

Sonia Desai

Dissertation Committee:
Associate Professor Ian Munro, Chair
Professor Julia Lupton
Assistant Professor Tara Rodman
Professor Janet Smarr

2018

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Curriculum Vitae

Sonia Desai

2011	B.A. in English/Plan II Honors University of Texas, Austin Honors Thesis: "Shakespeare's Women in War"
2012	Research Assistant, Department of Drama University of California, Irvine
2013-2018	Teaching Assistant, Department of Drama University of California, Irvine
2017	Graduate Dean's Dissertation Fellowship Recipient
2018	Ph.D. in Drama and Theatre, University of California, Irvine and University of California, San Diego

Fields of Study

Renaissance Drama, Gender Studies, Phenomenology

Abstract of the Dissertation

“And all is semblative a woman’s part”: Phenomenology and Gender in Early Modern English Drama

By

Sonia Desai

Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and Theatre

University of California, Irvine, 2018

Associate Professor Ian Munro, Chair

This project aims to create a way of looking at texts that is attune to issues of phenomenology and gender. In a post-Butler world, most scholars accept that gender is an everyday performance, often done without conscious thought in response to society’s expectations. Western society’s ideas about gender and sexuality seem so codified, however there have always been spaces that allowed for the questioning of heteronormativity and this adherence to strict gender performances. The Early Modern English stage represents one of these liminal spaces. The plays written for the space of the Early Modern stage deal with gender and performance in unusual and complex ways, making them the perfect texts for my investigation. My work looks at how we can talk about the experience of gender and understand how gender can influence experience. I’ve turned to the philosophy of phenomenology to help me articulate and focus my ideas. I look at several different plays in this project including Ben Jonson’s *Epicene*, Margaret Cavendish’s *The Convent of Pleasure*, and William Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It.*

Introduction

The Early Modern period in England was a formative time for modern Western society. As the name implies, the Early Modern period heavily influenced contemporary society and can be traced as the source of much of modern society. For this reason, a close look at the way gender was understood, performed, and experienced in the Early Modern period yields relevant information for understanding issues of gender today. The Early Modern period is also considered the Golden Age of English drama. Playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Ben Jonson were writing plays that would captivate audiences and scholars for centuries. These plays were written for a stage that barred female actresses, replacing them with prepubescent boy actors made up to look like female characters. Within the strict constraints of royal censorship and all-male casts, these writers produced plays that worked around and with their restrictions in many creative and elucidating ways. Looking at the way gender worked within the Early Modern playhouse offers many avenues for research. My dissertation looks at the experience of gender as it is written in dramatic texts of the Early Modern period, and as it is experienced, theorizing about the experience of the boy actors and the contemporary audience while also investigating how the plays work with modern actors and audiences.

The figure of the boy actor is an important part of my investigation, as it is a figure that represents both the character's gender, as well as the performance of gender itself. Theorizing about the place of the boy actor brings up questions about the performance and naturalization of gender, as well as how gender is interpreted by an audience and by society. This project has also been influenced by the recent turn in Early Modern studies towards issues of phenomenology. Many prominent Early Modern scholars have written and published work that can be located at

the intersection of the fields of Shakespeare scholarship and phenomenology, bringing a new philosophical insight to these dramatic texts. This innovative work has furthered Early Modern scholarship in several interesting ways, and introduced a new lens through which to view these plays, however, like all new scholastic ventures, it also has significant gaps. One of the blind spots in Early Modern phenomenology, and phenomenology as a whole, is a lack of attention to the implications gender may have on a consideration of phenomenology. There have been few publications that try to initiate an overlap between phenomenology and gender studies. I would like to look at this interaction in the field of Early Modern studies, and introduce an intersection between these two fields of study. I feel that each can inform the other to create new ways of thinking about gender and lived reality. I think that an exploration of the phenomenology of gender on the Early Modern stage will reveal interesting things about the way that gender was performed and experienced during the Early Modern period and how we understand gender as a society, as well as filling in several gaps in current scholarly work.

In Jill Dolan's *Feminist Spectator as Critic*, she discusses the way that theatre naturalizes a certain reality, a reality created for a specific assumed spectator. "[T]heatre creates an ideal spectator carved in the likeness of the dominant culture," a culture that supports and propagates patriarchal discourse and control.[1] She sees the work of a feminist critic as a "'resistant reader,' who analyzes a performance's meaning by reading against the grain of stereotypes and resisting the manipulation of both the performance text and the cultural text that it helps to shape".[2] The way gender is performed and expressed on stage is a reflection of the dominant cultural ideology, an ideology that works to maintain patriarchal power. Dolan calls for a recuperation of Brechtian

[1] Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012) 1.
[2] Dolan 2.

techniques which she feels "denaturalize social arrangements [and] can be fruitfully employed in feminist practice to demystify compulsory heterosexuality and the construction of gender as the founding principle of representation".[3] By concentrating on the way the illusion of theatre is constructed and revealing the mechanisms of theatre itself, Dolan feels that feminist critics can reveal the ideology making techniques of theatre. However, this theory is far more revolutionary when applied to modern realist theatre than the theatre of the Early Modern period.

Renaissance theatre maintained no illusion of realism. In fact, Renaissance dramatists were quite interested in the making of theatre itself, and the way the play can both maintain and reveal the mechanisms behind creating theatre. The metatheatrics employed by dramatists such as William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson consistently point to the way the illusion of theatre is created. This work is a precursor to the later work of Brecht, in that it maintains no illusion of a self contained, realist world. In this way, the playwrights themselves seem to be doing some of the work that Dolan calls for. In their plays, Shakespeare and Jonson call attention to the artificial construction of gender on a stage that banned female performers. It then becomes the work of the critic to point to these moments and interpret their meaning in terms of overall theatrical work and contemporary culture. There are moments in the play that question the semiotic system set up by Early Modern theatrical conventions. These moments ask the audience to question the sign it is reading on the stage, as well as the reality that is being experienced. As Bert O. States brings up in his treatise of the phenomenology of theatre, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms*, there must be a balance in theatre between semiology and phenomenology. While the theatre is indeed representative, it would be reductive to simply see theatre as representational without regard to the actual physicality of theatre, the actual experience of it. In

[3] Dolan 112.

my analysis, I point to moments in the plays of Shakespeare and Jonson that the body of the boy actor is used to make the audience aware of the tension between the semiotics of theatre and its experiential quality. The body of the boy actor is often used as a sign, a symbol meant to refer to femininity. However, the physicality of the actor, the very presence of the body of the boy actor, points to the performative nature of gender and the lack of true referent for any semiotics of gender. It is this metatheatrical, and slightly Brechtian, quality that makes Renaissance drama such an interesting case study of the way gender is performed and the way the image of the feminine is created.

The philosophical concept of phenomenology looks at the experiential quality of perception, positing what it means to experience a particular phenomenon in the world. This ideology posits an assumed subject position from which the experience is interpreted. Unsurprisingly, this subject is almost exclusively male, mostly white and upper middle class. Most work in phenomenology does not allow for the consideration of the multiplicity of experiences across the presupposed binary gender lines. This has been the issue that most feminist philosophers looking at phenomenology have taken issue with. As Dolan says, "[p]henomenology does not allow for the consideration of individual subjects, each shaped by a different set of historical and cultural circumstances—including the variables of gender, sex, class, race, and sexual preference—that influence how they see what they see. Applied to theatre or literature as a critical method, a phenomenological perspective implies that there are stable texts with immanent meanings that can consistently, rightfully be grasped".[4] This idea of a stable, or correct, interpretation of a theatrical experience conflates all audience reactions into that of a dominant cultural viewer. Edmund Husserl often discusses the direction or orientation

[4] Dolan 47.

of phenomenological inquiry. For Husserl, there seems to be a stable referent for this orientation that is actively experienced by a specific, male, subject. This is the assumption that Sara Ahmed troubles in her book *Queer Phenomenology*. She discusses how the assumption of a male subject obfuscates the multiplicity of experiences a subject may have towards an object. A female subject (or a homosexual subject, or a transgender subject, etc.) will approach an object with a different orientation than a male subject. And, by not allowing for this difference, phenomenology works within the dominant ideology to suppress and control the female experience. Ahmed, as well as other feminist phenomenologists, looks "[t]o queer phenomenology" to "offer a different 'slant' to the concept of orientation" as used in phenomenology.[5] As Husserl faces his writing table, relegating other realms of activity to the background, Ahmed, rightfully, queers this orientation, raising questions of who gets access to the writing table and how the writing table may be experienced differently by others, others who had to fight for their spot at the table.

Phenomenology does not inherently deny the multiplicity of experience. The work of Hannah Arendt sees a diversity of experience as a crucial part to any understanding of the human experience. The different approaches to an object do not mitigate the reality of the object, indeed all that is required is an object about which to disagree. This human interaction about an object, whether or not the actors are in agreement, is enough to confirm lived reality. Arendt's existential phenomenology with its focus on human interaction offers a different approach to the limited scope often presented in material phenomenology, a point I will return to later. Feminist scholars have noted the "general absence in phenomenology of analyses of gender or sexual difference, the lack of acknowledgment of women's experience and the specificity of that

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[5] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006) 4.

experience".[6] This "lack of acknowledgment on the part of phenomenology of feminist approaches or analyses, or indeed, of gender issues in general" has put off feminist scholars in the past from interacting with this particular philosophical modality.[7] However, there has been recent scholarship into the interactions between feminism and phenomenology, and I see my work as a part of this turn towards including phenomenology in gender studies.

Recent phenomenological criticism in the field of Early Modern studies has used this philosophical construct in interesting ways. There has been work done on the way the plays themselves express experience, which I find interesting in terms of how characters within the plays experience the gender of those around them. Other scholars, such as Julia Lupton, have used a type of phenomenology influenced by the work of Hannah Arendt. This work looks at the way experience is created through the interaction between individuals. For Arendt, our reality, indeed our identities, are created through interactions between human beings. The only way to confirm reality is through a dialogue with others who are experiencing the same phenomena. In terms of my research, I find this work very useful when combined with the work of feminist scholars, such as Judith Butler. Judith Butler discusses the way that gender is performative, created through actions. I argue that these theories can work in tandem to further explicate how gender is created, experienced, and understood. When looking at the plays of the Early Modern period, it is interesting to see how a character's gender can be constructed through their interactions with other characters, and the experience of that interaction.

In the past, phenomenology's resistance towards a gendered viewpoint or orientation has prevented a comprehensive interaction between it and feminist theory. There has been a move to

[6] Lester Embree and Linda Fisher, eds, *Feminist Phenomenology* (Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000) 3.
[7] Embree 5

rectify this gap in more recent scholarly material. Scholars of gender studies have begun to realize how phenomenology can be particularly useful for an investigation of gender. As Ahmed says, "[p]henomenology can offer a resource for queer studies [and gender studies, in general] insofar as it emphasized the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness,…and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds".[8] So much of queer theory and gender studies revolves around lived experience. Phenomenology is a useful critical turn for gender scholars in that it allows for an exploration of the experience of gender in philosophical terms. However, its inherent bias towards the male needs to be addressed and corrected.

Early Modern plays themselves offer rich material for phenomenological criticism. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night,* for example, Duke Orsino's experience of Cesario includes a passage on how Cesario's physical attributes resemble a young woman. Orsino's experience of Cesario in that moment seems to embrace an interesting queer reading of the body on the stage. This type of phenomenology is more in line with the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, as it looks at the physical, empirical quality of the phenomenon in front of the character, namely the cross dressing Cesario. The work of existential phenomenologists, such as Hannah Arendt, also provides an interesting lens for looking at the way gender is experienced in these plays. In Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the experience of Rosalind/Ganymede's gender is dependent upon her interactions. When speaking to Celia, even when disguised, Rosalind is constructed as a woman; however, when speaking to Orlando, she is constructed as male. The way that gender can be constructed and performed through these interactions speaks to Arendt's phenomenology and imbues it with concerns about gender.

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[8] Ahmed 2.

The male oriented bias of phenomenology is still apparent in the new work in phenomenology emerging in Early Modern studies. Bruce Smith, one of the leading scholars on phenomenology during the Early Modern period, dismisses any consideration of gender out of hand in *Phenomenal Shakespeare*. In a parenthetical, early on in the book, Smith writes that phenomenology is "indifferent to gender".[9] Such an extensive oversight seems to ask for more than just an acknowledgement of its existence. This is where I place my intervention into Early Modern studies. How can a phenomenological investigation of these plays open up a discussion of the cultural implications of gender during the Early Modern period? What does investigating the gender implications on phenomenology in the Early Modern period reveal about the construction and performance of gender at this time? The English Renaissance is a time of flux for cultural constructs, including gender. A look at the way gender is performed and experienced during this time reveals the changing views about gender and the questioning of binary gender constructs occurring at this time. I see my work as engaging with the various strains of phenomenology in the context of Early Modern plays, such as *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, while filling in a gap in current Early Modern studies. The lack of attention to gender in the current phenomenological work being done in Renaissance studies by scholars such as Bruce Smith needs to be remedied. I see my future project as a step towards correcting that imbalance in the scholarly field. I also see it as having further implications on gender studies as I develop an understanding of how gender is experienced and performed in society.

i. Feminist Shakespeare Criticism

Shakespeare's female characters have fascinated scholars and audiences for over four

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[9] Bruce Smith, *Phenomenal Shakespeare* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 23.

centuries. With his witty and strong female leads in a time when women weren't allowed on the stage, Shakespeare has provided scholars with ample material for many lifetimes worth of research. The gender play and fluidity of sexuality often seen in his characters has given rise to a significant subset of scholastic work within the larger oeuvre of Shakespeare studies. It is my intent here to give a brief overview of the field of feminist Shakespeare criticism in hope that this might help locate my work as a new addition to the field.

In her influential essay "The Patriarchial Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare: *King Lear* and *Measure for Measure*", Kathleen McLuskie opens with this comment on the field of feminist criticism: "Every feminist critic has encountered the archly disingenuous question 'What exactly is feminist criticism?' The only effective response is 'I'll send you a booklist', for feminist criticism can only be defined by the multiplicity of critical practices engaged in by feminists".[10] Feminist criticism finds its roots in a political movement but has come to encompass a wide range of methodologies and practices, from analyzing pop culture representations of women to criticism of historically ignored female authors. Feminist approaches in the field of Shakespeare studies is "both representative and exceptional in relation to the larger project of feminist literary studies" because "it is more a matter of reassessing than of rediscovering a literary cannon"[11] through a variety of approaches including "textual editing, teaching, academic research and performance".[12] Phyllis Rackin, one of the current foremost scholars in the field, comments on the early scholarship in this field: "The heroines of Shakespeare's middle comedies were especially attractive to the feminist critics of the 1970s,

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[10] Kathleen McLuskie, "The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare: *King Lear* and *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare, Feminism and Gender*, ed. Kate Chedgzoy (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 24.
[11] Kate Chedgzoy, ed. *Shakespeare, Feminism and Gender* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 5.
[12] Chedgzoy 9.

when it seemed important to mobilize Shakespeare's authority in the service of our own political goals".[13] This work was based mostly on close readings and rereadings of the text, which is still one of the primary methods of criticism used by feminist Shakespearean scholars. After this initial wave of feminist scholars identifying with and claiming Shakespeare's heroines as their own, scholarship in the field turned towards contextualizing the texts. Rather than understanding Shakespeare through their own biases, scholars wanting to understand "gender, sexuality, race, or social relations" did so by "reading his texts in the context of the culture in which he wrote them".[14] There was a move towards "a more pessimistic picture … as scholars marshaled historical evidence to demonstrate the pervasiveness of patriarchal beliefs and practices" in the Early Modern period.[15]

One of the foundational texts of twentieth century feminist Shakespearean scholarship *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* by Juliet Dusinberre "examines Shakespeare's women characters – and those of some of his contemporaries – in the light of Renaissance debates over women," placing feminist Shakespeare scholarship in the position of historicizing and contextualizing Shakespeare's treatment of female characters.[16] Her book looks at how Shakespeare and his contemporaries created strong female characters out of a culture that was learning to give women greater authority and freedom. Dusinberre sees the higher number of wealthy, educated women, such as Queen Elizabeth I, and the growing Puritan belief in an equal partner marriage as indicative of changing perceptions about the subjugated place of women in

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[13] Phyllis Rackin, "Misogyny is Everywhere," *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed Dympna Callaghan (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) 44.
[14] Dympna Callaghan, ed, *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) xiii.
[15] Rackin 44.
[16] McLuskie 27.

society. However, "[t]hese contentions about the period and the drama have been challenged"[17] by "feminist historians [who] doubt whether the presence of isolated 'women worthies' has much effect on the overall position of women or on attitudes towards them" during the English Renaissance.[18] Dusinberre's text, published in 1975, ushered in a form of "analysis of Shakespeare's plays which situates them in the ideological currents of his own time".[19] Though the claims Dusinberre makes have been contested, her methodology was adopted and utilized by feminist Shakespearean scholars.

While historical analysis and concern with the archive will always be a part of any scholarly field, with the introduction of psychoanalysis, feminist criticism of Shakespeare turned to issues of the body, constructed gender, and sexuality. The focus shifts again to the characters, rather than the culture. In *The Woman's Part*, one of the seminal anthologies of feminist Shakespeare criticism, Shakespeare's texts are more than a mimetic expression of the culture in Elizabethan London. While they must recognize the place of women in Elizabethan London and the prevalence of patriarchy, "feminist critics also recognize that the greatest artists do not necessarily duplicate in their art the orthodoxies of their culture; they may exploit them to create character or intensify conflict; they may struggle with, criticize, or transcend them".[20] Historical critics are seen as separate from feminist critics and are asked to account for "the relationship between life and art" as they "see[k] to relate the status of women in the plays to that of women in the period".[21] There is a focus on how "[t]he plays are aesthetic creations as well as social

[17] Gayle Greene, Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, and Carol Thomas Neely, eds, *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980) 7.
[18] Greene 8.
[19] McLuskie 27.
[20] Greene 4.
[21] Greene 7.

documents" and "historical data cannot simply be imported into them or derived from them".[22] The turn towards the inner life of the text corresponds with the introduction of psychoanalysis into criticism and the growth of New Criticism. These forms of criticism allow a feminist scholar "to restore female identity to the text of the plays" and privilege the (female) reader, rather than the male author.[23] The type of close reading espoused by New Criticism has been a part of feminist Shakespearean scholarship in the past and brings it back to the forefront as the methodology used by feminist scholars. Psychoanalytic theory gave feminist scholars the tools to "explore the psychosexual dynamics that underlie the aesthetic, historical, and genre contexts" of Shakespeare's texts.[24] Stemming from this time period and continuing forward, there is an interest in sexuality, female and male, as configured in Shakespeare's plays.

With the rise of postcolonial studies and critical race theory, scholars such as Ania Loomba, Dympna Callaghan, and Ayanna Thompson brought feminist Shakespeare criticism into conversation with critical race theory, figuring the Other in Shakespeare in terms of race and gender. It was generally felt that "feminist Shakespeare studies need[ed] to think through the complex relations of gender to other forms of disempowerment".[25] If "one of the pitfalls of feminist criticism" is "its habitual tendency to take gender as the diacritical difference of culture, and in so doing … eras[ing] other systems of difference", a union between feminist studies and critical race theory, or post-colonial studies, seemed like the next logical step.[26] This engagement with post colonial theory and critical race theory has continued to interest scholars in terms of the function and representation of race within the plays and the ways the plays function as cultural

[22] Greene 8.
[23] Greene 10.
[24] Greene 9.
[25] Chedgzoy 11.
[26] Chedgzoy 11.

commodities.

In more recent scholarship, there has been an added focus on productions of these plays, in addition to the theoretical understanding of them. The inclusion of performances into the academic world as actual sites of scholarship may be the influence of the growing field of performance studies or an elevation of performance as criticism in other fields. Chedgzoy notes "some of the most interesting and stimulating critical thinking about Shakespeare by women in recent years has gone on in theatrical productions, novels, poems, and films"[27] which shows the place of sites of performance within a larger academic context. She even points towards a future avenue, that has since been realized in scholarship, of "critical examinations of the role of women in [Shakespearean] reproduction through study and social groups and Shakespeare societies, as well [as] the interventions of women directors, performers and adapters".[28] The Shakespearean film adaptations of Julie Taymor, including her recent film *The Tempest* that featured Helen Mirren in the role of Prospera, have been included as material for critical analysis by Shakespearean scholars. With prominent female directors, such as Taymor, and feminist acting troupes, such as the Weird Sisters Collective from Austin, Texas, turning their attention toward Shakespeare's texts, this area of study is being discussed and explored.

There is also a subset of the ever growing field of feminist Shakespeare criticism that attends to the physical manifestation of the female on the Early Modern stage through the body of the boy actor. This work grounds itself in more historical archival work, looking at the historical data about the training and performance of the boy actor. The performance of the female roles by young boys certainly complicates the nature of gender in Shakespeare's plays, as I will also argue in my project. In *Squeaking Cleopatras: the Elizabethan boy player*, Joy Leslie

[27] Chedgzoy 12.
[28] Chedgzoy 13.

Gibson looks at the female characters created for the stage in terms of the demands on the boy actors. Gibson pays particular attention to the technical aspect of performance, looking at breath control and the physical demands of the plays. Gibson's focus on the lived experience of the boy actor on and off stage has interesting resonances with phenomenology and the materiality of gender. Michael Shapiro's book *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy heroines and female pages* looks at the phenomenon of cross dressing in Early Modern English society at large, citing incidents of historical cross dressing and the Puritan opposition to the practice, and the representation of cross dressing in the plays of the time. The figure of the boy actor is important in his understanding of gender at the time and the way that gender works in the plays. Stephen Orgel's *Impersonations: the performance of gender in Shakespeare's England* looks at the phenomenon of the boy actor on the Shakespearean stage. He takes as his starting point the question of why the tradition of boy actors instead of female actresses persisted for so long in England when the rest of Europe had already embraced women on the stage. He looks at the understanding of gender during the Early Modern period, using medical and anatomical texts. Orgel theorizes how the figure of the boy actor fits into the cultural concepts of gender held during the Early Modern period. The material and historical focus of these works, and other texts in this vein, are an important part of my project and the use of material phenomenology in my theorizing.

The most recent trend in feminist Shakespeare criticism is a queering of gender and sexuality as a theoretical lens through which to view the plays. The recent anthology *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare* edited by Madhavi Menon is a clear indication of the traction that queer studies is gaining in this field that is often seen as tethered to more traditional readings. The queering of Shakespeare opens up avenues of

discussion about the very nature of gender and sexuality and how the theatre can become a space of play and fluidity for these categories. In my own work, I have found the notion of queerness to be useful in allowing me to reach past traditional gender binaries and open my work up to complicating the more traditional notions of gender. While queer Shakespeare as a critical theory is still being developed, it has had an impact on stage productions which seek to complicate the notions of sexuality within the text. All male or all female productions of plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, as seen in the all male *Shakespeare's R & J* and the LGBTQ retelling *Still a Rose* featuring women as both the lead characters, have gained prominence and interest in the theatrical community. Looking forward to work in this field, the idea of queerness, in various forms, will figure prominently for scholars interested in Shakespeare, gender, and sexuality.

ii. Chapter Summaries

In the first chapter, I turn away from the plays of William Shakespeare and use instead the work of one of his contemporaries, Ben Jonson, to make my argument. Jonson's plays are quite different from Shakespeare's in a number of ways; one of those is his relationship to gender and the audience, both important points in my analysis of Early Modern drama. Jonson is known for writing for a more elite crowd, like those found in the more expensive indoor theatres. His humor focuses more on witticisms and intellectual tricks played by the characters on one another, and on the audience. In Jonson's plays, women are often the punchline of these jokes. Rather than the empowered female characters we find in Shakespeare's plays, Jonson's female characters are ridiculed and treated as accessories to the main male characters. Even in the title of the play that is the center of my investigation, *Epicene, or the Silent Woman*, Jonson makes the age old joke of unimaginative men: a silent woman does not exist. The character of the silent woman and the

characterization of the female characters in the play highlight an interesting view of gender in the Early Modern. The creation of Epicene as a character plays on the construction of women on the stage, and plays with audience expectations about how to read and interpret gender.

Through this play, I look at the audience's experience of gender on the Early Modern stage, playing off the *theatrical vibrancy* coined by Michael Shapiro[29]. Shapiro sees the multiple levels of viewing the audience experienced as contributing to the overall theatrical experience of the Early Modern stage. As audiences saw the male actors playing female characters, they were aware of all the levels of representation on the stage, but had to pick which to read in order to correctly interpret the scene before them. Jonson utilizes this double vision to his advantage in *Epicene*. I focus on what Jonson's playing with the system of representation reveals about the understanding of gender and what this play can show us about the experience of seeing female characters on the Early Modern stage.

At the end of this chapter, I turn to a female playwright who rewrites and comments on Jonson's *Epicene*. In the Restoration, Margaret Cavendish published several plays including *Convent of Pleasure*. Though her plays were never performed during her lifetime, Cavendish places herself in conversation with Jonson through the introductory material she writes at the beginning of her published volume. In *Convent of Pleasure*, there is also a male crossing dressing character that passes as female for the majority of the play. This character also evokes questions of what it means to perform gender and how society interprets gender. Cavendish also presents the audience with an all-female space, similar to that of the Ladies College in *Epicene*, with the Convent of Pleasure founded by Lady Happy. Unlike the Ladies College, though, the Convent is not treated as a joke; it is a genuine retreat for the women in the play. The infiltration

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[29] See Shapiro's book *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy heroines and female pages*

of this all-female space by a man is catastrophic and results in Lady Happy losing her status as an autonomous woman. Both plays feature a crossdressing male character who tricks the audience as well as the characters on stage. Unlike in Jonson's *Epicene,* in *Convent of Pleasure,* this trick brings us closer to the character, Lady Happy, who has suffered the brunt of this deception and asks the audience to think about how women are treated in society.

In chapter two, I use Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night* to look at the phenomenological descriptions and understanding of gender within the play text and how that worked with the theatrical conventions of the Early Modern stage. *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* is a play built on issues of gender, representation, identity, and sexuality, so it is the perfect case study to look at how women were described and represented in Early Modern theatre. Since there were no female bodies on the stage, other elements had to be present to create the female characters in these plays. In my previous chapter, I looked closely at the material elements that went into costuming the boy actors. In this chapter, I also turn to the way the text itself was utilized to bring the female characters to life for the audience. There are moments within the play when the verbal descriptions of the character are meant to translate into a lived experience by the audience. Early Modern theatre, with its minimal sets and props, was created through the words spoken on the stage. In specific moments, these words were used to create the gender of the characters.

In a play like *Twelfth Night* that is operating on several different levels in terms of gender, the text of the play has an important role in helping the audience create the world of the play. When Duke Orsino offers a detailed description of his new page Cesario, he is helping bring the female character of Viola to life. *Twelfth Night* is a complicated play in terms of gender, made even more complicated by the restrictions of the Early Modern play. As a playwright, Shakespeare played with these conventions to create moments of tension between the text and

the body being presented on the stage. This tension asks the audience to consider the reality before them and reexamine their thoughts about gender.

In the second half of this chapter, I turn to a modern production of *Twelfth Night* that tries to recreate the conditions of the Early Modern stage. The 2002 production of *Twelfth Night* produced by the Globe Theatre in London, England was an "Original Practices" production. This meant that the production attempted to recreate the Early Modern staging of the play, complete with an all-male cast and period costumes. This provides an interesting look at how certain moments would have played with male actors cast in the female roles, which we do not often see in modern productions. However, try as they might, the Globe cannot recreate the fundamental part of the Early Modern theatrical experience: the audience. Modern audiences bring their modern sensibilities to the play and to the actors of the stage. As one critic said, even simple atmospheric things like "the roar of a 747's engine overhead, [are] a constant reminder of the impossibility of stepping back in time, of fully restoring the Shakespearean stage" (Prescott 362). Original Practices productions are a continuing theatrical trend for companies putting on Early Modern plays. I use the Globe's 2002 production to look at how this trend works today with modern audiences and modern ideas of gender and sexuality. While it can be a useful tool to looking at how certain moments were meant to land or be understood, it also complicates the ideas of gender and performance we have in a post-Butler world.

In the final chapter, I use Shakespeare's play *As You Like It* to look at issues of identity creation, gender, and performance. I use the theories of Hannah Arendt and Judith Butler to posit a theory about how gender and identity are performed and understood. In *As You Like It*, the main character Rosalind constructs multiple identities for herself throughout the course of the play. She actively performs these new identities for a public audience, using interactions with

new characters to confirm and cement the reality of these new identities. At the start of the play, Rosalind and her cousin Celia must flee the world of the court for the Forest of Arden, a place of transformation and freedom. In the forest, Rosalind poses as a young boy named Ganymede. This identity gains social significance when she enters the forest and begins interacting with its inhabitants. Her performance of the male Ganymede mirrors the type of everyday performance of gender Butler talks about. Ganymede's interactions with the people in the forest confirm his male identity. The performance of Ganymede has no beginning for these characters, so it becomes naturalized. Within the fluid realm of the forest, Rosalind creates another identity: a fictional Rosalind that woos Orlando in an elaborate sexual game. This fictional Rosalind provides an interesting counterpoint to Ganymede. She is transparently fictional in a way that is revealing about how social and public interaction work in terms of identity formation. The play as a whole plays on ideas of gender and identity and the fluidity of those notions. I use Arendt's theory of the public and Butler's work in gender and performance to further analyze the play and its characters.

iii. Conclusion

At a recent Shakespeare Association of America conference, a new working group called Trans*Historicities discussed the future of trans studies, queer studies, and Shakespeare. Renaissance studies has had a complicated past with trying to incorporate new and emerging fields of research, like queer studies and critical race theory, that foregrounds marginalized groups, and trans studies is no exception. The conversation that preoccupied this group both before and during the conference meeting revolved around the nature and future of trans studies in Shakespeare criticism. There was a concentrated effort before the conference to collect a

compendium of trans criticism in the field of Early Modern drama, creating perhaps the first and only such bibliography to exist. As this new type of work becomes a part of the critical conversation surrounding Shakespeare, it is important to think carefully about how this work can be done in an ethical and political way. The conversation started in that room has continued as we as scholars keep checking in with each other and with ourselves. This is all to say that the work of pulling gender studies in Shakespeare criticism in new directions is still being done by a diverse group of scholars who are attune to the significance of the work they are doing.

Not only is this work being done in the erudite spaces of scholarly conferences, but theaters across the globe have been producing work that plays with the fundamental assumptions of gender in Shakespeare's plays. Here on our own University of California, Irvine campus, the New Swan Shakespeare festival produced a *Midsummer Night's Dream* featuring a gender swapped Lysandra, rather than the traditional male Lysander. While this change was resisted by more traditional audience members, with some even walking out mid-play and demanding a refund, it also brought new light to Shakespeare's words for many others. The demands for equality spoken by Lysander in the opening scene take on a different urgency and political resonance when coming from a lesbian woman wanting to marry the woman she loves. The Utah Shakespeare Festival invited Lisa Wolpe, the founder of the LA Woman's Shakespeare Company, to play Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, a play whose ideas about marginalized peoples and the intolerance of society continues to resonate. Productions like this put into action the type of ground breaking criticism scholars are currently working on. Future scholarly work can benefit greatly from a collaboration with theatre companies who are pushing Shakespeare in new and exciting directions. Early Modern plays continue to provide fertile ground for investigations into gender, performance, and embodiment.

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Chapter One

Material Phenomenology on the Early Modern Stage: Metatheatrics and gender in Ben Jonson's *Epicene*

I. Introduction

The English Early Modern stage was a male dominated world, barring women from the stage on the basis of propriety. Male actors and authors tried to understand and represent femininity on the stage, presenting symbols of the feminine without the actual presence of women. English playwrights had different approaches to addressing the absence of the female body on the stage. However it was dealt with, there is no doubt that this convention had an effect on the way plays and characters were written at the time. Authors played with the issues of presence and absence, male and female, character and actor in interesting and diverse ways. Some of the best known characters in Elizabethan drama were created to highlight this play of gender on the stage. I would like to briefly turn to the plays of Shakespeare, the most well known of the Elizabethan playwrights, and the female characters he created for the stage as a way of elucidating examples of the way this discussion of female materiality worked on the Early Modern stage. Instead of trying to cover the void left by the absence of women on the stage, Shakespeare's plays play with the limitations within which they are working. The lack of true female presence on the stage is commented on within the plays themselves in ways that serve to highlight the absence of the female. As can be seen in most plays of the period, the text of Shakespeare's plays points to the false creation of women on the stage. His plays, and the plays of his contemporaries, were a reflection of the rapidly changing society around him, taking into account new ideas about gender and identity.

In a period of burgeoning economic growth and trade, citizens of England were able to

transcend their economic class through wealth and marriage. The compromising of these strict class codes that had defined English society resulted in cultural anxiety surrounding identity and the ability to know someone's true identity and worth. Women from merchant families married into the nobility, raising their social status while increasing the wealth of their new husband's family. In addition to this ability to change one's social status through marriage, women were also changing their physical appearances through the use of cosmetics, which had become more readily available due to the increased trade with foreign countries. Women were able to take control over their appearance in a way that had not been possible before. Makeup was popularized across England; even Queen Elizabeth was a heavy user of cosmetics. As a result, there is an increased fear and anxiety about women deceiving men and being able to hide who they really are from onlookers which is reflected in cultural texts of the time. If a woman is able to manipulate her image, she is able to obfuscate her true identity and become an unknowable entity not readily available for the consumption of the men around her. These anxieties about knowing the feminine are mirrored within plays by male characters who see the empty and foreign space of the female character as dangerous.

Female characters often represent a space of anxiety for male characters. This anxiety is often revealed through the homosocial relationships that the male characters form, and the frequent assumptions of female promiscuity. Often the homosocial relationships formed between male characters take precedence over their heterosocial and sexual relationships with female characters, largely because of male anxiety about knowing the truth about female characters. When cross dressing female characters are introduced, they represent the opportunity to reveal the way that these relationships work, and the male creation of the female character. Many of Shakespeare's plays feature a female character who has to assume a male identity within the

world of the play. Through these cross dressing female characters, the reality of the boy actor's body is brought to the forefront and used as a source of comedy and sexual tension. The cross dressing female characters reflect on the construct of femininity. They show how gender is a performance and highlight the various levels that this performance is at work on the stage. The additional layer of male persona within the play calls into question all the layers of performance and points to the lack at the center of the female character. The unknowability of the female character is inherent in the practices of the Elizabethan stage, and is written into the characters themselves as a reflection of this absence and a commentary on it.

The cross dressing female character poses an interesting figure on the Elizabethan stage. It was a trope commonly used on the stage, requiring a female character to create a male persona that then interacts with other characters as male within the world of the play. This character calls into question the male actor's process of creating the illusion of the female character. Reclothed in male garments, the boy actor must still recall a feminine persona while impersonating the masculine. The male persona of the female character, while impenetrable to the other characters in the play, must still remind the audience of the female character underneath. Where can we locate the feminine in this triangulation of identity: boy actor, female character, male persona? Instead of hiding the complications of this creation, it is highlighted within the play itself as a source of comedy. With these plays, the audience is let into the difficulties of creating the masculine persona through the feminine character by the masculine actor and playwright. Within the plays, moments of metatheatricality can be found that point to the corporeality of the boy actor's body in a way that highlights to the audience the unreachable nature of the female on the stage.

In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night,* for example, the main female character Viola is forced to

create a male persona out of necessity. She masquerades as a boy page, Cesario, to serve the Duke Orsino. Within the world of the play, almost no other character knows her true identity as a woman, placing even more importance on the text of the play to remind the audience of Viola's female identity. It also means that almost all the characters in the play interact with Cesario as a man. This often leads to interactions that play with the illusion and performance of gender, providing moments of comedy and sexual tension. These moments highlight the character created by the boy actor while playing with the sexuality of the characters. In one of these moments, as Duke Orsino's newest and youngest page, Cesario is sent to woo the Countess Olivia. Viola, as Cesario, tries to protest that the mission will be to no avail, but is persuaded by Orsino:

> *Viola:* I think it not so, my lord.
>
> *Orsino:* Dear lad, believe it;
>
> For they shall yet belie thy happy years
>
> That say thou art a man. Diana's lip
>
> Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe
>
> Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
>
> And all is semblative a woman's part.[30]

The shared line indicates that the reply from Orsino is a quick rebuttal of Cesario's protestations. Shared lines often occur between characters who are romantically linked and emotionally tied. Though this line isn't a perfect line of iambic pentameter, it does suggest a close relationship between the two characters. Within the world of the play, Orsino perceives Cesario to be male, and they have developed a strong homosocial bond. This bond becomes the source of sexual

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[30] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, Or, What You Will*, ed. Keir Elam (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2008) 1.4.29-34.

tension within the play, as seen in this moment. Orsino's focus on the look of Cesario's lip, and the sound of his voice, mimics the way a lover would itemize the physical attributes of a loved one. It parodies the romantic blazon often seen in love poetry. This interaction raises the question of the Duke's sexuality, as he seems to indicate a sexual attraction and affection for his young page. Though this confusion of sexuality is eventually resolved with a heterosexual union, there are moments in the play that create confusion about the sexuality of the characters. The resolution of the play, and the convention of seeing boy actors as female characters, opens the space to explore nonnormative sexualities within the world of the playhouse.

In modern productions of the play, which use female actors, the humor in this moment is found in the female actor playing Viola/Cesario overperforming her masculinity in an attempt to discount her perceived femininity. The masculine posturing of the female actor becomes an in-joke with the audience who is well aware of the character's double status. The popular film version of the play directed by Trevor Nunn finds the humor of this moment in Cesario's incomplete performance of masculinity. Viola's inability to completely obscure her female form becomes the focus of the humor, and of Orsino's sexual attraction. Viola's femininity is never in question, in fact, the humor is in questioning her masculinity. After coughing and sputtering at Orsino's accusations of femininity, Imogen Stubbs, the actress who plays Viola/Cesario, ends up shoving Orsino in a display of aggressive masculinity. It also becomes an inadvertent moment of physical intimacy between the two characters as Orsino leans in to point out her feminine attributes. In the modern theatre, the actress is able to use the femininity of the character to find the humor in the scene. There is no need to call attention to the body of the actress herself, which gets subsumed into the female character.

In Early Modern performances of the play, however, without the women's clothes to

construct the female appearance, nothing about the male actor "is semblative the woman's part."[31] Instead of pointing out the feminine characteristics of Viola/Cesario, Orsino is, in fact, painting these features onto the male body of the actor. By invoking the female parts that should be there, the speech serves to highlight their very absence. The humor now exists in Cesario's lack of femininity, rather than masculinity. It plays on the body of the boy actor, rather than on the character. It is the absence of the female body that creates the moment of humor between audience and actor, rather than character.

The play breaks free of the fictional world to poke fun at the conventions of the physical world that bar a female presence on the stage. The text of the play reveals the theatrical construct of gender by pointing the audience to the boy actor's body as the readable object on the stage, rather than the female character he is playing. It is an inversion of the traditional semiotic system of the stage that asks audiences to accept the created femininity on the stage as truth. The humor results from a double vision that allows the audience to see and not see the male body underneath the feminine. The different levels on which the boy actor is forced to operate, particularly at such telling moments as in *Twelfth Night*, not only add to the dramatic richness of the text, they also point to the nature of gender on the stage and in society. The 2012 production of *Twelfth Night* at the London Globe featured an all-male cast and attempted to recreate the original practices of the Early Modern stage. The way certain moments played on the stage were certainly different with the all-male cast. In particular, in the moment where Orsino highlights the feminine characteristics of Cesario, the homosexual tension between Orsino and Cesario was heightened with the presence of the male actor. The presence of the two male bodies on the stage provides a physical tension not seen in productions where Viola is played by a female actress. Though

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[31] Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* 1.4.34.

modern audiences are not trained to read the male bodies as female, they were still able to recognize the humor of the moment and be a part of the joke created by the tension between the body of the actor and the words of the text.

A similar moment of gender confusion and humor occurs in *As You Like It*, another of Shakespeare's plays featuring a cross dressing female character as the lead. The main character Rosalind, pretending to be the young boy Ganymede, offers to cure her love interest Orlando of his love sickness. Ganymede recounts the reasons that he, as a young boy, is an appropriate substitute for the woman Orlando loves by recounting the time he cured his uncle of being in love. He says that when his uncle would come visit him he would imitate the actions of a woman:

> "At which time would I, being but a moonish youth, grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles; for every passion something and for no passion truly anything, as boys and women are for the most part cattle of this color; would not like him; not loathe him; then entertain him, then forswear him; now weep for him, then spit at him"[32]

Within the play, this list serves to prove that Ganymede, as a young boy, has enough of the traits of a woman to imitate Orlando's object of affection with the full passion of love. In a modern production with a female actor, this moment becomes a parody of femininity. The female constitution, especially that of a strong character like Rosalind, cannot be seen as "apish, shallow, inconstant." This is, instead, an exaggeration of the stereotype of a woman in love. The audience and Rosalind share a moment of humor as Orlando buys this explanation as actually indicative of the way women act, revealing his naïveté.

In an Early Modern production, this monologue serves as a justification for the substitution of young men for women on the stage in general. Just as Ganymede hopes to take

[32] William Shakespeare, *As You Like It,* ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006) 3.2.398-406.

the place of Rosalind because of the similarities of their constitution, so all boy actors hope to replace women by being imitative of their characteristics. The repetitious and lengthy nature of the list of characteristics hint at the insecurities hidden in the playing of the boy actor. It is a reassurance that the boy actor is indeed qualified to play the female character. As Ganymede recounts "boys and women are for the most part cattle of this color," cementing an equation between young boys who had not yet reached puberty and women.[33] In the Early Modern period, it was a common perception that before reaching puberty, boys resembled women. It was thought that not only their voices resembled women, but their personalities and attitudes were more "semblative a woman's part," as well.[34] Young boys were even thought to lack heterosexual desire. There are indications of this perceived common knowledge in plays of the period, such as Jonson's *Epicene*. In the beginning of the play, one of the characters remarks how only the young page boy is allowed into the private chambers of a lady. Though the play itself points to the potentially false nature of this assumption about young boys, it does show that this knowledge was wide spread in Early Modern society. As in *Epicene*, this moment in *As You Like It* hints that the parallels drawn between young boys and women are perhaps misguided.

In both of these examples from Shakespeare, the audience's attention is drawn to the corporeality of the boy actor's body in a way that would not happen in a day production with female actors playing the female characters. The audience is asked to look not just at the female character under the male persona, but also at the actor's body upon which these characters are written. They are moments that step out of the play to consider the superstructures of the theatrical world that bar women from entering it. In addition, these moments create instances of sexual tension between the two male characters that cannot hide and become normalized by the

[33] Shakespeare, *As You* 3.2.400.
[34] Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* 1.4.34.

body of the female actor. When Imogen Stubbs, as Cesario, gazes at Orsino (Toby Stephens) as he playfully brushes her lip, the moment of physical tension between them is allowable because of her physical status as a woman. The confusion is acceptable because, in the end, there is something concrete about her femininity. In the case of the boy actor, however, this moment has no safety net of heterosexuality to contain it. The confusion is only multiplied by the body of the boy actor. This confusion continues into the final scene as Viola never once appears on stage as a woman, but is in fact engaged to Orsino dressed as a man. The body of the boy actor creates a homoerotic tension through the piece that is highlighted by the male persona of the female character he is playing.

While this fundamental split in male actor and female character can be a source of comedy, it can also be the foundation of tragedy. The anxiety that the female character can never truly be known can have disastrous effects when internalized by the male character, as happens with Othello and Claudio.[35] The creation of the female character by the masculine playwright is echoed in the relationship between male and female characters within the play. The male character creates the image of the female character, and is then terrified and angered by the idea that this creation might not be real. The blankness of characters such as Desdemona and Hero point to the lack of true female presence on the stage. It is the 'acting/performing' of the female characters themselves that creates anxiety and fear within the male characters who have no way of understanding them. The 'acting' female becomes dangerous to the male because it results in an unknowability of the female other. Within the world of the play, male anxieties center around the lack of true understanding and trust of the female characters. In particular, these anxieties center around female characters to which the male characters have chosen and attached

[35] The characters I am referring to here are Othello from Shakespeare's *Othello* and Claudio from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.

themselves. There is a vulnerability associated with this emotional attachment that is unacceptable in the face of the blankness of the female characters. A female character like Desdemona can never be a fully realized woman because she will always be played by a boy imitating characteristics that have been deemed female. The boy, as well as the playwright, can never fully understand the female characters they create, perhaps feeling the same anxieties a character like Othello feels in the face of the inscrutable Desdemona.

In these plays, the unfathomable quality of the female characters, which is created on a fundamental level by the performance of these characters by boy actors, is a source of a great deal of male anxiety that often results in the elimination or containment of the female characters. In the comedies, however, where cross dressing heroines take center stage, the body of the boy actor becomes a source of humor and commentary on the reality of the staged play. The void within the female character is often exploited by the character, such as in the instance of Cesario being labeled as feminine, and denies the audience the possibility of buying into the conceit of there being an actual female presence on the stage. Specific moments in the plays call attention to the invisible body of the boy actor under the construction on the female character in ways that undermine the audience's semiotic system in relation to the stage. Early Modern playwright such as Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare ask their audience to both see and not see the male actor's body as the readable object on the stage, rather than the created female character. This 'double vision' reveals the feminine lack of the Early Modern stage as female characters are created by male authors for male actors.

In the tragedies, the same empty space of the female is seen as anxiety provoking and results in a desire to exhume the truth from the representation. This anxiety centers around what is hidden beneath the material signifiers of the feminine. Whether it is the body of the boy actor,

or the unknowable nature of the female heart, there is something that is being obfuscated by material signifiers. In his jealousy, Othello laments, "Was this fair paper, this most goodly book,/ Made to write 'whore' upon?"[36] The shock that Desdemona's peerless appearance could hide such depths of sin is a source of rage. The female character is not allowed to act, not allowed to be different from what her appearance may suggest. This accusation conflates the inner and outer realities of the woman: she is what she appears to be. Othello cannot reconcile the outward beauty of Desdemona with the idea that her inner self may be less than pure. This anxiety over material referents is at the heart of anxiety of gender. All of these plays point to the fear and anxiety that material signifiers of gender have no true referent, that they can not be anchored in an inner truth. The male desire to know the true female seen in these plays culminates in the excavation of the female body in John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, as Annabella's heart is cut out of her body and presented on stage by her lover and brother Giovanni, in a final attempt to know her. Throughout the plays of the period, the corporeality of the male actor's body creates an essential unknowability of the female character and provides a basis for understanding the female characters presented on the Elizabethan stage.

The Elizabethan cultural understanding that young boys and women were equivalent allowed for the stage convention that used young boy actors to play female characters. Young prepubescent boys were apprenticed to older actors and played the female roles dressed in women's clothes and covered in a thick layer of makeup. Material signifiers on the body of the boy actor created the image of the female characters that audiences would read as women. Gender was reduced to certain key material phenomenon that can be recognized and experienced by an audience: phenomenon such as white makeup, rosy cheeks, and red lips. In addition to

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[36] William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. E.A.J. Honigmann (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1996) 4.2.73-74.

elaborate costuming, boy actors were dressed up in wigs and cosmetics. The white face, red cheeks, and red lips seen on the boy actors was reminiscent of a trend in cosmetics found throughout England that was meant to symbolize ideal English beauty. The presence of these visual cues was enough to create the female character on the stage. The underlying physical body fades from sight as audiences are asked to only read the symbols of the theatrical reality being presented before them. Female characters were created on the stage through specific culturally recognizable signs. Audiences upon entering the space of the theatre agreed to the theatrical convention that allowed for boy actors dressed in certain cultural signifiers to be read as women. They agreed let the material additions supersede the actor's body as the legible sign on the stage.

II. Ben Jonson's *Epicene, or The Silent Woman*

Throughout his plays, Ben Jonson, a popular Elizabethan playwright known for his witty city comedies, uses the body of the boy actor portraying a female character to comment on the representational destabilization created by this practice. Specific moments in Jonson's plays call attention to the invisible body of the boy actor under the construction on the female character in ways that undermine the audience's semiotic system in relation to the stage. Jonson asks his audience to both see and not see the male actor's body as the readable object on the stage, rather than that of the created female character. This double vision reveals the female absence of the Early Modern stage as female characters are created by male authors for male actors.

Theatergoing audiences in the Early Modern period were trained to see the boy actors as the female characters they portrayed. Upon entering an Early Modern playhouse, the spectators enter into an understanding with the playmakers to read the male bodies dressed in drag as women. They agree to the theatrical conventions that dictate that the body of the boy actor

signifies femininity. The appeal of going to plays with cross dressing actors did not lie in the humor of seeing a male actor mislabeled as female, as is found in more modern works featuring cross dressing characters and men in drag. The attire of an actor or character was seen as an indisputable labeling system that superseded anatomically assigned gender associations. "[G]ender disguises in this theatre are represented as all but impenetrable," both within the material world and the fictive world of the play.[37] In *Epicene; or The Silent Woman*, Jonson presents his audience with moments that call this representational system into question. The final reveal of the true nature of Epicene unbalances the semiotic system upon which the theatre depends. These moments break up the theatrical space, erasing theatrical conventions and revealing the materiality of the theatre. They bring attention to the craft of the stage, and the very nature of the constructed and mimetic space of the stage. The machinery of the stage is exposed when the audience is forced to see how the representations on the stage are created.

By attending the performance, audiences were agreeing to abide by the theatrical conventions and see through the theatrical lens, which allowed for the naturalization of the gender bending of the transvestite boy actor. The double vision that is created when Jonson draws attention to the body of the boy actor underneath the female disguise disrupts that theatrical contract, revealing it as a false construct. The "imagined body of a woman, the staged body of a boy actor, the material presence of clothes" all combine to produce the constructed identity that is then read as a female character by the Early Modern audience.[38] Jonson plays with the different levels of representation and identity by breaking with the theatrical conventions and revealing the mechanics of how gender is created on the stage. In moments of metatheatricality, Jonson draws attention to the semiotic system of the theatre as he draws the

[37] Orgel 18.
[38] Orgel 31.

audience's attention to both the female character and the male body on stage. The double vision dissolves the sign system set up through the actor's attire and reveals the audience's misreading of the actor's body underneath.

In *Epicene, or The Silent Woman*, Jonson opens up the space of the theatre and calls into question the theatrical conventions of the Early Modern theatre. Particularly through the outdated restriction on female presence on the stage, Jonson forces the audience to confront the artificially constructed semiotic system of the stage. Jonson uses the theatrical convention to his advantage to deceive the audience with the title character Epicene and create confusion about the character's identity. The success of the gender switching plot in the play is revealing about Early Modern audiences and their ideas of gender, as both the characters and the audience fall for the disguise. In the final reveal, audiences are asked to see the body of the boy actor that they have been trying to obscure throughout the play. Through the moments of double vision, where audiences are asked to look simultaneously at the body of the boy actor and the constructed fiction of the female character, the answer to the question "What did audiences see when they went to theatre, the female character or the boy beneath the dress?" can be interrogated.[39]

The gender obscurity of the term 'epicene' is a good descriptor of the ambivalent sexuality of the boy actor playing the female character on the Early Modern stage, as "someone lacking fixed gender characteristics, possessing too many gender characteristics, or veering into the wrong gender role".[40] This idea of gender fluidity was a dangerous one to Early Modern society, and the anxiety surrounding gender and the performance of gender can be seen throughout the plays of the time. The term 'epicene' recalls these anxieties and draws attention to

[39] Orgel 31.
[40] Mimi Yiu, "Sounding the Space Between Men: Choric and Choral Cities in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene; or, The Silent Woman,*" *PMLA* 122 (2007): 72-88. 72.

the already contentious representation of gender with the boy actor. The term can just as easily apply to the character of Epicene before the final reveal, as it does after. The resolution of Ben Jonson's play *Epicene* is brought about by a gender bending magic trick played by the character Dauphine on his uncle Morose and the audience in the theatre. It is the audience, more than the characters on the stage, who are left with questions at the end after the title female character is unveiled as the male actor underneath. The semiotic system they have been operating under is destabilized by one move. The swift conclusion of the play allows little time for the audience to reconcile the two versions of Epicene. There is no creation of the male character under Epicene, so what is actually revealed is the place of the boy actor, rather than a character.

The silent woman of the play's subtitle is a feminine ideal that is completely created by men, by Jonson and the male actor in the world of the theatre, and by Dauphine and his boy within the play. The process of "crafting the perfect woman…[is] designed by men for men involving only men".[41] The space of the woman on the stage is highlighted as a fiction in the moment that the male actor's body gains semiotic significance within the world of the play. The fluidity of gender in a space where a male actor is accepted as the representative for femininity creates the uncertainty that allows Dauphine's trick to pass unnoticed by the audience until the final reveal. However, once the wig is lifted, the system of representation is replaced, and the audience's vision is redirected to the anatomies of the actors and the constructed nature of gender on the stage.

The motion of the final de-wigging also reveals the mechanisms of the theatre, where everything has been carefully constructed to produce one seamless production. The business of theatre takes great care to hide the craft behind the spectacle, but the curtain is pulled back with

[41] Yiu 82.

the removal of the boy actor's wig, which acknowledges the fabricated nature of the theatrical performance. It points to the materiality of the female character on the stage, to her complete creation through the material accoutrements of the boy actor. Without his wig and costume, he retains no remnants of the female character, no physical signifiers that can be read as female by an audience. He is immediately seen as male. The first comment made after Dauphine's speech is from Clerimont: "A boy".[42] It is a statement, not a question. This lack of confusion on the part of the stage audience is interesting in light of an earlier anecdote by Truewit, in which a "poor madam, for haste, and troubled, snatched at her peruke to cover her baldness and put it on the wrong way".[43] Truewit's story indicates that it was not especially unusual for women to wear perukes, so it was not inconceivable that Epicene could be a woman who regularly wore a wig[44]. The immediate recognition of Epicene as male points to a theatrical, rather than realistic, vision that is being employed by the characters on the stage. They are also abiding by the theatrical conventions, which would suggest that a woman in a wig must be a boy actor, rather than an unfortunate lady with hair loss problems.[45] For the characters on the stage, and, by extension, the audience, the removal of Epicene's wig unequivocally points to the male body and completely erases any vision of the feminine that has so carefully been created, by the boy actor, Jonson, and

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[42] Ben Jonson, *Epicene, The Alchemist and Other Plays,* ed. Gordon Campbell (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1995) 119-209. 5.4.198.

[43] Jonson, *Epicene* 1.1.118-120.

[44] Laura Levine offers this alternate reading of Truewit's story: "This moment of the perception of the baldness beneath the peruke is also a moment of androgyny, a recognition of the epicene. The baldness is 'prodigious' (monstrous) precisely because it signals the loss of sexual difference, and in a deeper sense, the loss of all difference. The bald woman is neither one thing nor another, neither man nor woman, and in this sense her epiceneness becomes a type or figure for all the ambiguity in the play which is simply the consequence of living in a world of time" (79).

[45] Will Fisher gives a detailed account of the importance of hair length and style to gender presentation in Early Modern society in his book *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (129-158).

Dauphine.

Dauphine's final trick is not only on his onstage audience, for which he is very publicly performing his wit, it is also on the audience at the Whitefriars, the indoor playhouse where *Epicene* would most likely have been performed. Up until that final moment, the audience believes that they have been included in the joke, that their location on the field of wit is on the side of Dauphine. However, with the revelation of Epicene's true identity, they are placed on the side of Morose, the antagonist and the duped. As in most of Jonson's comedies, the idea of wit holds an important place in determining social status and intellectual hierarchy within the world of the play. The characters are constantly performing their wit for one another in an attempt to gain the upper hand. Throughout the play, it is clear that Morose is on the side of the witless, while characters like Truewit and Clerimont are able to play tricks on other characters and show off their wit. However, the final moment when the true nature of Epicene is revealed, Dauphine emerges as the winner of the battle of wits, as he is able to fool all of the characters. With the other tricks that are played during the play, the audience is always in on the joke and enjoys being on the side of the wits, rather than the fools. Dauphine's trick, though, does not include the audience and leaves them in the dark along with the other characters, placing them on the side of the duped and fooled.

Unlike the characters on the stage, the audience has knowingly played along with Epicene's presentation as a woman, seeing the physical body of the boy actor through the theatrical lens. At no point does the audience think that there is an actual woman on the stage; they choose to participate in the theatrical convention that reads the boy actor's body as female. The removal of the boy actor's wig is an act that violently disengages the audience from the space of theatrical conventions they have entered, asking them to reread the genders of the

bodies on stage and rethink their understanding of the scene presented in front of them. The audience is forced to see both the constructed femininity of the boy actor playing the female character and the male characteristics of the body underneath the wig. It is an act of seeing that goes against the theatrical conventions and seems to mock the audience's participation in them. It is the audience's active participation in the creation of the stage world, by agreeing to read the bodies on the stage as female, that allows them to be duped, aligning them with the character who is shown to have the least amount of wit in the play. There is a disconnect between what they thought the theatre was representing and what they were actually seeing: "the final effect of [the] confidence tric[k] on the audience is to play up *differences* in gender, not their ambiguity[,]…[h]aving been tricked…the audience gets a first-hand lesson in the difference between appearance and reality."[46] Dauphine's authority, in terms of wit which held high social significance, seems to extend outside the world of the play, as his trick is played not only on Morose, but on the audience as well.

The humor in most cross dressing plots, such as *Twelfth Night* or *As You Like It*, is created by "the audience['s ability] to see through the impersonation, though the characters cannot".[47] This allows the uncomfortable moments of humor when the character is read incorrectly by other characters, and is only understood by the audience. The audience becomes part of an inner circle of wit and trust that excludes other characters who are not perceptive enough to catch on. As in *Twelfth Night*, when Viola as Cesario becomes the object of Olivia's affection, the audience is placed in a superior position as the possessors of knowledge. This knowledge provides a connection for the audience to the events unfolding before them, and distinctly places them on one side, that of the protagonist, when they are made privy to

[46] Smith, 143.
[47] Orgel 19.

information withheld from other characters. This is distinctly not true in Jonson's *Epicene.* Jonson was notorious having an elite sense of humor and refusing to pander to the less educated members in his audience. In this play, Jonson ensures that the entire audience intentionally misreads what is right in front of them and misses out on the joke. For example, the audience is not included in the humor of Mistress Haughty's insistence that "we'll have [Epicene] to the college; an she have wit, she shall be one of us!".[48] Only Dauphine can see the joke that Epicene will never be one of the collegiate ladies. It is only retroactively that the audience can find humor in Epicene's infiltration of the all-female space of the college, a space carefully guarded against male intrusion.

A more fertile ground for comedy that goes unnoticed by the audience until after Epicene's disguise is lifted lies in Daw and LaFoole's assertion that they are Epicene's lovers. As they seek to reaffirm their manhood through the performative act of heterosexual sex, they have, in fact, undermined themselves by choosing the misgendered Epicene as the object of their desire. If femininity is constructed through the physical accessories a woman purchases, as is the case in the world of the play, masculinity can be seen as created by the male's engagement in heterosexual sex, whether with real or "[their] own imagined persons".[49] By publicly proclaiming their involvement with Epicene, the knights think they are engaging in a practice that will further reinforce their masculinity in the eyes of their peers. The way that this backfires on them seems like the perfect set up for humor. However, only Dauphine, and Jonson, are privy to the joke. It seems like a missed opportunity to not include the audience in on the ploy, to not allow them to find pleasure in the attempted deception of the two knights. Instead, Jonson places the audience on the side of the dupes, on the side of the people who fall for Dauphine's trick and

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[48] Jonson, *Epicene* 3.6.48-49.
[49] Jonson, *Epicene* 5.4.208.

misread Epicene as a woman.

For the audience to not be included in the trick both pulls them further into the space of the play, revealing them to be one of the characters who is also being pranked, and isolated them from the protagonist, as they have been misreading the situation and are on the side of those who are swindled. There is a brief moment at the very end of the play where the Daw and LaFoole are soundly chastised by Truewit for their "common slanders," but it is so brief and follows so swiftly on the heels of the revelation, that it is not a moment that fully embraces the comedic potential in the situation.[50] It is also framed more as a scolding than a moment of comedy, as the men are chastised for their falsehoods. The two knights slink away, sharing in the confusion of the audience in the final moments of the play.

As is common for Ben Jonson's city comedies, the characters compete for social standing and rank by exercising their wit in a public setting. Throughout the play, characters display their wit through various tricks and pranks, constantly trying to gain ground on the other players. Dauphine, however, proves to be the most socially savvy through the creation of an unreadable figure. At the end of the play, Dauphine is revealed to be the manipulator behind Epicene, a character he created to secure his own financial ends. Dauphine is a playwright figure within the play, creating the script for Epicene that allows her to pass as a woman, unnoticed by the other characters until it is too late. Dauphine plays this trick on Morose, his fellow gallants, and everyone within the world of the play, as all the characters believe in Epicene's female identity.

Dauphine also fools the audience into reading Epicene as a woman, which they have culturally been trained to do through their previous theatrical experiences. The audience reads Epicene as a women, just as the read the other boy actors playing Mistress Otter and the other

[50] Jonson, *Epicene* 5.4.210.

female characters as women. Dauphine's deception complicates the place of the audience, refusing them a position of knowledge. In the other plays that feature crossing dressing character, such as *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, the audience is privy to the deception being played on the other characters. The audience sees both the male and female personas of the cross dressing characters, and often becomes a sounding board for the main character as they struggle to conceal their identity.

In *Epicene*, however, the audience becomes aligned with those characters that they have mocked throughout the course of the play. They are placed in the position of the culturally incompetent. Throughout the play, the audience has laughed at the antics of Morose, Daw, and LaFoole as they have proved themselves socially inept. However, the audience has also fallen for the same tricks as these socially unskilled characters. Therefore at the end of the play, the audience may feel sympathy for the characters at which they have scoffed, as the audience is now one of them, one of the duped. It can also create animosity for the protagonist who has left them in the dark and refused them access to a full understanding of the situation on the stage.

It is difficult to theorize about the reaction of the audience to the final reveal. The audience's participation in the theatrical conventions is called into question, as that is the mechanism through which Dauphine orchestrates his plot. However, this can also be associated with a type of thrill as audiences have a new theatrical experience where they are genuinely surprised by a play's ending. Like the twist at the end of *The Sixth Sense*, the ending of *Epicene* could provide the audience with a type of psychological thrill, as they are then forced to reconsider the events of the play in light of the new information, revealing new things about the play that they previously missed. Instead of confusing and alienating the audience, the twist ending may make them engage further with the play by continuing to work through it long after

it is over. The fact that the reveal of Epicene's true nature happens so close to the play's ending, allowing little time for both the audience and the characters to digest the occurrence, encourages a post-performance conversation unraveling the play through the lens of the new information.

Epicene's ability to pass as a woman within the world of the play, and to the audience, highlights the constructed nature of gender that is a central part of the play. The "social ground of gender categories necessarily finds itself null and void" in a theatre that does not allow a true representation of the feminine, constantly substituting the male body for the female.[51] "The interchangeability of the sexes is, on both the fictive and the material level, an assumption of this theatre," and points to the confusing semiotic system of gender that is being employed.[52] The idea of the epicene, the ambiguity of male and female categories, provides a good framework for looking at the gender of most characters within this play. The constant attention to the way the female characters create their femininity with cosmetic products points to the constructed nature of gender that is revealed in the final scene.[53] It is the "always invisible body" of the woman who is hidden under the cosmetics, or who is actually a man.[54] Otter complains that his wife "takes herself asunder still when she goes to bed, into some twenty boxes, and about the next day noon

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[51] Yiu 73.
[52] Orgel 18.
[53] In an extended rant against the vanity of his wife and her use of cosmetics, Otter exclaims, "A most vile face! And yet she spends me forty pound a year in mercury and hogs'-bones. All her teeth were made i' the Blackfriars, both her eyebrows i' the Strand, and her hair in Silver Street. Every part o' the town owns a piece of her" (4.2.81-85). This speaks to the consumer culture Mistress Otter is a part of, as well as the moralist argument against the use of cosmetics. Farah Karim-Cooper comments on the unpacking of this moment: "Mistress Otter loses her mystique [through this speech]; the power of her own deceptive arts has been undermined when Otter takes her apart by cataloguing her cosmetic appendices: face paint, false teeth, eyebrows, and hair. The 'town owns a piece of her', but equally, her body becomes a cosmetic map of London, perhaps giving us some indication about the various locations of cosmetic industry. This diatribe also reflects the common complaint of husbands and moralists that the wife wastes her husband's money…on this ritual" (115).
[54] Yiu 83.

is put together again, like a great German clock".[55] Much like Mistress Otter, any female character is physically constructed on to the body through material signifiers, such as female costumes and wigs.[56] The success of Dauphine's trick lies in "his ability to manipulate the signifiers of gender upon the body of a boy," which recognizes the malleable nature of gender and the mechanisms through which it is constructed on the stage.[57]

The space of the boy actor playing the female character is already an epicene space, "the abnormal no man's land (and no woman's land, too) between the normal male and the normal female," but within the play itself, any gender becomes a flexible construct.[58] The female characters, such as Haughty, Centaure, and Mistress Otter, are seen as monstrous or "hermaphroditical" for the authority they claim through their Ladies College.[59] This agency is seen to occupy a forbidden space as they bill themselves as the arbiters of society, a role reserved for men, particularly the gallants. The aggressive stance these women take as they assert the validity of their authority in society earns them the label of hermaphroditic, as opposed to epicene. Epicene has a far more gentle connotation, indicating a cohabitation of the sexes, an in between space that does not necessarily represent a threat to the semiotic system of gender. Hermaphroditic, on the other hand, is an aberration of nature, an unallowable perversion of the

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[55] Jonson, *Epicene* 4.2.87-89.

[56] This moment betrays the anxieties of the period surrounding women as objects, women as consumers of objects. With the proliferation of consumer goods and outdoor markets, Mistress Otter has access to the cosmetic goods she can then use to manipulate her appearance. This access to goods also translates to an access to the world outside of the private household. However, in the description of Mistress Otter and the equating of her body to a German clock, there is a reduction of the woman to an object that can be controlled, traded, and consumed among men. Karen Newman goes further into the "intersection of woman, the city, and consumerism" in her book *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (138).

[57] Adam Zucker, "The Social Logic of Ben Jonson's *Epicene*," *Renaissance Drama* 33 (2004): 37-62. 52.

[58] Yiu 73.

[59] Jonson, *Epicene* 1.1.73.

sexes. The primary difference between the safe gender bending of Epicene and the forbidden trespass of the Ladies College lies in the type of transition that is being made. Epicene is a man venturing into female territory, and, in fact, perfecting it. Helkiah Crooke, a Renaissance writer, "explains women as incomplete men" in "*Mikrokosmographia* (1615) [which] was the most compendious English synthesis of Renaissance anatomical knowledge".[60] So, it makes perfect sense that the perfect women would best be portrayed and created by a man, the complete version of woman. The male infringement onto the feminine helps create a more ideal version of femininity. The collegiate ladies, however, are deemed unacceptable because they attempt the reverse move: they are women trying to perfect a male position. The women trying to reach the more complete position of men is not only improper, it is also impossible. It means going against their nature and anatomy. The anatomical gender binaries of the period show clearly why the Ladies College can be seen as much more dangerous, and more of a travesty against nature, than the cross dressing boy actor playing Epicene.

In opposition to the " most masculine…authority"[61] of the female characters in the College, Morose is presented as "an inverted figure of feminine chastity" as he completely covers himself in public and prefers to remain out of sight.[62] The epicene position of Morose at the end of the play as a socially castrated figure calls into question the stability of the masculine identity. His declaration "I am no man, ladies" figures masculinity as performative.[63] Without his ability to perform sexually, Morose can no longer be categorized as masculine. The opposite pronouncement to Daw and LaFoole's claims to sexual promiscuity with Epicene, Morose's declaration works in the same way to define masculinity through the engagement in heterosexual

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[60] Orgel 21.
[61] Jonson, *Epicene* 1.1.72-73.
[62] Yiu 78.
[63] Jonson, *Epicene* 5.4.39.

intercourse, or lack thereof. Morose renounces his masculinity by admitting that he is unable to perform in the required ways.

The final scene of *Epicene* puts on display the complicated construction of gender in the representational space of the stage. The unveiling of Epicene, and the stripping of her femininity, lays bare the mechanisms through which the stage creates women. By de-wigging Epicene, Dauphine essentially pulls the wig off of the other female characters. The body of Epicene, as the "gentleman's son that [Dauphine has] brought up", reminds the audience that Mistresses Centaure, Haughty, and Otter are all similarly created, causing the audience to see both the female character and the body of the boy actor underneath.[64] The inventing of Epicene, the ideal woman, by Dauphine mirrors the way that the female characters are completely a masculine creation, being produced by both the author and the actors. The emptiness of Epicene apart from Dauphine's creation becomes apparent in the aftermath of the reveal. Epicene's real name is never mentioned after the boy is revealed underneath the wig. Dauphine continues to refer to him as "Mistress Epicene" in response to Clerimont, even as Epicene is standing on the stage unmasked as a man.[65] Epicene's last lines happen while she is still a woman. After her imploration that Dauphine "have some compassion on [her]," Epicene remains silent, finally the true picture of the ideal woman: silent, and, actually, a man.[66]

III. Jonson's continued influence

As the Golden Age of drama in England, the influence of Renaissance playwrights continues far into the future of English drama. While today, Shakespeare is the most influential

[64] Jonson, *Epicene* 5.4.183-184.
[65] Jonson, *Epicene* 5.4.199.
[66] Jonson, *Epicene* 5.4.173.

playwright from that period, Jonson was incredibly popular in the age of Royalist drama. His masques and city comedies written for indoor playhouses were perfect for the more elite audiences that were attending plays in the Restoration. The patron system that sustained theatre and playwrights in the Restoration period meant that nobility had a lot of input and influence on the kind of theatre that was made in this time. William and Margaret Cavendish were among the nobility who dedicated a great deal of time and energy into the theatre of the time. While William was more of a patron, who occasionally considered himself a playwright, Margaret was a self published playwright whose works give us one of the few examples of a female voice from this time period.

Margaret Cavendish's plays were never performed on the stage during her life and were written in the Restoration, after the introduction of female actresses to the stage. The theatrical circumstances she was writing for were fundamentally different from those of the Renaissance stage. However, the similarities between *The Convent of Pleasure* and *Epicene, The Silent Woman* are striking enough to invite a comparison of the way that Cavendish plays with the conventions of the Renaissance stage and the politics of Jonson. In addition to being a Royalist who was interested in theatre that highlighted the political and social standing of the monarchy and nobility, such as Jonson's masques, it is well documented that Cavendish was familiar with the works of Ben Jonson. "In her second epistle to the readers [included in the first collection of her published plays] Cavendish…admits that some of her play are so long they might bore the audience, [however, she] adds, 'I believe none of my Plays are so long as Ben. Johnson's *Fox [Volpone],* or *Alchymist*.'"[67] This mention of Jonson in the epistles shows that Cavendish is not only thinking of Jonson as a historical theatre maker, she sees him as a colleague and

[67] Shaver 9.

contemporary to whom her work could be compared.[68] Cavendish's mention of an audience for her plays and the worry about the length of the play also indicate that her plays were written for performance. Though they are traditionally thought of as closet dramas, Cavendish clearly saw her plays as stageable and was concerned with issues of performance.[69]

Cavendish was also familiar with Jonson's theatrical masques written for court, an important association that arises at the end of *The Convent of Pleasure* in the masque performed by the women in the convent. Cavendish's husband hosted two of Jonson' masques at his estate for the King and Queen. Cavendish writes about the exorbitant cost of the masques in her biography of William Cavendish.[70] These masques were a way for William to show his support for the monarchy and show off his resources. The Cavendish's were very involved in the theatre, and their continued appreciation for Jonson indicates his influence in Restoration drama. Popular in his own time, as well, Ben Jonson remained an important name in British theatre well into the Restoration.

Where Jonson's play *Epicene* offers a critical look at women and the societies that they form, Cavendish presents her audience with an alternate view, one that is far more sympathetic to the women it portrays. However, both these playwrights play with the infiltration of this space

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[68] Julie Sanders's piece "'A woman write a play!': Jonsonian strategies and the dramatic writings of Margaret Cavendish; or, did the Duchess feel the anxiety of influence?" goes further into lines of influence between Jonson and Cavendish. She places Jonson's *The New Inn* in conversation with Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*. While I think that this argument has much merit, I feel the similarities between *The Convent of Pleasure* and *Epicene* to be more striking. Though, of course, there are multiple levels Jonson's influence can be read through Cavendish's work.

[69] For a more elaborate discussion of why Cavendish's dramas cannot be classified just as closet dramas and the performative nature of her plays, see: "Performance, Performativity, and Identity in Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*" by Katherine Kellett; "'Why may not a lady write a good play?': plays by Early Modern women reassessed as performance texts" by Gweno Williams. Williams has a particularly compelling argument, as she discusses a production of *The Convent of Pleasure* that she produced for the Women and Dramatic Production project.

[70] Bowerbank 18.

by crossdressing male characters and the unconventional circulations of desire and sexuality caused by this ruse. While many plays of Cavendish's time featured crossdressing characters, with breeches roles being especially popular for the new female actresses of the Restoration stage, the characters in these two plays work in a different way than most. For one, they are men crossdressing as women in the world of the play. This conceit is a specific allusion to the portrayal of female characters by boy actors in the Renaissance theatre. It calls attention to the way the theatre works and the way that gender is created and performed. Also, in both *Epicene* and *The Convent of Pleasure*, the audience is kept in the dark about the true identities of the crossdressed characters. As the final scenes unfold and the secrets are revealed, the audience realizes that they have been tricked alongside the rest of the characters on the stage. This gender trick pulls the audience into the world of the stage and places them on the side of those who were duped. In both the plays, wit and wittiness are heavily valued, and the final reveal is formulated to align the audience with the characters who lack wit. The play of wit in both texts ties into the ideas of gender and women's spaces and the differing politics of both these plays.

In the case of *Epicene*, it is clear how the gender trick was pulled off. Epicene herself would have not raised questions among the audience who would have been trained to understand the young boy as a female character. In the case of *The Convent of Pleasure*, the performance of the Prince/Princess raises several questions about casting and gender on the Restoration stage. As a female playwright, Cavendish was unable to have her plays produced during her lifetime, so there are no records about the casting or performance of this play. While Jonson's play directly comments on the theatrical conventions of his time. In *The Convent of Pleasure*, however, the success of the Prince/Princess's disguise and the audience's understanding of the character is an unresolved issue. However, both of these crossdressing characters raise similar questions about

women's spaces and female autonomy. In the guise of a woman, Epicene is allowed access to the private woman's space of the Ladies College. While the Ladies College may be a source of ridicule in the world of the play, it is still unique in that is presents an all-female private space away from the eyes and company of men. It is a space where the women go to learn and share without the intrusion of their husbands. Epicene infiltrates this space and makes a mockery of it. In Jonson's play, this just provides further proof that the College was a ludicrous idea in the first place. Jonson's portrayal of these women who try to create a space for themselves as monsters speaks to his disdain for women gaining authority. Jonson's "talking women are not merely the butts of satire but are represented as monstrously unnatural because they threaten masculine authority" through their discourse (Newman 135). This unnaturalness also seems to justify the intrusion of this space by the boy actor playing Epicene and the fact that the women were fooled into allowing a man into their space. In Cavendish's play, the violation of the women's space has more serious consequences.

The reveal of the true gender identity of the Prince in Act 5 Scene 1 of *The Convent of Pleasure* does not have the same theatrical gesture of the removal of the wig in *Epicene*. An ambassador who has been sent for the Prince rushes in past Lady Mediator to kneel before the Prince, who is already in male clothing. The double crossdressing of the Prince within the Convent seems an important point that allows the final resolution of the play. Part of what makes Epicene such a perfect actor to play the part of a young lady is his boyishness, the fact that he has not yet reached the age of sexual viability. The Prince, however, is clearly at marriageable age and has come the Convent for that specific purpose. Upon entering the Convent, the Princess requests to "accoutre [herself] in Masculine-Habits…and act the part of [Lady Happy's] loving

servant."[71] As women play all roles of society within the Convent, Lady Happy finds nothing wrong with this arrangement, saying, "More innocent Lovers never can there be,/ Then my most Princely Lover, that's a She."[72] The very nature of the relationship between Lady Happy and the Princess is based on the understanding that it is between two women. However, the conclusion at the end seems to depend on the Princess convincingly playing the part of a virile man, enough to convince the audience that he is appropriately marriage material. The fact of the Princess's female nature is taken as a given throughout the play, particularly by Lady Happy who continually remarks on the gender of her companion. Through the course of the play, Lady Happy finds herself falling in love with the Princess. She remarks that she is "the most unhappy Maid alive" because her love for the Princess is a confusion of nature and the natural, two things Lady Happy holds dear.[73] The Princess convinces her that, since they are both women, their love is "virtuous, innocent and harmless."[74] They continue the play engaging in this innocent love between women. Though, in the end, Lady Mediator claims that it was clearly not as harmless as they would have people believe: "me-thought they kissed with more alacrity then Women use, a kind of Titillation, and more Vigorous."[75] The question of the extent to which Lady Happy and the Princess engaged in sexual acts is an open one. Lady Happy, though confused, seems pleased to be in love with a lady, rather than a man. This play is often talked about in terms of lesbian love and sexuality, and most of it certainly lends itself to this reading. However, the ending of the play undoes the progressive sexuality of the earlier scenes.

The unmasking at the end of *The Convent of Pleasure* works in a similar way to *Epicene*

[71] Cavendish 3.1
[72] Cavendish 3.1
[73] Cavendish 4.1
[74] Cavendish 4.1
[75] Cavendish 5.2

in that it reorders the lines of power in the play. As Dauphine takes the wig off of Epicene, he becomes the most powerful character of stage, having tricked his rich uncle into giving up his wealth. The boy actor playing Epicene retains none of the power that was previously granted to him as a member of the Ladies College or as a viable candidate for marriage. In *The Convent of Pleasure*, as the Prince's gender is revealed, he gains control of the Convent, Lady Happy, and the situation at hand. The combination of both his gender and his royal position ensures that he can take Lady Happy's place as leader. There is no point at which Lady Happy consents to this union which is conspicuous since she was so outspoken about marriage earlier in the play. In fact, it appears that she has no choice in the matter. The Prince, upon being discovered by his ambassador, tells him that he will have Lady Happy as his wife "by force of Arms" if necessary.[76] As he takes his place as Lady Happy's husband, the Prince gives away the Convent, cementing the dissolution of Lady Happy's power. Once the Prince's identity is revealed, Lady Happy's agency and voice is taken away. Not only does she not have a say in the marriage agreement, which she must enter in order to stave off war, she also has no say in how the Convent is to continue after her departure.

The last line Lady Happy has in the play seems particularly apt: "What you Rogue, do you call me a Fool?."[77] She has indeed been made a fool by the trick played on her by the Prince. As in Jonson, Lady Happy and the audience are placed on the side of the dupes, those that are not witty enough to have seen through the trick and fell for it instead. However, in the case of Lady Happy, the audience is asked to feel pity and empathize with this character who loses her voice and power because of this trick. In the case of Jonson, the audience is made to feel foolish for reading the signs of the stage incorrectly. This difference in emotion at the end of the play

[76] Cavendish 5.1
[77] Cavendish 5.3

seems appropriate for the plays overall and lines up with the ideas in each about ladies spaces. While Jonson is derisive of his audience and the Ladies College, Cavendish brings her audience along with Lady Happy and causes them to have empathy for the plight of a woman who wanted to badly to be except from the marriage market, only to be trapped into it in the end. These differences speak to how Cavendish reworks the earlier play by Jonson to highlight her own ideas and thoughts about women in society. Her references to the ideas and themes in Jonson's play, and the inclusion of several masque like moments, indicate a familiarity with Jonson's work and a desire to be a part of the conversation about women, theatre, and society.

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Chapter Two

"[A] suggestion of a woman": Speaking Gender in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*[78]

I. Introduction

In the beginning of Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Bernardo, upon entering the stage, calls out "Who's there?"[79] He initiates a conversation with Francisco that establishes the scene for the audience through textual clues: nighttime on the ramparts in the "bitter cold."[80] Theatre dominantly creates its reality through words and dialogue. There are other design elements that assist in transporting the audience to a new world, particularly in modern productions with large budgets. While these other elements help, theatrical reality is mostly created in the moment with the actors on stage and the help of the text. This is even more the case with the bare stage and universal lighting of the Renaissance stage; these textual clues are an integral part of setting the scene for the audience. These textual clues are also employed to augment the other absence on the Renaissance stage: the lack of female actors. Similar to the opening of *Hamlet*, there are moments in Shakespeare's plays where the text works to augment the reality of the character on stage in terms of gender. While in the case of the opening scene of *Hamlet* the audience is asked to create something that is not present on stage, i.e. the castle ramparts and cold, Danish night, the issue of gender on the Early Modern stage presents a different dramaturgical task for the audience. It asks the audience to change their understanding of a body that is being presented on the stage. This requires a more complicated and nuanced view of theatrical reality than simply believing that the characters are cold. However, both of these instances depend on the language

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[78] The quote from the title comes from an interview with Mark Rylance. As he talks about the differences between playing Cleopatra and Olivia, Rylance says, "With Olivia's portrayal – she's a suggestion of a woman, a stylized suggestion of a woman" (Craig 28).
[79] *Hamlet* 1.1.1
[80] *Hamlet* 1.1.6

and dialogue in a text to create this theatrical reality. The text enumerates a description of a character that works with the physical body being presented on stage to create the theatrical reality of the character in the play.

Female characters on the Renaissance stage were created materially for the stage on the body of the boy actor. Extensive voice training, clothing, accessories, and specific makeup were employed to represent cultural signifiers of gender for the audience. In addition to these material signifiers, the texts of the plays themselves help to create the female characters on the stage by painting traditionally feminine physical characteristics on the body of the actor. However, at the same time that these moments create and evoke the feminine, they also point out the lack of women on the stage. By asking the audience to imagine these characteristics in the realm of theatrical reality, these moments remind the audience that what they are seeing must be supplemented and draw attention to what is missing and does not exist. Put another way, the portrayal of gender in these plays necessarily follows the logic of the Derridian supplement. It is both necessary and superfluous to the way gender is being presented and created on the stage, expressing both ideas of lack and excess simultaneously. As seen in Derrida's discussion of the supplement in *Of Grammatology*, "the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence".[81] The theatrical supplement for the female body is specifically and consciously not female. It creates an image of the female built on culturally understood signifiers that perhaps lacks depth, but still is able to sufficiently represent 'woman' on the stage. These moments that evoke the supplement create a moment of estrangement for the audience as they both try and engage in the theatrical reality and are pulled

[81] Derrida 145, emphasis in original

out of it and forced to consider the physical reality before them. More broadly, this interest in exposing and playing with the mechanics of the stage is one of the hallmarks of Early Modern theatre and Shakespeare's plays in particular. As one of Shakespeare's more metatheatrical plays in terms of gender, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* provides a strong case study of the way that gender is augmented and supplemented on the Early Modern stage.

II. William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*

From those famous words, "What country, friends, is this?" Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* shows its investment in creating a theatrical reality with its audience. As the Captain answers Viola's question, placing them in the country of Illyria, the audience helps conjure the reality of that setting. While Viola expounds upon her plan to dress as a young page, the scene is set for moments of gender ambiguity and estrangement. The multiple layers of gender at work in the play lend themselves to a particularly metatheatrical look at the creation and absence of gender on the Early Modern stage. As the main protagonist Viola first steps out on the stage, she is a woman, or rather, a boy actor elaborately dressed as a woman representing a female character. The play continues with Viola in disguise as the male Cesario, a young page who serves the Duke Orsino. The drama and tension of the play depends on the audience remembering the hidden female nature of Cesario which is evoked in various ways throughout the play. Viola is in a different situation than other female cross dressing heroines, particularly Rosalind from *As You Like It*, in that she finds herself alone in this new situation. There is no one present who has insider knowledge of her true identity or who can act as an interlocutor for her. Viola, instead, finds that springboard in the audience, in whom she confides throughout the play. Her soliloquies and asides allow her to make the boundaries between the theatrical reality and the real world

permeable, while confirming her as a female character through the male persona. In all of these moments, there is a tension between the physical and theatrical realities being presented to the audience. In moments when Cesario's feminine characteristics are emphasized, the physical reality of the body on stage seems at odds with what the audience is being asked to see.

One such moment occurs between Orsino and Cesario, as Orsino highlights the ways in which Cesario is different from his other pages:

> Dear lad, believe it;
>
> For they shall yet belie thy happy years
>
> That say thou art a man. Dian's lip
>
> Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe
>
> Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
>
> And all is semblative a woman's part.[82]

The last five line endings highlight the feminine nature of Cesario's character: "happy years," "Dian's lip," "small pipe," "shrill and sound," "woman's part."[83] As each line ends, the audience's attention is directed to another aspect of Cesario's physical presence that is supposed to evoke her identity as Viola. The particular physical things that are itemized here provide an interesting picture. They point to physical attributes that are characterized as feminine, as ruby red lips and melodious voices often make an appearance in love poetry of the age. However, in this moment, Orsino is emphasizing Cesario's youth and pointing to the ways in which the young boy body, to an Early Modern audience, mimics that of a woman. The unchanged voice and delicate facial features that have not been hardened by puberty will make Cesario more palatable

[82] 1.4.29-35
[83] 1.4.29-35

to women, as it makes the young boy actor an acceptable substitute for a female actress on the stage. Attention is drawn to the ways in which the audience is supposed to read the body in front of them: as young and male, therefore an acceptable substitute for the female body. The specific blazon provided by Orsino in this moment serves to both highlight Viola's female features and confirm the similarities between the body of the boy actor seen on stage and the female body.

As a part of the plot, this passage serves to point out the ways that Viola's physical body betrays her as not entirely masculine and introduces the potential for desire between Orsino and Viola, as he labels her body as feminine. The play provides only a few moments of interaction between Orsino and Viola before they become a happy couple at the end of the play. The scenes between them work to try and create a sense of attraction and closeness in a short amount of time. Not only does Orsino's labeling of Cesario's body as female in this scene pave the way for the union that ends the play and provide dramatic tension with the role Viola is attempting to play, it also creates the character of Viola for the audience who is looking at male Cesario. The levels of gender identity at play are revealed in this moment, as it intentionally highlights both the absence of masculinity on the part of Viola and calls attention to the male body present on the stage. At the same time that this exchange creates a verbal picture of femininity, it brings the focus to the body of the boy actor. It directs the audience's attention to particular physical markers like the "smooth and rubious" lips that they see present before them.[84] The audience is asked to focus their gaze on the body being inventoried before them. However, there is a discrepancy between what the audience is actually physically seeing and what they are being asked to imagine as part of the theatrical world. Cesario's "smooth and rubious" lips are an elaborately painted construction that serves as reminder to the audience for what is absent on the

[84] 1.4.32

stage, both on the level of Viola's disguise as a male page and on the level of the boy actor playing a female character.[85] Attention is being directed to the corporeal body on stage, the lips of the young boy actor which, in their youth and with the addition of makeup, resemble a woman's lips. Again, the Derridian supplement is made from endless signifiers that replace what is not present. Since there are no women on the stage, this supplement is necessary to fill a lack of the object itself. The red lips, as a signifier for the female gender, both highlight and fill that specific lack. The focus is on the supplement as much as it is on the act of substitution taking place on stage. The audience's gaze is being directed to the body on stage, which is supposed to semiotically represent a female body. As the physical symbol is seen on stage, the symbolic meanings of it are also conjured, allowing a complex view of the picture happening in this scene. As Orsino's words create the theatrical reality of Viola's feminine physical characteristics, it points to the artificial nature of what is being shown on stage. Orsino is correct in his assessment: "all is semblative a woman's part," though no woman is actually present.[86] It is an elaborate representation that contains signifiers of femininity. The gesture towards what is absent serves as a reminder of this lack and highlights it as it tries to mitigate it.

Immediately after this interaction, Viola as Cesario has her first moment alone with the audience, establishing an intimate and revelatory relationship with the audience that Viola does not have with any other character in the play. From this very first aside, she establishes that while she is performing and acting in front of the other characters, she is able to be honest and confide in the audience. Again, *Twelfth Night* as a play is heavily invested in ideas of metatheatricality and questioning the nature of theatre, and Viola's relationship with the

[85] 1.4.32
[86] 1.4.35

audience serves as another example of that pushing of theatrical boundaries. The convention during the Early Modern period to have characters on stage speak directly to the audience sets up an interesting understanding of theatre and the permeable nature between the boundaries of the theatrical and real worlds. The audiences become further implicated into the world on the stage as they are treated as an additional character who is a part of the drama. While this is true of all of Shakespeare's plays, Viola's asides work in an interesting way. In these moments, Viola breaks out of the character of Cesario and reinhabits the character of Viola. She stops the action and turns away from Orsino to reveal something more of herself to the audience, something that could be interpreted as more authentic and true:

"I'll do my best/To woo your lady. *[Aside]* Yet a barful strife:/Whoe'ver I woo, myself would be his wife."[87]

Viola extends the nature of the theatrical world into the audience, as she brings them into her confidence. While still in the clothes of Cesario, Viola breaks through that male persona and reveals the female persona with her words. She expresses a wish to be Orsino's "wife," casting herself as specifically female spouse, rather than just a generic love interest.[88] The audience is being asked to look beyond the male attire to remember the female character underneath. Since Viola spends the entire play after Act 1 Scene 2 in male attire and, outside of these soliloquies, spends the play as Cesario, these moments serve both to remind the audience of Viola's female identity and to draw their attention to what they are being asked to see. There is a reason why these moments of reminder need to exist. On stage in these moments, the audience is presented with a male actor's body dressed in male attire playing a male character. Viola's asides bring the

[87] 1.4.40-44
[88] 1.4.44

female persona back to the audience's attention and remind them of the artificiality of the female character. What in these moments marks Viola as female? The gender construction of Viola seems at odds with the figure being presented on stage. The vestiges of Viola's feminine experience may remain in the cosmetics the actor continues to wear even as Cesario, but the Early Modern relationship to cosmetics was a fraught one. Cosmetics were commonly seen as an artificial construction and obstruction of true nature, and as an indication that the user had something to hide or a secret purpose. It is Viola's words and the specific way she labels herself, as Orsino's potential "wife," in this soliloquy that brings to mind the female label.[89] While moment seems to take the audience into her confidence, drawing them further into the action and world of the play, it also draws the audience out of the theatrical world by bringing their attention to the constructed nature of theatre. When Viola has her aside to reveal her true thoughts and feelings, she reasserts her female identity, an identity constructed on a male body through material signifiers that can be read as female. When in the costume of a male page, with fewer of these symbols, Viola's female nature is easy to question. It brings to mind questions of theatre and the theatrical contract the audience has agreed to upon entering the theatrical space. It also calls into question gender construction and the audience's understanding of how gender is understood. What allows Viola to be read as female without her "maiden weeds?"[90] Is it simply her assertion that she is female, or does it also require the audience's acquiescence? How is gender understood and determined? This has, of course, been an ongoing subject for debate: is gender something conferred by society, or does it emanate from the individual. This play brings up these issues as the audience is asked to understand Viola as female and Cesario as male. The

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[89] 1.4.44
[90] 5.1.251

setup of this particular aside also depends on the understanding that there is something inherently female about Viola, since she is able to be female without any of the material signifiers. This is suggested earlier in the scene by Orsino in his description of her. Despite her male attire, Viola is able to be female, suggesting that it is not the material trappings that confer gender upon her.[91] The implication is that there is something either inherent or something in the act of declaration which determines gender identity.

Olivia, a countess and one of the most powerful figures in Illyria, attracts the romantic interest of Duke Orsino because of her renowned and celebrated beauty. When Orsino speaks of Olivia to his most trusted counsellor Cesario, he makes clear that the basis of his love lies in Olivia's outward appearance:

"'Tell her my love, more noble than the world,

Prizes not quantity of dirty lands.

The parts that fortune hath bestowed upon her

Tell her I hold as giddily as fortune;

But 'tis that miracle and queen of gems

That nature pranks her in attracts my soul."[92]

Here Orsino makes a distinction between Olivia's title and wealth and her body, directing attention away from the abstract idea of the character as the rich countess and placing the physical body of the character and actor in center stage. The appeal of Olivia lies in her appearance, which surpasses that of all other women as she is held up as a paragon of beauty. This ideal of female beauty is, of course, a male construction. It is also constructed as an

[91] This observation is troubled at the end of play when Cesario/Viola and Orsino insist on producing Viola's original female clothes to prove her gender and identity.
[92] 2.44.81-86.

adornment or decoration that has been bestowed upon Olivia but that is different from her fundamental self. Nature has given her this outward appearance that Orsino finds so seductive. The word "prank" has several relevant meanings in this context; the most interesting is "To dress or deck in a smart, bright, or ostentatious manner; to decorate."[93] Here, Orsino figures Olivia's female body as a piece of clothing elaborately draped upon her by nature. The parallel that comes to mind immediately is that of the boy actor playing Olivia being dressed in the beautiful dress and ornaments of a countess. The clothing itself is then figured as the source of the attraction; it is a symbolic reminder to the audience of gender and brings something concrete to the portrayal of a woman by a man. The sensory presence of women's clothing seems to be an integral part of Early Modern cross dressing practices. In fact, it was so deeply connected to the practice of theatre in the time that anti-theatrical writers often fixated on the corrupting presence of women's clothing on the stage and the effect this would have on an audience.

The boy actor's body outfitted in elaborate costuming and makeup is the standard of beauty and object of lust for the world of the play, a world the audience is implicated in through Early Modern theatrical conventions. Reading the play in this way lends a little more credence to the worries of the anti-theatre radicals who wrote extensive pamphlets on the corrupting nature of the theatre. Protests against the theatre were often concerned with the lustful nature of the theatre and its ability to stir its audience to lechery and deviant sexuality. Naturally, the crossdressing nature of the theatre featured heavily in these diatribes. Not only were protestors upset about the abomination of men dressing in women's apparel, they were also concerned with the effect this apparel would have on the impressionable audience. The following quote from a pamphlet entitled *Th' Overthrow of Stage-Playes* provides an interesting, and perhaps inadvertent,

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[93] *Oxford English Dictionary*

synthesis of these two concerns:

> "The appareil of wemen is a great provocation of men to lust and leacherie . . . A womans garment beeing put on a man doeth vehemently touch and moue him with the rememberance and imagination of a woman; and the imagination of a thing desirable doth stirr up the desire[94]."

This quote shows the concern that simply the presence of women's apparel is enough to invoke the presence of a woman and the desire that accompanies that presence. The fear of this is interesting as it seems to be one of the conventions upon which the Early Modern stage is built. Women's clothing plays a large role in the establishing of female characters. Even with crossdressing heroines, they first appear on stage in women's clothing to establish a female identity: Rosalind in Duke Fredrick's court, Viola washed up on the shores of Illyria. Having the boy actor appear first in women's clothing seems to establish a femininity that can then be called upon when the character appears in male clothing. The second implication of this quote is a little more difficult to parse out. In his article looking at Early Modern audience responses to cross dressing actors, Robert Lublin provides the following reading: "Dressed as a woman, a male actor stirs up lust by provoking the audience's imagination and memory of a woman."[95] Turning his attention to the audience, Lublin sees this as a comment on how the sight of women's clothing is enough to "stirr up the desire" in those who behold it.[96] The use of the phrase "put on a man" in the original text also seems to suggest a concern for those who physically interact with the vestments, namely the boy actors whose bodies are in contact with the material. The act of

94 Rainoldes quoted in Lublin 67.
95 Lublin 67.
96 Rainoldes quotes in Lublin 67.

touching the material is enough to create desire. All of this seems to indicate that there is something to the physical presence of and interaction with the material signifiers of femininity that can produce a strong emotional response in both the audience and the actors. The space of the theatre is already one of imagination, where the implication of a woman can be read as the thing itself. It is the power of the theatre to create these moments of imagination that makes it so powerful and dangerous to its detractors. The presence of female clothing does something to the senses, whether it is the actor touching it or the audience visually perceiving it.

The emphasis on the powerful effect of visual perception extends into the world of the play, as well. The last line of the quote from Rainoldes could very well be talking about Orsino's desire for Olivia. For Orsino, "the imagination a thing desirable doth [indeed] stirr up the desire," as he has had little contact with Olivia outside of simply seeing her.[97] At the start of the play Orsino waxes poetic about his love for Olivia: "O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first/ Methought she purged the air of pestilence;/ That instant was I turned into a hart,/And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,/ E'er since pursue me."[98] His desire for Olivia was incited simply by the sight of her. There is no reference to her soul, or mind; Orisno makes it undeniably clear that the basis of his affection is Olivia's appearance. The focus on appearance brings attention to the image that is presented on stage: the boy actor clothed in evocative female clothing. Over and over in this play, the audience's attention is directed to Olivia's physical body and appearance. From the start of the play, several scenes before she makes an appearance on stage, Olivia is discussed in physical and visual terms, setting up the audience to interpret the image of Olivia in a certain way. The appearance of the male actor as Olivia has been primed by

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[97] Rainoldes quoted in Lublin 67.
[98] 1.1.17-21.

the text that precedes it which introduces the theatrical idea of Olivia. This theatrical idea works with the reality that the audience perceives to create the theatrical reality. Again, in the Derridian language of the supplement, the language surrounding Olivia's appearance from Orsino serves to supplement Olivia and to call attention to the thing that is absent: a woman's body.

The experience that the audience has in Act 1 Scene 5 when Olivia first appears on the stage after other characters have talked about her and created an image of her mirrors the experience Viola/Cesario has later in that same scene when she encounters Olivia. Upon hearing of Cesario's entreaty to meet with her, Olivia insists on wearing her mourning veil and obscuring her appearance. Viola/Cesario, who has heard so much of Olivia's beauty from others, entreats to see her face before proceeding with the message from Orsino. In acquiescing with his request, Olivia employs an analogy that further reduces her to just her image: "we will draw the curtain and show you the picture."[99] By comparing the removing of the veil to the drawing of a curtain before a prized picture, Olivia brings to mind the earlier implications that she is no more than her appearance. Just as the audience had to reconcile the image of Olivia created by Orsino's words and the real person standing in front of them, Viola has also been set up by Orsino's words only to then be confronted with the reality of Olivia. The body in front of Viola is, of course, at odds with the elaborate descriptions offered by Orsino, a realization shared with the audience upon their introduction to Olivia. The audience is not blinded to the reality of Olivia's physical body on stage. As Viola says to Olivia: "I see you what you are."[100] Just like the audience, Viola sees and correctly interprets the image in front of her. However, she allows the illusion to continue and even works to augment it, continuing to flatter and woo Olivia. Viola provides a mirror

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[99] 1.5.226.
[100] 1.5.242.

image of the audience and the imaginative work they do when they enter the theatrical space and agree to the conceits of the stage.

Viola's initial reaction to the reveal of Olivia's face under the veil is one of incredulity and suspicion. In answer to Olivia's question, "Is't not well done?", Viola answers with skepticism: "Excellently done, if God did all."[101] Viola's statement questions the authenticity of Olivia's appearance, attributing Olivia's good looks to manmade supplements. Viola here suggests that Olivia has augmented her appearance with the addition of artificial cosmetics. The reality is, of course, that the actor has changed his appearance with cosmetics to present a very particular construction of womanhood. The mention of the potential use of cosmetics draws attention to the very real use of cosmetics on the stage. However, Viola's attention to this detail and cynicism have no place in this narrative or in the space of the theatre. Part of the theatrical conceit is to ignore the artificial construct of the female characters and to allow them to be interpreted as authentic. The exchange that follows between Olivia and Viola/Cesario enforces that return to the parameters of the theatrical contract.

Olivia: 'Tis in grain, sir, 'twill endure wind and weather.

Viola: 'Tis beauty truly blent, whose red and white

Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on.

Lady, you are the cruell'st she alive

If you will lead these graces to the grave

And leave the world no copy.[102]

Olivia returns the dialogue to the world created by the play and refutes any assertion that her

[101] 1.5.228; 229.
[102] 1.5.230-235.

beauty is constructed, insisting on the naturalness of her appearance. Again, this plays on Early Modern concerns about cosmetics and the corrupting nature of the practice. Women who used cosmetics were seen as deceitful and untrustworthy, traits that are antithetical to Olivia's nature and her position in the play. These words help create the reality of Olivia's authentic beauty, as does Viola's response which forecloses on her early skepticism and engages in the theatrical reality of Olivia's female body. As Viola continues, however, she continues to draw attention to the constructed nature of Olivia's appearance as she disavows it. The "red and white" Viola mentions is a reference to the desired complexion of a beautiful woman, as can be found in numerous love poems of the period including Shakespeare's sonnets.[103] Women were instructed by Early Modern pamphlets on how to achieve this ideal look.[104] Thomas Jeamson was the author of one such pamphlet entitled *Artificial Embellishments* and instruct that "To be truly beautiful… female readers must be rosier than their pale-skinned sisters and whiter than their brown ones. That perfect in-between, it would seem, can only be achieved through make-up."[105] The perfect complexion here invoked by Shakespeare is an artificial construction even off the stage. The perfect woman is an artificial and theatrical invention created through the instruction of men.

It is also a reference to the particular style of cosmetics used on boy actors to create the illusion of a female appearance on stage. The white pancake makeup was used to cover the entire face and red highlights were added on the cheeks and lips. The hand that created Olivia's face, however "cunning," was certainly not "Nature's."[106] Here, the layers of gender and theatricality

[103] 1.5.231.
[104] For a more complete description of Renaissance cosmetic culture, see: Farah Karim-Cooper's *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama.*
[105] Poitevin 71.
[106] 1.5.232.

are all in play. Viola draws attention to the artificial nature of Olivia's femaleness, while supplementing it with her words and helping to create and mask the construction. The female persona is both created and destroyed in this moment as the dialogue helps call into being something which is not there, namely an authentic female body. As the supplement fills the void, it also calls attention to that which is absent. There is also a discussion of Early Modern concerns about beauty and cosmetics, as the two female characters debate the contaminating presence of cosmetics. The insinuation of cosmetic use must immediately be disavowed because of the perception of inauthenticity and duplicitousness that accompanies the practice. However, the fact is that cosmetics are very much present and are part of what constructs the image being presented in front of the audience. Olivia's cosmetics use is at odds with her upright and moral character, but allows the audience to correctly interpret her body. Rather than being a misleading mask, the makeup actually helps Olivia be read correctly as a female character. The particular reference to the "red and white" invites questions about Early Modern attitudes towards makeup and women.[107]

The rest of the scene continues to question the nature of the image being presented on stage and the construction of gender in the theatre. As Viola presses forward with her wooing of Olivia for Orsino, she calls up a traditional love trope, an entreaty to create progeny. This theme featured heavily in Shakespeare's own love sonnets, particularly those addressed to a young male love interest. In the sonnets, Shakespeare inverts the use of this idea by addressing the entreaties to a male love interest, rather than a young woman. In the scene between Viola and Olivia, Viola subverts this tradition by initiating this conversation between two women, which is the theatrical reality overlaying the physical reality of two male bodies on stage. The heteronormative ideal of

[107] 1.5.231.

a couple producing lawful progeny is replaced by a homosocial bond both in the play and in the playhouse. Olivia's response to Viola/Cesario's romantic overture makes a similar move by subverting traditional themes found in love poetry. In the traditional style of a blazon, Olivia dissects herself down to her individual parts, presenting an itemized list of all that composes her beauty:

> "I will give out diverse schedules of my beauty. It shall be inventoried, and every particle and utensil labelled to my will, as, item, two lips, indifferent red; item, two grey eyes, with lids to them; item, one neck, one chin and so forth."[108]

Rather than being the passive object of a lover's blazon which "tak[es] control of a woman's body rhetorically through its division into parts," Olivia takes it upon herself to present this mercantile description.[109] Traditionally, the blazon "involves simultaneously an act of unfolding, offering to the eye, and a more static sense of something to be gazed upon and seen," as the male poet presents the admired object to the view of others.[110] There is something inherently mercantile and gendered about the presentation of the blazon in traditional love poetry, as Patricia Parker argues in her discussion of the blazon trope in her book *Literary Fat Ladies.* Olivia's use of the blazon makes this apparent as she sets it up in terms of inventory and accounting.

The blazon is an interesting moment phenomenologically as it highlights the physical embodied presence of a person. Olivia becomes the physical parts of her that are seen and experienced by others; she is defined through the way she inhabits physical space in the world.

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[108] 1.5.236-241.
[109] Parker 126.
[110] Parker 127.

In this discourse, Olivia conjures her physical presence into being. “It would be hard to find a more vivid example of what Butler refers to as the way that ‘discourse might be said to produce a subject’; the very materiality of Olivia’s physical presentation is figured in her language. Olivia’s ironic catalogue reenacts the ‘performative speech act’ that in one sense has created her female body (And, of course, this performative moment becomes even more vivid in a character who has no actual existence outside language).”[111] Within the play, Olivia’s outward presence is often the only defining feature given to her. She is reduced to her physical body which can be coveted and controlled. Her appearance is mostly discussed when she is not present on stage, creating an idea of Olivia that exists only in the male imaginary. However, in this scene, Olivia is able to make herself a part of the conversation that normally excludes her. In this moment, Olivia is taking control over her physical body rhetorically through the blazon. Since traditionally the male poet or lover would have been the one to enumerate the various parts of the female love interest, Olivia’s speech is notable in the way it flips the gender expectations of this moment and allows her to maintain control over her body, just as she maintains control over her state by refusing to get married[112]. She defines herself on her own terms. As she states, this is the legacy she wishes to leave, a list of the parts of her that she defines, rather than progeny which would be connected to someone else. She refuses the traditional love trope of the blazon at the same time that she refuses the traditional plea to create progeny.

The phenomenological reality of this moment also presents an alienating moment in terms of reading gender on the stage. In this sense, it calls back to the earlier moment where Orsino provides a blazon of Cesario. The specific physical description offered by Olivia in this moment

[111] Rose 221.

[112] It is an interesting irony that the previous blazon from Orsino about his young page Cesario does fulfill the traditional set up of the love poem trope.

is notably gender neutral. At a moment when she is being defined as the epitome of female beauty, she chooses to highlight parts of her that do not, in fact, gender her in a particular way. The "red and white" that has previously been evoked is reduced to an "indifferent red."[113] Like the earlier blazon between Orsino and Cesario, the physical attributes that Olivia lists could apply either to the female character or the male actor playing her. The specificity of the "two grey eyes" suggests that it is a reference to the actor who played Olivia in the initial run of the play.[114] It has a physical point of reference to the body of the boy actor present on stage, rather than referring simply to the character being created. This blazon breaks out of the world of the play to call attention to and reference the physical body on the stage. It provides a moment of alienation for the audience as it calls attention to the mechanics of performing gender on the stage. In a moment of romantic banter that relies on the audience seeing both the heterosexual and homosexual tension present in the scene in order to further the comedy of errors, this blazon interrupts the action to pull the audience out of the world of the play and consider the physical presence before them. The blazon is a romantic trope meant to share a lover's gaze to an audience. Here, the romantic vision is of a male body clothed as a woman, calling into question the traditional heterosexual circulations of desire in the theatre. Moments like these seem to justify the fear of antitheatricalists like Rainolds, in that they suggest alternative views of desire and sexuality.

Olivia's blazon is predicated upon the physical body of the actor playing the character to be on stage to cause the moment of dissociation for the audience who is asked to look at both actor and character. A similar effect occurs later in the play through the character of Malvolio, Olivia's

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[113] 1.5.231; 239.
[114] 1.5.239.

steward, but in the absence of the physical body of Olivia on stage. This moment recalls the logic of the Derridian supplement as it adds to what is not there as it draws attention to the absence. In the subplot of the play, the steward is tricked into thinking that Olivia is secretly in love with him. The revelation of Olivia's true feelings takes place in a letter penned by Maria. Upon discovering the letter lying in the garden, Malvolio comments on the handwriting resembling Olivia's, saying, "By my life, this is my lady's hand. These be her very c's, her u's and her t's, and thus makes she her great P's. It is in contempt of question her hand."[115] The reference to Olivia's "c's, her u's and her t's" would have been to an Early Modern audience a bawdy one specifically about female genitals. Again, Olivia is reduced to her physical body parts. However, Malvolio's references evokes a body part that would never have been present on the Early Modern stage. While Olivia's blazon invites the audience to consider the reality of what is set before them and relabeled, Malvolio's reference exists completely in the imaginary. It works to supplement the physical body that is being presented as the female Olivia. As Malvolio's words create the theatrical reality of Olivia's female genitals, they also highlight their absence.

In Act 3 Scene 4, there is another moment that directly references genitals and provides another instance of Derridian supplement and alienation for an Early Modern audience. It is a moment that creates and questions Viola's femininity by contrasting it with the expectations of masculinity. The feeling of alienation is heightened in this moment, as opposed to the previous one, because of the presence of the material body that is being referenced on the stage in full view and focus. Viola as Cesario is challenged to a duel by Sir Andrew who has been encouraged by Sir Toby and Fabian. From the initial invitation to fight, Viola shows a reluctance to engage in violence that is antithetical to traditional masculinity, as seen later exemplified by Sebastian who

[115] 2.5.85-88.

immediately participates in fighting when provoked. When the fight becomes unavoidable, Viola approaches Sir Andrew saying, in an aside, "Pray God defend me! A little thing would make me tell them how much I lack of a man."[116] Like Viola's earlier aside at the end of Act 1 Scene 4, these words directly reference her hidden female nature. It provides a moment of connection and inclusion with the audience as Viola shares her secret with them, bringing them further into the world of the play as a character with which to interact. This direct connection to the audience through asides is necessary for Viola as a character since it serves as a reminder to the audience of Viola's female character. On the stage in front of them, the audience is seeing a boy actor in the clothes of a young man. These asides serve to resurface the female Viola hidden underneath the male Cesario. The dramatic tension and humor of these moments rely on the audience's knowledge of Cesario's true identity as Viola. With this aside, Viola directly references the male body parts she does not have. She pulls the audience's focus to the "lack" of male genitalia on the stage.[117]

Inversely to Malvolio's reference to genitalia, Viola here creates the female body on the stage through the absence of male body parts. It is a moment that draws attention to the physical body on the stage by referencing parts of the body. However, the words try to erase the reality of the body on the stage by creating a lack where one does not exist. As the audience looks at a male body performing the male character of Cesario, this aside erases the male body and creates the female character of Viola. The attention to physical body parts, however, invites the audience to consider the reality in front of them, as it supplements that reality to create a theatrical image. Viola's words simultaneously erase the male genitals of the boy actor and bring them to the

[116] 3.4.295-296.
[117] 3.4.296.

audience's attention. Rather than a supplement by addition, the supplement here works on negation, by canceling out the physical presence of a man to supplement the female character.

Twelfth Night is a play revolving around the mistaken identity of twins; it is built on the idea of substitution of bodies. As male bodies are substituted for female bodies, Sebastian becomes a substitute for Cesario in the final scenes of the play. Within the play, Sebastian becomes a supplement to Viola/Cesario. He replaces and adds to the figure of Cesario, particularly in the case of the relationship with Olivia. Rather than the supplement that occurs with the text where the body of the boy actor is supplemented by the words of the female character, Sebastian is the male supplement to Cesario who is not male enough to fulfill a heterosexual relationship with Olivia. Cesario's character presents a problem of a man who is not enough of a man, as seen in the way Cesario approaches violence and a relationship with Olivia. Both of these problems are assuaged by the presence of Sebastian as the supplement and replacement for Cesario. From the first interaction with Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, Sebastian has no problem engaging in violence. Sebastian is a gentleman who has been trained in the arts of fencing and fighting. Unlike Viola, he has the training necessary to be a proper gentleman, presenting an interesting inversion of the boy actor who is trained to play a woman. While Sebastian's gentleman training allows him to fulfill certain components of the masculine script, in others he is presents as a more passive participant. Sebastian is immediately seduced by Olivia and marries her, ensuring that Olivia is in a heterosexual union, but engaging in the relationship in a passive capacity more associated with the female partner. While Viola is able to effectively seduce Olivia, Sebastian is seduced by Olivia, continuing the complicated relationship to sexuality and desire found throughout the play.

Sebastian's position as the male supplement to Cesario within the play is not a straightforward and uncomplicated one. In this, his character mimics the relationship between the

female character and the boy actor. The relationship between the two is complicated and fraught with contradictions, much like the theatrical relationship between Cesario and Sebastian. This relationship is another way the play draws attention to the gap between actor and character. Sebastian presents the fulfillment of the imaginary creation of Cesario in his masculine identity and training, just as the female character, in the theatrical reality, is an ideal version of the physical creation of the character created on the boy actor's body. However, Cesario is an imaginary creation, as is the female character, created through theatrical dialogue and material symbols. The connection between the layers of representation, gender, and presence in the relationship between Cesario and Sebastian brings up a lot of the same questions as the relationship between the boy actor and the female character, showing again the play's interest in gender and theatricality.

The play proposes an idea that bodies are interchangeable and indistinguishable to a certain degree that a lover can easily mistake one twin for another. The male and female twins, once in similar attire, become as interchangeable as the clothes themselves. As Antonio says in the final scene: "An apple cleft in two is not more twin/ Than these two creatures."[118] When they are dressed in "one habit," or the same clothes, they are allowed to be interpreted as the same person.[119] This plot device mirrors the theatrical move being made on stage as male bodies stand in for female bodies. Just as the boy actor can stand in for a female actor, Sebastian and Cesario/Viola become interchangeable because of their physical resemblances, and the way that they have similar material cultural signifiers. Also, just as the female character is created through material signifiers and textual markers, the identical nature of the twins is created through

[118] 5.1.219-220.
[119] 5.1.212.

clothing and the words of the characters. There is no evidence that the actors playing Viola and Sebastian were indeed twins, nor are they often played by twin actors. The idea that they are twins is created on top of the bodies of the actors through statements like Antonio's and the coordinating of their costumes. The reading of bodies as cultural signifiers they possess is an important part of the substitution taking place on stage. The material symbols on the body of the boy actor provide the basis for the transformation from boy actor to female heroine.

Even in the final moments, after the true identities of the twins have been revealed, the similarity of their clothing still presents an issue. When Viola shares her identity with Sebastian, she says, "If nothing lets to make us happy both/ But this my masculine usurped attire,/Do not embrace me till each circumstance/ Of place, time, fortune do cohere and jump/ That I am Viola — which to confirm/ I'll bring you to a captain in this town,/ Where lie my maiden weeds."[120] Even this moment of happiness and closure is prevented by the presence of masculine clothing. Viola's female clothes become a necessary presence to separate these two individuals and to identify them as two different genders. Besides her female attire, there is nothing to prove Viola's female gender. There is nothing inherently female about Viola as she is a construct on a male body. Viola's female nature is created by material and textual signifiers, in which clothing plays a huge part.

In the 2006 film adaptation of *Twelfth Night* called *She's the Man*, the identity and gender confusion in this moment is resolved by the revealing of Viola's breasts and Sebastian's genitals. In the context of the Early Modern stage, the revealing of Viola's secondary sexual organs is not an option. However, it is clear that in this moment, textual signifiers cease to be enough to create Viola's gender. Even in the film version, something in addition to words and proclamations has

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[120] 5.1.245-251.

to be produced to provide enough evidence to bring about a conclusion. The connection between the way Viola and Sebastian's twin identity is created and the way that Viola's female identity is created becomes an issue in this moment. To establish Viola's female nature would mean undoing the creation of the interchangeability between Cesario and Sebastian. Since nothing has changed physically on the stage, to preserve the illusion of the identicalness of the twins, they need to remain as Cesario and Sebastian. Orsino continues to call Viola "Boy" while she is dressed as Cesario.[121] As he asks her to be his wife he says, "Give me thy hand,/And let me see thee in thy woman's weeds," repeating again the insistence on the material signifiers of a woman to be present.[122]

Even in the final lines of the play, Orsino refuses to allow the complete transition from Cesario to Viola to occur without the presence of Viola's female clothing: "Cesario, come—/ For so you shall be while you are a man;/ But when in other habits you are seen,/ Orsino's mistress and his fancy's queen."[123] In these last lines, Orsino genders Cesario as male, insisting on calling Viola by the name Cesario "while you are a man."[124] It is noteworthy that Orsino does not say while Viola is dressed as a man, but, rather, while she is a man. The clothes that the character is wearing and the material signifiers of gender are indisputable and create the gender of the character. Unlike the film version, in the play there is no easy recourse to determine gender and the play ends on an ambiguous note where the character of Viola simultaneously inhabits the positions of "man" and "Orsino's mistress."[125] In the 2002 Globe production, Orsino mistakenly grabs the wrong twin in these final moments, a move which invoked laughter when it was

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[121] 5.1.263.
[122] 5.1.268-269.
[123] 5.1.378-381.
[124] 5.1.379.
[125] 5.1.379; 381.

corrected, rather than when it was initiated. "His [Orsino's] mistake made comically visible the uncertainty of the Globe spectators, for like him, they could not distinguish the man from the woman, since in performance there was no distinction: they could not tell the man from the man."[126] Here, there is an indication as to why the uncertainty about Viola's gender and place is left intact. By destabilizing Viola's position as identical to Sebastian, the whole semiotics of the stage is put into question. Without the physical presence of female clothing, as is seen at the end of *As You Like It* where Rosalind leaves the stage to change into a dress, the heterosexual union and resolution of the play cannot be achieved. Unlike the theatrical audience, the characters within the play have not agreed to the theatrical convention to read boy's bodies as female and to create a theatrical reality through dialogue. Without this understanding, the presence of female material signifiers is all that remains to create Viola's gender. The final moments of the play reveal the importance of the theatrical environment in creating the play the audience has just witnessed and highlight the unique connection between the audience and the theatre in terms of the creation of gender.

II. Original Practices Productions

There are already a multitude of critical arguments surrounding the type of work that is done in an Original Practices production. Some of those arguments focus on the inability of the production to fully fulfill the promise of OP productions. With their adherence to historical accuracy, practitioners of Original Practices productions are trying to recreate as closely as possible the exact experience of attending an Early Modern play. The origins of the move towards Original Practices productions is hard to nail down with accuracy, but it develops around

[126] Bulman, "Queering the Audience" 583.

the same time as interest in historical phenomenology takes off. The correlation between these two movements, one theatrical and one critical, makes sense as historical phenomenology seems like the philosophical counterpart to the work being done by practitioners of Original Practices. In the vein of historical phenomenologists, OP practitioners feel that they can recreate the event of an Early Modern play by and through the material culture of the theatrical period. However, these productions look to recreate the cultural practices of the time without recouping the ideological content that would have been culturally accessible to the audience. Critics have had mixed opinions as to the success of such attempts and the work that these productions do. As one critic says about the Globe's 2002 production of *Henry V*: "Performing an early modern script on a facsimile of an early modern stage using early modern apparel and engaging early modern conventions, this production of *Henry V* must have seemed as historically accurate as possible. And yet, one crucial aspect of the production was unambiguously anachronistic: the audience."[127]

An Original Practices production can never recreate the experience of an Early Modern play and one of the impediments to this trip back into time is the cultural consciousness of the audience. The particular cultural reference frame a contemporary audience brings to an Original Practices performance heavily influences their understanding and interpretation of the production, with both positive and negative results. Original Practices in theatre also seems to have developed out of a similar move found in music studies and an interest in original music practices. Musicians and music scholars were interested in recreating the instruments and environments that classical music had been written for originally. It is easy to see how this impulse could translate to Early Modern drama. "Beethoven's keyboard sonatas, so the logic

[127] Lublin 72.

goes, were designed to exploit the fray, percussive qualities of the fortepiano, not the metal-harp-enhanced sonorities of the modern pianoforte. So, by analogy, were Shakespeare's plays designed to exploit certain types of music, certain physical spaces, certain types of human bodies."[128] However, while a fortepiano can be recreated, what we cannot recreate are the original instruments of Early Modern drama, namely, the bodies of the boy actors who appeared on stage. The development of the human form in terms of height and hormones since the Early Modern period prevents the recuperation of the exact instruments used on the Early Modern stage. There is also the fact of our society's distaste for watching older men woo young prepubescent boys on stage. So, while there is a concentrated effort to exactly recreate the material factors that contributed to an Early Modern play, there are significant obstacles to the fulfillment of that vision.

Environment plays another factor in most Original Practices productions which go out of their way to create a theatrical environment reminiscent of Early Modern England. When Mark Rylance toured his Original Practices production of *Twelfth Night* in the U.S., there was a recreation of the Middle Temple set up in every venue to try and help the audience locate more fully in Early Modern England. The New Globe Theatre in London, England is another clear example of this impulse to recreate the specific environment of an Early Modern play. However, even with the meticulous attention to detail from the team who created the New Globe, there are factors that are out of the production team's control. As one critic says, "Clearly the most obvious obstacle to authenticity is the irredeemably contemporary audience, which, no less than the roar of a 747's engine overhead, is a constant reminder of the impossibility of stepping back in time, of fully restoring the Shakespearean stage. How can early modern, if inevitably invisible,

[128] Smith, *Twelfth Night* 72.

underwear hope to compete with the semiotic burden of a postmodern, highly visible audience?"[129] The one thing that is consistent with an Early Modern audience's experience is the air of festival that surrounds a production at the New Globe, much to the chagrin of newspaper theatre critics in the U.K. Critics have remarked on this aspect of the Globe: "The carnivalesque elements of popular theatre that caused Puritan writers so much angst — the holiday cocktail of food, drink, and sex — are also present in contemporary Globe reception."[130] By making it into a tourist attraction that takes place mostly outside and encourages audience interaction, the productions attract a more rowdy and varied crowd than most British theaters. While there was considerable pushback from British theatre critics who felt that the audience's interruptions were a personal affront against the Bard, this environment is one of the more interesting aspects of the Original Practices productions at the New Globe.

As opposed to most contemporary theatrical productions, the Globe's performances take place in open air, mostly during the day to make use of natural light, and encourage audience participation. It is a major tourist attraction along the South bank of the Thames, attracting thousands of foreign visitors every year. English theatre critics have complained about the about of noise and commentary from the Globe audiences, commenting on things from questions asked about the play to the crinkling of crisps wrappers. All of this additional noise and the feeling that what they are witnessing is more an experience than a play creates a more relaxed and open environment for the audience. The closest thing this environment resembles is the smoking theatre of Brecht. It is the ideal environment for Brecht's alienation effect, which would be right at home in an Early Modern playhouse. The audience is continually invited to comment, to each

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129 Prescott 362.
130 Prescott 367.

other and to the players on the stage, on the performance that they see in front of them. Rather than try to submerse audiences in a realistic play world, Early Modern plays allowed the audience to have distance from the fiction and to think about the work of theatre. The drama of the time is characterized by its focus on metatheatrics and an insistence that the audience think critically about how theatre is made. The open environment of an Early Modern playhouse encouraged audience participation and split the audiences' attention between the stage, the other audience members, orange sellers, and various other vendors.

The New Globe is still able to maintain this environment. Rather than entering a hushed theatre with heavy velvet curtains and rows of seating all facing one direction, an audience member at the New Globe enters a tourist attraction. Before even entering the playing space, audiences see the exhibit on the original Globe theatre, Shakespeare himself, and the building of the New Globe, as well as the large gift shop. Rather than being passive consumers, from the very beginning, audiences are encouraged to participate and look at what surrounds them critically. As a theatrical experience, it sits outside the normal preconceptions and understanding that a typical modern audience member might have, and, therefore, invites more speculation and analysis that the hushed, darkened proscenium stages we are accustomed to.

Critics have understood the alienation effect that takes place during a production at the New Globe theatre in various ways. Most of these critiques tend to focus on the Original Practices productions done under the leadership of Artistic Director Mark Rylance. Critic James C. Bulman has written extensively on Rylance's Original Practices productions and similarly find them to be alienating for the audience. He locates this alienation effect in the fact of the all-male cast, rather than the broader environment of the New Globe theatre: "In the Globe performance [of Mark Rylance's Original Practices *Twelfth Night]*, however, the all-male cast served as an

alienating device to provoke spectators to grapple with the conditionality of gender identity and sexual desire."[131] Seeing an all-male cast perform Shakespeare's plays is probably not a common experience for most audience members. Therefore, the reinstating of this historical practice in and of itself can be an alienating concept for a spectator unaccustomed to such a conceit. Audiences are asked to reconsider the passive way they watch theatre and actively participate in forming the theatrical world of the play, right down to the gender of the characters on stage. This sort of engagement is unusual among the multitude of realistic plays that permeate most theaters and encourages the audience to think differently about theatrical representation. However, the presence of this one Early Modern convention is not the only reason to understand productions at the New Globe as alienating.

Bulman also cites the historical positioning of the Original Practices production as a way of distancing the audience. This historical distance does not seem to only lie in the Original Practices productions done at the Globe. Any performance at the Globe is already encouched in a historical structure. It invites the audience to step outside the temporal frame that they have previously been experiencing on the South side of the Thames and enter a space reminiscent of a past cultural time. This move already places the audience in a critical space, as one would have upon entering a museum. As with pieces in an art museum, the audience enters ready to pass judgment on what is placed before them. Though the all-male cast and Original Practices concepts might be new to them, the audience is already alienated by the historical edifice of the New Globe playhouse. The numerous incidents of audience interruption and side conversations cited by newspaper critics in non-Original Practices productions at the New Globe support the idea that it is not only the theatrical practices on stage that influence this critical distance. There

[131] Bulman, "Queering the Audience" 578.

is something to the act of walking into the space of the playhouse that changes the way an audience member would normally act when seeing a play. While English theatre critics see it as the deterioration of humanity's sense of propriety, Brecht would recognize it as the perfect setting in which to critically assess a theatrical production.

The presence of the alienation effect in the New Globe theatre's productions are particularly interesting in terms of the gender performance in the all-male Original Practices productions that are performed there. It necessarily asks a modern audience to think differently about gender in both the actor and the character. Even if Early Modern audiences "didn't 'take' boy actors as eroticized bodies at all, but understood that during the two hours' traffic on the stage, they were to be read as female the character as played: the boy actor 'himself' bec[oming] invisible, immersed in the role he assumes, his sex occluded by spectators' tacit complicity in the fiction," as several scholars have argued, this understanding of the theatrical convention does not exist for a modern audience and, therefore, requires a constant negotiation between the gender of the actor and the character.[132] By entering the space of the New Globe, audience members are already primed to analyze and critique the work set in front of them, rather than passively accepting the performance as a naturalistic portrayal of life. They are already looking for the theatricality of the performance, the edges between the theatrical and the real. The performance of female characters by male actors lends itself to this type of particular interrogation as audience members look to how gender is created and performed. It brings up questions about what is real in the performance of gender and how gender itself is inherently theatrical. In a post-Butler world, these questions seem more obvious and palatable to the average audience member. However, they are still topics that produce useful discussions and point to new ways of thinking. Scholar

[132] Bulman, "Queering the Audience" 566.

James C. Bulman also finds that these productions motivate audiences to think differently about gender. He locates this impetus not in the alienation of the audience from the production, but in the fact of its historical authenticity.

> "I shall argue that calling the use of an all-male cast an 'original practice' is in fact a tactical ruse by which Rylance coaxes audiences to divest themselves of essentialized notions of gender and sexuality and, if only for the duration of the play, to entertain queer thoughts. In other words, the Globe's 'original practices' productions advance a culturally transgressive agenda rendered safe by the distancing device of historical recuperation. They offer up a subversive sexual politics which, under the conservative guise of archeological work, are made palatable as popular entertainment."[133]

For Bulman, the fact that Original Practices claims to be adhering to the way things were done in the past allows it to insist that gender was always a construction, rather than presenting this idea of gender as a performance as a new idea. It also couches any sort of subversive politics under the guise of Shakespeare, further bolstered by the cultural landmark of the New Globe theatre, claiming it as a more mainstream and culturally acceptable object. While Rylance himself seems to disavow any transgressive and queer work being done in the all-male productions, it is clear that critics and audience members have found the work to be subversive on ideas of gender and sexuality.[134] However, this work does not seem to be the sole result of the production's claim to historical authenticity, as Bulman states. There are many more factors at

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[133] Bulman, "Queering the Audience" 575.

[134] "While participating in a roundtable together, Holly Dugan asked Rylance to connect "early modern technologies of gender" (i.e., authentic dress, original staging techniques) with ideas about performing as a "queer body"; he answered with a short, unequivocal "No!" ("Queer Eye for the Straight Play"). (Thomas 107)

work that produce the complicated ideas about performance, gender, and sexuality set forth by Mark Rylance's Original Practices *Twelfth Night*. The alienation of the audience, the white face makeup of the female characters, the period costuming, the historical distance from the play, and the personas and bodies of the actors themselves all play significant roles in how and what sort of message this production shares about gender and sexuality with its audience members.

In 2002, the production company of the New Globe, under the leadership of Artistic Director Mark Rylance, was invited to perform *Twelfth Night* at the Middle Temple in honor of the 400th anniversary of its first performance there. For the historic occasion and setting, the production team decided to do an Original Practices performance of the play, complete with period costuming and an all-male cast. After its initial run at the Middle Temple, this production played on the Globe stage and eventually toured internationally. In the international tour, a recreation of the Middle Temple space was erected in each of the touring venues. The production was directed by Tim Carroll with Mark Rylance playing the part of the Countess Olivia. It has mostly been discussed as Rylance's production as he emerged as the clear star of the piece, perhaps unusually so considering the character breakdown of the play's text. While this was not the first Original Practices production performed at the Globe, nor even the first to feature Rylance, this production has generated a lot of critical and scholarly work and discussion on the issues of gender and sexuality, perhaps due to the nature of the play itself.

IV. The Globe's 2002 Original Practices Production of *Twelfth Night*

Double vision still exists in Original Practices performances where audience members are asked and invited to hold both the male actor's body and the female character in mind at the same time. One does not erase the other, but, in fact, they highlight each other's presence. This

occurs for several reasons. First, the text itself insists on such an understanding, as I've demonstrated earlier in the chapter. The play was written for an all-male cast and the text uses that to its advantage to highlight the layers of gender at play on the stage. In addition, the modern audience is unused to the convention of having an all-male cast and having male actors play female characters. Therefore, they have not been trained to read the male bodies as entirely female and will hold on to their awareness of the male body underneath the character. They are looking for the male performance of the female character as it is a novelty and one of the tourist attractions they have come to see. Also, the persona of Mark Rylance himself contributes to this refusal to erase the male body on the stage. Rylance is a theatrical star and was one of the selling points of the production itself. People attended the show in order to see him perform. Audience members would be looking for the specific female performance of a famous male actor. There is no loss of understanding of Rylance's male nature because the focus is so entirely on how he tries to erase that or turn it into a strong female character.

The semiotics of gender are in full view with this production as Rylance enters the stage in full white pancake makeup, red lips, wig, and elaborate dress complete with Elizabethan neck ruff. The attention to detail in terms of Early Modern costuming and makeup was meticulous. The costuming team created Early Modern undergarments to be worn underneath the costumes and recreated Early Modern makeup recipes for added authenticity. All of these artificial attributes pointed to the semiotic construction of gender through signs and symbols that are culturally recognizable. As far as theatre is a mimetic art that is constructed semiotically, gender is read and understood through these symbols. However, the historical and artificial nature of the gender signs presented on the body of Rylance actually serve to point to the phenomenological reality on the stage and refuse to allow the theatrical scene to be read purely semiotically. The

nature of the particular signs of gender used in this production are part of what made both the male actor and the female character simultaneously visible. The distance from a realistic representation, through the elaborate makeup and historical positioning, further encouraged the idea of alienation in the audience. Similarly to the way that the idea of the Derridian supplement works in terms of the text of *Twelfth Night*, the addition to and supplementation of the actor's gender in order to create the female character points out and highlights what is missing. While this would also have been true in the Renaissance, this idea might be more highlighted in a modern production that uses historical Original Practices because it is not a given theatrical convention that the audience is trained to understand.[135] Therefore, the artificial nature of the construction of gender is thrown into extra relief and points even more directly to what is missing and why the artifice is necessary. Rylance's performance is applauded for his mastery of being female, an accolade that necessitates a focus on Rylance's male nature.

However, in a Cheek by Jowl production of *As You Like It* that used an all-male cast but did not utilize elaborate costuming or makeup to differentiate between characters and genders, the criticism mostly focused on the ability of the production to render the maleness of the actors invisible. As Bulman says about the Cheek by Jowl production: "the reluctance of critics at the time to view theatrical cross-dressing through a queer lens was amply evident in their responses to this *As You Like It*, whose all-male cast was widely praised for the effectiveness with which it rendered *invisible*, or at least irrelevant, the sex of those actors who played women."[136] In

[135] In addition to Early Modern audiences being accustomed to the convention of boy actors playing female characters, the excessive and mask like makeup seen on the boy actors would have been more common place. It was a trans in Early Modern ladies to apply similar makeup on a regular basis. See Poitevin "Inventing Whiteness" for a more in depth discussion of the white pancake makeup used by Early Modern women and the implications about race that the practice engendered.

[136] Bulman, "Queering the Audience" 567.

Rylance's presentation of Olivia, however, his male nature is never erased. Even though the Cheek by Jowl male actors only had a simple skirt on top of a neutral outfit to indicate their female character, they were seen as more effectively female than the elaborately decorated actors of the Globe's production. In fact, the semiotic attempt to create an impenetrable mask of femininity seems to have the opposite effect.

Commenting on the appearance of the older Rylance as Olivia, Bulman says, "[Olivia's] costume and make-up spoke to her advancing years and her lack of female attractiveness."[137] The inability to completely erase all traces of Rylance's masculine appearance, despite the clear effort, actually served to highlight his male features. The attempt to render invisible the male body underneath in fact places it in the spotlight and keeps it in the audience's vision. The attempt to supplement the actor's body draws attention to the absence that is being compensated for. This supplementation did not only occur in terms of costuming and appearance. Rylance's Olivia was lauded as being the pinnacle of femininity as his Olivia. As one critic notes, "this performance was also a marvel of female personification; in a sense, the gliding, white-faced Olivia was *more* of a woman than any actress I have seen in the role."[138] Rylance's Olivia spoke in soft, stuttering speech and took tiny mincing steps that made her look like she was gliding across the stage. Every behavior of Rylance's was affected to try and create a specific idea of femininity or to be able to be read as a referent to a cultural idea of femininity. In his own words, Rylance has this to say about the image of his Olivia: "With Olivia's portrayal — she's a suggestion of a woman, a stylized suggestion of a women; she's real inside — she's not got all the naturalistic trickery on the outside to make you believe through your eyes… I'm using my

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[137] Bulman, "Queering the Audience 581.
[138] Rose 221.

voice a lot differently with Olivia, too [as opposed to Cleopatra]."[139] Rylance's Olivia was unusual in a lot of ways, but one of those was the characterization of Olivia as a hysteric.

Rylance's Olivia was nervous and full of suppressed energy that would burst out in moments of hysterical exclamations. Olivia stuttered and hesitated, vacillating between extreme restraint and outbursts of emotion. While all of these behaviors were clearly affects created by the actor, they were seen as indications of a female character and an attempt to project a feminine character over the male body of the actor. Rylance's specificity of characterization was applauded and is part of what makes him the well known and high awarded actor he is today. However, the "idiosyncrasies [of Rylance's characterization of Olivia] called attention to themselves as clever characterization but never once let spectators forget the male actor beneath the dress."[140] The necessity and clear craft that went into the specific behaviors brings attention to what Rylance is trying to compensate for and create on the stage, the lack of a female body. All of the semiotic and readable signs of gender that Rylance presents on stage, from the costume and make up to the specific way he holds his body, only serve to further highlight the phenomenological reality of the stage: the male body that serves as the canvas for the female characterization, created by a male actor. Which brings me to the other way that Rylance's performance is discussed critically.

In addition to being seen as presenting as both and male and female in the role of Olivia, Rylance's performance is seen in terms of the older and accomplished male actor's mastery over the female character. As I've mentioned, the Globe's production of *Twelfth Night* was known as Rylance's production, despite him not being the director or playing the character with the most lines. In fact, the play itself is known as an ensemble piece, often used by theatre companies who

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[139] Craig 28.
[140] Bulman, "Queering the Audience" 581-582.

wish to have a relatively even distribution of parts. It has been used as a star vehicle for an actress playing Viola, but this is a unique instance where the star of the piece played Olivia.

Bruce Smith writing on the production has this to say about Rylance's domination of the play and part: "If the printed text suggest ensemble balance among the actors, if Nunn's film belongs to Viola, Carroll's *Twelfth Night* was very much about Rylance's Olivia."[141] Looking at the original play text, Olivia does not seem like the natural choice for a star to particularly showcase his talents and headline the show. Rylance's choice of Olivia is interesting and telling in terms of how his performance is interpreted and understood as a mastery and control over the character and role. Olivia's character arc in the play entails a significant change in emotional and social status. Rylance says this about the transformation the Olivia must undergo through the course of the play, "with Olivia there was something like an ancient agricultural nature festival play about her. She started in such a winter of grief and remorse, and she ended up in the deep spring of love and getting married."[142] In terms of the genre of festive comedy, Olivia starts out the play as an impediment to the environment of play and love as she is in deep mourning and rejecting all advances from suitors. She is refusing to engage in the marriage market and fulfill her role in society. She is the nonconforming female that must be brought into line in order for the successful comedic ending of the play to exist. In a way, the play can be read as the disciplining of Olivia. From the beginning of the play, characters like Orsino and Sir Toby comment on the immoderation of her mourning, insisting that she is acting in excess of what is acceptable for a woman in her position. By the end of the play, Olivia has been brought out of mourning, and into the socially sanctioned institution of heterosexual marriage. In fact, upon the confirmation that

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[141] Smith, "Ragging *Twelfth Night*" 75.
[142] Craig 28.

she has in fact fulfilled her duty as a marriageable female, Olivia ceases to speak. She has been effectively brought into line as a productive and acceptable member of society by the story arc of the play.

In a way, the play is about the mastery of Olivia, a renegade female character who must be brought back into line. The play itself is heavily invested in ideas of mastery and master/servant relationships. The position of Cesario within the world of the play as a dependent servant adds to the layers of desire and sexual play seen in the relationships both with Olivia and Orsino. The idea of the interchangeability of boy actors and women may even rest in this concept of dependency. As Lisa Jardine posits, "The dependent role of the boy player doubles for the dependency which is women's lot, creating a sensuality which is independent of the sex of the desired figure, and which is particularly erotic when the sex is confused."[143] The sexuality and sexual availability of the boy actor rests in the correlation between the dependent position of young boys and women. The relationships established within the play that fold both Olivia and Viola as dependents into sanctioned households and allow the maturation of Sebastian as master, rather than dependent, are mirrored in the relationship between Mark Rylance as male actor and Olivia as female character. It is Rylance's ability to conquer and master the character of Olivia that is seen as laudable, rather than the way he loses himself in the character and allows her to take over. As other critics have said, "the audience was absolutely aware of the older actor's male identity" throughout the performance.[144] Rylance remains consistently himself and in view when he is on stage as Olivia, never allowing the audience to forget that it is his skill that is creating the woman in front of them.

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[143] Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters* 24.
[144] Rose 221.

In addition to the rhetoric of mastery that surrounds Rylance's performance as Olivia, there is also the issue of representation that haunts all male performances of female characters. Who is creating and deciding what it means to be female in these moments? Looking at Early Modern dramatic representations of women, there is always the discussion of how these female characters are completely controlled and created by male authors and actors, allowing for no female representation and agency. Later theatre companies have attempted to intervene in this circulation of male authorship and control by having all-female productions of Shakespeare or female led productions, such as those done by the L.A. Women's Shakespeare Company under the leadership of Lisa Wolpe. However, the recent return to Original Practices can be seen as a step back towards the domination of men in the field of Shakespeare and performance. Again, women are being excluded from the institution. Representations of women are presented without any female intervention or input. While the work of all-male casts can be interesting in terms of desire and sexuality, it is hard to make a claim that transgressive work in terms of gender identity and female agency is being done in Original Practices productions. The New Globe is often seen as a more traditional venue that does not push the boundaries of gender identity and sexuality.

Even Bulman, a proponent of the transgressive nature of Rylance's Original Practices work at the Globe, has this to say about the reification of the gender binary that occurs in these productions: "the degree to which the Globe's brief for historical authenticity uncomfortably accords with modern gender stereotypes and confirms that female subjectivity on the stage remains largely, as it was in Elizabethan England, a male construction."[145] Other critics have taken similar issue with the work that Original Practices productions do: "The problem with this, I will argue of performances at the new Globe, especially those labelled as authentic, and as

[145] Bulman, *Shakespeare Re-Dressed* 19.

demonstrated by both the productions of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Henry V*, is that they are more likely to rehearse, maybe even to endorse and naturalize, unreconstructed ideologies of the early modern period."[146] There is a return to prominence of the male circulations of desire commented on in Early Modern theatre: the male playwright, to the male theatre maker, to the male actor. Garber notes this in her work on transvestite theatre: "This is a critique frequently made of contemporary male transvestite theatre, that it occludes or erases women, implying that a man may be (or, rather, make) a more successful 'woman' than a women can."[147] This is the implication that is most obvious in the praise Rylance received for his performance.

Rylance is seen as being able to be a more perfect woman in the role than female actresses who have played the part by multiple critics who have commented on this production. The critique of femininity hiding in this commentary resembles that of patrons in the Restoration who saw, and often resisted, the transition to female actresses on the stage. As this famous incident about actor Edward Kynaston, quoted from Garber, shows: "When actresses first appeared upon the Restoration stage in England it was said that the actor Edward Kynaston was more effective at playing female roles than any woman could be: 'Mr. Kynaston,' wrote John Downes, 'being then very young, made a compleat Female Stage Beauty, performing his Parts so well…that it has since been disputable around the Judicious, whether any Woman that succeeded him so sensibly touch'd the Audience as he'."[148]

This type of critique can also be seen in discussions of classical Japanese Kabuki theatre where there is a strong tradition of male actors playing the female characters. "[T]he celebrated eighteenth-century *onnagata* [male Kabuki actor known for playing female roles] Yoshizawa

[146] Conkie 191.
[147] Garber 249.
[148] Garber 39.

Ayame declared that 'if an actress were to appear on the stage she could not express ideal feminine beauty, for she could only rely on the exploitation of her physical characteristics, and therefore not express the synthetic idea. The ideal woman,' said Ayame, 'can be expressed only by an actor'."[149] Here, again, there are echoes of the praise heaped upon Rylance and his portrayal of femininity as in excess to that seen from a female actor. Rylance himself has cited the work of Kabuki actors as an inspiration for his female characters. In an interview, he had this to say about his experience with Kabuki theatre: "Both [my portrayal of Cleopatra and Olivia] were inspired by seeing Japanese actors. I visited Japan and saw roles played by an actor called Tsumasaburo - I saw him play women - *onnagata* parts. I was very inspired by him."[150] Here, Rylance explicitly draws from a tradition within which men were seen as being able to perform female roles better than female actresses. Again and again, the idea that a male body and mind is needed to create the perfect female character is reiterated. The work done by strong female actresses after the Restoration, actresses such as Charlotte Cushman, Sarah Siddons, and Sarah Bernhardt, to name a few, is stripped away by the return to all-male casts in Original Practices. It is, instead, replaced by the traditional notion that men are the determiners of perfect femininity, and should be the arbiters of what that means and how that appears.

The one aspect of Rylance's *Twelfth Night* production that does work to problematize this dynamic is the presence of the female dressers that lace each of the male actors into their dresses at the beginning of each performance. They represent the only visible female intervention in the production. Before each performance, audiences would be allowed into the playing space to see the actors physically preparing for their roles. Even in the U.S. tour, the audience would be

[149] Garber 245.
[150] Craig 28.

invited into the recreation of the Middle Temple space to see the transformation the male actors would undergo to become their female characters. Other scholars have cited this transitional pre-show moment as the place where the production does the most transgressive work in terms of gender. It highlights "not so much the particular ways a costume is seen as a natural extension of one's gender, but as a visible construction: female characters become discernible through historically recreated wigs, layers of makeup, and fastidiously recreated corsets."[151] Whereas, previously, the actors were indistinguishable in their maleness, the physical application of makeup and historical costuming now separates out the actors into male and female. Aside from the material additions to their bodies that mark them as female, there is a change in affect that the actors undergo as they prepare for the start of the play. This change is, at least in part, due to the physical constraints of the period costume. A scholar who was present at a U.S. performance of the production had this to say about the change he noted in the actors:

> "While other actors lounge easily on tables and stand with legs propped on benches after they have changed into costume, once the dressers lace their corsets, Rylance, Brown, and Shorey [who play Olivia, Viola, and Maria, respectively] can no longer slouch—their restricted bodies are stiff and erect. Thus bound, the actors' arms can no longer lift higher than their shoulders, and they lose the ability to bend over and assist others in moving set pieces. This restriction is further noticeable as the cross-gender-cast actors begin to move: several men clomp around the stage, pulling on boots and slapping backs, while Rylance and Shorey begin to glide, limited by their costume pieces into taking smaller steps, their flowing movement distinguishing their characters as highly stylized versions

[151] Thomas 106.

of femininity."[152]

By making the transformation into their characters public to the audience, the actors make clear the performance aspects to gender presentation. The way that the costume itself helps to create the physical attributes that are associated with the female gender is telling and brings up questions of what makes gender readable.

Years after the production, Rylance's tiny steps and gliding gait were still noteworthy and a reference point for future *Twelfth Night* productions. While most audience members saw this as a specific choice on the part of Rylance to highlight his feminine qualities, an interview with Toby Cockerell who played Katherine in the Original Practices *Henry V* reveals that it was, in fact, a result of the historical costume: "'after two weeks I had the real costume to try out. It was so precisely made it forced me to move in a certain way—I would just glide across the floor. You can't walk fast at all. There was lots of restriction in the chest; I found it hard to breathe'."[153] Understood this way, gender becomes the byproduct of material culture. What the audience is reading as female affect is the effect of the particular clothing and the way it works on the human body. By putting this transformation on display for the audience, the production calls into question the audience's assumptions about gender presentation. It is in this moment that the female dressers present their interesting intervention. They represent the normalized version of the gender presentation on display in female characters. As seen in Butler, the power of gender policing comes from the idea that gender is natural and innate. The creation of the female character undermines that understanding of gender and shows the performative nature of it and how dependent gender is on material items. The audience views the construction of the female

[152] Thomas 106.
[153] Cockerell quoted in Rose.

character through extensive dressing, interpreting gender through the makeup and costume. In fact, the extreme difference between the historical costume and contemporary makeup serves to further reinforce this idea of painted on gender. “As the audience views the actor, pinned into his bodice and skirts, ghostly pale with high spots of rouge on his cheeks, and a wig that suggests but does not approximate actual hair, it cannot help but become aware of the staged performance” that all gender essentially is.[154] The audience sees the transformation, leaving no doubt as to the gender of the actor’s body under the costume, but they still acquiesce to read the characters as female. Their complicity in this system of signs, particularly of such unnatural signs such as white pancake makeup and tightly curled wigs, reveals something about their everyday complicity to the system of signs that organize gender in the world outside the playhouse.

[154] Rose 216.

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Chapter Three

Phenomenology and Gendered Identities in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

I. Introduction

In the summer of 2015, Shakespeare Orange County put on a production of *As You Like It* that featured a male actor as the lead character Rosalind. Audiences and critics were intrigued by what many saw as a Hollywood style gimmick along the lines of *Tootsie* and *Some Like It Hot*. Others saw it for what it was, a nod to the original staging conditions of Shakespeare's playhouse which only allowed male actors on the stage. Though many modern productions have played with original staging practices with casts of all male actors, this production was unusual in that only featured one male actor in a female role.[155] This was a significant choice because the female character Rosalind spends most of the play impersonating a young boy. In *As You Like It*, Rosalind enters the Forest of Arden as her male persona, Ganymede, initiating a series of humorous encounters that are eventually resolved with a quadruple marriage ceremony at the end of the play. While critics enjoyed the "fluttery effeminacy" actor Josh Odsess-Rubin brought to Ganymede, they found his Rosalind as lacking proper feminine attributes, finding the conceit of a boy playing a woman "less credible".[156] The commentary that surrounded this particular production brings up interesting questions about the performance of gender and the way it is interpreted by an audience, whether in the highly stylized world of the theatre or in every day society. Why was it that Odsess-Rubin was seen as appropriately feminine when playing Ganymede, but as too masculine when in full makeup and costume as Rosalind?

[155] One of the most famous genderqueer productions of *As You Like It* is the 1991 Cheek by Jowl production starring Adrian Lester. See James C. Bulman's piece "Bringing Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* Out of the Closet: The Politics of Queer Theater" for an analysis and description of the production.
[156] OC Register by Eric Marchese

In the beginning scenes in Duke Fredrick's court, Odsess-Rubin's Rosalind and Marisa Costa's Celia appear in highly stylized makeup and dresses, reminiscent of the white makeup used in the Early Modern period. By emphasizing the physical cultural signifiers of femininity in these opening scenes, the production calls attention to the way gender is constructed through materials. However, elaborate costuming and makeup was not enough to create a convincing illusion of femaleness on the male body of Odsess-Rubin in the beginning scenes, so how is gender understood and established beyond these outer appearances? If putting on a doublet and hose is not enough to transform Rosalind into a boy, then what does make Ganymede male?

Within the world of the play, I posit that it is the interactions Ganymede has within the Forest of Arden that allows this persona to be male. The male identity of Ganymede is able to gain a level of social reality through the interactions with other characters that confirms this identity. All expressions of gender identity are performances that require an audience to be interpreted. In this chapter, I look at how the combined theories of Judith Butler and Hannah Arendt can be used to understand and examine the way gender becomes a part of someone's social reality and identity. The play *As You Like It* provides a useful platform for examining such issues as it is a text highly concerned with the performativity of gender. As individuals present themselves and become legible political subjects, they perform a gender identity that is then read and understood by a public audience.

II. Theories of Appearing

Throughout her work, Judith Butler looks at how gender is maintained through a constant state of performativity, which is seen "not [as] a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood in part, as a

culturally sustained temporal duration".[157] This clarification of the performance of gender explains how individuals manifest gender, but not how people experience their gender and those of other in a social setting. To elucidate the experience of gender, I turn to the work of ethical phenomenologist Hannah Arendt. Arendt's work looks at the way experience finds meaning only through interactions with other people who confirm our own experience of reality. For Arendt "the presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves".[158] In the same way that reality is confirmed by the presence of others who share in the phenomenological experience of it, identity can only be established through interactions with other individuals.

We as individuals are made by and through others; much in the same way as a play is made by the presence of an audience to witness and experience it. For, "no human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature's wilderness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other human beings".[159] Even in the absentia of society felt by the hermit speaks to what is being avoided. The very absence of other humans is a reminder of the society from which the hermit seeks to escape. An individual's identity is only confirmed, or brought into existence, by the presence of others who can witness that identity. An individual is made by the actions and speech acts preformed in the presence of others who can experience and decipher them. Identity can only be created when an individual exists in a space that is available and open to others, "for without a space of appearance and without trusting in action and speech as a mode of being together, neither the reality of one's self, of one's own identity,

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[157] Butler, *Gender* xv.
[158] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) 50.
[159] Arendt 22.

nor the reality of the surrounding world can be established beyond doubt".[160] In the phenomenologist vein, we can only be sure of the world around us by the shared experiences we have with others.

While Arendt solely focused on this idea of identity and how it comes into existence, I would like to narrow the focus to one aspect of identity, gender, and look at how ethical phenomenology as understood in Arendt's text can reveal the way that the performative aspects of gender are understood in a cultural setting and how gender is experienced. My claim is that gender is a phenomenon that is experienced and defined by interactions between individuals. Not only is gender performative, it is constantly performed with an audience outside of oneself in mind. Gender is interpreted through the interactions an individual has with others. I would like to show that gendered identity is created and maintained phenomenologically, through experiences and interactions, and cannot be maintained or understood in solitude because it always needs an audience to interpret and understand it. The cross dressing character in the play *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare provides a platform for me to investigate these claims.

Before engaging with the dramatic texts, I would like to clarify my use of the philosophy of both Arendt and Butler, and show why I use them in tandem to support my claims. For though Butler refutes using a phenomenological analysis in her text, both her and Arendt are concerned with experience and performance. Butler's assertion that "gender is culturally constructed" necessarily assumes a culture within which this gender must be exhibited and experienced.[161] If gender can be understood as a performance, then it must need an audience for which that performance takes place. Butler's understanding of gender as performance is a crucial part of my work in bringing gender theory into conversation with ethical phenomenology.

[160] Arendt 208.
[161] Butler, *Gender* 8.

Through her philosophical work, Butler shows that "gender proves to be performative…gender is always a doing".[162] There is no stable place where gender can be located, it is always in flux as a representation by an individual. It is an appearance and a signification with no true, stable signified underneath. The "internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts" with no referent point that can be identified as 'real'.[163] The plurality of cultural works that involve characters who vacillate between genders, such as cross dressing characters in everything from the plays of Shakespeare to classic movies like *Some Like It Hot*, attests to the way that gender is created by cultural signifiers. The "impersonation of women [in works such as these] implicitly suggests that gender is a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as real".[164] The interesting thing to consider is how these impersonations manage to claim a sense of reality, which I will investigate in relation to the characters in *As You Like It*.

To show that gender is a construct does not "assert its illusoriness or artificiality," for gender has very real consequences and is often seen as a strict reality.[165] Society has always placed a great deal of importance on the seeming reality of gender, despite the indications of its representative nature, and has strictly enforced individuals to align to gender norms, often resorting to violence to sustain the status quo. The performance of gender has become so sustained in an individual's body, that it appears natural. It gives the illusion of being grounded in some sort of reality. Though, "[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, [this] set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame [have] congeal[ed] over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being".[166] It is this appearance of naturalness that is

[162] Butler, *Gender* 34.
[163] Butler, *Gender* xv.
[164] Butler, *Gender* xxxi.
[165] Butler, *Gender* 45.
[166] Butler, *Gender* 45.

dangerous as it then presupposes that there is a natural order of gender within which individual bodies must conform in order to participate in society. By revealing the process by which gender is performed and eventually naturalized, the binaries of gender can be broken down and space can be opened up to allow for bodies that cannot and refuse to fit within the regulated spaces of gender. The performance of gender within the cultural space of society leads to the illusion of naturalness that is now associated with the gender binary accepted in society. My project attempts to understand how the performance of gender works and is established within society.

The performance of gender requires the presence of other individuals to confirm its presence. Gender cannot exist in isolation. A person born and raised completely alone would have no sense of their own gender. There would be no binary established without the presence of an individual showing what they are not; nor any reason to establish a gender without the pressure of a society to define the self. This isolated individual would have a sense of their own anatomy, but no reason to assign a particular gender to their behavior patterns, sex, and desire. The labels of gender are conferred upon an individual by society and are developed completely within the presence of others. Butler asks "To what extent do *regulatory practices* of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed the self-identical status of the person? To what extent is 'identity' a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? And how do the regulatory practices that govern gender also govern culturally intelligible notions of identity"?[167] To help answer these questions, I turn to cognitive science and sociology to provide an understanding of how perception and identity are intertwined.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the human brain is its ability to quickly analyze

[167] Butler, *Gender* 23.

situations and place them in understandable categories. It is a reflex that keeps us from being overwhelmed by the sheer amount of sensory input we encounter every day and gives us the information we need to accurately assess a situation and react accordingly. This process of perception and categorization also occurs when we meet a new person; our mind analyzes that person in terms of certain key categories in an attempt to understand and situate the individual and the interaction. Humans "need a shared way of categorizing and defining 'who' self and other are in [every new] situation so that we can anticipate how each of us is likely to act and coordinate our actions accordingly."[168] So, the way that a person is categorized in those initial moments determines the way they are treated and understood by others. The key categories of person perception are determined by culture, but "the male-female distinction is virtually always one of society's primary cultural-category systems."[169] Across cultures, the quick identification of an individual as male or female is used as an establishing factor for identity.

This understanding of identity sees it as something that is conferred onto an individual by another person who makes a judgement in a matter of moments, perhaps before any meaningful interaction has even occurred. It is a crucial part of participating in society, but is often out of our direct control. We can attempt to shape a person's understanding of us through dialogue, but this initial judgment is unavoidable. In fact, "social-cognition studies show that...we automatically and nearly instantly sex categorize any specific person to whom we attempt to relate."[170] For most of society, understanding and categorizing the gender of someone is a prerequisite to engaging in a meaningful interaction with them. These key categories of person perception "define the things a person in that society must know about someone to render that someone

[168] Ridgeway 147.
[169] Ridgeway 148.
[170] Ridgeway 148.

sufficiently meaningful to relate to him or her."[171]

This has several implications on the understanding and perception of gender in society. We see the importance of gender in terms of identity formation. If someone does not fit into these understood categories of gender, they can be interpreted as a threat to the overall system, as an outsider to the otherwise regulated society. Resisting categorization can also create a barrier to understanding. In the face of uncertainty, we do not have an established way of interacting and cannot predict and anticipate the interaction, leading to confusion and fear. This also explains why it is easy to demonize those that do not fit into the category. Person perception is how we meaningfully relate to someone. If this perception is hindered and a cannot be understood by the categories of person perception, it becomes easy to refuse to relate to them. This individual is not interpreted as a person, as someone who deserves empathy and understanding. It becomes dangerous to not fit into the categories of person perception. The process of immediate categorization into gender categories also means that "we frame and are framed by gender literally before we know it."[172] The performance of gender we enact on a daily basis is processed and interpreted by others in a matter of moments. It is part of the hard wiring of our brain as we navigate our society. The way we make sense of new individuals we encounter depends on the way they fit into our society's understanding of gender.

Hannah Arendt's phenomenology as outlined in her text *The Human Condition* attends to issues of "power, violence, and strength" which separates it from material phenomenology's focus on objective reality and brings it closer in spirit to gender theory.[173] Arendt sees reality as created by interactions and shared experience with other individuals. For Arendt, "whatever men

[171] Ridgeway 147-148.
[172] Ridgeway 148.
[173] Arendt vii.

do or know or experience can make sense only to the extent that it can be spoken about".[174] Reality is only established because individuals can converse with each other about what they are experiencing and confirm the existence of their reality. "Men in the plural, that is, men in so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves".[175] While material phenomenology is only concerned with the individual's physical experience of the world around them to confirm their reality, Arendt's phenomenology requires the presence of others to validate the experience. Not only can an outside reality not be substantiated without other individuals, a person's identity cannot be established without interactions with other humans to validate it. This emphasis on the way that others confirm identity becomes important when thinking about how ethical phenomenology can shed light on the performance of gender.

Another important part of Arendt's philosophy that sets her apart from material phenomenologists is her emphasis on the plurality of human experience. She allows for the wide range of human action and identity in a way that material phenomenologists such as Husserl fail to take into account. For Arendt, "plurality is specifically *the* condition…of all political life," placing great emphasis on the importance of multiple viewpoints and orientations.[176] One of the primary categories of human activity, action, allows for the creation of identity and is tied to the importance of the plurality of human appearing. In fact, "[a]ction, [which is] the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world".[177] Arendt allows for the variety of human experience, which is not seen in other

[174] Arendt 4.
[175] Arendt 4.
[176] Arendt 7.
[177] Arendt 7.

phenomenologists. While phenomenologists such as Husserl tend to conflate human experience into one ideal experiencing subject, often white and male, Arendt emphasizes the fact that no two individuals can experience the same object in the same way. "Those who are present [in the public sphere] have different locations in it, and the location of one can no more coincide with the location of another than the location of two objects".(Unattached Footnote)[178] It is the fact that they are experiencing the same object that confirms their reality; it is not necessary that it be experienced identically. This directly relates to the queering of phenomenology carried out by Sara Ahmed as she reorients the focused viewpoint of material phenomenologists. Arendt accounts for the different orientations individuals bring to the world and the objects around them.

A distinguishing theme of Arendt philosophy lies in her emphasis and clarification of the public sphere, the sphere of appearing where the shared experience can occur. There are two spheres of human appearing for Arendt: the private sphere of the household and home and the public sphere of shared human experience. It is in the public sphere that individuals are able to reveal their identity. It is only through their interactions with others in the public that identity can be established and confirmed. "The public realm…[is] reserved for individuality; it [is] the only place where men [can] show who they really and inexchangeably [are]".[179] The private sphere of the household does not allow for the expression of identity or individuality. "One of the characteristics of privacy…[is] that man exist[s] in this sphere not as a truly human being but only as a specimen of the animal species man-kind" as the privacy of the household does not allow for an individual to create an identity.[180] It is only through the interactions with individuals in the public realm that a person can become a specific identity, separate from the masses. This

[178] Arendt 57.
[179] Arendt 41.
[180] Arendt 46.

ability to become an individual in the presence of others makes humans distinct from animal species. The denial of access to a public sphere is tantamount to erasing the individuality of a human, which is why slaves in ancient civilizations were confined to the household and barred from any access to the outside world. “A man who live[s] only a private life, who like the slave [is] not permitted to enter the public realm, or like the barbarian [has] chosen not to establish such a realm, [is] not fully human”.[181] The presence of others is required in order to establish a person as a distinct and unique individual with an identity.

In Arendt’s work there are three modes of human activity: “labor, which corresponds to the biological life of a man as an animal; work, which corresponds to the artificial world of objects that human beings build upon the earth; and action, which corresponds to our plurality as distinct individuals”.[182] It is only action, however, that leads to the creation of individual human identity. Labor and work can occur in isolation and in anonymity. Action requires the presence of others, and, as such, confirms the existence of the actor as an individual. “It is only action that cannot even be imagined outside the society of men”.[183] A person may exist biologically in solitude, completely without the society of others; they may even begin to create objects that affect the world around them, however, they cannot engage as political beings without a society surrounding them. Implicit in Arendt’s idea of action is the coexistence of speech alongside that action. “Action and speech are so closely related because the primordial and specifically human act must at the same time contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: ‘Who are you?’”.[184] Only speech and action in the public sphere can answer that question by providing an identity. “Speech and action reveal [a] unique distinctness. Through them, men distinguish

[181] Arendt 38.
[182] Arendt ix.
[183] Arendt 22.
[184] Arendt 178.

themselves instead of being merely distinct; [speech and action] are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical object, but *qua* men".[185] A person reveals themselves through speech and action, but, it is only when this revelation is interpreted by others that it gains any sort of meaning. A person acting in solitude cannot be said to reveal anything about their identity as there is no audience for their disclosure. "Action and speech need the surrounding presence of others" in order to become legible.[186]

Though Arendt focuses her analysis on the political implications of human activity, her theories can be usefully applied to the analysis of dramatic texts. Using Arendt's theories about speech and action can illuminate the way characters become to each other and to the audience. Arendt herself has this to say about the way drama is connected to her theories:

"However, the specific revelatory quality of action and speech, the implicit manifestation of the agent and speaker, is so indissolubly tied to the living flux of acting and speaking that it can be represented and 'reified' only through a kind of repetition the imitation or *mimesis*, which according to Aristotle prevails in all arts but is actually appropriate only to the *drama*, whose very name…indicates that play-acting actually is an imitation of acting. But the imitative element lies not only in the art of the actor, but, as Aristotle rightly claims, in the making or writing of the play, at least to the extent that the drama comes fully to life only when it is enacted in the theater. Only the actors and speakers who re-enact the story's plot can convey the full meaning, not so much of the story itself, but of the 'heroes' who reveal themselves in it."[187]

Heroes in the Arendtian sense of those who engage in speech and action in the public sphere, opening themselves up to be understood and interpreted by others, can only be represented

[185] Arendt 176.
[186] Arendt 188.
[187] Arendt 187.

through drama. Other art forms, such as the novel or painting, fails to capture the liveness of human interaction that forms the basis of Arendt's theory. It is not the story that is being revealed through the actors, it is the characters themselves. The dialogue of a play reveals the very process of how humans disclose their identity to one another, through the act of speech. The actors in a play are always interacting with, not against, each other to create one coherent event, even if the characters themselves are at odds. In this way, the process of the play fulfills Arendt's requirement for human action and speech: that it occur with other humans, not in antagonism. Scholars of drama have been drawn to this understanding of theatre "as that distinctive scene of appearing, that special form of publicity…established above all by the assembly of an audience in the present time of performance in response to an ensemble of human beings enacting a story with their voices and bodies."[188] The characters in a play imitate, and open up to analysis, the very process of human interaction and identity Arendt illuminates. "This is…why [to Arendt] the theater is the political art par excellence; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art. By the same token, it is the only art whose sole subject is man in his relationship to others".[189] It is the only space where the action Arendt is theorizing is put on display.

If gender is inherently a performance as Butler attests, then it can be classified as an action in the Arendtian categorization. Gender is made visible through speech and action. The mannerisms and behavior of a person are part of the performance of gender. These behaviors require the presence of other individuals to read and confirm them, as is true for all other actions. "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world," it is the way that we interact and exist to those around us, how we differentiate ourselves from the inanimate objects that

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[188] Lupton, "Hannah Arendt" 209

[189] Arendt 188.

occupy our reality.[190] In the public sphere, “we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance,” creating an identity through our actions that includes culturally coded signifiers of gender.[191] The performance of gender seems to differ from other forms of action, as it does not seem to have a teleological goal towards which is it reaching. The performance of gender aligns more with a state of being than acting, due to the often unconscious and naturalized way that gender manifests.

Arendt accounts for such forms of action in her explication of the way that humans manifest in the public sphere. Not all action can be seen in the traditional sense of beginning an act that will eventually create an end goal or product in the outside world. Arendt uses “Aristotle’s notion of *energeia* (‘actuality’)” to understand other categories of action which cannot be measured through a quantifiable outcome. *Energeia* is a category of action within which the performance of gender can be classified. Aristotle used the notion of *energeia* to designate “all activities that do not pursue an end…and leave no work behind…but exhaust their full meaning in the performance itself. …[I]n these instances of action and speech as the end (*telos*) is not pursued but lies in the activity itself which therefore becomes an *entelecheia*, and the work in not what follows and extinguishes the process but is imbedded in it; the performance is the work, is *energeia*”.[192] The daily and constant performance of gender by the individual can be read in this way. The performance is the action itself being presented in the public sphere. It is only understood through the acting and performance, with no specific end. It is only the performance that matters, there is no end goal nor any real substance to which the performance refers or produces. If the performance were to end, there would be nothing left behind as the

[190] Arendt 176
[191] Arendt 177.
[192] Arendt 206.

product is the performance itself. There is nothing being created outside of the performance. “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expression’ that are said to be its results”.[193] The idea that the performance of gender has no stable referent point is an important part of Butler’s work. “That this [constant] reitereation [and continual performance of gender] is necessary is a sign that materialization [of gender] is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled.”[194] There are no results of the performance of gender, aside from the actions constituting the performance itself. So, in Butler, the performance and expression of gender is an ongoing process with no real end, a process that finds an analog in Arendt’s description of *energeia* and action. In this way, these two theories come together to describe the process of gender formation and how this links to identity as it is expressed phenomenologically in the public sphere of human appearing.

Analyzing dramatic texts that play around with the concept of gender allows for a deeper look at how this performance of gender manifests as a social reality. Though gender is a performance enacted by the individual, it does have a real influence on society and on societal understanding of the individual. Looking at how this understanding is created and maintained exposes the way that gender works in our society. William Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* is a text uniquely suited for this investigation of identity and gender. Its treatment of gender is nuanced and intricate, as its lead character vacillates between genders, creating layers and layers of gendered identity. The layering of this identity offers an interesting opportunity for analysis as it helps open up the way that gender is created and maintained. The main character Rosalind initiates the play as a woman and creates various identities for herself throughout the play.

[193] Butler, *Gender* 34.
[194] Butler, *Bodies* xii.

During the Early Modern period, the female character of Rosalind was already a gendered performance enacted by the boy actor who played her. As only male actors were allowed on the Renaissance stage, the performance of female characters were already invested in the concept of analyzing and performing gender in intentional, rather than subconscious ways. This intentional performance of gender is a theme that can be traced through *As You Like* It and makes it a particularly fruitful text for the investigation of these questions. Through the course of the play, Rosalind consciously and thoughtfully creates the male identity of Ganymede who exists solely within the confines of the Forest of Arden, a mythic place of escape and reinvention. To further complicate matters, while in the Forest, "Rosalind, playing the boy Ganymede, invents another woman: the imagined Rosalind", a new identity that differs significantly from the original character of Rosalind.[195] Each of these gendered identities is created with a different audience and public in mind, and the success of each identity in the social realm varies greatly. An analysis of how and when these identities succeed and fail is revealing in terms of the creation and maintenance of gender as a performed aspect of identity.

III. The Many Roles of Rosalind

The ease and frequency with which Rosalind creates differently gendered identities points to the fluidity and performativity of gender. Identities are constantly being created, exchanged, and modified in the Forest of Arden. The play itself reveals the work that goes on to create an identity, particularly one that centers around gender. Wardrobe, garments, and material objects play an important part in creating each of these personas. Costuming was an important part of creating the world of the play in the Early Modern period and signifying important character

[195] Juliet Dusinberre, Introduction, *As You Like It*, by William Shakespeare, ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006) 11.

associations. Without the presence of elaborate set pieces, costumes played an important part in the visual experience offered at the Early Modern playhouse. In *As You Like It*, clothes are often referenced as signifiers of gender, just as they are with in other plays with cross dressing characters, such as *Twelfth Night*. From the beginning of the play, the characters constantly reference their clothing, which changes with their identities. As princesses in the palace, Rosalind and Celia mention their "petticoats."[196] When they begin to plan their escape to the Forest of Arden, Rosalind begins her transformation into Ganymede by describing the material accessories that will accompany this change. Though these identities are signified with elaborate costume changes, as we've seen with the Shakespeare Orange County production of *As You Like It*, physical signifiers are not enough to effectively create a gendered identity. Just as Josh Odsess-Rubin's feminine makeup and ornate dress is not enough to convince the theatre critics, Rosalind's "doublet and hose" does not in and of itself create the male Ganymede.[197] It is the interactions between the characters that reveal the necessary elements for successfully performing gender.

Within the world of the play, Rosalind's successful portrayal of both male and female genders is dependent on her audience and presents an interesting case study for how Arendtian identity works in the social sphere. The nature of Arendtian identity as a public performance collides with the specifically gendered nature of the identities Rosalind invents, highlighting the often unrecognized and private way that gender is performed. Rosalind's initial character Ganymede, the young country boy, is originally created as a man to be witnessed by a specific audience. In fact, at the initial invention of the character, Rosalind considers this character mostly in visual terms, concerned with how this character will appear to others and be interpreted

[196] *As You Like It* 1.3.15.
[197] 2.4.6.

visually.

While preparing to flee for Arden, Rosalind laments, “Alas, what danger will it be to us,/Maids as we are, to travel forth so far!/Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold”.[198] Ganymede was a response to the fear of encountering other people, particularly hostile individuals, on the journey. If the princesses were to interact with others along the way, their presence as rich, beautiful young ladies would be interpreted as a weakness and vulnerability. Rosalind particularly points to their “Beauty” over the “gold” they possess as the main signifier that will be associated with them by thieves along the way.[199] From this initial moment of self-awareness, Rosalind displays an understanding of how gender plays an important part of identity and the specifics of how that identity is interpreted by other individuals. She recognized that Celia and she are explicitly understood as female when they encounter others in the public sphere, more immediately than they are identified with their class status. The identity of the boy Ganymede was specifically created to engage with other individuals; it was created with an awareness of how identity is understood and interpreted. Without this imagined audience, Ganymede does not exist, as Celia and Touchstone understand Rosalind as herself, rather than as this new persona. A closer look at why these two characters pose an exception in the Forest, as everyone else only sees the male Ganymede, reveals the importance of the public sphere of appearing for Arendtian identity. Before looking at the important distinction between the public and private for the manifestation of identity, it is important to unpack how Rosalind understand the concept of presentation and identity and how it is figured specifically in this play in a way that calls constant attention to the integral part the performance of gender plays in the way individuals are understood as social beings.

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[198] 1.3.105-107.
[199] 1.3.107.

As a character who is shown to cleverly manipulate the people and situations around her, it is not surprising that Rosalind is incredibly self-aware of the way she creates her gendered characters. She seems constantly aware of the performance she in enacting, and the specifics of gender performance. At the inception of Ganymede, Rosalind conjures the image of her male persona as having “A gallant curtal-axe upon my thigh,/A boar-spear in my hand, and in my heart,/Lie there what hidden woman’s fear there will,/We’ll have a swashing and a martial outside,/As many other mannish cowards/That do outface it with their semblances”.[200] In this description, Rosalind points to the way that gender is created through physical materials used as signifiers on the body and then read by others in a highly prescriptive way along strict gender lines.

It also introduces the idea that gender is not a natural state, but something that one actively works towards and attains, rather than something that is given. The axe and boar spear referenced in Rosalind’s speech become signifiers of the performance of the male gender, associated with masculine aggression and an idea of acting male that is a far cry from the feminized life of the princesses. In the rest of her speech, Rosalind highlights how gender is performed in everyday life: men perform their masculinity with “their semblances,” simulating and performing a societal ideal of gender that is not innate and does not emerge solely from an introspective sense of self.[201] Rosalind actively takes her cues for creating Ganymede from what she sees as the everyday performance of gender. From the beginning of the play, Rosalind established masculinity as a conscious performance that she has often witnessed. Men attempt to perform a scripted idea of maleness based on a strict gender binary. In the world of the play, this script seems to include acts of bravery and violence and is referenced at various points in the

[200] 1.3.113-119.
[201] 1.3.119.

play, as Rosalind attempts to maintain her new gendered identity as Ganymede.[202]

Upon their entrance into the Forest of Arden, wearied by the long journey, Rosalind tries to maintain her composure as Ganymede: “I could find it in my heart to disgrace my man’s apparel and to cry like a woman, but I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat. Therefore courage, good Aliena”.[203] Rosalind calls on the newly created personas of both the girls and creates a distinction between them based on her newly acquired clothing, an integral part of the performance and presentation of her new identity. Similarly to when she originally conceives of the idea of Ganymede, Rosalind again conjures the idea of bravery and courage in reference to portraying masculinity, revealing the scripted nature of a gender identity that must adhere to certain codes in order to be read correctly. Much like her male clothing, her actions are seen as signifiers of a particular gender performance that has been established and policed by society. Rosalind intimates that the act of her crying would be read against her material signifiers, the clothes she is wearing, creating a breakdown in the performance of masculinity she is trying to establish. In this, Rosalind shows an astute knowledge of what is construed in society as masculine, and reveals an ability to deftly manipulate those expectations in order to perform a male identity.[204]

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[202] For an insightful and well cited argument about the significance of the mythical allusion of the name Ganymede, see Mario DiGangi’s article “Queering the Shakespearean Family.” This article also offers an interesting look at the politics of homoerotic desire in the play.
[203] 2.4.4-8.
[204] The disconnect that happens when an action seems antithesis to the material signifiers as read by an external audience seems to be at the root of a lot of the anxiety surrounding non binary gendered individuals and transgendered individuals. Few societal norms are as deeply rooted as those that surround gender. And, as any deviation from a societal construct causes upset and pushback, the rupture that non binary individuals present to the status quo of gender often elicits a disproportionate amount of anger and violence. Governing institutions get involved in extremely private and individual matters, such as which bathroom an individual should be allowed to use, in order to correct this upset. Citizens enact extreme violence against individuals they see as violating the societal gender construct. It is interesting to note that Rosalind here sees the problem that the breakdown of a coherent gender performance might cause. And,

The script of male bravado and courage evoked by Rosalind in these early speeches becomes intimately tied with Ganymede's identity, helping secure his performance as distinctly male. When approaching Orlando for the first time in the forest, Rosalind says she, as Ganymede, "will speak to him like a saucy lackey and under that habit play the knave with him," invoking a playful sense of mischief and aggression[205] . Ganymede becomes associated with a brashness that belies the sincerity and tenderness seen in Rosalind in the beginning scenes. Rosalind and others consciously align Ganymede with a particular script foreign to the female Rosalind. Even when Rosalind presents herself as a woman within the confines of the Forest, she is reminded of what is expected of her male persona and the image she is presenting clothed in male apparel. After being stood up by Orlando, Rosalind melodramatically tries to elicit sympathy from Celia, crying, "Never talk to me, I will weep".[206] To which Celia responds with "Do, I prithee, but yet have the grace to consider that tears do not become a man," echoing Rosalind's earlier statement upon entering the Forest of Arden about presenting as masculine and restraining her emotions.[207] Celia reminds Rosalind of the male persona signified by her outward appearance, and the accompanying male script she has undertaken to perform, calling back to the idea that a disconnect between her actions and her male attire would be unseemly. Celia's reminder comes in the form of reiterating the expectations of maleness that have been referenced throughout the play: bravery in the face of hardship and a concealment of emotion. These behaviors are coded as specifically masculine, as seen in Rosalind's distinction between Ganymede and Celia at the entrance to Arden and in this interaction with Celia. These masculine

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though it is not framed in those exact terms, it does hint to the issues of violence and inequality that we see in society towards individuals who upset and trouble the stability of the binary gender model.

[205] 3.2.287-289.

[206] 3.4.1.

[207] 3.4.2-3.

behaviors are placed in direct opposition to the feminine persona of Rosalind that is revealed with Rosalind's passionate cries, and is always revealed in Rosalind's interactions with Celia who is often the only reminder of Rosalind's female character in the Forest. The facility with which Rosalind takes on and off these male attributes, slipping into her habitual female identity with Celia, while still clothed as a man, and then consciously performing Ganymede in front of Orlando, prepping herself beforehand to play "the saucy lackey", reveals the way that specific actions and performances are associated with gender, and how the enactment of these signifiers is the way that gender is read by society.[208]

While Rosalind's portrayal of Ganymede explicitly marks the territory traditionally seen as masculine, it is interesting to note the way that the character of Orlando, a character whose gender is never in question, but who raises several questions about the treatment of normative sexuality in the play, is portrayed in terms of these masculine tropes that underpin the creation of Ganymede. Through his language, and the language of others about him, Orlando is often characterized by gentleness, "a mode of behavi[or] which abjures the violent and aggressive-or…the cultural accouterments of traditional 'masculinity'," especially as performed by the other male characters in the play, including Ganymede.[209] While from the inception of Ganymede, Rosalind associated her male character with violent images of axes and spears, Orlando abjures such violence and provides an antithesis to Ganymede in some ways. From the beginning of the play, Orlando is characterized as "gentle," "sweet," and "virtuous" by Adam.[210] In fact, in the space of fifteen lines, Adam refers to Orlando as "gentle" three times.[211] These are adjectives more traditionally associated with young, unmarried woman, particularly in Elizabethan poetry

[208] 3.2.287
[209] Dusinberre 31.
[210] 2.3.2;3;5.
[211] 2.3.12.

and drama. Virtue is often a defining characteristic of a young woman who is of marriageable age, but is here used to characterize the leading male figure of the play, the romantic lead who is a de facto representative of the heteronormative union that typically concludes Shakespeare's comedies.

Orlando himself resists the idea of a performed identity built on violence and aggression.[212] When faced with a choice between death and "with a base and boisterous sword enforc[ing]/A thievish living on the common road," he chooses to remain at his brother's mercy, refusing to revert to an idea of masculine identity associated with violence.[213] When Orlando is forced to use his sword in the Forest to save Adam, he relents to appeals to gentleness from Duke Senior. He quickly asks for forgiveness for his threats of violence, saying that he "thought all things had been savage here/And therefore put I on the countenance/Of stern commandment".[214] Even in this apology, Orlando characterizes the violent intrusion as a "countenance" he has assumed, rather than a part of his true nature, a response to a perceived threat from his environment.[215] In the end, he eloquently requests the help of the Duke, pleading, "Let gentleness my strong enforcement be".[216] Again, Orlando is connected with an idea of gentleness, this time in direct opposition to an early act of violence he is attempting to disavow and claiming this gentleness as a defining feature of his identity. Orlando even uses female imagery to describe himself. After the Duke's invitation to the feast, Orlando asks him to "forbear your food a little while,/Whiles like a doe I go to find my fawn,/And give it food".[217]

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[212] Thomas Kelly's article "Shakespeare's Romantic Heroes: Orlando Reconsidered" offers a deeper discussion of the place of Orlando within the canon of Shakespeare's romantic male leads.
[213] 2.3.32-33.
[214] 2.7.108-110.
[215] 2.7.109.
[216] 2.7.119.
[217] 2.7.127-130.

Orlando chooses the image of a female deer taking care of her children to describe himself and his relationship to Adam. It is a maternal image that speaks of nurturing and gentleness, typically feminine attributes.

Orlando subverts traditional gender performance by not following the typical script for masculinity, but, in his subversion, he calls attention to the prescribed rules for performing gender. Orlando provides the anomaly that highlights the script from which he is deviating. The more traditional masculine role is seen in characters such as Duke Frederick with his anger and hunger for power, and Oliver, the "bloody brother".[218] The violence and elevation of aggression seen in the deer hunting scene also perpetuate this idea of traditional masculinity. These examples are much more along the type of masculinity Ganymede is seen to exhibit and imitate than the gentleness with which Orlando is characterized. The differences between Ganymede and Orlando speaks to the performative nature of gender, as both are self-conscious of acting a certain part: Ganymede of presenting as a typical masculine identity, Orlando of subverting that identity to present as a different, and destabilizing, form of masculinity that does not align to the script outlined in other parts of the play.[219]

Rosalind's constant awareness of her performance of gender, and the ability to easily vacillate between Rosalind and Ganymede, without changing her material signifiers, speaks to Butler's claim that gender is a constant performance. Rosalind intimately understands the way that this performance works, as she is able to perform the identity of masculinity convincingly. However, the success of her male identity lies in more than just the knowledge of gender's performativity. Ganymede can only exist in front of an audience; a performance must be

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[218] 2.3.37.

[219] A more in-depth analysis of the differences in identity and the nature of the self found between the antagonistic characters and the protagonists can be found in Mark Bracher's article "Contrary Notions of Identity in *As You Like It*."

witnessed in order to be interpreted. However, the type of audience is important when considering the success of the Ganymede identity.

Reiterating an early point, within the Forest of Arden, Celia and Touchstone are exceptions to the performance of Ganymede. Ganymede does not exist as a fully formed social being in front Celia or Touchstone, who are privy to the ruse being played by Rosalind. While Ganymede attains a level of social reality amongst the Forest population at large, he does not exist as an individual within the place of the home that Celia and Touchstone represent for Rosalind. In her interactions with Celia, Rosalind exists as her female identity, often being reminded by Celia of the assumed identity she is trying to play. Rosalind interacts with Celia as a woman after she has assumed the role of Ganymede in the Forest of Arden, a location that Rosalind as a female character does not fully enter until the final scene.[220] When speaking to Celia in Arden, Rosalind even exclaims, "Do you not know I am a woman?".[221] This exclamation, made in response to Celia expecting Rosalind to conform to masculine rather than femininely coded personality traits, serves multiple purposes. It shows how Celia as a character who is in the know helps remind both the audience and Rosalind of Rosalind's female identity while she is dressed as Ganymede. On an Early Modern stage with boy actors in the roles of Rosalind and Celia, this reminder to the audience to hold on to the image of the female Rosalind from the beginning of the play seems of particular importance as the audience watches a boy actor play, essentially, a young boy as Ganymede. This interaction also highlights how Celia plays a very different role to the other characters Rosalind interacts with in the Forest. Celia continues to be Rosalind's connection to her female identity throughout the play. While the other

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[220] For more on the fraught relationship between Rosalind and Celia and the politics of female homoerotic desire in this play, see Valerie Traub's essay "The (in)significance of 'lesbian' desire in early modern England."
[221] 3.2.242.

interactions Rosalind has in the Forest confirm the reality of the new identity she has created, Celia is one of the few characters who can help Rosalind maintain a social presence, as opposed to Ganymede.

The other character that functions in a similar capacity is the clown Touchstone. Touchstone also breaks through the male identity when interacting with Ganymede, recalling and confirming the presence of Rosalind under the guise. Upon finding the poems decorating the trees praising Rosalind, the object of Orlando's affection, Touchstone extensively teases her with the knowledge that she is Rosalind. Since he is not the only audience member to the scene, Touchstone speaks in coded language about what he and Rosalind both know to be true, that she is the object of these poems. Touchstone makes bawdy jokes about Rosalind's coupling: "He that sweetest rose will find/Must find love's prick – and Rosalind".[222] The construction of the jokes he tells relies on the information that he is in fact speaking to Rosalind, not Ganymede. The presence of Corin complicates the dynamics of this scene by introducing a public presence into a private space. Corin functions as an antithesis to the reminder that Touchstone offers; instead of reminding the audience of Rosalind's true identity, Corin keeps the identity of Ganymede present in the scene. Touchstone and Ganymede must speak elusively about the identity of Rosalind and the affection between her and Orlando, so as to not disrupt the illusion that Ganymede has maintained in the forest. When this coded language becomes too cumbersome, and the cousins wish to speak freely about, Celia dismisses Corin, asking him to "go off a little," reasserting the privacy of the household.[223] The intimacy between Celia, Touchstone, and Rosalind, particularly once they have entered the Forest, resembles that of a family, and "the relationships between the members of a family…[are] known to be non-political and even antipolitical," and, therefore,

[222] 3.2.109-110.
[223] 3.2.155.

private.[224] Celia and Touchstone comprise Rosalind's private household life, performing a function that differs from the other characters in the Forest by recalling an identity that is not being performed by Rosalind physically in that moment.

In Arendtian terms, an identity, a persona that has social capital and is considered a political subject, can only be established in the public realm. The private sphere cannot confirm an identity, as defined by Arendt, and it is necessary for a person to engage in interactions outside of the home to create an identity that has political influence. "One of the characteristics of [the private realm is] that man exist[s] in this sphere not as a truly human being but only as a specimen of the animal species man-kind," as the private individual does not enter the political realm, the space of society and justice.[225] To manifest in the public sphere is to engage in the social and political arenas which separate man from animal through their organizing forces where the activities of humankind extend past those of the strictly necessary by focusing energy on establishing a future and gaining a form of immortality. Reality is made concrete in the public sphere where various viewpoints confirm the existence of the self and others. "Since our feeling for reality depends utterly upon… the existence of a public realm into which things can appear out of the darkness of sheltered existence, even the twilight which illuminates our private and intimate lives is ultimately derived from the much harsher light of the public realm;" and the

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[224] Arendt 54

[225] Arendt 45-46. Obviously with the advent of the internet, the already porous boundaries between public and private become even more blurred. A social media presence lives in this in between space between public and private. It exists in the public sphere of discourse as others engage with this identity, but, until it can be confirmed in the physical public sphere, it still retains a shadowy presence. People are still cautious about the reality of a presence they only have online evidence of. However, there are several ways that this discomfort can be mitigated. Multiple social media accounts help to verify the identity of an individual, as do videos posted online and the corroboration of others who claim to have knowledge of this individual. As we move towards an increasingly mediated society, we will see these boundaries continue to shift in favor of online presences gaining social reality, a change that society will have to grapple with.

identity presented in private does not have the same sense of reality or political presence as the one performed in public.[226] The private life is a reflection of the knowledge gained and established in the public realm. The public realm is also the realm of political policing, where bodies become the political subjects that are forced to conform to traditional structures or risk being cast out as abject, in the words of Butler. The particular "portable politics" of Arendt, "which clears a space for human action wherever people confront, contest, acknowledge, or ignore each other" turns every space outside of the household into a public space of interaction.[227] As Dr. Lupton clarifies, "such a politics is free to *take place* wherever life is lives, including the playground, the kitchen, the cheat counter, the front porch, or the marriage bed."[228] To this list, I would add: the Forest of Arden.

For both Arendt and Butler, appearing public means appearing as a political subject and being a part of the political superstructures at work. Having an identity translates to being a politically present subject who can engage in politics and society. However, to gain this identity, the individual must present in a way that is legible to the mass of people they encounter in the public realm. The consequence to not producing a legible identity is the rejection by the public sphere to validate this identity and to incorporate this identity into the working society. So, the individual trying to create a public identity must adhere to certain societal regulations when performing this identity, particularly those surrounding gender. Gender becomes policed in society as some expressions of gender are acceptable and allowable, while others are forcibly ejected from society. A presence in public ensures a foothold in reality as it is "[o]nly where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those

[226] Arendt 51.
[227] Lupton, "Hannah Arendt" 215.
[228] Lupton, "Hannah Arendt" 215, emphasis in original.

who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity [as we see in the public sphere], can worldly reality truly and reliably appear."[229] So, individuals are forced to perform their gender in socially acceptable ways that can be read by society as a whole, or risk being denied the privilege of a public identity. With the gender fluidity that surrounds Rosalind, the importance of sticking to heavily masculine coded behaviors becomes far more important to Ganymede than it is to Orlando, who is able to negotiate the sliding scale of gender performance with more ease than Ganymede. Similarly, fictional Rosalind that is created in the Forest to be wooed by Orlando is much more staunchly feminine than the Rosalind who chooses to dress as a boy and directs the marriage ceremony at the end of the play.

The idea of the public realm and identity in Arendt can be tied in interesting ways to the idea of gender performance for Butler. "The most elementary meaning of the two realms[, public and private,] indicates that there are things that need to be hidden and others that need to be displayed publicly if they are to exist at all."[230] Similarly, if an individual's gender is not performed in public, it does not exist. In solitude, an individual's gender does not exist as there is no audience for which to perform and no other bodies from which to be differentiated, as has already been discussed earlier in this chapter.[231] The representation and performance of gender in the public sphere is an analog to the idea of identity in public that is seen in Arendt. Society is so fundamentally concerned with the gender binary that the identity an individual presents in public

[229] Arendt 57.
[230] Arendt 73.
[231] Again, the presence of the internet represents as interesting side note. Social media has become a place for people who identify as nonbinary or transgendered to find communities where they can perform their true gender. This is often different from the gender that they are forced to perform in the public sphere to prevent the physical violence of not performing traditionally. In this way, the internet and social media provides a strange liminal public sphere where an identity can be performed, particularly one that is concerned with gender, at the same time that the individual presents a different identity in the physical public sphere.

must be inextricably tied to a type of gender performance, either one that aligns with the gender norms prescribed by public or one that is intentionally atypical.

Action "engages in founding and preserving political bodies," and action is the only part of the human condition for which a presence in the public sphere is a precondition.(Unattached Footnote)[232] It is through action and speech that the individual establishes an identity and inserts themselves into the public sphere. The actions that one takes in the public sphere work to both create identity and establish the individual as a political subject. The presence of others to witness and confirm these actions is what gives them weight and influence. While the Forest of Arden may seem like a private, secluded location, especially compared to the surveillance court of Duke Frederick, it does, in fact, allow for the public sphere of interaction Ganymede needs in order to exist.

There is an interesting parallel between Touchstone and Ganymede in this necessity for a public audience. "Touchstone dislikes the Forest because it is private, the worst possible scenario for a jester, who must have an audience to entertain. Happily he finds that the Forest, seemingly deserted, is in fact full of people, and most of them are watching him".[233] The same can be said for Ganymede, who can only come into being through the relationships he forms with the people in the forest, most of who do seem very interested in him. While Touchstone needs an audience to entertain and confirm his wit, Ganymede needs an audience to become his male identity. Both Touchstone, as a clown, and Ganymede need audiences to construct their identities. Touchstone laments Corin's inability to appreciate his wit, but still seeks out his company to provide an audience for his jokes. Without the interactions in the Forest, Ganymede is simply Rosalind in boy's clothes, maintaining the female identity established in the opening scenes at court.

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[232] Arendt 8-9.
[233] Dusinberre 51.

Entrance into the space of the Forest is not enough to cement the public identity of Ganymede as Rosalind enters with the people who create her private sphere. The first time Ganymede exists is in his first interaction with Corin in the Forest of Arden.

> "*Rosalind [to Touchstone]:* Peace, I say. – Good even to you, friend.
> *Corin*: And to you, gentle sir, and to you all."
> (2.4.68-69)

This is the first time Ganymede has interacted with anyone outside of the private household. With that "sir," Corin calls Ganymede into existence, acknowledging the persona Rosalind is attempting to create.[234] With each subsequent interaction with the people in the Forest, the public sphere of interaction, Ganymede is confirmed as an identity. With every interaction Ganymede has in the Forest, the male identity becomes confirmed as reality. Corin's reference to "young Master Ganymede, my new mistress's brother" is an indication of the reality of Ganymede's identity within the world of the play, and it reasserts the identity being signified on the stage for the audience.[235] The confusion that might be caused by the building of layers of identity on the body of the actor playing Rosalind is subverted by the confirmation of Ganymede through the other characters in the play.

In Rosalind's interaction with Orlando in the forest continues to cement the social reality of Ganymede's identity. Ganymede's successful appearance as a "saucy lackey" only becomes reality when Orlando continues and confirms the interaction by asking, "Where dwell you, pretty youth?".[236] This response both maintains the interaction, allowing Ganymede access to the public realm, and bolsters the identity Ganymede was attempting to construct. Rosalind's declaration that Celia "call [her] Ganymede" is not enough to create this new identity as Celia is a part of

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[234] 2.4.69.
[235] 3.2.83-84.
[236] 3.2.287;323.

Rosalind's private household sphere.[237] While the initial interaction with Corin begins the creation of Ganymede, as opposed to Rosalind, it takes a "multitude of spectators [to create an identity]. Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear".[238] It is through a confirmation of a shared experience that individuals are sure of the reality around them. The phenomenological view of identity asks for a multitude of spectators and, a multitude of spectators is exactly what Rosalind unexpectedly finds in the Forest of Arden.

With Ganymede's introduction to Orlando comes the third gendered identity to be layered, the fictional Rosalind who will cure Orlando of his lovesickness. This identity has the least success in establishing a reality for itself. Fictional Rosalind also appears in a public sphere, interacting with Orlando on numerous occasions; however, she is unable to become a concrete identity. The problem lies in the naturalized performance of gender that must occur for a gendered identity to be read by society. Returning to the idea of gender as part of the initial categories of person perception, Orlando has already categorized Ganymede as male, as made clear by his greeting. While initial judgments of people can change over time, the "initial framing by sex never quite disappears from [a person's] understanding of [the new individual]" or from their understanding of the relationship.[239] Orlando's understanding of Ganymede as male will always be a part of his interactions. Orlando never sees the initial creation of Ganymede, the change from princess dress to the "swashing and…martial outside," and therefore accepts the performance of masculinity set before him.[240] There is no beginning or end of the performance of

[237] 1.3.122.
[238] Arendt 57.
[239] Ridgeway 148.
[240] 1.3.117.

Ganymede for Orlando, so he does not interpret it as a performance but as reality. A coherent set of "acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core".[241] The naturalization of gender on the body is what allows it to be policed and politicized. It is crucial for the maintenance of the hegemony that gender seem natural, rather than as a created and crafted performance. The societal pressure to prescribe to a codified gender binary evolves out of the insistence that gender is natural and innate, rather than a performance. The "acts, gestures, and desire [of an individual] produce the effect of an internal core of substance" that helps buoy the idea of a naturalized gender identity.[242] This illusion of coherence is broken with the creation of the fictional Rosalind. She never achieves a stable interiority that would allow her to exist as a complete identity in the way that Ganymede does.

In fact, the performance of fictional Rosalind is very revealing about the creation of gender. While earlier, we see that Rosalind has a grasp on the performative nature of masculinity, when she points to the behaviors associated with maleness and how these can be performed without a true referent, essentially a hollow fabrication with no interior reality, here with fictional Rosalind, the performative nature of femininity is revealed. Ganymede lists out the various behaviors associated with the feminine as proof of his aptitude for feminine performance.[243] In recounting the service Ganymede did for his uncle, he says that he played a woman and would "grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles; for every passion something and for no passion truly anything, as boys and women are for the most part cattle of this colour; would now like him, now

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[241] Butler, *Gender* 185-186.
[242] Butler, *Gender* 185.
[243] Cynthia Lewis's article "Horns, the Dream-Work, and Female Potency in *As You Like It"* provides an interesting reading of this moment as a way for Rosalind to define and control the narrative of the future romantic relationship between the two lovers.

loath him; then entertain him, then forswear him; now weep for him, then spit at him".[244] As Ganymede says, this is "the colour" of women and young men, equating the experiences and performances of these two distinct groups.[245] The collapsing of difference between the identities of women and boys before the age of puberty finds its logical conclusion in the practice of Early Modern theatre to have all female characters played by young male actors. As young men are inherently inclined to act as women do, they should be suited to play the female characters on stage.[246]

The transparent nature of Ganymede's female creation of Rosalind suggests that femininity can, in fact, be created, imitated, and performed. In a later scene, Ganymede again lists the behaviors of a woman, showing the acceptable social constructs that normalize femininity and the binary of gender. After being married to Orlando, fictional Rosalind promises to be "more jealous of thee than a Barbary cock-pigeon over his hen, more clamorous than a parrot against rain, more new-fangled than an ape, more giddy in my desires than a monkey. I will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain, and I will do that when you are disposed to be merry. I will laugh like a hyena, and that when thou art inclined to sleep".[247] By acknowledging that there is a script for femaleness, fictional Rosalind reveals the social performance behind gender, in much the same way that Rosalind revealed the script of masculinity when constructing Ganymede. It is interesting to note that, much like Ganymede's relation to masculinity, the femininity that fictional Rosalind enacts is an exaggerated and heightened form of gender stereotypes. By extrapolating out to the more fantastical ideas about gender binaries, the

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[244] 3.2.390-400.
[245] 3.2.397.
[246] Lisa Jardine looks at how "erotic attention" in the Early Modern period "is focused upon boys and upon women in the *same* way" in her article "Twins and Travesties: Gender, dependency and sexual availability in *Twelfth Night"* (28, emphasis in original).
[247] 4.1.139-146.

entrenched idea of the aggressive masculine hero and the shrewish and unreasonable wife, the arbitrary nature of gender formation becomes apparent.

The fictional gendered identities of Rosalind open up the idea of gender construction to questioning. Rosalind's shifting gender allegiances suggest to the audience that if it is so easy for one person to play act at gender, then perhaps this performance of gender is more common in society. As there are "many other mannish cowards…that do outface it with their semblances," there are women who perform the role of the shrewish wife.[248] In contrast to Ganymede, fictional Rosalind is emphatically transparent as a construct. While other characters constantly confirm Ganymede as an identity with a social reality, fictional Rosalind is rarely conjured into being without prompting. At their parting, after the initial meeting of Ganymede and Orlando, Orlando agrees to Ganymede's plan[249] by saying, "With all my heart, good youth," confirming Ganymede's identity while rejecting that of fictional Rosalind.[250] Ganymede attempts to bring fictional Rosalind into being by replying, "Nay, you must call me Rosalind".[251] The unsuccessful creation of this third gendered identity forces Rosalind to continually remind others of the act. With Ganymede, the only one who requires prompting is Rosalind herself, as Celia occasionally has to remind her of the part she is playing.

Fictional Rosalind becomes a self-conscious performance of femininity that is apparent to the characters within the world of the play, as well as to the audience of the play, as a reference to the feminine without actually being feminine. Thus, fictional Rosalind is subversive in that she

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[248] 1.3.118-119.
[249] Scholar Grace Tiffany reads Rosalind's plan as a way of breaking out of the trope of frustrated romantic isolation and satirizing the sort of masculine centered romances seen in other plays in her article "'That Reason Wonder May Diminish': *As You Like It*, Androgyny, and the Theater Wars."
[250] 3.2.415.
[251] 3.2.416.

reveals “[t]hat the gendered body is performative[,] suggest[ing] that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality”.[252] There is no true reality to the femininity fictional Rosalind performs. The statement of gender that fictional Rosalind reveals can be extrapolated out to undermine the hegemonic notions of a naturalized and binary gender construct. While this third identity is the least successful, the lack of success of fictional Rosalind is extremely telling in terms of gender construction and societal understanding of how gender functions.

The creation of Ganymede requires Rosalind to continually interact with others in the public sphere. While Celia remains mostly in the private sphere, interacting with Touchstone and Rosalind more than other characters, Rosalind needs to interact with others to create her new identity. In Rosalind’s interaction with Silvius and Phoebe, she becomes “sweet youth”,[253] “peevish boy,” and “a proper man”,[254] all the while remaining Rosalind to Celia in their private interactions. Nowhere is this difference between private and public made more apparent than in the fake marriage ceremony between Ganymede and Orlando. Orlando’s understanding of Rosalind is as a young man named Ganymede, which has been established in their previous encounters. Though he calls her Rosalind, as part of the game that constitutes their interaction, he perceives of her and interacts with her as Ganymede. It is not the specificity of the words that matter in the interaction, but the action itself. As Arendt says, “more fundamentally that finding the right words at the right moment, quite apart from the information or communication they may convey, is action”.[255] The action of Orlando’s naming her as Rosalind, in fact, serves to create for her the opposite identity of a young man. It is the action of playacting that allows for

[252] Butler, *Gender* 185.
[253] 3.5.65.
[254] 3.5.111;116.
[255] Arendt 26.

Rosalind's new identity.

As the playacting progresses, the two engage in a mock marriage ceremony. As Orlando "take[s] some joy to say [Ganymede is Rosalind] because [he] would be talking of her," Celia's presence interprets the complete creation of the new identity by introducing the private into the public.[256] After Orlando's exit, Celia exclaims, "You have simply misused our sex in your love-prate! We must have your doublet and hose plucked over your head and show the world what the bird hath done to her own nest".[257] Celia's comments create cracks in the identity Rosalind has so carefully crafted in her public interactions, bringing consciousness back to the initial identity of Rosalind, breaking through both fictional Rosalind and Ganymede. The presence of the private disrupts the speech and action performed in the public. Again, Celia highlights the difference between the public and the private sphere in terms of identity.

Rosalind's new gendered identity has no traction without the gaze and speech of others in the public realm. It is "[t]he presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear [that] assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves".[258] It is only through the multiplicity of interactions with others that Rosalind is at all conceived of as male. The presence of Celia, Touchstone, and even the audience, cannot create this identity as what they all see is a disguised Rosalind, effectively female in nature. It is the assurance of multiple outside spectators, like Orlando, Corin, and Phoebe, who create the idea of Rosalind as a young male named Ganymede. The only time these outside spectators begin to doubt the façade is when they confer and learn that others have seen what they see. In the final scene, Duke Senior says to Orlando about Ganymede, "I do remember in this shepherd boy/Some lively touches of my daughter's

[256] Shakespeare 4.1.82-83.
[257] Shakespeare 4.1.189-192.
[258] Arendt 50.

favour".[259] To which, Orlando replies, "My lord, the first time that I ever saw him/Methought he was a brother to your daughter".[260] Though the pronouns remain consistently male, and Orlando goes on to confirm Ganymede's forest upbringing, saying that "this boy is forest-born," it is the presence of each other which allows for this questioning to occur.[261] Reality is confirmed by the presence of others who see the same object. The "differences of position and the resulting variety of perspectives notwithstanding, everybody is always concerned with the same object" which is what allows the object, in this case Rosalind's identity as Ganymede, a reality.[262] It is only through the presence of others, particularly those outside of her private sphere, that her new identity as Ganymede is brought into existence.

The creation of gender in each of the identities Rosalind invents and explores has a basis in a cultural script of gender norms that have been regulated and confirmed by society. For Ganymede, it is the brash and brave masculinity that he must learn to convincingly project. Proving his "doublet and hose…courageous to petticoat" is an important part of the identity Rosalind creates in Ganymede.[263] The "saucy lackey" must adhere to specific characteristics of masculinity to create his identity:[264] characteristics such as not "weep[ing] …[as] tears do not become a man",[265] and not "swoon[ing]," unless of course it be in "counterfeit".[266] The specificity of these characteristics, which are brought up by multiple other characters in reference to Ganymede's maintenance of masculinity, show the universality of these masculine signifiers. Similarly, fictional Rosalind, the identity created by Ganymede for Orlando, promises to adhere

[259] 5.4.26-27.
[260] 5.4.28-29.
[261] 5.4.30.
[262] Arendt 57-58.
[263] 2.4.6-7.
[264] 3.2.287.
[265] 3.4.1-3.
[266] 4.3.168; 168.

to specific characteristics labeled as feminine; characteristics such as “weep[ing] for nothing”,[267] being “shallow, inconstant,” and “full of smiles”.[268] Each of these identities lays claim to their gender by a promised adherence to a strict set of social norms.

The success of Rosalind’s various identities lies in the seamless performance of the gender in the public sphere of human appearing. Butler’s model of gender performance needs the support of Arendt’s theory of identity and human appearing to explain how the notion of gender identity is sustained socially. An identity such as Ganymede needs to appear in the public realm in order to become a reality. As has been seen, Ganymede does not exist within the realm of the household. Celia is very aware of Rosalind’s identity and experiences Ganymede as a mask being worn by her cousin. In their time alone in the forest, Celia shares the knowledge of Rosalind’s identity; she “know[s] [Rosalind is] a woman”.[269] Outside of this private space, Ganymede can be brought into existence with the introduction of an audience. If gender is a performance, than a performance must have an audience. As Arendt would argue, all identity is a performance that requires interpretation and reification by an audience to confirm its reality. The only reality is one that is mutually experienced, and the only identity is one that can be confirmed by a source outside oneself. It is not enough to perform the coded gender norms of society; there must exist a society for which to perform. Gender is introduced into the public sphere when an individual creates an identity, and is read by an audience who picks up on the social signifiers exhibited by the individual. Both gender and identity are entirely created by the social interactions in the public sphere, neither can exist without the confirmation of other humans. Gender cannot exist in a vacuum, much as a person cannot become a differentiated

[267] 4.1.143.
[268] 3.2.395-396.
[269] 3.2.242.

being without an Other to observe. Gender, especially as understood through Butler's model acts in very much the same way as Arendtian identity. The converse is true, as well. Arendtian identity shares characteristics with the model of gender based on performance. Both rely on outward social signifiers and interactions with other individuals in order to exist, but, both are also created by signs and gestures, covering up a lack of origin that is at the heart of these performances. There is no true self that the signifiers for gender or identity are portraying to the general public. These notions are created entirely by their performance, having no true origin or complete truth in which they are grounded. The performance is the beginning and the end, creating nothing in its process and coming from no place of truth or origin.

There is a moment in *As You Like It* that points to the cracks in the performance of gendered identity and reveals the tenuous and unstable character of identity building. I introduce it here as a point of further investigation as it opens up an avenue for discourse about the amount of agency that can be exhibited by an individual in terms of identity and gender creation. Both Arendt and Butler, though to different degrees, posit that the actor can never be fully in control of the performance that is put on display. I would argue that, in opposition to what either Butler or Arendt would say, Rosalind exhibits a great deal of control over her identity and gender performance. In Arendt's philosophy of human political action, she already assumes an audience in the form of the historian. The "[a]ction reveals itself fully only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants".[270] In the case of the theatre, the audience is present to process and interpret the full story, having seen the action of all the participants. The complete action that ends with the falling of the curtain is available for the backward glance of the audience who is able to synthesize the

[270] Arendt 192.

action of all the individual characters. The audience has more knowledge than any of the individual characters and the distance from the space of the action to fully understand the story being told. This raises the question about characters within the play who act as storytellers, such as Rosalind in *As You Like It*.

Throughout the play, Rosalind has an understanding of the action not available to any of the other characters. When encountering her father in the Forest of Arden, Rosalind has a knowledge about the interaction not available to the Duke, a knowledge about her identity that she shares with the audience watching the play. The Duke asks her "of what parentage [she is]," "laugh[ing] and let[ting] [her] go" after her fabricated answer without realizing that the joke is on him.[271] Rosalind understands and operates on the different valences present in the scene the entire time. Her answer, "of as good [a parentage] as he," plays on her knowledge and control of the scene.[272] Rosalind's knowledge seems to mirror that of the audience. She is privy to information about the situation that the other characters do not have.

Rosalind is clearly a playwright figure within the play, orchestrating meetings and reveals throughout the play, but is she also an audience figure. Does she have the same knowledge Arendt bestows on the audience/historian? In a way, Rosalind's control over the way her identity is perceived indicates that she does indeed have the full insight of the audience/historian. Throughout her work, Arendt emphasizes the unknowability of the actor's projected identity to themselves. She compares it to the "*daimon* in Greek religion which accompanies each man throughout his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters".[273] "The 'who' [that is revealed through the actor's

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[271] 3.4.32-34.
[272] 3.4.33.
[273] Arendt 179-180.

interaction with others, that is to say, his identity], which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself," which would seem to say that the actor has no control over what identity is being revealed through this interaction.[274] However, Rosalind is able to craft the identity she exposes in her speech and action. While other characters reveal their identity to her through their conversations, she remains in control of her own image and identity. The various characters she meets in Arden, such as Corin, Silvius, and Jacques, believe in the identity she projects in their interactions. While they reveal something true about themselves, Rosalind is able to remain hidden. In this way, Rosalind seems more akin to the historian than to an actor in the action.

However, Arendt's point that once out in the public sphere, any action can provoke any reaction or consequence unbeknown to its initial actor is an important part of her theory of action. Rosalind's creation of Ganymede and fictional Rosalind cannot prevent other actions from occurring. She has no way to preclude disturbances in her plan or an upset of her carefully prepared identity. As Dr. Lupton says, "In both political action and acting upon the stage, the one who risks public speech discloses and even gives birth to an involuntary image of self…in relation to interlocutors and witnesses endowed with the unpredictable capacity to react, respond, acknowledge, or disavow what or who appears before them."[275] By engaging in action in public sphere, Rosalind introduces an image that she cannot fully control. The introduction of Oliver, Orlando's brother, into the Forest of Arden, and his subsequent interaction with Ganymede is one of the unforeseen consequences. Upon encountering Ganymede and his sister in the Forest, Oliver identifies them by the description Orlando provided: "The boy is fair,/Of female favour,

[274] Arendt 179.
[275] Lupton, "Hannah Arendt" 210.

and bestows himself/Like a ripe sister".[276] After an extended introduction, Oliver shows Ganymede the napkin stained with Orlando's blood. Upon seeing this token, Ganymede promptly faints. He is roused by cries of "Ganymede – sweet Ganymede" from Celia.[277] The following exchange then takes place between Oliver and Ganymede:

> "*Oliver*: Be of good cheer, youth. You a man?
>
> You lack a man's heart.
>
> *Rosalind*: I do so, I confess it.
>
> Ah, sirrah, a body would think this was well counterfeited. I pray you tell your brother how well I counterfeited. Heigh-ho –
>
> *Oliver*: This was not counterfeited: there is too great testimony in your complexion that it was a passion of earnest.
>
> *Rosalind*: Counterfeit, I assure you.
>
> *Oliver*: Well then, take a good heart, and counterfeit to be a man.
>
> *Rosalind*: So I do. But i'faith, I should have been a woman by right."
>
> (4.3.163-175)

What does this interaction between Oliver and Ganymede prove? What does it show about the importance of performance? In this brief interaction, the tenuous nature of the performance of gender is revealed. The only way Ganymede exists in this moment is because of Oliver's presence. Ganymede is conjured by the entrance of Oliver, but we see the tenuous nature of identity as well as gender. In this moment, both gender and identity are tied together. The moment proves that identity and gender are all a performance and needs to be seen by an audience. And, that the audience has the prerogative to interpret what they see.

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[276] 4.3.84-86.
[277] 4.3.156.

Rosalind tries to control the story, identity, and performance of Ganymede, but in this moment of visceral reaction, as "many will swoon when they do look on blood," something she does not suspect is revealed.[278] While throughout the play, Rosalind is seen as an excellent actor and play maker, as she controls and manipulates gender and identity, this moment shows that these things cannot always be so carefully controlled, which is alluded to by both Arendt and Butler. The lines become blurred and Ganymede's identity is compromised by a moment of physical, immediate, and uncontrollable reaction, an action that is put out into the public sphere without knowledge, or control, of its consequences. The fact that this action takes place in the public sphere is what makes it dangerous and compromising for Ganymede's identity. This danger is attested to by the number of times Rosalind tries to convince Oliver that the fainting was in counterfeit, and to relay that idea back to Orlando. The fainting, which deviates from the masculine social script, further confuses Ganymede's place in the gender binary.

The description of Ganymede provided by Orlando also blurs the idea of a gender binary. The characterization of Ganymede in this scene reveals a spectrum of gender that allows for a man who should have been born a woman, and who, indeed, carries himself like a beautiful young lady. These descriptors show the unrealistic nature of gender binaries, as brash Ganymede can also be delicate, petite, and beautiful. This moment reveals the pageantry behind both gender and identity, and the fluid nature of both, as they are often revealed in glances and flashes rather than as complete and total creations. Even the most crafted of identities, such as Rosalind's Ganymede, can slip and reveal something unintended by its creator. The performance of identity and gender, as all action that takes place in the public sphere, reveals something about its actor that cannot be completely controlled. Our appearance in the public sphere puts us in risk, as our

[278] 4.3.157.

actions become interactions that are no longer under our control. Rosalind realizes that she cannot foresee all the actions in the public sphere. The slips in identity that she cannot control show how elusive this performance can be, and the very crafted nature of both identity and gender. Arendt and Butler's theories of human appearing are woven into the drama of *As You Like It*, as we are presented with a microcosm of the public sphere in the space of the Forest of Arden, a perfect space to explore the ideas of performance, identity, and gender.

The scene in the forest between Oliver, Celia, and Rosalind is a mass of misrepresentation, heightened emotions, and shifting realities. Oliver walks into an exchange between Rosalind dressed as Ganymede and Celia dressed as Aliena, introducing an unforeseen interruption into the lives of these characters. He then proceeds to make an excuse for Orlando's absence, presenting physical evidence as proof his story. As he begins the story, he refers to himself in the third person, placing distance between the story being told and himself. The story ends with the reveal that the speaker, Oliver, was, in fact, an active participant in the tale and is relating his own experience. The presentation of the bloody napkin elicits a physical reaction from Rosalind who faints and has to be revived by Celia and Oliver. Through this interaction, Celia and Oliver fall in love, adding another valence to the significance of the scene. The scene reveals the cracks in Rosalind's persona Ganymede, but it also speaks to the way that experience is relayed, understood, and digested. Oliver presents a story that comes from his own experience and that of his brother, while Celia and Rosalind are active audience members who have strong reactions to the story they hear. The idea of experience and description works on several levels throughout the scene.

The interaction between Oliver and the ladies begins with the presentation of the "bloody

napkin"[279] as an excuse for Orlando's absence. It is delivered as tangible proof for the story Oliver would relay. This points to something interesting about experience and evidence. Physical evidence of an experience is a common requirement of proof that the experience happened at all. A person's direct testimony of an experience is often dismissed and the veracity of the related description placed in doubt. A subject of an experience is often seen as an unreliable narrator or source of information about the event, relying on outside confirmation such as additional witness or direct concrete evidence. Why should a person's description of their own experience be so placed in doubt? All experience is necessarily subjective as each subject occupies a different position from which they interpret phenomena. Each subject has a different "orientation" to presented objects and events, as Sara Ahmed notes. However, the inherent skepticism that surrounds the narration of experienced events seems to go further than just accounting for the difference in perspective. Physical evidence introduces an element of immediate phenomena that can be directly experienced and interpreted by the audience. It gives the receiver of the story their own experience of the event. With this creation of a new immediate experience associated with a past event, the past event is cemented and becomes a tangible reality to the audience of the narration. Once it becomes an experience they are having rather than one that is being related to them, it can be accepted as a reality, as something that has occurred.

After the presentation of the napkin, Oliver then reveals "how and why and where/ This handkerchief was stained.".[280] Initially, the experience of the napkin is mitigated because the full semiology behind the sign has yet to be revealed. Only Oliver knows the significance of the object at this point. The napkin gains meaning as the experience behind it is revealed. The

[279] 4.3.92
[280] 4.3.95

revelation that the "napkin [is]/ Dyed in [Orlando's] blood"[281] causes Rosalind to have a physical reaction, breaking from the role she's playing as Ganymede and revealing more of herself than she intended. As Ganymede faints, Oliver excuses it saying "many will swoon when they do look on blood."[282] However, the napkin has been labeled as bloody from its introduction, so it's clearly not the implication of blood alone that disturbs Rosalind. It is also not just the relating of the bloody encounter that causes such distress. There is something about the combination of the description of the experience and the physicality of the napkin that viscerally recalls the experience of Orlando's blood shed to the present audience, causing Rosalind to faint. This reveals an interesting insight about how an object can recreate an experience on a very real level. As I've discussed, evidence of an experience is often a critical part of relating an experience to a new audience, but, this object may play a more active role than just confirming the experience. The object itself becomes an actor that can relate the experience and reenact it anew. This phenomenon may be the reason why people collect seemingly trivial souvenirs of important moments. It is the same reason that objects that have witnessed terrible events often engender a feeling of foreboding upon being seen or handled. These artifacts retain remnants of the uses to which they have been put. The object itself is less like a tool and more like a subject that is also undergoing this experience. It discourses in its own way, communicating the experience to an audience and providing its own physical evidence.

The story that Oliver tells relates an event as experienced by Orlando, an event in which he plays a pivotal role. Oliver begins the story and describes himself in the third person as a "wretched ragged man, o'ergrown with hair… sleeping on his back."[283] As a present participant

[281] 4.3.154
[282] 4.3.157
[283] 4.3.105-106

in the scene who is momentarily incapacitated, Oliver occupies an interesting position.[284] He can only tell the story second hand, though he is himself featured in it. The events that happen to him, the "green and gilded snake…wreathed" around his neck and the hungry lioness waiting to pounce, present an immediate danger to him, but only registered as a dangerous experience when it is related to him after the fact.[285] The only character who actively registers the experience is Orlando as a subject with an alert consciousness. The experience is related through his perception and understanding. However, phenomena are experienced from a particular subject position which affects and tempers the interpretation and understanding of the event. Orlando's experience of the event is not the same as the one Oliver would have had, had he been awake. Therefore, although the Oliver is a participant in the experience, his understanding of it is mediated by another actor. The narration of the experience presented in the scene is an interesting example of the way we relate and understand experience. The speaker is a part of the experience, but does not have a first hand story to account for it. The experience is both present and removed for him. The description of the event that the women receive is several degrees removed from them, allowing for a greater amount of misinformation and miscommunication.

Perhaps, this space between the experience and the narration is why the physical evidence is a necessary part of the exchange. Oliver inserts himself into the narrative at the moment that he gains consciousness. Oliver "awake[s]" from the third person narrative when he begins a first hand experience of the event.[286] The introduction of Oliver's direct consciousness into the account changes the type of description of experience. It represents a shift away from the second

[284] For an interesting reading of the significance of this episode of storytelling in the play in terms of larger themes of theatrical representation and desire, see Martha Ronk's "Locating the Visual in *As You Like It*."
[285] 4.3.107
[286] 4.3.131

hand recounting as the tale continues. The description of the experience continues as a more immediate retelling, told from the perspective of the speaker. It also represents a shift in subject position. Instead of the unique position of Orlando, Oliver's position as a subject is introduced into the story. This changes the way that the experience is understood and related, as Oliver may have a very different take on the experience than Orlando.

The revelation of Oliver's part in the story and his true identity completely changes the experience Rosalind and Celia as an audience have of the story. The event being described is a step less removed from their direct experience and, so, becomes more urgent. There is an immediate reaction to the revelation of Oliver's identity and participation in the tale. The lines that follow Oliver's tale are shared between Celia and Rosalind as they express their surprise in quick, immediate succession. In fact, their interjections of shock interrupt the story and preempt Oliver from shifting the tale into his own subject position. The shock of this realization and the revelation of who Oliver is changes the experience of the story for Rosalind and Celia. There is something more immediate about the story for them at this point that they are forced to interject. The experience of hearing the story changes when the speaker is revealed as the subject.

The other aspect of experience to think about when considering a scene from a play is that of the audience in the theater. The act of sitting in a theater watching a performance is a complex one that involves the atmospheric elements, such as the temperature in the room, the feel of the chairs, the sounds of the person next to you, as well as the sensory input from the scene on stage. This play, in particular, asks a lot from the audience to keep in mind and process. The gender play with Rosalind requires the audience to keep multiple levels of play in mind throughout the play. In this scene, Rosalind is dressed as Ganymede, but slips and reveals Rosalind underneath. The audience must simultaneously understand the actor as being both

Rosalind and Ganymede for this moment to work. The audience is also privy to information that Rosalind and Celia are not. They have already been introduced to Oliver and know he is the subject of the story. This all adds up to a complex experience which requires a great deal of processing to fully comprehend. The description an audience member may give of the experience afterwards would probably not account for all the difference valences they are functioning in at the time. The various levels of understanding are present in the moment, but are fleeting. The general sense of the scene and of the overall production is all that remains. Sensory input, unless taken to an extreme, often leaves only the faintest impression that is then generalized when the memory of the experience is brought to mind.

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Conclusion

Breaking this project into three distinct parts has helped me break down my ideas about phenomenology and gender in these Early Modern plays and piece together a broader frame of understanding that could be applied to future texts. The ultimate goal of my investigations of these texts was to create a way of reading that accounts for the differences in experience that arise from gender. Gender and queer studies shows us that experience is variable and that this difference is an important part of how individuals understand their reality. However, the work of traditional phenomenological theorists can be off putting to scholars of gender studies, as it often speaks from a place of privilege that is male-oriented with little regard to other points of view. Phenomenology often assumes a stable point of view from which to theorize, creating an 'ideal' subject that does not account for the variety of human experience. Acknowledging this difference opens up the phenomenological reading and provides a new way of thinking about experience.

The Early Modern English stage represents a liminal space in society that allowed the questioning of boundaries and the blurring of the gender binary. In the plays that remain from this period, academics have long picked up on the subversive work that was being performed on the stage. These plays pushed the limits of acceptable desire and gender performance. The cultural mandate that demanded that only male actors appear on the insisted on having boys play female characters brought forward questions of sexuality and gender identity. These questions were part of the reason the English theatres were shut down as Puritans took great offense to the available sexuality represented by the boy actors. Young boys who had not yet gone through puberty were thought to be similar to women. They were not granted the same agency as men and considered to not have the same sexual desires. These boys held a similar place in society to women, as subservient to the men in their lives. The apprenticeship model that most boy actors

were a part of is an example of this power dynamic. The cultural understanding of young men and women and the role of the boy actor are integral to my investigations of these plays, as it sets the stage for the playing of gender that happens in Early Modern plays. The playwright and audiences were aware of the constraints of the English stage, and created theatrical conventions that allowed them to view these young male actors as female.

The double vision that was employed on the Early Modern stage required that audience members view the body of the boy actor and read it as female when necessary. However, playwrights working in this time often played with this convention and asked the audience to also read the body of the actor underneath the costuming and makeup. These moments disrupt the seamless production of the theatrical event and create questions about the performance of gender. The audience is asked to reflect on what creates gender and their understanding of gender. How was a female character being created on the stage? Why was the young man in front of them legible as female? These are questions open up a broader conversation about gender and performance. These plays begin to form an understanding that can then extend outside the playhouse. They are also questions that are of the utmost importance when staging these plays today, as theatres across the world continue to do. From Original Practices performances to gender swapped Shakespeare, we see that gender in Early Modern play texts continues to be a fascinating and engaging area of exploration.

Theatres across the world continue to think innovatively about Shakespeare and gender. This work often takes place outside the academic dialogue. One place that this project can expand into is a look at more modern productions of these texts. While Chapter Two looks at an Original Practices production from the Globe Theatre, there are many more productions that play with the conventional presentation of gender in these plays. The all-female productions done by

the LA Woman's Shakespeare Company under the artistic direction of Lisa Wolpe are an example of this innovative work. More academic critical attention needs to be paid to the work happening in theatres across the globe. Theatrical productions provide a look at critical thought in action. Theatre makers are often having similar thoughts and conversations in the theatre that academics are having in classrooms and conferences. Lisa Wolpe herself says that "the thoughts I repeat are about women, and art, and reflecting the patriarchy through art," a sentiment that will sound familiar to all feminist scholars of theatre[287]. Future research for this project will endeavor to extend outside the world on academia into the world of the playhouse more fully. Understanding the work that a play does on stage and in front of an audience is an important part of the theoretical framework that I am trying to build.

[287] From a personal interview with Lisa Wolpe on 1/28/2018.

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