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The Clothes Make the Man: Theatrical Crossdressing as Expression of Gender Fluidity in Seventeenth- through Nineteenth-Century Performance

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Drama and Theatre

by

Karen Adee Raphaeli

Committee in charge:

University of California, San Diego

Professor Janet Smarr, Chair
Professor Julie Burelle
Professor Nadine George-Graves
Professor Hoang Nguyen

University of California, Irvine

Professor Ian Munro

2019

Karen Adee Raphaeli, 2019

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Chair

University of California San Diego

University of California, Irvine

2019

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Leslie Feinberg, Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson and all of our trans elders, both known and forgotten.

EPIGRAPH:

Your Life

It isn’t that you don’t like boys,
it’s that you only like boys that you want to be.
David, with his jaw carved out of the side of a cliff.
Malcolm, who doesn’t have secrets—just stories he owes no-one.
Chris, the basketball hero with the tic—he blinks fifteen times when he makes a shot.
You spend hours blinking in the mirror pretending that you’re a star like him.
Mary Levine calls you a dyke and you don’t have the language to tell her
She’s wrong…and right.
So you just show up to her house promising to paint your fingernails red
With whatever gushes from her busted face if she ever says it again.
You’re in the seventh grade.
You don’t even know that you want a girlfriend.
You still believe too much in the people who believe in Jesus
To even feel that desire through its hell-threat.
You just want to kick your desk on the way to the principal’s office,
Slouch in detention.
Want to cut your hair and spit out whatever you don’t want in your mouth—
Your own name even. Skirting around the truth.
You don’t yet know the boys are building their confidence on stolen land.
But you do worry the girls might be occupied with things you will never understand,
Won’t ever ever be good at.
You take one pretty step and feel like you’re pouring bubbles
Into your own bloodbath.
You don’t want a soft death, you want a hard life.
That is your life.
Your life.
In the locker room that doesn’t stop demanding
That you keep your eyes on the floor.
Your life.
At the prom when you run home in a snowstorm,

Chucking your last pair of heels in a snowbank.
Realizing you are the only boy you ever wanted to tear your dress off for.
Your life.
The first Christmas you spend alone.
The years you learn to build your family out of scratch.
Your life.
When someone drags you from a restroom by the collar of your coat.
Your life.
Every time airport security screams pink or blue, pink or blue,
Trying to figure out what machine setting to run you through.
Choosing your life.
And how that made you into someone who often now finds it easier
To explain your gender by saying you are happiest on the road—
When you're not here or there. That in between.
The yellow line running down the center of it all—
Like a goddamn sunbeam!
Your name is not a song that you will sing under your breath.
Your pronouns haven't even been invented yet!
You're gonna shave your and drive through Texas.
You're gonna kill your own god so you can fall in love for the first time.
They're gonna keep telling you your heart is a pre-existing condition.
They're gonna keep telling you you are a crime of nature.
And you're gonna look at all your options and choose conviction.
Choose to carve your own heart out of the side of a cliff.
Choose to spend your whole life telling secrets you owe no-one—to everyone.
Until there isn't anyone who can insult you by calling you what you are—
You holy blinking star! You highway streak of light!
Falling over and over for your hard life.
Your perfect life.
Your sweet and beautiful life!
—Andrea Gibson, *Hey Galaxy*

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My friend Bill passed away shortly after I finished my coursework. Bill was not an academic or a theatre maker, yet he took a great interest in my coursework and listened to me for hours as I processed my seminar readings and discussions - be it Deleuzian rhizomes or *Orlando Furioso*. I did not have the opportunity to tell Bill about Charlotte Charke and Annie Hindle, but as I wrote I often thought of his delight at the subversive queerness of this project. Bill continues to help shape my scholarship.

Part of Chapter 4 was previously published as “Victorian Gender Fluidity: Magic Sex Change in *A Florida Enchantment* and Non-Binary Gender in Gabriel” in *Victorian Review*, Issue 44, No. 1 under the name Kara Raphaeli. Karen Adee Raphaeli was the sole author of this article.

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"Performance of Protest? Diana Oh's {My Lingerie Play}," *TheatreForum,* 49

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Clothes Make the Man: Theatrical Crossdressing as Expression of Gender Fluidity in Seventeenth- through Nineteenth-Century Performance

by

Karen Adee Raphaeli

Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and Theatre

University of California San Diego, 2019

University of California, Irvine, 2019

Professor Janet Smarr, Chair

"The Clothes Make the Man: Theatrical Crossdressing as Expression of Gender Fluidity in Seventeenth- through Nineteenth-Century Performance" explores theatrical crossdressing, specifically masculinity embodied by a female actor, in British and American performances starting in 1689 and ending in 1914. By examining specific performances, plays and historical individuals over the course of 225 years, this dissertation traces theorizations of gender during these different time periods, combining a close reading of texts with historical research and historiography to offer transgender readings of characters, performers and historical individuals. This project challenges the gender normative assumptions in the theatre scholarship, that previously read these masculine performances through a narrow lens, without fully considering gender identity. The wide temporal range examined in this dissertation allows for the development of a genealogy of genderfluid and transgender performance.

Introduction:

It is time for a fresh look at history. And this time I don't intend to be left out!

How is a body with female secondary sex characteristics (i.e. breasts, hips, lack of facial hair, high-pitched voice) rendered male in performance? Dress replaced with men's clothing. Chest bound. Walk, stance, general comportment altered. Physical emblems of masculinity such as a walking stick, cane, pipe, cigar held. Hair cut or covered with a wig. Facial hair painted or glued on with spirit gum. Any or all of the above, depending on the degree of transformation desired. Is the audience meant to believe the character is a man, or are they meant to see through the costume and read the character as a woman? Can an audience view a body with female secondary characteristics which are *not* occluded by costume and makeup and nonetheless recognize the character's maleness? Can an audience believe the character is male despite the performer's female body? How might an audience navigate a character's multiple gender changes over the course of a play? How might an audience understand a character who expresses ambivalence regarding binary gender?

This project is concerned with theatrical crossdressing, specifically masculinity embodied by a female actor, in British and American performances starting in 1689 and ending in 1914. By examining specific performances, plays and historical individuals over the course of 225 years, I am able to trace theorizations of gender during these different time periods, and combine a close reading of texts with historical research and historiography to offer transgender readings of characters, performers and historical individuals. This project challenges the gender normative assumptions in the theatre scholarship, that previously read these masculine performances through a narrow lens, without fully considering gender

identity. In examining these gender transgressive characters, I ask what these depictions can tell us about how gender is historically theorized; is gender seen as fixed or fluid, essential or socially constructed and performed? Do the specific performances reinforce or transgress gender norms? Do they utilize cross-dressing as a temporary disguise or as a permanent transformation? Are transformations binary and complete or are discrete gender categories rejected and blurred? How are these figures racialized? Sexualized? Caught in dynamics of power and oppression? How were these particular performances received? Recognizing that reception is not universal and that there is a multiplicity of ways in which contemporaneous audiences could read these characters, what readings can we offer without being ahistorical? How might these performances be understood through a transgender perspective? I am aware of the potential pitfalls of reading history utilizing contemporary constructs, a limit which caused some early gay and lesbian scholars to be ahistorical. The task calls for attention to both queer models and historical reality, to "produce methodologies sensitive to historical change but influenced by current theoretical preoccupations" (Halberstam, *Female Masculinities,* 46).

Each of the four following chapters focuses on two theatrical characters (Chapters 1 and 4) or two performers/historical individuals (Chapters 2 and 3) who utilize crossdressing and express gender non-conformity. Each pairing of characters or individuals contrasts binary and non-binary gender expression, such that in each chapter I read one example of binary gender (either cis or trans) and one example of non-binary gender. Non-binary gender is a new identity category, largely misunderstood and resisted by the cisgender community (and unfortunately by some binary transgender community members). This academic quarter,

Spring 2019, is the first time our university, UC San Diego, is providing students institutional recognition of their non-binary pronouns, which will appear on class lists and various administrative systems. This step toward inclusion is admirable, though it does not include staff and faculty at this time ("UCSD Now Accepts Preferred Names and Pronouns in Campus Data Systems 2019). It could be argued that non-binary readings of historical materials are ahistorical form of categorization; however, I do not use the term "non-binary" in an identitarian sense, but rather to mean an individual who expresses gender in ways which expand available binary gender categories.

In the spoken word poem, "Your Life," Andrea Gibson points to the inadequacy of established language to describe the experiences of non-binary gender, such that Gibson reaches for metaphor, stating that it is easier "To explain your gender by saying you are happiest on the road—/When you're not here or there. That in between./The yellow line running down the center of it all—" Gibson's line "Your pronouns haven't even been invented yet!" refers to neopronouns (pronouns such as ze/hir and xe/xir are rarely used outside of non-binary trans community), and the sense that a lack of communicative capacity is an impediment to self-expression and self-understanding. I engage the feminist philosophical concept of hermeneutical injustice to examine the ways in which the lack of communicative resources has hindered non-binary trans expression in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

Recognizing that non-binary gender experience is both difficult to explain and requires access to a character or individual's interiority, I have chosen my examples of non-binary gender carefully, largely utilizing close readings of texts which provide access to

interiority. For instance, in *Gabriel,* George Sand has written a character who announces, "I do not feel that my soul has a sex" (Sand 17) and who presents both male and female multiple times throughout the play, depending on the situation. In Chapter 4 I analyze Gabriel's non-binary gender non-conformity in relation to the binary gender transformation in the play and film *A Florida Enchantment.* In placing binary transgender expression alongside non-binary transgender expression, I seek to explore the varied ways in which gender is experienced. I offer my trans readings to enrich the scholarship, not as a rejection of queer theatre scholarship which has examined these particular sites of gender nonconformity.

Terminology: Considering the Powers of Langauge

In his 2005 commencement address to Kenyon College, David Foster Wallace began with a parable-like anecdote: "There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says 'Morning, boys. How's the water?' And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes 'What the hell is water?'" For Wallace, the fish's awareness of being surrounded by water represented the college graduates becoming aware of the tedium of adult life, the struggles that others experience, and the potential to choose to be compassionate to others. The point I wish to make is that gendering is as ubiquitous in our society as water is to fish and that it is ironic that in this anecdote about the difficulty of becoming aware of the social factors which shape our lives, Wallace himself didn't notice the gendered waters he was swimming in; Wallace chose a phrasing which ascribed gender to the

fish (i.e. "Morning, boys"). The cultural hegemony of binary gender pervades our perceptions of the world, making the study of gender nonconformity and transness in historical cultural texts difficult, as it requires a constant focus on the myriad ways in which gendering is present in the texts and in the very language available to us as scholars, while also maintaining an awareness of how gender is constructed during the historical period and how that is similar to and different from our current social construction of gender.

This project explores female to male cross-dressed theatrical characters and historical individuals, by which I mean that an individual understood to be a woman is dressed in men's clothing. To understand a person's clothing choices as cross-dressing requires a series of assumptions which my scholarship ultimately rejects. Female to male cross-dressing requires that the individual be assumed female based on their secondary characteristics (e.g. body shape, lack of facial hair, vocal quality) and that at infancy the individual was labeled female based on genitalia. The individual labeled female then wears clothing which is socially and legally restricted only to individuals labeled male. On stage these characters often 'pass' as male but remain understood as female to the audience. These assumptions are founded on the belief that gender and sex are inextricably linked and that gender is therefore essential, binary and fixed. In this project I counter those beliefs, offering a transgender reading of specific crossdressing performances.

Since the performance of gender (particularly the theatrical performance of gender) is largely sartorial, and the time periods I am studying have strictly gendered sartorial codes, the term "cross-dressing," has very good purpose. By "cross-dressing" I mean that the character and/or individual is wearing clothing which is associated with a gender they were

not assigned at birth. However, this term is far from ideal, as it inherently assumes two binary and fixed genders. While my use of “cross-dressing” includes characters and individuals who do not express binary gender, this difference can get lost through the binarity suggested in the crossing from one gender’s sartorial expression to the other gender’s sartorial expression. This is an unfortunate product of our ciscentric language, and I do not have a more elegant solution at this time.

By “ciscentric,” I mean a worldview which assumes that binary cisgender experience is “normal” and nearly universal. I use ciscentric in a similar manner as Sears uses the term “normative gender,” which she defines as “the modern Western insistence that all bodies and ways of being can be meaningfully divided into discrete, opposing binary categories of male and female, man and woman, masculine and feminine. These binary gender norms are cultural products, not biological absolutes, and they seem to be everywhere and nowhere at the same time; they permeate our assumptions, our interactions, and even our language but can be difficult to isolate and pin down” (5). Many theatre scholars who do not deny the existence of trans or gender-variant individuals in history nonetheless fundamentally hold a ciscentric worldview, which colors their analysis of the characters and historical individuals I explore in this project. Consequently, one of the aims of this project is to rethink the assessments of theatre historians, feminist scholars and lesbian and gay studies scholars who have interpreted these characters and individuals through a ciscentric lens.

Throughout this dissertation I will use the terms “masculine" and “feminine" to describe the characteristics of individuals and characters, as well as how others perceive them. By “masculine” and “feminine” I mean the manner in which individuals dress, carry

themselves, speak and behave. There are a number of potential problems with these terms. One potential problem is that using these same terms across different eras suggests that the binary of masculine and feminine is a stable, fixed category. In fact the gendering of personal characteristics is ever changing, as the construction of gender is affected by a multitude of factors, such as economics, technology, science. For instance, the very term "masculine" was invented in the middle of the 19th century, to mark a shift in the ideal traits American society ascribed to men. I understand the construction of gender as not simply change over time, but existing in multiplicity, with a variety of gender constructions concurrently present in society, as gender is racialized and class-based as well. British and American gender ideals are always white and either middle- or upper-class. I will provide historical context for the construction of gender in the different time periods which I analyze and advise my readers to remember that, although the terms "masculine" and "feminine" are the same in each chapter, the characteristics associated with these categories are distinct. Likewise, theories about sex differentiation and how "man" and "woman" and defined differ in the time periods examined in this project and should not be assumed to be fixed categories. I reject the notion that the binary categories of "man" and "woman," and "masculine" and "feminine" are fixed (or even necessary), thus I hope the reader recognizes that I use these terms as those of a ciscentric worldview, not my own.

In order to combat ciscentric assumptions, I have attempted to shine a light on the ways in which historical trans experiences have been ignored because of a lack of first-person narratives. The trans characters in this project were largely written by writers believed to be cisgender (with the exception of George Sand, who expressed gender nonconformity

herself) and the trans historical individuals rarely had the opportunity to have their own narrative preserved, or had the communicative power to articulate their experiences. I discuss these problems through the use of the feminist philosophical term "hermeneutical injustice." Hermeneutical injustice is one of several types of epistemic injustice, a theoretical term pioneered by philosopher Miranda Fricker. Epistemic injustice refers to a number of forms of injustice due to gaps in knowledge, understanding, and participation in communicative practices. Epistemic injustice is divided into the subcategories of testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice occurs when discriminatory views and practices discount the word of a marginalized individual or group, while hermeneutical injustice occurs when an individual or group does not have the ability to communicate their experiences, because of "a gap in collective hermeneutical resources—a gap, that is, in our shared tools of social interpretation—where it is no accident that the cognitive disadvantage created by this gap impinges unequally on different social groups" (Fricker 6). Fricker's main example of hermeneutical injustice is "a woman who suffers sexual harassment prior to the time when we had this critical concept, so that she cannot properly comprehend her own experience, let alone render it communicatively intelligible to others" (6). Hermeneutical injustice is not perpetrated by individuals, but rather is due to structural inequalities. For this project, I am primarily employing hermeneutical injustice in relation to meaning-making around 18th- and 19th-century historical individuals.

Miranda Fricker and Kathrine Jenkins have used epistemic injustice to analyze contemporary trans erasure. On a testimonial level, cisgender doctors and psychologists considered experts on trans experience have had the power to prevent trans individuals from

accessing transition-related medical services (hormones and surgeries) unless they described their experience of gender within a narrow clinical definition of a life-long and binary experience of dysphoria (the feeling of discomfort inhabiting one's own gendered body). Individuals who experience gender as non-binary, grew to understand their gender variance in adulthood and/or prefer not to have surgery have historically been prevented from accessing hormones (this situation is now changing, but still varies from doctor to doctor) (272). Fricker and Jenkins also describe the ways in which trans individuals do not have the hermeneutical resources to make sense of their own experiences. They quote trans journalist Juliet Jacques' memoir, in which she describes how as a teenager she could not make sense of her gender because the only terms she knew were crossdresser, transvestite, and transsexual. Jacques writes that her self-understanding was delayed as she assumed she was a crossdresser because she did not wish to have gender confirmation surgery (which she understood as a defining characteristic of transsexuals) and did not like the word transvestite, as it "felt sexual in a seedy, lonely way…It was not a word I wanted to apply to myself" (Jacques, as quoted by Fricker and Jenkins, 274). Jacques could not understand herself because the hermeneutical resources which she had access to were insufficient. In Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation I extend Fricker and Jenkins' application of hermeneutic injustice to the life experiences of trans individuals by applying it to the experiences of two historical figures as well as to the gay and lesbian scholarship which has erased trans experience.

This project is intended for multiple audiences. It is a work of theatre scholarship, in conversation with theatre historians, and therefore intended for theatre scholars. It is

imperative that theatre history expand beyond ciscentric assumptions. This work is also part of the growing subfield of trans history. An interdisciplinary field, trans studies is enriched by expansion into theatre scholarship. However, this project is not intended to exist solely in the academy, but to also be accessible to the trans community. Trans individuals grow up in cisgender families, consuming very little media which includes trans representation (and even less often witness trans representation which is not riddled with transphobia, homophobia and racism). Although social media provide today's trans youth with access to a wider variety of conceptual terms than were available to Juliet Jacques, there still exist few sources for trans history.[1] When trans individuals seek out transgender history, they usually learn that our history begins in the 1950s with Christine Jorgensen's "sex change"[2] operation, or, occasionally, they learn that trans history begins in Magnus Hirschfeld's 1910 book *Transvestites*, in which he challenged sexologists' pathologization of gender non-conforming people as psychotic (Beemyn, 114). Until the last few years, the only work of transgender history which spanned earlier time periods was Leslie Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors,* which unfortunately created an ahistorical and colonialist fixed category of "transgender." This project is intended to provide trans people with history of trans representation prior to

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[1] 1. For more information on how social media functions as trans community and resources, see Dame, 2016 and Jackson, Bailey and Welles, 2018.

[2] The term "sex change" is passed in trans community and is problematic because it essentializes sex to external genitalia. Terminology for transgender medical interventions continues to change, and at the moment the prevalent term is gender confirmation surgery, which is less essentializing, and includes a variety of masculinization and feminization surgeries, not only those reconstructing genitalia.

the 20th century. As I aim to write for this audience, I strive to write in clear accessible language, and to provide definitions for any concepts which are discipline-specific. I have also taken my trans community into consideration when choosing my terms.

Utilizing transgender studies to analyze material within the domain of theatre studies creates a tension between different sets of terms and concepts. Transgender studies, along with the transgender community, pay special attention to word usage, as some words have been used to oppress (e.g. "tranny" and "shemale") while other words have fallen out of favor because of shifting conceptions of transness. The term "transvestite" was once commonplace, but is now fraught and should not be used. In the Freudian sense, "transvestite" assumes a sexual fetishism involved in the act of cross-dressing – a quality which scholars such as Garber and Senelick do not purposely invoke when utilizing the term; however, this fetishist quality is inherent in the term. For the transgender community the term is seen as derogatory[3], so I have included the term transvestite only in direct quotations.

One recent language shift in trans language use is that of ceasing to describe a trans person as "born male" or "born female" and instead describing them as "assigned male at birth" or "assigned female at birth." This change recognizes that biological sex is more complex than binary male/female based on the visible presence or absence of a penis and that gender construction and socialization is assigned to an infant rather than being innately present. Using the term "assigned female at birth" (or AFAB for short) is a useful term for this project, as it does not make any assumptions about the individual's internal sense of

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[3] Bizarrely, Garber acknowledges both these points in the introduction to *Vested Interests*, yet goes on to use the term continuously throughout the text.

gender identity. It is also much more concise than the awkward phrasing and linguistic gymnastics of some cross-dressing scholars who attempt to affirm the gender of historical AFAB individuals who lived as men, without outright identifying them as trans. For instance, at one point in *Arresting Dress*, sociologist Clare Sears describes such 19th-century individuals as "men with bodies that could be classified as female" (35). Since the only reason these individuals usually exist in the historical record is due to their anatomy being discovered to be incongruous with male sex characteristics, the use of the phrase "could be classified as female" is not wholly accurate, since they *were* classified female by their contemporaries. Thus I believe that "male-presenting AFAB individuals" is a less awkward phrase which provides clearer information than Sears' phrase or any others I have seen.

Another term used throughout this dissertation which will be better understood by trans scholars and trans community members than theatre scholars is the singular they as a personal pronoun. Acknowledging that the practice of using singular they as a personal pronoun is a 21st-century development, I nonetheless choose to use it in order to highlight the non-binary gender expression of some of the characters and individuals I am analyzing. The more common academic use of he/she and him/her recognizes gender ambiguity, but reinforces binarity.

Gender Studies, Queer Theatre and Theatrical History Scholarship with Which This Project Engages

This project is interdisciplinary, sitting at the intersection of theatre history and transgender studies and drawing from queer theory and gender studies. The major foundational assumption on which my project is based is that gender is not innate, stable or fixed but, rather, an ideological construct shaped by social forces and fluidly shifting over time. Judith Butler's groundbreaking *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* elaborates on the notion of gender as a process, stating that gender is "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33). Butlerian gender performativity is the process by which gender is continuously constructed through the subject either capitulating to social norms or pushing against them. Butler argues that gender roles cannot be rejected, as even the act of subverting gender norms is a form of gender performativity. Gender performativity is constant and inescapable, causing the misperception of gender as stable and innate.

While Butler's gender performativity is canonical in gender studies, she has received criticism from trans studies. Regarding cross-dressing, Butler suggests that "cross-dressing can be viewed as a subversive reiteration of heteronormative constructions of gender" (Gender Trouble 32). Butler seizes on the figure of the transgender subject as visibly performing gender as well as queering it. While Butlerian gender performativity is foundational to this project, Butler's own use of cross-dressing and transgender identity to illustrate gender performativity conflates performativity and performance and takes agency

away from the cross-dressing or trans individual. A further criticism of Butler's theory is that in stating that gender is a process that is never completed, but rather continuously enacted, she implies that the transgender individual can never fully transition, can never "become" the gender they identify with. As trans scholar Jay Prossner writes, "in Butler's reading transgender demotes gender from narrative to performative. That is, gender appears not as the end of narrative becoming but as performative moments all along the process: repetitious, disordered, incessant, above all, unpredictable and necessarily incomplete" (Transgender Studies Reader 263). Prossner considers first person narratives as a space of trans self-actualization. In Chapter 1 of this dissertation I utilize the theory of gender performativity in order to analyze the play *Sir Anthony Love*, while in Chapter 2 I utilize Prossner's writing on trans narrative when analyzing Charlotte Charke's 18th-century memoir.

Theatre scholars have also ignored subjectivity in their writings about cross-dressed characters. In "Fiction or Friction" Stephen Greenblatt reads the Shakespearean cross-dressing of Rosalind as a homoeroticism, which Marjorie Graber criticizes as "the tendency on the part of many critics…to look *through* rather than *at* the cross-dresser, to turn away from a close encounter with the transvestite, and to want instead to subsume that figure within one of the two traditional genders" (Garber, 9). In looking *at* the cross-dresser, Garber theorizes a third sex, a liminal figure whose presence challenges "easy notions of binarity, putting into question the categories of 'female' and 'male,' whether they are considered essential or constructed, biological or cultural…the necessary critique of binary thinking" (Garber, 10). Garber calls this challenge to gender construction a "category crisis" which disrupts and destabilizes cultural and social boundaries, including class, race, and the

very notion of categories (17). In collapsing categories, the “third,” creates new modes of understanding identity. Unfortunately, these new modes of self-knowledge are for the benefit of binary gendered audiences, not of the gender non-conforming person themself. This discussion of “category crisis” and challenging notions of a unified self, objectify the cross-dressing character, and turn them into a device. Even as she critiques other scholars for looking through rather than at the cross-dresser, for seeing in the liminal non-binary figure a symbol or erotics which is binary, Garber still writes about the cross-dressed character as object rather than subject. Furthermore, Garber’s theory of a “third” is limiting, as Laurence Senelick observes, “to define the stage transvestite solely as a third alternative and to relegate fluidity and ambiguity exclusively to such an alternative is to overlook the wide range of reinventions of masculine and feminine within the theatrical frame” (12). This project recognizes Garber’s work and does engage her concept of category collapse twice. However, overall, the focus of this project is to analyze cross-dressing in ways that uphold and validate gender nonconforming subjectivity.

Examining gender nonconforming subjectivity also calls for a recognition of a non-homogenous audience. Jean Howard examines the link between theatrical subversion of class and gender roles and the empowerment of the Shakespearean female audience. When women enter the theatre as spectators, the theatre shifts them from being objects of the male gaze into “desiring subjects, stimulated to want what was on display at the theater” (79). When the performance they are viewing mirrors this playhouse-induced subjectivity by presenting empowered female characters, this empowerment is magnified. Howard asks, “is it possible that in the theatre women were licensed to look – and in a larger sense to judge what they

saw and to exercise autonomy – in ways that problematized women's status as object within patriarchy?" (78-79). Howard focuses on the presence of straight women, but if we posit that within 17th- through 19th-century audiences there existed a diversity of genders in the audience (as we know historically there were a few people performing the opposite gender or a composite of gendered behavior and presentation in these periods, and can extrapolate an unexpressed gender nonconforming desire existing in a percentage of the audience), might performances of gender nonconforming characters have empowered those audience members, reached a space of recognition within those individuals? Can we read in the historical cross-dressed character a space of possibility not just for the binary gendered audience but for the gender nonconforming audience member as well?

In writing about cross-dressing entertainment in 19th-century San Francisco, Sears offers the following consideration about possible audience reception which sprang from recognition rather than objectification:

> I also want to leave open the possibility that institutions of display had ironic or unintended consequences that cannot be fully explained in terms of discipline. In particular I want to imagine the multiple responses that audiences may have had to cross-dressing entertainments, including recognition and desire. To be clear, there is scant evidence of such responses, as the voices of those who may have appropriated entertainment discourse in this manner have not made their way into the archive. Neglecting the possibility owing to insufficient evidence, however, may be more problematic than raising it unsupported, as it replicates the structure of the archive, amplifying some voices and silencing others.
>
> In vaudeville, freak shows, Chinese theater, and Barbary Coast saloons, audiences clamored to see male and female impersonators on stage. Some audience members were drawn by the strangeness of these performances, but others perhaps were attracted by a different set of pleasures. These pleasures

> could have been fueled by a shared sense of gender difference and a longing for connection. Perhaps people with gender identifications that diverged from their legal sex visited freak shows to befriend Matson, for example, or attended Chinese theaters to meet Lee Hoo backstage. (Sears 119)

Like Sears, Laura Horak explores audience reception of cross-dressing in 1910s and 1920s film (including *A Florida Enchantment*). Horak challenges ahistorical queer readings of these cross-dressed performances by carefully situating questions of gender and sexuality within the cultural moment. Horak does not engage in theorizing potential readings, instead providing a carefully researched understanding of gender performance and lesbian coding in early film. However, she does attend to both mainstream reception and emergent lesbian subculture's reception. This dissertation builds on research such as Horak's, to present rigorously researched history while also utilizing transgender studies to offer readings which, while not the dominant reception of cross-dressing performance, can be potential alternative understandings.

While I draw from queer theory and gender studies, transgender studies allows me to focus on the tensions between the binary construction of gender and gender variance. Queer theorists such as Jack Halberstam use "queer" in an expansive manner, far beyond literal homosexual acts and embodiment, reaching into the borders of the term. Yet even Halberstam defines queer for his purposes as "nonnormative behaviors that have clear but not essential relations to gay and lesbian subjects." (2005, 6). The focus is on "gay and lesbian subjects." Discussing gender variance through queer theory would implicitly keep the focus of the discussion on sexuality and how gender variance could serve sexuality. To simply place a transgender or gender variant subject under the heading of queer threatens to occlude the subject.

There are specific aspects of transgender subjects which queer studies is not equipped to discuss. Susan Stryker makes the connection between transgender studies and intersex and disability studies, in the sense of all three analyzing "forms of embodiment and subjectivity that do not readily reduce to heteronormativity" and which also "fall outside the analytic framework of sexual identity that so dominates queer theory" (214). When transgender experience is reduced to simply part of "LGBT," the specific qualities of transgender embodiment and experience are either lost or unable to be examined as separate from sexuality. Furthermore, both Stryker and David Valentine point out that while issues of gender and sexuality do intersect, the expectations around gender discourse prevent those intersections from being fully seen "like race or class, as something that cuts across existing sexualities, revealing in often unexpected ways the means through which all identities achieve their specificities" (Stryker 214). In short, my goal in my analyses is to tease apart layers of meaning and layers of assumptions and provide new, powerful and nuanced readings of performances and performers which have been written about previously both as part of theatre history and part of queer studies.

In an academic landscape shaped by Foucault, it is hard to argue for the ahistorical use of notions of homosexuality or transgender. According to Foucault, prior to the late 19th century there was no such thing as sexual identity; instead sexuality was a matter of actions. Valentine upholds Foucault's perspective, arguing that language shapes knowing and thus, prior to the development of these identity categories people constructed their notions of self very differently from today. It is therefore incomprehensible to state that a person in earlier eras was homosexual, because "to imagine historical subjects as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' or as

‘transgender’ ignores the radically different understandings of self and the contexts that underpinned the practices and lives of historical subjects” (Valentine 30). Valentine brings up these problems in Leslie Feinberg’s *Transgender Warriors,* a text engaged in providing a transgender history prior to the 20th century. Valentine complicates the discussion by his thesis that our current scholarly categorization of gender and sexuality into two discrete forms of subjectivity assumes an ontological separation that his field work does not reflect. I do agree with Valentine that Feinberg’s reclamation of historical figures from gay and lesbian scholarship suggests two discrete conceptions of self, gender and sexuality, which are not necessarily ontologically distinct and did not exist prior to the 20th century. I also think that both Feinberg and the gay and lesbian scholars from whom ze is seeking to reclaim these figures were heavy-handed in their pronouncements, flattening out nuance.

I do not seek to write a definitive transgender history, though I am aligned with Feinberg, who wrote, “It is time for a fresh look at history. And this time I don’t intend to be left out!” (59). Jay Prosser has written about narrative as the main form of expression in which transgender individuals have been able to find their voice. *Transgender Warriors* is as much a memoir as it is a history, Feinberg weaving hir own life history with hir search for traces of gender nonconforming figures in history. Seeking a transgender history was both a personal and political act for Feinberg, as it is for me.

Since I am not so post-modern as to completely assault linear historical analysis, I follow Halberstam’s reminder to “produce methodologies sensitive to historical change but influenced by theoretical preoccupations” (1998, 46). Thus I straddle a line between Feinberg and Foucault, following Stryker’s model of transgender historical scholarship rather than

Feinberg's attempt at an historical narrative. Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah call for a "flexible" use of the term transgender rather than an identitarian one;

> Transgender can, for example, be a useful neologism for interrogating the past. While it would be anachronistic to label a previous era's departures from currently normative expressions of gender as ''transgender'' in an identitarian sense, there is another sense in which transgender as a critical term demarcates a conceptual space within which it becomes possible to (re)name, (dis)articulate, and (re)assemble the constituent elements of contemporary personhood in a manner that facilitates a deeply historical analysis of the utter contingency and fraught conditions of intelligibility of all embodied subjectivity (Stryker and Currah, 8).

In this project, I understand trans as describing gender performance, presentation and/or expression that significantly and emphatically deviates from normative gender expectations.

A Note on Race

Recognizing that gender is inherently racialized, I have done my best to attend to how the cross-dressing characters I analyze are racialized. Recognizing that whiteness is the unmarked category, I have done my best to acknowledge that normative gender is white by default. Nevertheless, I am aware that my own whiteness contributes to my worldview being white-centric, and I am still learning how to make invisible whiteness visible. In analyzing 17th-century racialized gender and conceptions of Indigenous gender, I have turned to Eve Tuck and K.Wayne Yang's "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," as well as works by Jonathan Gil Harris and Sabine MacCormack, who analyze European perceptions of Native Americans. In writing about 19th-century American theatre and society, I lean heavily on Siobhan Somerville's *Queering the Color Line*, and Gail Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization.*

Historical Context for Understanding Shifting Gender Norms

Women first appeared on the commercial English stage during the Restoration, which was a moment of shifting social expectations and attitudes toward women. The 16th century was a period of tension around the role of women, which was heavily debated, taking the form of a pamphlet war in which English women were able to write in their own defense for the first time. The anti-woman pamphlets present stereotypes of women corrupted by overstepping gender norms through masculine dress. This was a time of strict sumptuary laws, "in which a person's social station, social role, gender and other indicators of identity in the world could be *read*, without ambiguity or uncertainty" (Garber 26). Furthermore, the violation of sumptuary laws was seen as a sign of sexual promiscuity in a time of sexual repression of women. It is worthwhile to mention that the anti-women writers were often also writing anti-theatrical tracts (Howe 21).

In contrast to the repressive 16th century, the mid-to-late-17th century was a time of theatrical and sexual permissiveness. Gender theorizing shifted from a focus on the subordination of women to a seeming equality in which women were seen as "the opposite, yet indispensable sex, excluded from male spheres of public and professional life but vital in the field of domestic management" (Howe 21). In this more permissive environment it became possible to have actresses visible in the public theatre. It should also be noted that during the Interregnum Charles II and his court were exiled on the Continent, where actresses had been performing for over a century.

While the 17th century saw the first English actresses on the commercial stage,

causing shifting performance style and audience reception, the late 19th century saw the development of the music hall and burlesque hall as an alternative performance space, shifting traditional theatre's performances even as American Broadway was just developing its own distinct flavor. Minstrelsy also continues to exist alongside the theatre, having provided the roots of American performance, and now getting folded into Broadway, the music hall and burlesque. Minstrelsy and racialized alterity function significantly in all the works I have looked at from the late 19th century.

In the late 19th century, white women's social roles were quickly changing from a Victorian ideology of the Cult of True Womanhood, which imagined femininity as fragile and domestic, to its mirror opposite, The New Woman, who "constituted a revolutionary demographic and political phenomenon. Eschewing marriage, she fought for professional visibility, espoused innovative, often radical, economic and social reforms, and wielded real political power" (Smith-Rosenberg 245). The Cult of True Womanhood was an ideology actively developed by men as a rigid and confining narrative which essentialized femininity with qualities such as domesticity, passivity, demureness, asexuality and morality. Medical beliefs surrounding female sexuality changed drastically, from a long standing tradition of viewing women as highly sexual to a new image of the woman as naturally asexual. Women who violated the ideals of the Cult of True Womanhood could then be controlled by being labelled hysterics; the hysterical woman was "selfish and demanding, she violated all that was natural in women" (Smith-Rosenberg 179).

In the early 19th century gender was negotiated through the framework of "separate

spheres;" men and women lived their lives largely in separate spheres; the woman's sphere was the domestic one and the men's sphere the public one. Areas which were considered within the male sphere (and therefore out of bounds for women to participate in) were politics, war, and the workplace in general. The separate spheres ideology "offered an appealing solution for ordering the relations of the sexes in a modern liberal democracy. In effect it maintained the subordination of women without necessarily harping on their inferiority" (Matthews 5). Smith-Rosenberg charts the way that female kinship functions within normative Victorian culture and explores that invisible female sphere as a space of complex kinship and friendship networks. In this sphere women spent much of their time with both family and friend networks of other women, which ranged from "the supportive love of sisters, through the enthusiasms of adolescent girls, to sensual avowals of love by mature women" (53). Crucial to Smith-Rosenberg's argument is that the romantic tone of these homosocial relationships was not just accepted by society but considered crucial in the healthy development of women.

By the late 19th century women came to chafe significantly at the confinement of their sphere, and a number of developments assisted them in breaking into the public sphere. Starting in the 1870s cities grew drastically. Whereas women in rural areas and small towns had little opportunity to participate in public life, the cities offered more possibilities. Public transit and well-lit streets made it possible for women to move about the city in relative safety while the establishment of department stores and the shift of theatres from a bawdy men's space to a respectable and family-friendly entertainment provided destinations. As the previous generation had seen a significant rise in the middle class, women of the late 19th

century had a new economic power which can be seen as well, as books, magazines and theatres begin to cater to women's tastes. In addition, larger populations of women entered higher education, as women's colleges were founded, and a small portion of women even infiltrated the male sphere of the established universities. The numbers of women who chose to rebel grew in the younger generation. The Woman's Rights Movement grew in momentum over the course of the century. The generation of white middle-class women coming of age in the late 19th century (from the 1870s on) increasingly did not wish to conform to the ideals of the Cult of True Womanhood, demanding college education and viable life choices beyond marriage and motherhood. "Repudiating the Cult of True Womanhood in ways her mother – the new bourgeois matron – never could, she threatened men in ways her mother never did" (Smith-Rosenberg 179). The images of the suffragette and the New Woman existed as alternative femininities which were challenged as unnatural and manly. The New Woman was "young, well educated, probably a college graduate, independent of spirit, highly competent, and physically strong and fearless" (Matthews 13).

Much like the representations of shifting gender norms of the 16th century, the late 19th century's seem to be predicated on an imagined set of scales on which masculinity and femininity must balance each other out, and therefore a shift toward masculinity in women must have an equal shift towards effeminacy in men. Fears of women accessing the vote and the public sphere manifested in the threat of men being forced to take on domestic roles. Men's fear of emasculation as a result of women's empowerment is one facet of a significant shift that American male gender construction underwent in the late 19th century, from a

Victorian sensibility to the core of traditional American masculinity still visible today.

The Victorian ideal of manliness revolved around self-control, familial support and financial stability. The Victorian man was expected to be self-restrained in his sexual behavior and his emotional states. He took responsibility for the well-being of his wife and children and was financially stable in a middle-class profession. His physique was ideally “lean and wiry.” (Bederman 16). The new masculinity of the 1890s revered bulky, muscular silhouettes’s and focused on physical virility in the form of boxing and physical fitness. This was an appropriation of lower-class manhood, the lower class being another stressor in the lessening of white middle-class manhood’s control of society. That virility’s specific focus on connection to the land and to ritual was an appropriation of African American and Native American manhood, as race was the third stressor on white middle-class masculinity. The resulting masculine ideal of the bodybuilder is an exaggeration, a hypermasculinity that is consciously performed.

Economically, the urban growth of the earlier 19th century allowed the previous generation of white men to rise along professional ranks and for a culture of entrepreneurship to develop. “The nineteenth century was the Age of the Bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie emerged as a new class during the commercial and industrial revolutions that initiated the nineteenth century; by the 1860s and 1870s, the bourgeoisie had established its unquestioned hegemony.” (Smith-Rosenberg 50). However, the larger middle-class work force of the next generation meant fewer promotions beyond entry level jobs. Moreover, a series of financial depressions and bankruptcies weakened trust in entrepreneurship, leading

to a fear among young men that "traditional sources of male power and status would remain closed to them forever…" (Bederman 12). Furthermore, working-class men became more politically active, an arena of manhood. The development of a politically active immigrant working class with labor strikes, socialists and anarchists, threatened middle-class sensibilities. Suffragettes further infringed on the male sphere of politics, and the advancement of the New Woman in the work force (with a small minority reaching positions of prominence in education, medicine and the church) added to the sense of diminishing power of middle-class men.

A new ideology of manhood formed as a result of these challenges, in which men turned away from the codes of manly self-restraint and Victorian work ethic, in favor of a growing leisure culture, one rooted in physical strength. In the 1890s physical strength became lauded, men took up team sports, hunting and other outdoorsman activities, organizations such as the Boy Scouts, YMCA and various fraternal orders were formed, and body building and boxing were embraced by middle-class men. Professional work became suspect as the new nervous disease of neurasthenia was "discovered" and feared to ravage the middle class due to excessive intellectual activity and a decadent lifestyle in which the heartier "primitive" lower classes did not engage.

The new masculine ideal held a racial tension within it; while white supremacy was prevalent in the development of a white masculinity with a renewed separation between white manhood and black inferiority, it was also in many ways an appropriation of the "primitive" masculinity imagined to exist among the African American and Native American.

American national identity has always depended on the dual elements of the image of Indian as noble savage, as Phillip J. Deloria clarifies in *Playing Indian*: "Americans wanted to feel a natural affinity with the continent, and it was Indians who could teach them such closeness" (5) Through the image of the Indian rooted in the land, the men's movement imagined a primitive masculinity that was rooted in physical prowess, in the connection to the land, and in spirituality – the latter expressed through rituals in which "imaginative urbanites of the Indianite fraternities gathered in dark halls to don Indian dress and initiate palefaces into the historical mysteries of Indianness and patriotism" (Deloira, 69).

Thus the late 19th and early 20th century was also a period of racial and gender anxiety with significant cultural shifts. The suffragettes and the New Woman are representations of women who actively pushed against the gender boundaries, creating a stress similar to the 17th century in England. This is also the moment in which American masculinity develops as distinct and separate from Victorian ideals of manliness while the Cult of True Womanhood stands in tension with the New Woman. These shifting dominant masculinities and femininities, fueled by racism, were conceived as existing in opposition to hybrid bodies (i.e. Intersex and trans bodies), racialized bodies, and deformed bodies, which were exhibited in dime museums and vaudeville while being carefully regulated and outlawed in public spaces.[4]

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[4] See Sears for an in-depth analysis of how racialized, disabled and cross-dressed bodies were regulated in San Francisco during the late 19th century.

Sexology

Although my study is not about sexuality, gender and sexuality are inextricably linked and therefore some time exploring 19th-century ideas surrounding sexuality is necessary. Foucault posits that the late 19th century was a moment in which perception of homosexuality changed from an act that was done to a state of being, an identity category. This shift, Foucault tells us, was due to the birth of sexology as a field of medicine and to sexologists' pathologization of sodomy as part of sexual inversion. Foucault argues that despite their claims to scientific objectivity and truth, sexologists' theories were heavily shaped by Victorian ideologies, specifically a fixation on categorization and pathologization and a growing focus on individualism. Davidson summarizes Foucault's position as, "It is not because we became preoccupied with our true sexuality that a science of sexuality arose in the nineteenth century; it is rather the emergence of a science of sexuality that made it possible, even inevitable, for us to become preoccupied with our true sexuality. Thus our existence became sexistance, saturated with the promises and threats of sexuality" (xiii).

The medical field of sexology first developed in the 1860s in Europe and spread to the United States beginning in the late 1880s. Due to the fact that different sexologists had varied theories on sexual inversion and that only a few were translated into or published in English, American sexology was mostly influenced by Havelock Ellis, whereas European sexology focused more on the theories of German doctors Richard von Krafft-Ebbing and Otto Westphal. Earlier notions of sexual inversion understood it to be a complete character reversal such that a female invert experienced the desire to be a man. The case studies of

sexual inverts were mostly of what was then called “transvestitism.” I reproduce this word for the sake of proper representation of the historical moment. However, in addition to the word transvestite being considered offensive to the transgender community, I am interested in exploring what is underneath this category in the sexological literature. For an individual to desire to live as other than the gender they were assigned at birth is a transgender expression. For an individual to take active steps to dress and perform the gender they identify with is an act of transness. The category shift from sexual inversion to homosexuality occludes research that is at the birth of medical documentation of transgender behavior and expression.

Since Victorian gender roles were so polarized and circumscribed, any degree of noticeable deviation from normative gender performance could be seen as masculinization. 19th-century sexologists focused on this gender deviance, not on sexual object choice. Furthermore, for female inverts the very act of having same-sex desires was proof of sexual inversion, since, as we have seen, Victorian Cult of True Womanhood desexualized a woman to passionless, asexual beings. Experiencing sexual desire – be it heterosexual or homosexual – was in and of itself a cause for pathologizing a woman and labelling her sexually deviant. As Chauncey states, “in the context of female passionlessness, there was no place for lesbianism as it is currently understood: if women could not even respond with sexual enthusiasm to the advances of men, how could they possibly stimulate sexual excitement between themselves?” (118) Thus, for two women to have a sexual encounter, one of them had to express desire, be the sexual aggressor, which was seen as a complete sexual inversion. Chauncey points out that this is a result of the Victorian polarization of male and female gender roles, such that “In their discussions of sexual behavior the doctors were

unable to conceive of a single person simultaneously embodying both [masculine and feminine traits]: a woman could not invert any aspect of her gender role without inverting her completion" (121).

Havelock Ellis, the sexologist most influential in the United States, did not agree that sexual inversion was invariably a matter of "transvestitism." Nevertheless, the essentialist gender ideology of attributing different but complementary emotional and behavioral characteristics to men and women was so central to Victorian thought, that a full rejection of it would have rendered a sexological theory incoherent. Thus Ellis continued to attribute masculine traits to the introverts he studied, finding, if not masculine dress then masculine traits such as aggression, robust sexual drive, enjoyment of alcohol and cigars, interest in existing within the public sphere or a disinterest in domestic behaviors such as needlework and other gender-appropriate domestic tasks. In the 1910s Ellis began shifting away from complete character reversal to a focus on sexual object choice as the cause of sexual inversion – a shift which Davidson argues was influenced by the emergence of psychoanalysis and its emphasis on psychic sources for sexual perversions rather than physiological ones. However, the paradigm of gender hierarchy in which men were dominant and women were submissive was transposed onto homosexual relationships, such that female sexual inversion continued to be attributed solely to the sexual aggressor in a same-sex relationship, the "passive" partner being explained as a woman susceptible to being seduced by the sexual invert rather than a sexual invert herself. Ellis's accounts of female inverts who were passing as men married to women focused on the passing men, completely ignoring their wives in the accounts.

Whereas Foucault identifies Victorian culture as a source of the sudden development of a robust sexological field, Chauncey puts more weight on the cultural shift away from Victorian ideals, the late 19th-century crisis of masculinity and the threat of the New Woman, stating that "the designation of their challenge [to the sex/gender system] as the disease of sexual inversion allowed male doctors both to explain the phenomenon in a non-threatening way and to stigmatize it as deviant behavior which should be avoided" (139). As gender constructions shifted in the early 1900s, women were resexualized. This placed a greater scrutiny on their deviant inversion and a need to correct it. Women's newfound sexuality came to be utilized to reinforce their place in the social hierarchy as wives and mothers. College educated women could choose to stay single and support themselves in a larger array of professions than were previously available to middle-class women. Once the option of economic stability and community support through feminist institutions such as women's colleges and settlement houses developed, the traditional family structure was threatened and the fear of race suicide developed. New Women needed to be urged back into marriage. Marriage manuals were published instructing men on the need for a "companionate marriage," and cultural norms shifted towards a focus on dyadic relationships. As women came to be resexualized, "…the culture increasingly postulated the importance of women's sexual desire as a basis for their involvement in heterosexual institutions such as marriage, which their employment supposedly rendered less of an economic necessity than before" (Chauncey 144).

The second half of this dissertation focuses on plays and historical events which take place during the development of these categories of sexual inversion. I offer this short history

of sexology and the patholization of transgender and queer individuals as historical context of the conceptualization of gender and sexuality. Additionally, Foucault offers this historical moment as the cause of the emergence of sexuality as an identity category. All of the plays and historical events examined in this dissertation include romantic relationships. While a trans analysis of these relationships need not consider the gender of romantic partners, much of the scholarship which this dissertation challenges does focuse on the gender of the gender of romantic partners.

Chapters

I begin charting AFAB trans performance in Chapter 1 on the Restoration stage, focusing on Aphra Behn's *The Widow Ranter* and Thomas Southerne's *Sir Anthony Love.* I first contextualize these depictions of gender nonconformity and cross-dressing through an examination of the 16th century pamphlet wars, particularly *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*, which debated women's nature, proper modesty and masculinized dress and behaviors. Like the women described in the pamphlets, Ranter engages in such masculinized behaviors as drinking punch and smoking tobacco. I also explore a subplot which also involves cross-dressing in the gender performance of the Indian Queen. I argue that Behn utilizes cross-dressing, and Ranter's gender nonconformity to reinforce gender, race and class hierarchies. In contrast, Southerne imagines in Sir Anthony a male-presenting AFAB character who rejects gender and class hierarchies. Sir Anthony presents male in order to get close to former lover Valentine, but once the two are reunited, Sir Anthony rejects Valentine's offer of marriage and reverting to female presentation. I argue that through Ranter, Aphra Behn

reinforces gender norms while through Sir Anthony, Southerne subverts them, offering a character who approaches gender as performance rather than essential. Furthermore, Sir Anthony offers the audience an agender subject who is permanently male-presenting, sexually free and in an egalitarian romantic relationship.

Chapter Two traces the changes in British conceptualization of male-presenting AFAB individuals, through analysis of Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband* and actor Charlotte Charke's memoir, *A Narrative of the Life of Charlotte Charke*. I explore the story of Charles Hamilton, who was put on trial in 1746 by his wife after she discovered Hamilton was AFAB. Hamilton's trial was covered in newspapers and inspired Henry Fielding to write the pamphlet *The Female Husband,* which reached such great popularity that "female husband" came to be a regular label for male-presenting AFAB people who married women. The term "female husband" is still used by contemporary scholars in order to discuss male-presenting AFAB people who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries. I use Fricker's theory of hermeneutic injustice to show how this term contributes to the erasure and silencing of historical trans experiences. Invoking Prossner's work on trans narrative, I analyze Charke's use of autobiography and theatricality to retell her life in a way which refuses the reader access to her interiority.

This project crosses the Atlantic in Chapter Three, as I look at how performer Annie Hindle brought male impersonation to the United States, developing the genre in variety halls and, later, vaudeville. I examine why Annie Hindle's hypermasculine impersonation was appreciated in the 1860s-1880s and how a shift in the construction of American masculinity caused Hindle's style to fall out of favor and be replaced by the more feminine style

emblematic of Vesta Tilley. This chapter also considers the hermeneutical injustice of how Hindle's off-stage masculinity was interpreted contemporaneously and by 1990s gay and lesbian theatre scholars: specifically, how some aspects of Hindle's trans expression were read as lesbian coding through the concept of the "female husband," while other aspects of Hindle's trans expression were misinterpreted as relating to their performance. The chapter challenges these cisnormative assumptions which have impeded a transgender reading of Hindle as a performer and an individual.

The final chapter analyzes two late 19th-century plays, *A Florida Enchantment* and *Gabriel,* as performances of trans representation of central characters played by female actors performing both male and female personas. In *A Florida Enchantment* a young woman physically changes sex through swallowing a magical pill, turning into a heterosexual man. *Gabriel* takes place in 17th-century Italy, where a young AFAB gentleman was raised as a boy for the sake of being eligible for the family inheritance must enter adulthood and make sense of his gender, sex, sexuality and social position. Unique in these plays is the embodiment of a masculine gender identity by female actors in female dress. In addition to exploring gender presentation and identity, I consider how sexuality and desire function in conjunction with gender presentation to make a character legible as trans. Like *The Widow Ranter* in Chapter 1, *A Florida Encounter* includes a supporting character whose gender transformation functions as a racialized foil to the main character's white gender transformation.

Chapter 1: Troubling Gender in Restoration Comedy, or The She-bear and the Rogue

The English Restoration saw women integrated into the theatre as actors and playwrights, and the production of plays which explored women's societal roles. With the introduction of women to the Restoration stage, the convention of breeches roles (women cross-dressing as men) quickly became popular, being included in an estimated quarter of the plays produced from 1660-1700. These breeches roles provided a chance for the objectification of women, displaying the actresses' chests, hips and legs in a sexualized manner for the male gaze. Therefore prevailing scholarship considers breeches roles "little more than yet another means of displaying the actress as a sexual object" (Howe 59). This chapter challenges that assumption, contending that the convention has the potential for social commentary regarding gender roles, gender nonconformity, personal agency, and sexuality. To that end I examine Aphra Behn's *The Widow Ranter* and Thomas Southerne's *Sir Anthony Love*, two Restoration plays whose titular characters are masculinized women who wear both men's and women's clothes over the course of the plays. The comparison of *The Widow Ranter* with *Sir Anthony Love* is a natural one; these plays were produced a year apart (1689 and 1690 respectively) by the same theatre. The plays' titular characters are considered the two most masculine of all breeches roles of the period—women who disguise themselves as men, smoke, drink and speak in masculinized forms (Rubik 52). I argue that despite these similarities, the plays diverge in purpose; Behn's work uses gender nonconformity to reinforce social hierarchies of gender, class and race, while Southerne's work uses gender nonconformity to critique and reject those hierarchies. I arrive at this conclusion by placing these two plays within a larger set of social anxieties of the Early

Modern period concerning gender, class and race boundaries. The chapter ends with an analysis of two 16th century pamphlets, *Haec Vir* and *Hic Mulier*, in which masculine women and the fashion of cross-dressing are debated, and I connect Ranter and Sir Anthony to the societal perspectives embodied in these pamphlets.

The Widow Ranter, or, The History of Bacon in Virginia

The Widow Ranter (also spelled *Widdow Ranter)* is a tragicomedy with three distinct but intertwined plots—a romantic comic plot, a political comic plot, and a romantic and political tragic plot. The main comic plot is the story of the titular Ranter, a rich widow, and her interaction with various single people's romantic schemes. Ranter is in love with Lieutenant Dareing, who is in love with the well-bred young heiress, Chrisante. Chrisante is in love with Friendly, a young second son who, lacking land in England, has travelled to Virginia to find a financially secure wife. Another young second son, Hazard, is wooing the married Mrs. Surelove, who is shortly expected to be widowed (her older husband is ailing). These romantic triangles are disrupted by Bacon's Rebellion, when Chrisante and Surelove are among women taken hostage by Bacon's men. Afraid that Dareing will consummate his desire with Chrisante while she is his hostage, Ranter cross-dresses as a fop to enter Bacon's camp and rescue Chrisante. Dareing realizes the fop is Ranter and sees her with desire for the first time now that she is in men's clothing. Once peace has returned to Jamestown, three respectable couples are ready to enter into marriage: Ranter and Dareing, Friendly and Chrisante, and Hazard and the newly widowed Surelove (who requires an appropriate mourning period, but Hazard is secure in his future with her).

The second comic plot involves the Jamestown Council and their plots against Bacon. *The Widow Ranter* is a fictional retelling of Bacon's Rebellion, which took place in 1676 in Jamestown, Virginia. Behn's version of this political moment veers away from the historical facts of tensions between wealthy landowners in political power and poor former indentured servants and African slaves. Instead, Behn envisions a Virginia in which Governor Berkeley is away and few "well bred" men live in Virginia—and only one of them is a member of the Council. The wealthy men in power are drunk, ill-bred and even illiterate men who came to Virginia to remake themselves and achieve an unearned respectability.

The tragic plot is a romance between Bacon and Semernia, the Indian Queen. Bacon respects Cavarnio, the Indian King, but wishes to kill him in battle in order to take his wife, Semernia, as his own. In battle Bacon does kill Cavarnio and takes the Indian Palace, leading Semernia to escape cross-dressed as an Indian man. Bacon accidentally kills Semernia while she is in disguise, and shortly thereafter falls on his sword, erroneously believing that his men have lost the battle with the colonists. This subplot differs in tone from the rest of the play, with Cavarnio and Semernia's dialogue emulating a classical tone. Additionally, the tragic plot mirrors the two comic plots, with characters as foils for each other. I am interested in analyzing this plot primarily to see how Semernia functions as a feminine foil for the masculine Ranter, and secondarily to understand the social and racial hierarchies of the play and how they relate to gender in both Ranter and Semernia's case.

The character of Widow Ranter transgresses gender norms of feminine delicacy. Her very name, Ranter, was a 17th-century term "used for a roistering man or a whorish woman: Ranter is a roistering woman" (Todd 416). As a rowdy, unrestrained roisterous woman,

Ranter expresses gender nonconformity through drinking and smoking, manner of speech, treatment of the subject of love, manner of wooing her love interest, Dareing, and behavior in battle. Ranter also appears in male dress, though only for the purpose of a short-term scheme. From her very entrance at Surelove's residence in I.iii., Ranter's interest is in drinking punch. As she dismisses her coachman to tie up the horses, he speaks an aside about how drunk she will get during this visit. She commands Surelove's servant, "Here boy, some Pipes and a bowl of Punch; you know my Humor, Madam, I must smoak and drink in a Morning or I am maukish all day" (Behn 225). Here is an interesting statement of how gendered behavior can perpetuate itself; if she does not smoke and drink as a man, she will feel sickly, unable to be the loud and assertive person she is, but rather be weak, more like the feminine ideal of delicate passivity that her gender performance transgresses. Ranter's manner of speech is direct, like the male characters' rather than genteel like the other female characters'. She insults Surelove's servant, calling him a "son of a baboon" (Behn 225), which is not only in contrast to Surelove and Chrisante's speech, but even to the lower-class tavern-keeper, Mrs. Flirt's, manner of speech as well.

Widow Ranter's aggressive nature is also visible in the manner in which she expresses and responds to love. Widow Ranter admits to caring for Dareing, but rather than express tenderness or sentimentality, her love manifests in possessive aggression. The first mention of Dareing is a threat, "I hope I shall not find that Rogue Dareing here, sniveling after Mrs. Chrisante; If I do, by the Lord, I'll lay him thick." (Behn 225) When hearing that Friendly will be among the party sent to capture Bacon, Ranter warns "Hark ye, Charles, by Heaven, if you kill my Dareing I'll pistol you" (Behn 229). At her dinner party she also

speaks negatively of love, saying, “Major, I ban Love-making within my Territories. ‘tis inconsistent with the Punch-bowl” (Behn 237). Ranter interrupts Dullman’s flirtation with Chrisante as part of her plot to pair Chrisante with Friendly (for her own interests with Dareing); nevertheless, it is also a statement that fits with her personal approach to expression of romantic love. In Act IV, in the exposition explaining why she has arrived in Dareing’s camp disguised as a man to rescue Chrisante, she again scoffs at “sniveling” love while also admitting that she is “dying for” Dareing (Behn 272). She declares that she will win Dareing by dueling him rather than wooing him, reassuring her servant, Jenny, “I’ll take care to make it as comical a Duel as the best of ‘em; as much in love as I am, I do not intend to die its Martyr” (272). Dying for love does take place in *The Widow Ranter* in Bacon and the Indian Queen’s deaths. Through the comparison, Widow Ranter is seen as a much more rational personality. It is interesting to note, however, that the expression of love without aggression only appears when Widow Ranter is in breeches, perhaps as a form of softening her masculinity and the gender subversion of the scene.

Ranter’s lack of genteel manners are linked both to her masculinity and her unsavory background. In the opening scene, Friendly describes her to Hazard as, “a great Gallant, but…she retains some of her primitive Quality still, but is good-natured and generous.” (Behn 214) When meeting Hazard, Widow Ranter advises him “…you must learn [to smoke tobacco], we all smoke here, ‘tis a part of good Breeding” (Behn 214). Here is the inversion of class, in which the colonists dictate social graces at odds with those practiced in England. It seems the colonists make up their own social expectations and establish their own hierarchy, much to the more well-bred Virginian’s disappointment. After leaving Widow

Ranter's dinner party Surelove complains about the extravagance of "…a great Dinner and what's worse, a desert [*sic*]of Punch and tobacco." (Behn 235) While tobacco is the main Virginia crop, and therefore understandable as a cultural signifier, it must be noted that no women other than Widow Ranter smoke on the stage. Like many of the Jamestown "gentleman" which the play mocks, Ranter is a testament to Virginia's potential for class mobility. Ranter arrived in Jamestown as an indentured servant, bought off a ship by Old Colonel Ranter, who then married her and died, leaving her his fortune. The qualities which code Ranter as masculine—namely drinking and smoking—are precisely the qualities which align her with the colonies. Smoking in particular marks Ranter as outside of idealized Englishness.

Tobacco was a New World plant, and as the habit of smoking achieved popularity in England, a number of anti-tobacco pamphlets were published, linking tobacco to racial and sexual degeneration. Richard Brathwait's *The Smoaking Age* (1617) characterized English smokers as "English Moors" who followed in "a late Negro's introduced fashion" (as quoted by Rustici 117). King James anonymously published the pamphlet *A Counterblast to Tobacco* in 1604 in which he argued that "English smokers created a network of resemblances between themselves and Native Americans" (117). King James' argument was that English civility was lost through smoking, and that the English smokers were in a state of becoming native. As Rustici explains, the Early Modern understanding of physiology was a geohumoral perspective, which believed that English bodies were moist and that tobacco was drying, such that regular use would throw off English humors. Ethnicity was linked to the humors and had a fluidity; thus tobacco could shift the humors such that the smokers would lose their

physiological Englishness and become Other. King James and other anti-tobacco writers warned that tobacco could lead English smokers to laziness, sexual lasciviousness, alienation from god, and make them unrecognizable as English (Rustici 122). Similarly, John Deacon's *Tobacco Tortured* (1616) "catalogues a dozen ways in which the English are transformed and alienated from their native character" (127).

Taking this into consideration, Ranter can be seen as not simply a gender nonconforming woman, but a character who is threatening what Marjorie Garber terms "category collapse." Garber views gender transgression as a space of calling other social categories such as race and class into question. For Garber, cross-dressing creates a disruption beyond the binary of male and female, creating a "crisis of category itself" (17).[5]

Reading Ranter through Garber's theory of category crisis, we find that her blurring of gender norms functions to highlight the malleability of other social categories which were previously considered rigid and stable. While Garber sees gender transgression and cross-dressing as opportunity to challenge categories, Behn introduces Ranter's cross-dressing as a threat to gender categories which must be neutralized. Because her gender transgression is directly linked to these other category transgressions of race and class, the reinscribing of Ranter as an obedient wife also rejects the racial and class blurring, reinscribing race and

[5] I invoke Garber's theory of category crisis hesitantly, as I see many limitations to it as a theory which is not intersectional in its framework. The idea that a character challenging binary gender leads to larger category collapse assumes that notions of gender are not intrinsically racialized and classed. The characters who fit Garber's theory must be white, and middle or upper class. Whiteness must exist as the unmarked category for Garber's theory to make sense, since to argue that a character's gender blurring causes a collapse of racial categories is nonsensical if that character is racialized rather than normatively white. Recognizing the theory's limitations, I nonetheless consider it useful in analyzing gender nonconfoming literary characters.

class boundaries. The love between Semernia and Bacon is intrinsically tragic because its success would threaten miscegenation, but the love between Ranter and Dareing must be consummated if proper English order is to be reestablished.

Behn sets *The Widow Ranter* in Virginia, marking it the earliest extant English play to be set in the colonies (Todd 412). Behn presents a Virginia in which the few English gentleman are outnumbered by questionably reformed riffraff. The very first scene is set in Mrs. Flirt's tavern, where the various town councilmen are getting drunk. They goad each other with the rumors and gossip about each other's histories, establishing that they were all thieves and con men in England. Virginia is a place where the past is not entirely forgotten, but can be rewritten and surpassed in a manner that is impossible in England. Act III scene 1 takes place in the court, in which the Council is lampooned as a pack of petty drunks insulting each other's wives as whores. With such men in power the Bakhtinian displacement of the king by the fool is solidified. At the same time, there is also a lesson to be taken from the court proceedings. When Justice Whiff's wife is denounced as a whore, with the unquestioned proof that she has two bastard children, Whiff responds, "Sirrah, Sirrah, that was when she was a Maid, not since I marry'd her; my marrying her made her honest." (Behn 253) Clearly, no matter the level of personal disgrace, respectability can be easily attained in Virginia. The Widow Ranter herself is newly respectable, having been "….a Woman bought from the ship by old Colonel Ranter…" (Behn 213). Thus Widow Ranter's gender nonconformity is highly tied both to the Virginia lifestyle and to this unique colonial ability to remake oneself—a quality which threatens English social identity.

Behn was a vocal Tory who "desperately wanted to be of the court of Charles II, then

of James II…" (Todd 411). *The Widow Ranter's* Virginia, then, with its disreputable council and absentee governor was a view into the chaos that appears when no legitimate authority is in control. Behn's play is reinforcing the societal hierarchy, one aspect of which is men's superiority over women. As the play was written at a point in time when England was shifting into becoming an imperial power, the colonies are both a space of interaction with the racialized Other and a space for surpassing traditional class stratification. The threat of gender inversion could act as a prism for the different ways in which English identity was strained by the potential breakdown of rigid class and ethnic boundaries. This connection between imperialism and gender is present in Ranter's language regarding love. As previously discussed, in *Widow Ranter* II.ii., during her dinner party, Ranter disrupts Dullman's attempt to woo Chrisante by stating, "Major I bar Love-making within my Territories." The use of "Territories" functions in multiple ways in this moment. Firstly, Ranter's use of the term is a reminder that under the law of coverture, should she remarry she would lose her property. In this way, lovemaking is a direct threat to her capacity to have territory. Secondly, the use of the term is a reminder that this play is focused on colonialism and empire. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Sir Anthony also expresses his desire to be admired invoking colonialism by stating, "I am for Universal Empire, and wou'd not be stinted to one Province" (I.i. Lines 11-12). Imperialism was one aspect of changing culture which put tension on notions of gender differentiation and gender roles. Finally, the linking of wooing a woman and territory aligns with the colonial perspective towards the Americas, which imagined the land as a passive female waiting for male conquest.

Columbus and other early mapmakers believed the New World to be the site of the

original Paradise. In the logs of his second voyage, Columbus wrote that he believed that the world was not round, but rather shaped like a breast and that Paradise was the nipple, located somewhere south of the Caribbean. (Harris 6) This image illustrates the ways in which Early Modern Europeans imagined the land as woman—and more importantly woman as land of origin and desired destination (we might also consider that the setting of *Widow Ranter* is in the colony Virginia, named after the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I). Harris links this imagery of Paradise with the New World through examining Theodor de Bry's illustrations from Thomas Harriot's *Discovery of the Newfound Land of Virginia.* One of the illustrations, *Adam and Eve* shows the Biblical Adam and Eve with the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in the foreground and people in the background working the land. "The prophetic implication, despite the serpent's menacing presence in the tree, is that the "discovery" of Virginia amounts to a postlapsarian repossession of Paradise" (Harris 7). If Eve was the cause of the Fall of Man, repossessing the land and feeding at her nipple might bring redemption. In the next section I consider Behn's depiction of the Indian Queen Semernia and *The Widow Ranter*'s tragic plot within the context of colonization and colonial fantasies of Native American women.

The Princess and The Amazon

In writing about Behn's depiction of Native Americans in *The Widow Ranter*, I have considered what responsibilities I have as a scholar to challenge the ways in which Behn uses a caricature of Indians in the service of whiteness. Behn was never in Virginia and did not intend to depict Native Americans with any sense of accuracy. Instead, she created composite characters based on her own time living in Surinam and on Early Modern depictions of the

Indigenous people of North America. Behn's Indians are imaginary, and therefore my focus is not to provide historical accuracy about the living Native Americans, but to explore how Behn's imaginary Indians function within her critique of colonial culture.

In *The Widow Ranter*, Bacon's interactions with the Native Americans with whom he is at war with occur in the Indian Court, which is depicted in a Greco-Roman manner. Rather than an uncivilized Chief, the Indigenous tribe is ruled by King Cavarnio and Queen Semernia, classical tragic royalty. Dramaturgically, this depiction functions to provide properly noble tragic characters for the tragedy part of this tragicomedy. However, the depiction of Indigenous people as Greco-Roman was also due to the framework with which Early Modern Europe approached the New World. As Sabine MacCormack explains, when Europeans came to the New World, they understood Indigenous people through the frameworks of pagans that they had already encountered—that of antiquity and the Far East. "They all integrated what was new and strange about America into a context of what was familiar and known. When such information was subsequently published and publicized in Europe, further steps were taken in integrating the unknown with the familiar, the result being that, increasingly, the 'new' things of America shed the very features that defined them as alien and different" (79) Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century scholars became invested in identifying parallels between the civilizations and religions of the Americas and those of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean (87). We see this influence in IV.i., the Temple scene, in which the Indian King and Queen consult a god who prophesies in a manner reminiscent of the Temple of Delphi. In the temple scene a disembodied voice announces the results of the battle in an enigmatic manner which offers multiple interpretations. A layer which King

Cavarnio hears as his successful defeat of Bacon but which Queen Semernia understands as portending Cavarnio's death. Cavarnio is assured of his success in battle in the words "The English General shall be / A Captive to his Enemy / And you from all your Toyls be freed" (37). However, Semernia understands the captivity of the English General to be his love for her and the freedom mentioned as the freedom of death, warning Cavarnio that "Alas the Oracles have double meanings, their sence is doubtful, and their words Inigma's" (37).

Queen Semernia exists in a state of racial hybridity—Indigenous yet coded European (and therefore white) through noble breeding, neoclassical dialogue and actions. This hybridity can be understood as part of a form of depiction which Rayna Green calls the Pocahontas Perplex. Green traces the shifting European image of the Native American woman through visual art, popular ballads and stories. As mentioned earlier, Europeans envisioned land in relation to women. Thus the Indian woman came to be "the iconographic representative of the Americas" (102).

The Indigenous cultures which the Europeans encountered did not share European gender roles. The first image Europeans developed of the Indian woman was that of an Amazon, named thus because of rumors of women-only warrior tribes. These battling women aligned with the classical myth of the land of warrior women, the Amazons. The Greek myth and explorer narratives melded to produce the image of a bare-breasted Amazonian Indian Queen.

> Draped in leaves, feathers, and animal skins as well as in heavy Caribbean jewelry, she appeared aggressive, militant, and armed with spears and arrows. Often, she rode on an armadillo, and stood with her foot on the slain body of an animal or human enemy. She was the familiar Mother-Goddess figure—

> full-bodied, powerful, nurturing but dangerous—embodying the opulence and peril of the New World. Her environment was rich and colorful, and that, with the allusions to Classical Europe through the Renaissance portrayal of her large, naked body, attached her to Old World History as well as to New World virtue" (Green 702).

As the New World became a space of colonization, the intimidating Amazonian Queen was replaced by the more subservient, chaste and acquirable Princess, such as Pocahontas. Pocahontas is not one singular figure, but rather emblematic of an archetypal Indian Princess. Green describes the Princess as "young, leaner in the Romanesque rather than Greek mode, and distinctly Caucasian, though her skin remains slightly tinted in some renderings. She wears the loose, flowing gowns of classical statuary rather than animal skins, and Roman sandals grace her feet" (702). Pocahontas is the exemplary depiction of the Indian Princess, but Green demonstrates how prevalent this archetype became and the tensions which delineate her complicated and untenable existence. Untenable, because as the personification of the paradisal New World, the archetype exists in a particular state of madonna-whore syndrome: "tied up with abstract virtue…she must remain the Mother Goddess-Queen. But acting as a real female, she must be a partner and lover of Indian men, a mother to Indian children, and an object of lust for white men" (703).

I will show how Queen Semernia fits this Pocahontas archetype. The Indian Princess/ Pocahontas must be noble—a princess or a chieftain's daughter. Semernia is a Queen, married to King Cavarnio; however, for this analysis we can consider her naivety, virtue and chastity as fitting the archetype of the Princess. Although she is married to the Indian King, Semernia is not a mother. She is young and married Cavarnio out of a sense of duty, not out

of love. Her love exists only for Bacon, whom she met in the Royal Court at age 12 and fell in love with. Thus there is a faithfulness to the love Semernia and Bacon share. The archetypal Pocahontas is caught between honoring her own culture and community and saving the Christian white man. Semernia attempts to act as a mediator between Cavarnio and Bacon, managing to broker a short truce, but no lasting peace. Brokering a peace is impossible for her, since, as Indian Princess, Semernia is the personification of the land. The battle between Cavarnio and Bacon exists on two fronts—that of control of land near Jamestown and that of the heart and body of Semernia. Bacon's desire for her is an important part of his impetus to wage war.

The Princess's story is a necessarily tragic one. If she does not reject her own culture for the white man—either because she was unable to save his life or because her father will not allow her to marry him—"the Princess is allowed the even grander gesture of committing suicide when her lover is slain or fails to return to her after she rescues him" (Green 704). Behn's tragedy offers a mirror image of this suicidal end. Bacon and Cavarnio battle and Bacon kills Cavarnio. At her husband's death Semernia cross-dresses as an Indian man in an attempt to escape, as she knows that Bacon would take her as his war trophy and that to her own dishonor, she would enjoy as she is in love with him. Bacon's men tell Bacon that "a Party of Indians, taking advantage of the Night, have set Fire on your Tents, and born away the Queen" and Bacon replies that "By Heaven this Victory shall cost them dear; come, let us fly to rescue her" (V.i.). Framing her escape as a kidnapping and his pursuit as a "rescue" functions to maintain Bacon as the romantic hero rather a villain. Instead of the princess committing suicide at the white man's death, Bacon accidentally murders Semernia, thinking

her an Indian man. Bacon then commits suicide when he thinks his men have lost the battle (they in fact won). Bacon wins both the land and the woman, but the attempt to take ownership is destructive, and ultimately ends in his own death along with that of Cavarnio and Semernia.

Green situates the Pocahontas archetype within a larger framework of shifting and solidifying characters in the American mythscape. In *The Widow Ranter* each of the characters in the tragic plot line is mirrored in the comic plot line. Semernia, the woman who is in love with the soldier Bacon, disguises herself in men's clothing, and is a danger to racial purity that is neutralized through death, has a doppelgänger in Ranter, who is in love with the soldier Dareing, disguises herself in men's clothing, and is a danger to class and gender purity that is neutralized through her being married to a man capable of controlling her. Semernia is not an Amazon, but a Pocahontas. Her femininity is classical, understood, classifiable, controllable and tragic. Semernia herself acknowledges her own classical frailty by invoking the image of the Amazon, crying "I have no Amazonian fire about me, all my Artillery is sighs and Tears" (Behn 283). Semernia is a delicate princess; however Ranter is the Amazonian who fights alongside her lover, Dareing.

The Amazonian She-bear turns Fop

While Ranter is a masculine woman, she nonetheless makes a feminine man, providing a comic criticism of masculinity. When she enters Dareing's camp disguised as a man to rescue her captured friend, Chrisante, she declares—as we noted—that she will win Dareing by dueling him rather than wooing him, reassuring her servant, Jenny, "I'll take care

to make it as comical a Duel as the best of ‘em; as much in love as I am, I do not intend to die its Martyr” (Behn 272). Indeed, her planned duel is all bluster and show; she begins dueling Dareing and then interrupts their action to suggest that Chrisante be given a choice between her and Dareing: “bring me to her, and whom she does neglect shall give the other place” (Behn 274). Widow Ranter then makes a great show of wooing Chrisante, which includes the stage directions *“pushes away Dareing, looks big, and takes Chrisante by the Hand and kisses it”* (Behn 275). This is a slight to Dareing, who is annoyed and insulted at being pushed, but it is also a mockery of the way men puff themselves up, taking up extra space. At losing Chrisante, Dareing calls Ranter a coxcomb and a fop and complains that Chrisante would “prefer such a callow Fop as thou before a Man.” Men’s worth in Dareing’s eyes is based on degree of masculinity, which in this case is measured by physical prowess and bravery, and thus he is insulted to be bested by an effeminate man. The scene functions to render Ranter’s masculinity inferior to Dareing’s. I would suggest that there is a threshold of “acceptable” gender nonconformity for a woman and that it requires the presence of a more masculine love interest to preserve the hierarchy.

As a gender nonconforming female character, Widow Ranter both subverts and reinforces societal norms of gender behavior. Her presence as an active participant in both the romantic plots and the battle places her in a position as one of the important individuals in the world of the play. Yet Behn carefully crafts the plot so that although the limits of female behavior are tested, constraint on female agency is critiqued and masculinity mocked, the Widow herself is also kept within the bounds of acceptable gender dynamics. In addition to reinforcing gender norms of the sexually pure woman (Ranter has been a chaste widow),

the manner in which Behn characterizes Dareing and the relationship between him and Widow Ranter preserves the male-female power differential expected in romantic liaisons.

Dareing is a man who can both be a good foil to Widow Ranter and control her. Their relationship may be seen as nearly egalitarian, a pairing of equals while still observing the minimum of male superiority required not to subvert marriage. Once Dareing realizes that the boy who comes for Chrisante is the disguised Widow Ranter, he plays with her. At the suggestion he marry the widow, he says "I'd sooner marry a she-Bear…we should be eternally challenging one another to the field, and ten to one she beats me there; or if I escape there, she would kill me with drinking" (Behn 276). While stated as an insult, Dareing enjoys and respects Widow Ranter's strength, later suggesting that he will only marry her while she remains in male dress; "take me in the humor, while thy Breeches are on, for I never lik'd thee half so well in Petticoats." (Behn 277). Indeed, at the end of the play, when Widow Ranter chides Dareing for leaving her during the battle, he responds that he purposefully left her "to see how well you cou'd shift for yourself; now I find you can bear the brunt of a Campaign, you are a fit Wife for a soldier" (Behn 292). The subversion of Widow Ranter's masculinity is further neutralized when she is disarmed and taken as a hostage, to be returned to Dareing after the battle.

Sir Anthony Love

In discussing the plot of *Sir Anthony Love*, I have struggled with language and the way in which tropes of gender disguise keep entering my writing in ways I do not intend. In this chapter I argue that the character of Sir Anthony is not invested in binary gender and

could be read as a trans character. Yet before I provide this analysis, I must provide context of the plot of this play, which uses cross-dressing as a form of reinvention that includes the occluding of the character's identity. Traditionally, this is described as cross-dressing for the purpose of disguise. In trying to provide a plot synopsis I fall into assumptions attached to the trope of gender disguise. It is a very difficult task to disrupt the assumptions of "true gender" and binarity that are embedded in the short hand of gender disguise plots. A typical synopsis for the play *Sir Anthony Love* might describe Sir Anthony as "a young woman disguised as a man." While these sentences provide accurate plot information, they also convey assumptions that Lucia is the character's authentic identity and that she is at her core a woman—assumptions which I wish to disrupt. My first attempt at a synopsis described Sir Anthony as "in fact the male persona of a woman named Lucia." Rereading this description, I recognized that this was not how I wished to depict Sir Anthony. The character has no authentic title and is sexed female, however the character also discusses gender as a social construct and describes both female and male as costumes. To this end I do not want to lean into the gender disguise trope and language which assumes essentialism or a binary of authenticity and falsehood. However, in describing the plot I could not find more neutral terms without being verbose and cumbersome. I could write that "Sir Anthony previously knew Valentine while presenting as a young woman named Lucia and took on the name and title of Sir Anthony." But the use of the term "presenting" outside of trans culture and context also has a sense of falsehood such that to state that Sir Anthony previously presented as female may suggest that the character's male persona is more authentic than the character's female persona. Recognizing that language around gender and specifically cross-dressing

contains these traps, I have instead chosen to describe Sir Anthony/Lucia as assigned female at birth (AFAB). Using the phrase "assigned female at birth" troubles notions of binary sex as well as binary gender. I recognize that using this phrase to describe Sir Anthony but not all the other characters in the play is not an ideal solution however it is the best solution I have found to date.

The following is a short plot synopsis: Sir Anthony Love, Valentine, and Ilford, have recently arrived in the French town of Montpellier (spelled Mompellier in the script), seeking the entertainment of young women and the possibility of a French wife with a large dowry. Sir Anthony was assigned female at birth and lived as a woman named Lucia until meeting and falling in love with Valentine. Lucia chose to rob Sir Gentle Golding, the knight who was keeping Lucia as his mistress, and to travel to Europe as the young knight Sir Anthony in order to befriend Valentine. Valentine and Ilford are among young men vying for the hands of two young French sisters, Volante and Floriante (whose sister Charlott has been allotted a life as a nun and is desperate to escape this fate). Through various schemes Sir Anthony manages to unmask a thieving monk, trick Sir Golding into agreeing to pay a yearly sum on the promise that Sir Anthony will to stay away from him, and land Valentine a wealthy French wife. At the end of the play Sir Anthony and Valentine look forward to a life of entertainment, travel and sexual escapades.

Southerne places *Sir Anthony Love* in a setting that not only is outside of England, but also lends itself to the atmosphere of freedom, reinvention and the carnivalesque. While any location outside of England allows for greater libertine behavior, the Mediterranean in particular symbolizes a carnivalesque state, owing to the hotter climate and connection to the

classical world (examples of English plays involving sexual freedom set in the Mediterranean include *Anthony and Cleopatra* and Aphra Behn's *The Rover).* Montpellier, in particular, was a resort town popular with the English and known for its carnival (Jordan and Love 455). Such a setting provides aspects similar to Behn's Virginia in that the Englishmen living in and visiting Montpellier seek each other out, creating a temporary community. The English men visiting Montpellier are not respectable family men, but rather wonderlusting rakes who struggle to pay for their idle lifestyle. Some arriving strangers are also able to reinvent themselves, fabricating or hiding their pasts. Both Sir Anthony Love and the Pilgrim do this, while Sir Gentle Golding would have kept his embarrassment secret had not Valentine known of it. Indeed, Sir Anthony Love's entire approach to life is carnivalesque, subverting notions of gender, class, sexuality and morality. As Sir Gentle is getting acquainted with Sir Anthony, Valentine and Ilford, Sir Anthony declares, "We make a Carnival; all the year a Carnival: Every Man his Woman, and a new one at every Town we come at" (II.i.572-573).

Before discussing the character Sir Anthony Love it is important to ask what pronouns to use for this character. From a phenomenological standpoint, the audience sees the actress Susannah Mountfort in the role. Breeches roles were created as an excuse to show off the actress's body, the naked leg and curve of the buttocks. As Howe explains, "it was central to the effect that the actress's femininity showed through." (56) Furthermore, while the popularity of breeches roles inspired some productions in which actresses played male parts, the first lines of the play establish that Sir Anthony is in fact a woman in male dress, not a male character played by an actress. While I argue that the character expresses non-normative perceptions of gender, the character nonetheless seems to identify as a woman.

This suggests using she/her pronouns. However, an argument could be made to speak of Sir Anthony using male pronouns. In the published play, the character is listed in the Dramatis Personae in the Men's section. The scenes in which Sir Anthony is in women's clothes are few and short. At the end of the play it is understood that the character will continue to live as Sir Anthony, not as Lucia. The play overall makes a strong argument for gender as performative rather than innately essentialist and binary. Indeed, in the first scene Sir Anthony instructs Wait-well to bring the female wardrobe as well, "For as the Conduct of Affairs now goes, I'm best disguis'd in my own Sex, and Cloaths." (I.i.60-61) For Sir Anthony all dress is costume and disguise, as are behaviors. In explaining to Valentine and Ilford how he has significant funds, he tells them of an Englishwoman that is providing for him. While also fueling Sir Anthony's rakish reputation, there is a hidden truth to the words. Sir Anthony says:

> In short, this is the English Lady you have heard me speak of:
> I allow her the favour of my person;
> and she allows me the freedom of her Purse;
> And I am glad I command it so luckily, to answer the
> Occasions of my Friends. (I.i.436-439)

The imaginary woman is Lucia, Sir Anthony's female persona, who receives the "person" of the male Sir Anthony persona. Is this a woman using a male alter ego to get what she wants or a man using his female history to get what he wants? Are these two personas both fully integrated into Sir Anthony's personality? In this chapter I have chosen to use they/them pronouns for Sir Anthony in order to highlight the degree to which the character rejects gender essentialism while confidently navigating both female and male gender presentations

in different personas. This choice should not be mistaken for an ahistorical claim of nonbinary gender identity.

Sir Anthony passes completely as a young man. Unlike Widow Ranter, Sir Anthony is written as an ideal gentleman, a better presentation of a young man than any of the men they interacts with. As their butler, Wait-well, proclaims in the 8th line of the play, "You're a pretty proficient indeed, and so perfectly act the Cavalier, that cou'd you put on our Sex with your Breeches, o'my Conscience you wou'd carry all the Women before you." Sir Anthony does not actually need a male sexed body to develop love affairs with women nor for rivalries with the men. Sir Anthony responds,

> And drive all the Men before me; I am for Universal
> Empire, and wou'd not be stinted to one Province; I wou'd be fear'd, as well
> as lov'd: As famous for my Action with the Men, as for my Passion for the
> Women. (I.i.11-14)

Sir Anthony shows mastery over idealized masculinity through dueling, not because they are a master swordsman, but rather because they have mastered the performance of dueling (much like Widow Ranter's technique). Sir Anthony understands that being a gentleman is only a matter of performance:

> Why, 'tis only the Fashion of the World, that gives your Sex
> a better Title then we have, to the wearing a Sword; my Constant
> Exercise with my Fencing Master, and Conversation among men, who
> make little of the matter, have at last not only made me adroit, but
> despise the Danger of a quarrel too. (I.i.17)

Sir Anthony duels in II.i as part of the performance of a romantic rivalry for the hand of a young woman, Volante. In quarreling with their supposed rival, Ilford, Sir Anthony creates the atmosphere for a duel right before the women enter the room. They then use the

excuse of the shrieking Volante to interrupt the fight and get themself out of harm's way. Ilford recognizes this and exclaims, "This was a Trick to save his Cowardice" (II.i. 283) but nevertheless, the action has the desired effect on Volante, who proceeds to show concern for Sir Anthony and animosity towards Ilford. Similarly, Sir Anthony reveals Count Verole's cowardice by challenging him to a duel, knowing he will refuse. Canfield views this challenge of Count Verole as part of the way Sir Anthony subverts class, since they show that Count Verole does not have "the merit that goes along with his rank" (Canfield, 156). Sir Anthony's masculinity is in itself a critique of men in general and, more specifically, the way that gender and class coalesce to determine the performance of masculinity among gentlemen and aristocrats.

Sir Anthony's supposed knighthood serves to reveal the hypocrisies of society. Whereas Widow Ranter is on the fringe of the class order, Sir Anthony is performing class as well as gender by posing as a knight. In taking on this persona they are both fulfilling the ideal of the Englishman and subverting the aristocratic order. In the first scene of *Sir Anthony Love*, Ilford questions Sir Anthony's assertion of being a knight. Valentine defends Sir Anthony by stating that even if he isn't really a rich knight, "He lives as like a Gentleman, has all things as well about him; is as much respected by the Men, and better receiv'd by the Women, than any of us" (I.i. 332-334). Image and action can supplant true titles. Canfield points to Sir Anthony's treatment of Sir Gentle, both in mocking him and in becoming a lady by marrying him, as subverting class (156-157).

Like Widow Ranter, Sir Anthony is not sentimental about love. When they explain their plans to Wait-well, and why they continue to live as a male friend of Valentine's rather

than revealing themself to be Lucia, they say

> Thou wou'dst have had me, with the true Conduct of an
> English Mistress, upon the first inclination, cloy'd him with my Person;
> without any assurance of his relishing me enough, to raise his appetite
> to a second taste: No, now I am sure he likes me and likes me so well
> in a Man, he'll love me in a Woman; and let him make the Discovery if
> he dares. (I.i.49-54)

This comment about English women's behavior can read as derisive of women, or as an awareness of how men such as Valentine discard women after sleeping with them. Sir Anthony's treatment of women throughout the play seems to disrespect and exploit them, to take on male privilege along with the masculine persona. And yet, various actions they take shows that they respect and are concerned about women's agency. In talking to Ilford in Act III, Sir Anthony toys with him and tells him he intends to sexually seduce Volante without any intent to marry her. Ilford is shocked at such rakish plans, to which Sir Anthony replies that they will lie with her, "Without asking any Consent but her own" (III.i.37-38). In this statement Sir Anthony is expressing their belief in women's personal agency and rejection of cultrual propriety.

The lack of agency for women is foregrounded by the situation in which Floriante, Charlott and Volante find themselves. As Count Canaile's daughters (Volante is his niece and ward) they are dependent on his choice for their future. Floriante and Charlott challenge Count Verole on convincing Canaile to place Charlott in a nunnery, pointing out that Canaile's motivation is getting his hands on her dowry. As Floriante says:

> So you promise all
> Before you have enclos'd us, but possess'd
> Our Fortunes, and our Persons as your Slaves,

Us'd like your Slaves, and often both abus'd. (II.i.402-405)

The Widow Ranter and *Sir Anthony Love* differ in their treatment of female sexuality. While the Widow Ranter is one of the most gender transgressive female characters of the time period, she is limited by two factors which can be seen as reinforcing societal gender expectations. One factor is the matter of sexual promiscuity. Despite the libertine behavior of the other female colonists (such as Mrs. Flirt and Madam Whiff) Widow Ranter takes care to keep her reputation clear of sexual gossip. When Dareing goads her in IV.iii, his mocking her temper and her drinking does angers her, but it is the insinuation of promiscuity which causes her to draw her sword:

> Dareing: There's not a Blockhead in the Country that has not –
> Ranter: What –
> Dareing: Been drunk with her.
> Ranter: I thought you had meant something else Sir. *(In huff)*
> Dareing: Nay – as for that – I suppose there is no great difficulty.
> Ranter: 'Sdeath Sir, you lye – and you are a Son of a Whore. *(Draws and fences with him…)*

There is nothing in the text to suggest that Widow Ranter has religious concerns or personal moral concerns regarding sexuality. Rather, being a sexually active woman would have curtailed her social standing and other freedoms.

Sir Anthony, on the other hand is sexually free. Once they reveal their identity and sex to Valentine, he offers to marry them, but Sir Anthony opts to remain his mistress and encourages him to marry Floriante, a rich woman he has been courting. Within their male persona they are a prostitute and even convinces Valentine, now their confidante and lover, to take part in their sexual dalliance with a woman who expressed sexual interest in Sir

Anthony. Their plan is to meet the woman with Valentine hiding in the room, then for Valentine to covertly take their place in bed (extending the performance of gender to the only realm which does theoretically require a male body). Valentine hesitates before agreeing to this sexual exploit, asking Sir Anthony if this trick, this sending their lover to another woman's bed, is not too much. Sir Anthony responds:

> So long, I can part with you; to provide for your pleasure as
> Well as my own: Besides, 'tis a diverting piece of Roguery; and will be a Jest
> as long as we know one another. (V.iii7-9)

The second subversive aspect of *Sir Anthony Love* not present in *The Widow Ranter* is full egalitarian status between Sir Anthony and Valentine. Unlike Dareing's manly superiority, Sir Anthony surpasses Valentine in being a rake, a plotter and a romantic aggressor. In reversal of the relationship between Widow Ranter and Dareing, Valentine is under Sir Anthony's control. When they reveal their female sexed body and identity as Lucia to Valentine, he reacts by expressing his intention to marry them, but they do not share in that desire; rather Sir Anthony recognizes that Valentine's nature (like their own) is to wander and be sexually promiscuous, and therefore they would rather he marry Floriante while they remain his mistress. For Floriante is a rival as a lover, but not as a wife. Here is one of several instances where we see Sir Anthony's perspective on marriage, in which the wife is stripped of her agency. As mentioned above, Sir Anthony told Wait-Well that since Valentine "likes me so well in a Man, he'll love me in a Woman; and let him make the Discovery if he dares (I.i.53-54)." I argue that Sir Anthony wants Valentine to love them in the fullness of their gender expression, as tender lover and fellow adventurer.

In *The First English Actresses*, Elizabeth Howe presents a reading of *Sir Anthony Love* as “no real threat to the established social order” (60). Howe specifically points to *Sir Anthony Love* as the 17th-century play which would hold the greatest potential for subversive breeches performance, and then dismisses *Sir Anthony Love*’s potential as “a freak rather than the norm” (60). Howe reads Sir Anthony as reinforcing gender roles by being presented as a foil for four heteronormative couplings. However, the experiences of these women who conform to gender expectations are not fully happy or successful. Charlotte marries Verole because it is preferable to becoming a nun, Volante’s romantic dreams of Sir Anthony are shattered so she marries Ilford as the next best option, and Floriante is expected to marry Valentine, who plans on a continuing affair with Sir Anthony. The fourth heteronormative coupling that Howe is referring to must be the marriage between Sir Gentle and Sir Anthony. This marriage, however, is a trick played on Sir Gentle which provides Sir Anthony with 500 pounds yearly salary. Traditional marriages are being critiqued throughout the play in Sir Anthony’s derision and subverted in the ending.

Through sexual license, egalitarian romance and permanent rather than temporary masculine presentation Sir Anthony rejects societal norms where Widow Ranter does not. A few more questions could be asked as to why the two playwrights differ in this manner. Janet Todd provides one possibility. In analyzing Widow Ranter, Todd writes “the depiction is not subversive – it cannot be, for, as Behn knew, if pushed to any limit, the theatrical woman in breeches simply became a rogue and a freak. She would do this in Sir Anthony Love…” (416). Todd and other scholars view Sir Anthony as being so far outside the bounds of acceptability due to amoral behavior that the character ceases to be subversive. I should

like to unsettle the other aspects of society which Behn and Southerne present in the two plays and in their personal politics.

Aphra Behn herself was a widow, and personally aware of the importance of keeping her reputation free of sexual gossip. A few years earlier, in 1682, Behn's play *The City-Heiress* was critiqued as too raunchy. Her contemporary, Robert Gould, wrote of her as "the vicious widow." Todd writes, "it says something for Behn's personal discretion that Gould, who probably did not know her personally, seems to have had little specific to charge concerning her sexual life, when he dismissed Dryden's wife as a whore, Dryden as a lecher, and Otway as a drunk" (287). It would have been in Behn's personal best interest to keep her widow main character free of licentiousness. As a man, Southerne had no personal stake in how his female characters were viewed.

In his dedication to the published version of *Sir Anthony Love*, Thomas Southerne thanks the women of London for "so visibly promoting my Interest, on those days chiefly (the Third, and the Sixth) when I had the tenderest relation to the welfare of my play" (172). If Southerne is to be believed, the play was not only a success among women, they made sure to fill the playhouse on the days he as playwright received the performance's profits. It is also noteworthy that Sir Anthony Love is the first play on record to receive a second playwright benefit performance, after which the second benefit night became commonplace.

Theorizing Gender in the Renaissance

The topic of women's roles in both family life and society was heavily debated during the Renaissance. While 'the woman question' had been debated in previous centuries, the

16th century in England marked a shift in the members taking part in the discussion; this period was a landmark because for the first time women in England began writing in their own defense and getting published. Most wrote anonymously or under pseudonyms, creating suspicion that the writer was in fact male, while a few writers did publish under their own names (for instance, Jane Anger, author of the pamphlet *Her Protection for Women*, who despite the suspiciously appropriate name, was a real person). As Henderson and McManus remark, "the debate over women's worth has proved a staple of the western literary diet, and during the Renaissance the English middle class had a distinct taste for this fare" (3).

The pamphlets were successful not only for the interest in the subject, but as entertaining writing. Pamphlets on both sides of the debate employ satire and wit. This satirical element lends these pamphlets to multiple levels of interpretation: where is a mocking comment written in jest, intensified for the sake of a pun, and where is a serious argument being made? Analyzing the women pamphleteers presents the potential pitfall of missing the joke, taking satire for sincerity. I will strive to avoid such pitfalls of misinterpretation by examining larger ideas rather than specific, pointed remarks. In the Renaissance worldview the sovereignty of men over women was a fragment within the overall hierarchical order of society, and a view bolstered by religious dogma, since in the Bible God commands Eve to be subordinate to Adam. In an age when the Bible was interpreted strictly, the defenders of women could not discount that passage in Genesis; "therefore, although they argued that woman was as good as, if not better than man, they accepted men's rule over women as part of the God-given order of the world" (Henderson and McManus, 27).

The anti-woman pamphlets present stereotypes of corrupt and corrupting women. Some present women as naturally corrupt, others as corrupted through modern trends, chiefly overstepping gender norms through masculine dress and behavior. The women (and men) responding in support of women utilized various tactics of rebuttal; however, the majority were not subversive of societal expectations. Rather, they countered negative stereotypes by asserting that women were naturally virtuous, chaste and maternal, that they were "acceptable because they have carried out proficiently the tasks allotted to them by a patriarchal society" (Shepherd 10). These writers turned the blame back on men, claiming that sin in fact resided in men not women. Those who attempted to broaden the scope of acceptable behavior for women nonetheless did so without challenging the patriarchal system, just as *The Widow Ranter* retains the patriarchal system through Ranter's marriage to Dareing. Yet, despite accepting and reinforcing the societal framework, "these Renaissance pamphlets show some tentative stirrings of feminism and prefigure certain modern feminist ideas" (Henderson and McManus 14). One pamphlet which does seem to call for female agency (though, again, humor complicates meaning) is *Haec Vir*, a pamphlet published anonymously in 1620, as a response to the anti-woman pamphlet *Hic Mulier*.

The English held three negative stereotypes of women; woman as seductress, woman as shrew, and the vain woman. All three stereotypes are associated with masculine women, best illustrated by *Hic Mulier; or The Man-Woman*. In the first paragraph of *Hic Mulier*, the author declares that never before have women behaved in so masculine a manner, "masculine in mood, from bold speech to impudent action…without redress they were, are, and will be still most Masculine, most mankind and most monstrous" (265). It is important to note that

this opening is playful. The title *Hic Mulier* is a grammatical mix-up, Latin for "this woman" with the masculine form of "this" used. The opening paragraph quoted above is filled with word play, setting up the mood of the pamphlet as witty. Right away the modern reader must question the sincerity of all statements. Yet the overall criticism does seem sincere, as the anxiety *Hic Mulier* expresses had become a prevalent preoccupation in English thought. In that same year, King James ordered the clergy to sermonize "against the insolence of our women and their wearing of broad-brimmed hats, pointed doublets, their hair cut short or shorn, and some of them stilettos or poniards, and such other trinkets of like moment" (quoted in Henderson and McManus, 17).

The masculine dress *Hic Mulier* condemns includes aspects of dress which sexualize the body; the French doublet, a blouse which reveals cleavage, "being unbuttoned to entice" and open skirts instead of petticoats. The author charges these masculine women with having "the impudence of harlots" (266). The author suggests they are sexually promiscuous, and will trade in sex; "she that hath given kisses to have her hair shorn" (269). The masculine women are vain and will "swim in the excess of these vanities" (269). In the pamphlet wars female sexuality was one of the chief topics of debate. Where the shrew may nag and scold and the vain woman be prideful and prone to extravagance, it is the seductress, sexually insatiable, motivated by lust and bringing men to sin, on which the defenders of women focused their efforts. Women pamphleteers countered attacks on female lust with arguments that men are the more lustful beings while women are naturally chaste and nurturing**.** This focus on sexual purity is visible in Behn's characterization of Widow Ranter. Anti-woman moralists paid particular attention to young widows such as Ranter, as the assumption was

that, having been sexually active, a woman would not be able to stay away from sexual temptation.

At the same time, other aspects such as broad-brimmed hats and short hair are criticized for occluding and defiling the women's God-given feminine beauty. The masculine attire mirrors (or perhaps encourages) masculine behavior.

> [Masculine women] will be manlike not only from the head to the waist, but to the very foot and in every condition: man in body by attire, man in behavior by rude complement, man in nature by aptness to anger, man in action by pursuing revenge, man in wearing weapons, man in using weapons, and, in brief, so much man in all things that they are neither men nor women, but just good for nothing (269-270)

The pamphlet imagines these masculine women as existing in a unique androgynous state in which their feminine bodies are hyper-sexualized by male dress while their emotions and behaviors become masculinized and aggressive. In this way they become illegible in a binary system of gender, "neither men nor women" and therefore "good for nothing." The fear of gender blurring imagines a transness which surpasses binary gender and threatens the stability of society—a fear which is exemplified in Sir Anthony's ability to pass as a man, perform masculine aggression and express sexual appetite.

The response pamphlet to *Hic Mulier* was *Haec Vir, or The Womanish-Man*. *Haec Vir* is a humorous dialogue between a Hic Mulier and a Haec Vir. Once more, this pamphlet opens with a humorous tone, the woman mistaking the man for a fellow woman because he is so effeminate in appearance and manner and the man mistaking the woman for a fellow man because she is so masculine. This opening establishes that a balance exists between the two

sexes, such that even if women become more masculine, it is in proportion to men's shifting femininity. This balance is directly acknowledged towards the end of the pamphlet. Once they clarify their respective genders, Haec Vir repeats the accusations expressed in the pamphlet *Hic Mulier*, providing an opportunity for rebuttal.

The response voiced by Hic Mulier is that what is being charged as unnatural is simply new, the resistance a fear of change. She is not unnatural because change is natural, as the seasons change, plants grow and bear fruit. Since there is nothing new under the sun, there can be no novelty, only change. She denies that her clothing is a matter of immodesty and vanity, but rather "warm, thrifty, and wholesome" (284) – a matter of new fashions, not immodesty. A unique expression of personal agency is stated, "Next you condemn me for Unnaturalness in forsaking my creation and condemning custom" but "I was created free, born free and live free" (284).

The potentially subversive expression of personal will is tempered by the immediate shift into self-parody. Hic Mulier attacks Haec Vir, claiming that he and his fellow fops have stolen femininity. She condemns him for the flaws society typically charges women with: vanity in appearance, frivolity, excessive women's ribbons in dress. Further, he and other fops have taken over feminine dances and play shuttlecock, which was previously a woman's game. Given this appropriation of femininity, women have no choice but to become masculine, since there must be a distinction between men and women and someone has to take up arms in battle. If Haec Vir agrees to re-masculinize himself, Hic Mulier will serve and obey him and they will return to being "true men and true women" (288). By creating this reciprocal relationship between the masculine woman and the feminine man, the author

of *Hic Mulier* argues that society need not be threatened by shifting cultural signifiers of gender, as long as both genders shift in a symbiotic manner. The pamphlet rejects *Haec Vir*'s fear of women's autonomy and sexuality by reinforcing the stability and unchangeability of binarly sexed bodies, which should not be threatened by changing fashions. The monstrous androgynous "good for nothing" is rejected, and with it the trans potential to surpass binary gender.

The Widow Ranter is the type of masculine woman mocked in *Haec Vir* and supported by *Hic Mulier.* The stereotypes expressed by anti-women pamphleteers are also present in the perspectives the other characters have of Ranter. When she attacks Dareing in IV.iii, he calls her "virago" and the stage directions during the battle read that she fights *"like a Fury"* (Behn 280). These descriptions express the way the aggressive woman is seen as an anomaly, outside of civilization, primal in a way that is mysterious. Yet, like the write of *Hic Mulier*, Behn normalizes Ranter within the gendered, raced and classed hierarchy of English society.

Behn presents a masculinized woman within a colonial environment in which class hierarchy has broken down and the colonists' very Englishness is in danger. Ultimately, order is restored, as racial hybridity is prevented and class and gender hierarchies are restored. The illiterate drunks on the Jamestown Council will be replaced by "Gentlemen of Sense and Honour" and "The Governor when he comes shall find the Country in better hands than he expects to find it" (Behn, 293). Unlike Behn, Southerne imagines in Sir Anthony a character who upturns, rejects and subverts social hierarchies. Like the Widow Ranter, Sir Anthony is unique in the play, an outlier. As Dareing says of Widow Ranter, "half a dozen would ruin the

land, debauch all the Men and scandalize all the women" (Behn 176). Unlike Behn, however, Southerne does not neutralize Sir Anthony's subversive power, and the play ends with Sir Anthony achieving all her goals and looking forward to more subversive adventures.

Chapter 2: On Female Husbands, Passing Women and Oddities

This chapter is concerned with trans erasure both in 18th-century and in 20th-century scholarship. I will introduce two historical 18th-century individuals who were gender nonconforming: Charles/Mary Hamilton and Charlotte Charke, along with the literary versions of these two individuals. Hamilton's life was fictionalized by Henry Fielding, in the pamphlet *The Female Husband* (1746), while Charlotte Charke published her autobiography, *A Narrative of the Life of Charlotte Charke (Youngest Daughter of Colley Cibber, Esq.),* in serial form in 1755. I read both Hamilton and Charke as trans, with Hamilton presenting a binary gender expression and Charke expressing a non-binary gender, somewhat similar to Sir Anthony. Through close readings and analysis of these individuals (both historical and literary) I examine the reasons trans experience was fixated upon, exploited and erased during the 18th century and the ways in which contemporary scholars have continued to understand these stories and individuals through cisnormative assumptions in order to reinforce fixed beliefs about gender and sexuality. I utilize the concept of epistemic injustice in order to interrogate the ways in which the language used to discuss 18th-century gender nonconformity contributes to trans erasure.

Who was Charles/Mary Hamilton and What is a Female Husband?

Charles Hamilton was a quack doctor in his early twenties who was who was assigned female at birth (AFAB) and outed as a 'woman' and arrested in Glastonbury on September 13, 1746. What we know of Charles Hamilton comes to us through the existing

1746 trial records and the newspaper reports of that trial. Raised as Mary Hamilton, Charles Hamilton was born in Somerset and left home at the age of fourteen in his brother's clothes. He traveled to Scotland, where he apprenticed with a "quack doctor" for three or four years, then started his own practice. Hamilton married his landlady's niece, Mary Price, and the two traveled around Somersetshire for two months until Mary Price had Hamilton arrested for deceiving her into marriage. The *Bath Journal* described Hamilton on September 22, 1746 as "very gay, with Perriwig, Ruffles, and Breeches" and printed rumors "that she has deceived several of the Fair Sex, by marrying them" (as printed in Baker 222). After the trial, on November 12th London's *Daily Advertiser* covered Hamilton, adding more colorful details,

> [Mary Hamilton] pretending herself a Man, had married fourteen Wives, the last of which Number was one Mary Price, who appeared in Court, and deposed, that she was married to the Prisoner, some little Time since, at the Parish Church of St. Cuthbert's in Wells, and that they were Bedded as Man and Wife, and lived as such for about a Quarter of a Year, during which Time she, the said Price, thought the Prisoner a Man, owing to the Prisoner's using certain vile and deceitful Practices, not fit to be mentioned. (as printed in Baker 222)

Hamilton was found guilty—but of what? There was no law against lesbianism, so Hamilton was prosecuted under the Vagrancy Act and sentenced to six months hard labor and four public whippings. The Vagrancy Act was a general catch-all for the regulation of the poor and socially undesirable such as prostitutes and actors (Easton 135). As a quack doctor, Hamilton practiced the type of mobile profession which was regulated by the vagrancy laws (other such professions included strolling actors, unlicensed peddlers and fortune-tellers). Indeed, the focus on Hamilton's vagrancy is visible in the trial records, with details about Hamilton's "travels in mans [*sic*] apparel," apprenticeship to a Mountebank, his becoming a

quack doctor himself, and traveling across different counties taking up twice as much space in Hamilton's deposition as the details about his meeting and marrying Mary Price (deposition reprinted in Baker 219).

However, vagrancy was not simply a matter of wandering, but rather the regulation of undesirable individuals and the prevention of social disorder. Fear of social disorder was specific to the poor, since "the unruly rich were only sometimes a problem; the poor were unruly by definition." (Dwyer 170). The wandering poor were especially dangerous to the social hierarchy, because individuals who stayed in one town were more easily controlled and corrected by the local law. Vagrancy laws became broader in the 18th century, owing to societal changes that led to a greater trend of mobility among the lower class. Twelve statutes were added to the vagrancy laws in the first half of the 18th century, with the 1744 act bringing "idle and disorderly" actions under the jurisdiction of the vagrant laws, which was applied to "social undesirables, particularly streetwalkers, beggars and the destitute" (Rogers 106).

Hamilton's was not the first case of a British woman discovering that her suitor or husband was a 'woman.' Fraser Easton has found over forty records for such individuals in the period between 1660 and 1832.[6] These individuals were sometimes referred to as "counterfeit bridegrooms," a term taken from the play 1677 *The Counterfeit Bridegroom* (the authorship of this play is in question, but may have been written by Aphra Behn or Thomas Betterton, as an adaptation of Thomas Middleton's *No Wit, No Help like a Woman's)*. In *The*

[6] Easton's sources included pension records, preserved diaries and letters, newspaper and periodical publications and legal documents.

Counterfeit Bridegroom the crossdressed woman arranges for her brother to slip into the marriage chamber in her place to convince the wife of her husband's authenticity. This is the same ruse Sir Anthony attempts to convince Valentine to participate in in *Sir Anthony Love*, as discussed in Chapter 1. This is a recurring plot line, which existed in commedia dell'arte and in William Taverner's *The Artful Husband* (1716). Prior to 1746, the counterfeit bridegroom was seen as a comic rogue who had no amorous interest in women, but rather sought out a wife in order to escape with her fortune before she was "discovered" as a woman.

What made Hamilton's case notable was that Mary Price's testimony clarified that their marriage was consummated. In the trial record, Mary Price testifies that Charles Hamilton "entered her Body several times, which made this Examinant believe, at first, that the said Hamilton was a real Man, but soon had reason to Judge that the said Hamilton was not a Man but a Woman, and which the said Hamilton ["own" deleted] acknowledged and confessed afterwards (on the Complaint of this Examinant to the Justices) when brought before them that she was such to the Great Prejudice of this Examinant" (as quoted in Baker 219-220). Easton points to this consummation as causing the press interest in and cultural power of Hamilton's trial; "press accounts circulated the idea that Hamilton had imitated not only a man's sexed body, but his sexual body as well" (Easton 154). For a marriage to successfully exist without a cisgender man involved played into male fears of the time around the need and superiority of European manhood and the fixity of gender roles. The pamphlet, *The Female Husband: Or, The Surprising History of Mrs. Mary, alias Mr. George*

Hamilton. "Who was convicted of having married a Young Woman of WELLS and lived with her as her Husband. Taken from Her own Mouth since her confinement" was a fictionalized version of Hamilton's life, published anonymously in London in 1746, but which scholars agree was written by Henry Fielding. *The Female Husband* focused on Hamilton's success in sexually satisfying women, and as a result of the pamphlet's success, the phrase *female husband* replaced *counterfeit bridegroom* in common use, causing a shift in cultural attitudes towards the individuals labelled *female husbands* (Easton 163). This cultural shift is discussed below.

Will the Real Charles Hamilton Please Stand Up?

Thus far I have provided the cultural context of Hamilton's trial and the details about Hamilton which exist in the public record, which makes a spectacle out of a person deemed an aberration and a criminal. Hamilton himself did not write a memoir nor sit for an interview. We have no remnant of Hamilton's own experience. Despite *The Female Husband*'s claim that this is Hamilton's story, "*Taken from Her own Mouth since her confinement,"* Sheridan Baker has shown that Fielding was not present prior to or during the trial and only learned about the case second-hand from the newspapers (Baker 219). Baker concluded that "everything in Fielding's first twenty pages, and much in his last three, looks fictitious." There is no real introspection or analysis of Hamilton's motives and feelings, despite the fact that Fielding states that he interviewed Hamilton for this pamphlet. Rather, Fielding exploits the story of Charles Hamilton, playing with the unusual nature of his case in

order to reinforce the fixity of gender roles while at the same time to moralize against the dangers of same-sex desire, titillate his readers with “near pornographic” (Baker 213) details, and mock Methodists.

The Fielding Hamilton

Fielding’s Mary Hamilton was born in 1721, amusingly on the Isle of Man. She[7] was a good girl, raised in strict virtue and religion and did not give any indication as a child that she would “one day disgrace her sex by the most abominable and unnatural pollutions” (2). As a teenager, Mary was seduced by her neighbor Anne Johnson, a childhood friend. They moved to Bristol together and lived as a couple, until Anne Johnson left Mary to marry a man. Experiencing heartbreak and jealousy, Mary reacted by deciding to wear men’s clothes, travel to Ireland, and be a Methodist teacher. While a full analysis of Fielding’s anti-Methodist attitude is outside the scope of this chapter, I would like to provide a little context regarding Fielding’s use of Methodist teachers as a vehicle for Mary Hamilton’s wickedness. The Methodist movement began in 1738, when preachers John Wesley and George Whitefeild began preaching in public spaces in England. Methodists threatened the social hierarchy in a number of ways which relate to *The Female Husband*. First, they preached individual divine inspiration and encouraged lay teachers who travelled, decentralizing and minimizing the importance of the Church itself. Second, they focused on preaching to the

[7] When discussing the living Hamilton, I shall refer to him as Charles and use he/him/his pronouns to respect that fact that he lived as a man. When discussing Fielding’s fictional Hamilton, I will use she/her/hers as Fielding’s Hamilton is a woman who uses male presentation as a disguise.

poor, being very successful with Irish migrant laborers. Third, the Methodist movement encouraged women to take leadership roles, arguing that women were equal to men rather than dependent and beneath men in Biblical and biological hierarchy. Women's activities in Methodist preaching and missionizing also led to fears that women would avoid marriage and their proper place in the home (Cupples 3-4). Thus, by blaming Methodists for Hamilton's loss of propriety, Fielding uses sexual and gender deviance to denigrate Methodists, while also reinforcing both traditional gender roles and the Anglican Church as normative and desirable.

Hamilton's romantic and sexual exploits begin in Ireland, as a Methodist teacher. At first she meets a widow she desires, but having lost her voice, can only express her desire by "squeezing, kissing, toying, etc." (7). Fielding tells us that these physical overtures "were received in such a manner by the fair widow, that her lover thought he had sufficient encouragement to proceed to a formal declaration of his passion" (7). The next day Hamilton writes the widow a love letter, which she responds to with mock shock at Hamilton's assumptions and a clarification that she is not interested in a romantic encounter with Hamilton. Why would the widow, who Fielding tells us was encouraging Hamilton the previous day, now compare Hamilton to Farinelli? The widow is 40 years old, twice widowed and seeking a third husband (7). In her reply to Hamilton the widow states that she couldn't even fathom that Hamilton handed her a letter, at first, but that, "I thought, when I took it, it might have been an Opera song, and which for certain reasons I should think, when your cold is gone, you might sing as well as Farinelli, from the great resemblance there is between your persons" (8). Farinelli was one of the most famous singers of the time, so this

would seem to be a compliment. But in fact it is an insult, because Farinelli was also a castrato and therefore an ambiguously gendered oddity. The suggestion that there is a "great resemblance" between Hamilton and Farinelli may be a hint that the "squeezing, kissing, toying etc." clarified to a woman who had had sex with multiple men previously, that Hamilton's body was non-normative. Since Hamilton had lost her voice and couldn't speak, the widow's comparison cannot be a simple comparison to the combination of feminine (i.e. high pitched) voice and male presentation. It is also worth noting that Fielding also mocks Farinelli in his play *Pasquin*, in which a country girl says to her mother that she'd like to go to a London masquerade, where "we shall see Faribelly, the strange Man-Woman that they say is with child…" (15). As a castrato, Farinelli had a soprano voice with a significant range, in a masculine-presenting body. Like Hamilton, Farinelli was a person whom Fielding could exploit in order to reinforce proper gender roles.

Fielding's Hamilton is a womanizer and a trickster, who marries three women and deceives them into believing she is a man. After the first widow rejects him, he finds another, much older widow, Lady Rushford (i.e. Rush-for-it). Rushford is comically sixty but behaves like a young woman and Hamilton plans to marry her only for her fortune. This plan aligns with popular assumptions which were challenged by Hamilton's trial and Fielding's *The Female Husband*, namely, that there were women who passed for men in order to defraud gullible women financially but who did not sexually desire their marks nor were they capable of retaining their male identity after a sexual encounter. This is the first of four times that Fielding tells the readers that Hamilton has a means of deceiving his wives into thinking she is a man; unlike the counterfeit bridegroom, Hamilton is sexually experienced with women

and is able to be convincing in bed “by means which decency forbids me even to mention” (10) which is to say a dildo. This dildo is alluded to with double entendres throughout the pamphlet.

Although too indecent for Fielding to directly name, the dildo was far from unknown to Londoners. French traveller Georger-Louis Lesage wrote of his 1713-14 trip to London that he saw a doll seller in St. James Park who sold dolls to young ladies, but the dolls did not have legs, but rather a six-inch cylinder covered in cloth (Wagner 52). Anonymous bawdy poems were also published, including *Dildoides. A Burlesque Poem* (London, 1706), *A Bauble, a tale* (London, 1721), and *Monsieur Thing's Origin: or Seignor D—o's Adventures in Britain* (London, 1722). *Monsieur Thing's Origin* tells the tale of a dildo that came to London from France, traveling from house to house, pleasuring various ladies in need. Among the solitary masturbatory activities with ‘Seignor Dildo,’ exists also a story of two women in the poem,

> She acted Man, being in a merry Mood,
> Striving to please her Partner as she cou'd;
> And thus they took it in their turns to please
> Their Lustful Inclinations to appease.
> - *Monsieur Thing's Origin*, as quoted in Wagner, 53.

While such writing existed, *The Female Husband* remained accessible to a female readership by only indirectly alluding to the dildo. Terry Castle explains that the pamphlet is written for two audiences: women whose innocence has to be preserved and men for whom the innuendo is present. For the male and non-virginal female readership, the innuendo provides titillating erotica, as ”Lesbianism has a long history as a topos in pornographic literature, and was never more popular perhaps than in the eighteenth century” (612). The use

of trial reports and supposedly instructional materials (as *The Female Husband* purports to be) for acceptable pornographic use was prevalent in the 18th century. Peter Wagner details the ways in which a subgenre of pornographic trial reports developed out of the popular crime report genre, determining that by the 1730s the publishers were changing their crime publications based on a public desire to read these reports as entertainment. Trial cases which involved adultery, nymphomania, impotence and other obscene or sexually perverse topics were published in books, brochures, magazines and newspapers to a degree that "[i]t bespeaks the preoccupation of the eighteenth century that trial reports containing sexual material were published and read for erotic reasons" (1982 134). Thus London readers knew much more about a range of sexual behaviors and their social consequences than propriety allowed Fielding to acknowledge.

Let us return to Hamilton and Rushford and the unmentionable dildo which cements their marriage. The first few days of marriage are happy, but on the fourth day the widow tries to sexually arouse Hamilton outside of the bedroom. This is a problem, because Hamilton "had not the *wherewithall* about her" (italics in original; 9). Not having the dildo on hand to provide a convincing erection makes Rushford suspicious and she discovers that "I am married to one who is no man. My husband? A woman, a woman, a woman" (10). Hamilton runs off in the night, travels to another town and sets herself up as a quack doctor —as unsophisticated and unplanned an action as running off as a man was in the first place.

A Mr. Ivythorn brings his virginal daughter to Hamilton to treat for greensickness. Bonnie Blackwell states that this "apparently minor detail about the virginal bride Miss Ivythorn—her greensickness—is actually a crucial key to understanding *The Female*

Husband and its singular patterns of reading and refusing to read" (61). Blackwell clarifies that while greensickness was most likely an iron deficiency, the belief of the time was that it was a form of "uterine hysteria" due to unfulfilled sexual desire. Since getting a husband was what would help with this sort of hysteria (as it is the sexual desire without sex which was the assumed cause), "Dr. Hamilton, who has been hired to cure her greensickness, becomes the literal embodiment of her cure when Miss Ivythorn revives enough to elope…" (62). The two marry and Hamilton "so well acted his part, that his bride had not the least suspicion of the legality of her marriage" (13). I suggest this is the third euphemism for Hamilton's dildo.

Though Hamilton's second marriage lasts longer than her first, after a fortnight Ivythorn eventually discovers that, as she cries, "You have not — you have not — what you ought to have. I always thought indeed your shape was something odd, and have often wondered you had not the least beard; but I thought you had been a man for all that, or I'm sure I would not have been so wicked to marry you for the world" (14). Hamilton tries to convince her that their marriage is a good option for her because "she would have all the pleasures of marriage without the inconveniences" (14) which Blackwell calls "a new cure for greensickness. She prescribes not children to combat anemia but homosexuality to combat children" (70). Ivythorn hesitates, but ultimately states that she won't be a sinner and is going to tell her father the truth. Once again, Hamilton runs away to another small town and finds her third wife, Mary Price.

Mary Price is a naive and uneducated girl who falls deeply in love with Hamilton. Unlike Rushford, whom Hamilton was swindling, and Ivythorn, to whom Hamilton was not very attached, Mary Price was Hamilton's great love; "With this girl, hath this wicked

woman since her confinement declared, she was really as much in love, as it was possible for a man ever to be with one of her own sex" (17). At this point Hamilton's story completely strays from the traditional plots of crossdressing female bridegrooms and ventures into true love. The two elope and for three months they live happily, until a man from the town of Hamilton's second marriage recognizes Hamilton and Mary Price's mother has Hamilton arrested. The magistrate sends men to search Hamilton's things and they find "something of too vile, wicked and scandalous a nature, which was found in the Doctor's trunk" (21). Mary Price would not believe Hamilton was not a man until the trial, yet the discovered dildo incriminates Hamilton, who is found guilty and whipped in four market towns. Yet even after the first whipping, which was a punishment intended to bring Hamilton public shame, Hamilton did not learn her lesson, and at night would try to bribe her jailers to bring her a pretty girl. The pamphlet ends with a moralizing tone, stating that the only reason to share this wicked story is as a warning to young women not to commit "such foul and unnatural crimes" (23).

Poking Fun with Pronouns

The incongruity of joining "Female" and "Husband" seems to be part of the humor Fielding creates, which can also be seen in his use of pronouns. Despite framing Hamilton as a woman, Fielding playfully uses both female and male pronouns, jumping wildly from **him,** to **her,** to **his**—even within the same sentence. Looking at Fielding's pronoun choices carefully, we can see a pattern emerge in which Fielding uses male pronouns when Hamilton is interacting with woman she is wooing. The male pronouns reflect that in the interactions

Hamilton has she is a (man-like) desiring subject rather than a female object of desire, while the female pronouns reflect Hamilton's interiority as a deceptive "wicked woman" who is using gender disguise as a means for sexual satisfaction. Hamilton presents as male from the moment she leaves home for Ireland; however the descriptions of her experiences en route use female pronouns. The first instance male pronouns appear is with the first widow he attempts to seduce; "[t]o this widow our adventurer began presently to make addresses, and as he at present wanted tongue to express the ardency of **his** flame, **he** was obliged to make use of actions of endearment, such as squeezing, kissing, toying, etc." (7). The male pronouns continue in the next paragraph, but then switch back to female pronouns: "[The widow's] lover thought **he** had sufficient encouragement to proceed to a formal declaration of **his** passion. And this **she** chose to do by letter, as **her** voice still continued too hoarse for uttering the soft accents of love." (7)

We see another example of these shifts occur when Hamilton arrives at Totness as a doctor. Fielding narrates that, "**she** assumed the title of a doctor of physic, and took lodgings in the house of one Mrs. Baytree." However, when Hamilton becomes interested in Miss Ivythorn, "The doctor had not been long entrusted with the care of this young patient before **he** began to make love to her" (13). In total, Fielding uses male pronouns eleven times during this section of the story, throughout their elopement and fortnight of marriage, and even into Ivythorn's discovery of Hamilton's anatomy. It is only when the young wife states she is going to tell her father Hamilton is not a man that Fielding shifts female pronouns. This shift does not occur in discrete sentences, but rather marks the shift Hamilton makes in giving up on this marriage; "Which resolution the Doctor finding **himself** unable to alter, **she** put on

her cloaths with all the haste **she** could…" (15).

The difference between Hamilton's womanly interiority and the exteriority of Doctor Hamilton, the desiring subject, is maintained when Fielding shares the thoughts of the women Hamilton seduces. When Hamilton is interested in Mary Price, nearly all of the male pronouns are present in moments that Mary Price is interacting with or thinking about Hamilton. This can be seen in the way Hamilton calls upon Mary Price in her mother's home after they have exchanged love letters,

> "**She** now resolved to be no more contented with this distant kind of conversation, but unable to meet **her** mistress face to face. Accordingly that very afternoon **she** went to her mother's house, and enquiring for her poor Molly, who no sooner heard her lover's voice than she fell trembling in the most violent manner. Her sister who opened the door informed the Doctor she was home, and let the impostor in; but Molly being in dishabille, would not see **him** till she had put on clean linnen, and was arrayed from head to foot in as neat, tho' not in so fine a manner, as the highest court lady in the kingdom could attire herself in, to receive her embroider'd lover" (18).

Through pronouns Fielding effectively divides Hamilton in two, one part a wicked woman (The Female) and the other part a desiring man (The Husband).

Men's Fear of Obsolescence

In "Gender's Two Bodies: Women Warriors, Female Husbands and Plebeian Life" Fraser Easton identifies the press coverage of the Hamilton trial (which includes Fielding's pamphlet) as causing a shift in both terminology and attitude towards passing women. Prior to 1746, the term for passing women who married was "counterfeit bridegroom" taken from the play *The Counterfeit Bridegroom*, as mentioned above. The shift to "female husband"

involves the acknowledgment of sexual capability and penetrative success. “The new terminology marks the shift: whereas the word ‘bridegroom’ evokes the ephemeral act of marrying, the word ‘husband’ evokes sexual consummation and an ongoing state of marriage” (Easton, page?). For such a marriage to be successful threatened the family unit and the “sexual indispensability of men” (163). Additionally, since husbands were in control of their wives’ wealth and property, a female husband was a fraudulent “baron” of her property, and thus “committed a symbolic offense against her own status as a plebeian *woman*; a woman who becomes a ‘feme-baron’ (to coin a phrase) is analogous with a servant who becomes the master of a fellow servant: she commits a crime against status” (163). Easton carefully presents different subcategories of *passing women* in the 18th century, making distinctions between literary representations and real-world examples, and concluding that, for the most part, unlike their literary counterparts, passing women were working class, and their choice to present as men was accepted in some instances because it was read as part of lower class industriousness and subordination—options for work for plebeian women were fewer and wages were a fraction of men’s wages. Easton shows a distinction between the passing women laborers and women warriors on the one hand and female husbands on the other. Using a wealth of archival accounts (newspaper reports, legal documents and memoirs) Easton shows that while cross-dressing and lesbian romance were each acceptable separately, the joining of the two together in a female husband was persecuted. “Female husbands appear to have been singled out for social stigma and, often, criminal punishment because they represented the possibility of a woman’s rivaling imitation of a man outside the justifications of plebeian industry” (171).

Why the term *female husband* in the first place? Blackwell suggests that Fielding was inspired by the woman warrior tradition of popular ballads, many of which had titles such "The Female Soldier," "The Female Smuggler," "The Female Sailor Bold" (56). In the 17th century English fascination with gender nonconforming individuals manifested in the figure of the Female Warrior, a "transvestite heroine [who] masquerades as a man and goes to war or to sea for love and for glory" (Dianne Dugaw 11). The figure of the Warrior Woman existed in ballads and chapbooks sold on the streets. In the 18th century this figure of the Warrior Woman persisted, but was also joined by fascination with real individuals such as Hamilton. "Without exception, the cross-dressing woman of the ballads renounces male drag to become an obedient wife to the man she followed to war" (56). The woman warrior ballads tell the stories of heterosexual women who temporarily pass as men, ultimately returning to their female gender roles, thereby reinforcing gender boundaries and hierarchy.

Hermeneutic Injustice and Transhistoricity

The female husband, like the female warrior, is imagined as a woman who is temporarily dressing as a man for a specific goal (or set of goals), without any consideration to gender identity. I argue that the term *female husband* is an example of hermeneutical injustice, in that the term functions to define these AFAB individuals as women, even when their actions provide no reason to believe they consider themselves women. This act of naming AFAB individuals *female* or *women* discards the individuals' own self-identification as men (a form of testimonial injustice) and prevents contemporary trans individuals from

learning about these historical AFAB people and understanding them as trans (a form of hermeneutical injustice). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy elaborates on the notion of hermeneutical injustice: “People in a position of power will tend to create concepts and linguistic representations that help to conceptualize the experiences and phenomena that matter *to them*, rather than the experiences and phenomena that matter the most to people in a position of marginalization.” The category of female husband was developed and named first by Henry Fielding, a cisgender man, then utilized and further delineated by cisgendered journalists and scholars for the next two and a half centuries (the term is still used by some scholars today). We do not know if Hamilton learned of Fielding’s pamphlet, or how he might have felt were he aware of the pamphlet. However, we do have access to other trans individuals who have been labelled female husbands and passing women, despite personally clearly self-identifying as men. Such examples include Dr. James Barry and late 19th century New York politician Murray Hall (Katz 232-237).

The influence of Fielding’s pamphlet about Hamilton has led to the widespread use of the term *Female Husband* in discussing AFAB people who lived as men and married women. This term persists in currently written books and articles about gender nonconforming individuals in England and America in the 18th and 19th centuries. Throughout the 19th century newspaper stories about female husbands continued to fascinate both English and American readers. As mentioned above, Easton and other scholars discuss *female husbands* as a subcategory of *passing women*. I have been able to trace this term as far back as Jonathan Katz’s 1976 *Gay American History*, though I don’t know that Katz coined the term.

A passing woman means an AFAB person living as a man but not specifically engaging in romantic relationships with women. Historians will suggest many possible reasons for passing women to live as men, including escape from home, patriotism, the need for a job, crime, following men to sea or war, leaving men behind, avoiding rape, preserving virginity, and love and desire for women" (Donoghue, 59). But as the term suggests, while these individuals may pass as men, they are *women*. Katz adamantly declares, "Despite their masculine masquerade, the females considered here can be understood not as imitation men, but as real women, women who refused to accept the traditional, socially assigned fate of their sex, women whose particular revolt took the form of passing as men" (209).

Passing woman is a very strange phrase. It sounds as though someone is passing *as* a women, not a woman passing as a man. The identity being presented is absent from the phrase—not "women passing for men" or "male-passing women" but simply "passing women," suggesting that what they are passing as should be obvious. At the same time, the phrase emphatically reinforces the individuals' "real" sex as women. The use of "female husband" and "passing woman" is a scholarly practice that I challenge. Both terms reinforce cisgendered conception, preventing an analysis of these individuals as trans.

The second half of this chapter will explore the life and autobiography of actress Charlotte Charke. As the other prominent AFAB cross-dresser of 18th-century England, Charke has also been categorized by scholars as a "female husband" and "passing woman."

Charlotte Charke's "Unaccountable Life"

In this section I analyze both Charlotte Charke's life and the literary version of herself which she created in her autobiography, *A Narrative of the Life of Charlotte Charke (Youngest Daughter of Colley Cibber, Esq.),* (henceforth referred to as simply the *Narrative*). Charlotte Charke wrote her memoir in 1755, at the age of 43, recounting her life from childhood through that moment. Throughout her adult life Charke had many professions, including puppeteer, sausage seller, grocer, inn keeper, pastry chef, newspaper copyeditor and, in her final years, author. But most important of all, Charke was an actor: not simply a breeches actress, but a female actress who played male roles. Charke was also known to dress in men's clothing for most of her adult life. The ways in which gender, performance, and reality meld in her writing and how they intersect with gender performance are what interest me.

Charlotte Charke came from a theatrical family, which affected her relationship to performance, and perhaps to gender. Charke's father, Colley Cibber, was a prominent actor-manager, as well as a playwright and poet. Politically savvy, Cibber came to be poet laureate despite his poetry being considered mediocre (his odes were mocked in the papers by several different fellow writers) (Nichols 282). Charlotte's mother, Kathryn Cibber, and brother, Theophilus, were both actors, with Theophilus following in Colley's footsteps, managing the summer seasons at Drury Lane (Shevelow 96). The family was also very public, with Colley, Theophilus and Charke each writing an autobiography which utilizes theatrical references and descriptions throughout. Unlike other autobiographies, which are written as a form of confession, Jean Marsden states that "the Cibbers create works in which the self is

constructed by means of acting rather than confessing and in which the presence of theatre confounds the personal because it is inherently public rather than intimate" (67).

All autobiography is to a degree a constructed self, an individual looking back and retelling the past within the framework of their present. Philippe Lejeune's theory of the autobiographical pact states that an autobiographical writer and reader enter into a contract where it is agreed that the author, narrator and protagonist are the same person, and that the information is factual (Lejeune 12). Although Charke makes many claims to truth, a healthy distrust is needed when reading Charke's autobiography due to her writing in the mid-18th century, the beginning of memoir developing as a genre, as well as her own motivations for writing one. Charke lived most of her adult life in poverty and in debt, estranged from her father, Colley Cibber. In 1755 she returned to London after nine years away as a 'strolling actor' and unsuccessful shop-keeper, determined to make a living by writing, to reform her somewhat notorious reputation and reconcile with her father. The autobiography was written in eight installments and published in the newspaper, thus catering to a certain tabloid interest in scandalous material. Additionally, Charke's writing is very theatrical, framing memories as dramatic scenes. Indeed on the title page Charke quotes the prologue of the play *The What d'ye Call It*, "This Tragic Story, or this Comic Jest, May make you laugh, or cry—As you like best." From the title page and into the introduction of the *Narrative* Charke frames her existence as extraordinary, telling her readers that they will come to know her as an Oddity and one of "the Wonders of Ages past, and those to come" (13). Throughout the *Narrative* Charke frames herself as someone who is extraordinary, largely because her abilities clash with societal expectations placed upon her. Charke is both a victim of circumstance and an

individual whose personality is singular and entertaining.

Which Charke are we discussing? Charlotte Charke does not exist as a singular individual, but as a multiplicity. It is impossible to completely separate the 43 year old Charke writing her memoirs, the literary protagonist Charke that she is fashioning with her own pen, Charke the actress, the younger Charke who existed without these dramatic flourishes, the scandalous cross-dresser who lived in notoriety. In analyzing recent writing about Charke, I recognize many scholars attempting to treat these different facets of Charke as singular yet conflating literary Charke and 'reality' Charke. At times it seems Charke's storytelling has charmed scholars into reading too much theatricality, frivolity and symbolism into 'reality' Charke. I am interested in the literary Charke which joined Fielding's Mary Hamilton as one of the more prominent representations of gender nonconformity in 18th-century England, as well as the 'real' Charke who walked London's streets in breeches, waistcoat and wig. I will attempt to attend to these different versions of Charke, yet I fully expect to be confounded in this exercise, as Charke refuses tidy categorizing. Indeed, I argue that Charke's refusal to be singular and consistent for the reader is also a refusal to be legible within a strict gender binary.

Young Charke: Strong willed, theatrical and masculine?

The first installment of the *Narrative* is largely about Charke's childhood, and she develops her character as a rambunctious, pompous and strong-willed child who expresses her agency over and over—often getting into trouble. She does not state that her behaviors were masculine, instead complaining that behaviors she was dissuaded or prevented from

engaging in would have been completely acceptable had she been a male child. The very first story about herself is "a small Specimen of my former Madness, when I was but four Years of Age" (17) in which child Charlotte attempts to dress up as her father. She decides to convince the neighbors that she was the 'squire (Cibber), so she rose early in the morning, before anyone else, took Colley Cibber's wig and her bother's coat and breeches (which she had to pin up for size) and walked around outside. She realized she had to hide her girls' shoes so the effect would be complete, so she stepped into a dry ditch where her feet would be hidden in dirt. "But, behold, the Oddity of my Appearance soon assembled a Croud about me; which yielded me no small Joy, as I conceived their Risibility on this Occasion to be Marks of Approbation, and walked myself into a Fever, in the happy Thought of being taken for the 'Squire." (18)

Some scholars link Charke's cross-dressing to her father. Young Charlotte liked dressing up in her father's wig, a periwig style which, by this point in time, was rather old fashioned and ridiculous. The senior Cibber created iconic fop roles, specifically a character he wrote himself, Sir Novelty Fashion, a character known for the preposterous length of his periwig. Straub and Mackie view the fact that Cibber specialized in fop roles as providing Charke with an incomplete representation of masculinity (as father figure). Straub links the childhood attempt to perform Cibber with adult Charke performing the fop, Lord Place, in Henry Fielding's *Pasquin*. Lord Place was a caricature of Cibber himself. Straub views Charke's performances of her father as both "parodic repetitions of some of her father's more infamous differences from an authoritative, heard-but-not-seen masculine subject. Charke puts on the guise of masculinity in order to put her father on, and in the process she gestures

toward a performative, 'unnatural' masculinity that unsettles newly dominant assumptions about gender as legitimized according to fixed and oppositional categories" (118).

These arguments expose a minor way in which gender nonconformity is pathologized. When a man takes on manhood, his emulating of his father is unremarkable. Indeed, Charke's brother Theophilus is described as emulating Colley Cibber as well, but his actions are only mentioned because he could not match Colley's acting and literary success. So why this focus on Charke imitating her father? Because rather than read it as a way of growing, self-understanding, etc, it is an imitation. It is a masquerade. Her clothing and roles are not viewed by these scholars as "authentic" in the way that a Theophilus' were. Instead they are deviant. Therefore they are seen as pathological and failed.

Certainly there is meaning in Charke's first personal anecdote being about her dressing as her father, since Charke is a careful storyteller. Charke personally links her adult presentation to her four-year-old self, "[h]aving, even then, a passionate Fondness for a Perriwig" (17). Both the desire for masculine dress and the desire to perform are presented as fully developed in young Charlotte, leading her to act out in ways that would be seen as entertaining and harmless in a small child. Each of the "madcap" adventures with which Charke fills the first installment of the *Narrative* can be read as a child performing in order to be the center of attention, particularly in public. While dressing up as Colley Cibber is the most overtly masculine of these adventures, Charlotte exhibits other interests which clashed with normative behaviors expected of girls. As an author, Charke sets this expectation up in a way that adult Charke's performative, breeches-wearing misadventures make sense in relation to young Charlotte. As a point of historical fact, these pranks make sense in terms of

child psychology. Charlotte was a golden years child. Her mother was 47 at the time of her birth, and suffering from asthma. Her siblings were grown and her father largely absent from her life; Cibbers spent much of his time acting, gambling, and traveling. Charlotte grew up without a great deal of supervision, which clarifies why young Charlotte's pranks are designed to place her at the center of attention.

As she grew, Charlotte exercised masculinity through her education as well. Charlotte so excelled in school that her parents were urged to give her a private tutor, who taught her Latin and Geography, topics which were not considered appropriate for girls to study. In the *Narrative* Charke uses her unusual education as an excuse for her teenage behavior. She writes that as a teenager her mother sent her off to learn how to be a good housewife too late —not because she had already developed interest in masculine activities such as shooting and animal husbandry, but because she had become too learned a scholar to want to be a proper wife. She is partially excusing herself, expressing that the choice to educate her came from a tutor and from her parents' fondness and desire for her to be wise, and therefore implying that it was not her fault.

Charlotte Charke's teenage years were also spent in traditionally masculine ways. At fourteen she moved to her family's country home with her ailing mother. Colley Cibber remained in London. During these years Charlotte loved to shoot and spent large parts of her days practicing her marksmanship until a "strait-lac'd, old-fashion'd Neighbor" persuaded her mother that it was inappropriate for a young gentlewoman to shoot. Charke remarks that her focus on shooting would have been perfectly acceptable had she been born a boy (29). When she was denied her guns, she took to gardening, working with cattle and learning

animal husbandry. Kathryn sent Charlotte to live with Dr. Hales, a relative who had daughters Charke's age. Sending a daughter to live with relatives for a few years was not an unusual practice at the time (Shevelow 72). With Charlotte, however, Kathryn also hoped she would develop more feminine pursuits, but Charlotte could not stand lady-like activities, writing that she had a "natural Aversion to a Needle, and profound Respect for a Curry-Comb, in the Use of which I excelled *most young Ladies* in Great-Britian" (271). Like her marksmanship, gardening and education, Charke uses excellence as her alibi for taking on habits marked as unfeminine and inappropriate for young girls.

While living with the Hales, Charlotte rejected spending time with her female relations, instead becoming the doctor's assistant and developing a great interest in medicine. Upon returning to her mother's home a few years later, Charlotte opened her own secret clinic for the poor women of the area. She would have been sixteen or seventeen at this time. While she did not have a proper knowledge of medicine, she convinced the women that she was a professional by using her knowledge of Latin to speak impressive nonsense.[8] This medicine hobby is another example of her interest in areas which are typically masculine and showing the agency and selfishness to pursue her interests (selfish since she could have caused harm to these women due to her lack of knowledge).

Kristina Straub argues that Charke's description of her childhood shows a child who is "inept at both masculine and feminine pursuits and so ends up vacillating between the two"

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[8] Speaking nonsense in Latin in order to be perceived as a doctor is also a theatrical trope in such comedies as Machiavelli's *The Mandrake*. This could be a coincidence, a source of inspiration for young Charlotte, who was brought up in an acting family and about to debut as an actress, or an embellishment by the adult Charke.

(121). What is it that Straub reads as "inept"? Charke's descriptions of her marksmanship, gardening and animal husbandry suggest that she was quite adept in those skills. True, Charke's big plans (such as her rural medical practice) never succeed, but is that a measure of ineptitude in relation to gender, or is that the way Charke uses her biography to entertain her readers? Young Charlotte has ridiculous adventures, but these are the result of her overeager imagination and difficulty in managing and planning her behavior—qualities which cause her trouble throughout her whole life, but are not directly related to gender.

Charlotte Charke/Charles Brown: Actor and Cross-dresser

Born into a theatrical family, Charke made her performance debut in 1730, at the age of seventeen. In her first few years as on the stage, a number of stressful interactions with management caused her to either quit or be fired from both the Drury Lane and Covent Garden multiple times. Drury Lane and Covent Garden were the two Theatres Royal, the legitimate patent theatres of London. However Henry Fielding was successfully managing the Hay-Market Theatre, which did not have a royal patent, but was not being censored until the Licensing Act of 1737, which caused Charke and many other London actors to lose their careers (Baruth 21).

As a budding actress, Charke showed a preference for breeches roles and in 1736 Fielding cast her in the role of Lord Place in his play *Pasquin.* The character of Lord Place is not a disguised woman. Rather, he is a satirization of Charke's father, Colley Cibber. Fielding likely cast Charke in order to further insult Cibber, since it was public knowledge that Cibber and Charke were recently estranged due to a family argument. (Shevelow 216). Starting with

Lord Place, Charke played many male roles intended for male actors, first at the Hay-Market Theatre and then in her years strolling. In telling of her years as a strolling actor in the country, Charke shares that some country gentleman who thought himself a great critic saw her Hamlet and thought that "no Man could possibly do it better" (208). This is not necessarily an indication great skill, since she writes that many of the strolling actors are completely talentless. However the statement tells us that in those later years of strolling and presenting as Charles Brown, Charke did not actually always attempt to pass.

Why did Charke present in male clothing for most of her adult life? Here the tricky question of intent comes up. Given that she was often running away from creditors during her 30s, it could be guessed that it was due to the need to hide from them. Yet, the first time Charke mentions being arrested for her debts, she is already in men's clothing and her friends, a group of female owners of London coffeehouses and brothels, attempt to put together bail money for "Sir Charles" as they affectionately called her (92). So although there were times in which Charke passed as Charles Brown in order to hide from creditors, she was already dressing in men's clothing and being called Charles previously.

Another possible explanation for Charke's off-stage crossdressing is her need for money. Certainly Charke was in poverty and struggling for most of her adult life; therefore she took jobs which were unavailable for women and jobs which would have paid less for women. And yet, as I will show, Charke's narrative describes multiple times in which dressing in men's clothing and passing as a man were financially disadvantageous for her. Charke at times dressed as a man but does not attempt to pass, giving her real name, while at other times she passed and used the name "Charles Brown." There are a number of jobs she

tells about which are complicated by her gender presentation. At one point Charke's brother helped her find work as a "gentleman" for an aristocrat. Her employer knew she was female, as well as her family identity, but was happy to hire her, as she had the education he needed, particularly fluency in French. Charke was very happy in this job for five weeks until her employer was swayed by friends that having a woman in men's clothes in this position was not appropriate and he let Charke go. In this case being in men's clothes was both financially advantageous and disadvantageous for her. She could not have received this position while presenting as a woman; however, given how much her employer cared for her and pitied her given her financial hardships, could he not have found another position for her in his home in women's dress? Such a position may not have paid as well, but it would have been better than unemployment. This is only my musings, for Charke does not hint that such a position was ever actually offered or considered. Yet, since she tells that he often invited her to join his table and that he had "Pity for an unfortunate Wretch, who had never given him the least Offence" (136) but that presenting in men's clothing was the only problem, I am led to ask why not simply change dress for a job? Certainly on the stage Charke kept occasionally performing both male and female roles throughout this time (illegal theatres were cropping up again, but Charke had to be careful not to be recognized by bailiffs because she was hiding from debtors prison). So why not wear women's clothing in life if a job would be possible through it? When working for this aristocratic employer, Charke felt joy at the protection the job gave her from the law, writing that in her walk to work every morning, "I marched every Day through the Streets with Ease and Security, having his Lordship's Protection, and proud to cock my Hat in the Face of the best of the Bailiffs, and shake Hands

with them into the Bargain" (136).

After she had been unemployed for a little while, her personal connections yet again helped her find a position. A childhood friend introduced Charke to her husband as "a young Gentleman of a decay'd Fortune"(160) and he got her a job as a waiter for Mrs. Dorr at Kings Head. Thus again she gets a job presenting as a man, which is higher paying than it would be for a woman, but as she was already in men's clothing to start with, the job was not the instigating factor. After a short while Charke had to leave the job because things became difficult in relation to Charke's gender. A maid started playing matchmaker between Charke and Mrs. Dorr's kinswoman who desired "the young Gentleman," while there was also a customer who started a rumor that Charke was female. Here we see again how the act of presenting male was both advantageous and dangerous to Charke's financial stability.

We have Charke's own explanation as to why she wears male clothing, but it is an explanation intended to prevent further questions—a deflection presented as an earnest confession. Charke never discusses when she began to wear men's clothing, only that her great misfortune and poverty were due to a falling out with her father, not being able to act, and living as a widow with a young child. Charke developed a love affair with a man whom she does not name. She says they married in secret and that he died soon after. Charlotte gives the reason she dresses in men's clothing as another secret she cannot share, but which is related to this secret lover/husband. She writes, "My going into Men's Cloaths, in which I continued many Years; the reason of which I beg to be excused, as it concerns no Mortal *now living*, but myself" (272). She had debts which she could not pay off with money from her secret lover, because when he died, his money did not go to her, since their affair/marriage

was a secret. One creditor, who knew of Charke's relationship with the deceased man, went to the authorities, thinking that Charke had inherited the money but would not pay her debts. As a result, Charke was arrested for failing to pay her creditors. This is the first time in the *Narrative* that Charke mentions herself in men's clothing. She does not set the scene very clearly, only saying that she was discovered because she was wearing a distinctive and "very handsome lac'd Hat I had on, being then, for some substantial Reasons, EN CAVALIER; which was so well described, the Bailif had no great Trouble in finding me" (90). This clarifies to the reader that Charke had established her presentation as masculine by this time, without Charke explicitly stating the fact.

In one of the few queer analyses of Charke's *Narrative*, Jade Higa does not seek to read a reason for Charke's masculine presentation. Instead, Higa highlights Charke's refusal to reveal why she cross-dresses. Higa sees in this refusal a hint at how carefully cultivated Charke's autobiography is; "Even though she opens up her entire life to an audience through her *Narrative*, this particular lack of transparency highlights how carefully she controls what she discloses about her life" (7).

Without knowing Charke's motivations, nearly every other scholar who has written about Charke in the past three decades has offered their own reading of Charke's masculine presentation, which mostly amounts to reading her masculine presentation as inauthentic, lacking or theatrical. In other words, it is less 'real' than her female presentation. Sidonie Smith sees Charke's cross-dressing as masquerade and deception, writing, "On the psychological level, her cross-dressing speaks to female desire for authority, adventure, power, and mobility, the accoutrements of male selfhood." (94) Kristen Pullen also focuses

on masquerade. As masquerades in the 18th century provided spaces where women had greater sexual agency and freedom, Charke's two decades of wearing men's clothing is "a long-term, successful masquerade" to Pullen (61). This perspective is unfortunate, as it continues the association of deception with gender non-conformity, with cross-dressing as disguise rather than a choice of presentation, while also diminishing the nonconformity of Charke's presentation. While it is true that at different points in her life Charke sought to pass and presented as Mr. Charles Brown, these times (at least the ones she shares in the *Narrative*) were for economic or safety reasons. It seems from the *Narrative* that when passing was not necessary, it was not Charke's goal. Indeed, many years of her adulthood Charke did not seek to pass, but rather was known as a woman who went "en cavalier." To compare Charke's presentation to masquerade assumes that there is a "real" female Charke underneath the "costume" of men's clothing, rather than that clothing being a way Charke expresses herself.

Jean Marsden considers Charke's cross-dressing within a purely theatrical context, stating that "rather than trying to *be* a man, Charke is *playing* a man" and that, for Charke, gender is a "performative act" (76). She points to how Charke engages with gender solely through costume ("Masculinity is synonymous with periwig and breeches, femininity with skirts and needles"), rather than deeper feelings of "femininity" or "masculinity" (76). Marsden does not clarify what deeper feelings of "femininity" and "masculinity" would entail or how they would be expressed, nor does she explain why expressing gender through sartorial choices would be costume rather than self-expression. Indeed, Marsden's argument seems to me to rest on a misunderstanding of the social construction of gender. While

Marsden does not mention or cite Judith Butler, I cannot fathom a scholar using the phrase "performative act" in relation to gender when writing in 1998 without its being a gesture to Butler. Here is the most common misunderstanding of Butler's theory of gender performativity. That gender is a series of performative acts does not mean that is it all costume. Gender performativity means that repetitive performance of one's gender through clothing and behavior reinforces one's sense of one own's gender. Gender performativity is the way in which all gender is constructed while also causing a false sense of "a natural sort of being" (Butler 33). In addition to a misunderstanding of gender performativity, Marsden's argument does not elucidate Charke's presentation because she fails to realize that *everything* has a theatrical quality in Charke's life—at least in the act of retelling. This theatrical quality to her behavior will be explored at greater length later in this chapter; for now I mention Charke's theatricality in order to point out that Marsden's argument does not elucidate Charke's dressing in men's clothing or her relationship with her gender, because theatricality is the foundation of all of her actions.

Like Marsden, Higa observes that Charke uses sartorial choices rather than any internal sense of "masculine' or feminine"; "She does not in this moment say 'I wish I were a man,' nor does she say, 'Of course, I wasn't a man.' All that happens in relation to gender identification is inferred through material objects" (6). However, through an analysis of Chark's use of material objects, Higa determines that "[s]he is able to use clothing to bend her gender, sex, social status, and identity; in taking up a variety of differently gendered clothing as readily as she puts it down, her body becomes a manifestation of gender fluidity." Rather than dismissing Charke's masculine presentation as simply symbolic, theatrical or

performative, Higa sees all forms of Charke's gender presentation as functioning together to refuse a rigid gender binary through embodied actions. Christine Cloud goes a step further by suggesting that Charke can be viewed as genderfluid with a gender identity that is "hybrid, multiple and disconcerting" (858). Cloud notes how in the *Narrative* Charke "never really lets the reader know when her performance as a 'man' has stopped and when that of a 'woman' has begun. It's almost as if she forgets which one she is at these moments…" (863). Indeed, Cloud points out that Charke's description of her education (being educated in boy's subjects causing her mind not to be "cultivated" towards feminine activities such as needlework) suggests that Charke herself views these traits as learned—and therefore socially constructed—rather than innate and essential (868). In these ways Charke's relationship to gender seems to align with the character of Sir Anthony, who, as we have seen in Chapter 1, describes both male and female clothing as "costumes" and recognizes men's behaviors as constructed and learned.

Charke the Performer, Charke the Dramatist

In the *Narrative*, Charke's use of theatricality prevents a clear division between reality and performance, as well as between subjectivity and presentation. One way in which this division is disrupted is through Charke's approach to clothing as costume. When Charke is hiding from debtors, she exchanges her expensive hat with the bailiff she has befriended for his hat (which is comically too large for her head). She repeatedly borrows clothing and sells her clothing (as well as her daughter, Kitty's, and Mrs. Brown's) when she is out of money. In addition to often quoting plays, she uses characters and scenes from well-known

plays in order to describe the situations she is in and feelings she has. As Higa puts it, "Charke's *Narrative* frustrates our natural desire to delineate the difference between performance and reality" (7).

Kristen Pullen points out that subjectivity was the new way of thinking about individual autonomy in the 18th century and that memoir was a means of constructing and externalizing subjectivity, which was in tension with masquerade as a means of performing the self.

Memoir and masquerade are two strategies through which Georgian men and women tested themselves against society. On the one hand, masquerade suggests the self is performed; the interior, private subject is masked by outwardly visible signs. When those signs are decoded as the inverse of the true character… the inner core is revealed. On the other, autobiographical memoir offers individuals a means to construct subjectivity; by narrating a life, its meaning is made clear. But that memoir, as Charke's autobiography demonstrates, is always only partial revealing no more and no less of the subject than the domino worn by the masquer. (56).

Pullen argues that the *Narrative* be viewed as performative writing, through which Charke "rework[s] female subjectivity" (57). While I would not consider Charke's writing to relate to "female subjectivity," I am interested in Pullen's use of the concept of performative writing to understand Charke's use of memoir, which envisions moments in her past through the retelling, allowing those retold moments to exist as individual events, separate from a clear, linear chronology while also informing the present.

The importance of theatricality to the literary Charke might best be seen through a

story about her daughter Kitty's illness. The child was sick with a fever, but Charke had to leave her for some hours in order to sell some clothes for money. When Charke returns home to find Kitty unconscious, she runs out into the street wailing that her daughter is dead.

> I took her up, and, overcome with strong Grief, immediately dropped her on the Floor; which I wonder did not absolutely end her by the Force of the Fall, as she was in Fact a dead Weight. My screaming and her falling raised the House; and, in the Hurry of my Distraction, I run into the Street, with my Shirt-Sleeves dangling loose about my Hands, my Wig standing on End, "Like Quills upon the fretful Porcupine," And proclaiming the sudden Death of my much-beloved Child, a Crowd soon gathered round me, and, in the Violence of my Distraction, instead of administering any necessary Help, wildly stood among the Mob to recount the dreadful Disaster.
>
> The Peoples Compassion was moved, 'tis true; but, as I happened not to be known to them, it drew them into Astonishment, to see the Figure of a young Gentleman, so extravagantly grieved for the Loss of a Child. As I appeared very young, they looked on it as an unprecedented Affection in a Youth, and began to deem me a Lunatick rather than that there was any Reality in what I said. (98-99)

From the moment a crowd gathers, Charke forgets her maternal grief and becomes a performer. In the retelling, "she laughs at the audience she has fooled and she invites her readers to laugh with her" (Higa 6). Cloud views this moment, in which Charke was in men's clothing but mourning like a mother, both confounding to the strangers in the street and also jarring to the reader because of Charke's disjointed style of writing. The confusion of the reader due to the gaps in the writing is something Cloud thinks "Charlotte seems to take great joy in exploiting" (866). We cannot know to what degree Charke augmented this story and to what degree the "real" Charke truly shifted into performer mode when a crowd gathered around her despite her grief. We can only know that Charke wished her readers to

view her as such a ceaseless performer that even family tragedy was most accessible to her through theatrics. Through the telling of Kitty's illness, we can see how Charke shares her misfortunes but refocuses on her theatricality, thereby refusing the reader access to her subjective experience.

Philip Beruth reads Charke's early business ventures as performance art. Once the Licensing Act of 1735 prevents her from acting, Charke decides to open a small grocery. Baruth points out that she writes of the purchase of the store as a "Whim" rather than a carefully thought out decision. Indeed Charke describes her behavior as a grocer as if describing a theatrical character who has a general line of dialogue, "The Rise and Fall of Sugars was my constant Topick; and Trading, Abroad and at Home, was as frequent in my Mouth as my Meals. To compleat the ridiculous Scene, I constantly took in the Papers to see how Matters went at *Bear-Key*; what Ships were come in, or lost…" (61). As Beruth points out, the "ridiculous Scene" shows that she looks at it as a scene. As a satire of the average London shopkeeper, "it was performance art, in the postmodern sense of the term: ephemeral, metadramatic, and constituted both as critique and as collaborative performance —the 'piece' could not exist, after all, without her 'Acquaintance' coming to see it and agreeing to 'act' as customers. And like most late-twentieth-century performance art, it was on at least one level *political* theatre. Not only was Charke taking off the London merchant, but part of the point was that her comedic talents were being wasted" (31). Another of Charke's businesses was an inn she attempted to keep. She chose the first available house in Drury Lane. The choice, she tells her readers, was a poor one given the previous inn-keeper's bad reputation, which affected her clientele, but one she did not consider because in the

moment “’twas sufficient that I had a House” (149). Where Charke blames impulsivity, Baruth reads a purposeful choice to rent a space a block away from the Drury Lane Theatre. Charke also mentions in the *Narrative* that she let poor strolling actors stay on credit. In this way, “[n]ot only does Charke make clear that her ‘Publick’ house is a sanctuary to the ‘out of business’ actor, but she manages to publicize their predicament (and hence her own) through this affectionate poke at their penniless condition” (Baruth 35). Baruth quickly clarifies that he is not suggesting that Charke does not have economic motivations to attempt these business ventures, but rather that each of her businesses “seems constructed according to the same plan, to entertain (and perhaps instruct) and then spin theatrically out of control” (32).

Baruth’s reading of Charke’s theatricality as performance art compliment’s Pullen’s analysis of the *Narrative* as performative writing. I find Baruth’s interpretation of Charke’s theatricality compelling, however I do wonder if he is conflating the fictional and the real, viewing Charke more as a character than a person. I would caution that while Charke was theatrical, it is ridiculous to imagine that a single parent without family support would knowingly repeatedly lose money and businesses out of a theatrical sensibility. As an author, though, Charke certainly seems to turn her life history into avant-garde performance.

Lesbian or Female Husband?

An analysis of Charke’s *Narrative* would be incomplete without exploring her sexuality. There are four different topics in relation to Charke’s sexuality: her relationships with men, her relationships with the woman known only as “Mrs. Brown,” women’s desire for Charke when she passes as a man, and Charke’s literary homophobia in her novel *Henry*

Dumont. Perhaps more than any other aspect of Charlotte Charke, her sexuality is where scholars reveal their own vested interests.

First there are Charke's relationships with men. Charke was married twice (possibly three times) to men. She married her first husband, Richard Charke, at seventeen and they separated soon after the birth of their daughter, Kitty. The second husband mentioned in the *Narrative* was a love who married Charke in secret, and then died shortly after. Nothing is known about him and the veracity of his existence beyond Charke's short passage in the *Narrative.* The third marriage was to John Sacheverell short-lived and is not mentioned in the *Narrative* (Shevelow 317). Strange and Fidelis Morgan used these marriages to substantiate a vision of Charke's heterosexuality, insisting that Charke's relationship with Mrs. Brown was companionship only. (Baruth 50). Others dismiss these marriages and focus on evidence they can use to substantiate her as a lesbian, while others are fine calling her bisexual while focusing on her same-sex romance.

The second topic about Charke's sexuality is her relationship with Mrs. Brown. During her time as a strolling actor, Charke came to be close to a fellow actress whose name is never revealed. They left acting together and lived as Mr. and Mrs. Brown while Charke spent a few years once again attempting to be a shop keeper. Charke does not mention the woman only known as Mrs. Brown returning to London with her, however many scholars assume that she did. While Strange and Fidelis Morgan insist that this relationship was non-romantic, most other scholars assume a romantic relationship. I am less interested in the possibility of sexual interactions between Charke and Mrs. Brown than in the visible

heterogendered[9] dynamic between the two.

Charke describes herself and Mrs. Brown living together and enacting traditional gender roles of the period. When they decide to leave acting, they travel together to Chestow, a town in Wales, where Charke tries her hand at running a pastry shop and farming. This is the period in which they pass as a married couple. Most telling, when one of Mrs. Brown's relatives dies and leaves her an inheritance, it is Charke who intends to travel to receive the money and Charke who manages it (and soon spends it all). She tells of how the inheritance allowed her to go about town as a "worthy Gentleman." Of this Baruth writes, "Like a loveless husband from Congreve, or the 'fool' brewer whom Defoe's Roxana marries, Charke squanders Mrs. Brown's legacy in being a 'worthy Gentleman,' and in doing so she demonstrates the same absolute control over a wife's finances allowed a man under English law" (48). Baruth sees their dynamic as a replication of the heterosexual marriages represented in the plays Charke performed in, with Charke writing herself as "the thoughtless and henpecked husband" (47). Pullen writes that "Charke cross-dressed in order to facilitate her relationship with Mrs. Brown" (88). This is an odd statement, since Charke was male presenting years before meeting Mrs. Brown. However it is true that Charke's male presentation allowed the pair to live in a heterogendered relationship, as described above.

Was Charke a female husband? Frideli and Shevelow both state that Charke was not a female husband, because she and Mrs. Brown did not legally marry and, unlike the "Lady of

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[9] By heterogendered I mean a relationship in which two individuals who are not a heterosexual couple present as a traditional couple with one partner taking on the role of the husband and the other partner taking on the role of the wife. In this instance, Charke and Mrs. Brown presented themselves as a heterosexual married couple and Charke took on the husband role while Mrs. Brown took on the wife role.

Great Fortune," Mrs. Brown was not deceived into believing Charke was a cis man. How is this categorization helpful? Does it add to scholarship to create a prescriptive category of individuals who deceive women into marrying them? Or is this category's function to uphold cisness as normative and natural while vilifying transness as immoral, deceptive and false?

The third topic is the attractions of women to Charke when she is passing as a man. Charke shares two situations in which this happens, placing herself as the object of unrequited desire. One story, of being desired by Mrs. Dorr's kinswoman, has been discussed earlier in this chapter. The other story takes place outside of London, when Charke went "strolling"—that is being a traveling actor in the country—for the first time. While performing in a country town, Charke became aware that a young rich gentlewoman had fallen in love with her—that is, with Mr. Charles Brown. Charke tells how she met with the girl and explained to her that she is really a woman and Cibber's daughter, but the young girl was not convinced, believing that this was an excuse because Charles did not like her. Charke's fellow actors thought this funny and told her she should have let the girl believe she was a man and married her and stolen her money. Worried about possible repercussions, Charke chose to announce her identity in that town, "that, in Case it was spoke of, it might be regarded as an Impossibility, or, at worst, a trump'd-up Tale by some ridiculous Blockhead…" (113)

Through these two stories, Charke utilizes the salaciousness of same-sex desire without implicating herself in the actions of it. As Straub writes, "Throughout the *Narrative*, Charke attributes the desires she creates to the deceived perception of other women; while her cross-dressing provokes it, she denies responsibility for the effects of her

performance" (127). Charke capitalizes on the increased public interest in female husbands through these stories, even including the story of the young woman who desires Mr. Brown on the title page of the *Narrative* "Her Adventures in Mens Cloaths, going by the Name of Mr. Brown, and being belov'd by a Lady of Great Fortune, who intended to marry her."

Shifting from Female Husband to Queer Desire

I wish to part with Hamilton and Charke by meditating on queer desire rather than the objectifying act of categorization between "female husband" and "passing woman." Liberty Smith examines the ways in which the 'deceived' women are attracted to Fielding's Hamilton and Charles Brown, noting how there is a queerness about these potential *female husbands* that particular women are drawn to. There is an oddness to their shape, a lack of beard, a narrowness of shoulder. Yet rather than being attracted to these men *despite* these qualities, "their admirers desire a specifically non-normative masculinity, even when they seem to believe that non-normativity belongs to a biological male" (116). In the *Female Husband* this queer desire is visible in Miss Ivythorn's statement at her discovery of Hamilton's body that she "always thought indeed your shape was something odd, and have often wondered you had not the least beard" (14) yet believed him to be a man despite these unmanly qualities. Indeed, after this admonition Hamilton attempts to convince her to stay with him and keep his biology a secret, and though she does not agree, Fielding tells us that she hesitates before rejecting Hamilton. In the *Narrative*, the women who desire Charke as Charles Brown also seem to prefer a certain quality about him. The "Lady of Great Fortune's" maid first approaches Charke (who is presenting as Mr. Brown), and states that

Charke is the first gentleman “who had ever made an Impression on [the Lady’s] Mind” (109). Charke tells us that the Lady of Great Fortune is physically attractive in addition to being rich, so surely she has had suitors. The fact that she seizes on Charke specifically from seeing him perform suggests a potential unconscious queer desire at play.

We will continue to consider unconscious queer desire in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 3: Male Impersonation as a Space for Gender Expression

This chapter is concerned with 19th-century male impersonation, a form of cross-dressing which began in the British music halls but developed in American variety theatre. Like breeches roles, male impersonation offered the audience the pleasure of tracking two disparate genders—the assumed female gender of the performer and the male gender of the character. Male impersonation is different from breeches roles in that the performers' stage personas always presented male and were to be understood as men at all times. American male impersonation of the 1860s-1880s was developed by performer Annie Hindle and involved realistic presentations of masculine men from a variety of walks of life and ages. Starting in the 1890s, male impersonation shifted to performance of more androgynous young men of the middle- and upper-classes only. In this chapter I focus on performers Annie Hindle and Vesta Tilley, who are emblematic of these two periods of male impersonation. Hindle's on-stage personas were binary "hyperrealistic" men while Hindle's off-stage life shows a complex gender nonconforming individual. Hindle's sexuality was highly visible, as they married a woman, propelling themself into the public awareness as a freak. Tilley, on the other hand, presented a more androgynous, queer stage persona, while maintaining a carefully binary cisgender and heterosexual female off-stage persona. In addition to exploring how these two performers were understood in their time, this chapter examines the hermeneutical injustice made visible in theatre scholars' ignorance of Hindle's trans expression, erasing their masculinity in order to code them lesbian. I offer my own reading of Hindle as trans. Tilley's gender and sexuality have not been deeply analyzed, as she performed them in normative cishet ways, thus her presence in this chapter functions mostly

as a foil to Hindle rather than an object of deep analysis. However, her onstage characters offer an opportunity to read 19th-century queer desire.

"The Greatest Male Impersonator Living"

Hindle caused controversy in 1886, when they and their dresser, Annie Ryan, married in Grand Rapids, MI. Hindle registered as Charles Hindle and wore a men's dress suit to the ceremony. The officiating minister was quoted by the *New York Sun* as saying "The groom gave me her – I mean his – name as Charles Hindle and he assured me that he was a man. The bride is a sensible girl, and she is of age. I had no other course to pursue. I believe they love each other and that they will be happy" (*New York Sun*, Dec. 27, 1891 13). The sensationalist newspaper, *The National Police Gazette*, reacted to the controversy by publishing an article alleging that Hindle was never a woman, but rather an effeminate man living as a woman in order to succeed as the perfect male impersonator.

Theatre scholars do not entertain the *Police Gazette*'s accusation that Hindle was in fact a cisgender man, however Hindle's gender remains a contested site in contemporary scholarship. Hindle's marriage and previous relationships with women is attractive to those who wish to integrate Hindle into a lesbian genealogy. On the other hand, Hindle's gender performance both on and off stage offers a possible reading of transness, and is therefore seductive to a scholar such as myself, wishing to claim Hindle for a transgender genealogy. In this chapter I explore the various readings of Hindle in the 19th century and in the past three and a half decades since Hindle was incorporated into theatre scholarship by Laurence

Senelick, in order to explore the ways in which historical figures such as Hindle are utilized in the theorizing of gender and sexuality. How has the scarcity of primary sources on Hindle allowed specific narratives to form? What foundational assumptions have gone unexamined in these narratives? How is the visible performativity of gender impersonation used to obscure questions of gender identity? How do binary assumptions elide possible genderqueer readings? Most importantly, how can we restore subjectivity and respect to the memory of a person who has been objectified in these theorizations?

Hindle as quintessential 1860s American male impersonator

Annie Hindle was the first male impersonator in the United States. Hindle developed their skills an a performer in English provincial theatres, and at around age twenty, sailed to New York City on the ship *City of Paris* on August 29, 1868 . Two weeks later Hindle began performing in New York, billed as "the great serio-comic and impersonator of male characters" as the term male impersonator did not yet exist (Rodger 27). Prior to Hindle's arrival, there were a number of female singers who would change into male costumes for a part of their acts, but no female singer had specialized exclusively in male personas. Consequently, Hindle's realistic performance style became emblematic of male impersonation, and the singers who were inspired to take on the specialty in American variety continued in Hindle's style rather than the more androgynous performance style which developed in England, of which Vesta Tilley is the clearest example. I will discuss Hindle's performance style both as specific to Hindle as well as a general style of male impersonators of the 1860s-1880s. Newspaper reviews described Hindle as a talented singer

with a deep alto voice and a masculine look, costume and mannerisms to make her performances quite convincing. Hindle shaved regularly so that the down on her face developed into a coarse stubble (Senelick 330) and some journalist descriptions "suggested that even when dressed in woman's clothing Hindle looked like a man" (Rodger 54). Since for a male impersonator of Hindle's time, the goal was to come as close to passing for a man as possible, Hindle's mannishness was a professional asset.

Gender impersonators were variety performers who performed at music halls in England and in variety theatres in the United States. British music halls sprang from men's supper clubs, sites for men to drink and sing together, which gradually developed into venues for professional entertainers. The American variety theatre developed after the Civil War, among other forms of entertainment such as minstrel shows, burlesque, circuses and dime museums—all of which were viewed as separate from and inferior to the legitimate theatrical stage. There existed a sharp division of high and low entertainment, and it was not proper for middle-class individuals to participate in low entertainment. A shift took place in the 1890s as managers such Tony Pastor sought to refine variety to appeal to more mainstream middle-class audiences. As a result, in the late 1880s a noticeable difference developed between clean, conservative, and family-friendly vaudeville theatres which catered to middle-class expectations and lower paying, raunchier variety and burlesque theatres and troupes which engaged in sexualized and scandalous performances for a dwindling male working class audience. This split developed as a result of the cultural shifts which took place in relation to class, race and gender formation during the 1880s, and will be discussed later. For now, my focus is on the audiences that male impersonators performed for in the 1860s-1880s, which

were primarily working class white men (though women did attend performances in larger cities). The types of audiences that male impersonators performed in front of determined which male impersonators were successful, what type of material they performed, and the ways in which we understand audience reception of them. Variety and vaudeville featured multiple acts, including comedians, acrobats, magicians and minstrel performers in blackface. However, the gender impersonators were the stars of these performances, received top billing and commanded the highest salaries (Aston 256).

Hindle and the Hindle-esque male impersonator performed similar songs and acts as the male comic singers of the time. These acts lasted at least twenty minutes, included three to four songs with three to four different characters. The performer would change costumes in the wings between songs and reviewers noted the speed and ease (or lack thereof) of these costume changes. Rather than highly scripted performances, variety songs had a flexibility such that performers could take stock of the night's audience and choose to emphasize different aspects of the characters. Performers needed to be able to adapt quickly based on audience preferences (Rodger 11). Despite Hindle's success, male impersonation remained a novelty act; variety scholar Gillian Rodger has only found six other male impersonators who debuted before 1880 and whose careers lasted more than a single season. Rodger surmises that there were likely fewer than two dozen performers who appeared even briefly as male impersonators prior to the 1890s. Rodger attributes this scarcity to the many specialized skills and attributes which male impersonation required, and which female actresses and singers could not easily develop in female roles and performances in America prior to the 1890s.

What about the performances did the working class male audiences respond to? The

main character type in male impersonation was the swell, or “man-about-town.” This was an upper-class man who engages in leisure activities rather than working hard. This character both embodied the aspiration of wealth and existed as a figure of ridicule for workingmen. Rodger notes that the *National Police Gazette* frequently published scandalous stories which depicted this sort of man. The men portrayed by male impersonators bore little resemblance to the models of middle-class masculinity depicted in nineteenth-century advice manuals. They were, if anything, the antithesis of middle-class masculinity, conforming more closely to stereotypes of upper-class or working-class masculinity. These men were sexually active and boasted about their conquests, they drank and smoked—often to excess—and if they mentioned work at all, it was depicted as being less important than the avid pursuit of pleasure. When middle-class men were referred to in the songs sung by male impersonators, they were depicted as hypocritical reformers who wanted to deprive the workingman of his well-earned enjoyment (Roger 37).

When the swell was depicted as foppish, the knowledge that the character was depicted by a women might offer the audience a sense of superiority; the men could look at the fop, knowing there was a female body under the fine tailored suit, and that these foppish upper-class men were womanish and less manly than themselves (Rodger 40). Other characters offered advice on courtship for shy young men. Many workingmen left home young and lived in exclusively male homosocial circles until they found financial stability and were ready to marry and settle down. In *Arrested Dress*, Claire Sears discusses the crossdressing which took place in San Francisco and in Western mining towns in the 1800s. In these predominantly male spaces workingmen took part in crossdressing in order to

maintain the heteronormative forms of socialization they missed. At mining town dances half the men would designate themselves "ladies" for the evening by a visual code such as tying a handkerchief to their arm, while the musician—often an amateur fiddler—encouraged the gendering of these men as women in his directions to form a "lady's chain" and "set to your partner" (29). Rather than subversive, these crossdressing dances "provided the temporary fantasy of binary gender, which facilitated—if somewhat ironically—the appearance of heteronormative relations" (31). Thus the working class men for whom Hindle performed were already primed to accept cross-dressing entertainment as wholesome rather than transgressive. Rodgers suggests that these working-class men received Hindle's critiques of upper-class masculinity as a form of solidarity with workingmen.

Half-Man/Half-Woman

Variety theaters and their performers were heavily impacted by the protracted financial crisis known as the Long Depression, beginning with the Panic of 1873. Many small theatres were forced to close, which increased competition between performers and caused significant decreases in salary (Rodger 66). While many performers retired from the stage during the1880s, Annie Hindle was able to perform continuously during this period, though only by lowering their standards and performing in less lucrative and respectable venues. Rodger has uncovered that Hindle maintained media presence through a number of publicity stunts and even performed in dime museums on a number of occasions during the 1880s (132). The nature of one of these marketing gimmicks and the type of performances Hindle would likely have performed in dime museums invited the attendees to focus on

Hindle's body as a site of physiological uncertainty, and thus requires that we explore Hindle's gender performance from a different perspective.

Dime museums provided fascinated attendees with displays of bodies which transgressed normative categories or which presented as deformed or diseased, thus reinforcing the white, cisgender, abled body as normative and other bodies as suspect, "freakish," aberrant and in need of regulation. Gender and sexual binarity was challenged by staple characters such as the Bearded Lady, the Bogus man, or the Half-Man/Half-Woman. These characters were at times performed by intersex individuals and at other times relied on theatrical deception. Racialized bodies functioned to solidify national and racial superiority and to be seen as animalistic with characters such as The Missing Link or What-Is-It?, which were performed by individuals who were either African American or white men in blackface, presenting as the Darwinian "missing link" in human evolution (Sears 102). Many bodies combined racialization with physiological deformity. The best known example of this was the conjoined twins Chang and Eng Bunker (known as the "Siamese twins"), and Millie and Christine McCoy (known as "the Two-Headed Nightingale" and the "United African Twins), who were African-American conjoined twins born into slavery (Nickell 124-125). Due to the scientific racism of the time, intersex and racialized bodies were believed to be less evolved and and closer to apes than white, sexually differentiated bodies (Somerville 21-17). Rather than a typical stage, performers were often exhibited on roped-off raised platforms which the viewers gathered around, so as to stage social distance between the freak and attendees and to create a fantasy of permanent inherent difference between the normal and the abnormal" (Sears 107). Since these "freaks" could be faked through theatrical make-up,

lighting and other forms of presentation, the dime museum managers capitalized on attendees' suspicions, encouraging onlookers to touch and prod the exhibited bodies, ask questions and try to "unmask" fakes (Sears 110). I argue that this state of suspicion functioned to further the divide between the "normal" white, binary gendered and able bodied attendees and the "freaks" by placing the attendees in a state of disbelief and incredulousness regarding the existence of these unnatural beings.

Imagined within the environment of the dime museum, Hindle's performance shifts from a performance of realistic masculinity to a performing body existing in a state of objectification, Othering, and suspicion. Regarding Hindle's performances in variety theatre, Aston writes that "the stage act became a means of 'neutralizing' the threat posed to images of femininity by the 'butchness' of Hindle and her imitators. In this instance, art concealed reality" (250). However, with Rodger's recent discovery that Hindle performed at dime museums, we must see Hindle's art as highlighting reality, not concealing it. Rather than judged for witty patter and realistic manliness, Hindle's masculinity would be presented as an aberration and conundrum and the attendees encouraged to question Hindle's secondary sex characteristics; was Hindle a woman performing in men's clothing, or a feminine man? Or some evolutionary misfit, stuck in between the two "true" sexes?

One of Hindle's publicity stunts also invited people to question Hindle's sex. Rodger found an advertisement in the *Boston Globe* in 1883 in which a ten thousand dollar prize would go to anyone who could conclusively identify Hindle's sex. The ad reads: "Annie Hindle is a mystery, and the question is still unsolved as to whether She is He, or He is She; but by all She is admitted to be The Greatest Male Impersonator Living" (as quoted in

Rodger 131). Taken together with Hindle's performances in dime museums, this ad suggests that Hindle presented themself as being of indeterminate gender, inviting people to question their biology (since the question of "whether She is He" is intended as seeking a definitive physiological answer to the incongruity between Hindle's secondary sex characteristics and their gender expression). Since we cannot access Hindle's interiority, we do not know whether Hindle was enthusiastic about this form of branding and performances or whether they were pressured into these performances by their manager and the difficult economy. However, in an 1891 article in the *New York Sun* the reporter writes that "It was immaterial to her, she said, rather naively, whether the reporter addressed her as 'Sir' or 'Madam'" (New York Sun, 13). Hindle's dime museum performances and the *Boston Globe* ad suggest that Hindle did not express a strong identification with either binary male or female gender and that they often were viewed as existing in a liminal state of gender indeterminacy.

Is She He?: Hindle the Female Husband

One night in June of 1886 Hindle married their dresser, Annie Ryan, in a private ceremony in Grand Rapids, Michigan. A reporter from the *Telegram-Herald* heard about the marriage and finding the couple dining with friends, pestered Hindle for an interview. The reporter published the story, with an article titled "Married Her Maid: The Strange Story of Charles and Annie Hindle."

I would like to pay special attention to the manner *The National Police Gazette* covered Hindle. *The National Police Gazette* was a sensationalist weekly newspaper which served a primarily white lower and middle-class male audience, focusing on crimes, sporting

events, and entertainment, including many illustrations of scantily clad women in the crime and human interest stories and in the entertainment reviews. For circulating titillating images of women, the *Police Gazette* has been called "the earliest girlie magazine" (Gabor 31); it both shone a spotlight on deviant behavior and reinforced new ideologies of masculinity. Many stories in the *Police Gazette* presented women "as criminals, aggressors, and victors over men," which, taken in conjunction with the paper's sports stories, "have a cumulative effect of challenging, embracing, and reinforcing masculinities all at once" (Reel 9-10). Regarding actresses who cross-dressed and male impersonators, the *Police Gazette's* entertainment section was neither consistently sympathetic nor critical. The *Police Gazette* was not sympathetic to Hindle's marriage.

Two months after the wedding, in July of 1886, the *Police Gazette* published a report in their "Stage Whispers" column, titled "Since the marriage of Annie Hindle to her maid the question arises, 'Is she he?'" The column reads:

> Annie Hindle (?) or Charles Hindle, (?) recently married in Cleveland, says that she married Vivian, and that when he discovered her sex he wanted to masquerade with her, but not having such a feminine appearance failed to make a success. Hindle further claims to be the illegitimate child of Ellen Terry, Henry Irving's famous partner. She denies that the woman with whom she lived and whom she called mother in Jersey City was anything but foster mother. A western reporter states emphatically that Hindle is a man. ("Stage Whispers," *National Police Gazette,* August 21, 1886:2)

The article's composition is convoluted and hard to follow, lacking a narrative arc and using a mixture of male and female pronouns. To clarify, the article suggests that Hindle was never a woman, but rather an effeminate man living as a woman who was performing male

impersonation. The writer grasps at the name Charles, given to the reverend in Grand Rapids, and questions whether it is in fact Annie's given rather than a pseudonym. Then calling back to Hindle's marriage to Charles Vivian (two decades earlier),[10] the article claims that after marrying Hindle, Vivian "discovered her sex"—meaning discovered Hindle to be a man—and wished to "masquerade with her," pretending also to be a woman who performs as a male impersonator. The writer suggests that, unlike Hindle, Vivian could not pass enough as a woman to be believable. This report's explanation of Hindle's gender expression seems unlikely, yet it offers a way to understand two women marrying when a society is unable to think outside of heterosexual binaries. The *Police Gazette* article also contains echoes of the late 19th-century fixation on intersex bodies in asking whether Hindle might have been a man to begin with and was capitalizing on the genre of male impersonation. In posing such a possibility, The *Police Gazette* calls Hindle's biological sex into question, focusing on Hindle's body as a site of gender uncertainty. There is also the element of gender disguise that Hindle's profession centers on, presented as a feat which Hindle can perform, but Vivian, another 'man' cannot.

It could be argued that this confounded response is understandable given how Hindle was covered as the perfect gender impersonator. The role of gender impersonation in questioning reality, questioning the boundaries between genders, also comes into play. However, stories of "passing women" were numerous during the 19th century, building on the

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[10] Early in their career, Hindle married fellow performer Charles Vivian, but that marriage lasted only a few months. Later in life, Hindle spoke openly spoke of Vivian beating them, being quoted in the *New York Sun*: "He lived with me several months – long enough to black both my eyes and otherwise mark me; yet I was a good and true wife to him" (*New York Sun*, Dec. 27, 1891 13).

fascination of the 18th century in Charles Hamilton and other male-presenting AFAB people. Alison Oram looks at reports of cross-dressing women who passed as men in the British tabloids (*News of the World* and *The People*) in the first half of the 20th century (1910-1960). Oram utilizes the tabloid articles to chart shifting cultural attitudes towards cross-dressing women, finding that in the 1910s the stories are framed with jovial admiration of a 'trickster' and only in the 1950s are these individuals denounced as 'perverts.' Oram shows that the shift in how these stories were covered comes from a growing awareness and condemnation of lesbianism, and the eventual connection of these stories with medical understanding of intersex individuals and the emergence of sex change operations. Although Oram studied British papers of the early 20th century, not American papers of the late 19th century, these papers nevertheless had a similar working-class white readership as the *National Police Gazette*.

Yet unlike the stories Oram covers, which clarify how the passing woman participated in masculine behaviors (for instance, sports and smoking) and how men around him took him completely as a man without question, the article on Hindle is rather convoluted and difficult to follow. This suggests that gender as disguise is more intelligible than the gender ambiguity surrounding Hindle as a male impersonator. Gender impersonation necessarily focuses the audience's attention on both the performer's stated (or believed) gender and the gender they are performing. Such confusion resulting from gender ambiguity is what Marjorie Garber calls a "category crisis," and a "failure of definitional distinction" (16)

Sexually, note that the *Police Gazette* reporter does not identify that Hindle married a

woman, only that they married in Cleveland (an inaccuracy, as Hindle married in Grand Rapids). Instead, the marriage that the report mentions is Hindle's first marriage to Charles Vivian. In suggesting that Hindle was a man, the report creates a same-sex marriage between Hindle and Vivian rather than between Hindle and Ryan. Following the logic of the writer, if Hindle is presenting as a woman, a marriage to a man fits the heteronormative traditional pairing more than two women do. The Hindle case suggests that perhaps lesbian partnership was still outside the zeitgeist, understood by some readers, invisible to others. The Alice Mitchell and Oscar Wilde trials would take place a few years later (1892 and 1895, respectively), at which point the topic of sexually active homosexual relationships would enter the public discourse more explicitly.

Hermeneutic Injustice: Hindle the Female Husband becomes Hindle the Lesbian

The information about Hindle is scant and none of it (other than the quote in "Stranger than Fiction") quotes Hindle directly. Rodger has done significant archival work, unearthing various reviews and performance notices, but few sources exist to provide context for Hindle's life, and only one interview quotes Hindle directly. Information about Hindle is primarily gleaned from the 1891 New York *Sun* article, "Stranger Than Fiction", in which Hindle alleges that Vivian beat them while they were married. A second significant primary source is an entry in Graham's *Histrionic Montreal*, written at Annie Ryan's death. Additionally, there are a few anecdotes Senelick and Rodger share, whose sources are unclear to me. Without a memoir, a diary, private letters or accounts from her close friends, Hindle's interiority is closed to the historian, leaving only spaces to be filled in by

speculation and assumptions. Unfortunately, the ways in which historians have built a narrative for Hindle thus far has ignored or erased Hindle's masculine expression, resulting in a hermeneutical injustice.

Franklin Graham's *Histrionic Montreal* is a collection of biographies of performers as they relate to their performances in Montreal. There is a short entry for Hindle, which includes some context as to their biography and performance history, but which focuses on Annie Ryan's funeral and Hindle's emotional and mental state during the funeral and in general during that later period of their life. Graham states that "[a] strange fate has overtaken Annie Hindle…She has grown a moustache, and believes at times that she is a man" (215). Graham does not include any information about how this belief that "she is a man" manifests, other than the growth of a moustache. This line could be part of a general confusion about Hindle's sex due to their marriage to Ryan. Yet Graham does not express confusion about whether Hindle is male or female, but rather, states "recently it appears that her mind has become somewhat unhinged on the subject of her sex" (215). Scholars Senelick and Donoghue do not provide their readers with this statement, despite both citing the entry in their works.

The earliest twentieth-century scholar to write about Hindle is Laurence Senelick. Senelick wrote extensively about Hindle in his 1982 essay "The Evolution of the Male Impersonator on the North American Stage," which he incorporated (with minor revisions) into his 2000 book *The Changing Room*. Both essay and book have been invaluable to my own research on Hindle specifically and the field of theatrical cross-dressing in general. As important as these historical and analytical works are, I must challenge the positionality and

assumptions Senelick held in the creation of his narrative on Hindle. In "The Evolution of the Male Impersonator on the North American Stage," Senelick states that one of his aims is to show that male impersonation was "an expression of Lesbian wish fulfillment" (33). I argue that Senelick's academic hypothesis of the male impersonator as a site of lesbian desire, as well as his implicit assumptions of sexual and gender binarism, cause his account of Hindle to fit the narrative of a butch lesbian, ultimately erasing Hindle's trans expression. As in the case of Donoghue's writing, I believe that reading female masculinity through a lesbian lens rejects (or at least prevents) the possibility of assessing gender variance outside the bounds of sexuality.

Senelick's statements regarding Hindle's marriage to Charles Vivian reveal a binary perspective of sexuality. After providing the few known details about Hindle and Vivian's short marriage, Senelick writes, "This is mere speculation, but Hindle's unfortunate experience with heterosexual romance may have confirmed latent Lesbian tendencies (or the latent Lesbianism may have undermined the marriage's chance)" (1982, 36). The very act of posing such a question is problematic, assuming a rigid heterosexual/homosexual binary, ignoring the existence of bisexual desire. It also assumes lesbianism to be Hindle's final stage of existence—as though Hindle might have been straight, but either that Vivian's violence ended any appeal men could have for them, or that this "latent lesbianism" bubbled to the surface, shifting them from heterosexual possibilities to life-long lesbianism. I bring this element of Senelick's writing up because it seems to me that ignoring bisexuality as a permanent sexual orientation rooted in lived experience is a symptom of a form of binary thinking that is unlikely to exist alongside a nuanced perspective of genderfluidity or

transmasculinity. It is also an epistemic wrong. Interestingly, in *The Changing Room*, Senelick links Hindle's failed heterosexuality to an increasingly masculine presentation, stating, "Whatever the case, Hindle's male impersonation became more veristic from this point on: her physique thickened, her voice deepened, and she took to shaving regularly, so that the down on her upper lip bloomed into a moustache and her chin sprouted the stubble of a beard" (329). As I have not seen any such link in the primary texts, it seems to be a connection Senelick has read into the facts. Hindle's "increasingly masculine presentation" could simply have been a result of growing more mature. Alternatively, in 1870 Ella Wesner began performing and became Hindle's chief rival male impersonator (Rodger 54). A connection could very well be made between Hindle's efforts to improve their act and an increase in competition. The subtext of Senelick's narrative seems to be that domestic violence caused this woman to reject men and physiologically morph into a stone butch. Such unspoken storytelling arises from decades of pathologization of stone butch lesbians as rejecting their bodies due to childhood or adult sexual trauma (Hale 315).

I would also like to bring attention to how Senelick presents Hindle's choice to grow facial hair. Senelick calls their growing of facial hair an act of "veristic" male impersonation. Verism is a term specifically related to art, to the faithful and naturalistic representation within art or literature. Thus this word choice connects Hindle's act of shaving to their theatrical performance to a theory of art, rather than a personal choice which might better be related to gender identity. While it is true that performers can dedicate time and resources to improving their performances, to the detriment of their personal lives, I have trouble imagining a cis woman choosing to live with a beard solely for the purpose of improving a

performance. Furthermore, this strategy seems a poor one for the stage. I fail to see how thickening the appearance of facial hair through shaving could be visible past the first few rows of the audience (at best). A fake beard would read more easily than such minor stubble. Indeed the image of Hindle which accompanied the New York *Sun*'s "Stranger than Fiction" article depicts them with a fat (undoubtably false) mustache. I argue that the desire for verisimilitude might have been an excuse Hindle gave for shaving, not the primary reason for it. Minor stubble and the act of daily shaving would be better understood as self-affirming trans actions. What makes Senelick's narrative all the more galling is that the information about Hindle's growing facial hair comes from Graham, who does make the connection between their growing facial hair and their gender identity; "[s]he has grown a moustache, and believes at times that she is a man" (Graham 215).

Along with the act of shaving, Senelick's narrative also includes an anecdote in which I see a hint towards Hindle's gender identity, but which Senelick does not discuss in relation to gender. The anecdote involves the "mash notes" Hindle received from female fans, and Senelick writes, that Hindle "was quite indifferent to whether her correspondents addressed her as 'Sir' or 'Madam'" (2000, 329). This one sentence, not further elaborated on, dangling awkwardly at the end of a short paragraph, speaks to Senelick's awareness that Hindle's gender identity was not fixed strongly, that Hindle at the very least did not strongly identify as a woman. Yet this element of Hindle's narrative is not included beyond this one sentence. Senelick is not blind to Hindle's masculine expression, writing that gender impersonation was a good occupation for a masculine woman, as "the personal masculinity of [Hindle and Wesner], was, in fact, neutralized by their disguises" (1982, 37). Whatever level of

masculinity Hindle and Wesner possessed is ascribed by Senelick to the profession and craft of impersonation rather than to the performers themselves.

In 1998 Irish writer, Emma Donoghue, wrote the play *Ladies and Gentleman!* based on Hindle and Ryan's marriage. Donoghue became interested in Hindle after reading Senelick's "The Evolution of the Male Impersonator in the Nineteenth-Century Popular Stage," basing the play on Senelick's essay, the 'Stranger than Fiction' newspaper article and Franklin Graham's *Histrionic Montreal*. In "A Tale of Two Annies" Donoghue dismisses Graham's statements that Hindle believes herself to be a man, writing, "Clearly these writers do not know what to make of Hindle, but they approve of her success as a man (which includes wealth, fame, glory, and settling down by the sea with a Victorian wife)" (147).

The play takes place in Hindle's dressing room, on the night of their 1891 comeback performance, with frequent flashbacks over the course of a decade, exploring Hindle and Ryan's relationship. In her essay "A Tale of Two Annies," Donoghue clarifies that her interest in Hindle and Ryan is of them specifically as lesbians, stating, "[t]heater thrives on contrast between characters, and butch/femme is one of the many polarities that create frissons of comedy and erotics" (148). Donoghue's version of Hindle is foremost a performer; sitting in the dressing room with fellow gender impersonator Gilbert Saroney (who was Hindle's best man when Hindle and Ryan married), the dressers Annie Ryan and fellow male impersonator Ella Wesner (whom Donoghue imagines to be Hindle's one time lover), Hindle jokes, brags, flirts and performs, easing in and out of song and dance routines within scenes, and ready to run onto the stage with an impromptu additional number when a company member can't be found or has shown up too drunk to perform.

Donoghue's Hindle is a butch lesbian, comfortable in the masculinity of her male costumes without a need to be perceived as male off-stage. Early in the play Wesner and Saroney are shocked when witnessing Hindle shave her cheeks. Hindle explains a barber told her regular shaving would stimulate her follicles to grow facial hair so that she won't have to put on fake beards for her performances. The gender implications of this choice are not explored, though this post-Vivian Hindle is such a consummate performer that it seems Hindle hardly exists outside the theatre (her Jersey Shore mansion is spoken of only as a future home) minimizing relevance of gender considerations of the world outside the music hall. Additionally, the juxtaposition of Hindle beginning shaving with returning to the stage after a season married to a physically abusive Vivian (and still sporting a black eye poorly hidden by make-up) suggests that the act might be a reclamation of her body after domestic abuse.

Donoghue's reading of Hindle's masculinity solely as butchness is part of Donoghue's ciscentric lesbian historian framework, visible in examining her scholarly text, *Passions Between Women*, which analyzes seventeenth- through nineteenth-century "lesbian" culture. In *Passions Between Women,* Donoghue dedicates a chapter to female husbands – the term Fielding invented when profiting off of Charles Hamilton's trial, and which is understood to mean women who passed as men in order to marry women *who remain unaware of their husband's sexed body*. Donoghue interprets these female husbands as women who presented as men because of "practical considerations as primary in most cases; the disguise was assumed for the world, and sometimes (at least initially) for the wife" (62).

If Donoghue is not sensitive to the possibility that people who lived as men, passed as

men for years, might identify as men, how could we expect her to imagine Hindle—who performed masculinity but did not attempt to pass after marriage, and who, the anecdote tells us, did not care if the 'mash' notes women in the audience sent them addressed them as 'Sir' or 'Madam' – as identifying with masculinity, as transmasculine rather than a lesbian? Donoghue's erasure of trans expression is visible in her analysis of the life of James How/ Mary East. How and his wife were married for 36 years and owned a public house together until 1766, when How was discovered to be AFAB. Contemporaneous newspaper coverage states that How's defense was that in their teens he and his wife were both mistreated by men and so chose to pose as a married couple to "avoid farther importunities." Donoghue challenges this explanation, stating, "I find this story most improbable. Even if we believe that two teenage girls would make such an absolute decision about the rest of their lives, why would that decision entail a disguise?" (70). Donoghue further points out that given their socioeconomic position, they could have worked and lived together, as "it was considered acceptable for spinster friends to live together and they would not have come under special attack" (71). Donoghue concludes that their decision to pose as a married couple must have been less a matter of economics than a desire to experience heterogender coupling, that is to say, "[given] a heterosexual model for their erotic life….to be treated as a couple, to receive the validation and respect of their neighbors" (71). Donoghue sees the male-presenting James How not as an individual, but rather as half of a couple. I find it remarkable that Donoghue thinks women who identify as women would live their lives in male dress, being addressed as men, and having to fear getting caught in an illegal deception, solely for a sense of

couplehood rather than gender identity. Donoghue's ciscentric worldview and inability to see past cis possibilities is made clear when the reader considers that at the time How was found to be AFAB, his wife was recently deceased. If heterogendered coupling was the reason for How's male presentation, why would he continue to live as a man? Donoghue acknowledges that "This suggests that she would prefer to live on in a male role, even after the death of her wife" (72). This sentence to me would seem to contradict her conclusions that passing women and female husbands lived as men in order to seem like heterosexual couples. But Donoghue does not see the contradiction, concluding the chapter on female husbands by stating that cases such as How's and Billy Tipton's, "show not only that it is still possible to pass for a lifetime and not be discovered, but that for some lovers of women in a hostile society, the husband role is the only one that offers enough privacy and dignity" (82).

Thus far I have analyzed the scholarship which has assumed Hindle to be a lesbian. However, I am not the first person to suggest reading Hindle through a transgender lens. In "Transgendered Masculinities in Performance: Subcultures Laid Bare," Catherine McNamara suggests that Hindle be reclaimed by trans scholars as a transman. McNamara critiques Senelick's understanding of Hindle's shaving behavior, as I have done above. MacNamara responds that "accounts of history suggest that Hindle's life choices, which he affected in the everyday, were not a Masquerade. Regardless of what the content of his stage performance was, his maleness was an actuality" (164). McNamara does not cite any other scholars when making this assertion and I have not found any other transgender assessment of Hindle within academic writing.

Variety turns to Vaudeville and the Rise of Vesta Tilley

The construction of white manhood underwent a significant shift in the late nineteenth century, influenced by multiple social, political and economic factors. The Victorian ideal of manliness revolved around self-control, familial support and financial stability. The Victorian middle-class man was expected to be self-restrained in his sexual behavior and his emotional states. He took responsibility for the well-being of his wife and children and was financially stable in a middle-class profession. A series of economic depressions and bankruptcies destabilized the growing middle class. Suffragettes further infringed on the male sphere of politics, and the advancement of the New Woman in the work force (with a small minority reaching positions of prominence in education, medicine and the church) added to the sense of diminishing power of middle-class men. Free African Americans' entrance into the waged labor force after the dissolution of slavery and the development of a politically active immigrant working class further threatened middle-class sensibilities. A new ideology of white manhood formed as a result of these challenges, in which men turned away from the codes of manly self-restraint and Victorian work ethic, in favor of a growing leisure culture. Since this "crisis of masculinity" was taking place during the 1880s and 1890s, alongside the change of variety's audience from working-class to a more respectable white middle-class, male impersonators could no longer afford to critique manhood through their performances, as Hindle and the male impersonators of the 1860s and 1870s had done. The man-about-town character shifted to a more effeminate dude or dandy, whose femininity was emphasized in a more androgynous form of costuming reinforced by the female body of the male impersonator.

American male impersonation shifted to be more androgynous and more similar to that of English male impersonators, with less focus on realism. The songs the performers sang were less likely to be shared with cis male comic singers and more likely to be sentimental songs (Roger, 145). The period of male impersonation from the 1890s through the 1920s can best be examined through the performances of Vesta Tilley. Vesta Tilley was the most successful of the turn-of-the-century male impersonators. She came to the United States for a tour with Tony Pastor in 1894 and stayed for a few year, though eventually she returned to England, working with the British soldier recruiting effort for WWI and finally retiring in 1920 when her husband, Walter de Frece, was elected as a Conservative Member of Parliament. Tilley's style of male impersonation was the polar opposite of Hindle's realism. Tilley's singing voice was a soprano, she did not cut her hair, but rather wore short cropped wigs and hats to hide her hair. Tilley's costumes often emphasized her shapely waist and hips and her characters were androgynous young men. Due to her soprano voice and shapely body, Tilley's audience would not even momentarily forget that Tilley was a woman underneath her costumes, and it was this mixture of gender codes which her audiences seemed to enjoy.

Whereas Hindle performed primarily for working-class male audiences, Tilley's performances in both the English music hall and American vaudeville were to white middle class audiences. Tilley was the most conservative of the male impersonators, her songs lacking double entendres and any material which could offend middle-class sensibilities. Tilley also preserved her off-stage persona as a lady by being photographed in a variety of women's outfits; Tilley's image was collected on postcards in both male costumes and off-

stage women's outfits (Aston 253). As Sears explains, in the late 19th century "female and male impersonators had to emphasize their gender normativity and sexual propriety off-stage, or else their on-stage transformation would conjure up a different set of associations—not an awe-inspiring act of magic but the grotesque display of a freakish self" (100). Tilly successfully developed an off-stage persona which identified her as a "lady"—a category which signified white, middle-class sensibilities, as well as a presence within the domestic sphere, supporting their husbands. Indeed, Tilley's reviews included descriptions of her "utter femininity," and her domesticity as a "talented little wife" (As quoted by Sears 101).

Tilley carefully crafted a public persona, which was developed through postcard photos of her, press interviews and her memoir. She also produced a record album which has survived, thus offering us a recording of her voice, singing and patter style. Also preserved were Tilley's anti-feminist opinions, which she made public on multiple occasions. Perhaps these were Tilley's earnest personal opinions; however, it seems clear that publicizing these opinions was done in order to secure her career and make sure her performances would not be perceived as subversive.

Tilley wrote an essay in 1904, which was published in the *Pittsburgh Gazette Home Journal*, in which she railed against mannish women. Titled "Mannish Women," the essay begins "If there is one thing I object to, it is the mannish woman." Tilley clarifies that her criticism is not solely of clothing reformers such as Dr. Mary Walker, but of any woman "who affects a mannish style, aping the various characteristics of the sterner sex." Woven into this 900-word criticism is Tilley's careful defense of herself as a traditional woman. She states that "I like to wear coats and trousers before the footlights, but would never dream of

wearing wide-soled shoes, or a stiff front fancy shirt when I have removed the greasepaint and returned to the privacy of life." She wonders why people have the wrong idea of her, assuming her to be mannish, simply because she is a male impersonator. The second half of the essay is chiefly concerned with the necessity of wearing men's clothing when impersonating male characters and the ways in which an actress can employ acting techniques to convey manly traits despite personally embodying "all that is gentle and modest." Tilley ends the essay glorifying the "little home woman," repeating her condemnation of mannish women off the stage, and reminding the reader that Tilley herself "still remembers the graces natural to her sex" (Tilley 5). Thus, while the essay condemns mannish women, its chief purpose is to position Tilley as a sensible feminine woman who does not challenge gender roles and whose male impersonation should be understood as apolitical art. "Her careful construction of a public persona so radically different from her stage persona gained her 'the best of all worlds': she could express 'masculinity' and enjoy its power, without having to reject her own 'femininity' or endure the social stigma attached to women who are too 'mannish'" (Maitland 177).

Like earlier male impersonators, Tilley's characters were mostly swells. However, these swells no longer satirized the construction of masculinity, but rather were presented straightforwardly as the aspirational dreams of young men. Rodger describes Tilley's characters as "young men whose indiscretions and misbehavior could be forgiven due to their youth" (157). Tilley's portrayals were so influential that young men imitated her fashion choices. On one occasion, Tilley lost her cufflink right before going on stage. She tied her shirt cuff with a piece of ribbon, and consequently inspired young men to begin using "cuff

ribbons" rather than cuff links. Tilley utilized her fashion influence to brand her own line of menswear, including Vesta Tilley Socks, Vesta Tilley Waistcoats and Vesta Tilley Cigars (Rodger 156).

Unique to Tilley's repertoire were characters who were young men in uniform. As Aston explains, the uniform identifies the profession one belongs to while stripping away individuality, turning Tilley into an androgynous figure with "an absence of gender identity. In this way, Tilley's uniformed, androgynous figure was not dominated by an overtly overpowering military or 'macho' image, but combined militarism with the asexual uniform of youth" (150). Tilley's song "The New Policeman," is about a young man who boasts of his arrest record, with the descriptions making it clear that these arrests are inappropriate but the young man might become a competent policeman over time. The song "It's Part of a Policemen's Duty," pokes fun at the ways the policeman's power can be used in the name of hedonistic desires, as Tilley informs her audience that

> It's part of a policeman's duty
> Part of a policeman's work.
> I think I'm right in telling you
> It's a thing never shirked by
> The man in blue.
> He'll do his best for England,
> Beer, and Beauty.
> To be a walking restaurant and pub
> It's part of a policeman's duty.

In this way the uniformed characters were similar to the swells Tilley performed. Songs such as "Jolly Good Luck to the Girl Who Loves a Soldier," was directed to young women, congratulating them in loving military recruits, but also celebrating a soldier's various romantic seductions. Tilley developed these characters prior to World War I and alternated

performing them and swell characters; however, when the war started, Tilley focused solely on military characters, directly aiding in the recruitment efforts. Just as her portrayals of swells influenced young men's fashion, her patriotism earned her the nickname "England's Greatest Recruitment Sergeant." The title of her song "The Army of Today's Alright" was used in enlistment posters and the British Army even named a platoon after her (Aston 258).

Tilley as Object of Queer Desire

Tilley's performances influenced male audience members (first in fashion and then in enlisting to fight in World War I), yet her fan base was largely female (Aston, 255). Young women regularly wrote her letters in which they professed their love for her and some women behaved like "groupies," following Tilley from city to city, watching her performance nightly. Tilley did not embrace this attention, but neither did she openly reject her more obsessive fans (Rodger 177). As we have already seen, the ways in which same-sex desire is discussed in theatre scholarship largely depends on the worldview and political objectives of the scholar. Maitland writes that Tilley "could also enjoy, and obviously did, a certain amount of lesbian-oriented devotion from her fans without having to take responsibility for it. Her *Recollections* are illuminating on the rare occasions when she acknowledged this sort of devotion. She patently did enjoy the power she had, but managed at the same time to be dismissive (if not insulting) about its motivation." On the other hand, Aston reads female audience members' desire for Tilley as heterosexual and non-physical, framing the characters Tilley played as the object of desire rather than Tilley herself. Aston calls Tilley's characteristic young man the ideal of an Adonis, stating that "[w]hereas images of 'macho',

muscular masculinity invite the admiration of males and engage women in the voyeuristic gaze of physical and sexual desire, the Adonis image, for the female spectator, is a spiritual, asexual coupling in which the threat of physical, sexual contact is absent" (255). While I would not dismiss this argument as a possibility for some audience members, to state that Tilley's youthful androgyny is universally asexual seems odd to me. The androgynous combination of a female performer's body, soprano voice and male clothing and mannerisms queers the audience's gaze, offering an object of desire who can be viewed as both a masculine woman and a feminine man. Thus audience members might respond to Tilley with sexual desire for a variety of queer gender expressions. I wish to imagine Tilley's audiences as composed of diverse sexual and gender experiences.

The urbanization of the late 19th century provided queer individuals in large cities developing communities, as scholars such as George Chauncey, Laurence Senelick and Jonathan Katz have shown. Chauncey has shown that in New York City, Harlem's drag balls and same-sex dance halls existed by the 1890s. Sears writes about San Francisco's masquerade balls, which "on Saturday nights, attracted men in "female attire" as well as women in "male attire" and a host of other masqueraders and onlookers" (30). These queer spaces, along with theatres, bars, and dime museums formed the city life of which vaudeville's audiences were members. Thus it would do scholars well to remember that the fact that vaudeville was targeted towards white middle-class families as wholesome entertainment, does not mean that the audiences were discrete, lacking individuals who also frequented other cultural spaces and understood male impersonation through a queer framework.

Chapter 4: Magic Sex Change in *A Florida Enchantment* and the Non-Binary Gender of *Gabriel*

This chapter analyzes two theatrical characters who are assigned female at birth (AFAB), identify as male or masculine, and express masculinity both while presenting male and while presenting female. These characters ask the audience to read masculinity performed by someone AFAB and female presenting. This chapter explores the following questions: How might a nineteenth-century audience have read such masculinity? Can an audience make the jump not only past physiological signifiers of gender such as breasts, long hair, facial features, but sartorial signifiers as well? Can an audience see a female actor in female costume and retain the awareness of the character's masculine identity through knowledge of the plot and performance of masculine physicality? Can these performances be understood as more than the lesbian-coded homoerotics scholars have previously attached to them? I will explore Gunter's 1892 novel and 1896 stage adaptation of *A Florida Enchantment* and George Sand's 1839 play *Gabriel,* reading both as forms of trans representation. Both plays explore gender fixity, fluidity, and essentialism through representations of non-normative gender identity. Furthermore, both feature a central character played by a woman who performs both male and female personas.

This analysis of Archibald Clavering Gunter's *A Florida Enchantment* is partly an act of reconstitution. While what interests me most is the 1896 stage performance and its reception, the playtext has been lost. I therefore approach the performance through an analysis of the 1892 novel and the 1914 film version, as well as contemporaneous newspaper reviews. The film version mainly follows the plot of the novel, with the exception of an

altered ending. Based on newspaper reviews, Laura Horak concludes that the play did not alter the ending, staying true to the novel with the exception of the addition of a few musical numbers (97). *A Florida Enchantment* is a melodrama which tells the story of Lily Travers, a young New York heiress who ingests a magic seed which was stolen from an African tree, and which turns her into a man. Wishing to live as a man, Travers leaves Florida to create a new male persona so that he[11] may return as a man and court a woman with whom he has fallen in love.

Gabriel's titular character is AFAB but raised as a boy in order to bypass inheritance laws (the play takes place in seventeenth-century Italy, where property and aristocratic title could only be inherited by men). Discovering their[12] assigned gender at age seventeen, Gabriel seeks out their cousin, Astolphe, who is the rightful heir. The two cousins become lovers, and Gabriel proceeds to live a dual life—presenting as Gabriel in society and as Astolphe's wife, Gabrielle, during secret rendezvous in the country. The play explores notions of gender essentialism and critiques the misogynist confines of female gender norms through Gabriel's navigating both male and female personas. In this essay, I will explore issues of gender presentation and gender identity within these two plays as well as how sexuality and desire function in conjunction with gender presentation. I will take time to examine *A Florida Encounter*'s conflation of gender and racial hybridity and the minstrelsy

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[11] When writing about Travers, I alternate pronouns such that they correspond to the character's gender identity, not to the character's gender presentation.

[12] I use they/ them pronouns for Gabriel. As we will see, Gabriel expresses complicated feelings about gender identity, not feeling fully male or fully female. I believe that they/them pronouns are particularly helpful in thinking through Gabriel's non-binary gender.

tradition in which the play was performed. Finally, I will express some thoughts regarding a trans perspective of both plays.

From Lily to Lawrence: A Florida Transformation

In *A Florida Enchantment* we see Travers perform three separate genders. First she performs the femininity expected by what the Victorian Cult of True Womanhood. Next Travers is turned into a man but continues presenting as Lily, creating an interesting layering of genders on the stage. Finally, he takes on the presentation and identity of Lawrence, which corresponds to his new gender. Tracking these three gender performances provides both a window into audience reception of the play, as well as the gender beliefs to which Gunter reacts.

When Lily Travers is introduced in the novel version of *A Florida Enchantment*, her description is that of the Victorian ideal of womanhood. She is described as “graceful and feminine” in her appearance and her movements. She is timid in some respects, becoming frightened at the sight of a taxidermied rattlesnake. The text focuses a great deal on her emotions, particularly her passion and jealousy over her fiancé, Fred (who is indeed a playboy). Her jealousy is framed as a female emotion by various characters, including herself, when she wishes she could “love like a man” so that she would not feel tormented. These feminine behavioral and emotional traits disappear once Travers is turned into a man. Upon swallowing the seed, Travers’s movements immediately become careless, “tossing her boots to one corner of the room, her stockings to another, firing her garters on the mantelpiece, and throwing the other articles of her apparel in reckless disorder over floor and

furniture" (25). Travers looks at himself in the mirror in the morning and sees that his facial features remain the same but "containing a threat of coarseness in the near future, for a bolder light seems to gleam in the staring, questioning eyes that look upon her as he gasps, 'Great God! Can it be possible? I am a man!'" (72). As Travers gradually changes into a man (developing a deeper voice, hands and feet growing, facial hair sprouting), he loses his ability to navigate feminine gender performance. Later in the morning after his transformation, Travers struggles to walk in a dress, "her long, trailing skirts have become awkward to her, who yesterday in these same clinging garments, was the poetry of motion, and grace itself" (79). The world which Gunter has created is one in which gendered mannerisms are essentialized to the degree that the knowledge of how to walk in a skirt becomes lost by growing male.

In the film version, the physical awkwardness Gunther describes in the novel is not visible, but there is a still dissonance between the feminine clothes and physicality. Edith Story portrays Travers as instantly changing from lady to gentleman through mannerisms. Storey's Travers knocks over a chair immediately after having swallowed the seed. In the morning he discovers facial hair in the mirror and expertly shaves. He beats his maid, flirts with his female friends, walks in long strides, stands with arms akimbo, and makes confident and large hand gestures rather than the dainty hand movements Storey performs in the first twenty minutes of the film. Thus, in both novel and film versions, Travers' gender at this point in the plot is conveyed through masculinized mannerisms which are in direct conflict with his feminine presentation, and with the actress's body.

One other notable masculine act in which the dress-wearing Travers engages is

assaulting a black female body. Fearing Jane, the maid, will discover his gender transformation, and wanting a gentleman's valet, Travers turns Jane into a man non-consensually, holding her down and forcing the seed down her throat (the symbolic rape is far from subtle). Once turned into a man, Jane also continues to present as a woman while being male identified. However, analyzing Jane's gender performance is more complicated than Travers's for two reasons: first, Jane's character development is an expression of gendered racial stereotypes, the character performed in blackface both on stage and screen. Furthermore, on stage the role of Jane was performed by Dan Collyer, a *male* blackface performer (Horak 97). The confluence of race and gender in the character of Jane is further analyzed below.

Gabriel or Gabrielle? Gender Uncertainty in *Gabriel*

In contrast to Travers and Jane, when Gabriel is presenting as Gabrielle, they do their best to perform feminine movements. Gabriel's first scene as Gabrielle comes in Act II, when Astolphe (still believing Gabriel to be a man) has convinced them to attend a dinner party disguised as a woman. The audience witnesses Gabriel standing by a mirror, practicing feminine mannerisms. The trope of a man disguised as a woman practicing female mannerisms is part of cross-dressing tradition and traces as far back as Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, first performed in 411 BCE. Because Gabriel has been socialized as a man, they struggle to perform femininity; their attempt to use a fan, a signifier of femininity, ends in their breaking the accessory. Gabriel practices walking in the manner women walk but does not seem to improve significantly at first, as Astolphe agrees that their gait is

awkward. Throughout Acts III and IV, as Gabriel lives as Gabrielle, their masculine socialization and identification are highlighted by other characters. Act III begins with a scene in Astolphe's mother's house, in which Gabriel's performance of femininity is policed and criticized. The very first words spoken to Gabriel in the first scene are a reprimand that they go hunting too often and their horse riding is immodest (for a woman) because they jump fences. When Gabriel leaves the room, Astolphe's mother complains that Gabriel is lazy and unhelpful with housework: "You think she works? All she does is break threads, lose needles, and waste silk. [regarding her needlework] Look how tangled up all the threads are!" (92). Not only does Gabriel consciously perform femininity, but as the play progresses and they respond to societal pressures— specifically to Astolphe's urgings— they becomes more adept at femininity. Thus Sand presents gender as performative rather than essentialist.

Sand created a character who is fully accepted as whichever gender they present. Although Gabriel's delicate facial features are commented on when they are presenting masculine, there is no suspicion attached to that observation. Although imperfect in feminine physicality, they are believed to be a woman and desired by men when presenting as a woman. Even in Act II, in which Gabriel dresses as a woman for the first time, no one doubts their gender. Astolphe's former lover is jealous of Gabriel (Astolphe's supposed reason for the ruse) and another man kisses Gabriel. Astolphe becomes so jealous at the sight of Gabriel being kissed by another man that he challenges him to a duel. When Gabriel reminds Astolphe that they are only performing as a woman, and therefore Astolphe's honour has not been sullied, Astolphe responds, a

> Gabriel, listen. I am not myself tonight. I am under the spell of a strange illusion: I am convinced you are a woman. Even though I know otherwise, the illusion has taken hold of my imagination the way the reality does, perhaps even more so. Because when you are in that costume, I feel a passion for you that is jealous, ardent, fearful and chaste (83).

Gabriel is not a comedy and Astolphe is not Orsino. There is no Shakespearean metatheatrical wink to the audience, no boy players to joke about between the lines. Rather, Sand has created a world in which Gabriel's gender identity and their perceived gender are carefully examined.

If Gabriel's masculinity is not emphasized through physicality when they are presenting as Gabrielle, perhaps it is because Gabriel is not male-identified, but rather a non-binary gender non-conforming character. How does Gabriel view their own gender and the two different gender presentations/personas which they perform? Despite the wealth of soliloquies Sand gives Gabriel, the reader or audience's understanding of Gabriel's sense of their own gender remains murky. In the prologue, one of Gabriel's first lines upon entering the scene (prior to being told that they were in fact AFAB) is, "I do not feel that my soul has a sex" (73). When first dressed as a woman, they are physically uncomfortable, stating, "how I suffer in this garment! Everything binds and stifles me… I feel so awkward!" (68). Yet Sand ends the scene with Gabriel looking at their reflection in the mirror, with the stage directions "remains absorbed before the mirror" (69). Gabriel is fascinated, but do they find the image pleasing? Sand does not let the audience into Gabriel's subjective experience. In Act IV Gabriel muses, "I am reluctant to renounce being a man when I wish; because I have not been happy for long in this other disguise, which has become our mutual torment" (125).

Gabriel views both male and female personas as disguises, recognizing that gender is performed, in a manner similar to Sir Anthony Love. Yet Sir Anthony is content to perform whichever gender is most convenient in the moment, while Gabriel is emotionally conflicted and seems to feel the oppression society's expectations for binary gender expression. Gabriel describes their female persona as a torment, however, it is unclear if the torment is due to being strongly male-identified and experiencing gender dysphoria, the social limitations placed on women (such as the gender policing they experience in Act III) without any internal crisis and dysphoria, or simply Astolphe's jealousy. Living as a woman is uncomfortable for Gabriel, but they not quite comfortable presenting as a man either. It might be reasonable to suggest that Gabriel expresses sentiments which look like those expressed today by people who identify as nonbinary, agender, or genderfluid.

A final clue towards analyzing the character's gender identity is the fact that Gabriel chooses to leave society and join a monastery. Although gendered male in comparison to a nun, the monk is a man who has renounced some of the behaviors which mark male privilege (namely property ownership and marriage). Taking a vow of celibacy and existing outside of the rest of society, the monk is an unsexed, liminal figure who is not bound by gender norms. Furthermore, as Pratima Prasad points out, turning to a celibate life in the church is a common literary device for female characters, not male characters. Prasad writes, "in Western literature, religious seclusion is often a conventional narrative outcome for a female character, through which the heroine opts out of the romance plot" (348). Joining a monastery is a notably queer act, one that unsexes a man while allowing a woman to exercise freedom. Even sartorially, monk robes are a feminized form of male attire. The monk is

perhaps the only societal figure who is allowed a degree of androgyny of expression and a deviation from the gender binary.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Butlerian gender performativity views gender as an enactment of scripts rather than an expression of essentialist qualities. These enactments are socially monitored such that correct gender performance is “a strategy of survival” which eventually comes to seem natural and essentialist. Gender formation is a process which occurs through the rehearsal and repetition of gendered behavior, as “the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time” (“Performative Acts” 274). In Gabriel we see a child raised as male and introduced to particular gendered scripts and encouraged to enact masculinity both in deeds and in mode of thinking (i.e. reason). In the opening scene, Gabriel’s tutor reassures Gabriel’s grandfather that from an early age Gabriel was “imbued with the grandeur of man’s role and the lowliness of woman’s in nature and society” (12). As a result of that socialization, Gabriel is judged by the tutor and grandfather as completely masculine in behavior and reasoning. Yet Gabriel contradicts that assessment even before learning that they are AFAB and raised male. Gabriel has a sense of dissonance with their gender, feeling that their soul is genderless. Gabriel tells the tutor that they had a dream in which they were a woman. Butler offers a notion of “multiple and coexisting identifications” which we all experience and which “contest the fixity of masculine and feminine” (*Gender Trouble* 85). Gabriel has been socialized male, yet does not fully identify with that gender role, experiencing other possibilities through the subconscious.

While Sand’s play has affinities with notions of gender performativity, *A Florida*

Enchantment turns on assumptions of gender essentialism, the belief that there is a physiological basis to the gender assigned to bodies. Not only are behaviors such as manner of walking and talking not socially constructed in Gunther's world, but they are forgotten and replaced by a new physicality once the seed has been swallowed. This magic sex change provides a unique differentiation between gender fixity and gender essentialism, since, in Gunther's world, gender can change but only in a binary fashion in which all gendered traits shift from female to male or male to female.

The Link between Gender & Sexuality

Furthermore, gender and sexuality are linked in *A Florida Encounter*, such that the moment of sex change creates a shift in sexual desire. Travers loses desire for Fred and becomes enamored with her two female friends, "for it is the first time she has ever seen the wondrous loveliness of women with masculine eyes" (80). Travers greets her friends with kisses on the lips, one source of queer scholars' focus on the film as an early example of lesbian coding (see Brasell, Senelick, Somerville). What interests me, however, is not the image of two women kissing, but rather, the notion that women who were not attracted to Lillian Travers prior to her magic sex change have become attracted to him even as they still believe him to be female. In the novel, Gunter describes the two women as both attracted and confused by their feelings. In Gunter's world there is a sort of masculine magnetism which attracts women who still see Travers as a woman. On Travers' first day as a man, he greets Bessie as she disembarks her carriage and asks for a friendly, platonic kiss, "for these two having known each other from childhood, kiss at sight in the careless, easy way peculiar to

girls" (81). However, the kiss is sexually charged, as Gunther writes,

> Miss Travers grants the plump little blonde's demand, and apparently produces a great sensation on that young lady, for she ecstatically cries: "Just one more!" and gives the tall brunette another salute that comes from the very bottom of her heart and goes on enthusiastically, "Lilly, you are the best kisser I ever saw—boys or girls!" then suddenly pauses—for Miss Connie's voice is heard in reproving tones "Bess!" Whereupon the maiden stammers, "No, I don't mean that! Of course I don't! I don't know what I am talking about!" and sits down covered with rosy blushes. (81–82)

Siobhan Somerville points to this attraction as a flaw in the reasoning of scholars who reject a lesbian reading of the novel/film, stating, "whether or not one sees Lillian as a lesbian, one must take into account the question of Bessie's desire: how do we make sense of this character's unambiguous delight in being courted by Lillian, who she thinks is still a woman?" (57). Certainly I find the change in Bessie to be interesting in relation to the queer desire discussed in Chapter 2, in which women feel attracted to Hamilton and Charke specifically over other (cis) men, as well as the queer desire of Hindle and Tilley's female audience members expressed, discussed in Chapter 3.

Horak challenges the idea that the critics' reactions to the play was prompted by its depiction of sexual deviance. Instead, she claims the reaction to the play is better understood in the social context of late 19th-century New York theatre and the collapsing boundaries between high and low culture. Gunther was a sensationalist writer, "the shop-girl's favorite novelist," and as such an outsider to high culture (Horak 100). However, "*A Florida Enchantment* glorified sexual desire and featured scantily clad women, and yet it was staged at a legitimate Broadway theater" (101). She points out that the *New York Times*' critic used similar language in reviewing *A Florida Enchantment* and another Gunther play which did

not have sexually deviant plot lines, nevertheless calling it an unredeemable "dramatic monstrosity" (quoted in Horak 101). But scholars Laurence Senelick and Siobhan Somerville are clearly reading the female presenting Travers as a woman and the romance as lesbian—and assuming that that is how the audience is receiving it. Thus the dominant scholarship assumes the audience reads the female presenting Travers as a woman.

In *Gabriel* gender and sexuality are also linked, but for Astolphe, not Gabriel. Astolphe's desire for Gabriel could be read as homoerotic, but I suggest it would be more fruitful to read this passion as queer desire. I make the distinction between homoerotic and queer in order to highlight the limits of the binary language which has dominated theatre scholarship in past decades. An eye to the homoerotic flattens Gabriel's non-binary gender into a vehicle for same-sex attraction. Marjorie Garber refers to this type of scholarship as a tendency "to look *through* rather than *at* the cross-dresser, to turn away from a close encounter with the transvestite, and to want instead to subsume that figure within one of two traditional genders" (9, emphasis in original). Thus, creating a space for more than homonormative interaction, I argue that Astolphe is attracted to the very indeterminacy of Gabriel's gender.

In Act Two, Astolphe convinces Gabriel to dress as a woman so they can go as Astolphe's date to a dinner party, ostensibly to make a former lover of his jealous. However, the very idea belies Astolphe's awareness of and attraction to Gabriel's feminine qualities. Astolphe experiences strong lust for the cross-dressed Gabriel. At first glance at the female presenting Gabriel, he exclaims, "It is remarkable. If I had seen you like that the first time we met, I would never have guessed your sex…Indeed! I would have a fallen head over heels in

love" (70). The queer desire he feels for Gabriel while they presents as a feminine boy is controllable but the beauty Gabriel has when presenting as a woman confuses and upsets Astolphe. He cannot see Gabriel as a man, despite continuing to appreciate their androgyny; when Gabriel states that they feel uncomfortable with their ungraceful, boyish walk, Astolphe responds "I assure you it is adorably awkward. … I see you and realize that your awkwardness is a more powerful attraction than all the skills of elegant women" (73). Earlier in the play, upon first meeting Gabriel, Astolphe has a soliloquy in which he muses over Gabriel as an object of desire,

> With his fifteen or sixteen years, and his chin smooth like a woman's, he almost makes you imagine… I would like to have a mistress who looks like him. But a woman can never have that kind of beauty, that mix of candor and strength, or at least the feeling of strength… His pink cheek is like a woman's, but his large, pure brow is a man's. (51)

Astolphe has trouble articulating his thoughts and desires in this soliloquy because they are seemingly deviant. However, he does articulate a desire for a woman *like* Gabriel. A woman who is as fair but also has Gabriel's strength. In *Vested Interests,* Garber utilizes a Lacanian definition of desire to argue that "the transvestite is the space of desire" (75). Garber views the indeterminate and liminal quality of cross-dressing, androgyny, or non-binary gender presentation as a source of unattainability, a refusal to be categorized in a binary fashion which propels desire. Indeed, it is Gabriel's queerness, their deviation from binary gender which is most attractive to Astolphe.

Yet despite his initial attraction to Gabriel's queerness, Astolphe is threatened by Gabriel's masculinity and autonomy and spends their few years together attempting to turn Gabriel into a controllable woman who conforms to gender roles. Beyond Astolphe's

anxieties, as a gender non-conforming character, Gabriel has no place in the binary world of seventeenth-century Italy and is ultimately killed off. In death Gabriel can be mourned but living they create too much anxiety for those who know them. Garber calls the state which gender variant characters evoke "a category crisis" (17).

Garber examines how gender transgression is utilized to call other social and cultural categories into question. Plays with gender disguise and cross-dressing often attack categories of class and race as well. As Garber writes, "*transvestitism is a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture*: the disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself" (17). In *Gabriel,* Gabriel's gender socialization was due to their grandfather's wish for them to inherit the family title and wealth. Gabriel grapples with the ethics both of cheating Astolphe out of his inheritance and of the inheritance laws themselves, which they deem "troublesome" and "perhaps even unjust" (25). They question the very class structure. In Act I, after a bar fight, Gabriel muses, "A ruffian? Yes, his fellow man. With wealth and good breeding, that ruffian might have been a brave officer, a great captain" (47). When gender essentialism is challenged, all common sense beliefs about social strata are also called into question. Gunther goes further than Sand by setting up multiple binaries which collapse upon themselves through the gender transformation.

Setting is especially important to examine in relation to the idea of "category crisis" in *A Florida Enchantment.* At the end of the nineteenth-century, America was a shifting landscape and Gunther set up Florida to represent aspects of American culture; the North vs. South divide, the tame city vs. the wilderness, white vs. black. Gunther further includes an

Old World vs. New World divide. Yet even as he sets up the categories, Gunther blurs them together. At the very top of the novel Gunther describes the environment Traverse and Bessie are standing in.

> Immediately facing them is the square of the Alcazar with its ceaseless fountain and tropical plants; beyond, the Villa Zorayda looking like some Granadan villa from which the Emirs of the Moorish Kingdom issued five hundred years ago to sack Andalusian villages and carry off the maids of fair Castile to Eastern harems. Through this scene of the Old World passes the Alameda which is all of the modern; its asphalt pavement, covered with prancing steeds and liveried equipages; its stone sidewalks peopled with brilliantly dressed men and women displaying the toilets of Paris and New York (18).

Thus, the world of the play is a mixture of Old World and New World, of nostalgic fables and contemporary industry, such that the sensibilities of locations intersect each other, signaling the category collapse which will take place later in the play. Gunther clarifies these interlinked categories one more time, describing St. Augustine as "this old town of the Spanish conquistadores, now rebuilt and revivified by a modern conqueror of finance and oil" (11). Categories are violated as conquerors usurp lands. Furthermore, the seeds are brought from Africa to the New World. Lily Travers's name itself symbolizes a traversing of categories—that Travers is similar to traverse is clear. However, it is worth mentioning that in the 1890s Lily was a name commonly adopted by female impersonators, automatically linking her to gender blurring (Garber 62). Travers is also traversing through time; through the lost casket and Oglethorpe's letter, Lilly is able to connect to her great-great grandfather, whom she is curious about and knows through his portrait, which she is described as gazing at in her aunt's home. When Lilly opens the casket, she finds a parcel that has written on the

outside “To be conveyed to my family, by the finder, unopened! HAUSER OGLETHORPE” (48). This is startling to Lilly.

The Racialization of Gender Transformation

How does race function within *A Florida Enchantment*? There are a number of elements in the play that rely on nineteenth-century understandings of race. First of all, the seed comes from Africa. Gunter dedicates a full chapter of the novel to Oglethorpe’s detailed account of procuring the seed, and emphasizes the role of capitalist exploitation and violence. Oglethorpe was a slave trader and planned to sell the seeds to rich European women who wish to turn into men. Indeed, Oglethorpe burns the tree to the ground, both disrupting the African tribe’s access to the seeds and creating a scarcity that would increase the value of the seeds he collected. Colonialist violence is also present in Oglethorpe’s obtaining the secret location of the seeds by means of threats of torture.

As described in Oglethorpe’s letter, Africa is a place of sexual ambiguity and susceptible to exploitation. Oglethorpe’s contact is the tribe leader, Quassi. The name Quassi evokes a sense of incompleteness and complication, echoing the fact that he and all the men in his village were transformed by the seeds. Quassi is both victim and perpetrator of violence, as without women, the village can only perpetuate itself by capturing women from other villages and turning them into men. This cycle is implicitly violent but it is represented as positive, since, through kidnapping, the captured women are freed from gendered oppression. It is also worth noting that the village maintains itself through a sexless process. The men are all former women, and neither reproduction nor labour exist in the village. And

though it is known to the villagers that the seed will turn men into women, Quassi states that no man has ever wished to transform back into a woman.

While the process of transformation is one-directional for the Africans, Oglethorpe and his men experiment in becoming women. Their very proximity to the tree affects their gender, as "Even the perfume of its flowers had a wondrous effect. As we breathed we seemed to become effeminate and our natures milder, and even our cruel Spanish boatswain became softer in his language and less savage in his blasphemy" (55). Oglethorpe and two of his men ingest the seed, becoming women. Somerville points out how this description suggests that the very landscape of Africa "inverts" the masculinity of Oglethorpe and his men. The ambiguity of Africa is also reflected in the racial dynamics of the sailors. The only sailor who remains a man is the Spaniard, who quickly accumulates a harem of newly-transformed women, who fight over him, as he is "the only white man among us" (57). Elsewhere in Oglethorpe's account, however, the Spaniard was not seen as white but as a "savage" (58). There is a hybridity in desiring the Spaniard, who is neither white nor black. Somerville analyzes the racial and sexual power dynamics of this scene as the Spaniard "function[ing] as a pivot in this scene, protecting Oglethorpe and his crew against the sexual threat of Quassi and simultaneously posing his own sexual threat" (75).

The combination of gender and racial hybridity is also integral to an examination of Travers' servant, Jane. Analyzing the performance of Jane is complicated by representations of race through blackface. In discussing Jane and gender there are a number of nineteenth-century notions of race that should be addressed. We should first look to the playtext's depiction of black femininity and black masculinity; then we must consider how that

depiction is performed on stage and how the presence of a white male blackface performer playing Jane informed this performance. Finally, we should look at the film's use of blackface, which has been written about extensively.

The interplay between racial and gendered stereotypes are complicated in the character of Jane by the fact that she is "mulatto" and therefore a hybrid character to begin with. Nineteenth-century writers often employed sexual differentiation as a measure of civilization. White men were held to be innately superior to white women, but black men were not. Siobhan B. Somerville analyzes the use of comparative anatomy in scientific racism, noting how medical discourses of the period both hypersexualized and de-gendered black women by describing their bodies in terms of a physical excess, emphasizing, for example, a larger than "normal" clitoris. As Somerville writes, "such characterizations literalized the sexual and racial ideologies of the nineteenth century 'Cult of True Womanhood' which explicitly privileged white women's sexual "purity" while implicitly suggesting African American women's sexual accessibility" (28).

Compared to its representation of the lily white virgin Travers, the play depicts Jane's pre-transformation sexuality in two ways. First, she has a sweetheart, whom she meets at night and who breaks her heart with his womanizing ways, in the same manner that Fred Cassedane breaks Lily Travers' heart. While the fact that both men womanize functions to make Jane a foil for Travers, the fact that she would go out at night to meet her sweetheart marks Jane as sexually active in a way that Travers is prohibited from being. The second example of the hypersexualization of Jane is the way in which Travers forces her to swallow the seed. This symbolic act of forcing the seed (which we cannot but view as symbolic of

semen) is a violation of Jane's black body by a white man. This violation is sexual both in its symbolism and in its actuality of changing Jane's gender, taking her female "sex" away against her will and without her knowledge. This act follows the history of hundreds of years of raping and sexually violating black women.

Once Jane turns into John, his strength and sexual drive define him as hypermasculine. Although Travers performs masculinity through physical strength, his violence appears to derive from the exercise of his capacity for reason. In contrast, John is depicted as spontaneous in his violent outbursts, to the point that Travers needs to knock him unconscious. As Somerville notes, "the film thus calls on asymmetrical contemporary cultural constructions of black and white masculinity, reinforcing stereotypes of the aggressive black male and seeming to justify drastic measures to control his violence" (65).

Whereas Travers' transformation makes him fully male, Jane's transformation results in both racial and sexual hybridity. In the novel, Travers discovers that Jane (who has been transformed into a man but still presents as female, as does Travers) is moonlighting in the local dime museum as "the greatest freak on earth" (161). This is the 'intermediate' point, in which Travers and Jane/John both have transformed but are presenting female (and about to switch to presenting male). The novel does not give any specifics as to how Jane is displayed, leaving a question as to what about Jane's body and manner would be read as male and what as female. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, dime museums tended to display stigmatized bodies which were also racially marked as Other. After learning of John's dime museum performances, Travers has a nightmare that he is displayed at a dime museum, alongside the "Missing Link" and the "Living Skeleton" (162). Sears points out that Travers' fear is not

simply being labelled a freak, but it is a fear of being marked as racialized as John is. Sears notes that

> Part of [Travers'] horror at being displayed as " The Woman Man" is being displayed alongside and in association with the racialcized "Missing Link" character and the "Living Skeleton." Indeed throughout the novel the dime museum appears as a racialized site that serves as both the source of gender transgression (i.e., sex-change seeds from Africa) and the space of its containment. is suggests that the potential disciplinary effects of freak-show visibility were intricately connected to its association with imperial exoticism and racialized difference. 108

The fear of becoming racially marked and the relationship between gender hybridity and racial hybridity would have been highlighted on the stage, through the use of blackface.

In the stage production, the role of Jane was performed by a white man in blackface, by Dan Collyer, a known minstrel performer. In Jane, the audience saw first a cross-dressed man performing a woman, then, once Jane is transformed, they saw a man performing a cross-dressing man and finally, a man performing a man. At the beginning of the play we see a white woman performing the white woman, Lily Travers, and a white man performing the black woman, Jane. Then Travers ingests the seed and becomes a man. We then witness a white woman performing a white man who is still presenting as a white woman. This person then symbolically rapes a black woman who is being performed by a white man, turning her into a black man. At this point we witness a white woman playing a white man and a white man playing a black man. So as the audience is asked to read a woman as a man they are also asked to read a white man as a black man. One might wonder, however, how the transformed Jane may have affected reception of the transformed Travers; that is to say, how an audience witnessing a male actor performing a cross-dressing man may have challenged the

acceptance of the female actor performing a cross-dressing man. One can imagine how jarring the difference between the presentation and physicalization of these two actors must have been and the humor which was likely developed from this discrepancy.

The majority of scholarship on *A Florida Enchantment* is focused on lesbian readings of the film. R. Bruce Brasell and Vito Russo analyze lesbian coding in the film while Somerville analyzes the convergence of lesbian and black identities. These scholars contend that the 1890s was precisely the moment in which lesbianism came into public awareness with the emergence of the field of sexology and the 1892 trial of Alice Mitchell for the murder of her female lover, Freda Ward. The case was sensationalized in the press and "its effect was to increase public consciousness of and to criminalize a new type of woman, the female 'invert'" (Somerville 2). However, there are some problems with this argument. While Ellis came to be the most influential sexologist in the United States, his *Sexual Inversion* was only published in 1895 in Britain and in 1897 in America, so it would not have been a significant influence on the public viewing the 1896 stage performance of *A Florida Enchantment.* Furthermore, Laura Horak challenges these readings, contextualizing the novel and film within late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century cultural references, and concluding that, "as transgressive as [the cross-dressing and same-sex desire in the film] look to us now, they signified an old cultural regime to audiences of the time" (117). While the same-sex erotic dynamic between Travers and Bessie was not lost on the audience, it was received outside the context of pathologized sexuality. Rather, their dynamic would have been read as a healthy Victorian homosocial relationship, which Smith-Rosenberg argues was seen as normative within the Victorian society (53).

Taking all this into consideration, I ask: is a woman performing a man read as male (i.e. is Travers' and Jane/John's maleness accepted by the audience)? And does Dan Collyer's maleness undermine Marie Jansen's malesness due to the fact that when Jane is transformed into a man, the character's maleness corresponds to the actor's maleness, whereas Lawrence Travers' maleness is in opposition to actress Marie Jansen's femaleness?

As we saw in Chapter 3, the 1890s and 1900s were a time of shifting aesthetics for the genre of male impersonation. In the 1860s–1880s, Annie Hindle and the other male impersonators on the variety and vaudeville stages aspired to a kind of realism in their performances. The aesthetic goal was for the male impersonator to "pass" as male. In the 1890s, male impersonators became less realistic until by the 1900s impersonators such as Vesta Tilley were performing non-threatening feminine men. Unlike the early impersonators, whose costumes had a boxy, masculine cut, later impersonators wore costumes tailored to accentuate their hips. Rather than keep their hair short, the later impersonators wore their hair long and often performed a final gender reveal through taking their hat off and letting their hair tumble down. The characters that impersonators performed shifted from a range that included working class men, soldiers, sailors, and beggars to upper class swells. This shift reflects the growing concern around American masculinity, which "began to emerge in the mid-century, but a fever-pitch by the 1880s and 1890s" (Rodger 195). A shift which, as discussed in the Introduction, was a response by white men to the presence of African American men in the waged labor and the rise of suffragettes and the New Woman.

Examining the performances of Lawrence Travers within this understanding of shifting male impersonator performance, we can ask what type of masculinity might have

been evoked by Jansen and Storey. Lawrence Travers is the type of swell most focused on by the male impersonators of the 1890s (Rodger 194). I have not found much information regarding Marie Jansen's performances, though she seems to have been a mezzo-soprano, as she performed the titular role in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*, a mezzo-soprano role. Regarding Storey's film performance, promotional materials compared Storey's performance as reaching the impersonating success of Vesta Tilley, the most successful male impersonator of the 1900s, but one who was not a convincing man and was actively working to be read as a cross-dressing woman rather than pass as a man in the way earlier generations of impersonators had done. In the film, when Storey dresses in male attire as Lawrence, the suits are cut to emphasize her waist and hips. In the realm of gender play, "the most common element in most early twentieth-century writing on male impersonation is an element of relief on the part of the writer that the impersonator was not terribly convincing in the act" (Rodger 189).

The argument that Jansen and Storey don't convincingly pass as men seems to suggest that they would not be read by the audience as mannish women or inverts. Even if Travers were read as a sexually inverted woman, sexual inversion is not the same as our contemporary category of lesbian. Inversion in the late-nineteenth century was not a unified theory, but rather a term understood differently by different sexologists. Where Richard von Krafft-Ebing viewed female same-sex desire as due to having a male soul trapped in a female body, Havelock Ellis noted that masculine presentation was not always accompanied by sexual inversion. Generally, inversion assumed that a woman had masculine tendencies. Same-sex desire was understood as one aspect of alignment with the opposite gender.

Inversion was a matter of the individual not conforming to gender roles, more than having same-sex desires. As George Chauncey notes, Ellis recognized that "inverts were occasionally involved in heterosexual relations…but they were always attracted to someone whose sex role was opposite their own. Ellis thought that the man attracted to an inverted woman, for instance, must be exceptionally effeminate" (121). Although present in the history of the development of the category of homosexual, this conflating of sexuality and gender identity makes sexual inversion part of transgender history as well. Therefore, if the audience of the time read sexual inversion into *A Florida Enchantment*, it is not far-fetched for a twenty-first-century reader to view the play as a trans narrative.

To bring about a category crisis does not imply a complete rejection of foundational beliefs, but rather, a troubling of those beliefs. Both *A Florida Enchantment* and *Gabriel* challenge the assumed norms of the sex/gender system while also accepting patriarchal assumptions of male superiority. In *A Florida Enchantment,* the magic seeds are discovered by an American slave trader who has captured an African from an all-male tribe. All women in the tribe ingest the seed so that they can become men. Captain Oglethorpe seeks to find the tree and harvest the seeds in order to sell it to American and European women, imagining that rich and powerful women, including queens, would pay to become men. He labels the vial of seeds "For Women Who Suffer" (63). Gunter himself is quoted in an interview as stating that he wrote the play to show that "men have a better time than women amid the social environment of our present civilization" (quoted in Brasell 9). In the late-nineteenth century, presenting as a man provided women economic and social freedoms.

Yet it is worth noting that the character of Travers does not wish to be a man because

of societal pressures, but rather because she wishes to free herself from an emotional interiority which is deemed feminine. She experiences jealousy due to her fiancé, Fred, flirting with other women. She wishes to “love like a man” and is admonished by Fred that she must control her jealousy “as a man would” when they are wed. It is an essentialist notion of emotional gender difference which inspires Travers to ingest the seed and change her sex.

Similarly, *Gabriel* assumes a male superiority of rationality as the essential difference between men and women. In Act Five, Astolphe asks Gabriel’s tutor, who raised Gabriel as a man to consider whether or not “the same upbringing can provide a woman with as much logic, knowledge, and courage as a man? But you would not prevent her from having a more tender heart, or from caring more about love than chimerical ambitions. The heart escaped you, Father Chiavari; you fashioned only the mind” (153). Sand’s view of gender fluidity retains an essentialist notion of gendered emotional difference, one which upholds the supremacy of reason over the vagaries of emotion.

Gender fluctuates in these two plays, aligning and misaligning with the actresses’ assigned gender, their costumes, and the sociocultural expectations of the nineteenth-century. I have discussed the ways in which Gunther and Sand examine assumptions of gender fluidity and essentialism through cross-dressing. As an artifact of its historical period’s attitudes toward gender roles, *A Florida Enchantment* exposes essentialist assumptions of gender and the limitations of nineteenth-century gender norms for women. Perhaps less representative of its socio-historical moment, *Gabriel* provides a nuanced and well-developed representation of a gender non-conforming individual, written by an author whose

own gender identity was complex and transgressive. But this study is more than a comparison of two separate plays; the unique complexity of gender layering in both texts, in which male identification is affixed to AFAB bodies while in female dress, prompts questions as to deeper understandings of gender in performance and its effect on reception. In both Travers' and Gabriel's cases, the audience cannot process the narrative arc without tracking the character's changing gender identity, even as their feminine gender presentation contradicts their masculine identity. Might that very process challenge notions of gender binarism, creating a space to envision gender as a continuum? Might we read these nonconforming gender performances as creating a space of possibility in which audience members who were exploring their own gender identity and expression find recognition and insight?

A Final Thought

Although the primary purpose of this project is an analysis of female to male cross-dressing, I would like to take a moment to examine the female to male transformation of Doctor Fred Cassedene in *A Florida Enchantment*. Investigating Lily's disappearance, Fred is convinced that Lawrence Travers murdered her. To stop Fred's allegations, Travers confides in him that he is the sexually transformed Lily and offers Fred a seed as proof and ends up forcing it down his throat with the help of the now-male Jane. In the novel/play Fred's transformation into Frederika is incomplete compared to Travers'. Indeed, the novel chapter in which it occurs is titled "The Horrible Metamorphosis of Doctor Frederik Cassadene" (242). Frederika is described as a masculine woman with a "semi-masculine

stride." What is interesting is that what seems to be the immediate transformation is her sexual desire for Travers, her first words to him stating that he's handsome. When Bessie's father shows up for the duel, Frederika is horrified by the dueling pistols, begging that they be put away or else she will scream. Her manner towards Bessie's father is described as "simpering" and the men are described as being disgusted by her. The gender performance on an emotional level is complete but on the level of mannerisms and movements is incomplete, as Frederika is a masculine woman. What Sydney does with the character in the film is completely different.

Frederika's gender performance in the film challenges the audience's suspension of disbelief, falling into a gaudy burlesque of femininity. Sydney sticks his hips out to accentuate and call attention to his buttocks. He lifts the hem of his suit jacket as he walks as though he were lifting the long fabric of a dress in order to walk more easily. When he runs while still in menswear, he takes many fast but very small steps, an implication that women walk in that manner due to some essential quality rather than adjusting their gait to the heavy and constricting fabric of a skirt which is in the way of their feet as they walk. Sydney's performance reminds me of Alisa Solomon's assertion that "men dressed as women often *parody* gender, women dressed as men, women, on the other hand, tend to *perform* gender*"* (145). Sydney's gender performance cannot be taken as anything other than a send-up. But is he mocking women, the gender role of woman or the ways in which women are expected to perform? Or might he be mocking feminine men? Whereas Travers successfully "passes" as Lawrence, even after Frederika manages to find some women's clothing and make up, she is read as Fred. From the moment that Fred turns into Frederika, she becomes a

simpering flirt, which is responded to very poorly. Horak describes the reaction as "the characters in the film find Fred's inverted behavior far more grotesque than Lillian's or even Jane's, and they chase Fred through town and eventually off a pier – an evocation of lynching" (107).

Dressed in women's clothing, Sydney is doing a drag performance. If Sydney's performance of essentialist femininity is parody, how does that affect the way we understand Storey's performance of masculinity? We can examine it for exaggeration and certainly there is a great deal of exaggeration in the way Storey throws things, the way she hits her maid, the way she walks a man's gait. But it does not read as a blatant mockery as Sydney does. Again I call up Solomon's assertion: even within the same film, the woman performs masculinity and the man parodies femininity. We can't search *A Florida Enchantment* for a sincere understanding of subjective gender. However, it is clear that a masculine woman is more acceptable than a feminine man in this time period. The masculine woman is desired while the feminine man induces disgust and disdain. But perhaps it also tells us that femininity is understood as a putting on of airs, a taking on of excessive mannerisms. This makes masculinity the neutral state from which femininity departs.

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Figure 1: Comic entitled "What it Mean to be a Man?" by Kasia Babis. Copyright has been obtained.

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“Every time airport security screams ‘pink or blue, pink or blue,’ trying to figure out what machine setting to run you through.”

Andrea Gibson, *Your Life*

Conclusion

On April 29, 2019 Polish comic artist Kasia Babis posted a new comic on her website and her Facebook page (@KasiaBabisComics) and it immediately went viral. Created in collaboration with the Polish sex-positive advocacy group Sexedpl, the comic is intended to “explor[e] the complexities of masculinity.” The comic is composed of six panels, though only five panels are filled in. The first panel simply asks the seemingly gender essentialist question “What it means to be a man?” In the second panel a muscular man in a tank-top who looks reminiscent of Mr. Clean states: “Being a man means being tough.” The third panel disputes aggressive machismo as dominant masculinity, by presenting a Renaissance gentleman who counters: “To be a man you need to wear most impressive wigs.” These two panels function to teach the reader that gender is socially constructed and that the qualities which are emblematic of gender change over time. The fourth and fifth panels playfully challenge any lingering biological essentialism in the reader’s mind by depicting an ape saying “The secret it to have a flashy butt and to scream” and a seahorse saying “It’s all about the miracle of giving birth to be honest.” The sixth panel remains empty, an invitation at the top of the panel to “type your answer:” At the time of this writing, one week after the debut of the comic, it has been shared on Facebook by over 4,500 individual members and the discussion on Kasia’s Facebook page has 376 individual comments (a combination of earnest thoughts on masculinity, memes responses and people tagging their friends).

This comic's viral popularity is a reflection of the complex discussions of gender which society is currently grappling with. Across the internet, on film and television there are messages that people can define themselves outside of rigid binary categories. These discussions help create a misperception that we currently live in a highly progressive historical moment with great freedoms for gender non-conforming, queer, and trans people. In May 2014 Time Magazine's cover story, written by Katy Steinmetz, was "The Transgender Tipping Point," an interview with trans actress Laverne Cox. The article won a GLAAD Media Award by promising that the transgender revolution was on the horizon, and certainly trans visibility and representation have grown in recent years. There are quite a few trans celebrities who are now household names, including Caitlin Jenner, Lana Wachowsky, Chaz Bono and Chelsea Manning. Meanwhile, on social media trans people are able to connect, developing communities and communicative resources (Dame, 2016, Jackson, Bailey & Welles, 2018).

While all of this is true, the expansion of gender expression exists in tension with conservative voices who seek to reinforce the rigidity of a binary society. While there are no longer sartorial laws preventing people from wearing clothing of the "opposite gender," it is still legal to discriminate against people for their gender expression, and trans women are beaten and killed at alarming rates ("Violence Against the Transgender Community in 2019"). Individuals who do not conform to binary gender roles experience not simply societal pressure to be legible, but state sanctioned pressure as Andrea Gibson writes, "Every time airport security screams 'pink or blue, pink or blue,' trying to figure out what machine setting to run you through." While normative looking white cisgender people think about

TSA screenings as a gender-neutral experience, in fact the screening machines are operated with pink and blue buttons. As TSA's own website explains, "When you enter the imaging portal, the TSA officer presses a button designating a gender (male/female) based on how you present yourself. The machine has software that looks at the anatomy of men and women differently. The equipment conducts a scan and indicates areas on the body warranting further inspection if necessary" ("Transgender Passengers" 2019). The machine then flags any body tissue which does not conform to the shape an assumed male or female body. For trans travelers, this means that genitals and breast tissue can be flagged as a potential bomb or smuggled object. Other forms of gender non-conformity such as a body designated female wearing boxers rather than panties can also trigger the alarm. In 2015 TSA made the linguistic shift, designating the flagging of trans bodies as "alarms" rather than the stigmatizing term "anomalies" which they previously used (Marzano-Lesnevich). This daily humiliation of trans travelers as part of TSA security theatre is an example of the tensions existing between trans expression and institutionalized cisgender binarity, which is the current iteration of the gendered tensions we have examined in the pamphlet wars of the 17th century, in Charles Hamilton's trial and the "crisis of masculinity" of the late 19th century.

This dissertation has explored 17th- 18th- and 19th-century female to male theatrical cross-dressing, offering trans readings of characters, performers and individuals through close readings of texts, historical research and consideration of contemporaneous theorizations of gender. In my introduction I presented a series of questions with which I would examine the texts and performances: What do these depictions can tell us about how

gender is historically theorized? Is gender seen as fixed or fluid, essential or socially constructed and performed? Do the specific performances reinforce or transgress gender norms? Do they utilize cross-dressing as a temporary disguise or as a permanent transformation? Are transformations binary and complete or are discrete gender categories rejected and blurred? How are these figures racialized? Sexualized? Caught in dynamics of power and oppression? How were these particular performances received? Recognizing that reception is not universal and that there is a multiplicity of ways in which contemporaneous audiences could read these characters, what readings can we offer without being ahistorical? How might these performances be understood through a transgender perspective?

While no single chapter could explore all of these questions, the dissertation engaged each question multiple times. Each chapter provided an analysis of one binary character or individual and one non-binary character or individual. In Chapter 1 I introduced two plays with AFAB characters who express masculinity. I showed how Aphra Behn engaged in gender non-conformity and cross-dressing in order to reinforce white, European gender norms. The Indian Queen cross-dresses as a temporary disguise, but is killed, preventing miscegenation, while Widow Ranter's gender non-conformity blurs gender categories, but is ultimately neutralized through heterosexual marriage to a man who is manlier than she is. The gender hierarchy in *Widow Ranter* is restored alongside class hierarchy, as colony of Virginia's Council is restructured. On the other hand, Sir Anthony Love rejects marriage and class hierarchy, engages in an egalitarian love affair and approaches gender as performative, learned and fluid. These two competing perspectives on gender emerge towards the end of a time of social anxiety about gender, which we explored through an analysis of *Hic Mulier*

and *Haec Vir*.

In Chapter 2 I traced further changes in British conceptualization of male-presenting AFAB individuals, through the fictionalization of Charles Hamilton's trial in Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband* and the autobiography of cross-dressing actress Charlotte Charke, *A Narrative of the Life of Charlotte Charke*. I utilized Miranda Fricker's theory of hermeneutic injustice to show how Fielding's fiction, which purports to be "*Taken From Her own Mouth*" not only erased Hamilton's own experience of his gender and sexuality, but the continued used of the term "female husband" contributes to the erasure and silencing of historical trans experiences (along with the term "passing woman"). I argued that whereas in Hamilton we see a either a binary trans man (the historical Hamilton) or a deceptive binary cis woman (Fielding's fictional Hamilton), in Charlotte Charke we see a non-binary AFAB individual who preferred men's clothing, but did not necessarily prefer presenting male.

Analysis of the notion of "female husbands" continues in Chapter 3, with a historiographical analysis of 20th century feminist and lesbian theatre scholarship about male impersonator Annie Hindle, who married Annie Ryan. I have argued that aspects of Hindle's trans expression has been read by gay and lesbian scholars as lesbian coding through the concept of the "female husband," while other aspects of Hindle's trans expression were misinterpreted as relating to their onstage performances rather than personal expression. I challenge these cisnormative assumptions which have impeded a trans reading of Hindle as a performer and an individual. I also explore Hindle's success as a realistically masculine male impersonator in the 1860s-1880s in relation to American class and gender tensions. Audience preference for a more androgynous form of male impersonation in the 1890s-1900s is linked

to a shift in the construction of American masculinity (itself a white middle-class reaction to increasing socio-political power of suffragettes, immigrants and African Americans). As with every other chapter, I consider Annie Hindle's gender expression in relation to another figure's gender expression. In exploring male impersonator Vesta Tilley's gender expression, I conclude that while Hindle performed a binary male gender onstage and expressed a non-binary/indeterminate gender offstage, Tilley performed a non-binary, androgynous masculinity onstage while cultivating a binary cisgender offstage persona.

Unlike male impersonation, the actresses performing the characters of Lily Travers and Gabriel needed to embody masculine identity without the benefit of male clothing. This final chapter of this dissertation explores the trans representation in two 19th-century plays, *A Florida Enchantment* and *Gabriel.* I explore how audiences might accept AFAB characters played by AFAB actresses as men, comparing a play written by a cisgender man who views gender as essential and gender transformation as comical, with a play written by an androgynous AFAB writer who authentically imagines non-binarity through the creation of Gabriel. In addition to exploring gender presentation and identity, I consider how queer desire functions in conjunction with gender presentation to make both of these character legible as trans.

Reflections on Future Research

This dissertation is the first step in a larger project of transhistory, and now that I have completed it, I am considering what other forms of performance and trans expression might be explored with the same methodology I have utilized in this dissertation. While this

dissertation analyzed female to male cross-dressing as AFAB trans performance, it would be worthwhile to explore male to female cross-dressing as assigned male at birth (AMAB) trans expression. Unfortunately I have yet to find a way to do this, as I have not come across any examples of male to female cross-dressing that is not grounded in transphobia, homophobia and misogyny, in the same manner that *A Florida Enchantment* exploited such parodic misogyny for humor in the performance of Fred's transformation into Frederika. Such mockery is visible as far back as ancient Greece and as recently as the current Broadway productions. I would like to take a moment to analyze a few examples, namely Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* and the current Tony nominated musical adaptation of *Tootsie.*

The premise for cross-dressing in *Thesmophoriazusae* is that Euripides has discovered that the women of Athens are plotting to kill him due to being angry with his portrayal of female characters. In order to save his own life, Euripidies convinces his relative, Mnesilochus, to be dressed as a woman in order to infiltrate the thesmophoria, a women's religious festival, in order to speak on Euripides' behalf. Much of the comedy of the first part of the play comes from transforming the hyper-masculine Mnesilochus into a passable woman. Euripides turns to the effeminate poet Agathon, who first enters the stage wheeled on the ekkyklema dressed as a woman, singing a portion of the female chorus he is currently writing. Mnesilochus exhibits both aggressions and queer desire towards the effeminate Agathon. He challenges Agathon's androgynous gender expression, saying:

> From where do you stem, effeminate thing?
> Where's your country and what's your home?
> And what is this garb you wear?
> What kind of mix-up have we here?
> Lute, chatting cheek and jowl with party frock,

Hairnet with lyre?
It doesn't click.

Despite challenging Agathon's non-binary gender presentation, Mnesilochus continues to sexually proposition him, and ultimately agrees for Agathon to help Euripides disguise him as a woman. Despite offering himself up for the assignment, once Euripides begins to shave his beard, Mnesilochus puts up a fight. Once his masculine beard has been shaved, he sees himself in Agathon's mirror and exclaims "What a wimp I am!" Taaffe points to the moment that Mnesilochus views himself in the mirror as a shifting point. He has been divested of his masculinity and becomes aware of himself as an object of the male gaze. Dressed as a woman, he no longer struggles, but rather becomes concerned with the fit of the garments, instructing Euripides to "make sure the line of the dress around the legs is right." The female costume induces changes in behavior, creating a role-reversal, turning Mnesilochus into a passive victim of sexual humiliation. This portrayal functions as parody rather than performance of gender, as we saw in Chapter 4 with Sydney's portrayal of Fredericka. The parody evokes humor due to the objectification of the male body in the position of a woman. The current musical, *Tootsie* is another form of this transphobic and misogynistic humor.

The film *Tootsie* debuted in 1982, starring Dustin Hoffman as Michael, an unemployed actor who decides to cross-dress and audition for a soap opera role as a woman. Michael's female alter-ego, Dorothy, is cast in the soap opera. As a man, Michael is sexist in the objectifying way he treats women, but existing as a woman, he is shocked by experiencing objectification that he proceeds to ad lib feminist statements in character. These feminist rants resonate with viewers and Dorothy proceeds to develop a tremendous fan base.

Ultimately Michael's web of lies and complications surrounding Michael's cross-dressed disguise become too complicated and he outs himself as a man. A comedy, *Tootsie*'s humor is built on transphobia, homophobia and misogyny. Michael's roommate (played by Bill Murray) repeatedly asks Michael if he's really cross-dressing for the job or if he likes to wear the clothes. Men develop interests in Dorothy and the audience is meant to enjoy the knowledge that these men are flirting (and even kissing) a man, thinking him to be a woman. Michael develops a romantic interest in a fellow actor, but he can't hit on her because she knows him as Dorothy. However, he can access her desires, needs and vulnerabilities through friendship as Dorothy—knowledge which he can then use to his advantage in pursuing her as Michael. The cross-dressing disguise is fundamentally deceptive, used for Michael's personal gains in career and personal life.

What is funny about male to female cross-dressing? The humor lies in watching a man behave as a woman, being objectified under the male gaze. The humor also comes from they ways in which other characters are being taken in by the cross-dressed man—especially men who fall in love with his female persona. The humor is enhanced by the discoveries the man can make once he has access to women's spaces and conversations. The audience can enjoy that the man has to engage in code switching, repeatedly transforming between genders and often making a mistake and letting his low voice be heard (which occurs in both *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Tootsie*). A man in a dress is funny because he can never be a woman. Humorous cross-dressing films such as *Tootsie* do not have any trans characters, but function to reject trans women's existence. Films like *Tootsie* function to reinforce gender binarity by presenting cross-dressing as a temporary disguise which cannot be sustained.

Michael alters his voice, walk, mannerisms and vocabulary. He wears dresses and a wig. He shaves his legs. But he must always perform femininity in a conscious manner. He cannot sustain it and he slips and uses his deep voice to hail a taxi or at a moment when he is surprised and needs to recover, lest he be suspected of being a man. Disguising himself as a woman helps Michael understand women better and have compassion for them, but the purpose of this knowledge is to then try to keep that compassion when not performing as Dorothy. As Michael says to his romantic interest at the end of *Tootsie,* "I was a better man with you as a woman, than I ever was to a woman as a man. You know what I mean? I just gotta learn to do it without the dress."

All this is bad enough for 1982, but how could it come to be revived in 2019? When I first read that *Tootsie* was being adapted to the stage I worried about the message of the production, yet I held out hope that perhaps the production would be more self-reflective than the film and provide a more nuanced examination of gender. Yet it does not seem to be the case. As Christian Lewis writes in *American Theatre*, "Although there are no trans characters in the musical, trans people are the butt of every joke, a silent specter of mockery, as the whole musical revolves around a never-ending 'man in a dress' gag, a trope that's rooted in transmisogyny (hatred of trans women)" ("The Gender Problem *Tootsie* Can't Dress Up").

Since male to female cross-dressing does not seem a be an avenue for a trans reading of historical performance, another avenue for trans scholarship is to focus on examining contemporary trans performance in relation to these historical cross-dressed examples. This dissertation provides historical context for gender theorization over different time periods and

countries, which would allow scholars to make nuanced comparisons rather than simplistic and flattening transgender associations which are understandably criticized as ahistorical. Such a project would benefit from new terminology for gender expression, since, as discussed in the Introduction, the transhistorical use of *masculine* and *feminine* creates the illusion of a fixed gender construction.

It is important to continue the conversation of how gender nonconformity and cross-dressing can be explored and understood both in authentic, subversive, queer ways and in essentialist, close-minded ways which function to reinforce gender norms and to reinforce violence against trans people.

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