

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: WHEN THE CLOTHES DO NOT MAKE THE
 MAN: FEMALE MASUCLINITY AND
 NATIONALISM IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
 BRITISH LITERATURE

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Recently, masculinity has garnered much attention from scholars of eighteenth-century literature and history. However, these studies focus almost exclusively on the masculinity performed by men. Likewise, studies of female masculinity tend to examine masculine women only within the context of women.

My dissertation lies at the convergence of these two areas of inquiry by examining the implications of female masculinity on normative masculinity and the link between these masculinities and nationalism from the early to late eighteenth century, with particular emphasis at the mid-point of the century. I argue that female masculinity was integral to the development and construction of an idealized masculinity and that both positive and negative responses to female masculinity fostered nationalist propaganda and aided in the development of the British Empire.

In the first chapter, I trace the shifting grounds of normative masculinity and argue that what constitutes masculinity narrows as the century progresses and is defined by its resistance to any connection with French culture, particularly within the rising

middle class. Chapter two examines three female soldier narratives, some of the only positive representations of female masculinity. I argue that the authors praise female masculinity as a means of creating a heroic masculinity to serve the nation.

The third chapter examines the function of female husbands. I argue that these texts employ female husbands as a means of inciting xenophobia and promoting nationalism, through narrative strategies of silence and disclosure. In the final chapter, I discuss the masculine women who populate four domestic novels. I posit that female masculinity functions as a means of authorizing sentimental masculinity, a mode of masculinity popular in mid-to late eighteenth-century novels.

Through the examination of texts such as novels, pamphlets, and biographies, my dissertation insists that female masculinity was an integral force in the construction of normative masculinity and was intimately linked to a nationalist agenda in the eighteenth century.

WHEN THE CLOTHES DO NOT MAKE THE MAN: FEMALE
MASCULINITY AND NATIONALISM IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
BRITISH LITERATURE

by

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For the two most important women in my life:
Joan A. Jansen (in memoriam)
and
Stacey J. Gaines

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Chapter 1: English Masculinity in Crisis: Constructing the Nation Through the Construction of Masculinity

What an Inundation of Ribbons and Brocades will break upon us? What Peals of Laughter and Impertinence shall we be exposed to? For the Prevention of these great Evils, I could heartily wish that there was an act of Parliament for Prohibiting the Importation of *French Fopperies*. Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* 45

The Model of this *Amazonian* Hunting-Habit for Ladies, was, as I take it, first imported from *France*, and well enough expresses the Gayety of a People who are taught to do any thing so it be with an Assurance; but I cannot help thinking it sits awkwardly yet on our *English Modesty*. Richard Steele, *The Spectator* 104.

On March 1, 1711, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele launched *The Spectator*, a publication that lasted only a few years but significantly influenced cultural norms. In just the first few months of publication, Addison and Steele addressed an issue that would capture the attention of biographers, pamphleteers, journalists, moralists, and novelists throughout the eighteenth century: masculinity—in both men and women—and its connection to nationalism. Addison and Steele’s anxiety about the influence of foreign, especially French, culture parallels the concerns of other eighteenth-century writers, who feared that nations, such as France, would make Englishmen effeminate and Englishwomen masculine. Addison, Steele, Henry Fielding, and John Cleland, to name a few, contended that this inversion of natural genders was a threat to Britain’s strength and would render it vulnerable to foreign invasion at a time when Britain was creating its empire and positioning itself as the dominant world power.¹ Of particular interest to Addison, Steele, and to all of the authors I will discuss, is the effect female masculinity has on normative masculinity; indeed, this is the focus of this project. Some writers praise female masculinity because it motivates and strengthens masculinity, while others

¹ I will develop this argument in full in chapter 3, where I discuss works by Fielding and a text translated by Cleland.

deride it because it is unnatural and usurps male privilege. Despite the variety of responses to female masculinity, these texts are united by the interplay between the masculinity performed by men and the masculinity performed by women. Even when authors denounce female masculinity, it is nevertheless integral to the construction of masculinity and to the nationalistic fervor that pervades throughout the eighteenth century.

Before delving further into *The Spectator*, I want to address the central topic of this project: masculinity. Though masculinity in the eighteenth century was far from a coherent, monolithic concept, the texts I discuss attempt to fix notions of masculinity, such that it appears to have one, universal denotation. Masculinity in these texts is defined by possession of a male body and by strict adherence to heterosexuality;² these qualifications functioning in conjunction with each other are unique to the eighteenth century, as I will discuss later. But female masculinity troubles both of these “natural” elements of masculinity, disrupting the connection between maleness and masculinity and revealing gender, sex, and sexuality to be performative. Thus, I will show how masculinity is a constructed category, despite the belief in the eighteenth century that it was naturally the possession of men. When I use the term “female masculinity,” I am not suggesting that it is derivative or imitative of the masculinity performed by men. Rather, its status as Other, its position outside of normative masculinity functions to deconstruct the stable masculinity these texts hope to create. In short, the texts I discuss are ripe for critique because they deploy naturalized masculinity *as a ground* for the notion that

² The female soldier texts, discussed in chapter two, illustrate that certain aspects of masculinity can be performed without a male body, but the female soldiers’ masculinity is depicted as limited in scope because the women do not engage in sex with women. Since they lack a male body, these texts suggest, they cannot perform the sex act that defines masculinity in the eighteenth century.

masculinity naturally inheres in men. The attention paid to female masculinity and, in most texts, the anxiety surrounding it indicates both the instability of masculinity (it is in constant need of defense) and the significance of female masculinity. Even when texts attempt to disavow masculine women as failed imitators of men, they nevertheless acknowledge female masculinity and exhibit a compulsion to justify its challenges to normative masculinity, lending female masculinity a measure of legitimacy and power, which I will explore throughout this project.

The significance of masculinity in the eighteenth century is evident in the history of the word itself. The *OED* indicates nothing surprising about the meaning of masculinity.³ However, what is interesting is that the first listing for “masculinity” is an eighteenth-century usage in 1748. As a point of contrast, “femininity” had been in use for some three centuries prior to masculinity. There are usages of “masculinity” in print prior to 1748, though they seem to be few in number.⁴ Notably, Samuel Johnson’s *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) does not contain a listing for “masculinity,” though it does list “masculine” and “manly,” but masculinity’s lack of inclusion in this seminal text speaks to the newness of the term in the period. Regardless, however, of the number of times masculinity appears in print before the eighteenth century and regardless of when precisely it entered the language, what is important is that it was not commonly used *until* the eighteenth century. Its etymology is also interesting and a bit ironic, given English concerns about the effeminizing effects of French culture. “Masculinity” derives

³ The *OED* defines ‘masculinity’ as “The state or fact of being masculine; the assemblage of qualities regarded as characteristic of men; maleness, manliness.”

⁴ The earliest use of “masculinity” that I found is in *The Gentleman’s Monitor* (1665), by Edward Waterhouse. Two other texts, the anonymous *The History of the Imperial and Royal families of Austria and Bourbor* (1708) and James Parson’s *A Mechanical and Critical Enquiry into the Nature of Hermaphrodites* (1741) also use “masculinity.”

from the thirteenth-century French word masculinité. I do not want to overemphasize this point, since (as Johnson's *Dictionary* reveals) words similar to masculinity, such as masculine and manly had been in use for centuries prior to the eighteenth century, but the simple fact that another word denoting qualities usually associated with men entered the lexicon in the eighteenth century suggests the importance of "masculinity." Masculinity also serves a different grammatical function from masculine or manly, since it is a noun, not an adjective, and since it expresses a state of being. Masculinity, as a state of being, suggests an ownership that masculine and manly do not denote. In other words, to indicate (or prove) this state of being, one must possess masculine or manly qualities. But this notion of possession causes trouble and anxiety for men in the eighteenth century because it suggests that some are allowed to possess it (men), while others are not allowed to possess it (women). However, the masculine women in the texts I discuss challenge this notion of possession.

Although masculinity was not a static category prior to the eighteenth century, in this period men became gendered in new ways that are linked to sex difference but also sex complementarity, the emergence of the middle class, and the increasing enfranchisement of men. In *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*, Anthony Fletcher traces the construction of masculinity and femininity through a three hundred year period, arguing that in the eighteenth century the difference between the sexes shaped modern patriarchy: "Once men saw women as distinct beings, a transformation in the nature of patriarchy, based upon a new reading of gender, became possible" (xix). Fletcher relies upon Thomas Laqueur's argument in *Making Sex* that sometime in the eighteenth century the one-sex model was replaced by the two-sex model

such that men and women were perceived as two separate, distinct beings with two separate sexes.⁵ With this as a ground for his argument, Fletcher details the different ways in which boys and girls were taught prescriptive codes of behavior, through formal and informal education, that ensured men's dominance over women. What differs in the eighteenth century, according to Fletcher, is the shift in masculinity as a gender now defined by its civility and honor. This civility, he argues, is linked to the development of the gentry class, for whom class identity (for men and women) became inseparable from gender identity: "By 1700 the gentry had established a sense of class identity, based upon a set of distinct cultural and intellectual assumptions, which differentiated them from the multitude . . . Moreover their view of class henceforth was always gendered, that is, it took its strength from an increasingly rigid and elaborate scheme of gender construction" (283). I will return to the function of class in the construction of masculinity later, but for my purposes here, what we learn from Fletcher's work is the importance of sex difference in the eighteenth century and its role in men's dominance over women, which is a significant aspect of their masculine identity.

Carole Pateman's groundbreaking work in *The Sexual Contract* complicates the arguments set forth by Fletcher in that she analyzes the social contract, which, beginning in the long eighteenth century, began the enfranchisement of men in ways that had not previously occurred. Pateman examines the contract theories of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau that were instrumental to the creation of a government based on a public contract aimed at protecting the rights of individuals. Although this theory of government, particularly Locke's and Rousseau's, enabled the enfranchisement of many men who previously were disempowered, it also, Pateman argues, bound women

⁵ I will discuss Laqueur's argument in more detail later, see page 15.

to men: “The original pact is a sexual as well as a social contract: it is sexual in the sense of patriarchal—that is, the contract establishes men’s political right over women—and also sexual in the sense of establishing orderly access by men to women’s bodies. Contract is far from being opposed to patriarchy; contract is the means through which modern patriarchy is constituted” (2). Patriarchy, Pateman observes, is actually fraternal (it is the rule of men) rather than paternal because men rule as fathers only after they have exercised their rights as husbands over their wives. In other words, the enfranchisement of men and their access to power begins with their rule over women. Like other historians, Pateman links men’s power, particularly political power, to sex differentiation: “The story of the sexual contract reveals that the patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection, and that sexual mastery is the major means through which men affirm their manhood” (207). Pateman’s elucidating work is key to understanding what was at stake for eighteenth-century men. Their masculinity and all the power and privileges associated with it were bound up in men’s dominance over and sexual access to women.

Building upon the work of Pateman and expanding Fletcher’s arguments, Thomas King illustrates that masculinity became defined by sex differentiation and heterosexuality in the eighteenth century:

“[M]asculinity” has been the scene of an ongoing, and ever expanding, struggle for access to full citizenship and enfranchisement, to civic and personal privileges and obligations only gradually extended to all adult males, let alone all adult females. “Masculinity” accordingly constitutes the struggle to acquire personal

and political autonomy, to realize that autonomy as “individuality” and “authenticity,” and to identify one’s private interests with the public good. (49)

King fills in gaps left by Fletcher, such as the fact that men vied for power amongst *themselves* and were not equally dominant in society. “This was a manliness that could never be finally achieved,” King argues because it was always “domain and context specific,” creating situations where men were superordinate in one context, but subordinate in others (5). In other words, male privilege was not a constant that all men held at all moments, but rather had to be negotiated, performed, and claimed. Central to the eighteenth-century masculinity that King defines is heterosexuality. He argues that men derive their power from sexual intimacy with women, a qualification for power that he claims is new to the eighteenth century and is set in opposition to effeminacy, which signaled a loss of power (12).

King relies upon the work of Randolph Trumbach in constructing his argument that sodomy, once an acceptable practice that did not compromise a man’s masculinity, became associated with effeminacy and a lack of power in the eighteenth century. Again, this is an argument I will develop in more detail later, but Trumbach’s work documents the shift in the perception of sodomy, such that the eighteenth century witnesses the development of molly culture, and more specifically the development of the molly as person, a man who primarily or exclusively engages in sex with men. From the eighteenth century onward, Trumbach argues, sodomy (once a marker of masculinity in the virile rake) and sexual passivity were unimaginable (*Sex and the Gender Revolution* 6). King contends that masculinity was defined by eschewing effeminacy, now linked to sodomy, and like Fletcher, he argues that masculinity was tied to class. Aristocratic and

propertied men achieved a “joint hegemony,” King argues, in shifting their attractions entirely toward women (116).

In advancing their arguments, all of these scholars rely, in varying degrees, upon the importance of sex differentiation and complementarity, which was new to the eighteenth century. Todd Parker most relies upon this notion, particularly as he links sex complementarity to heterosexuality. Parker, also indebted to Trumbach, traces the shift in the eighteenth century from numerous permissible sexualities to one permissible sexuality, heterosexuality:

From 1700 on, I contend, competing ideologies of sexuality and sexual identity begin to give way to an overriding construct of natural heterosexuality that in its turn depends on men and women who are rhetorically constituted as different from each other. We move, in other words, from a plurality of sexual practices legitimated by class and social rank to a dominant representation of sexuality in which male and female bodies naturally and inevitably invoke each other. (3-4)

Parker’s emphasis on the rhetorical effect of “male,” “female,” and “heterosexuality” distinguishes his argument from the others I have discussed, and is important to understanding sex, gender and sexuality in the eighteenth century.⁶ Parker argues that the terms “male” and “female” not only rely upon their “opposite” for meaning, but they also signify in uncontested ways in the period: “The fiction of complementarity, in its turn, links this newly innate masculine sexuality to its only appropriate object the female body. By way of complementarity, ‘male’ and ‘female’ become unquestioned mutual referents

⁶ The difficulty in parsing out these terms is not confined to the eighteenth century, but remains a problem for scholars even when thinking about modern notions of male and female. As Nancy Armstrong argues, “So basic are the terms ‘male’ and ‘female’ to the semiotics of modern life that no one can use them without to some degree performing the very reifying gesture whose operations we would like to understand and whose power we want to historicize” (24).

in a signifying system structured simultaneously by the logic of heterosexual difference and by what we may call the logic of heterosexual synergism” (22). Male and female must function together or synergize in this “natural” system, creating sexes that rely upon distinguishing one from the other, male from female, but are also bound to each other in order to signify; thus what develops in the eighteenth century is sex complementarity. Indeed, Johnson’s *Dictionary* tells us that to be “masculine” is to be “Male; not female.”⁷

The arguments that I have presented here all convey the notion that in the eighteenth century masculinity undergoes dramatic shifts in signification in ways not seen prior to this period, and that masculinity, while not always easily performed by all men, is exclusively linked to being “male” and heterosexual. These two terms, male and masculine, become virtually inseparable, creating a circular meaning: to be male is to be masculine and to be masculine is to be male. Although such a circular definition seems impenetrable, its reliance upon “female” for signification (per Johnson’s definition) creates an opening for women. Throughout this dissertation, I will position female masculinity within this fissure in the seeming monolith of eighteenth-century masculinity, suggesting the ways in which the “female” contests these unquestioned terms of sex complementarity and heterosexuality and challenges the link between “male” and “masculinity.”

Female masculinity’s position and importance within the study of masculinities has yet to be explored in depth. While many scholars, such as the ones already discussed have examined masculinity, these investigations focus only on male performances of masculinity. Some texts, such as Philip Carter’s *Men and the Emergence of Polite*

⁷ Other definitions of “masculine” include, “Resembling man; virile; not soft; not effeminate.” The definition I cite above is the first definition Johnson lists.

Society, Britain 1660-1800, are quite explicit in their interest in men only. But other titles, with seemingly broader intentions also fail to consider it. For example, *English Masculinities 1660-1800* contains many essays on the varied forms of masculinity, *except* female masculinity. In the introduction, Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen describe the collection as “explor[ing] different masculinities in the various contexts in which they took shape over the course of the long eighteenth century. It has sought to bring together a range of perspectives, based on a wide variety of different sources; to juxtapose work on the gendered behavior and culture of poor and rich men, of the articulate and inarticulate, of the metropolitan and the provincial” (2). Likewise, in *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century*, Michèle Cohen exclusively examines the fashioning of masculinity as it pertains to men. Thus, while some of the very excellent work being done on masculinity seeks to gender men—or to see them as conspicuously gendered, despite men’s attempts to appear inconspicuously gendered—to some degree, this work also maintains the gender binary by positing masculinity as a quality that belongs exclusively to men.

Seeking to fill this void, we might turn to studies of women and the construction of gender in the eighteenth century. Here, we find discussions of masculine women, such as in Lillian Faderman’s pioneering work, *Surpassing the Love of Men*. However, Faderman’s focus is on love between women, which does include some masculine women, but female masculinity is not her primary agenda. Likewise, Emma Donoghue’s *Passions Between Women* deepens and diversifies Faderman’s work, yet again her focus is not exclusively on female masculinity, but rather on lesbianism. To date, the only book-length study is Judith Halberstam’s, *Female Masculinity*, though Halberstam

devotes just a few pages to the eighteenth century. Halberstam makes the important argument for female masculinity's function in masculinity studies that informs my investigation of masculinities in the eighteenth century: "If what we call 'dominant masculinity' appears to be a naturalized relation between maleness and power, then it makes little sense to examine men for the contours of that masculinity's social construction" (2). Indeed, by investigating masculinity in women we deepen our understanding of masculinity and its complex function in eighteenth-century culture and politics.

Many scholars have studied crossed-dressed women and the ways in which they challenge the gender binary. In *Amazons and Military Maids*, Julie Wheelwright examines female soldiers, though not exclusively in the eighteenth century. Although she acknowledges that women were capable of performing masculinity, thus challenging the gender binary, she finds their overall effect less significant because women were imitating masculinity rather than claiming the privileges associated with it. Moreover, she contends, the female soldiers' lack of identification with a larger cause, their staunch individualism, "presented little threat to the established order" (11). Dianne Dugaw, in her study of warrior women ballads and crossed-dressed heroines, argues that these women are relevant to notions of gender, even if they "justify" themselves through masculinity and heterosexuality: "Essentially double, essentially ironic, its dissembling vision inverts, transforms and certainly exposes the structures of that world as it is usually set up. The Female Warrior ballads turn the world upside down with an ease which is perhaps their most provocative characteristic" (4).

Dugaw's notion that warrior women reveal and invert the workings of the men's world that they inhabit is a central concept to my argument. My dissertation examines the interconnections between female masculinity and normative masculinity. Since masculinity studies focuses almost exclusively on men, and studies of eighteenth-century female masculinity usually explore a link to homoeroticism, neither of these areas of inquiry has investigated female masculinity as a gendered category in relation to normative masculinity, which is my chief interest. Examining female masculinity in conjunction with normative masculinity illuminates the important ways that real and fictional women contributed to the construction of masculinity as well as challenged the very "nature" of men's exclusive claims to it in the eighteenth century, exposing masculinity to be performative. Although female masculinity sometimes enabled the dominance of normative masculinity, it also supplanted men's claim to ownership by illustrating women's ability to perform masculinity better than men did.⁸ My study of masculinities positions female masculinity as central to the development of normative masculinity and to discourses of nationalism. I argue that female masculinity significantly affected the nation (and even the growth of the Empire) by rallying men to war and by forcing men to rethink and justify the patriarchal foundations of eighteenth-century society. In having to defend patriarchy, men redefined what constituted English masculinity in light of female masculinity's influence.⁹ Since women performed

⁸ I will discuss this in more detail in chapter two, but by "better" than men, I mean that women prove to be stronger, more courageous, and more successful in wooing women than men.

⁹ There are many definitions of "patriarchy." Anthony Fletcher defines it as "the institutionalised male dominance over women and children in the family and the subordination of women in society in general" (xv). Carole Pateman argues that, "patriarchy ceased to be paternal long ago. Modern civil society is not structured by kinship and the power of fathers; in the modern world, women are subordinated to men *as men*, or to men as a fraternity. The original contract takes place after the political defeat of the father and

masculinity as well as men, men sought to ground their claims to masculinity in the body, especially through their “exclusive” claim to sexual relations with women.

Before returning to *The Spectator* and before moving onto a survey of how normative masculinity gets constructed in the eighteenth century, it is necessary to define some key terms. I have referred to gender as “performative” and here I rely upon Judith Butler’s theory. In “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” Butler argues that,

[G]ender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself . . . what they [normative femininity and masculinity] imitate is a phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity, one that is produced by the imitation as its effect. In this sense, the ‘reality’ of heterosexual identities is performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitations. In other words, heterosexuality is always in the process of imitating and approximating its own phantasmatic idealization of itself—and failing.” (21, emphasis in original)

According to Butler, gender is non-referential in the sense that it does not emanate from some inner, natural core identity based on one’s sex and understood as the ‘real.’ Thus, it is not a copy of the real, but rather a copy of a copy, since no ‘real’ masculinity or femininity exists or predates gender performances. Instead, gender is created by the performance itself. Moreover, since gender has no real of which it is a copy, no one can truly possess or claim ownership of masculinity or femininity. There is, however, a compulsion to ascribe ownership because it is necessary to sustain the theory of

creates modern *fraternal patriarchy*” (3). I use Pateman’s notion of patriarchy, particularly the sense that women are subordinated to men through men’s right to women’s bodies.

heterosexuality as natural, and more importantly to eighteenth-century men, it is fundamental to maintaining their power. Throughout my dissertation, I will use the term “perform” to refer to the way someone ‘does’ their gender as well as to illustrate the constructed, non-referential quality of gender.

In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler develops her theory further, saying that “sex” is also a constructed category that is “forcibly materialized through time” (2). Butler says that the body is assumed to pre-exist the sign “body” or more specifically “male” and “female” bodies. Yet, she argues, “If the body signified as prior to signification is an effect of signification, then the mimetic or representational status of language, which claims that signs follow the bodies as their necessary mirrors, is not mimetic at all. On the contrary, it is productive, constitutive, one might even argue *performative*” (30). In other words, the body does not pre-exist the signs for them, “male” and “female.” Rather, the signs themselves contribute to the signification of the body by investing meaning in men’s and women’s bodies, which do not exist outside language as unread or unsigned texts. They always enter discourse with meaning because signs are not without signification. Using Plato’s and Aristotle’s theories, Butler argues that the materialization of the body is not without history and that the body is ascribed meaning in a gendered and hierarchical system that privileges the masculine. Applying Butler’s theory to the eighteenth century, we can see how the male body is prefigured to exclude the female. It enters discourse, becomes materialized as the possession of men. But if we consider “sex” to be performative, then we can begin to understand how women can perform masculinity without a male body, thus questioning the definition of what it means to be “male.” If men’s possession of masculinity is grounded in the male body,

and if that body is perceived as performative and as constructed through language, then men lose their exclusive claim to “masculinity.” The body and gender do not naturally belong to men, they are only constructed as such through discourse in order to serve men. Of course, this belief was not held in the eighteenth century, but if we can resist naturalized claims to gender in the eighteenth century, we should at least consider resisting naturalized claims to sex.

A distinction between female masculinity and female homoeroticism is also in order. In some instances, women who perform masculinity also desire or seek out other women sexually. These two behaviors, however, are not interchangeable. Female homoeroticism refers to sexual acts, desire, or representations of such between women, whereas female masculinity is a gendered category that may or may not also include sex acts or desires. I use “female homoeroticism” because other terms, such as “lesbian” and “sapphist” pose problems. They suggest an identity and as such are anachronistic. “Female homoeroticism” is a more nebulous term, but its lack of a very specific signification is useful when talking about desires and behaviors in the eighteenth century that often are indistinct. The division between “female masculinity” and “female homoeroticism” is important because all of the women I discuss are masculine (in varying degrees), but not all of them express desire for women. Nevertheless, in some cases, the masculine women are suspected of desiring other women (by the authors or other characters in the text) because they are masculine. Even though some of these women are depicted as married or desiring men (or desiring no one) some authors go to great lengths either to defend their desires for men or to suggest that they desire women. The authors of these texts assume their audiences will conflate female masculinity with

female homoeroticism, and they work to prevent or to encourage such readings based on the way in which female masculinity functions in the text.

Finally, I will address Thomas Laqueur's notion of the "one-sex" and "two-sex" models to which I referred earlier and which many historians rely upon or critique in their work. In *Making Sex*, Laqueur argues that "Sometime in the eighteenth century, sex as we know it was invented. The reproductive organs went from being paradigmatic sites for displaying hierarchy, resonant throughout the cosmos, to being the foundation of incommensurable difference" (149). In other words, a shift occurred in which women ceased to be understood as the same sex as men, and instead began to be perceived as a sex separate but still inferior from men. Although the one-sex model ensured male dominance by positing men as the superior form of the species, it nevertheless affirmed sameness between men and women, linking them through homologous sex organs. The two-sex model, however, positions men and women as opposites whose gender is a natural derivation of their sex; this notion of difference has persisted to the present day. The naturalized "incommensurable difference" Laqueur describes wrenches males and females apart from each other, and thus masculinity from femininity as well. By privileging the naturalness of difference, this model allows the culture to ascribe certain roles and behaviors exclusively to men or women.

The two-sex system, as Laqueur explains it, naturalizes and collapses sex, gender and sexuality into one concept. One's biological organs determine sex, one's sex determines gender, and one's gender determines sexuality. To say determine is perhaps overstating the case, since there's nothing to be determined; nature predetermines all of these qualities, or so the two-sex system implies. Furthermore, there is only one notion

of gender that corresponds to each sex and only heterosexuality is presumed for both sexes. According to Laqueur, because the two-sex system eliminated the hierarchy of the one-sex system, which privileged men, a new set of cultural and gender norms were developed to ensure that men maintained their power over women: “When, for many reasons, a preexisting transcendental order or time-immemorial custom became a less and less plausible justification for social relations, the battleground of gender roles shifted to nature, to biological sex. Distinct sexual anatomy was adduced to support or deny all manner of claims in a variety of specific social, economic, political, cultural, or erotic contexts. (The desire of male for female and female for male was natural—hence the new slogan ‘opposites attract’—or it was not). Whatever the issue, the body became decisive” (152).

Laqueur, however, is not without his detractors. Although his work has been praised, even by those who are critical of him, what troubles some scholars, notably Valerie Traub and Katharine Park, is the way in which he “obscure[s] differences and discontinuities among temporally proximate discourses”—he glosses over evidence that contradicts his theory that the one-sex model dominated prior to the eighteenth century (Traub 157). More specifically, Traub is critical of Laqueur’s flattening out of the differences that exist between individuals and the progression he constructs from one model to the other: “What is lost is the specificity by which human actors experience their relationship to multiple and often conflicting discourses, as well as a more precise diachronic charting of the advent and process of change” (158). While Traub questions Laqueur’s theorization of the shift from the one-sex to two-sex model, Park is critical of the evidence he draws upon. She notes that the sources he cites, chiefly Aristotle and

Galen, do not advance a one-sex model in the way he claims and that he collapses distinctions in the service of his argument: “[H]e consistently imposes a false homogeneity on his sources, especially for the long and varied period before 1750. There is, in truth, no single early Western model of sex and sexual difference. Laqueur’s ‘one-sex model’ is a hybrid of individual and sometimes mutually contradictory features” (54). Laqueur’s theory, thus, is not without its problems; however, what is important is the notion of a shift in thinking *sometime* in the eighteenth century (though not necessarily among everyone), wherein people began to see men and women as differentiated by biological sex to a greater extent than they had previously and that this shift in thinking contributed to the polarization of the sexes.

The *Spectator* and Masculinity

Returning to *Spectator* 45, it reveals the way in which France influenced the construction of masculinity in the eighteenth century. Addison begins *Spectator* 45 with an epigraph from Juvenal’s *Satires*, which translates to “They are a nation of play-actors.” This passage functions as a preface to Addison’s discussion of French men, in *Spectator* 45, whom he perceives as effeminate.¹⁰ Based on his discussion of English men in this issue, this passage from *Satires* also implies that England, by contrast, is not a “nation of play-actors” because English men are not performing, or faking masculinity, they simply *are* masculine. Ironically, Addison instead reveals English masculinity as fragile, performative and subject to influence by various outside groups. The fears latent in *Spectator* 45 illustrate the forces with which English masculinity will contend throughout the eighteenth century, such as the influence of foreign cultures and the threat

¹⁰ In *Spectator* 45, Addison discusses both French men and women, so he likely refers to both as “play-actors.” However, my interest in *Spectator* 45 is in the way in which he constructs French masculinity.

of losing its many military campaigns. English men grapple with all of these issues as they determine what constitutes English masculinity and as they position themselves as a world power.

Addison begins this issue of *The Spectator* by expressing a desire for peace with France (with whom England was fighting the War of Spanish Succession), yet he also expresses his apprehension of the “many ill Consequences that may attend to it [peace].” Although the war had significant consequences for England because it would decide who would ascend the Spanish throne, Addison does not fear these outcomes. Rather, he worries about other nations’ perception of England and the consequences peaceful relations with France would have on English masculinity: “What an Inundation of Ribbons and Brocades will break in upon us? What Peals of Laughter and Impertinence shall we be exposed to? For the Prevention of these great Evils, I could heartily wish that there was an Act of Parliament for Prohibiting the Importation of *French Fopperies*” (192). Although peace with a nation does not necessarily imply the influx of the former enemy’s culture, Addison assumes that peace with France will result in another kind of attack, though this time the battle is waged over the invasion of culture. He envisions ribbons and brocades assaulting the nation as if they were cannon fire, and the result of this textile attack is the deflation of English masculinity in the eyes of other nations, making England more vulnerable to attack.

Addison’s anxiety that a mere change of clothes will compromise the nation suggests the tenuous nature of *English* masculinity itself. Although he intends his reference to Juvenal’s *Satires* to apply to Frenchmen, the reference speaks more to the crisis in English masculinity because as the century progresses Englishmen will accuse

each other of performing an inauthentic masculinity, with the aristocracy and the gentry both claiming that they embody *the* authentic English masculinity. What *Spectator* 45 reveals is that masculinity is indeed a performance, not an innate quality, if merely dressing it up in fine fabrics radically alters its signification. Such precarious instability because of its performativity calls attention to England's fragile and often contested status as a dominant world power throughout the eighteenth century. What is also important, for my purposes here, is the foregrounding of France as the source of effeminacy. His fear that "French Fopperies" are linked to French effeminacy and that both may contaminate English masculinity, reflects the core of the crisis in English masculinity in the eighteenth century. That Addison feels the intervention of government is necessary to dictate what constitutes English masculinity is indicative of how salient this crisis in masculinity is to England and its national identity.

In the next paragraph of *Spectator* 45, Addison constructs a valet de chambre who represents precisely the kind of impotent masculinity he fears will infect England. His depiction of this man explicitly draws upon England's notion of French foppery: "I myself have seen one of these Male *Abigails* tripping about the Room with a Looking-Glass in his hand, and combing his Lady's Hair a whole Morning together. Whether or no there was any Truth in the Story of a Lady's being got with Child by one of these her Handmaids, I cannot tell, but I think at present the whole Race of them [male Abigails] is extinct in our own Country" (192). This "Male Abigail" is quite obviously foppish in his vanity, his sprightly movements, and his pleasure in combing women's hair. Whether Addison questions the virility of the fop or the veracity of the story is unclear, but he distinguishes the effeminate man as a "Race" separate from masculine men; he is a kind

of third gender, which is precisely the claim Trumbach makes about effeminate men or mollies, whom he calls “a third illegitimate gender” (“London’s Sapphists” 111). Despite Addison’s earlier statements, which suggest that masculinity is unstable and performative, here he attempts to fix masculinity in the “Race” of certain types of men, namely English men. In so doing, Addison can claim masculinity as a kind of authentic, English quality, making it a national characteristic. In contrast, the fop, Addison claims, either through impotence or an inability to woo women, suffers the consequence of a Darwinian extinction, at least in England. The last line of the passage, “extinct in our own country” leaves open the suggestion that such third-gendered, effeminate men do possibly exist elsewhere, perhaps in France. This displacement of gender deviance outside of England is typical of eighteenth-century writers grappling with people who eschew gender norms.

Just a few months after Addison’s warning to men about the influence of French fashion, Richard Steele casts his gaze upon women’s fashion and the influence, once again, of France. While Addison’s concern in *Spectator* 45 is the effeminacy of French male fashion, in *Spectator* 104, Steele fears the converse: the masculinization of women’s fashion in England. *Spectator* 104 begins with a preface to a letter submitted to *The Spectator* by John Hughes.¹¹ In the preface to this letter, Steele swiftly links decency to virtue and both of these qualities to dress and behavior. In the process, he makes sweeping claims about female behavior and its function in a woman’s life. A woman’s life, according to Steele, is restricted to a few roles for which her behavior and dress should always recommend her: “It would methinks be a short Rule of Behaviour, if every

¹¹ The footnote for this issue reads: “The letter is by Hughes; it is in Duncombe’s list, and Hughes acknowledges the authorship in a letter of 22 Aug. 1716.”

young Lady in her Dress, Words, and Actions were only to recommend her self as a Sister, Daughter, or Wife, and make her self the more esteemed in one of those Characters” (433). Steele’s construction of female roles, which are limited to relationships to men, suggests the very performativity of femininity and reveals the narrow options available to women in the eighteenth century, especially since the guidelines set forth by *The Spectator* were available to only a select group of women, who had the wealth and leisure time to make themselves into desirable wives.

John Hughes’ letter, however, describes women who behave independently of such constructions of femininity: instead of being understood in relation *to* men, they adopt the behavior and dress *of* men, which has implications for the masculinity of the onlooker, Hughes himself. The first cause for censuring masculine women reveals Hughes’ irritation at having confused the sex of a woman, whom he first thinks is an effeminate youth “educated only as an Object of Sight” (434). Upon first glance, Hughes both pities and dislikes the ‘boy’ for his effeminacy and for the ornate style of his dress; his riding coat is made of a fine silk, richly embroidered, and his hair is tied in a scarlet ribbon. Based on Hughes’ observation, this ‘boy’ has demeaned himself and his masculinity by making himself an object to be gazed at; in other words, he has adopted a female role. Although Hughes disapproves of the ‘boy’s’ effeminacy, he nevertheless is attracted to the ‘boy’s’ beauty (he notes that he pays no attention to the other members of the riding party), which is a problem for Hughes’ masculinity.

The very same qualities that Hughes is drawn to and disapproves of in the ‘boy’ disappear when he realizes that the ‘boy’ is in fact a woman: “After this Discovery [of the rider’s petticoats], I look’d again on the Face of the fair *Amazon* who had thus deceiv’d

me, and though those Features which had before offended me by their Softness, were now strengthen'd into as improper a Boldness; and tho' her Eyes, Nose and Mouth seem'd to be form'd with perfect Symmetry, I am not certain whether she, who in Appearance was a very handsome Youth, may not be in Reality a very indifferent Woman" (434-35). Despite having had soft features, which conflicted with the masculine riding coat, the woman's, now Amazon's, soft features are hardened by her masculine attire into an "improper" "Boldness." Thus, in both cases, what determined the gender of the person was not corporeal or biological features, which are made fluid by Hughes and instantly shift from soft to hard, but rather Hughes' own reading of the figure's attire. Even though Hughes initially pities the 'boy' because he is only an object to be gazed upon, he renders this very same figure "indifferent" when he realizes she is a woman. Fashion, then, is privileged as a marker of sex and gender that has the power to override the 'natural' or biological features of an individual. Furthermore, what Hughes' confusion and declarations illustrate is the very fluid nature of masculinity and femininity and the ease with which these constructed categories can be traversed. Part of what seems to bother Hughes is his own confusion over whether to find the figure attractive or not; indeed the figure is most beautiful as a boy, but Hughes resists this attraction. Oddly, the beauty of the figure is lost when it becomes a woman, and Hughes is left with the realization that he found the 'boy' more attractive, even if he disapproved of his effeminacy. Hughes' letter reflects the influence female masculinity has on masculinity. In blurring the distinction between male and female because of her gender performance, this masculine woman is more appealing to Hughes as a boy, than as a woman, rendering his attraction homoerotic, thus compromising his masculinity.

Seeking a scapegoat for this vexing problem of sex, gender, and sexuality, Hughes assumes that masculine fashion for women must be a product of France. He establishes clear boundaries between English and French women, and ultimately he concludes that if women wear some articles of men's clothing, they might also wear other pieces of clothing with metaphorical significance:

The Model of this *Amazonian* Hunting-Habit for Ladies, was, as I take it, first imported from *France*, and well enough expresses the Gayety of a People who are taught to do any thing so it be with an Assurance; but I cannot help thinking it sits awkwardly yet on our *English* Modesty. The Petticoat is a kind of Incumbrance upon it; and if the *Amazons* should think it fit to go on in this Plunder of our Sex's Ornaments, they ought to add to their Spoils, and compleat their Triumph over us, by wearing the Breeches. (435)

In Hughes' configuration, cross-dressed women parallel pirates who steal men's riches and the power inherent in it. Although his suggestion that women should wear breeches is sarcastic in tone, his comment indicates a concern that if women begin to wear some articles of men's clothes, it is but a short slippery slope toward women's power over men, as they literally and figuratively wear the breeches. The implied solution is that English women should insist upon maintaining an *English* sense of modesty and dress untainted by foreign influence. Hughes thus invokes nationalism as a means of manipulating the construction of and adherence to femininity. For a woman to be masculine is inherently to be un-English.

“The Great Masculine Renunciation”

In order to understand why female masculinity had an impact on constructions of masculinity in the eighteenth century, I will trace the “gendering of men” as it shifted throughout the period and as men sought to construct an authentic English masculinity.¹² Such claims to authenticity stem largely from a conflict between the aristocracy and the rising middle class. As each class struggled for power, both groups claimed their performance of masculinity best represented strength, morality and nationalism and each class felt it was best suited to present an image of masculinity to the world that would ensure England’s dominance. This conflict over the definition of masculinity led to a narrowing of what constituted it, particularly at mid-century. Expressions that displayed a connection to French culture, such as fashion, manners, or language, became markers of an unpatriotic, effeminate masculinity. For example, the fop, once a likeable stock character of Restoration drama, fell vastly out of favor at mid-century, both within the theatre and in society. Effeminacy also began to be linked to sodomy during the eighteenth century, and sodomy, like clothing, was often attributed to the degenerate influence of foreign nations.

The majority of the texts I discuss are located at the mid-point of the century, and it is at this mid-point that the shift in what constitutes masculinity begins to occur.¹³ But to understand these changes and the catalysts for them, we need to examine the state of masculinity in the early part of the century. One of the more visible markers of the change in masculinity is men’s fashion. As the century progresses, other changes in

¹² “Gendering of men” is Thomas King’s phrase.

¹³ Mid-century concerns about masculinity stemmed from other sources besides female masculinity. Jews were also perceived as a threat to English masculinity and to the nation. See Dana Rabin, “The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39 (Winter 2006): 157-171.

masculinity include an emphasis on politeness, nationalism, and sensibility. Changes in fashion offer a visible marker of the changes in masculinity. Historians have labeled the eighteenth century “the great masculine renunciation”¹⁴ to signify the move from conspicuous, ornate clothing, to modest, inconspicuous fashion that became the standard by the end of the century. Historians debate over precisely when such a shift took place, many argue that it occurred late in the century, but David Kuchta argues that it occurred much earlier and he posits that it emerged after the Glorious Revolution.¹⁵

Regardless of where one wants to locate the “great masculine renunciation,” we can see this change as a product of class conflict and national politics. The stirrings of these conflicts began with the Stuart kings. Although the Catholicism of the Stuart monarchs largely drove them from rule, the luxury of their courts and their connections to France also fueled the dislike of them. The kings’ tastes (in fashion, manners, etc.) carried over into the early eighteenth century and influenced aristocrats’ taste. Power and rule became connected to a specific set of behaviors and dress, and these qualities were linked to France. David Kuchta explicitly links the sartorial choices of the Stuart monarchs to their absolutist rule: “Like their English predecessors and their French counterpart, Louis XIV, Charles II and James II linked political leadership with fashion leadership. Thus, as the Restoration court aspired to absolute rule, Restoration courtiers put on all the French finery and expense for which the English court has long been criticized, and for which the Restoration court has long been famed” (“The Making of the Self-Made Man” 56). The privilege to rule, a privilege bequeathed by blood, was

¹⁴ This phrase was first used by J.C. Flugel in his *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930). Many fashion historians continue to use this phrase and the ideology associated with it.

¹⁵ For example, see Davidoff, Leonore and Catherine Hall. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*. New York: Rutledge, 2002.

intimately linked by the Stuart kings to the display of such power through appearance. Although Charles II would later attempt to tone down the display of power through fine clothing, his court and the aristocracy would be forever linked to his taste for French culture.

One of the changes that Charles II instituted in his attempt to eliminate the association between his court, luxury, and France was the three-piece suit. The simplicity of the three-piece suit instituted a more subtle form of dress for men, which Charles hoped would connect his court with modesty and legitimate power. David Kuchta argues that the trend in male fashion shifted during the eighteenth century toward “inconspicuous consumption,” and the three-piece suit is the genesis of that trend. Facing criticism for the absolutist power of his father and the luxury of his own court, Charles II hoped to use an inconspicuous fashion style to deflect attention away from the Stuart kings’ tarnished reputation. According to Kuchta, Charles intended to “appropriate an iconoclastic, oppositional ideology and use it to redefine court culture, thereby restoring the crown’s moral authority and political legitimacy” and also to “teach the nobility thrift and put a stop to the seemingly constant alteration of styles, so disruptive of political stability” (*Three-Piece Suit* 79). However, according to Kuchta, Charles II’s attempts to promote modesty among his court were largely unsuccessful. Kuchta argues that it was not until after the Glorious Revolution that the three-piece suit began to take on the modesty with which it was inextricably linked by the end of the eighteenth century, but not before middle-class men would co-opt the style as a representation of their masculinity.

Although Charles II could not legitimate his power through sartorial change, the aristocracy seized the opportunity to establish their claims to power and to masculinity through inconspicuous consumption throughout the early part of the eighteenth century. During the early eighteenth century, politics, virtue, and fashion all became intertwined in the construction of masculinity, such that masculinity was not just the ‘natural’ expression of the male sex, it was a means of securing and displaying power through claims to an authentic masculinity. For the aristocracy, securing power meant they had to claim their masculinity was the most legitimate because, among other things, their style of dress was more modest than that of the lower classes. According to Susan Kingsley Kent, the aristocracy strove to make claims to power because of their class status, but at the same time they also distanced themselves from the luxury of the Restoration court: “By the early eighteenth century, a much more restrained style of dress prevailed amongst men of the upper ranks. They sought to demonstrate their public virtue by deploying a modest and sober style By adopting a style of ‘noble simplicity’ and denouncing the world of fashion and luxury, gentlemen trumpeted their virtue, asserting their claims to social, moral, and political leadership” (62). This modesty of dress ushers in a more modest construction of masculinity (such as more restrained behavior), for which the middle class and aristocracy would vie throughout the century.

The aristocracy’s claims to power through modest masculinity, however, became more tenuous as the century went on, and in an effort to legitimate their masculinity, they began to define middle-class men as effeminate.¹⁶ The aristocracy claimed that middle-class men were especially prone to the vices of luxury because middle-class men used

¹⁶ By “middle-class” I mean primarily merchants (shopkeepers) and men involved in trade.

clothing as a sign of their wealth or social standing.¹⁷ Since rich, ornate clothing was the marker of power and class during the Restoration, the aristocracy argued that middle-class men were simply employing out-dated modes of fashion to gain power and that in doing so, they were more effeminate because they were vain. Kuchta includes not only middle-class men among these politically excluded groups, but also women and men who were not exclusively heterosexual: “Both by making masculinity a prerequisite to political legitimacy and by claiming masculinity as their own, aristocratic men used the label of effeminacy to directly exclude from power all other men—lower-and middle-class men, as well as men with alternative sexual practices—and to indirectly yet doubly exclude women from power” (“Self-Made Man” 63). By equating vanity to effeminacy and by asserting that effeminacy excluded men from masculinity and therefore from power, the aristocracy created an anxiety such that men feared a connection with anything considered effeminate. Kent links these changes to post-1688 politics: “Yet the ‘homocentrism’ of this masculinist culture in turn amplified anxieties about effeminacy, precisely because the Glorious Revolution had legitimated an oppositional political culture that considered homoeroticism and homosexual practices to be inherently effeminate, and thus a danger to the state” (100). While the timing of when precisely effeminacy became linked to sodomy is debatable, and something which I will take up later, the most salient aspect of Kent’s argument is the fear of the feminine or effeminate and the association of effeminacy with political illegitimacy. To be effeminate quickly became a liability for men who sought to claim that their masculinity represented an

¹⁷ According to Kuchta, “Defenders of aristocracy defined luxury as the vice of middle-class upstarts who ambitiously lived above their social station” (“Self-Made Man” 63).

authentic English masculinity. Moreover, we begin to see why so many women performed masculinity in the eighteenth century: it signified access to power.

By about mid-century, middle-class men strongly challenged the aristocracy's claim to masculinity and to power by using the aristocracy's own arguments against them. While the aristocracy claimed authority to rule because they did not need ornate clothing to prove their wealth, middle-class men began to connect the aristocracy to luxury and luxury to political corruption. Despite the aristocracy's attempts to distance themselves from the luxury and profligacy of the Restoration court, middle-class men continued to make these connections, and they contended that the luxury of the aristocracy bred political corruption and that this made the aristocracy ill-suited to hold the reigns of power. Furthermore, they argued that the aristocracy had been weakened through generations of profligate, thus effeminate men, since effeminacy was connected to luxury. As Kuchta argues, middle-class men positioned themselves as self-made men who were untainted by the luxury of the aristocracy and therefore were the more manly class: "In reformers' eyes, an artificial aristocracy prevented natural, rational manliness from leading the nation. In the new politics of character, political legitimacy was still determined by manliness, modesty, and frugality, but these were now the attributes of the self-made man" ("Self-Made Man" 70). The reigning ideology of masculinity at mid-century relied upon the notion of being "self-made," as middle-class men were, rather than having inherited luxury and profligacy, as the aristocracy had, according to the middle-class. While the aristocracy sought to buy their masculinity, middle-class men claimed they had earned their masculinity.

As middle-class men trumped up their charges of aristocratic effeminacy, they turned from the aristocracy's idleness to the aristocracy's connection to (effeminate) France. Because of the Stuart monarchs' connections to France after the Restoration and because France was commonly linked to effeminacy in the eighteenth century, middle-class men not only claimed that the aristocracy had a history of effeminacy, but they also argued that aristocratic men were less patriotic, less representative of the English nation.¹⁸ As Kent argues, the connection between the aristocracy and France became the force behind which middle-class men would claim their rights to power: "The governing classes, so claimed poets, playwrights, and pamphleteers, echoing the sentiments of many men and women of the middling commercial ranks, had been contaminated by French fashions and French passions, and must be reclaimed for the nation by the moral, virtuous, patriotic citizens of Britain" (81). Not surprisingly, definitions of masculinity included the language of nationalism because England was engaged in many conflicts throughout the course of the eighteenth century and most of these involved France in some way.¹⁹

Addison's fears of French influence articulated in *Spectator* 45 became magnified at mid-century, when England was engaged in battles with France. As England celebrated victories over France, the notion that England was more manly than France was, and therefore victorious, left the aristocracy on the wrong side of the Channel, so to

¹⁸ Charles II and James II both sought refuge in France after their father's execution, and James fled to France again after he was removed as king. The Stuart kings' Catholicism also linked them to Catholic France and religion was another issue that divided these two nations. The Stuart kings obviously had other connections to France, but my reference here is simply to establish the basics of that connection. Linda Colley captures the alliance succinctly: "France, in short, was the Stuarts' most devoted ally. Britons had every reason to suppose, therefore, that a restored Stuart dynasty would operate, whether it wanted to or not, under the shadow of French power and in support of French interests" (79).

¹⁹ These wars include: the War of Spanish Succession (1701-14), the War of Austrian Succession (1740-48), the Seven Years' War (1756-63) and the American Revolutionary War (1775-83).

speak, over the debate about which class was more masculine. As Kent argues, the crucial victories gained by England, particularly in the Seven Years' War, allowed middle-class men to connect their rising commercial success to their masculinity and to England's power in the world: "Against the aristocratic governing classes, who were held responsible for British losses because of their supineness in the face of the enemy . . . middling commercial men defined themselves as manly, patriotic merchants who had the interests of the country at heart. When, in the years 1758-62, the British won a series of battles against the French, these visions of imperial potency in the hands of the commercial middling orders appeared to have been borne out" (83). Thus, middle-class men began to connect their self-made status through their commercial successes to English military victories and ultimately to their own masculinity, as opposed to the French-influenced effeminacy of the aristocracy.

By mid-century, middle-class men actively worked not only toward their own financial success, but also toward seizing political power under the guise of military victories, which they linked to their own patriotism and masculinity. The rise of the middle-class is in part responsible for the backlash against aristocratic masculinity. Middle-class men contended that the aristocracy's consumption of French culture, and a general association with France as the marker of refined taste, was selling out English culture and this, they reasoned, rendered the aristocracy unpatriotic. Linda Colley argues that commerce and patriotism coalesced for middle-class men: "As long as British patricians spoke French among themselves, the claim went, as long as they favoured French clothes, employed French hairdressers and valets, and haunted Parisian salons on the Grand Tour, as long as the taste for French cultural and luxury imports was allowed

to put native artists, traders and manufacturers out of business, national distinction would be eroded and national fibre relaxed” (88). The aristocracy’s investment in French culture, including French valets, echoes Addison’s concerns about male Abigails (or valets) and the effeminate influence of French culture. Middle-class men’s claims to masculinity extended beyond just a critique of the aristocracy, though, and included the promotion of their own masculinity through their commerce.

While the aristocracy was consumed by and was consuming French culture, the middle-class turned inward and promoted distinctly English goods through the formation of patriotic societies established to reward English merchants. One such society that Colley documents was the Laudable Association of Anti-Gallicans founded in 1745. Its motto was “to discourage by precept and example, the importation and consumption of French produce and manufactures, and to encourage, on the contrary, the produce and manufactures of Great Britain” (89). As Colley explains, these patriotic societies carried out their business by raising money and awarding it to English merchants whose goods could compete with the quality of French goods. Middle-class men stood to benefit from the promotion of English goods because they profited financially and because the promotion of specifically English goods linked them to a nationalist agenda. By linking themselves to the strength of the nation’s economy and to nationalism through commerce, middle-class men sought to legitimate themselves and their masculinity as the authentic English masculinity. Since they labored for their wealth, rather than having inherited it, they represented a vigorous masculinity that ran counter to the “malaise” Britain experienced, according to Colley, that was a result of aristocratic leadership (88).

Effeminacy and Sodomy

Middle-class men's claims to an authentic English masculinity were made easier through the change in the definition of "effeminate." Men who were considered effeminate by mid-century standards (because of their clothes and behaviors) were simply perceived as performing a masculinity that was part of the range of acceptable masculinities during the Restoration and the early part of the eighteenth century. In the seventeenth century and the early part of the eighteenth century, "effeminate" was just as likely to refer to men who were overly interested in women in a sexual way as it was to refer to men who were considered feminine.²⁰ According to Michael McKeon, the shift in the meaning of "effeminate" occurs around mid-century:

In the seventeenth century 'effeminate' referred to two distinct kinds of sexual overindulgence both of which were marked by male ingratiation with the female: it referred to men who *are like* women (in the sense of sodomitical transvestism), and to men who *like* women (in the sense of being sexually obsessed with them).

By the middle of the eighteenth century, an adult effeminate male was likely to be taken only in the former sense, as an exclusive sodomite or molly. (308)

Such an ingratiation with the female, without also being suspected of sodomy, is indicative of the Restoration and early eighteenth-century "fop." Susan Staves argues that fops in plays are more likely to be read as asexual than as homosexual: "[T]he emphasis in most plays seems to me to be on the fop's lack of strong sexual appetite

²⁰ Thomas A. King also argues that effeminacy in the seventeenth century implied a lack of access to power and the public realm: "Through the late seventeenth century in England, effeminacy described not a falsely gendered or sexual subjectivity but a failure of, or lack of access to, the public representativeness of those men and exceptional women who were statesmen, citizens, and householders. Accordingly, effeminacy named the occupation of a position of dependency within the extended household or network of alliance, on the one hand, and a misoccupation of social spaces—including the space of the body—by those men and women whose bodies were cynosures or 'gazes,' on the other" (67).

rather than on any suggestion of homosexuality or bisexuality. Such a lack of sexual appetite was itself, in the increasingly polite mind of the eighteenth century, female or effeminate” (415). The fop one might encounter on the street, rather than on the stage, was also not generally associated with femininity or sodomy. Instead, these fops were likely to be read as overly refined men of ceremony, characterized by their excessive vanity. In essence, these men displayed the manners and fashion of the French court to the extreme at a time when such displays were still acceptable, at least to some degree.

Not surprisingly, fops were more likely to be found in public urban arenas, such as coffeehouses, public parks, and theatres, since these areas reflected popular, fashionable culture. As Philip Carter argues, foppish behavior at the early part of the century was a result of an over production of fashionable behavior: “It was recognized that many would-be gentlemen interpreted politeness less as refined and relaxed social intercourse than as a strict adherence to established codes of civility or ceremony. The result produced artificial conduct by which ‘men of ceremony’, as they were often termed, reduced social encounters to a laborious display of formal, and essentially anti-social, manners” (34-35). Even if the behavior of the fop were termed “effeminate” by some on-lookers, such effeminacy held a different meaning than the “effeminacy” of the mid-to late eighteenth century.

While many scholars mark the shift in perceptions of effeminacy as synonymous with sodomy to have occurred at mid-century, Randolph Trumbach marks the beginning of this change several decades earlier. Although Trumbach traces the meaning of “effeminate” in a similar way as McKeon, he attributes this earlier shift in meaning to the development of an explicitly male homosexual culture: “After 1720 the fop’s effeminacy,

in real life and on the stage, came to be identified with the effeminacy of the then emerging role of the exclusive adult sodomite—known in the ordinary language of his day as a *molly*, and later as a *queen*” (“Birth of the Queen” 134). However, much of the evidence Trumbach presents stems from the mid-century and his earlier examples are isolated incidents of effeminate sodomites. Thus, his claims are a bit dubious and though it is difficult to pinpoint when the shift in the perception of effeminacy as linked to sodomy begins, the more credible argument seems to be that by mid-century foppish men were likely to be read as sodomites, regardless of when this change actually *began*.

Although many foppish men by the mid-to-late eighteenth century were likely to be seen as mollies or sodomites, the assumption that all effeminate men were mollies in the early eighteenth century disavows other representations of effeminate masculinity. Philip Carter presents the most convincing response to Trumbach’s otherwise seminal work on male gender and sexuality in the eighteenth century: “Trumbach’s attempt to trace the origin and subsequent vilification of the homosexual type has led him to overemphasize the importance of the molly in early eighteenth-century discussions of gender identity. Thus, while Trumbach and others are correct in identifying the emergence of a new type of male sodomite, it remains that the predominant eighteenth-century image of unmanliness was that of the fop, not the relatively obscure molly” (“Men about Town” 39-40). In other words, Carter seeks to separate foppish or effeminate masculinity from mollies or sodomites and therefore expand the representations of male masculinity, especially in the early part of the century. The basis of Carter’s critique of Trumbach’s argument stems from the fact that Trumbach’s evidence for the existence of the molly derives from “prose or verse pamphlets

specifically discussing sexuality, commentaries on the urban underworld or more risqué social satires” (“Men about Town” 40). While evidence for the early-century molly comes from more obscure publications, Carter asserts that evidence for non-sodomite fops is found in many more mainstream publications, such as essay periodicals and courtesy and conduct books, which suggests that fops were often represented as a non-normative in terms of gender, rather than sexuality. By refusing to conflate effeminacy with sodomy, we allow for multiple representations of sanctioned masculinity that existed in the Restoration and the early eighteenth century. In so doing, we can more clearly see the shift from effeminacy as an acceptable form of masculinity to a maligned form that was used by middle-class men as tool for gaining power at mid-century.

Changes in the perception of sodomy and the development of “molly culture” are also a product of mid-eighteenth-century changes in masculinity. Although molly culture has its roots in the seventeenth century, it becomes more visible by the mid-eighteenth century, identifiable largely by its effeminacy, and is quite well known by century’s end. In the seventeenth century sodomy was often linked to power and not to any kind of sexual identity. For example the bisexuality of aristocrats and monarchs, such as James I, the Earl of Rochester, and William III was speculated about throughout the long eighteenth century. Molly houses provided men with a private space for meeting other men and engaging in sex, which often involved role playing, with one man taking on a passive or female role. According to Randolph Trumbach, the predominance of the female role created the association between sodomites and effeminacy: “all men, whether effeminate or not, were likely to be called Madam or Miss or your Ladyship. They spoke to each other as though they were female whores” (“London’s Sodomites” 17). Public

accounts of mollies also emphasized effeminacy, creating the link between sodomy and effeminacy: “Descriptions of the sub-culture which were intended for the general public always emphasized its effeminacy. It is likely enough that many sodomites were effeminate, and it is possible that . . . younger men who had recently entered the sub-culture were especially prone to effeminacy” (“London’s Sodomites” 17). Although sodomy had been an acceptable aspect of male, generally libertine, sexuality at the beginning of the century, by the end of the eighteenth century sodomy was almost always linked to effeminacy. Thomas King marks the shift in the definition of effeminacy even earlier than Trumbach: “By the early eighteenth century . . . effeminacy became associated with ‘feminine identification’ of a new class of self-conscious ‘homosexual’ men (effeminate sodomites or ‘mollies’)” (64). Thus, to be masculine was to be heterosexual and to be effeminate from mid-century on (or perhaps even earlier) was to risk being perceived as a homosexual or at the very least engaging in homosexual acts. Middle-class men exploited the link between sodomy and effeminacy, making effeminacy antithetical to masculinity and making many men anxious about proving their manhood through heterosexuality.

By mid-century, effeminacy was not an acceptable form of masculinity. Instead, politeness became the marker of normative masculinity, and it is explicitly linked to a middle-class agenda. It also figures largely in the novels I will discuss in chapter four. Like the shift in understanding of the fop’s sexuality, the moment at which politeness became the norm for masculinity varies from historian to historian.²¹ And, as with the

²¹ In *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge, 1985) J.G.A. Pocock documents the beginnings of politeness or sensibility in the Restoration (236). Lawrence Klein also points to the seventeenth century as the beginning of politeness, though he emphasizes the influence of the Glorious Revolution and dates the

dating of the fop as a sodomite, I am not concerned with establishing a firm date on the emergence of politeness. Rather, for my purposes it is more important to note that politeness, as the dominant mode of masculinity (as normative masculinity), was in full-force by the mid-century, even if its roots are largely in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The creation and popularity of periodicals whose purpose was to civilize society, or as *The Spectator* announces in its intentions “to Cultivate and Polish Human Life by promoting Virtue and Knowledge, and by recommending whatsoever Useful or Ornamental to Society” (V:174) reflect the beginnings of polite society and polite masculinity that would firmly take hold by mid-century. *The Spectator* published six times a week from 1711-14 and *The Tatler*, was published from 1709-11. Although both publications addressed proper behavior in men and women, the primary audience was men, particularly since men read and discussed the periodicals in coffeehouses. Furthermore, the overt political (Whig) agenda of *The Spectator* was part of Addison’s reform efforts aimed at middle-class men. He was instrumental in promoting politeness as an aspect of Whig and middle-class masculinity, which distinguished middle-class men from the more aristocratic Tories. As Brian Cowan argues, *The Spectator* project was explicitly political: “The goal was rather to construct a social world that was amenable to the survival of Whig politics during a time in which the future of Whiggery was unclear” (347).

Nationalism

Although polite society could appear on the surface to be an innocuous apolitical movement aimed at refining men’s manners, it is in fact directly connected to class

beginnings of politeness after 1688. See Klein’s “Liberty, Manners and Politeness in Early Eighteenth-Century England.” *Historical Journal* 32 (1989): 583.

conflict and a developing sense of nationalism; these issues reach an apex at mid-century. Before discussing the connection to class and nationalism a definition of “polite” masculinity is necessary. Carter defines “politeness” as the possession of the following qualities: propriety or decorum, elegance of manners, and a display of accommodation to one’s companions (*Polite Society* 21). Being polite also required a sensibility, which the *OED* defines as “Quickness and acuteness of apprehension or feeling; the quality of being easily and strongly affected by emotional influences; sensitiveness.” The first reference to this definition of sensibility is in 1711 in *Spectator* no. 231—further evidence of *The Spectator’s* influence on masculinity in the early part of the century. Sensibility is a quality most often attributed to the late eighteenth century, thus I will discuss it later, but it is important to note here that sensibility is often used in conjunction with politeness even in the early eighteenth century.²²

At its center, politeness demands that the individual be cognizant of his place in a social setting and that he strive to put others at ease by displaying his own easiness in conversation, manners, and dress. Carter privileges conversational skills as one of the most important qualities of politeness: “As the crucial means for uniting and engaging friends, professional associates or strangers, conversation was recognised as central to the polite ideal and a key requirement of the modern gentleman” (*Polite Society* 62). By the beginning of the eighteenth century, we begin to see a distancing from earlier seventeenth-century mores of courtly conversation. The gentleman of the eighteenth century distinguished himself without a sense of competition: “Courtiers were to learn the

²² According to Carter: “This image of politeness and sensibility in tandem is certainly apparent from the regularity with which commentators applied the terms interchangeably. In addition, descriptions of sensibility often referred to qualities already familiar to practitioners of an early-eighteenth-century model of politeness” (*Men and the Emergence of Polite Society* 28).

appearance of nonchalance and to apply their skills in courtly competition, either to ingratiate or to intimidate with seeming ease. Polite gentlemen, by contrast, were expected to be less concerned with competing than with socializing, and hence were thought in need of just a few general guidelines by which to achieve good speech: namely, interesting, respectable subjects presented in a direct, clear, yet pleasing tone” (*Polite Society* 63). Once again, we see divisions by class in what constituted masculinity, and once again, the middle-class man’s masculinity, or politeness, ultimately predominates throughout the remainder of the century. Men were expected to learn such polite speech by conversing with women, whom Addison said were “formed to temper Mankind, and sooth them into Tenderness and Compassion” (I: 242). However, as with other aspects of mid-century masculinity, men needed to maintain a fine balance, such that they were not perceived as effeminate. The man who allowed himself to be overly influenced by women, risked being perceived as effeminate, and since masculinity defines itself in opposition to effeminacy by the mid-century, effeminate styles of conversation were distinctly unmanly.²³

Besides claiming to best represent masculinity through their dress and conversation, middle-class men also laid claim to a masculinity that was distinctly English and nationalist in its motivations. I distinguish middle-class masculinity as nationalist, rather than as simply patriotic, because a nationalist project engages in group formation based in xenophobia, at least to some degree. In *The Rise of English Nationalism*, Gerald Newman argues that patriotism is a “mere primitive feeling of loyalty” and that it applies to the country’s “prestige in context of foreign relations; to its

²³ Fops were often criticized for their lack of skill in conversation. This included being opinionated, self-absorbed, and pedantic, as well as being more interested in self-display than the exchange of intellectual debate (Carter 149).

arms, flags, and power in the international sphere” (53). Middle-class men were certainly motivated by thoughts about England’s place in the world, but they were also concerned with their own culture and these inward thoughts are, according to Newman, what distinguishes nationalism from patriotism. Newman argues that nationalism develops out of an anxiety about outsiders and that this anxiety stimulates group formation among those who are familiar with each other: “The activity [group formation] is cultural at the outset, its causation is originally defensive and reactive, and its purpose is to create or revive, by conscious self-comparisons with the alien culture, a more distinct sense of we-group identity” (55). Middle-class men identified French culture and by association the aristocracy as an alien culture against which they created a group identity that, while founded in their commercial class identity, was also distinctly bound up in their construction of English masculinity. Newman’s book begins at mid-century because he identifies these decades (1740-50)²⁴ as the point at which middle-class men begin to establish this group identity and also as the point at which anti-French sentiment reached its pinnacle, or as Newman describes it, “cries of simultaneously anti-foreign and anti-aristocratic cultural protest . . . were becoming a full-blooded chorus of lament and execration [by the 1750s]” (63). Newman, like Colley, posits that wars with France, middle-class anger at the aristocracy for their adherence to French culture and their disinclination for English goods, as well as the Jacobite rebellion of the 1740s are among the main factors that led to middle-class men’s ability to claim that their masculinity was specifically English and untainted by foreign (French) influence.

²⁴ More generally, Newman dates English nationalism as occurring over a forty-year span: “This philosophical transformation [founded in anti-French sentiment and a sense of aristocratic betrayal of the nation] took place essentially between the mid-1740s and the mid-1780s; these were the critical years in the launching of English nationalism” (67).

The scapegoating of France as the cause of English effeminacy, immorality, and weakness in battle is well-represented in John Brown's two-volume *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757-58), which sold well over 10,000 copies.²⁵ Brown, a Whig and Anglican minister, sets out to reform the manners and masculinity of the nation, which, he argues, have been overrun by French, effeminate influence. Brown's target is the ruling class, the aristocracy, whom he believes is unfit to lead because of their profligacy. The problem, according to Brown, is centered largely upon the influence of France. Brown decries traveling abroad, particularly the Grand Tour, as part of a young man's education because such travel promotes the adoption of French manners, fashion, and vanity, which he believes leads to effeminacy. His diatribe against France and the aristocracy is explicitly nationalistic in its endeavors because, according to Newman's theory, Brown's criticism is rooted in group identity (non-aristocratic English group identity) and is in conflict with an alien culture, France. Newman argues that Brown claims French influence weakened England and made it susceptible to foreign invasion: "We come then to the *fons et origo* of the modern Effeminacy. This effeminacy, according to Brown, was part of a gigantic French plot, consciously or unconsciously abetted by England's ruling class He elaborates his view most fully in the course of a comparative analysis of French and English national strength—another identifying characteristic, as we have seen, of early nationalist thought in general" (82). In his well-circulated, popular text, Brown informs England that its ruling class enabled the effeminacy of the nation and comprised its power in the world.

²⁵ Brown does primarily blame France for England's effeminacy, though as Newman notes, Brown did not think effeminacy was "entirely the result of French influence" (82).

Brown's comparison between England and France suggests that France must be as effeminate and weak as England, since the French are the progenitors of effeminate men. However, Brown instead concocts a range of unconvincing reasons for France's ability to be both effeminate and strong through a careful balancing act evidenced by France's military prowess.²⁶ In essence, what Brown sees in France is an ability by the people to unite under nationalist ideals, and this unity makes the country strong. As Newman humorously notes, Brown sees much of France's strength as its ability to effeminize other nations through cultural influence: "It thus becomes fully apparent at last that effeminacy and dissipation are no weaknesses at all for the French, but rather magical potions of global influence and power" (83). Although France can unite behind its effeminacy, England is capable of no such feat, according to Brown:

And as the internal Strength of a Nation will always depend chiefly on the Manners and Principles of its leading Members, so these effeminate Manners and this Defect of Principle operate powerfully, and fatally, on the national Conduct and Affairs. They have produced a general Incapacity, have weakened the national Spirit of Defence, have heightened the national Disunion . . . and thus seems [sic] to have fitted us for a Prey to the Insults and Invasions of our most power Enemy. (2:181-82)

In this passage, Brown explicitly links effeminacy to a weakened national defense, and he also implies that masculinity strengthens national defense. He then links effeminacy to the influence of a foreign culture, and he implicitly suggests that masculinity is an

²⁶ Among some of the reasons Brown cites for France's ability to remain strong despite their effeminate culture are their excellent schools, their national character, their military honor, and their strong leadership (in the form of a strong monarch).

English quality. Thus, masculinity is a nationalist project that brings the nation together and promotes the security and prosperity of the nation. It also constructs a national identity through an explicitly masculine culture (and in opposition to the effeminate French culture). According to Newman, nationalism begins as a philosophical concept in the eighteenth century. Benedict Anderson also marks the eighteenth century, though he argues for the end of the century, as the moment when “nation-ness” came into “historical being” (4). If this is true, then this moment in English history marks the point when masculinity becomes a foundational aspect of English national identity.

Sentimental Masculinity

As middle-class men displayed their masculinity by singing the praises of the nation at mid-century, and they did so quite literally—“Rule Britannia” and “God Save the King” were both written in 1745—by the end of the century, masculinity would undergo yet another change. Although nationalism would still be an important aspect of male masculinity, the polite masculinity that dominated the early and middle part of the century would shift toward sentimental masculinity by the end of the century. Philip Carter defines sentimental men in the following way: “Sentimental men, like their female counterparts, were encouraged to employ a range of physical gestures—sighing, trembling and facial expressions—to convey and receive the sympathies on which sentimental sociability depended” (*Polite Society* 94). Although sentimental masculinity implies something different from polite masculinity, because of its emphasis on feeling, the two are not opposed to each other and often went hand-in-hand to construct a model English masculinity. As I will argue in chapter four, masculine women in sentimental novels played an important role in constructing this model, sentimental masculinity.

Even though sentimentalism was in vogue in the late eighteenth century, it risked compromising a man's masculinity. Weeping best demonstrates how sentimentalism could mark a man as effeminate because it is more aligned with femininity than other sentimental traits. Richard Steele believed that crying was acceptable for men only at certain times. According to Steele in *Tatler* 68, men generally refrain from crying: "Such a reflection [of pity] in the breast of a woman immediately inclines her to tears; but in a man, it makes him think how such a one ought to act on that occasion, suitable to the dignity of his nature" (I:472). In short, men risked appearing effeminate if they wept too often or at inappropriate times. Even though masculinity was no longer defined by the dueling bravado of the previous century, masculinity still demanded that men distance themselves from certain feminine behaviors. Carter describes this careful balancing act in his discussion on male weeping: "Despite the popular image of Georgian men freely and confidently indulging in tears, it would be wrong to suggest that the eighteenth-century association between femininity and tears was broken, even at the height of the vogue for sensibility" (*Polite Society* 106). As Carter mentions, one need only look to sentimental fiction and its frequent reminders that crying was *not* unmanly as evidence that male weeping still needed to be defended.

Although late eighteenth-century masculinity is marked largely by sentiment and politeness, this masculinity was nevertheless not (for the most part) deemed effeminate, particularly when contrasted to the effeminacy of the macaroni and mollies. The macaroni is generally defined as synonymous with the fop.²⁷ Carter provides us with a slightly more specific definition: "By the early 1770s, with the macaroni phenomenon at

²⁷ The *OED* defines macaroni as, "A dandy or fop; *spec.* (in the second half of the 18th cent.) a member of a set of young men who had travelled in Europe and extravagantly imitated Continental tastes and fashions."

its height, the term signified a social type drawn from diverse social backgrounds, and characterised by vanity, affectation and unregulated refinement. The shift saw the macaroni, a period-specific character, subsumed within the well-established eighteenth-century fop-type” (153). The macaroni was also frequently linked to men who traveled, and specifically those who traveled to and were influenced by Italy. Despite the potential associations between Italy, sodomy, and the macaroni, sodomy instead was still associated with mollies, not macaronis. The distinction between the effeminate macaroni and sentimental man is important because the dominant masculinity, though more feminine in the late eighteenth century than in previous decades, is still distinguished as manly in contrast to other representations of masculinity. This shift in masculinity toward sentimentalism is evident in domestic novels and stands in contrast to the female masculinity depicted in those novels, which is a kind of out-of-date masculinity, not representative of an authentic English masculinity.

Because of these changes in masculinity over the course of the eighteenth century, men became extremely conscious of their masculinity. Despite the trend in masculinity moving toward one of outward inconspicuous consumption, it is perhaps more accurate to say that men were consciously inconspicuous. In other words, their performance of masculinity was tailored to project the image that they paid little attention to their appearance or manners, particularly in relation to other men: “Changes in male fashion were driven not by a social dynamic of conspicuous consumption, not by an attempt to keep up with, or ahead of, the Joneses, but by a politics of inconspicuous consumption, by elite understatement, by an attempt to stay away from the Joneses” (Kuchta 72). Instead, their masculinity was intended to read to others as natural, an emanation of their

biological sex. According to King, men's anxiety over appearing effeminate stemmed from their legitimate concern that to be effeminate was to have little social or political power: "*effeminacy* described not a falsely gendered or sexual subjectivity but a failure of, or lack of access to, the public representativeness of those men and exceptional women who were statesmen, citizens, and householders" (67). Instead, as Linda Colley explains, masculinity was defined by manliness and intertwined with an English identity: "There was a sense at this time—as perhaps there still is—in which the British conceived of themselves as an essentially 'masculine' culture—bluff, forthright, rational, down-to-earth to the extent of being philistine—caught up in an eternal rivalry with an essentially 'effeminate' France—subtle, intellectually devious, preoccupied with high fashion, fine cuisine and etiquette, and so obsessed with sex that boudoir politics were bound to direct it" (252). Thus, most Englishmen aligned themselves with a narrow definition of masculinity, steeped in nationalism.

Prescribing Femininity

As the construction and representations of masculinity shifted over the course of the eighteenth century, so too did the construction of femininity. Many of the changes in femininity were set in motion by men who desired a particular type of femininity that would function in contrast to their masculinity and would ensure their dominance over women. Once again, *The Spectator* influenced the debate over femininity and female masculinity. In *Spectator* 104 (1711), Richard Steele expresses fear of masculine women who wear male clothing, and Addison returns to this problem again in *Spectator* 435, published a little over a year after 104. *Spectator* 435 (1712) begins with Addison declaring the influence he wielded over the fashion and manners of the period. He claims

that he has “so effectually quashed those Irregularities [of fashion and manners]” that in the future people might think that he had contrived them. Despite his self-proclaimed success, he laments that he has yet to eradicate the fashion of women wearing riding coats and tying up their hair. Even though Addison’s boasts exceed his influence on culture, he nevertheless did have a significant impact on society. That women were still allegedly wearing men’s clothes after such a practice was derided several times in *The Spectator* suggests that women in the early part of the century were willing to tolerate society’s criticism in exchange for the pleasure they took in wearing men’s clothes. In fact, Addison mentions one of his female readers who “cocked her Hat full in my Face” (29), suggesting a purposeful transgression of cultural norms, a sort of thumbing her nose at him.

While *Spectator* 104 linked women in riding coats to Amazons, *Spectator* 435 represents masculine woman as two-sexed beings. Addison refers to women in riding coats as a “Mixture of two Sexes in one Person” and as “Hermaphrodites” (28). He even envisions what Juvenal might have said about women in men’s clothes, “He [Juvenal] would have represented her in her Riding Habit, as a greater Monster than the Centaur” (28). Addison extends Hughes’ concerns in *Spectator* 104 about sex and gender by suggesting that cross-dressing not only confuses sexual categories, but also literally produces a kind of two-sexed being. What is at stake here for Addison is the importance of maintaining a division between the sexes through the performance of opposite genders. The crossing of these arbitrary boundaries implies, according to Addison, nefarious intentions, while normative genders promote good behavior. Whether intentionally or not, Addison promotes the ideology of the two-sex system by arguing for the distinction

between men and women as two separate sexes: “I think it however absolutely necessary to keep up the Partition between the two Sexes, and to take Notice of the smallest Encroachments which the one makes upon the other” (28-29). Although Addison speaks of the importance of gender norms in many issues of *The Spectator*, this comment in *Spectator* 435 also reflects the necessity of policing gender in order to maintain heteronormativity.

Just as Addison links masculinity to nationalism, he also links femininity to the strength of the nation, though in a different way. His closing remarks in this issue express the convergence of femininity and nationalism: “Modesty is our distinguishing Character . . . And when this our National Virtue appears in that Female Beauty, for which our *British* Ladies are celebrated above all others in the Universe, it makes up the most amiable Object that the Eye of Man can possibly behold” (29-30). Besides connecting femininity to nationalism, Addison also connects femininity to heterosexuality, and he defines British women as merely objects for male pleasure. Through publications like *The Spectator*, women were encouraged to perform a femininity that equated their gender to a national identity, which was located in their modesty and virtue. A woman who did not perform this femininity not only transgressed the presumed law of nature, she also betrayed the nation. I will address this issue in more detail in chapter three, where Henry Fielding takes up this notion of betrayal in his discussion of female husbands.

Although Addison suggests that women’s persistence in cross-dressing is a cause for great concern, it is not a harbinger of impending radical change. Notions of femininity do change throughout the century, but society does not become more tolerant

of cross-dressing as the century progresses, as Addison seems to fear it would. Women's wearing of men's clothes, especially riding coats, mostly disappears, and by 1801 in Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda*, Harriet Freke is punished for her gender transgressions, and her punishment specifically includes her inability to wear breeches, which she wore throughout much of the novel. Even though Addison is obviously critical of women in men's riding habits, his criticism is mild compared to the satirical prints that appeared toward the latter part of the century. One such print entitled "An Officer in the Light Infantry driven by his Lady to Cox-Heath" (c.1780) depicts a woman wearing the same coat as her husband, who sits dozing in the carriage beside her, while she stands and drives, wielding a whip. Her husband has full, bright lips, as if he were wearing lipstick, and though he is overweight, his chest rests on his arms in such a manner that it looks as if he has large breasts. His passive effeminacy is obviously meant to stand in contrast to his wife who has literally seized the reins, apparently empowered by her masculine coat.²⁸ This print plays out and exceeds the fears expressed by Addison. But according to Linda Colley, Addison's fears (and those of satirical printmakers') about women in men's attire were exaggerated, and men's responses do not indicate major changes in femininity, but rather men's anxiety that femininity *might* be changing. She argues that only a small number of women wore riding coats, but the effect on men was great because it symbolized cultural changes that threatened the patriarchy: "Under enormous pressure from war and revolution without, and more rapid social and economic transformations at home, Britons seized upon the comparatively minor changes in women's state as a symbol of all that seemed disturbing and subversive" (242). While

²⁸ A fear that women might metaphorically seize the reins from men arises in a discussion in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, which I discuss in chapter four.

notions of femininity did change during the eighteenth century, the perception of those changes did not correspond to reality. Instead, they reflect men's anxiety about women, women's gender, and men's desire to maintain control over women.

One of the most influential means by which men sought to control women's behavior and prevent change was through conduct books, which were mostly written by men. Conduct books and the fiction of the period, such as the domestic novels I will discuss in chapter four, construct a notion of femininity in which women were expected to care for children, educate young children (to varying degrees, depending on class), maintain the household, serve their husbands' needs, and be subordinate to their fathers and husbands. The model woman was also distinguished by her virtue and chastity, and all of these factors combined to create a woman who was desirable to men. Prior to the publication of the conduct books, the categories for what constituted a woman and what made her desirable varied, particularly by class, but with the advent of the conduct book such categories were codified and concretized, such that, according to Nancy Armstrong, by the end of the century "virtually everyone knew the ideal womanhood they proposed" (61). The codes and behaviors spelled out in conduct books become so normative that by the end of the century, we see these values commonly represented in popular domestic fiction, and we also see a decrease in the publication of conduct books, suggesting that their content was already so well-known, that there was less need for such texts.²⁹

²⁹ It is possible that a decline in the publication of conduct books represents a movement away from the codes of femininity articulated in the texts, but this is borne out neither by the kinds of women depicted in late eighteenth-century literature, nor by the culture at large. Although Wollstonecraft writes at the end of the century, her text, and the resistance to her theories, serve as an example of how concretized the femininity of conduct books had become. Nancy Armstrong makes a similar argument in *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. See specifically page 63.

Conduct books sold well during the long eighteenth century, and there was no shortage from which to choose. Richard Allestree's *The Ladies Calling* was first published in 1673 and was reprinted twice by 1675 and seven times between 1693 and 1727.³⁰ Among other popular conduct books are John Essex's *The Young Ladies Conduct* (1722), Wetenhall Wilkes' *Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady* (1740), William Kenrick's *The Whole Duty of Woman* (1753, reissued in three new editions in the 1790s), Thomas Marriott's *Female Conduct* (1759), James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), and John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* (1774).³¹ Wilkes' book constructs a version of "womanhood" typical of conduct books, in that it binds women to an essentialized and naturalized notion of identity. According to Wilkes, qualities such as chastity are simply inherent to the female sex: "Chastity is so essential and natural to your sex, that every declination from it is a proportionable receding from womanhood. An immodest woman is a kind of monster, distorted from its proper form" (Jones 30). Because Wilkes conflates sex and gender ("sex" and "womanhood" are synonymous with each other), his theory leaves no room for women who perform a gender other than normative femininity. Thus, Wilkes is forced to construct a kind of third-sex, a being who is not woman, who is a "monster." If indeed such a monster could exist, we can see why conduct books were so popular in the eighteenth century. These books strictly enforce behavior in order to ensure that women are the correct sex and gender, and they reform those who strayed into some nebulous

³⁰ For more on the influence of *The Ladies Calling* on conduct books, see Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. 384-387.

³¹ Fletcher notes that the religious influence in conduct books "all but disappeared" by 1730 (389). He also notes that by the 1740s, "conduct book writers heightened their stress upon men's and women's natures" (390).

third-sex state. Given that such a slippage into a third-sex can apparently occur after a few extra-marital liaisons, the strict codification and regulation of women's conduct is essential to maintaining women's submission to men and to the patriarchy. The obsessive need to control women's behavior in order to maintain a belief in a naturalized system of gender reflects the instability of femininity and the fragility of masculinity, which is reliant upon its binary opposite, femininity, to define its strength.

Besides delineating women's duties and appropriate behavior, the conduct books also constructed the model woman as between an aristocratic and laboring woman. Since aristocratic women, like aristocratic men, were often portrayed as vain, superficial, and conspicuous consumers, they were not the model of femininity. Such women indulged their desires for material goods instead of focusing their attention on the domestic. At the other end of the spectrum are laboring women. Armstrong argues that conduct books also dismissed them because their labor was inconsistent with the model of femininity advanced by these texts: "It is a curious thing that even though conduct books represented aristocratic behavior as the very antithesis of the domestic woman, they never once exalted labor. They generally found women who worked for their living to be morally bankrupt too" (78). Most female laborers worked primarily as laundresses, spinners, seamstresses, weavers, or lace-makers; some women were also involved in the printing trade.³² According to Susan Kingsley Kent, female labor also consisted of farming nearby common lands, which many women cultivated through common "use rights," while their husbands farmed more distant land (71). Despite the necessity of women's

³² For more on women in the printing trade, see Hannah Barker, "Women, work and the industrial revolution: female involvement in the English printing trades, c. 1700-1840," *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, eds. Hannah Barber and Elaine Chalus. New York: Longman, 1997. See also, McDowell, Paula. *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Marketplace, 1678-1730*. New York: Clarendon Press, 1998.

labor to their families' incomes, women who worked outside the home were strongly criticized, especially at the end of the century, because their labor stood in contrast to notions of normative femininity: "From constituting the industrious, productive, invaluable contributors to family and national wealth at the beginning of the eighteenth century, plebeian women came by the end of the eighteenth century to be regarded as coarse, profligate, and degraded; portrayed as shameful, suspect, and even criminal, working women were depicted as posing a serious danger to the nation's moral, physical, and economic health" (Kent 70-71). One of the factors that contributed to this change in the perception of working women was the increasing population in urban areas. With more people moving to cities for employment and access to goods, there were fewer jobs, more crime, and more conflicts between classes. Laboring women became a convenient scapegoat for these problems, and their access to the public sphere was seen largely as a contributing factor.³³

Although there was concern by men about women working outside the home, the actual number of laboring women decreased in the latter half of the century (McKeon 299). This discrepancy between what women were actually doing, versus what society (mostly men) claimed was occurring is further evidence of men's exaggerated and misplaced anxiety about changes in women's behavior. Michael McKeon explicitly correlates the decrease in women's labor to the rise in fertility, which is also linked to a rise in the number of married women at the end of the century and a fall in the age of marriage (299). His argument is substantiated by population data compiled by E. A. Wrigley, who reports that age at first marriage dropped from 26 to 23 over the course of the century, and at the same time, the number of unmarried women fell from about "15

³³ See Kent, 71-72 and Colley, 241.

per cent at the beginning of the period to no more than half its initial level towards the end of the eighteenth century” (224). Wrigley explicitly links the “dramatic surge of population growth” toward the latter part of the century to “the timing and incidence of marriage” (224). While Wrigley attributes the surge in marriage to a rise in income, there are other factors at work, including governmental and cultural propaganda. Colley notes that a large number of maternity hospitals were established, starting at mid-century and continuing throughout the century. Women were also strongly encouraged to breast feed their own children, rather than send them to wet-nurses.³⁴ Colley argues that all of these practices, as well as rescuing orphans, became “increasingly attractive to British legislators, pundits and charitable bodies in the second half of the eighteenth century, for practical as well as humanitarian reasons” (240). All of these factors, government propaganda, literature, conduct books, etc. contributed to a femininity that advocated women’s confinement in the domestic sphere, or as Colley describes it, a “cult of prolific maternity” (240). What inroads women did make into the public realm were largely dwarfed by the push to keep women in the home. Thus, while women did attempt to alter what constituted normative femininity, the overwhelming response from men was to constrict acceptable forms of it. This construction of femininity is important to understanding female masculinity and men’s responses to it. Since femininity was being defined by women’s confinement to the home, masculine women’s access to public spaces directly challenged the gender role they were supposed to follow in society.

³⁴ In general, being a mother became essential to the identity of a woman. Dror Wahrman argues that maternity as an identity represents an ideology that was new to the eighteenth century: “[T]he distinctive shift peculiar to the late eighteenth century was one from maternity as a general ideal, broadly prescriptive but allowing for individual deviations, to maternity as inextricably intertwined with the essence of femininity for each and every woman” (13).

Instead of working outside the home, women were encouraged to engage in activities that contained them within the home. However, women found themselves in a double-bind. While female labor was not valued, idleness in women was also problematic because women without anything to occupy their time would, the conduct books assumed, degenerate to idle amusements. The conduct books conceived of women as domestic managers who were expected to be frugal in the spending of their husbands' money. As Lynne Friedli notes, the eighteenth century marks the period when being a wife and mother "constituted a specific status or profession" (235). Part of this new profession demanded modesty, so that women did not waste money on unnecessary expenses. However, according to Harriet Guest, in the second half of the century women were encouraged to spend, though not excessively: "Excessive fashionable consumption by women, and particularly by women of the trading classes, does of course continue to be ridiculed, satirized, and stigmatized as the abomination of polite society; but with increasing insistence, I think, a kind of counterimage of equally undesirable feminine behavior emerges in the figure of the woman who does not consume enough" (76). Normative femininity, like masculinity, was a product of class ideology that charged both sexes with maintaining a careful balance of behaviors. This notion of femininity significantly restricted what was acceptable for a woman's gender performance.

Besides the conduct books, one of the texts that most influenced the construction of femininity in the eighteenth century was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's conduct book-like *Emile* (1762). It was so integral to the construction of normative femininity that Mary Wollstonecraft devotes a significant portion of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) to challenging Rousseau's theories. Linda Colley describes *Emile* as "only the

most dazzlingly successful statement of this kind of highly polarised treatment of the sexes” (239). She also notes that it appeared in “at least five different English-language editions before 1770” (239). Although the focus of *Emile* is the education of boys, Rousseau devotes Book V to ‘Sophy,’ a model for all females. Rousseau begins by arguing that the biological differences between the sexes establish the foundation for men’s dominance over women: “The man should be strong and active; the woman should be weak and passive; the one must have both the power and the will; it is enough that the other should offer little resistance” (322). This basic tenet of the patriarchy, which claims that men’s physical strength justifies their dominion over women, is the primary frame around which Rousseau structures his theories. Rousseau then moves on to a declaration that is at the heart of the separate spheres ideology: “The consequences of sex are wholly unlike for man and woman. The male is only a male now and again, the female is always a female, or at least all her youth; everything reminds her of her sex” (324). This passage goes on to delineate women’s function as a child-bearer and as the central emotional force that keeps a family together. Given that context, when Rousseau says “the female is always a female,” he implies that women are always subject to their biological functions, as dictated by their sex. Men have fewer of these responsibilities and instead are permitted a kind liberty that elevates them from the baseness of nature and places them in the public realm. When Rousseau posits that “everything” reminds women of their sex, he seems to suggest that nature reminds women of their role (i.e. women are physically weak and require men’s protection and in exchange men have dominion over women). In short, Rousseau argues that women are created by nature and for natural functions (such as childbirth), while men are generally exempt from the demands of

nature. As the being who is generally not subject to his sex, man naturally assumes a position of power over woman.

Because women were created to serve the natural duties of their sex, as Rousseau's ideology would have it, women were expected to conform to a standard of behaviors, or more specifically to normative femininity. These standards of femininity are explicitly contained in the judgment and possible censure of public opinion, with public opinion being defined as the voice of men: "Nature herself has decreed that woman . . . should be at the mercy of man's judgment" (328). Although Rousseau provides no immediate justification for this appeal to nature, he would likely argue that since men possess reason, and women do not, men are in the position to judge women. Moreover, claims Rousseau, women are given value not only by nature, but by others' opinion of them: "Worth alone will not suffice, a woman must be thought worthy . . . when a woman does right her task is only half finished, and what people think of her matters as much as what she really is" (328). What a woman "really is" is determined by nature—she is weak, passive, and submissive to men, and according to Rousseau her submission makes her worthy of men's attention, love, and protection. Even though Rousseau articulates this argument earlier, here he qualifies his argument and belies the appeal to nature as the determinant of a woman's value—or at least this determines only half of her worth. The other determining factor is society's laws or the social construction of what a woman is. Therefore, a woman is twice subjected: once to nature and once to men. And while her adherence to nature is important, in the end, it is only men's judgment that deems her worthy—worthy of men's attention, worthy of being deemed 'woman.' Her value lies not in her inherent worth according to nature, but rather

in men's thoughts, and thus men's opinions are elevated to a position of privilege in the determination of who/what a woman should be. I will return to the importance of men's views of women in detail in chapter four.

In the following chapters, which I outline below, I discuss different representations of female masculinity, the varied response to it, and the way in which it influenced and shaped discourses of normative masculinity. Although men were defining themselves in relation to other men, as I have discussed above, they also defined and redefined themselves in relation to women. Chapter two, "A Passing Phase?: Female Masculinity Serves the Nation," examines the representations and functions of female soldier narratives, specifically *The Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies* (1740), *The Female Soldier; Or, the Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell* (1750) and *Memoirs of the Remarkable Life and Surprising Adventures of Miss Jenny Cameron* (1746). This chapter is the only chapter that presents positive representations of female masculinity, largely because female soldiers are among the very few positive representations of female masculinity in eighteenth-century literature and culture. Some representations of female masculinity in the eighteenth century are somewhat benign; however, few are explicitly positive and most are rather negative, which makes female soldier narratives an interesting disjunction from other representations of female masculinity, and which allows us to see female masculinity as a masculine performance separate from normative masculinity. Even the narrative of Jenny Cameron, which is an anti-Jacobite text, praises Cameron's courage and fortitude in battle. All of the narratives were written at mid-century, yet the women served as female soldiers during the Restoration and during the early part of the century. This raises the question why such

narratives were written at mid-century. I argue in this chapter that the female soldier narratives were written at mid-century because the authors employ the narratives as nationalistic devices that promote imperialism and encourage men to join the military, the impetus being that if mere women can do it, surely men can too. The narrative of Jenny Cameron also fits this model, but it uses anti-Jacobite sentiment to incite support for Hanoverian England. The timing of the publication of the texts coincides with the numerous wars England fought, particularly with France. Furthermore, the publication of the texts corresponds to the changes occurring in masculinity at mid-century, wherein masculinity becomes linked to nationalism. In this instance, women are allowed to be masculine when their performance of masculinity not only serves the broader goals of the nation, but also of masculinity itself. In essence, female masculinity is co-opted by patriarchal culture to serve a male agenda, and because of this beneficial function, female masculinity is carefully constructed in a positive manner in these texts. Part of what compromises this positive response is the suggested heterosexuality of the women. However, I argue that this construction is unconvincing and instead, the female soldiers express desire in a way that differentiates female masculinity from normative masculinity.

The texts I discuss in chapter three, “‘Not Fit to be Mentioned’: Silence and Disclosure in the Narratives of Female Husbands” stand in direct contrast to the female soldier narratives of chapter two. In this chapter, I examine texts published mostly at mid-century, such as Henry Fielding’s *The Female Husband* (1746) and *The Jacobite’s Journal* (1747-48), the anonymous *Satan’s Harvest Home* (1749), and Charlotte Charke’s *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (1755), which focus on women who

passed as men and married or attempted to marry women. Like the female soldier texts, these texts also construct female masculinity within the discourse of nationalism; however, they find female masculinity a threat to nationalism. First and foremost, female husbands usurp male privilege by passing as men, which enables them to enter public life, travel unescorted by men, obtain a job, and sometimes marry women or have sex with them. Moreover, female husbands demonstrate that masculinity is indeed a performance, not something inextricably tied to biology, since women can put on masculinity and even a phallus at will and ‘become’ men. Given that masculinity is so important to the identity of the nation, female husbands present a troubling threat to gender norms and to England’s notion of itself and its strength. Some writers attempt to disarm this threat by linking female husbands to other cultural influences, such as Jacobitism. In *The Jacobite’s Journal*, Fielding explicitly links female husbands to Jacobitism, suggesting that they threaten English femininity by encouraging women to be unnaturally masculine, like Jacobite women. Authors of other texts make a similar argument, claiming that English women must learn to become female husbands from other nations. This argument mirrors Addison’s argument that English women’s virtue and moral character prevent them from engaging in such behavior. However, these authors undermine their attempts to silence knowledge of female husbands, especially knowledge of what female husbands do with women, by disclosing their existence through the publication of the texts. As with many of the texts I discuss, I argue that a counter discourse runs throughout these texts that complicates their attempts to condemn female husbands. Many of these texts reveal fears that women may indeed perform masculinity as well as men, even when they lack a male body.

Chapter four, “Undressing the Canon: Female Masculinity in Sentimental Novels,” diverges from the previous chapters in two significant ways. First, it examines texts published both at mid-century and at the end of the century. Second, it focuses on representations of masculine women who, for the most part, do not attempt to pass as men (though in one instance, a character does wear men’s pants). In this chapter, I discuss Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, Frances Burney’s *Evelina*, and Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda*. These novels, which function as regulatory fiction instructing women how to enter the marriage market and how to perform normative femininity, depict a masculine female character who serves various functions. In general, the authors employ masculine women as models of female gender gone awry, resulting in women who are either embarrassing to polite company or who are shunned, especially by the heroines. The male characters, particularly the heroines’ future husbands, encourage the heroines’ disinclination to associate with the masculine woman by suggesting that masculinity in a woman will render her undesirable and unfit for marriage. In making such claims, the male characters reinforce normative femininity by employing female masculinity as a kind bogey aimed at scaring the heroines into their ‘proper’ social role. At the same time, masculine women also legitimize sensibility in men. They function as foils, performing an outdated masculinity that to the heroines appears unattractive in contrast to sensibility. Since sentimental masculinity risks being read as effeminate, these masculine women show readers that sensibility is the normative masculinity, rather than the brutish masculinity associated with the Restoration and the early eighteenth century. In these novels, then, female masculinity enforces both

normative femininity and normative masculinity and constructs genders that represent the model for English men and women.

In the quest for power and control over even the simplest aspects of their lives, some eighteenth-century women chose to perform masculinity as a means of gaining access to the privileges it conferred. In doing so, they challenged the argument from nature that masculinity was the sole province of men, and they thrust themselves into the public world of men in more visible ways than England had previously seen. In *The Gendering of Men*, Thomas King argues that masculinity is the sine qua non of self-government: “[M]asculinity’ has been the scene of an ongoing, and ever expanding, struggle for access to full citizenship and enfranchisement, to civic and personal privileges and obligations only gradually extended to all adult males, let alone all adult females. ‘Masculinity’ accordingly constitutes the struggle to acquire personal and political autonomy, to realize that autonomy as ‘individuality’ and ‘authenticity,’ and to identify one’s private interests with the public good” (49). Given the central importance of masculinity to independence and to access to personal and political power, it is not surprising that women would perform masculinity as they sought their own rights in the eighteenth century. Unfortunately, women’s private interests were often perceived to be at odds with the public good, and as a result, their masculinity was censured and punished. But when their masculinity did serve the public good, such as in the female soldiers, they were praised as model English ‘men.’ Regardless of how society responded to female masculinity, it is undeniably significant to the construction of masculinity in the eighteenth century.

Chapter 2: A Passing Phase?: Female Masculinity Serves the Nation

In 1748, Hannah Snell, masquerading as James Gray, aided her fellow sailors in an attack on the French-held fort of Devakottai in India. Snell's biographer describes her as having served valiantly, even though the conditions were "sufficient to damp[en] the Spirits of an Alexander or a Caesar" (14). Amazingly, Snell is purported to have fired "37 Rounds of Shot" in this battle, despite having been shot in the groin and several times in both legs. Two years later, Snell began collecting a pension for her service to Britain and began performing military exercises on stage to audiences' delight. Although Snell was by no means a commonplace woman of the eighteenth century, her masquerading as a soldier and her service to Britain in the development of its empire are not as anomalous as they may seem. Hundreds of women like Snell served Britain and aided its rise to power. Perhaps even more astonishingly, there was little resistance to these cross-dressed, masculine women, even when they courted other women in men's attire. Instead, they were praised in narratives and song, applauded in theatres, and awarded pensions by the government. But this celebration of female masculinity was short-lived and narrowly confined. Other forms of female masculinity were condemned, and by the end of the century, even the female soldier began to fall out of favor with Britons.

Hannah Snell's exploits and the narrative detailing them represent an interesting, passing phase in the eighteenth century. While eighteenth-century Britain celebrated female masculinity in the form of the female soldier, this positive response to female masculinity would turn negative when society examined other masculine women. The commendation of female soldiers hinges on the function of their masculinity—it served the nation—and the historical moment in which they appeared—the early to middle part

of the century, a time when Britain was engaged in many battles. In this chapter, I examine three female soldier narratives: *The Life and Adventures of Christian Davies, Commonly Called Mother Ross* (1740), *The Female Soldier; or The Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell* (1750), and *Memoirs of the Remarkable Life and Surprising Adventures of Miss Jenny Cameron* (1746).¹ These narratives deploy female masculinity as nationalist propaganda to promote Britain's imperialist agenda and to goad men into joining the military. They also establish the boundaries of acceptable female masculinity. In short, women can be masculine when their gender transgression serves the nation, especially the needs of men, but women are not permitted to transgress sexual boundaries. They can perform the gender role of men, but they cannot perform the sexual role of men; however, this does not foreclose the homoerotic possibilities of these texts. Although the female soldiers do not engage in sexual relationships with women in these texts, they establish an emotional intimacy, which I argue creates a romantic bond between the women that differentiates their desire from heterosexual male desire.

Although eighteenth-century scholars often discuss the subversive possibilities of cross-dressed women, female soldiers helped strengthened the dominant gender—

¹ Christian Davies' narrative quickly went into a second edition in 1741. Two abridged versions were published in 1742 and 1744. Hannah Snell's narrative was originally published in two versions. The shorter version (42 pages), which I use, was published by Robert Walker. The other 1750 version is 187 pages and includes engraved illustrations; it was also published by Robert Walker. The ESTC lists a 1756 edition, referred to as the "3rd Edition." However, it does not list a second edition. The 1809 chapbook edition has a slightly different title from the 1750 editions. It is entitled: *The Widow in Masquerade; or the Female Warrior; Containing a Concise Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell*. Numerous abbreviated versions of her story also exist, such as a version in *The Gentleman's Magazine* and another in *Women Adventurers: The Lives of Madame Velazquez, Hannah Snell, Mary Anne Talbot, and Mrs. Christian Davies* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893), 59-131. Snell is perhaps one of the best known of all the female soldiers; therefore, her story appears in several publications. All, however, appear to draw from the shorter 1750 edition. Later editions contain verbatim passages from this 1750 edition. In accordance with other scholars, I primarily use the first edition (1740) of Davies' text. I also discuss the second (1741) edition because it contains ancillary texts, not contained in the first edition, which I argue reflect readers' responses to the first edition. All references to Snell's text are to the shorter, first edition (1750). There appears to have been only one edition of Cameron's text (1746). Thus, I use this edition.

masculinity—by encouraging men to be more masculine and by privileging masculinity as the highest form of nationalism. Since women cannot fight as women, the greatest form of nationalism (arguably fighting and risking one’s life for one’s country) appears to require masculinity. By connecting masculinity to nationalism, Britain establishes its identity as overwhelmingly masculine, to the extent that even some of its women aspire to perform masculinity. Later in the century, society establishes gender roles for women, raising and educating the sons of Britain (its future soldiers and leaders), so that women can be patriotic *and* feminine without transgressing gender boundaries. But through mid-century, female masculinity fosters Britain’s masculine identity, advances its dominance as a world power, and solidifies normative masculinity as heterosexual.

Despite the popularity of female soldier narratives in the eighteenth century, scholars have only recently discovered them, and most scholars are interested primarily in the cross-dressing and gender masquerade of the heroines; few devote much attention to the homoerotic scenes. Julie Wheelwright mostly focuses on gender, arguing that the female soldier “blurs distinctions [between the sexes] and raises questions about how they are maintained” (28). In her discussion of the homoerotic scenes, Wheelwright argues that female soldiers courted women to bolster their disguise and “vent their resentment against the hegemony of male authority” (55). She seems to take at face value the narrator’s claim that Davies’ interactions with women were platonic and functioned only as an expression of male power. Dianne Dugaw does not devote much attention to the homoerotic scenes in the narratives. Rather, she situates the female soldier narratives in the context of warrior women ballads, detailing the tropes of these ballads and their influence on the female soldier narratives. Scarlet Bowen argues that

the female soldier narratives serve a national and class function, focusing on the middle and upper-class appropriation of plebeian female soldiers. Although there are similarities between Bowen's argument and mine, Bowen is interested in class and nationalist politics, while I am interested in how female masculinity, within the context of nationalist politics, shapes and influences masculinity. Like other scholars who have written on these texts, Bowen's interest does not lie in the homoerotic scenes, though in a brief discussion, she argues that these scenes serve to teach men how to be virile without being unruly. In other words, the female soldiers teach men to be gentle with women without seeming effeminate.

Two scholars offer arguments most relevant to my reading of the homoerotic scenes. In an examination of both female soldiers and female husbands, Fraser Easton argues that women can masquerade as men as long as that masquerade does not include sex with women. Emma Donoghue devotes more time to a discussion of the homoerotic scenes than any other scholar. She encourages readers to resist the simple explanations authors provide for the female soldiers' courting of women. She is more interested in documenting the homoerotic potential of these scenes than offering an interpretation, but she does suggest that cross-dressing allows women a "flexible bisexual preference" (96). I want to build upon Easton's and Donoghue's work in arguing for a deeper understanding of desire and sexual acts in the eighteenth century, especially as they pertain to women. Easton is right that the boundaries of female masculinity do not include the ability to perform the sexual role of men, and these narratives do not construct their heroines as engaging in sex with women or even desiring women. Instead, the authors present the soldiers' interest in women as merely a part of their male role.

However, these homoerotic scenes conflate desire with sexual acts. In other words, if no act occurred than there was no real desire and desire would compel a sexual act or at least an attempted one. This understanding of desire and sexual acts presumes that action must follow desire; it leaves no room for intimacy outside of sexual acts, such as emotional intimacy. As many queer studies scholars have noted, we need not have direct evidence of sex to read relationships or desire as homoerotic, and I want to encourage such readings in these texts.

The female soldier narratives conflate desire with sexual acts, so that they can claim their heroines are heterosexual; they never had sex with women, therefore they never really desired them, and this assumed heterosexuality makes it easier to praise the women's masculinity and foreground the nationalist function of the texts. Such a conceptualization of sex and desire reads, I argue, as distinctly male, in that it privileges action and ignores other forms of intimacy that are not connected to sex acts. Tassie Gwilliam argues that, "desire itself is understood to be masculine [in the eighteenth century]" (118). This certainly makes sense if we collapse desire and sex and assume that the sexual aggressor is male, as it generally was in the eighteenth century. Such an understanding of sex and desire privileges men (since they are supposed to initiate and control courting and sex acts) and links desire and sex to men and male bodies, since the penis (or phallus) is a presumed necessity for sex acts. In her book on female masculinity, Judith Halberstam argues that, "far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity. In other words, female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing" (1).

Halberstam's theory is useful in situating female masculinity in conjunction with the masculinity performed by men in the eighteenth century. In these narratives, female masculinity helps maintain a notion of masculinity as strong, courageous, and patriotic. In women's "failure" to perform the sexual role of men, thus when they function as the "rejected scraps" of masculinity, masculine women reveal the collapsing of desire and sex as a component of masculinity. Women fail as men because only "real men" can perform sexually, these texts suggest, but they also illustrate normative masculinity's investment in sexual acts as manifestations of desire.

If we resist reading desire as inextricably linked to sex acts, we can expand our understanding of the homoerotic scenes in these narratives, and more importantly expand our notions of how desire functions in the eighteenth century, especially for women. If we allow for manifestations of desire other than sex acts, we begin to see how women can use masculinity as an inroad to intimacy with other women without necessarily expressing that desire through sex, especially in texts. Katherine Philips' Restoration poetry is a useful model for thinking about intimacy and desire between women that does not include expressions of sex acts.² Philips situates her desire for other women as equal to that of love between a husband and wife³ and as superior to the ambitions of kings.⁴

She and the women she writes to and about express an intimacy compared to

² A full discussion of Philips' poetry is beyond the scope of my project, but I use her poetry as one model of understanding how women can express desire without needing to manifest it in sexual acts. Although the female soldier narratives were published decades after the publication of Philips' poetry, this does not preclude a connection between the expression of desire from one text to the other.

³ Such expressions can be found in many of her poems. For example, in "L'amitié: To Mrs. M. Awbrey," Philips says that intimacy between herself and Mrs. Awbrey is "as neare/As love, or vows, or secrets can endure" (5-6).

⁴ Philips privileges her love for Mrs. Awbrey above the achievements of kings and other conquerors, "Let the dull world alone to talk and fight,/And with their vast ambitions nature fright . . . But we by Love sublin'd so high shall rise,/To pittie Kings and Conquerors despise,/Since we that sacred union have engrost,/Which they and all the sullen world have lost" (15-22).

heterosexual love (in marriage), but Philips also distinguishes her love from heterosexuality, and positions it as superior to such love because her love for these women exists on an emotional and spiritual plane; it is not merely expressed through physical and fleeting acts. As I will argue in the succeeding pages, the women of these narratives begin to feel a similar intimacy and desire for other women. They feel an emotional connection to women, either because they rescued them from other men or because they enjoy the women's conversation and company. Thus, masculine women do not need to express desire through sexual acts, but men seem to need to engage in sexual acts (with women) as evidence of desire and as evidence of masculinity itself.

Although the homoerotic scenes in these narratives are an important element of my argument, the women's role as soldiers and the texts' role as nationalist propaganda are critical to comprehending how female masculinity could function in the eighteenth century without being condemned. To understand why and how female soldiers became a force of nationalism, we must understand them in their historical and cultural context. The eighteenth century marks a period of tremendous growth for Britain in its accumulation of land, wealth, and status as a dominant world power. Britain acquired land through the Act of Union with Scotland in 1707, extended its colonial reach in North America and India, and gained power over France and Spain through the War of Spanish Succession (1701-14), the War of Austrian Succession (1740-48), and the Seven Years' War (1756-63). Britain also withstood internal revolt in the form of the Jacobite rebellions in 1708, 1715, and 1745. The end of the century marks the only significant defeat Britain suffered: the American Revolution (1775-83). Most of these conflicts were confined to the early and middle part of the century in part because Britain's successes

early on necessitated fewer conflicts in the latter part of the century as it amassed more power. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the mid-point of the century also marks the moment when masculinity was most unstable, since middle-class and aristocratic men were vying for power, with each group claiming that it was more masculine than the other, especially because it exhibited more nationalistic fervor. All of these wars and uprisings required the ideological support of the general populace as well as a large number of soldiers and sailors to serve the nation. As Linda Colley describes the situation, “All of these major wars . . . challenged the political and/or religious foundations upon which Great Britain was based, and threatened its internal security and its commercial and colonial power. Consequently, its rulers were obliged, over and over again, to mobilize not just the consent, but increasingly the active cooperation of large numbers of Britons in order to repel the recurrent danger from without” (4).

Recruitment was not always easy, as evidenced by the need to press-gang men into the service, and this military need helped legitimize female soldiers.⁵ Female soldiers certainly did not comprise the majority of Britain’s army and navy, but as Dianne Dugaw notes, what is most surprising about them is their “frequency, not only in fiction but in history as well” (v). Julie Wheelwright contends that, “The long years of war in the eighteenth century when naval press gangs roamed Britain produced more than 100 female warriors who surfaced in more than 1,000 variations of Anglo-American ballads” (8). It is impossible to know how many women were soldiers, since those who passed successfully would not have drawn attention. We only know of those who revealed their sex or had their sex revealed by others, such as those in the narratives, in newspaper

⁵ Although the majority of men who served Britain were volunteers, press-gangs and the resistance to them (in the form of riots) were not uncommon. See Colley, chapter seven (especially 303).

accounts, and in ballads.⁶ Nevertheless, the female soldier was popular enough that Sadler's Wells Theatre included a performance of Hannah Snell carrying out military exercises in uniform. Dugaw argues that performances such as these illustrate "just how widely familiar the [female soldier] heroine was by 1800" (34). Indeed, the female soldier, as subject of narratives and ballads and as personage, was well-known to eighteenth-century Britain.

Britons were also familiar with female soldiers through queen Boadicea, who was an important part of Britain's history made popular in the eighteenth century through a narrative and a play about her performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. The narrative, *A short history of Boadicea, the British queen* (1754), details Boadicea's role in battles against the Roman Empire. Although the narrative was published after the female soldier narratives, the story of Boadicea dates to 60 AD. Boadicea is an important figure in British history because she led an assault against the Romans in Camulodunum (now Colchester) and in Londinium (now London). In the first battle, the narrative states that she inspired her fellow soldiers by telling them that, "it was the custom of the Britons to be led by women" (21). Spurred by the Romans' raping of her daughters and their seizure of land left to her by her husband, Boadicea is said to have led her army in the killing of some 70,000 Romans in the battle of Londinium. Although none of the narratives I discuss mention Boadicea, she was well-known to Britons (William Cowper writes an ode to her in 1782, "Boadicea, an Ode"), and, like the female soldier narratives,

⁶ Fraser Easton discusses accounts of female soldiers that appeared in the *General Advertiser*, the *Daily Advertiser*, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and the *Annual Register*. See pages 145-146. Other female soldier narratives include *The Female Review: Or, Memoirs of an American Young Lady* (1797), *The Surprising Life and Adventures of Maria Knowles* (1798), *The Intrepid Female: Or, Surprising Life and Adventures of Mary-Anne Talbot, otherwise John Taylor* (1820), and *The life and surprising adventures of blue-eyed Patty, the valiant female soldier* (1800).

the narrative and legend of Boadicea links female warriors to nationalism and patriotic pride. Thus, the female soldier narratives do not arise as a wholly new phenomenon for Britons. They are part of a history of female warriors dating back centuries.

Awareness of female soldiers also spread through other media, such as the warrior women ballads. These ballads became popular in the seventeenth century and continued to be popular throughout the eighteenth century. Most of these ballads, which Dianne Dugaw refers to as “hit-songs,” adhere to conventionalized forms in which the heroine follows a husband or lover into the service and proves to be courageous and valiant in war. In the end, she reunites with her male lover and returns to female attire. These ballads, which sing the praises of real and fictional women, were sold as songsheets, chapbooks, and broadsides. The ballads’ popularity began to wane, though, at the beginning of the nineteenth century when, according to Dugaw, the ballads begin to, “depict a restrained heroine whose idealized delicacy both of body and spirit actually works against both the epic reach of the motif and viability of the masquerade itself” (67). Since female gender roles at the end of the century linked femininity to domestic duties, a woman who left home to fight abroad was no longer heroic; she was deviant. This shift in gender norms parallels the decreasing popularity of the warrior women ballads. All of these phenomena, wars, ballads, shifts in gender norms, occurred in a cultural and political milieu that facilitated the development of the female soldier narratives. Like their ballad counterparts, the female soldier narratives sold well and sustained their greatest popularity at the mid-point of the century.

Christian Davies

Just as the ballads rely on common tropes and exaggerated depictions of women warriors' feats in battle, the female soldier narratives use a conventional structure to tell their story. One of the most compelling aspects of this structure is the way in which the authors manipulate truth and fiction to further their political goals. This is certainly the case with the anonymous *The Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies*. The narrative, published by Richard Montagu, purports to be "taken from her [Davies'] own mouth . . . And known to be true by Many who were engaged in those great Scenes of Action," but we have no way of verifying that claim. According to Dianne Dugaw's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Davies was a real person, but it is unclear how much of the narrative is true: "[The text] clearly mixes, in an ultimately undeterminable ratio, elements of fact with legends and motifs conventional in early modern popular ballads and prose narratives about masquerading heroines" (344). Whether any or all of the Montagu's text is true is to some degree irrelevant, since the text employs certain narrative conventions that appear in the other female soldier narratives I discuss. Furthermore, the text was very popular; thus, its effect within the popular imagination of mid-eighteenth-century readers is not mitigated by its veracity or fictionality. One thing we do know about the text is that it was not published during Davies' lifetime; she lived from 1667-1739. Rather, it was first published in 1740 at the height of female soldiers' popularity and after Davies' true life fades, making it easier for the narrator to construct the text as propaganda. Thus, its publication at the mid-point of

the century, when Britain was engaged in so many military campaigns, seems to be no mere coincidence.⁷

The Montagu text of Christian Davies' life presents and legitimizes her masculinity through the lens of her service to Britain. The title page itself calls attention to her time in the military, noting that she fought, "Under King William and the Late Duke of Marlborough, In the Quality of a Foot Soldier and Dragoon, [and] Gave many signal Proofs of an unparallell'd Courage and personal Bravery." The narrative lives up to its title by painstakingly documenting all of the battles Christian Davies fought, and, in this way, has much in common with the narrative of Hannah Snell's life. Unlike Snell's narrative, however, Davies' narrative is written in the first person, which has the effect of seeming to grant her more agency.⁸ The text reads as if Davies were presenting the story directly, erasing the amanuensis implied by the title phrase, "taken from her own mouth." As a result, Davies appears to provide her own explanation for her masculinity and her discomfort with femininity, for her interest in martial activities, and for her motivations for wooing women. This first-person narrative juxtaposes the preface and the bookseller's note to the reader, which appears only in the second edition. Davies' first person story legitimizes her masculinity but warns female readers not to imitate her heroic action. These textual discrepancies represent the conflicted sense of masculinity in her narrative as well as the vexed understanding of precisely what constitutes masculinity in the eighteenth century, if not a male body. Davies' text illustrates that masculinity is not relegated only to those with male bodies, nor even to those who pass as

⁷ Because the female soldier ballads had been popular since the seventeenth century, it is likely that Montagu's text would have sold just as well had it been published earlier.

⁸ Because this text is narrated in the first person, and in order to avoid confusion when I will discuss the ancillary texts, I will attribute the narration to Davies.

men, since Davies proves her masculinity without the accoutrements of masculinity, such as clothes, weapons, etc. At times, Davies performs masculinity even without masquerading as a man.

Davies' story begins as many female soldier narratives do, presenting her childhood as evidence for some kind of early masculinity. As an adult reflecting back on her childhood, Davies explains her adult masculinity by linking it to a very early interest in male occupations and by eschewing any interest in typical female pastimes. Thus, Davies, as narrator, deliberately positions her masculinity as an organic part of her identity. She says of her early education, "I had patience, indeed, to learn to read, and become a good needle-woman, but I had too much mercury in me to like a sedentary life, the reason that I was always at the farm to assist my mother; this I did as much through inclination as duty, being delighted with a country life, it indulging to [sic] my love of ramping [sic], and the pleasure I took in manly employments" (239-40). Davies asserts that her masculinity was not a simply a choice, or "duty," but rather something more biological, an "inclination." This formulation of gender identity seeks to naturalize her masculinity and construct a linear path progressing toward a coherent adult identity. In other words, she reflects upon specific events or behaviors in her childhood and cites them as evidence of an early masculine identity. Thus, her gender appears more normative if it has been there since childhood or even birth.

Davies as narrator normalizes her masculinity by drawing upon an ancient belief, still present in the eighteenth century, that all compounds were derived from five elementary principles of which mercury was one. Mercury was thought to indicate

sprightliness or volatility,⁹ so having “too much mercury” suggests she was predisposed to masculine behavior: “ramping” and “manly employments.” This connection between activity and masculinity also extended to a belief that too much activity, which generates “vital heat,”¹⁰ could initiate a sex change from female to male. According to Thomas Laqueur, this idea persisted as long as the one-sex model, which was displaced by the two-sex model sometime in the eighteenth century.¹¹ As evidence of this belief in sex change by vital heat, Laqueur cites Ambroise Paré’s story of a woman who acquires male genitalia through too much activity: “So puberty, jumping, active sex, or something else whereby ‘warmth is rendered more robust’ might be just enough to break the interior-exterior barrier and produce on a ‘woman’ the marks of a ‘man’” (127). Thus, while Davies’ activity or “manly employments” mark her behavior as masculine, her masculinity can also be a product of her activity. According to eighteenth-century beliefs, it is difficult to determine which came first, her masculinity or her activity but either way, her masculinity reads as an intrinsic part of her identity. Either it was there from birth or it naturally sprang forth in her childhood; identifying a biological or early childhood cause for her masculinity creates an appealing narrative. Davies’ natural masculinity makes her a safe heroine. She did not learn masculinity or homoeroticism from another masculine woman, nor will she indoctrinate other women.

⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*

¹⁰ The idea that men had more “vital heat” than women dates back to Galen’s theory in the second century A.D., which claimed that women were essentially men who had less heat. This lack of heat prevents their genitals from extending outside the body, as men’s do. Women, according to this one-sex model, were simply imperfect versions of men; women were not viewed as a separate sex, until the two-sex model became popular sometime in the eighteenth century (Laqueur 4).

¹¹ Laqueur does not locate the shift from the one to two-sex model at a specific moment in the century, in part because the shift in belief was incremental within the general populace.

The ease with which Davies performs masculinity is juxtaposed to her discomfort with performing femininity. The few feminine acts she engages in are cooking and laundering her husband's clothes, but these activities occur only after her sex has been revealed and so that she could remain in the military. The following passage is the only other exception, and here she is so uncomfortable with femininity that ironically she sounds as if she were a man cross-dressed as a woman. She describes a hoop-skirt that was given to her as a gift from her benefactor:

One day [she] gave me a hoop-petticoat, a machine I knew not how to manage; and no wonder, for I never had one on before, and I believe it requires as much dexterity to exercise as a musket; however I was resolved, since it came at such an easy rate, to show away in it, and accordingly, wanting something of a brazier, I put on my hoop, which made me fancy myself in a go-cart, used for children when they begin first to feel their legs. I could not help laughing at the figure I made; but my finery, which at my setting out was the subject of my mirth, occasioned me, before I returned, both pain and confusion. In Knave's-acre, the footpath being narrow, I thrust against a post, which made the other side of my hoop fly up. I, who had never been hooped before, imagined it was some rude fellow thrusting his hands up my coats, and thinking silyly to revenge the insult, threw my stick back without looking behind me, and gave my left hand, I carried on my wound, which has been always open, such a blow, that I could not help crying out. I turned about, but could see nobody but some apprentices, who came about me at my roaring, and set up a loud laughter at the awkward management of

my hoop, which I heartily cursed, with its inventor, and made off, vexed and ashamed at becoming the sport of boys. (407)

In discussing something that should come quite naturally to her as a woman, wearing a skirt, Davies describes this whole event as something entirely foreign to her. She makes it anything but a naturally feminine event by comparing it to something masculine, firing a musket. Being feminine and behaving like a woman are not natural events. Instead, femininity is something that is both artificial, aided by a “machine,” a hoop, and something that one learns, such as a child learning to walk; it is something that Davies has yet to learn and finds confusing. While masculinity is presented as a natural, organic part of her self, femininity is an artificial construct—no more natural to her than it would be to a man. Indeed, when she feels most vulnerable as a woman (fearing a man has put his hands under her skirt), she responds not by calling for help, a typical female response (in the eighteenth century), but rather by attacking her presumed assailant, a typical masculine response. In constructing her masculinity as natural and femininity as unnatural, Davies legitimizes her masculinity.

Having established and legitimized the cause of her masculinity by an appeal to nature, Davis provides numerous examples of her masculinity, including events in which she surpasses the masculinity of men. As Davies relates these events, she often does so with such nonchalance that it makes her actions seem all the more courageous because they appear to require little effort from her. One such event occurs amidst a battle, when no one will help a fellow soldier who has been wounded. With little concern for her own safety, Davies sweeps in and saves his life: “The next day, a drum of our regiment went into a very dangerous place to ease nature . . . when he was buttoning up his breeches, a

cannon-ball took off both of his arms. The place where he rashly exposed himself, was so very dangerous, that not a man would venture to go to his assistance. I ran, therefore, and carried him off to a surgeon” (342). Although the use of the word “man” here surely connotes “person,” it nevertheless implies an interesting interpretation. To Davies, it is obvious that no “man” would be brave enough to save this soldier, so it is incumbent upon her, a cross-dressed woman, to save him. Her sense of duty and her fearlessness are evident in the way that she follows the statement that “no man would venture to go to his assistance” with an immediate “*I ran, therefore*” (italics mine). In the face of danger, when no man is up to the job, Davies demonstrates a masculinity that surpasses her male counterparts’ masculinity. While she performs a sort of compulsory masculinity, the “real” men stand idly by, further suggesting that Davies’ masculinity emanates from some internal drive, rather than simply from putting on male clothes. This passage also seems to suggest an amusing fear of castration. The phrase, “The place where he rashly exposed himself,” suggests both exposure to enemy fire and exposure of the man’s genitals. As he comes under fire, his genitals become the “dangerous place” where “no man would venture.” His arms are blown off, but the text implies that the amputation could as easily have been of his exposed genitals. Davies, having no fear, or no fear of castration, is the only one who will come to his aid. Without this liability (the fear of castration), Davies is able to perform masculinity more competently than any other man in her regiment. Here, the best man is clearly—in a very corporeal way—not a man at all, and this incident raises the question of just what constitutes masculinity, if not a penis or male body. This issue will be raised again in the discussion of a urinary instrument that Davies uses, which I will discuss later.

In another incident, Davies again proves that she is more masculine than a man, when she fights for the honor of a young woman. In this incident, she has secured the attention of a burgher's daughter, who was harassed by a sergeant in Davies' regiment. After the woman is almost raped by the sergeant, she seeks out the cross-dressed Davies and asks Davies to defend her honor. Davies chides the higher-ranking officer by telling him that he does not deserve to wear a uniform, and then she challenges him to a duel by calling his masculinity into question: "If you have as much courage in the face of a man, as you have in assaulting defenceless women, go with me instantly" (266). Davies clearly frames this as a dispute between two men, the more masculine of whom will prove the victor. In fact, this whole dispute revolves around Davies' maligned masculinity, while the woman's honor is of somewhat secondary importance. She feels that the sergeant ignored her claims to the woman, who "for aught he knew [was] my wife" (265). She engages in a sword fight with him that she handily wins and notes that her wounds were "slight, as [she] was the aggressor" (266), while the sergeant was taken to a hospital where it was thought he was mortally wounded. Davies is sent to prison for assaulting an officer, but is pardoned by King William when the woman's father learns of what Davies did for his daughter and petitions for her release. The better man here is obviously Davies because she was not only stronger and won the fight, but her honor and the honor of the woman were restored and validated by the king. Although Davies surely refers to herself as a man here because she is cross-dressed, this reference reflects the degree to which she identifies as masculine and the degree to which she feels equal and even superior to men, particularly in acts that call upon displays of masculinity.

Davies' displays of masculinity, however, are not based on or solely contingent upon the trappings of masculinity: clothes, swords, etc. Rather, Davies exhibits an aggressive masculinity even when she is not cross-dressed and even when she is not on the battlefield. After she has left the service and is living with her husband, she has an encounter with her landlord and a carpenter in which she takes great pleasure in inflicting pain upon both of them as well as shaming and scaring them. Davies describes the clash with the landlord in the following way: "he gave me a blow. I never received one before with pleasure; but I own the stroke afforded me a particular satisfaction, as it gave me an opportunity to pommel the rascal with impunity, and I did not let it slip; for I flew at him and beat him unmercifully, as I was greatly superior to him in strength" (404). She then describes the fight with the carpenter: "I, having seized the carpenter, struck up his heels, and falling upon him with my knee in his stomach, I let him rise, but it was to knock him down again . . . he often endeavoured to get clear of me, and follow the example of [the landlord], which he did as soon as he could, and showed he had better heels than hands" (404). This scene is both amusing and disturbing in its representation of her hyper-masculinity. Again, Davies serves as a model of masculinity, while the "real" men cower or run away in fear and shame for having been beaten up by a woman. By reveling in beating the men and even in being beaten, Davies compensates for her lack of a male body, aware that eighteenth-century readers might doubt her masculinity. This scene, though, suggests that her masculinity is not merely a response to the demanding circumstances of war, but rather is part of her everyday life. To be aggressive, to be masculine, appears to be a kind of instinctual response for her. It is not a response that

always exists instinctually or internally in men, but it can exist in women, despite their lacking a male body.

The fact that Davies performs masculinity with such aplomb and bravado, even when she is in women's clothes, presents a compelling challenge to naturalized notions of masculinity, which is no doubt why a cautionary preface was attached to the text. This prefatory intervention stands in sharp contrast to the identity Davies constructs of herself because it explains her masculinity as a product of time spent in the military: "By her having been long conversant in the camp, she had lost that softness which heightens the beauty of the fair, and contracted a masculine air and behaviour, which however excusable in her, would hardly be so in any other of her sex" (237). In other words, there is nothing intrinsically masculine about her; rather she learned to be masculine because of her environment. In constructing Davies' masculinity as a product of martial circumstances, the preface disavows her claims to a biological masculinity, reifying the natural connection between maleness and masculinity. Interestingly, although the preface also articulates a concern with Davies' masculinity, it makes an exception for her—"however excusable in her." Thus, her masculinity is excusable because it was a product of her environment and that environment just happened to be one that served Britain. Yet, this exception for Davies is for her only and does not extend to all women, suggesting that other women should not follow her example. This compels us to question for whom she would serve as an example. And the answer seems quite clear—she is model of masculinity for men.

As a model for normative masculinity, Davies illustrates through repetition, the text is replete with examples of her masculinity, what constitutes masculinity. To some

degree, these excessive reports of her strength, courage, and masculinity reflect a self-consciousness that, as a woman, she must outperform men in proving her masculinity. But excessive accounts of masculine feats are not limited to masculine women and can also be found in texts about men. The repetition of masculine acts is not linked to her lack of a male body, but rather to her gender performance and the need to prove masculinity through constant repetition. As I discussed in chapter one, Judith Butler argues in “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” that gender is non-referential and does not emanate from some inner, natural core. Furthermore, she argues, in order to maintain the notion that heterosexuality is “natural,” it is necessary for gender and gender roles to be continuously performed: “Precisely because it is bound to fail, and yet endeavors to succeed, the project of heterosexual identity is propelled into an endless repetition of itself. Indeed, in its efforts to naturalize itself as the original, heterosexuality must be understood as a compulsive and compulsory repetition” (21). The same is true of Davies’ gender performance. Like her male counterparts who are also quick to duel or display their masculinity, Davies enacts a compulsory performance of masculinity aimed at naturalizing her gender. Yet, because there is no “natural” masculinity, Davies is required again and again to prove her masculinity through battle and through wooing women. Courting women is an essential part of her performance of masculinity because masculinity implies heterosexuality.

Although Davies’ courting of women functions as a necessary aspect of her gender performance, the text provides us with unconvincing explanations for her courtship of women. Davies woos several women and though she does not marry any of them, she does propose to one of them. She proposes to the burgher’s daughter, the

woman for whom she fought. She claims to love this woman: “taking her in my arms, I told her, that she had heightened the power of her charms by her virtue; for which I should hold her in greater esteem, but could not love her better, as she had already engrossed all my tenderness” (264). Despite this professed love, in the very next sentence Davies qualifies her sentiments and says, “I was now fond of the girl, though mine, you know, could not go beyond a platonic love” (264). Since the narrative presents her courting of the burgher’s daughter as an imitation of men’s flirtations with women, Davies says she replicates all the “tender nonsense” that men had used on her, and since she quickly retreats from her declarations of love for the woman, the narrative provides a simple explanation of Davies’ behavior for the reader, who is directed to infer that her interest in women is only part of her performance of masculinity. Or, as Davies herself says, she flirts with the woman only to amuse herself: “In my frolics, to kill time, I made my addresses to a burgher’s daughter” (263). The transitory nature of these flirtations (she is only doing it to “kill time”) is what, according to Emma Donoghue, makes Davies’ behavior permissible: “It is as if wearing men’s clothes gives certain women the temporary right to woo women, so long as the game ends when they put their dresses back on” (96). But Davies removes the threat of becoming a female husband well before she returns to female dress by suggesting that she ask the woman’s father for her hand in marriage, knowing her father would object because of their class difference.¹² The woman protests, saying that her father would never allow it and Davies conveniently escapes marriage: “This answer I expected, and, indeed, my being very sure that her father would not consent, was the reason why I proposed speaking to him” (267).

¹² When Davies asks the woman if she could ask her father for her hand in marriage, the woman replies: “My father! cried she; you cannot imagine a rich burgher will give his daughter to a foot soldier” (267).

Davies, therefore, is safely removed from becoming a female husband, and the explanation is apparently sufficient.¹³

If these explanations were not sufficient, such scenes would then be read as homoerotic and would compromise the nationalist function of the text, since homosexuality is not a part of Britain's national identity. Moreover, readers would be forced to reconsider the dynamics of heterosexuality: what does it mean that a woman can court another woman better than a man can? What does it mean that another woman would prefer a cross-dressed woman to a man? (another man competes with Davies for the burgher's daughter). Is there no inherent masculinity in men that attracts women?

The text inscribes the response of its male readers to these issues through depicting how other men in the text react to Davies. In one instance, Davies woos a woman away from another soldier to spite him because he insulted her. Although at this point she is no longer passing as a man, and is pregnant, she dons her husband's clothes temporarily, solely for the purpose of wooing the woman, and asks the woman to marry her; the woman consents. The soldier who was courting the woman follows Davies after she leaves the woman's house and challenges her to a duel. As Davies and the soldier draw their swords, her husband comes upon them and, calling her by name, asks her what she is doing. The soldier realizes who she is and the scene unfolds in the following way: "[The soldier] put up his sword, laughed heartily, and taking me by the hand, said, Let us be friends for the future; I am glad I have not a more dangerous rival; come Kit, I'll give you and your husband a bottle and a bird for dinner" (349). Even though Davies is

¹³ Although we have no reception history, the second edition of Davies' narrative includes a preface that addresses questions and concerns readers had. Davies' courting of women is not among these issues, though, as I will discuss later, the preface does include a discussion of a phallic instrument.

known amongst her fellow soldiers for her acts of bravery in combat, for having beaten up several men, and for having wooed the burgher's daughter away from another man, this soldier is not threatened by her, as either a physical or a sexual competitor, because she is a woman. He apologizes for his affront to her, and the dispute is settled happily over dinner. Central to this scene is the revelation of Davies' sex and the fact that such knowledge, for the soldier, eliminates the threat that she poses to his masculinity: "I am glad I have not a more dangerous rival." Davies could be a very dangerous rival because she is adept at wooing women and fighting to keep them, but her signification as a man is emptied by her inability to consummate the relationship, or so the man assumes. Once her disguise is revealed, her sex is exposed, her masculinity is eliminated (in this man's perception), and he no longer perceives her as a threat because he assumes that Davies courted the woman only to humiliate him, not because she was actually interested in the woman.

For the male reader, a similar situation likely unfolds. Although he reads about a cross-dressed woman who fights more courageously than male soldiers and who successfully woos women, halfway through the narrative Davies reminds the reader of her true gender when she returns to female dress and serves as a cook, laundress, wife, and mother. While male readers may initially perceive her masculinity as threatening, in the end she is revealed to them as a woman who performs gender-appropriate tasks and who chooses men as romantic interests by marrying three times. While the soldier only discovers her sex by accident and then only after risking a duel, readers know from the outset that the person they are reading about is a woman and, therefore, not a "dangerous rival." In her discussion of Davies' wooing of the burgher's daughter, Theresa

Braunschneider argues that both the people in Davies' text and her readers share a common knowledge, which forecloses homoerotic readings: "The moment of expressing fondness for the girl is the moment of reliance upon a common body of knowledge about how gender and sexuality work together: 'you know' that two women cannot go beyond platonick love; presumably 'you know' as well what it would mean if they did. The evocation of impossibility suggests this is something so fundamentally true and so universally understood that it does not even have to be named" (81). This same common body of knowledge functions here for the soldier with whom Davies duels and for male readers. Whether they (the readers) know she is a woman from the beginning or whether they (the men in the text) discover her gender accidentally, the effect is the same: they know she is a woman and therefore they know she does not pose a threat to heterosexuality, apparently.

I qualify that last claim because Davies does not threaten heterosexuality *if* we assume that a lack of a sexual relationship with the burgher's daughter eliminates the homoerotic possibilities of their relationship. But if we consider desire as inclusive of emotional intimacy that does not necessarily require physical intimacy, then this scene reads differently. Even though Davies claims she was not romantically interested in the girl, she then says that she tried "to take an indecent freedom" with her. Davies apparently assumes the girl would expect a man (Davies is cross-dressed) to express his desire through sexual acts. But the girl rebuffs her, telling Davies, "If [Davies] had dishonourable designs upon her, she was not the man [the girl] loved; [the girl] was mistaken, and had found the ruffian, instead of the tender husband she hoped in [Davies]" (264). Davies responds by stating that the girl's desire to maintain an emotionally

intimate relationship, exclusive of sex acts, is what makes her love the girl: [I] could not love her better” and “she had already engrossed all my tenderness” (264). Once Davies’ desire for the girl is awakened by the girl’s rejection of physical intimacy, Davies immediately assumes that her desire cannot go any further. Given the way the text constructs Davies as a model of masculinity, it follows that Davies would assume that courting a woman must include an attempt at sex, that desire can only be expressed through sex, and that sex with a woman necessitates a male body. However, the text also suggests that love between women does not necessitate sex acts or at least an acknowledgement of them. Indeed, in this instance, the girl’s desire for emotional intimacy, not sex, appears to be the catalyst for Davies’ desire for the girl.

That Davies may have desired women appears to be a concern in the second edition of *The Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies*. This edition includes a note from the Bookseller to the Reader that suggests either the publisher was concerned about readers’ responses or readers had actually expressed some concern about the potentially homoerotic nature of Davies’ encounters with women. The subject of this note regards a “urinary instrument,” which Davies strapped on by means of a leather harness, so that she could more convincingly perform masculinity by urinating standing-up. The note does not call this instrument a dildo, but her possession of a phallic urinary instrument *is* an obvious concern of the bookseller’s, since she could have used it as a penis. The self-conscious tone of the note is evident from the beginning when it states that certain passages were omitted from the first edition because Davies died before she could revise it. But, we are told, conveniently her daughter “reclected and communicated to the Bookseller” the omitted passages to render the history “complete,” suggesting that

readers should not assume any detail of Davies' life was kept from them. The note goes on to say that, "it may be necessary to gratify the Curiosity of many, who, as we understand, have been greatly puzzled to conceive how a Woman could so long perform a certain natural Operation [urinating]." In its attempt to persuade readers of her masculinity, the explanation opens itself up to another question much more troubling than how she urinated: might she have used this penis-shaped instrument for another "natural Operation" as well?

The explanation for how she acquired and parted with the urinary instrument does not entirely allay fears that she could have used it for sexual purposes. The note claims that Davies acquired the instrument from another female soldier, who accidentally left it behind at Davies' house while serving with Davies' father. According to the note, the discovery of this urinary instrument "determined her, in Imitation of that Heroine, to put on Men's Apparel." Various readings of the significance of the urinary instrument range from empty signifier to a dildo. Julie Wheelwright argues that the device is evidence of Davies' "artificial" masculinity because it is not a real penis, and only a real penis is symbolic of masculinity: "Since sexuality was understood only in phallic terms this claim implied that Davies could only adopt her masculine identity like some clumsy, mechanical device. She acquired the symbolic gun and trousers—transformative accoutrements—but since only a phallus could bring another woman the 'real' sexual pleasure of penetration the female soldier's flirtations were rendered harmless and pleasingly erotic in the popular imagination" (59-60). Emma Donoghue directly responds to Wheelwright, arguing that "If Christian Davies could strap on a urinary instrument she could strap on a dildo too, and readers could only find her flirtations with

women totally ‘harmless’ if they shut their ears to all the stories about dildos that were circulating in the ‘popular imagination’” (94). Wheelwright conflates gender identity with sexual identity and penis with phallus such that she ignores the possible signification, in terms of gender identity, that such a urinary instrument could have. Donoghue, on the other hand, sees the dildo-like object’s multiple possibilities.

The possession of a phallus, such as the urinary instrument, could certainly allow Davies to have sex with women, and given that she already performs masculinity convincingly, passing as a man sexually likely would not be difficult for her. As for whether or not this urinary instrument is “harmless,” we need only look to the way in which the author discusses it: “But the Reader must excuse our not giving a formal Description, of this notable Engine, to which the World is indebted for two such courageous Amazons; being cautious of relating any Thing that might offend Nice ears, or propagate the Humour of female Knight Errantry.” The author recognizes the potentially salacious nature of the urinary instrument, but this is not the only reason for curtailing a discussion of it. In foreclosing a further discussion of the device, the note reflects an anxiety that such a discussion might encourage other women to be masculine or cross-dress—a fear that echoes the warning in the Preface. Thus, this urinary instrument is not “harmless.” Moreover, the note concludes by stating that Davies no longer possesses the device and “sold the Toy,” which she later wished she had kept to show as a curiosity. By referring to the urinary instrument as a toy, the text diminishes the significance of the object, suggesting that it is a mere plaything of no particular significance. Through its circumlocutions attempting to downplay the significance of the urinary instrument, the text asks readers to believe that Davies did not use the device for

sex, and that if Davies did not have sex with women, readers should not question whether Davies desired any of them. Even if eighteenth-century readers believed that desire and sex were inextricably linked and did not question Davies' courting of the burgher's daughter and other women, this revelation of the urinary instrument likely gave some readers pause and left them questioning whether a male body was necessary to perform masculinity.

This is indeed a very troubling prospect because it suggests that masculinity can be put on and taken off at will by anyone. Such a radical possibility would seem to make Davies' text controversial, yet it was not. What helps to temper the troubling gender questions this text raises is Davies' service to Britain and the overtly nationalistic tone of the text. Although Davies was Irish and although her father fought on behalf of James II, her loyalty lies squarely with Britain and William III. Davies attempts to explain her father's Jacobitism by claiming that he felt a "duty incumbent on him to support his lawful sovereign" (241). In other words, her father was merely abiding by the law rather than supporting the Jacobite cause. Davies tells us her mother explicitly disliked the Catholic king's ascension and "wept bitterly for some time" after she learned that James II had become king. If Davies' familial history seemed to align her with Britain's enemy, she insists on her support for the hero of the Glorious Revolution: "I offered him [an officer] my service to go against the French, being desirous to show my zeal for his majesty king William, and my country" (258). As the story progresses, it is clear that Davies takes great pride in fighting and serving Britain. While her initial motivation for cross-dressing was to find her husband, who had been press-ganged into the military, she soon forgets about her husband and does not think of him again until over a year later:

“As we lay quiet all the winter, my husband, whom the hurry of the war had in a manner banished, occurred to my memory, and I made what inquiry I could after him, but in vain; wherefore, I endeavoured, as I concluded him for ever lost, to forget him, as the melancholy the remembrance of him brought upon me, profited him nothing, while it consumed me. To do this, I had recourse to wine and company, which had the effect I wished, and I spent the season pretty cheerfully” (283-4). Although Davies says that she was “consumed” by her loss, she nevertheless is able to mourn the loss of her husband “cheerfully,” and she continues to cross-dress and fight, suggesting that regardless of her initial reasons for cross-dressing, she decided to continue to pass as a man because she enjoyed serving in the military and being one of the men.

Davies’ loyalty to Britain outstrips her relationship with her husband, whom she eventually discovers, and the joyous reunion is less eventful than she had previously suggested it would be. When she finally finds her husband, she tells him that she will pass as his brother and refuses to have sex with him, so that she will not become pregnant: “I told him after this, that notwithstanding the hardships I had gone through, and the wounds I had received, I had such a liking to the service, that I was resolved to continue in it [and] if ever he discovered me, I would forget he was my husband, and he should find me a dangerous enemy” (301). Not only does she dissolve the sexual bond with her husband, but she also promises to avenge him should he prevent her from continuing to serve. Even when her sex is discovered to her regiment, she finds a way to continue to serve in the military as a cook and reiterates her “strong inclination to the army” as her reason for continuing to pass as a man even after finding her husband (312). Davies’ devotion to the military wins her the respect and admiration of her peers, as well

as a pension for the twelve years that she served. Besides her oaths of loyalty to Britain, Davies also peppers her narrative with praise for King William, as a soldier, a leader, and as the rightful claimant to the throne: “The king, indeed, lost the battle with about sixteen thousand men . . . but he lost nothing in point of reputation. For Lewis XIV could not help giving him the praise of a great general and brave prince . . . and the prince of Conti, in a letter he wrote to his princess, said, that king William exposing himself with such heroic bravery as he did in this battle, deserved the quiet possession of a crown which he wore with so much glory” (261). Although Davies acknowledges that she did not observe William’s prowess on the battlefield because she was wounded (she heard of it from other soldiers), she nevertheless concludes the above passage with more detail of William’s skill as a leader and soldier. That Davies cites the French king’s admiration for his enemy (a dubious claim) is indicative of this text’s unmistakable nationalist polemics. This nationalist framework softens and perhaps even obscures Davies’ radical challenge to naturalized notions of masculinity, and eighteenth-century readers would find her far less threatening than female husbands.

Hannah Snell

The narrative of Hannah Snell’s life promotes a much more overtly nationalist agenda than Christian Davies’ narrative. Published at mid-century when Britain had fought two more wars and faced another Jacobite rebellion in the ten years since the publication of Davies’ narrative, *The Female Soldier’s* explicitly nationalist focus reflects the increasing need for soldiers and for national unity. *The Female Soldier* also more explicitly draws upon the tropes of warrior women ballads. There are many similarities between *The Female Soldier* and the broadside, *The Female Volunteer: or, an Attempt to*

make our Men Stand (1746). This broadside, accompanied by an illustration of a female soldier, was intended to be read on stage (after ballads were sung) by actress Peg Woffington, who appeared cross-dressed as a soldier. It urges women to join the military because men are not up to the task:

Well, if 'tis so, and that our Men can't stand,
'Tis Time we Women take the Thing in Hand.
Thus, in my Country's Cause I now appear,
A bold, smart, Kevenbulla'd Volunteer;
And really, mark some Heroes in the Nation,
You'll think this no unnat'ral Transformation:
For if in Valour real Manhood lies,
All Cowards are but Women in Disguise. (53)

While taunting men for not joining the military and not being manly, the broadside also suggests a more literal male impotence and female virility, as it bawdily urges women to “take the Thing in Hand.” Perhaps women would do so using a urinary instrument or other such device, but however they accomplished it, the broadside suggests that a penis is not the exclusive property of men. As the broadside goes on to praise heroic female soldiers, it also challenges naturalized notions of masculinity and femininity. It posits that masculinity, in fact even “Manhood,” lies not in one’s body but rather in one’s behavior or character traits, such as valour. Likewise, femininity or womanhood is not limited to women, since men’s behavior, cowardice, makes them women. Despite the seemingly radical claims *The Female Volunteer* makes regarding gender, it nevertheless maintains essentialist notions of gender; valor is associated with men, cowardice with

women. Thus, the *qualities* of gender, such as valour and cowardice are essentialized because they belong to a particular gender, but *gender* is performative, since both sexes can perform either gender. And when these lines were delivered by Peg Woffington, famous for her popular cross-dressed roles, such as Harry Wildair in Farquar's *The Constant Couple*, she visually represents the performative nature of gender, lending credence to *The Female Volunteer's* insistence that women can be just as manly as men, if not more so. *The Female Soldier* employs a similar strategy of shaming men into joining the military by suggesting that if a woman, Hannah Snell, can be valiant, surely men can be courageous and fight for Britain too.

As with Christian Davies' narrative, it is unclear how much of *The Female Soldier* accurately reflects Hannah Snell's life, but the broad outline of the text does appear to be true. Julie Wheelwright's entry for Snell in *The Dictionary of National Biography* confirms that Snell joined the marines in 1747 to fight against the French. Captain John Rozier's log notes that James Gray, Snell's alias, joined the *Swallow* in Portsmouth harbour, corresponding precisely to the narrative. She was also made an out-pensioner at the Royal Chelsea Hospital in London and is one of only two women to be buried there. One detail that is probably fictional is the claim that Snell was injured in her groin. Records confirm that she was indeed admitted to Cuddalore hospital, but rather than recovering from a wound to her groin, she was probably suffering from a disease, such as scurvy, which, as Wheelwright suggests, is how she was able to keep her sex a secret (no one needed to examine her groin for injury). Scholars conclude that *The Female Soldier* is largely factual based on medical and military records; however, the presentation of Snell's life is far from a bland recounting of her deeds. Rather, the text

quite explicitly manipulates the reader by presenting Snell's story with great pathos and an emphasis on the nationalist function of her service, which justifies her masculinity.

The first 1750 editions of *The Female Soldier* spawned several other editions and retellings of Snell's story, including a chapbook sold in Northampton, Massachusetts (1809), and a Dutch translation published only months after Robert Walker's abridged and expanded editions in 1750.¹⁴ There appear to be more editions of Snell's story than of any other female soldier narrative, and most of these retellings contain verbatim passages from the shorter first edition, though none presents Snell's story with the obvious nationalistic tone of Walker's edition. Other editions, such as the 1809 edition, diminish Snell's service to the nation in the very title of the text, *The Widow in Masquerade; or the Female Warrior; Containing a Concise Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell*. By beginning with *The Widow in Masquerade*, rather than with *The Female Soldier*, this edition emphasizes Snell's marital status and her heterosexuality, whereas the first edition focuses on Snell's military service. The change in the title of the 1809 edition may reflect the diminishing popularity of female soldiers in the nineteenth century and a need to market the text with a less controversial title. Furthermore, this edition lacks the intervening voice of the narrator (present in the Walker edition), who frequently stops the action to provide commentary on events and directs the reader toward a particular interpretation. Later editions seem to be interested in Snell as a curiosity, while Walker's editions emphasize nationalism.

Since Hannah Snell's accomplishments in battle are not much more significant than other female soldiers' successes, it seems likely that part of what made her text so

¹⁴ For more on the publication history see footnote forty two. See also Dianne Dugaw's introduction to *The Female Soldier*.

popular is the narrative presentation of her story, which elevates her to heroic status and presents the details of her life in an exciting, patriotic tone. While the narrative voice may be praising Snell, it nevertheless reflects anxiety about Snell's masculinity. In excessively praising her, the narrator seems to be compensating for her masculinity. The narrator's commentary explicitly directs the reader toward a specific response to Snell's actions, and this response is always one of praise for her morality and chastity (because she was able to preserve her chastity despite sharing beds with men), admiration for her courageous service to Britain, and dismissal of her homoerotic encounters. The narrator's careful framing of Snell's story and the directive moral commentary constructs Snell's masculinity as acceptable and even commendatory. By praising her bravery and courage in warfare, while simultaneously praising her for her virtue, the narrator positions Snell as both a model of masculinity *and* as a model of femininity. As I will discuss in detail later, the narrator links her masculinity to her femininity, making her masculinity appear to facilitate the preservation of her femininity. Despite this narrative presentation, however, the explanations for Snell's wooing of women are much less detailed than the descriptions of her feats in battle, and they are not wholly convincing. In a text laden with narrative intervention, the lack of attention paid to these scenes underscores the boundaries of female masculinity. Masculinity in women may be permissible when it serves Britain, but it is not acceptable when it extends to homoeroticism, and therefore the narrator dismisses these scenes because they do not conform to the text's nationalist agenda. If we accept the text on its own terms, the homoerotic scenes do appear to be platonic, but, as with Christian Davies' narrative, Snell seems to express desire for women, even if she does not engage in sex with them.

Snell's narrative opens with a note to the public that establishes the text's two fundamental concerns: her service to Britain and the preservation of her virtue. In detailing her service to Britain, the prefatory note emphasizes her masculinity, telling the reader that this "British heroine" served as both a soldier and sailor and that she received twelve wounds, "some of which were dangerous" (iv). We are also told that in her role as soldier and sailor she fought in the East-Indies against France for control of trade with India. Like Davies, Snell aided Britain's building of their empire, and her narrative not only praises her service but also implicitly promotes nationalism and imperialism. Additionally, the note makes clear its didactic purpose in promoting a femininity largely defined by chastity. In contrast to Davies' narrative, which cautions the reader from following Davies' example, Snell's narrative claims to be written for women: "it [the narrative] merits the Countenance and Approbation of every Inhabitant of this great Isle, especially the Fair Sex, for whom this Treatise is chiefly intended" (iii). By drawing attention to Snell's service to Britain and to her femininity, the narrator counterbalances her masculinity with these other concerns, making Snell a more acceptable heroine because, the narrator claims, she does not stray from normative gender roles. Thus, the note to the public guides the reader toward understanding her cross-dressing as acceptable because it served Britain and because Snell, underneath her male clothing, was still performing femininity. In this way, the narrator of Snell's text avoids the problematic presentation of masculinity evident in Davies' text, which required the explanatory and cautionary preface. Since the narrator of Snell's text emphasizes the preservation of her virtue and femininity *while* cross-dressed, Snell still maintains some

of her femininity. Consequently, readers realize that she would never have trouble wearing a hoop skirt, as Davies does.

The note to the public serves another important function: it introduces the reader to the narrator's overt intervention into the text. Rather than simply presenting the events of her life in a factual manner, the narrator includes his own thoughts about Snell. The note to the public serves as an affidavit, "in order to prevent the Publick from being imposed upon by fictitious Accounts" (iii). It claims that Snell herself related her story to the publisher, Robert Walker, and that she swore before the Lord Mayor to its veracity; it even includes a mark representing Snell's signature. Given that many eighteenth-century novels begin with such truth claims, which are obviously false (such as Richardson's claim that he merely found and edited Pamela's letters), this affidavit appears to be merely following a convention of some eighteenth-century texts.¹⁵ The affidavit ultimately draws attention not to the veracity of the text, but rather to its very constructed nature. Snell's story is not entirely fictitious, as Pamela's is, but this prefatory note suggests to contemporary readers, if not also to eighteenth-century readers, that *The Female Solider* may not be simply a story dictated by Snell to the publisher. Rather, it is a story that has been manipulated by the narrator to serve a specific political agenda.

The narrative itself begins by echoing the nationalistic tone of the note to the public, but it also frames Snell's story within the context of what the narrator perceives as a time of decreasing masculinity. This opening frame appears only in the first edition, and it is important in legitimatizing Snell's masculinity: "In this dastardly Age of the

¹⁵ Some eighteenth-century novels (published before Snell's narrative) that make truth claims are *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, *Roxana*, *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Tom Jones*. All purport to be either fact or a history and some claim to be taken directly from the mouth of the protagonist. The popularity of these texts and readers' awareness that they were not fact, but fiction, would have acquainted readers with this convention and, at the very least, made some readers suspicious of the factual content of Snell's narrative.

World, when Effeminacy and Debauchery have taken Place of the Love of Glory, and that noble Ardor after war-like Exploits, which flowed in the Bosoms of our Ancestors, genuine Heroism, or rather an Extraordinary Degree of Courage, are Prodigies among Men” (1). The opening line sets a nostalgic tone of a bygone era of masculinity when men sought out opportunities to prove their courage. It also places her story within the context of an age of decreased masculinity, yet it introduces Snell to the public as someone who should be celebrated for her masculinity. Furthermore, it essentially chastises men who have created this “dastardly Age” where effeminacy rather than masculinity reigns. During such an effeminate time, one of the more courageous soldiers is a woman not a man, and her feats in battle often surpass those of her male counterparts.

While Snell’s text is marked by moments when the narrative goads men into serving Britain, it is also distinguished by the narrator’s compensatory attempt to naturalize Snell’s otherwise unnatural masculinity, just as Davies’ text does. These moments in the text reflect the narrator’s concern with readers’ reception of Snell and the awareness that she is quite obviously performing a non-normative gender. After the opening note about the “Age of effeminacy,” the narrative mentions several male leaders whom the narrator believes were strong and successful. The text moves on to admiring courageous women and constructing a legacy of such women: “However, tho’ Courage and warlike Expeditions are not the Provinces by the World allotted to Women since the Days of the *Amazons*, yet the female Sex is far from being destitute of Heroism. Cleopatra headed a noble Army against Mark Anthony, the greatest Warrior of his Time” (2). Several more examples of women warriors follow this passage, which leads into the first mention of Snell. By situating Snell within a history of women warriors, the narrator

naturalizes her masculinity by suggesting that she is part of an already existing group of heroic, masculine women who fought for their countries. Thus, before the reader even knows anything of Snell, she has already been constructed as participating in an accepted and honorable tradition of women warriors.

The opening list of exemplary leaders and warriors discussed above is then used as a parallel to Snell and her family, who exemplify the kinds of heroic descendants the narrator refers to in the opening sentence. Snell's actions are attributed not only to her courage and patriotism but are also linked to a familial tradition of serving the nation, which the narrator claims was passed down to her: "she had the Seeds of Heroism, Courage and Patriotism transferred to her from her Ancestors" (3). The text then traces a brief genealogy, which focuses primarily on her grandfather, who fought in many battles for Britain. Although her father never served in the armed forces, the narrator excuses him for this, but still emphasizes his courage by instead stating that Snell's father followed a calling into trade: "[the] Father of our Heroine, was possessed of many excellent Gifts, particularly Courage, for which he was distinguished; yet never had an Opportunity of displaying his Bravery in the Field of Battle, his Genius leading him another Way, to wit, Trade" (5). The narrator also mentions that all nine Snell children, except one daughter, were either soldiers or sailors or married to them. By beginning her biography in this way, the narrator naturalizes Snell's service to the nation and thereby legitimizes her cross-dressing as a means of participating in a family tradition, instead making it appear to be something out of the ordinary. From the very beginning, the reader is encouraged to read Hannah Snell's cross-dressing as simply a means of serving Britain. By placing her cross-dressing in this context, the narrator deflects attention away

from the otherwise seemingly abnormal behavior (her cross-dressing and wooing women) and encourages readers to interpret her actions as patriotic.

Once the narrative finally progresses to telling Snell's story, it places Snell in a safe heterosexual and feminine context to counterbalance her masculinity. Her meeting and marriage to her husband James Summs (a sailor) is described as pure and moral: "this Acquaintance was gradually improved into a Familiarity, and this Familiarity soon created a mutual, though not a criminal Passion" (6). The narrator goes on to describe Snell's fidelity to her husband and his abandonment of her after he spent all their money on prostitutes while she was pregnant. In other words, Snell is depicted as a dutiful wife and mother who conforms to eighteenth-century expectations of women, including loyalty to her husband, even though he mistreated her. Each of the other editions also mentions this part of her story, though in far less detail. This first edition relies heavily upon pathos to secure readers' sympathy for Snell and therefore sets readers up for a sympathetic reading of her cross-dressing. This is especially evident in the motivation given by the narrator for Snell's decision to cross-dress: "she thought herself privileged to roam in quest of the Man, who, without Reason, had injured her so much; for there are no Bounds to be set either to Love, Jealousy or Hatred, in the female Mind" (7). Snell is not choosing to cross-dress because she wants to be a man, or wants to acquire the power that men have, or because she is attracted to women. In short, there is nothing about her cross-dressing, according to the narrator, that is linked to masculinity or her desire to be masculine. Instead, her cross-dressing derives from her femaleness. She is driven by her emotions, which for women have no bounds, and she is practically compelled, because she is a woman, to seek out her husband.

Though the narrator initially positions Snell within a safe feminine and heterosexual context, the next sentence in the narrative proves a bit vexing. It states, “That she might execute her Designs with the better Grace, and the more Success, she boldly commenced a Man, at least in her Dress, and no doubt she had a Right to do so, since she had the real Soul of a Man in her Breast” (7). This sentence suggests that there is something naturally masculine about her and that this masculinity is at the core of her being. In fact, this masculinity is such a legitimate part of her that she has a “Right” to cross-dress. In claiming that she has the “real Soul of a Man,” the narrator suggests a natural explanation for Snell’s bravery; only with the soul of a man inside her could she be so courageous. While such a justification does not quite equal the biological explanation given in Davies’ narrative, it nevertheless legitimizes Snell’s cross-dressing and naturalizes the link between men and bravery. Snell is not described here as a brave woman, but rather as a brave man—she is dressed like a man and has the soul of a man. Thus, bravery is still linked to men and masculinity, as we saw in the broadside, *The Female Volunteer*. Snell’s motivation for cross-dressing is part of a feminine biological drive to reunite with her husband, but her ability to pass successfully as a man stems from some inner masculinity, which enables her to perform courageous acts, like a man. By describing Snell’s behavior in this way, the narrator elides criticisms of her cross-dressing as unnatural by positing that her cross-dressing is only a means to serve a natural end and that in doing so, she serves Britain at the same time. Because the narrator presents her motivation as a force of nature that also benefits Britain, there is nothing nefarious about her masculinity. Furthermore, by preserving a natural link between men

and bravery, the narrator suggests that the courage required for warfare is naturally found in men.

These biological explanations for her cross-dressing are not present in other versions of Snell's story. Their presence in this edition further illustrates the intervening role of the narrator. *The Gentleman's Magazine* does not even suggest a reason for her cross-dressing, while the 1809 edition suggests that her cross-dressing would simply yield greater success in looking for her husband: "That she might execute her designs with the better grace and greater success, she boldly put on a suit of her brother in law" (4). Undoubtedly, the lack of an explanation in the above works is in part due to the brevity of the texts, but it may also be linked to a different agenda present in later editions. The 1809 edition is distinguished by its variant title *The Widow in Masquerade*, which de-emphasizes Snell's gender transgression. The explanation presented in the first edition is also more likely to be accepted by readers in 1750, when female soldiers and the ballads honoring them were extremely popular, than in 1809, when the ballads waned in popularity.

Having established Snell's legitimacy as a warrior and having positioned her within a heterosexual and feminine context, the narrator moves on to establish her paradoxically as a model of masculinity. Each time the narrator describes a scene when Snell is forced to fight, he concludes these passages by praising her ability to perform like a man. And on more than one occasion, he acknowledges that her bravery would be commendable even for a man, but it is all the more praiseworthy for her, since she is a woman. In one such passage, he states that the hardships she had to endure would test the fortitude of even the most heroic of men: "I say such Reflections and Gloomy

Prospects, prove the Cause of many such Hardships and Difficulties even in the most robust of the Masculine Gender, how much more in one of the tender Sex, who are afraid of Shadows, and shudders [sic] at the Pressage of a Dream” (15). Certainly this passage praises Snell’s abilities, but the underlying implication is that even though warfare requires enduring hardships and difficulties, men must face them or be outdone by a mere woman who is afraid of her own shadow. Although this passage does not quite chide men in the way that the broadside *The Female Volunteer* does, the effect is nevertheless similar in that both texts seek to challenge men to match the masculinity of the female soldier.

The narrator is also careful to situate Snell’s masculinity within a nationalist framework. In fact, her masculinity and the nationalist agenda of the text function in conjunction with each other, such that nationalism is virtually inseparable from masculinity: “though unexperienced in the Use of Arms, except in learning her Exercise, she behaved with an uncommon Bravery, and exerted herself in her Country’s cause” (14), and later “During this Space and Time, she behaved with the greatest Bravery and Intrepidity, such as was consistent with the Character of an English Soldier, and though so deep in Water, fired 27 Rounds of Shot, and received a Shot in her Groin, six Shots in one Leg, and five in the other” (15). In each of these passages, to be masculine is to be brave and to be brave is to embody the qualities of an *English* soldier. Passages such as these exemplify the narrator’s manipulation of Snell’s text to serve a political agenda. These passages also conflict with the prefatory claim that the text is chiefly intended for women, since women are not expected to take up arms, even if in service to Britain. Thus, these details seem more aimed at a male audience than a female one. Furthermore,

these passages deflect negative attention away from her cross-dressing because her performance of masculinity benefits Britain and does not usurp male privilege simply to serve herself.

Although the narrator praises Snell for her masculinity, these passages are tempered by other passages that evoke the reader's sympathy for Snell. By drawing attention to her status as a woman, the narrator deflects attention away from her masculinity and her cross-dressing so that she does not read as too masculine. Many of these episodes are followed by an exposition in which the narrator interrupts the narrative and reflects upon how difficult Snell's life has been and how harrowing her experiences as a soldier were. In one such passage, the narrator offers a "Digression" concerning Snell's sufferings:

What an Ocean of Troubles was this unfortunate Woman involved in? Behold her inwardly looking back on the past Vicissitudes of her Life, on an inhumane, ungrateful and faithless Husband . . . Behold her tempted by a vicious Man, to be aiding and assisting in carrying on an immodest and abominable Intrigue . . . Behold her tender Flesh cut and mangled by these Scourgings, and the Pains and Agonies she suffered. (9-10)

The narrator attempts to elicit pity from the readers by calling on them repeatedly to envision Snell as the sufferer, as the victim, and not as someone who is trying to benefit by passing as a man. By directing readers' attention toward Snell's suffering, the narrator can deflect attention away from her cross-dressing. The reader is called upon to view her as a woman—one who was treated poorly by men and whose "tender Flesh" was whipped—and not as a cross-dresser. The narrator's focus on her body and flayed flesh

is not unlike Fielding's description of Molly Hamilton at the end of *The Female Husband*. In both texts, the narrator draws attention to the exposed female body in such a manner that undoubtedly evokes pity, but is also quite likely read as titillating. And just in case the readers do not respond in the desired way, the narrator tells them how they should feel: "The Rehearsal of so many concurring Circumstances of Adversity, is sufficient to melt the most stoney Heart into a compassionate Tenderness for this our female Adventurer" (10). The narrator is very conscious of readers and their responses to Snell's story, and while some readers may not initially be sympathetic to Snell, eventually, they too will take pity on her.

The narrator's concern for how the audience might read Snell's masculinity is also evident in the frequent mention of how successful she was in passing as a man and why she should be praised for it. At several points in the text, the narrator lauds Snell's ability to pass as a man. It seems odd that the narrator would explicitly focus attention on her performance of masculinity, but each time the narrator does so, the reason for mentioning her successful performance is to highlight her purity and chastity. In the first reference to her success in passing, the narrator states:

Here is a Woman, and an *English* Woman, who, notwithstanding the many Dangers and Vicissitudes she underwent for near the Space of five Years, during her Travels, was never found out to be of the feminine Gender . . . This her Conduct, very surprizingly preserved her Virtue from becoming a Sacrifice to the Impetuosity of the carnal Delights of both her Superiors and Inferiors . . . if her Sex had been discovered, but she must have fallen a Victim to the loose, disorderly, and vitious Appetites of many on board. (30-31)

Her masculinity, then, is implicitly linked to her femininity. It was imperative that she pass as a man once she undertook the role of soldier because if she were discovered, she would likely be raped. Thus, by drawing attention to her masculinity (her success in passing as a man), the narrator is able to lead the audience toward reading her masculinity as necessary for the preservation of her virtue, instead of as evidence of unnatural behavior. Ironically, her successful performance of *masculinity* allows her to preserve one of the most fundamental aspects of her *femininity*, her chastity. The narrator's investment in Snell's chastity extends to an assertion that she maintained her disguise, even when her life was at stake. The narrator claims that she received a wound to her groin, which would have required her to make her sex known to the doctor, but she chose to fish the ball out of her groin and tend to her wound herself because "of two Evils, as she thought, this was the least, so rather chusing to have her Flesh tore and mangled than her Sex discovered" (36-37). However, according to Wheelwright's entry in the *DNB*, historians have argued that Snell was likely suffering from scurvy, which would have made it far easier for her to maintain her disguise. Although it is not clear which is the true account, Snell was more likely to have suffered from scurvy than from a wound to the groin that she treated herself. Claiming that Snell went to great lengths to preserve her sex so that she might continue to fight for Britain and preserve her chastity suits the text's political agenda.

While Snell's motivations for continuing to cross-dress after she discovers her husband is dead may be different from what the text tells us, the narrator clearly makes her virtue the focus of her story. He weaves a tale of sacrifice of her body for her country, while facing uncertain death or rape, all in pursuit of her husband. The emphasis

on Snell's service to her country echoes the patriotic frame that opened her narrative and establishes a thread present throughout the text. The narrator is clearly impressed with Snell's achievements as a female soldier and seems, again, to overstate the case a bit, illustrating the politics of the text:

Such an Adventure as this, is not to be met with in the Records of either ancient or modern Observations, therefore, for the Sake of the *British* Nation, ought to be recorded in Golden Characters on a Statue of Marble for succeeding Ages, to peruse with Admiration, that an *English* Woman should, *Amazon* like, not only enter herself upon the List in behalf of her Country at Home, but boldly and resolutely launch out into the most remote Corners of the Earth, upon enterprising and dangerous Adventures, the like never attempted before by any of her Sex.

(31)

In this passage, the narrator contradicts the text's opening frame, in which she was placed in context with a number of female warriors (including Cleopatra), by claiming that no other woman had attempted what she did. Were it not for the mention of the "*British* Nation" and references to imperialism, "remote Corners of the Earth," it would seem that this passage should be read ironically because it excessively praises Snell. But passages such as these illustrate the nationalist agenda of the text and the narrator's manipulation of Snell's story. Not only is Snell praised for her service to Britain, but Britain itself is implicitly praised for its military engagements around the world.

The text repeats its declaration of Snell as a hero(ine) for the entire nation—especially for women—to admire. After the details of Snell's story are complete, the narrator intervenes in the narrative again to ensure that readers do not miss the didactic

purpose of Snell's biography. The narrator compares Snell to Richardson's Pamela and finds that Snell is a far better role model for women because she is real and not fictional and because her virtue was more ardently tested than Pamela's was. Whereas Pamela had to fend off only one man, Snell had to contend with many as she risked the perils of war. But the narrator seems to be most influenced by the fact that Snell is a real person and Pamela is not: "She is not to be put in the Lists with the fictitious and fabulous Stories of a *Pamella*, [sic] &c. no, her Virtues have displayed their Lustre in the remotest Corner of the World, the once fam'd *Asia*" (40) and later, "This is a real *Pamella*; the other a counterfeit; this *Pamella* is real Flesh and Blood, the other is no more than a Shadow: Therefore let this our Heroine, who is the Subject of this History, be both admired and encouraged" (41). In comparing Snell to Pamela, the narrator chooses a familiar and revered icon of chastity and femininity and supplants Pamela with Snell. Snell's value over Pamela is linked to the fact that she is not a fictional character, and to the fact that her reputation for virtue extends to the far reaches of Britain's empire ("fam'd Asia"). Her virtue is described as a precious commodity exported to display Britain's value. In other words, Snell's virtue is an aspect of imperialism that both exemplifies Britain's superior culture and justifies the far reaches of the British Empire. Pamela is an English heroine, but Snell is a British heroine who represents the empire's greatness. Snell and her virtue serve as a model of femininity that she exports to other nations. Her virtue functions as a civilizing force that is an integral part of colonization and of the subjection of native cultures to British culture.

Despite the narrator's complex construction of Snell's gender, her sexuality receives less attention. While Snell is cross-dressed, she has several encounters with

women, and with each woman, the narrator seems uninterested in this part of Snell's adventures. He dismisses her encounters as part of her role as a man or as simply platonic because Snell does not engage in a physical relationship with any women (as far as we know). Like Davies' narrative, though, these scenes do express an emotional intimacy between Snell and the women she courts, which, I argue, opens up the possibility for reading these scenes as homoerotic. Snell's first encounter with a woman occurs when she comes to the aid of another woman whom a fellow soldier plans to rape. The soldier asks Snell to help him by acting "the Pimp," but instead Snell informs the woman of his plan. The woman is so grateful that she and Snell become intimate friends: "[Snell] warned her against the impending Danger; which Act of Virtue and Generosity in a Soldier, gained her the Esteem and Confidence of this young Woman, who took great delight in her Company; and seldom a Day passed but they were together, having cultivated an Intimacy and Friendship with each other" (8). If the narrator thinks there is anything strange about Snell's relationship with the woman, he does not articulate it. He simply views it as a "friendship," even though Snell is cross-dressed and even though her dedication to the woman results in Snell's being whipped five hundred times, which Snell does not regret because she saved the woman from a violent man. Emma Donoghue suggests that this presentation of the relationship glosses over the potential for it to be anything but platonic: "It is not clear what the writer thinks of this relationship. His approving tone and his use of words like 'Friendship' make it sound like a virtuous bond. Yet the woman is reported as being surprised by such generous behaviour 'in a Soldier,' which implies that she has no idea that Snell is female. Crossdressers' memoirs tend to

highlight scenes of discovery or revelation, but there is no such scene here. Yet the writer treats this daily intimacy with appreciation, not suspicion” (92).

We cannot know for sure exactly how Snell viewed the woman and her relationship with her, but Donoghue’s sense of intimacy between the women makes sense. Her encounter with this woman, while cross-dressed, reflects her desire to protect women from men and to seek out the company of women. The narrator admits that they rarely parted company and did indeed establish an “Intimacy.” If this intimacy was one-sided, Snell could have easily broken off her attachment to the woman, by claiming, for example, that her duty required her to be elsewhere, but she does not. The relationship ends only when Snell feared a new recruit, who had lodged with her brother and sister, would discover her cross-dressing. Even the narrator finds the termination of their relationship sad and describes their affection as having, “chained them together in the strictest Bonds of Love and Affection, which never quit its hold, till forced thereto by a hard Fate” (10). The woman (whom Snell saved from rape) says that she was, “loth to lose the Company of such a Friend and Companion, [but] yielded to her Remonstrances, and provided her with Money to bear her Charge in her intended Flight” (9). Given the woman’s attachments to Snell and her gift of money, it is likely that she felt more than a platonic affection toward Snell, and it is likely that Snell would have perceived the woman’s affections as such.¹⁶ But Snell seems content to maintain the relationship, despite the risk of her sex being discovered or the potential for the woman to fall in love with her, creating an awkward situation for Snell. Despite all of these homoerotic

¹⁶ Even if the woman did not have romantic feelings for Snell, others would have likely perceived their relationship as such in the eighteenth century because of the amount of time they spent together, so it is likely that Snell would have questioned the woman’s intentions. In other words, neither woman would have been naïve of the implications of their intimacy.

possibilities, the narrator spends little time pondering this relationship, and instead interrupts the flow of the narrative to comment on how difficult Snell's life has been, deflecting attention away from this ambiguous relationship. The narrator directs readers toward a platonic reading of this relationship because there is no evidence of physical intimacy. Snell's interest in the woman contrasts to the man's interest, which is explicitly physical; the "real man" expresses his desire by attempting a physical relationship, setting a standard for masculinity and desire and rendering Snell's relationship platonic. If we reject the notion that desire must include physical intimacy, Snell's relationship could be read as homoerotic, given the emotional intimacy between the women.

This encounter is not Snell's only interaction with women while cross-dressed, and with each successive encounter, Snell's motivations become more and more questionable, though the narrator consistently maintains the platonic nature of her exploits with women. While staying briefly in Lisbon, Snell encounters Catherine, whom she had met and established an acquaintance with when she was stationed there previously. While Snell often chose to spend time with her shipmates in order to allay their suspicions that she was a woman, in Lisbon she chooses to spend most of her time with Catherine. Sensing that Catherine is intrigued by her, Snell pushes the boundaries of this relationship further than any of the other encounters: "Hannah, finding this young Woman had no dislike to her, she endeavoured to try if she could not act the Lover as well as the Soldier, which she so well effected, that it was agreed upon she should return from London, in order to be married as soon as she had got her Discharge and Pay" (28). This is precisely what could have happened with the woman Snell rescued from rape. Having seen this possibility earlier, Snell easily could have avoided this situation with

Catherine, but instead she initiates it. Scholars, such as Julie Wheelwright, argue that scenes like this one are not evidence of homoeroticism. Wheelwright claims that women chose not to reveal their sex to other women because they would lose the friendship and risk “the loneliness and isolation disguised women had to confront as part of their dealings with other women” (58). She also asserts that concealing their sex was part of their (inept) masculine performance: “The need to prove their masculinity forced these women to mimic male power relations, flirting with, mocking or flattering their admirers, but reinforced their inability to completely transform their gender. There appeared to be no room for any real intimacy” (58).

But this does not hold true in Snell’s case because she consistently empathizes with the trials that women face, and she clearly establishes intimate relationships with women. In fact, her relationships with women are *distinguished* by their emotional intimacy, and they display a closeness that is lacking in the male soldiers’ relationships with women, since the men seek only brief, physical encounters. While Wheelwright is correct in noting that female soldiers often did feel the need to prove their masculinity, Snell never woos women in front of other men. When the one opportunity presents itself for Snell to show off her sexual prowess in front of men, she gladly gives up a woman to a crewmate. Why then would Snell woo Catherine? The narrator has no explanation for this, except to imply, as Wheelwright does, that it was merely part of her performance, and it was just a “scheme,” though the narrator also says that the intimacy between them leads them to “convers[e] upon Love.” Since Snell seeks out intimate relationships with women, she obviously desires these connections, and we should not assume they were platonic simply because she does not have sex. Although we do not have evidence of

Snell engaging in a sexual relationship with a woman, she does say that she intended to return to Catherine in Lisbon, once her service was complete, and “consummate their matrimonial Ceremonies with a Solemnity suitable to her Abilities” (28). This is a curious and ambiguous statement, which has many interpretations, and it may be that Snell was simply lying. However, it is possible to interpret this passage as a real desire to have sex with Catherine, even if she does not have the male body to do so, as “suitable to her Abilities” suggests. And if desire for women in the eighteenth century is understood to necessitate a sexual act and a male body, Snell may have assumed she could not consummate the relationship in a heterosexual way (intercourse), but could through other sex acts.

The most compelling evidence for Snell’s potential interest in women comes toward the end of the narrative, after she has left the service. Snell returns to her sister and brother-in-law’s house and takes a room there, which she has to share with another woman. This woman has agreed to share a room with a woman, but objects when she sees Snell, who is still cross-dressed. Snell, as well as her sister and her brother-in-law, assure the woman that Snell is really a woman, yet the woman refuses to share a bed until she has “ocular Demonstration” of Snell’s sex (32). Once Snell reveals her naked body to the woman, we are told that, “ever since they have been Bedfellows” (32). While it certainly makes sense that this woman would want to be sure that she is really sharing a bed with another woman, it seems strange that she is not at all concerned that other people assume the “man” she travels with is her husband. Because the two are bedfellows, the “Neighbors report (imagining her to be a Man) that the young Woman was married to a Soldier, and this great Untruth was reported for Fact throughout the

whole Neighborhood” (32-33). Snell and the woman even travel together as husband and wife. Even though everyone else who meets Snell seems to perceive her interactions with this woman as a marriage, and therefore as a sexual relationship, the narrator ignores the fact that Snell essentially behaved as a female husband. The narrator comments on this homoerotic scene, but only as it pertains to Snell’s ability to pass successfully as a man and fool all whom she meets. Again, the narrator shifts the reader’s attention away from the potentially homoerotic nature of Snell’s sharing a bed with a woman and instead encourages the reader to be amazed by her ability to pass as a man.

If we examine Snell’s relationships with women chronologically, they progress from an “Intimacy and Friendship,” to “act[ing] the Lover as well as the Soldier,” and they culminate in Snell traveling about the country acting like a female husband. Once Snell realizes her marriage is over, she consistently seeks out the intimate company of women. But because she was not known to have sex with any of these women, the narrator presents her relationships as platonic, suggesting that sex must accompany desire for a relationship to be romantic. And, as I have suggested here, depicting Snell as anything but heterosexual would compromise the political agenda of the text, since homosexuality is not part of the identity Britain was cultivating in the eighteenth century, and it certainly was not part of the “civilized” culture they forced upon their colonies. But important to our understanding of how masculinity functioned in the eighteenth century, the depiction of Snell’s relationships with women illustrates the necessity for sexual acts to accompany desire in the construction of normative masculinity. Since Snell was not a “real man,” she could not engage in sex with women and without evidence of a sex act, the narrator dismisses all of her relationships with women,

categorizing them as platonic. But Snell's masculinity enables her to pursue women and establish an intimacy with them that she continues to seek even after she leaves the service and therefore no longer needs to prove her masculinity. While normative masculinity may require a consummation of desire to prove masculinity, female masculinity makes no such demands and instead, I argue, allows for a bond between women that links them in ways that men in relationships women, at least in these texts, do not achieve.

Jenny Cameron

Although Davies' and Snell's narratives promote a nationalist agenda while also disavowing their homoerotic content, *Memoirs of the Remarkable Life and Surprising Adventures of Miss Jenny Cameron* promotes a nationalist cause without explaining away its homoerotic scenes, perhaps because suggesting that Cameron desires women serves the text's agenda. Little is known about this text, including whether the author, Archibald Arbuthnot, is a pseudonym, and it has received little critical attention. But we do know that Jenny Cameron is a fictionalized version of the female Jacobite soldier Jean Cameron. The legend of Jenny Cameron was fairly well-known in the eighteenth century, spreading through a ballad detailing her relationship with Charles Edward, a 1746 account of her in the *Bath Journal*,¹⁷ references to her in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, and of course through *Jenny Cameron*.¹⁸ *Jenny Cameron* draws upon most of the tropes of female soldier narratives, such as a discussion of Cameron's lineage, her masculinity (i.e. skills as a soldier), her education, her motives for cross-dressing, and her

¹⁷ See *Bath Journal* December 29, 1746-January 12, 1747.

¹⁸ Her legend continues even to the present day. Several musicians have recorded the ballad of Jenny Cameron, entitled "Bonnie Jean Cameron," and their recordings are readily available to the public.

romantic encounters with women. However, with the exception of Cameron's skills as a soldier (for which she is praised), *Jenny Cameron* is an atypical female soldier narrative. While Davies' and Snell's texts naturalize their masculinity and attempt to explain away their encounters with women, Cameron's narrator instead deploys these events to condemn Jacobitism and trumpet a Hanoverian agenda. Thus, despite its Jacobite heroine, *Jenny Cameron* functions in a similar way as Davies' and Snell's narratives (it promotes nationalism), yet it does so by questioning the heroine's character and critiquing her political loyalties. In short, the narrative of *Jenny Cameron* illustrates precisely how female masculinity gets constructed in eighteenth-century culture as a political force that supports or threatens Britain. Since Cameron's cross-dressing, seduction of women, and successes on the battlefield are not very different from Christian Davies' and Hannah Snell's exploits, we can see how her masculinity becomes a threat to Britain because it serves the Jacobite rather than Hanoverian cause.

In each of the female soldier narratives discussed in this chapter, the narrator begins by placing the heroine within a familial context of heroism. Even though Davies' father fought for the Jacobite cause, the narrator offers little critique of him and instead focuses on Davies' mother's loyalty to William III. But this is not the case with *Jenny Cameron* and her ancestors, whose achievements the narrator mocks and questions. He tells us that the Cameron family boasts of having had a settlement in Scotland for seven hundred years, but they can offer no proof of that claim. Their claims to greatness are also discarded as the stuff of verse and song with no grounding in truth: "Their Business was to sing Encomiums to their Heroes, and magnify and extol the great Achievements of those Worthies from whom their Patrons claimed their Descent; and therefore it is no

Wonder if we find but little Truth, or have the greatest Reason to suspect the Veracity of such of their Genealogies” (16). Rather than being constructed as part of a long line of soldiers or heroes, as Davies and Snell are, Jenny Cameron is introduced to the reader as just as much of a pretender as the man on whose behalf she will eventually fight.

Readers are expected to doubt the strength of the Cameron clan and by implication the strength of the Jacobite cause and Charles Edward himself.

While Davies’ and Snell’s narrators naturalize each woman’s masculinity and carefully explain why each woman cross-dressed, Cameron’s narrator instead constructs her as a perfectly normal child who went astray in adolescence, thereby suggesting that Cameron’s masculinity and cross-dressing are aberrant. We are told early in the narrative that Cameron’s parents cared for her and gave her a proper education befitting her sex. The narrator is careful to detail all of the feminine activities in which she was instructed: “at Six Years of Age [she] was capable of doing any Sort of Needle-Work; at Eight or Nine she could take the lead in a Dance, with such a graceful Air, as drew the Admiration of all that saw her; and her Mother, who was an excellent Housewife herself, instructed her in Pastry, Cookery, and in all the other Business which belongs to the Management of a Family” (27). The only fault the narrator finds in her education is that her father was over-indulgent and allowed her to do as she pleased, but otherwise we are to assume that she was raised well, and as a child, she was the model of femininity. Nothing suggests that Cameron has the “real Soul of a Man” or that she has “too much mercury,” as Snell and Davies are described. There is no natural explanation for Cameron’s masculinity. Instead, the narrator attributes her masculinity to her boisterous nature, making her masculinity a choice and making it easier to condemn her Jacobitism.

One of the first times Cameron chooses to perform masculinity occurs after she has been sent away because she grew too unruly for her parents to control her. The narrator informs us that she grew “hoydenish” (saucy, boisterous) as she became older, such that her father feared she would be debauched, so he sent her off to be raised by his aunt. While with her father’s aunt, Cameron cross-dresses for the first time. In stark contrast to the portrait of the feminine young lady described above, these scenes illustrate how Cameron’s masculinity arises out of her own desires, and how these desires reflect her interest in usurping male privilege. In an effort to quell her boredom, Cameron decides to cross-dress, an idea sparked by a recent masquerade held in the town. Although masquerades were quite popular during the eighteenth century, they were not without controversy because they allowed people to present themselves as a member of another class or as the opposite sex, among other dangers.¹⁹ Indeed, the narrator informs us that this masquerade occurred, “where Men and Women chang’d Habits, or put on such as best agreed with their own Fancy, without any Regard to the Distinction of Sexes” (52). The pretext, therefore, for Cameron’s first cross-dressing is linked to a cultural practice defined by indulging one’s own pleasure and disregarding gender norms.

Once cross-dressed, Cameron joyfully assumes the role of a man, borrowing the clothes of her male cousins and forcing the footman, Dick, to dress as a woman.²⁰ Cameron’s motives for cross-dressing are hardly as valiant as cross-dressing to find one’s husband. Instead, Cameron exploits the power and authority her disguise grants her:

“But poor Dick soon wish’d himself in his Breeches again; for Miss having assum’d the

¹⁹ For more on masquerade in the eighteenth century, see Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century Culture and Fiction*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986.

²⁰ Cameron forces Dick to cross-dress to “complete” the masquerade. She derives a lot of power and amusement out of forcing the servants to cross-dress.

Man, was resolv'd to act the virile Part as high as she could possibly carry it, and having Wit at will, she so tormented the poor Fellow both with her Hands and her Tongue, that he swore he would as soon wear a Halter as a Petticoat again" (52). Although Snell and especially Davies act in a virile manner, their narrators do not use such loaded language. But this narrator describes Cameron as so eager to abuse male power that she enjoys assaulting Dick with "her Hands and her Tongue," a sexually suggestive attack. Dick is so distraught by Cameron's treatment that he would prefer to be led around like a horse rather than assume the passive role of a woman again. This scene plays out precisely the fear that men express in the female husband texts: if women are permitted to perform masculinity, they will usurp male privilege and power, emasculate men, and become sexual predators. Already Cameron's narrative deviates from the conventions of female solidier texts, where rather than attempting to allay readers' fears of emasculation, the text plays out the threat posed by female masculinity.

After having practiced her performance of masculinity with the footman, Cameron ventures out with the specific intent of wooing women.²¹ Accompanied by two maids (also cross-dressed) and the footman (no longer cross-dressed), Cameron heads into town with all the swagger and confidence of a "young wild Rake," as she is described. Despite Dick's fears that Cameron and the maids might end up in a scuffle, no one bothers them because their rakish behavior makes them "dangerous to meddle with." After wandering around town, Cameron and the maids encounter prostitutes, whom they immediately approach because, according to the narrator, "This was the Game they wanted" (55). At this point, Cameron's behavior does not significantly deviate from

²¹ Dick senses that Cameron wants to woo women and in a speech in which he cautions her before going out, he warns, "if you have a Mind to make yourselves merry with the Wenches, why do; but be sure go into no House with them" (54).

Davies', who says that she pursued women to "kill time." However, Cameron enacts this so-called game with a fervor we do not see in Davies' or Snell's narratives. Cameron and the maids are said to have "singled out [their] Lady, and kiss'd, and toy'd, and prattled with 'em with as much Assurance as if they really had been those pretty Fellows they appear'd to be" (55). Cameron even wants to accompany the prostitutes into a tavern, but Dick prevents her, knowing it will likely end poorly. It is not clear what Cameron's intentions were; the narrator tells us that she was "eager to carry on the Joke as far as she cou'd," but she pushes the boundaries of her masculinity as far as she can. While Davies maneuvers her way out of commitments to women, and Snell relies on always setting sail, Cameron has no easy way out of her entanglement with the prostitutes, and yet she seems unconcerned. Without Dick's intervention, Cameron might have faced extricating herself from a sexual encounter with a woman. While Davies and Snell always initiated romantic or emotional relationships with women, Cameron's encounter is decidedly sexual and is more representative of male desire. The use of her homoerotic behavior in the text surely serves to heighten fears of female masculinity.

Her curiosity having been piqued by the prostitutes, Cameron again solicits a woman's attention while she is cross-dressed. In this instance, Cameron has joined the military, (following her lover, Captain Douglas, into the service²²) and while at a ball encounters Lady Mackintosh, who falls in love with Cameron. Having perceived Lady Mackintosh's interest, Cameron, going by the name of Charles,²³ has an opportunity to

²² Captain Douglas admits that he only wants Cameron as a mistress, and she admits that she too has no desire to marry. They both agree to be monogamous and create a union of sorts, to be dissolved whenever either party chooses.

²³ The narrator refers to Jenny as Charles while she assumes that identity. Later in the narrative when she stops cross-dressing, the narrator returns to calling her Jenny.

pursue what the footman Dick earlier prevented: “Charles presently saw how Matters went, and that he had got a female Captive in his Chain; a Thing so novel, that he resolv’d to make himself some Diversion with it” (119). Though earlier the narrator described Cameron’s pursuit of the prostitutes as a joke, this encounter with Lady Mackintosh is more serious. When calling upon Lady Mackintosh the morning after the ball, Cameron is rendered speechless when she sees Lady Mackintosh in her morning gown:

Charles was in a deep Contemplation of the wonderful Things he saw about him: But his Eyes had not been long employ’d in this Manner, before they were entertain’d with an Object that surpriz’d him more than any Thing he had seen yet. The Lady herself appear’d with such an Air of Dignity as commanded Veneration from the Beholder . . . he could hardly persuade himself but he was in the Presence of an Angel, or that he was transported by Enchantment into some visionary Region, such as he had read of in the Descriptions of Poets and Writers of Romance. Some Minutes he stood without being able to utter a Word. (122-23)

Cameron’s awestruck reaction to Lady Mackintosh is a departure from her encounters with the prostitutes. Pursuing the prostitutes may (or may not) have been a game, but Cameron continues to pursue Lady Mackintosh, despite warnings from Captain Douglas that she will inevitably have to reveal her sex or incur the anger and disappointment of the lady. The representation of Cameron’s desire for the woman again deviates from Davies’ and Snell’s texts. There is no declaration that Cameron is *acting* the lover; rather, this scene expresses Cameron’s genuine response to the beauty of another woman.

She venerates her and views her as more valuable and beautiful than any of the objects in Mackintosh's home. And, unlike her pursuits of the prostitutes, Cameron seems to be interested in Mackintosh for reasons other than a simple sexual encounter. This description certainly focuses on Mackintosh's physical beauty, but it also suggests that she fell in love upon seeing Lady Mackintosh.

After Cameron's initial enchantment by Lady Mackintosh and after spending a short time in her presence, the narrator declares that Cameron wishes she could literally be a man for Mackintosh. Her desire to be a man distinguishes Cameron's relationship with Mackintosh from Davies' and Snell's relationships with women. Neither Davies nor Snell expresses a desire to please other women in the way that Cameron does: "Charles was so charm'd at the obliging Manner with which she [Lady Mackintosh] treated him, that he really wish'd himself (what he appear'd to her) a Man for her sake; and was not a little troubled in his Mind, that it was not, or ever would be in his Power to answer her Expectations" (124-25). According to the narrator, Cameron is not troubled by how she will extricate herself from this situation (though Captain Douglas is when she tells him what transpired), nor is she troubled by the obvious homoerotic nature of her relationship with Mackintosh. She is only troubled by her lack—of a penis, of a male body, of whatever she perceives Lady Mackintosh would expect from a man. Even though Mackintosh does not know Charles is a woman, Cameron does know, yet she still wants to please Mackintosh. Of all the homoerotic scenes in these narratives, this scene, more than the others, illustrates the conflation of desire with a sexual act. According to the text, Cameron as Charles presumes that desire must include a sexual act and, likewise,

that a woman would expect or desire the same when engaged in a relationship with a man.

Unlike the narrators of Davies' and Snell's stories, this narrator elevates the discourse in this scene, depicting it as homoerotic, rather than attempting to downplay the erotic interplay between the women, which would seem to counter the argument that intimacy between women does not require a sexual act to express desire. However, this scene occurs in an anti-Jacobite text with a different agenda. By emphasizing Cameron's desire to satisfy Mackintosh's "Expectations" of a man, the narrator constructs Cameron as desiring women (or at least potentially desiring them), linking a usurped sexual role to usurped political affiliation. While Snell and Davies use their masculinity in service to Britain, Cameron not only employs her masculinity for the Jacobite cause, but she also pursues other men's women. Thus, homoeroticism functions as a tool of anti-Jacobitism, calling upon the reader to denounce both.

The decidedly anti-Jacobite tone of this text becomes more evident when Cameron begins fighting for Charles Edward. Although the narrator acknowledges and even praises Cameron's military skills, particularly her handling of arms and her riding ability, he laments the cause for which they were employed:

And, had she not been so violently prejudic'd in Favour of a bad Cause, she wou'd have appear'd in the first Class of the Female Worthies of the present Age. Had she happen'd to have took the right Side of the Question, her Praises wou'd have been sung and said, both in Prose and Rhime, by all the Loyal Wits in England. But by employing her fine Talents in so infamous a Cause, she has

blasted all those Honours which wou'd have brighten'd her Character, and carried down her Name with Reverence to Posterity. (259-60)

Essentially, the narrator tells us that had Jenny Cameron fought on behalf of the Hanoverian cause, she would have been lauded as Christian Davies or Hannah Snell were. The fault lies not in her military talents, or in her ability to perform masculinity, but rather in her politics, which conflict with the narrator's politics. As Leigh Anna Eicke argues, "Jenny's character is . . . entirely an invention, but if one is to draw an anti-Jacobite message from the text, it comes from the author's judgments and interpolations, not in the characterization of Jenny" (154). But it is difficult to separate the author's judgments from the characterization of Cameron, since one informs the other. However, there are moments in the text when the narrator's politics seem to affect the characterization of Cameron (and other Jacobites) more noticeably than in other parts of the narrative.

The narrator's characterization of Charles Edward and Cameron's interaction with him is one place in which the text's political agenda influences the discourse on gender, especially female masculinity's effect on normative masculinity. Cameron, whom the narrator says sits at the right hand of the Pretender advising him in everything he does, is constructed as the real leader of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. After criticizing the decisions made by the other soldiers, Cameron recommends that they invade England, fomenting an unsuccessful rebellion and prompting the following response: "*Jenny* having finished her Harangue, the Chevalier said, that what Mrs. Cameron had advanc'd, he thought, was very just and reasonable" (271-72). In other words, Cameron provides military strategy for the Jacobite rebellion, placing her in a role that even Davies and

Snell never achieved. Such claims by the narrator are entirely fictional. Jenny Cameron did not take part in battle, nor was she an advisor to Charles Edward.²⁴ But the narrator constructs her as such because, while it is a positive portrayal of her skills, it also shows Jacobite men to be ineffectual leaders who are guided by women. This is all the more evident when the invasion begins to fail and the Pretender, tired from walking, is depicted as enervated: “he was quite sick of the Expedition and wish’d himself a thousand Times either at *Paris* or *Rome*. And this Vexation of his Mind had a manifest Effect upon his Body, and in the visible Decay of his Health. For when he came in his Coach to Preston, it was observ’d that he look’d very pale, faintish, and sickly” (274). This description of a Jacobite leader stands in contrast to characterizations of Cameron, who, like most female soldiers, is generally the strongest and most courageous of all the soldiers. The difference here, though, is that the other female soldier texts do not describe men, especially leaders, in such a debilitated state. Hanoverian men may fall short of Davies and Snell, but they never wish to scuttle off to France and shirk their duty.

As the Pretender falls further into an enervated state, Cameron tries to prop up his masculinity and encourage him to press on with the rebellion. Cameron first attempts to soothe Charles Edward through maternal means; she brings him broth, sings songs for him, and plays the spinet. When this proves fruitless, she attempts to motivate him by appealing to his masculinity:

Have you not hitherto been victorious wherever you came? Have you not
vanquished your Adversaries whenever you met them? Have you not made

²⁴ In a discussion of Jean Cameron and Anne Mackintosh (this Mackintosh is not Lady Mackintosh), Leigh Anne Eicke confirms the fictional nature of the narrative: “Though neither woman took part in battle, propaganda, fiction, and image depicted them so. Jean Cameron was the source of the fictional Jenny Cameron, supposed to be a warlike mistress of Charles Edward” (51).

yourself Master of many of their strong and rich Towns . . . These, I say, are Considerations which should raise your Spirits, animate your Courage, rouse your Vigour, and inspire you with Sentiments of Magnanimity, becoming your high Birth and Station. Pusillanimity in a Prince derogates from his Dignity, discourages his People, dispirits his Soldiers, [and] weakens the most vigorous Measures that may be concerted by his Friends and Allies. (275-76)

To a Hanoverian audience, this speech probably reads as humorous, since Cameron suggests that the Pretender to the throne is not worthy of or fit for kinship, and they would concur. An anti-Jacobite audience would also likely be amused by the pusillanimity of Charles Edward. Despite Cameron's fervent attempts to rouse the masculinity of her Prince, he cannot be shaken from his cowardly state, and a Hanoverian audience would expect nothing more of an effeminate French-supported usurper to the throne. It is important to note that all of this is fictional. Jenny or Jean Cameron, the actual Jacobite female soldier, was not Charles Edward's mistress, nor his advisor; we do not even know if Jean Cameron ever met him. Thus, this depiction of the Pretender as effeminate and in need of support and advice from a woman has a clear nationalist agenda to trump up fears of female masculinity that does not serve men in power. Even though Cameron attempts to rouse Charles' masculinity, he cannot summon the masculinity Cameron possesses. Since she has really been the leader of the rebellion all along, usurping Charles' role, we are to expect nothing more from the emasculated Charles.

As is evident from *The Memoirs of Miss Jenny Cameron*, not all female soldier narratives unequivocally praise female masculinity. The differences between Davies'

and Snell's narratives and Cameron's narrative illustrate that female masculinity, at least at the mid-point of the century, is not problematic when deployed to serve certain political agendas. When it does not serve Britain or when it is used to woo women and usurp male privilege, it becomes contentious. Had Jenny Cameron fought for the Hanoverian cause, the narrator might not have qualified any of her triumphs in battle as an unfortunate waste of talent. As the century progresses and notions of gender roles shift toward a more conservative conception of femininity and masculinity, this earlier tolerance of female masculinity will wane. Even stories of women who perform masculinity in service to Britain will begin to diminish in popularity; this is especially evident in the decreasing popularity of the warrior women ballads by the nineteenth century. Thus, positive portrayals of female masculinity are part of a passing phase in early-to mid-eighteenth century Britain.

What also distinguishes these texts from the others I will discuss is the treatment of homoeroticism between women. Although Davies' and Snell's texts likely intend to allay readers' fears that the women performed masculinity so that they could woo women, they instead configure desire between women as emotionally intimate and alluring to masculine and feminine women alike. These women carve out a space wherein desire can exist without necessitating a sex act and thus exists outside the confines of heterosexual notions of desire, distinguishing (masculine) women's desire from men's desire. Despite the challenges this way of thinking poses to conventional notions of desire and sex, it allows women to pursue other women within the context of a platonic relationship. However, some masculine women choose to express conventional notions of desire by attempting, while cross-dressed, to engage in sex with women, and,

as I will discuss in the next chapter, these acts cross the boundaries of permissible female masculinity and challenge the hold men have on masculinity.

Chapter 3: ‘Not Fit to be Mentioned’: Silence and Disclosure in the Narratives of Female Husbands¹

On 22 September 1746, Thomas Boddely’s *Bath Journal* published a brief notice about an unnamed woman who wore breeches and was rumored to have married several women. The details in this brief post are scant, but it does promise more articles, since the newspaper assumed readers would be interested, and they were. The newspaper published two more articles about this woman, the second revealing her name, Mary Hamilton (alias Charles Hamilton), and a final article, published 3 November, claiming that she married fourteen women and deceived them through “certain vile and deceitful Practices, not fit to be mentioned.” Mary Hamilton was likely not the first woman to cross-dress and marry a woman in the eighteenth century, but she is probably the first to become well-known for doing so, and she is arguably the most well-known female husband of the century (both in the eighteenth century and today). In large part, awareness of her stems from coverage in various newspapers (the *Daily Advertiser* and the *St. James’s Evening Post* republished verbatim articles from Boddely’s *Bath Journal*) and especially from Henry Fielding’s pamphlet, *The Female Husband* (published 12 November 1746). The *Bath Journal*’s assumption that readers would be interested in Mary Hamilton anticipates society’s curiosity with female husbands throughout the century, which was exhibited through the publication and consumption of several female

¹ A “female husband” is a woman who crossed-dressed with the intent to woo or marry women, and in some cases female husbands did marry women. I also use the term to describe masculine women who were in relationships in which they played the dominant or “husband role.” According to Fraser Easton, the term “female husband” originates with Henry Fielding’s text. Searches in four databases from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries yielded no instances of the term “female husband,” and there is no listing for it in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Easton uncovered one instance of “female husband” prior to 1746 (c. 1676) in “The Male and Female Husband” (Easton 154).

husband texts.² The *Bath Journal* article is also important because it establishes a rhetorical move employed by all of the texts I discuss. It hints at certain behaviors and practices but refuses to mention what those practices are. It seduces readers, piquing their interest, and then in an effort (not always successful) to control discourse, denies them a full disclosure, such that the threat female husbands pose to masculinity, especially to heterosexuality, can be contained.

Although eighteenth-century England exempted female soldiers from condemnation because they served a nationalist function, female husbands were not granted such leniency; instead, they were perceived as a threat to the nation. The authors of these texts present female husbands as a foreign import infiltrating England and, in some cases, inducing effeminacy in men. Fears of the effect female husbands have on masculinity and the nation are expressed in these texts through a tension between silence and disclosure. By their very public nature, these texts disclose the existence of female husbands and their actions, as a means of condemning them. However, they also silence parts of the female husbands' lives, as the *Bath Journal* article does, in order to closet the most subversive aspect of their masculinity. But these efforts to silence and maintain power over the female husbands frequently conflict with other aspects of the texts. The authors do not maintain absolute control over their subjects, and instead they often reveal

² It is impossible to know precisely how many women passed as female husbands in the eighteenth century because, like the female soldiers, those who were successful in passing would not have drawn attention. It is also unclear how many women simply cross-dressed in the eighteenth century; scholars disagree on this point. In "Gender's Two Bodies," Fraser Easton counts the cross-dressed women from the historical record and death notices in *The Gentleman's Magazine* and notes an increase in the numbers of cross-dressed women at the end of the century (137). However, in *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe*, Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol argue that there is a decline in the number of cross-dressed women as the century progresses (102-03). Another difficulty in counting the number of female husbands in the eighteenth century lies in the prosecution of them. Like Hamilton, they were often prosecuted for "fraud," instead of a sex crime, so it is not always easy to discern whether a woman was a female husband based on criminal records. In contrast, men who engaged in sex with other men were prosecuted for sodomy, so their numbers are easier to document.

their own fears about the threat female husbands pose to masculinity. As Todd Parker argues, “male and female bodies naturally and inevitably invoke each other [in the eighteenth century]” (4) and “By way of complementarity, ‘male’ and ‘female’ become unquestioned mutual referents” (22). This is, indeed, how men attempt to script masculinity in the eighteenth century. However, female husbands’ ability to perform the sex role of men, while lacking a male body, deconstructs the logic of this system based on sex complementarity and heterosexuality. Without the male body as a ground, men cannot claim ownership of masculinity, nor can they even claim they perform an authentic masculinity. While the narrators of the female soldier texts concede women’s ability to perform the gender role of men, they resist the notion that women can perform the sex role of men, and they resist a connection between masculinity and female homoeroticism. In challenging the necessity of a male body for the performance of masculinity, female husbands challenge the foundation of masculinity in the eighteenth century: sex complementarity and heterosexuality. That female husbands disrupt the grounds of normative masculinity is evident in the anxious way in which these authors fixate on female husbands and attempt to frame their sex/gender transgression as a threat to the nation.

Each of the texts I examine attempts to discredit and even mock female husbands for their performances of masculinity, especially their attempts to engage in sex with women, though each text positions and responds to female husbands in different ways. These discursive representations reflect the variances in what was known about each woman and the influence of different national perspectives. Henry Fielding’s *The Female Husband* (1746) is the earliest of the five texts I discuss and is perhaps the first

female husband narrative. This text has garnered more critical response than the other texts, perhaps because it is Fielding's, but also perhaps because it offers a fictional version of a documented case. I position Fielding's pamphlet as the paradigmatic female husband text because, besides being the first chronological text I discuss, it establishes the rhetorical mode of silence and disclosure present in the other texts. Also, the fears and anxieties in Fielding's text regarding female husbands' challenge to normative masculinity persist in all of the other texts. In conjunction with *The Female Husband*, I also examine Fielding's *The Jacobite's Journal* (1747-48), which plays out fears that female husbands emasculate men and are a threat to the nation. Female husbands and effeminate men are also linked in the anonymous *Satan's Harvest Home* (1749). This text first details the formation of effeminate men, who the author fears are more susceptible to sodomy than their masculine counterparts. These effeminate men are then linked to women who have sex with other women. The author thinks women have sex with women because men have lost their dominance over women. In an interesting triangulation of gender and sexual deviance, masculine women raise effeminate boys who become sodomitical men, and through the men's sexual deviance, women learn the pleasures of same-sex desire, leading them to become female husbands. Like the other texts in this chapter, *Satan's Harvest Home* identifies foreign nations as the source of these non-normative genders and sexualities in order to displace what it fears outside England.

In *The True History and Adventures of Catherine Vizzani* (1751), the English translation of a text by Giovanni Bianchi, we are privy to a text that provides a startling contrast between an Italian and an English response to female husbands. The text,

translated by John Cleland, includes two parts: the narrative and the “Remarks” section, which includes Cleland’s response to Bianchi’s narrative.³ Cleland’s remarks reveal deeply held anxieties about women who engage in sex with other women and women who simply appear in public in men’s attire.⁴ In short, Cleland attempts to silence aspects of Vizzani’s life that he dislikes, while attempting to elevate England’s reputation by suggesting that female husbands originate in foreign nations, such as Italy. The final text I discuss, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (1755), also employs silence and disclosure. However, it utilizes these techniques to obscure Charke’s female husband role and pass it off as a harmless extension of theatrical cross-dressing. While the other female husband texts demonstrate the male authors’ anxiety about female husbands, Charke’s text reflects her own anxiety about her relationship with a woman (Mrs. Brown) and behaviors that she knows are questionable at best. Charke’s text is significant because it is the only female husband text I discuss that does not condemn the female husband (nor does it present her as a threat to the nation), and despite this, it sold well, and Charke gained the sympathy of many readers.⁵ I argue that this positive or neutral response to Charke as a female husband is linked to her narrative strategy. She presents her cross-dressing and relationship with another woman as merely an extended performance of her breeches roles. Since eighteenth-century England was tolerant of

³ Roger Lonsdale attributes the translation to Cleland. Lonsdale notes that Cleland’s publisher, Ralph Griffiths, “starred the first line of the title and [wrote] in the bottom margin ‘Translated by Cleland’” (277).

⁴ Of course, Cleland had no qualms with including a scene of sex between women in *Fanny Hill or, Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749). But this scene serves to initiate Fanny into sex and functions as a precursor to what she really desires: sex with men. After having sex with Phoebe, Fanny says, “For my part, I now pined for more solid food, and promised tacitly to myself that I would not be put off much longer with the foolery of woman to woman” (57).

⁵ We can surmise that part of the reason the text does not condemn Charke is that she wrote it. Certainly, someone could write a memoir in which she finds her own behavior deviant, but this seems less likely than writing to justify one’s behavior. Also, the public’s acceptance of Charke is likely connected to some readers’ willingness to take Charke at face value and perceive Mrs. Brown as merely her friend.

cross-dressed women on the stage, Charke exploits this permissiveness and makes her real life read like a staged role, suggesting that female husbands are acceptable in a fictional context, but not in real life. Notably, all of the texts I discuss either reference or are exclusively about real, historical female husbands.

Many scholars have examined cross-dressed women and female homoeroticism in the eighteenth century, but most of these studies do not focus on female husbands exclusively. Often, discussions of female husbands are grouped under broad categories that examine a variety of cross-dressers and women who have sex with women. Emma Donoghue's work is one exception. Donoghue devotes a chapter of her *Passions Between Women* to female husbands and argues against claims that women cross-dressed simply for financial or psychological reasons.⁶ Instead, Donoghue emphasizes female husbands' desire for other women as the motivation for their cross-dressing; cross-dressing was merely a means to gain access to women's bodies. She devotes most of her project to legitimizing homoerotic readings of texts (she argues that scholars have been reluctant to acknowledge homoeroticism without direct evidence of sex), rather than advancing extended, theoretical arguments, so her work is a bit limited in scope, but it is an important foundational text. Randolph Trumbach opposes the argument that women cross-dressed to have sex with women, claiming that "most women who dressed and passed as men for any length of time [in the early to mid-eighteenth century] did not seek to have sexual relations with women; this is probably true even of those who married women" ("London's Sapphists 114). Unfortunately, Trumbach offers no evidence for this claim; however, he does acknowledge that women cross-dressed to attract other

⁶ The psychological argument posits that women cross-dressed so they could think of themselves as a man and this psychological guise allowed them to court other women. Rudolph Dekker and Lotte van de Pol advance this argument in *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern England*.

women at the end of the century. While Donoghue and Trumbach are interested in women's motivations for cross-dressing, I am interested in how female husbands affect and influence men and the construction of normative masculinity.

Lynn Friedli articulates a more specific argument about cross-dressed women who desire women. Friedli focuses on many forms of cross-dressed women, including some female husbands, and she concludes that these texts illustrate the instability of masculinity in a politically charged historical moment: "The ease with which so many [women] passed as men suggests that standards of masculinity may not have been very high . . . The increasing condemnation of effeminacy may thus point to an unease with such fluid boundaries in a society which was confronting the apparent erosion of many other social, political and geographical distinctions" (250). Friedli's conjoining of masculinity with other social and political concerns bears some resemblance to my argument. However, her correlation between higher numbers of cross-dressed women and lower standards of masculinity suggests that men have a natural access to masculinity because, she seems to imply, men have a male body. This argument would certainly make sense in the eighteenth century, but female husbands' ability to pass, even when engaging in intercourse, troubles the grounding of masculinity in male bodies. In other words, if standards of masculinity were higher, then it is likely women would not be able to pass as men because then only men would be up to the task of performing masculinity. But if masculinity is a natural outgrowth of sex, why would standards of masculinity fluctuate? The male body does not change from one historical moment to the next; rather, it is *perceptions* of it that change. Thus, masculinity is not so much linked to a male body (if there was a natural one-to-one correlation between maleness and

masculinity, would effeminacy exist?). It is linked to the performance of masculinity, which does not originate in male sexed bodies. The notion that women are merely playing at masculinity, while men possess the real thing is precisely what I attempt to challenge in my examination of the female husband texts.

In addition to the texts I will discuss in detail in this chapter, there are several accounts of female husbands that appeared in various English newspapers from the mid to late eighteenth century. Most of these reports are very brief, paragraph-length descriptions that focus on various aspects of the female husband's identity. The variances partly reflect the different interpretations of the women's motivation for being female husbands. One account from the *London Chronicle* 9 June 1759 mentions a female soldier who "lately married a wife." The posting is concerned more with her status as a female soldier than as a female husband, and it fixates on her ability to pass undetected by her regiment. Thus, her service to the nation displaces her status as a female husband. Another from *The Gentleman's Magazine* of 28 June 1773 mentions a female husband who was brought before the Lord-Mayor. The incident is treated as fraud, and the posting states that the female husband's "design was to get possession of the money, and then to make off; but the old lady proved too knowing." Yet another from *The Gentleman's Magazine* of 5 July 1777 mentions a female husband who defrauded three wives. She was sentenced to six months in prison and had to stand in the pillory. One of the differences between the discussion of these female husbands and the ones I discuss is that these articles do not mention whether these women had sex with the women they married. The postings in these newspapers are briefer than the texts I discuss; therefore, they provide less detail in general about the women. But they also

avoid mentioning the possibility of sex between women, suggesting that silence is often present in discussions of female husbands regardless of genre. These postings are a small-scale example of the type of disclosure and yet silence surrounding female husbands. Eighteenth-century England clearly had an interest in female husbands, but responses to these women were mixed; this is one of the reasons why we see various representations and responses to them.

Part of what contributed to the inconsistent responses to female husbands was the way in which female homoeroticism was viewed by society and by the legal system. Although many European countries in the eighteenth century had laws prohibiting sex between women, making it punishable by death, England had no such laws.⁷ Marriages between women were also difficult to police, since they would not have been counted if the marriage passed, i.e. if the cross-dressed woman passed. In general, marriage itself was not highly regulated until the passage of Lord Hartwick's Marriage Act of 1753, which sought to reduce fraudulent weddings by enforcing the registration of them. In contrast, however, sodomy (specifically sex between two men) was illegal in England. That England did not criminalize sex between women suggests various possibilities. Perhaps English society thought that sex between women could not or did not occur or perhaps people believed that it did not present a problem for society. However, the existence and popularity of these texts proves that at least some people were aware that sex between women could and did occur. And most of the authors of these texts

⁷ Although fewer European women than men were sentenced to death for homosexual acts, there were women who were put to death for engaging in sex with women. In France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland "lesbian acts were regarded as legally the equivalent to acts of male sodomy and were, like them, punishable by the death penalty" (Crompton 11). Perhaps the most famous case is that of Catharina Linck, a female husband and female soldier, who was executed in Germany in 1721. For more on both the Biblical and secular tradition prohibiting sex between women in Europe, see Louis Crompton, "The Myth of Lesbian Impunity: Capital Laws from 1270 to 1791," *Journal of Homosexuality* 6.5 (1981): 11-25.

perceived sex between women as a problem that they warned against. Perhaps, then, another reason England chose not to criminalize sex between women was that doing so allowed society to ignore the existence of female homoeroticism. Pretending that it did not exist in England would make it easier to displace such acts outside England and in the European countries where it was illegal.

English society's conflicting responses to female homoeroticism needs to be considered within the shifting context in which such acts were understood. Susan Lanser argues that by mid-century explanations for female homoeroticism began to shift away from a genital model. Prior to this point, female homoeroticism was often understood to be a consequence of an enlarged or abnormal clitoris, which women used as a penis-like organ. As Lanser argues, the shift away from a genital model creates a problem: "For the erosion of the genital model leaves a disturbing vacuum: if there is no anatomical mark of sapphism, then *any* woman is a potential sapphist. It has been my contention here that where the masculine marker written *in* the body has failed, a new masculine marker gets written *on* that body—a marker of clothing, stature, features, skills" ("Queer to Queer" 34). I want to extend Lanser's argument further. Masculine markers are written on the body of female husbands in their clothes, dildos, etc. But what happens when those markers fall away? What happens behind closed doors? Did any of Mary Hamilton's wives know she was a woman? Certainly, Mrs. Brown knew that Mr. Brown was really Charlotte Charke. So we have women who knew or possibly knew that the person they found attractive was not a man. Perhaps the women as "men" was what initially attracted the women, but the female body performing masculinity is what made them stay with their "husbands." This possibility is one of the most troubling aspects of

female husbands (both literary and historical) because women may have chosen a masculinity that is not linked to a male body, suggesting that the male body is not a necessary element of masculinity. Of course, some women did reject female husbands once they discovered their sex, but some, such as Mrs. Brown did not. And it is possible that more women could have married female husbands and chosen to stay with them despite or *because* they were women. We can not know for sure what transpired between female husbands and their wives because this information is part of what these texts silence.⁸ The notion that a woman might knowingly choose a masculine woman over a “real” man is the one of the most transgressive and subversive elements of the female husbands because this choice means that men have almost nothing to offer a woman that another woman cannot also offer.⁹

In order to understand why authors silence certain aspects of the female husbands’ lives, it is useful to turn to Eve Sedgwick’s argument in *Epistemology of the Closet*: “Knowledge, after all, is not itself power, although it is the magnetic field of power. Ignorance and opacity collude or compete with knowledge in mobilizing the flows of energy, desire, goods, meanings, persons” (4). In other words, what eighteenth-century society claimed not to know and the efforts that were made to shield others from knowledge of female homoeroticism is just as important as what knowledge they *did* have of it. Because England did not make sex between women illegal, it could mask the existence of female homoeroticism and maintain a willful ignorance of it. This logic is

⁸ Obviously, Fielding did not know what transpired between the women, but since most of the text is fictional, he could have written such scenes; he simply chose not to.

⁹ The one exception would be pregnancy, and a failure to conceive children would compromise a woman’s femininity. However, given the risks of childbirth and the financial burden of children, this too might have been a benefit, in some women’s eyes, of being with a female husband. Fielding even suggests this when he has Hamilton say that she could offer “all the pleasures of marriage without the inconveniences” (42).

circular. It suggests that there was no need to prohibit female homoeroticism because it did not exist, and if there were no laws prohibiting it, then no one could be charged with it. Instead, women were prosecuted, if at all, for crimes such as fraud, as Mary Hamilton was.¹⁰ Such a crime, however, obscures her sexual behavior. In silencing aspects of the female husbands' behavior, these authors can simply plead their own ignorance of female homoeroticism. Ignorance, then, authorizes the claims made in these texts and positions the authors as innocent observers who claim only to represent the 'natural' order. These "ignorance effects," as Sedgwick calls them are then "harnessed, licensed, and regulated" as a means of controlling and restricting sexual knowledge and behavior (5).

Ignorance in these texts manifests itself primarily through silences. These silences function to promote ignorance in readers and are an attempt by the authors to maintain power over female husbands and over the discourse about them. When discussing the sex acts that the female husbands engage in, the authors refuse to provide information, saying either that they lack the information or that it cannot be spoken. These various circumlocutions may seem to shore up the power of the one who discloses or silences, i.e. the author, and to silence the existence of female husbands and the threat they pose to masculinity and heterosexuality in general. Their ignorance of details and/or unwillingness to present those details would possibly result in readers' ignorance of female homoeroticism. However, as Michel Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality*, silences are never the end point of discourse, and they can reveal as much as they conceal:

¹⁰ Specifically, Hamilton was charged under the Vagrancy Act of 1744, which is a crime defined by a purposeful attempt to deceive others (Baker 223).

Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. (27)

Therefore, the silences imposed upon these texts do not necessarily prohibit knowledge of and about female husbands from entering the public discourse. Although disclosure functions as a means of censuring female husbands and silence seemingly functions as a means of controlling them, authors do not maintain complete control over their texts. Instead, the texts proliferate knowledge and discourse of female husbands, while the silencing of female husbands' sex with other women immediately draws the reader's attention to that which cannot be said. Silences elevate the threat female husbands pose to masculinity by suggesting that knowledge of female homoeroticism is dangerous because it might encourage women to become or marry female husbands and because it challenges men's exclusive claim to masculinity. The tension in these texts between silence and disclosure reveal deep anxiety about how to grapple with the existence of female husbands and what effect they may have on normative masculinity.

The Female Husband and The Jacobite's Journal

In *The Female Husband*, which details the adventures of Mary Hamilton, who cross-dressed, wooed, and married several women, Henry Fielding uses silence and disclosure as a means of promoting ignorance and attempting to prevent women from

becoming female husbands. Although he may have succeeded in censuring Hamilton, he also draws attention to her successes with women, revealing his concerns about female husbands' challenges to normative masculinity and especially to heterosexuality. I devote significantly more attention to this text than to the others because Fielding goes to great lengths to construct the character Mary Hamilton, from the actual Mary Hamilton, and this gap between the scant facts we have about her and who/what Fielding creates exposes the ways in which female husbands function in relation to normative masculinity.¹¹

When the pamphlet was first published in 1746, it sold well and quickly went into a second printing. Despite Fielding's claim that the story was "taken from her own mouth since her confinement," we know through newspaper accounts that much of his version of her story is fictitious and obviously was not "taken from her own mouth." It is full of embellishments and, according to Sheridan Baker, "It is basically dishonest. There is no doubt that the man who with *Joseph Andrews* made the factual pretense an honored part of fiction . . . has marketed a piece in which the factual pretense hopes to pass as fact itself—along with the very thin thirteen percent of the pamphlet which actually is so" (224). Indeed, the pamphlet does attempt to pass as fact, but its value lies in its dishonesty. The text's "dishonesty," its rhetorical style, and its tone provide a means of reading Fielding's fears and intentions. Terry Castle, whose argument I will discuss later, claims that Fielding's construction of Hamilton is a means of diminishing her threat to masculinity, but I argue that Fielding's fictionalization of Hamilton actually opens up a

¹¹ None of the other texts presents this possibility because we have no competing facts about the female husbands with which to compare to the narratives. I also want to acknowledge that the newspaper accounts of Mary Hamilton are constructions too, so I do not mean to imply that they are fact. However, the information in the articles and the style of them illustrates that they are more interested in telling the "facts" of her story than in constructing a fictional version of her.

space for transgression and subversion that did not exist in the newspaper articles detailing her exploits.¹²

Mary Hamilton's story first appeared in Boddely's *Bath Journal*. Other newspapers then printed her story, using the details of the original publication. Although Fielding's cousin was consulted in the case to determine what crime Hamilton could be charged with and what punishment she could receive, Fielding presumably gathered the facts of her case from the newspaper accounts.¹³ The first brief article (22 September 1746) focuses on Hamilton's passing as a doctor and states that the writer has little knowledge of her involvement with women but promises more in the next article. The second article, published on 29 September, includes her name, her alias and place of birth. The third and final article, published on 3 November 1746, provides more detail: Hamilton was accused of marrying 14 wives, the last of whom was Mary Price; they were married for about 3 months, and Price assumed that her husband was a man because, according to Price, Hamilton "us[ed] certain vile and deceitful Practices, not fit to be mentioned." The remainder of the article discusses her punishment: she was convicted under the vagrancy act for fraud and was sentenced to be publicly whipped in four towns and imprisoned for six months; all of the punishments were carried out. We know little else of Mary Hamilton. We lack such important information as her motivation for cross-

¹² Sheridan Baker's article convincingly credited this otherwise anonymous pamphlet to Fielding and opened the door for more scholarship on the pamphlet. For more on *The Female Husband* see Terry Castle, "Matters Not Fit to Be Mentioned: Fielding's *The Female Husband*," *ELH* 49 (1982): 607. Emma Donoghue *Passions Between Women* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993) 73-80; Lynne Friedli, "'Passing Women'—A Study of Gender Boundaries in the Eighteenth-century," *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*, ed. G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina UP, 1988): 234-260; and Susan Lanser, "Sapphic Picaresque, Sexual Difference and the Challenges of Homo-adventuring," *Textual Practice* 15 (2001): 251-268.

¹³ For a detailed account of how it is assumed Fielding gathered his information, see Baker, "Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband*: Fact and Fiction."

dressing, whether her interest in her fourteen wives (if indeed there were fourteen) was sexual, monetary, or both, and whether any of her wives knew she was a woman before or after they married her.¹⁴ Since the motivation for cross-dressing seems to be a key element in determining how eighteenth-century society responded to masculine women, knowing why Hamilton cross-dressed is important to interpreting how she would be read by society. Lacking this information, Fielding creates his own reasons for Hamilton's cross-dressing as well as her motivations for wooing various women, and importantly, he silences the most destabilizing aspects of her gender transgression: her sexual activity with women. These moments are always glossed over with a stock phrase about not being able to discuss them for the sake of decency.

Although it is not clear why Fielding chose to write about a female husband, and make her a mock hero, Sheridan Baker speculates that his primary motivation for writing the pamphlet was monetary (223). However, his financial motivation does not account for the *kinds* of changes, (mostly in the form of additions), that Fielding made to fictionalize the story, nor does this foreclose a discussion of the inherent ideology imbedded within his retelling of Hamilton's story. Terry Castle argues that, "*The Female Husband* says more of Fielding himself—and certain characteristic projections of eighteenth-century masculine fantasy—than of its ostensible female 'subject'" (607). This seems quite accurate, especially given the way in which Fielding frames Hamilton's story. He adds many other details, including her first sexual experience with a woman, her marriages prior to Mary Price, and all the details of those courtships. The more significant additions that he makes reflect his deep investment in a naturalized sex/gender

¹⁴ Of course, her wives could not admit whether they knew she was a woman, but sometimes such knowledge is discussed in female husband texts.

system, and a fear that cross-dressed women may be legitimate sexual competitors of men, that they may usurp male privilege, and that they may corrupt innocent women, either by wooing them or by encouraging them to cross-dress also.

While some of Fielding's changes exhibit a commitment to ensuring that heterosexuality prevails in the end, some of the other changes are humorous, leading some critics to assume that Fielding was amused, not threatened, by Hamilton. Among some of these alterations are changing Hamilton's birthplace from Somerset to the Isle of Man and creating an elderly widow named Mrs. Rushford (evoking William Congreve's Lady Wishfort) who is overly anxious to get married. But the ideological framework of the pamphlet and Fielding's concerns about heteronormative genders reveal his deep investment in heteronormativity. Fielding attempts to defuse Hamilton's challenge to naturalized genders by silencing aspects of her sexuality and by making her an object of male desire, reworking her into a heterosexual framework. Likewise, his mock-heroic presentation of her serves as a means of disavowing her attempts to perform masculinity.¹⁵ Because she is depicted as a mock hero, we are encouraged to laugh at Hamilton and by extension laugh at her performance of masculinity. Thus, Fielding's recounting of Hamilton's story reflects both a fear of the masculine woman and a belittling of her attempts to perform a gender that does not 'naturally' belong to her.

The opening line of *The Female Husband* establishes Fielding's ideological purposes in writing, and it reveals Fielding's underlying fear of female husbands present throughout the pamphlet. Fielding begins the story of Mary Hamilton not with a discussion of her, but rather with an exposition of, as he sees it, the natural drive toward

¹⁵ For more on Fielding's use of the mock-heroic in *The Female Husband*, especially in light of his other works, see Baker, "Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband*: Fact and Fiction."

heterosexuality: “That propense inclination which is for very wise purposes implanted in the one sex for the other, is not only necessary for the continuance of the human species; but is, at the same time, when govern’d and directed by virtue and religion, productive not only of corporeal delight, but of the most rational felicity” (29). *The Female Husband*, then, is a pamphlet about heterosexuality gone awry—a fear of what happens when carnal appetites are not governed. In claiming that an attraction for the opposite sex is “implanted” in each person, Fielding suggests that everyone is born heterosexual; thus heterosexuality is privileged as natural and therefore as the only legitimate sexuality. Yet, at the same time that he claims heterosexuality is natural, he also acknowledges that it must be compulsory and strictly enforced; otherwise it might descend into something unnatural, such as homosexuality or some other deviant sexual practice. In order to prevent such deviations from the norm, Fielding states that one’s sexuality must have “prudent and secure guides”—those being “virtue and religion”—otherwise “there is no excess and disorder which they [our carnal appetites] are not liable to commit . . . nothing monstrous and unnatural, which they are not capable of inventing, nothing so brutal and shocking which they have not actually committed” (29). Fielding’s gloomy configuration seems to suggest that practicing something other than heterosexuality is more likely than practicing the sexuality supposedly “implanted” in each person. From the start, we see the tension between the reality of human behavior and Fielding’s attempt to maintain naturalized gender norms.

Judith Butler’s theory of heterosexuality’s function and the attempts to maintain its privileged position as the “original” is particularly relevant to understanding Fielding’s theorization of gender and heterosexuality. Butler disputes the argument that

heterosexualized genders are original or primary genders and that cross-dressing or drag is merely mimicking or imitating heterosexuality. She argues that there is no original gender but only an imitation that produces the “notion of the original,” and that heterosexualized genders imitate a “phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity” (21). These identities are “performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitations” (21). In other words, Butler argues that there is no “original” gender and sexuality. Rather, all genders, especially heterosexualized ones, are always a performance, and they always imitate prior performances. Since each subsequent gender performance is an attempt to mimic previous ones, there is never an original, there are just imitations of imitations. Heterosexualized genders must always be imitating themselves through repetitive performances in order to maintain the notion that there is a primary gender they are mimicking. The idea that everyone seems to be doing it—performing heterosexualized genders—becomes the “evidence” that heterosexualized genders are natural or originary. Finally, as Butler argues: “Indeed, in its efforts to naturalize itself as the original, heterosexuality must be understood as a compulsive and compulsory repetition that can only produce the *effect* of its own originality; in other words, compulsory heterosexual identities, those ontologically consolidated phantasms of ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ are theatrically produced effects that posture as grounds, origins, the normative measure of the real” (21). These theatrically produced effects are what Hamilton imitates, but Fielding insists they are the “real” of masculinity, belonging only to men.

This disconnect between positioning heterosexuality as natural and original, but also insisting upon compulsory performances (with punishments for those who fail to

conform) illustrates the tension in Fielding's logic in the opening sentences. If heterosexuality and heterosexualized genders are implanted in each sex, then why must these genders be guided by an outside force, indeed even a human construct, such as religion? If the opening passage is read in light of Butler's theory, it becomes clear that gender performances must adhere to strict guidelines and each performance must imitate other performances in order for heterosexuality to appear to be "implanted in one sex for the other" or to *appear* to be the "original." The idea that gender and sexuality are "governed and directed," to use Fielding's words, again corresponds to Butler's theory. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," she argues that gender performances are scripted: "The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it" (526). Those who do not perform according to the script are governed and directed, or as Mary Hamilton's experiences show, punished.

The Female Husband demonstrates precisely these punitive measures for "unscripted" performances. First, it publicizes Hamilton's punishment: she was whipped in four towns and imprisoned for six months for cross-dressing and marrying women. Second, the pamphlet itself serves a regulatory function. By situating Hamilton's story within the confines of a cautionary tale, Fielding attempts to (re)enforce gender norms and warn other women that they too will be punished if they stray outside the "script" of heteronormativity. Fielding states this quite explicitly at the end of the pamphlet: "But it is hoped that this example will be sufficient to deter all others from the commission of any such foul and unnatural crimes: for which, if they should escape the shame and ruin

which they so well deserve in this world, they will be most certain of meeting with their full punishment in the next” (51). Thus, punishment for gender and sexual outlaws exceeds even this world and haunts female husbands in the afterlife too. Several of the texts I discuss in this chapter also employ these admonitory tactics to ensure that the “script” of female homoeroticism does not continue. By focusing on the individual’s performance (what caused her to be a female husband? how did she accomplish it? was she foreign? was she repentant?), rather than focusing on the phenomenon of female husbands, the authors make the performers the center of attention. The performers can then be cast aside as anomalies and the larger phenomenon of female husbands is ignored and silenced. Since, according to Butler, the “script,” not the actors (here female husbands), survives, focusing on the individual woman allows knowledge of female husbands to be controlled because it suggests that the individual is anomalous, and she is not linked to a larger group of women who are also female husbands. Female husbands, then, become actors in a kind of “closet drama” for whom only those in the know (those who are aware of or who are female husbands), know of the performance. Making female husbands anomalies ensures that the only “script” that prevails is heterosexuality.

Terry Castle, however, reads Fielding’s approach differently, and she sees the ideological underpinnings of Fielding’s work as indicative of a tension between his commitment to a naturalized heterosexuality and his fondness for masquerade. She mentions Fielding’s own “playful impulses,” his “desire for mischief” (617) and his casting of Charlotte Charke in breeches roles (cross-dressed, male roles) in his own plays from 1736 to 1737 as evidence of his support for performativity and even for the cross-dressed woman. However, an affinity for playful performances and cross-dressed

actresses does not equate to an acceptance of cross-dressed women, who use such performances offstage to usurp male privilege and engage in sex with women. In fact, Fielding's casting of Charke sometimes functioned as a means of bringing the male character's masculinity *into question*.¹⁶ For example, in *The Historical Register* Charke plays an auctioneer named Mr. Hen whom other characters in the play link to the well-known eighteenth-century castrato, Farinelli. Thus, Mr. Hen, as his name and as the allusion to the castrato suggests, is not fully a man.¹⁷ Charke, therefore, brings *femininity* to the role of Mr. Hen, as opposed to the role merely imbuing her with masculinity. Although I agree with Castle that Fielding appreciated theatricality, I disagree with the notion that Fielding condones Hamilton's performance of masculinity, since he sometimes used cross-dressed actresses to question a character's masculinity (not necessarily to suggest that masculinity could be performed by women) and because Hamilton's masculinity is a performance that occurs offstage and out of the safe confines of a controlled theatrical space. Female masculinity on the stage is a very different performance and is often read differently from female masculinity offstage.

Castle, however, argues that Fielding is intrigued by Hamilton's theatricality precisely because it is part of her everyday performance; it is not just a stage act. Moreover, she foregrounds Hamilton's theatricality as an issue in which Fielding was personally interested:

¹⁶ Besides the role mentioned below, Charke also played the role of Lord Place in Fielding's *Pasquin*, a satirical character based on Charke's father, Colley Cibber. Since Fielding was satirizing Cibber and since Cibber's masculinity had been satirized by others, Charke's casting in this role further develops the effeminacy of this character. That she was Cibber's daughter also adds to Fielding's satire of him.

¹⁷ The character of Mr. Hen is based on the real-life auctioneer Christopher Cock. The name change from Cock to Hen was meant to develop the connection between the castrato and the auctioneer (Campbell 37). Jill Campbell discusses Mr. Hen and his "castrated" status in greater detail in her *Natural Masques: Gender and Identity in Fielding's Plays and Novels*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995): 27-48.

Fielding realizes [Hamilton] is also a marvel of theatricality—theatricality transferred into the mundane realm of everyday life . . . She embodies theatrical values in her own person—the hallucinatory primacy of costume over ‘identity,’ the suspension of so-called ‘natural’ categories, sexual release, the notion that anything is possible. One need hardly reiterate at this point that Fielding was himself drawn to these values. (617-18)

Although Hamilton certainly does embody theatrical values, Fielding does not endorse Hamilton’s behavior in *The Female Husband*. Perhaps he was amused by or even admired Hamilton’s ability to play the part of a man, in a theatrical sense, but based on the language of the text, Fielding is not amused by the reality of her performance and its real world, offstage consequences, which threaten men’s authority over women. One of the realities of her offstage performance is that no one can know for sure when he or she is observing a man’s or a woman’s performance of masculinity; whereas the artifice of the theatre allows the audience to distinguish between reality and a play. Though an actress might have cross-dressed, her actual gender was rarely unknown to the audience, since the billing would list her name. The offstage cross-dressed woman, however, could circulate undetected in the public realm, and the longer she went undetected the more her performance challenged the notion that masculinity was an innate quality of men only. This is precisely what troubles Fielding.

In “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” Judith Butler expounds upon the differences between a staged performance and a non-staged performance and argues that while a cross-dressed performer on stage may elicit pleasure, that same cross-dressed

person can compel “fear, rage, even violence” if we encounter that person in our own lives:

In the theatre, one can say, ‘this is just an act,’ and de-realize the act, make acting into something quite distinct from what is real. Because of this distinction, one can maintain one’s sense of reality in the face of this temporary challenge to our existing ontological assumptions about gender arrangements; the various conventions which announce that ‘this is just a play’ allow strict lines to be drawn between the performance and life. On the street or in the bus, the act becomes dangerous, if it does, precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act. (527)

This bifurcated response to a theatrical versus a real performance, I argue, more accurately reflects the contrast between Fielding’s treatment of Hamilton in *The Female Husband* and his use of cross-dressed actresses in his plays. Fielding could de-realize actresses’ performances, such as Charke’s, because they were part of a carefully controlled, scripted performance that existed in a closed, fictional space. But Mary Hamilton’s performance of masculinity circulated well beyond the confines of the theatre.

There are moments when Fielding appears to sympathize with Hamilton, but these moments also serve his agenda. For example, when Fielding discusses Hamilton’s punishment, a whipping, he objectifies Hamilton and draws attention to her female-sexed body: “These whippings she has accordingly undergone, and very severely have they been inflicted, insomuch, that those persons who have more regard to beauty than to justice, could not refrain from exerting some pity toward her, when they saw so lovely a

skin scarified with rods” (50). From this account, one might conclude that Fielding had actually observed the whipping, but he did not. Instead, he is an imaginary voyeur, detailing a female body being scourged with phallic-like rods. He fantasizes what her exposed body would look like, and he encourages his readers to do the same. A seemingly sympathetic portrayal of Hamilton, such as this one, serves to titillate male readers and defuse Hamilton’s masculinity, rather than encourage readers to appreciate her performance of masculinity.

This seemingly sympathetic tone must be read in context with the vast majority of the text, which is unmistakably critical of her. Fielding states that, “unnatural affections are equally vicious and equally detestable in both sexes, nay, if modesty be the peculiar characteristick of the fair sex, it is in them most shocking and odious to prostitute and debase it” (51). Thus, women are held to a higher moral standard than men and have farther to fall when they violate the codes of gender and sexuality. At the end of the text, Fielding offers the following justification for his pamphlet: “In order to caution therefore that lovely sex, which, while they preserve their natural innocence and purity, will still look most lovely in the eyes of men, the above pages have been written” (51). This statement reveals his anxiety about female masculinity and belies the argument that Fielding condones female masculinity offstage. The text has come full-circle and returns to the opening language that casts gender and sexuality in terms of “nature.” Although Fielding claims he wrote to caution women, it seems an equally important reason for his writing the pamphlet was to ensure that women will always be perceived as the object of men’s desire and men’s control. While women may stand to benefit from performing masculinity by gaining sexual partners and money, men gain nothing. Therefore,

Fielding writes to ensure that masculinity remains the possession of men, so that men retain their power and control over women. Masculinity belongs to men and women belong to men too, since they should be focused on looking “lovely in the eyes of men” and not looking lovely in the eyes of women. This framing of the text suggests that Fielding must feel some threat to masculinity, if he needs to remind women whom they are *supposed* to find attractive.

Fielding’s anxiety about the consequences of female masculinity for men are evident in several revealing passages that express a fear of female husbands as sexual competitors. The first appears when Fielding describes Hamilton’s courting of the elderly widow Mrs. Rushford. He confesses that women are more adept than men at understanding other women, particularly in the act of wooing: “It has been observed that women know more of one another than the wisest men (if ever such have been employed in the study) have with all their art been capable of discovering. It is therefore no wonder that these hints were quickly perceived and understood by the female gallant” (37). Fielding probably intends this to be a backhanded compliment; women may understand each other better, but that is because men do not bother to “study” women. Nevertheless, this statement implies that women have a connection with and knowledge of each other that even the best of men cannot match, suggesting that women could court other women more successfully than men could. Fielding also implies that women’s advantage over men extends to sexual expertise, given Mrs. Rushford’s satisfaction with Hamilton after only three days of marriage: “the bride expressed herself so well satisfied with her choice, that being in company with another old lady, she exulted so much in her happiness, that her friend began to envy her, and could not forbear inveighing against

effeminacy in men; upon which a discourse arose between the two ladies, not proper to be repeated” (38). This stock phrase—something is not proper to be repeated—serves as a code for sex throughout the text, reflecting the silencing of sexual discourse. The supposition that Hamilton, and women in general, possess more knowledge of each other than men do of women, is evident in Mrs. Rushford’s gushing approval of Hamilton’s performance in bed. Although Fielding encourages the reader to laugh at this incident (because of the hearty sexual appetite of a sixty-eight year old woman and because she cannot distinguish between a man and a woman), the passage nevertheless reflects Fielding’s fears about female husbands, most notably because he did not need to make any of these confessions about female husbands as competitors with men. Mrs. Rushford and Hamilton’s sexual prowess are purely Fielding’s inventions.

In another scene, Fielding establishes Hamilton’s sexual prowess in her relationship with Mary Price, whose mother questions whether her husband is “in any degree less a man than the rest of his neighbours” (48). Price’s response is silenced; however, we do get her mother’s response: “[Price] asserted some things which staggered her mother’s belief, and made her cry out, O child, there is no such thing in human nature” (48). It is not entirely clear what Price told her mother, but it is likely she mentioned Hamilton’s dildo or the conflicting aspects of Hamilton’s anatomy (that she has a female body, but is able to engage in intercourse with Price). Ironically, although this passage is silent about Hamilton’s sexual activity, it also discloses her success in performing masculinity, since she can fashion a masculine identity that is larger than life, so to speak. Even though her sexual performance may be “artificial,” it nevertheless satisfies her wives; none are said to discover her sex because she performs poorly in bed.

Thus, Fielding creates a fictional scenario whereby he imbues Hamilton with a virility many men would envy.

It seems odd that Fielding would construct Hamilton as more pleasing to women than men are, but he actually emphasizes the advantages and allure of a compromised masculinity, whether he intends to or not, in other texts.¹⁸ Fielding explores the attraction of a castrated man in *The Historical Register* (1736), suggesting that he has more than a passing interest in compromised masculinity. In the beginning of act two of *The Historical Register*, several women converse about the opera and the performance of the castrato Farinello, a fictional version of the castrato Farinelli. One of the ladies says, “He’s every Thing in the World one could wish” (24). Another lady replies, “Almost every Thing one could wish” (24). As the conversation continues, the ladies speculate about rumors that Farinello has fathered children. Even as they mock his impotence (saying his children are made of wax), they are also intrigued by his compromised access to phallic power. One woman wishes to run away with him and his wax children. Interestingly, his effeminacy, coupled with the fact that he is not sexually threatening, makes him titillating to these women—just as Hamilton is to her wives. Jill Campbell argues that, “[I]n the real or imagined responses of women to them, the castrati provided a rare opening in the normally monolithic entity of masculinity in which to explore—whether with wishfulness, fear, or denunciation—complexities or contradictions in women’s relation to the phallus . . . [T]his scene articulate[s] what it would mean for a woman to prefer a man without the sexual use of his penis” (30). If some women

¹⁸ In this instance, I am using “compromised masculinity” to refer to the way in which Fielding represents a woman or man who lacks a penis. Presumably, such a person would lack the ability to perform sexually; obviously, this is not the case, given other possibilities and accoutrements. Thus, I emphasize the use of this term as *Fielding’s* representation.

preferred a man without a penis or preferred a female husband, such a desire affects normative masculinity and the nation. Indeed, Fielding expresses these concerns when Medley responds to Sourwit's questioning of whether Farinello has fathered children: "Upon my Word, Sir, 'tis Fact . . . I take it to be ominous; for if we go on to improve in Luxury, Effeminacy and Debauchery, as we have done lately, the next Age, for ought I know, may be more like the Children of squeaking *Italians* than hardy *Britons*" (25). Although I will not go so far to suggest that Medley is Fielding's mouthpiece, his comments nevertheless reflect anxieties present in many of Fielding's works, most especially the notion that effeminacy is a threat to the strength of an otherwise burly Britain.

The intriguing compromised masculinity of Farinello mirrors the masculinity Fielding constructs for Mary Hamilton. Fielding himself makes the link between the masculinity of a castrato and Hamilton's masculinity in a letter to her from one of her failed conquests. The woman writes that when Hamilton has recovered from her cold she "might sing as well as *Farinelli*, from the great resemblance there is between your persons" (36). Fielding likely intends this comparison to be funny, since the woman rejects Hamilton's advances, suggesting that she is no more appealing than a castrated man. However, Fielding has Hamilton say to her second wife that, "she would have all the pleasures of marriage without the inconveniences" (42), implying that a pregnancy and perhaps a penis are inconvenient. In other words, there are advantages to the masculinity she offers, and some women may find it appealing. The notion that women could find female masculinity appealing, indeed even more appealing than the masculinity men perform, is a fear present throughout *The Female Husband* and, I argue,

is the subtext of the silenced passages. What the text hints at, but never discusses openly, is the possibility that some of Hamilton's lovers may have known she was a woman, and stayed with her because they found female masculinity appealing.

Since most of the text is fictional, Fielding himself is the one who plays out the possibility that Hamilton's lovers might have known she was a woman. Before Mary Hamilton's marriage to Mary Price (the last of her wives), Fielding constructs a scenario in which everyone must either know Hamilton is a woman or everyone must believe that masculinity is not an inherently male quality. Shortly before her marriage to Price, Hamilton's breasts are accidentally exposed during a quarrel, yet, according to Fielding "it did not bring [Hamilton's] sex into an absolute suspicion" (47). Some of the older women "whispered" about Hamilton, implying they realized she was a woman. But Fielding also claims that Price's mother was "extremely pleased" that Hamilton married her daughter, suggesting she did not know Hamilton was a woman. Fielding exculpates Price from any knowledge whatsoever of Hamilton's sex by claiming that her innocence prevented her from knowing anything, even though she is the only one who had access to the most information. That the exposure of Hamilton's breasts was not sufficient evidence to reveal her sex reflects a deep investment in gender norms. Price's mother dismisses Hamilton's corporeality because it does not conform to her gender performance. But what of the women who whispered about Hamilton? They seem at least to suspect Hamilton is a woman, but in Fielding's story, they do not act upon that knowledge. And what of the actual woman Hamilton married? Was she as innocent as Fielding's character or did she knowingly marry a female husband? In Fielding's account of Hamilton, it is safer for those who viewed her body to maintain the belief that

she is a man, rather than ponder the implications of a woman who could often convincingly perform masculinity. Ironically, society's own strict adherence to naturalized genders enables Fielding's Hamilton to perform masculinity successfully. The other way of reading this scene is that everyone knew Hamilton was a woman, but let the marriage go forward anyway. Either way, Fielding constructs a scene where women accept female masculinity, even find it attractive, despite the fact that it does not emanate from a male body. Although this text may contain puns and jokes about Hamilton, Fielding nevertheless constructs a scenario whereby women, like the ladies in *The Historical Register*, play out their interest in a masculinity that is not connected to a male body.

As I have argued here, Fielding's fictionalization of Mary Hamilton's story illustrates the ways in which female masculinity challenges natural gender roles, and it reveals Fielding's fears of female masculinity, especially female husbands. However, Terry Castle suggests that Fielding fictionalizes Hamilton's story in order to *diminish* the threat that she poses: "Making Hamilton over into a 'fictive' personage is a way of transferring the troubling historical facts of female transvestism and homosexuality into the safe realm of literature" (608). This is partially true. Despite claims to the contrary on the frontispiece, Hamilton no more tells her own story than does Richardson's Pamela. Even though Hamilton was a real person and Pamela is a fictional character, the texts are similar in that each author positions himself as a transcriber or editor who merely tells a young woman's "true" story. Castle also argues that in making Hamilton into a literary character, Fielding exercises complete authority over her as a subject. In doing so, he maintains control, thereby preserving his masculinity while diminishing or eliminating

hers: “The prose of *The Female Husband* is bowdlerized, ‘emasculated’; and Hamilton herself, the subject of this prose, is an emblem of emasculation” (Castle 610). As examples, Castle cites some of the silences regarding Hamilton’s sexual activities, and that even on the level of pronouns, Fielding makes light of Hamilton’s masculinity. In one paragraph, he refers to Hamilton as both he and she: “[Hamilton] 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” (35, emphases mine). According to Castle, Fielding places her in a safe context by trivializing Hamilton’s masculinity and relegating her to the confines of fiction. Thus, his text functions just like a closed theatrical space, where he can manipulate her performance of masculinity and *attempt* to render it less threatening to him and to other male readers.

Despite these efforts, though, there are moments in the text where the threat that a female husband poses cannot be eliminated by the confines of literature. Although Fielding attempts to reign in Hamilton’s masculinity and sexuality by writing her life story, there are gaps, fissures, moments in the text where Hamilton’s performance exceeds Fielding’s own control and reveals more about masculinity itself than her inability to perform it. Each time Fielding relates the details of Hamilton’s relationships with women, he builds to a climax and then coyly silences what transpired between the women. At the same time that Fielding silences the most controversial aspects of Hamilton’s activities, he also, by the very publication of the pamphlet, contributes to the proliferation of discourse about female husbands. Fielding may intend, as he claims in the pamphlet, to deter other women from becoming or succumbing to female husbands, but he has no control over how his pamphlet will be read and used. Thus, his attempt to

silence some of the discourse surrounding female husbands is not entirely effective. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argues that this is precisely what began to occur in the eighteenth century and continued into the nineteenth century; he terms this phenomenon the “incitement to discourse.” Foucault also discusses the function of silence within discourse and how it relates to power: “Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance” (101). It is debatable whether Fielding’s text suggests “areas of tolerance,” but the silences do loosen Fielding’s hold on power because they cede power to the reader. By leaving gaps in his discourse, Fielding allows the reader to create or fantasize what two women can do in bed, and the reader’s imagination may actually exceed the reality. In this way, readers fill the gaps with their own discourse, wrenching control of the text away from Fielding.

Fielding attempts to disguise his discomfort with female husbands by employing a recurrent catchphrase for sex between women (or the discussion of sex) with a variety of phrases that include something “not fit to be mentioned.” This phrase comes right out of the *Bath Journal* account of 3 November 1746. Although the *Bath Journal* article obliquely referred to her use of a dildo, it exceeded decency to mention in the article how she was able to fool all the women she married. Fielding replicates the standard set by the newspaper supposedly to preserve the decency of his female readers. He first uses this phrase in reference to Hamilton’s first sexual encounter with a woman, Anne Johnson: “Their conversation, therefore, soon became in the highest manner criminal, and

transactions not fit to be mention'd past between them" (31). The first part of this statement is rather telling, even if it does not tell us exactly what they discussed. That two women can have a discussion about sex that is "criminal" speaks to the power of discourse itself and the power female husbands have to disrupt and threaten heterosexuality. There are at least four other instances where Fielding silences a discussion of sex between women. Although I think that Fielding uses "conversation" to suggest a verbal act, in the eighteenth century "conversation" also suggests sexual intercourse or intimacy, further suggesting the transgressive nature of the acts in which the women engaged. As the pattern repeats, even the most innocent reader must begin to suspect, by context, that Fielding uses this phrase to signal sex between women.¹⁹ Even if the reader cannot comprehend how such an act would play out, he or she would now be aware that such a possibility exists. In this way, Fielding's attempt to silence and prevent the existence of future female husbands is counterproductive. Given the mysterious way in which Fielding discusses sex between women, he would also likely pique the interest of his readers, rather than preclude their interest. Thus, as Foucault argues, silence is not the "absolute limit of discourse" but rather is "an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies" (27). Fielding may attempt to silence sex between women, but his coy discussion merely encourages further discourse. What did these women do? What can two women do together? How is it criminal?

¹⁹ In other passages, Fielding says that Hamilton intended to marry the old widow and "deceive her by means which decency forbids me even to mention" (37)—this passage is followed by Hamilton not having the "wherewithal" about her to sexually satisfy her wife. This same widow discusses her satisfaction with a friend which is reported as, "a discourse arose between the two ladies, not proper to be repeated, if I knew every particular" (38).

As Fielding details the case brought against Mary Hamilton, he presents the most shocking aspect of Hamilton's story under a veil of silence. After Hamilton is arrested, Fielding tells us that, "something of too vile, wicked, and scandalous a nature, which was found in the Doctor's trunk, [was] produced in evidence against her" (49). Undoubtedly, he is referring to a dildo, since an earlier passage alludes to Hamilton's use of one. In this earlier passage about the elderly widow, Fielding reports an instance where Hamilton was not able to oblige the widow's advances because she "[had] not the *wherewithal* about her" (39). The *wherewithal*, which Fielding emphasizes, is surely her dildo. He uses "wherewithal" because of its amusing correlation to a poem that he cites about a "more able husband than Mrs. Hamilton." The poem states, "The doctor understood the call,/But had not always wherewithal" (39). Emma Donoghue argues that Fielding compares Hamilton's problem to male impotence, and she asks "if all men are liable to drops in potency, is maleness itself a matter of flux, or luck?" (77). Although Fielding appears to be merely mocking Hamilton, he equates her situation to male impotence. Ironically, he presents Hamilton's performance of masculinity as akin to men's performance of masculinity because her virility is just as susceptible to periods of failure as is men's. In an odd move, Fielding demystifies masculinity and strips it of its power—not because of periods of impotence—but rather because it can be performed by a woman as well as or better than a man.

As the text comes to a close, Fielding informs the reader of his purpose in writing, but in explaining his purpose, he reveals a fear that any woman could become a female husband. He says that he silenced parts of the story so that he would not "shock" female readers and that he wrote to caution and deter women: "But it is hoped that this example

will be sufficient to deter all others from the commission of any such foul and unnatural crimes” (51). Essentially, he employs “ignorance effects,” whereby he promotes ignorance, under the guise of morality, as a means of controlling the public dissemination of knowledge about female husbands. However, the fact that he feels the need to “deter” women and not just caution them against the Mary Hamiltons of the world, implies a fear that more women may become female husbands or marry them. Emma Donoghue argues that framing the text in this way makes female homoeroticism situational: “But determent is an interesting concept; it implies that the readers are capable of, or even thinking of committing, the crime in question. So lesbian transvestism can be situational; it is a crime within any woman’s scope” (80). If being a female husband must be deterred through regulatory practices, then this challenges the opening argument of the pamphlet, which claims that heterosexuality is implanted in each sex—that women will naturally be attracted to men. Fielding also says that, “not a single word occurs throughout the whole, which might shock the most delicate ear, or give offense to the purest chastity” (51). This statement seems contradictory to his goal of deterring women from becoming female husbands. If female readers are not shocked, then Fielding’s text will not have served its purpose. If *The Female Husband* serves as a deterrent, it would do so because of the revelation that women might be marrying cross-dressed women and that women can engage in sex with other women. But if women are not shocked by what they read, then the notion of unwittingly marrying a woman and having sex with her is apparently not unappealing to women. Fielding contends that he silenced sexually explicit material to protect women’s chastity, yet *The Female Husband* instead contributes to the

proliferation of discourse. If women did not know about female husbands before its publication, some certainly would after its publication.

Fielding's concern with female husbands and their use of dildos, as well as the threat posed by their gender masquerade, surfaces in another one of his texts. Gender masquerade was especially unsettling to Fielding because it permitted one to become what he or she naturally was not. The following passage, taken from his poem *The Masquerade, A Poem*, is a satire in Swiftian form signed by "Lemuel Gulliver." In this poem, everything is turned upside down, roles are reversed, and it is a "heap of incoherencies" in which morals are disrupted (66). In this world of masquerade, the speaker encounters a lady who warns men that:

Your empire shortly will be ended;
Breeches our brawny thighs shall grace,
(Another Amazonian race.)
For when men women turn—why then
May women not be chang'd to men? (128-132)

In his discussion of this poem, Ronald Paulson argues that the metaphor of the masquerade reflects Fielding's belief that everyone is just playing a part in this world. The "acting" each person does allows him or her to be someone he or she is not. Paulson discusses this idea mostly in terms of class status: "A vulgar pleb might play a perfect gentleman as convincingly as the gentleman himself and so pass as morally and socially what he or she is not" (16). Although Paulson focuses mostly on class status, the dissembling associated with masquerade is especially disruptive when viewed in reference to gender. In a gender masquerade, a woman's ability to be someone she is not,

a man, fundamentally disrupts the social hierarchy. As this passage warns, if men abdicate their claim to masculinity, women will seize power in their wake. What was once merely a masquerade of gender reversal will become the all too real situation of a female-dominated society.

Fielding feared cross-dressing because it violated what Jill Campbell refers to as his belief in the expression of one's "interior self," a concept that suggests an authentic masculine self. In her reading of Fielding's *The Historical Register*, Campbell discusses the influence of fashion, particularly the effeminate styles from France and Italy, which Fielding highlights in his play: "For Fielding, the pervasiveness of this force [fashion] threatens to empty the realm of authentic interior self, and even erodes the certainty with which a self possesses those presumably basic features of personal identity, gender and sexual desire" (43). Thus for Fielding, when women cross-dress, they are masking their authentic self, which is biologically female. In doing so, they maintain control over knowledge of their gender and sexuality. This masquerade is empowering because, armed with this knowledge, they are able to circulate within the public realm without others being aware of their gender or their potential interest in women. It is also empowering, and therefore troubling to society, because women have control over their own bodies. Therefore, no one can impose a gender, sexuality, or submissive role upon them.

If women who cross-dress understand gender to be merely a performance that is no more an authentic or true representation of self than the costumes one dons at a masquerade, then it is not inconceivable that they might also question the power invested in the phallus. In other words, if masculinity is not the sole property of men, then might

women obtain the authority of the phallus and the penis itself (or other manifestations of it)? Female husbands bring this fear to reality. When Fielding compares Hamilton's not having the "wherewithal" about her to male impotence, his analogy unmasks the exchangeability of the penis, and its phallic authority, for a dildo. As Hamilton proves, the penis can be "reproduced" on female bodies and can perform and fail, just as a man's penis does. Such a revelation disrupts the "nature" of heteronormativity. The exchangeability of the penis for a dildo as phallus and women's access to male power is what *The Female Husband* explores. Despite his efforts, Fielding does not shore-up the connection between men and masculinity. Instead, he illustrates the permeability of this connection and the tenuous nature of male power.

Fielding's concerns about masculinity and his belief that cross-dressing belies one's authentic self—or makes one a pretender—are also linked to his critique of Jacobitism. Since Jacobites elicit a nationalist response from (many) readers and since they pose a greater threat to England than female husbands do, linking female husbands to Jacobitism further discredits the Jacobite cause (as well as female husbands) and elevates the threat female husbands pose to England. Fielding wrote several anti-Jacobite texts, most notably *The Jacobite's Journal*. His erroneous reference to Hamilton's alias as George Hamilton, instead of Charles Hamilton (as it appeared in court proceedings) was likely, according to Sheridan Baker, a reference to a Jacobite captain who was tried the day before Mary Hamilton for his participation in a Jacobite uprising.²⁰ In *The Jacobite's Journal*, Fielding links female husbands to nationalist concerns by adopting the persona of a Jacobite, John Trott-Plaid, who seeks to explain Jacobite beliefs. In the process, Trott-Plaid reveals the threat Jacobites pose not only to England but also to

²⁰ Baker 222, note 29.

gender roles. Of course, the Trott-Plaid persona is satiric and everything he says serves as an indictment of the Jacobite cause. A woodcut, which appears on the cover of the first twelve numbers of the journal, depicts John Trott-Plaid riding an ass with his wife on the back; she is yelling and wielding a large sword pointing straight up in the air. Despite the fact that she is behind her husband, the phallic significance of the sword and her aggressive posture cannot be missed. From the outset, Fielding uses the *Journal* to link Jacobitism and female masculinity and he eventually extends this connection to include female husbands.

In the second issue of the journal, Trott-Plaid introduces us to his wife and discusses their relationship, which appears to be a husband/female husband relationship. Mrs. Trott-Plaid is described as having a “most Masculine Spirit” and she is “as ready to draw her Pen as her Sword in the Service [to Jacobites]” (100). In her masculinity and loyal Jacobitism, Mrs. Trott-Plaid sounds much like Jenny Cameron. As her husband continues the description, it becomes clear that her “Masculine Spirit” also extends to her rule over her husband. He informs us that she proclaims her equality with men and that, though he did initially protest, he has now submitted to his wife. Given her dominion over her husband and her phallic power, Mrs. Trott-Plaid is depicted as a kind of female husband, albeit a different type of one. Although she is technically a wife, she resembles a female husband. Her masculinity is not limited to her dominion over her husband or her desire to advocate and fight for the Jacobite cause; her masculinity is also evident in her appearance. Jacobite women were frequently attacked for their lack of femininity and beauty, and Fielding’s depiction is no different. He describes Mrs. Trott-Plaid as attempting to determine the proper Jacobite emblems women might wear “without

making any Female Jacobite uglier than she is at present” (101). In short, Mrs. Trott-Plaid figuratively wears the breeches in this relationship, extending the fear of female husbands ostensibly to include heterosexual women.

Mrs. Trott-Plaid’s disruption of heteronormative gender roles establishes her masculinity and contributes, to some degree, to her husband’s emasculation and, as Fielding suggests, to his homoerotic desires. It is not clear whether her masculinity is the catalyst for his effeminacy or vice versa, but the queer gender roles depicted here enable each other. In an amusing conclusion to this number of the journal, Trott-Plaid metaphorically describes his desire to give other Jacobite men and women an opportunity to write for the journal. Returning to the frontispiece woodcut as symbolic of their authoring of the journal, Trott-Plaid states that “my Wife will dismount herself for a Day, in order to give her Place to the Lady, who shall ride behind me, ornamented with her own Devices: And this Justice I faithfully promise to perform with great Exactness to the Male Part of the Species, who shall intitle themselves to fill my Saddle, and mount the generous Beast in the Frontispiece” (102). Since Fielding frequently refers to the ass on the woodcut as symbolic of Jacobites, we can read Trott-Plaid as this ass or “Beast.” If Trott-Plaid is the “Beast,” then he asks other men may to “mount” and “fill [his] saddle.” In a discussion of other references in the journal to the woodcut, Jill Campbell develops the link between Jacobitism, emasculation and homoeroticism:

Jacobite men are not only identified with ‘*that Ass which we exhibited so many Weeks in his Plaid, at the Head of this Paper,*’ but also ridiculed as ‘bare-ars’d’ (in Highland dress), at once unmanly because ‘*unbreeched*’ and apparently open to the anal sexuality associated with Caligula. All these essays imagine anal

eroticism as necessarily sadomasochistic; and some specifically link the anal sexuality they diffusely attach to Jacobitism with a loss of phallic identity. (193)

Thus, Trott-Plaid and Jacobite men in general are so emasculated by their overbearing wives that they assume a subordinate position and welcome domination by other men. Fielding's depiction of Jacobite men calls to mind the description of the enervated and emasculated Charles Edward in *Memoirs of Jenny Cameron*. Through this characterization, Fielding represents Jacobitism not only as a political threat to the nation, but also as a threat to gender norms and heterosexuality. Jacobite men, then, willingly surrender their natural claim to power and authority afforded by their masculinity and yield that power to women.

With male Jacobites allowing women to seize the reins of power, female Jacobites are free to enter the public sphere, which disrupts the domestic sphere. Although men are associated with the public realm, they are supposed to control the domestic sphere. Once women begin to make forays into the world of masculinity and men, they challenge men's power in the home as well or so anti-Jacobite sentiment claims. Fielding plays out this threat in a fictitious letter to the editor in *The Jacobite's Journal* number 34. Simon Supple, a government employee and supporter of the Whig government, writes to Trott-Plaid bemoaning the state of his domestic affairs. When Supple's wife begins to take an interest in public matters, particularly the government, she abandons her gender role, usurping her husband's role and then espousing Jacobite beliefs. Supple says of his wife: "I observed that my Wife's Head had taken a political Turn; the Affairs of her Family began to be neglected; and notwithstanding we owed our entire Support to a genteel Post I enjoyed under the Government, I was compelled every Day at Table to hear that

Government abused” (350). His wife begins to author Jacobite-leaning pamphlets and as a result, he loses his post with the government. Fielding makes it clear that Supple, lacking in masculinity as his name suggests, cannot subdue his wife. Instead, his attempts to silence her interest in public affairs have the exact opposite effect. Once Supple loses his job, his wife seizes this opportunity to become the breadwinner—the man—of the family. Even Supple’s description of the event illustrates his wife’s control over him: “[She said] that I ought to look upon myself as the happiest of Men, in having a Head to my Family, who knew how to secure the Emoluments of a Husband by the very Means that must save her dearer Country from Destruction” to which Supple responds: “My Heart was overflowing with Comfort at these Assurances” (353). Indeed, Supple is so lacking in masculinity that he takes pleasure in knowing that someone is capable of being the husband. But in the conclusion to his letter, Supple informs us that he has been accused of being a Jacobite himself and that his wife’s pamphlet fails “from Want of Taste in the Public, or from a Knowledge that they are the Writings of a Woman” (354).

The lesson Supple’s story conveys is quite transparent. Men who lack the masculinity to be the head of their family will induce masculinity in women, and such a disruption of gender is linked to traitorous, Jacobite sentiments. In contrast, true Englishmen, who support the Hanoverian government, uphold the natural laws of gender. In Fielding’s configuration of the Supple household, the affairs of the domestic realm have a direct impact on the public sphere. Gender, then, works in conjunction with the public and private realms, and a transgression of gender has a ripple, or as Supple’s story suggests, a tidal wave effect on society. As both of these examples from *The Jacobite’s Journal* illustrate, Jacobitism may lead to gender transgression and gender transgression

may lead to Jacobitism. The two are interrelated, and the consequences and costs of each to eighteenth-century England are equally troubling, since they lead women to usurp men's roles and become female husbands, albeit heterosexual female husbands. In this way, Fielding conflates nationalist concerns with gender, which raises the stakes of gender and sexual transgression and suggests that being a traitor to one's gender is as dangerous as and is linked to being a traitor to one's country.

Satan's Harvest Home

The fear that effeminacy might lead to female masculinity or female homoeroticism is not the peculiar anxiety of Henry Fielding. Other texts published shortly after *The Female Husband* and *The Jacobite's Journal* express similar uneasiness with gender transgression and its tie to the influence of foreign nations. The anonymous *Satan's Harvest Home: or the Present State of Whorecraft, Adultery, Fornication, Procuring, Pimping, Sodomy and the Game at Flatts*²¹ details, as the title suggests, all the sexual sins of England. Toward the end of the text, the author devotes a section to "Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy, etc." wherein he²² rails against effeminacy in men, which he links to sodomy, and he worries that women may learn to be attracted to the same sex from men. In this text, the author links normative masculinity to female homoeroticism and female homoeroticism to becoming a female husband. However, the connection in *Satan's Harvest Home* functions differently than in the other texts. Here the anxiety is not so much about the effects of female masculinity on normative masculinity, though that is a concern of the author's, but rather about the consequences of

²¹ The game at flatts (also flats) refers to sex between women.

²² For the sake of simplicity, I am referring to the author as "he." I do not intend this usage to suggest that the author is necessarily a man.

effeminacy on femininity. Like the other texts I discuss, the author of this text also links fears about non-normative genders to an anxiety about the stability of the nation. In other words, genders and sexualities in flux place a nation at risk.

“Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy” opens with a very romanticized tale of how boys used to be educated and cultivated into men—before overbearing mothers effeminized them and turned them into future sodomites. This opening frame is amusing (though not intentionally so) because it reveals an author who is bitter, insecure, and fearful about the state of masculinity: “Our Fore-Fathers were train’d up to Arts and Arms; the Scholar embellish’d the Hero; and the fine Gentleman of former Days, was equally fit for the Council as the Camp” (45). Masculinity, as this passage tells us, used to be defined by men who were not only educated, but who were also able and willing to defend their country. The focus on serving the nation is reiterated in the next paragraph, when the author states that the well-developed boy will grow up to be a man who has “Abilities of Mind and Body, [that] render him capable of serving his King, his Country, and his Family” (46). Obviously, this configuration of masculinity is deeply entrenched in heterosexual gender norms and the patriarchy. Boys must grow up to be men who marry, who are the heads of their family, and who bravely defend their country.

The author then contrasts this older notion of masculinity to the current state of masculinity. Thematically, this section bears a striking similarity to the opening of Snell’s text in which the narrator bemoaned the “dastardly Age” of “Effeminacy and Debauchery.” However, unlike Snell’s narrator, this author does not position women as models of masculinity. Instead, masculine women are the problem. The author begins by suggesting that over-indulgent mothers smother their sons, submit them to the

company of women, and bar them from the sort of physical exercise that would allow boys' bodies to develop into men's bodies; in short, these boys are mamma's boys. The result is foppish men who, "unable to please the women, chuse rather to run into unnatural Vices one with another, than to attempt what they are but too sensible they cannot perform" (50). Although mothers are not described as masculine, they do rule over their son's education. Moreover, the mothers are described as having "set themselves to thinking, and got the upper-hand of our Petits Maitres . . . and are, in all Respects, fitter for the Management of publik and private Affairs, than the Milksops beforemention'd" (49). The author does not go so far as to suggest that women purposefully coddle boys so that they may get the upper hand, but the two work in conjunction with each other: mothers cultivate effeminate men and effeminate men allow women to have more power and more access to the public sphere, creating, to some degree, masculine women. This creates men, like Simon Supple, who are incapable of ruling over their family. The author then claims that, "the Father, instead of being the Head of the Family, makes it seem as if it were govern'd by two Women: For he has suck'd in the Spirit of *Cotqueanism* from his Infancy" (49). The *OED* defines a cotquean as a "coarse, vulgar, scolding woman" and as "a man who acts the housewife." According to the author, men have been suckling the milk of effeminacy from women, who act as if they are husbands instead of wives. Ultimately, this is question of origin: either effeminate men create female husband-type wives (like Simon Supple's), or female husband-type wives breed effeminate men. It really does not matter which was the catalyst, though, since effeminacy and female masculinity are both problems. The result

of these female husband-like mothers who rear effeminate sons is a nation of men susceptible to foreign influence and domination.

Although the author worries about the breeding of effeminacy on the home front, he also fears the infiltration of foreign culture as an effeminizing force. His criticism of effeminate men, whom he believes are rapidly increasing in numbers, is grounded in xenophobia. First, the author constructs Englishmen as influenced by foreign cultures and by women: “Master *Molly* has nothing to do but slip on his *Head Clothes* and he is an errant Woman, his rueful face excepted; but even that can be amended with Paint, which is as much in Vogue among our Gentlemen, as with the Ladies in *France*” (51). The author conflates gender and sex, marking men first as effeminate, “Master Molly,” and then as errant women, though interestingly not as errant men, as “molly” would suggest. In this configuration, Englishmen’s masculinity is so weak that merely changing clothes effects a change of sex. Obviously, Englishmen turning into women is problem enough, but their learning such behavior from France, a chief enemy, implies a cultural invasion with implications for the security of the nation. The suggestion is that once France displaces manly English culture with an effeminate foreign one France can overtake the nation. The author cites historical precedence to support his concern. He mentions Romans, who became taken with women singers, “which so softened their Youth, they quite lost the Spirit of Manhood, and with it their Empire” (56). Indeed, effeminacy puts the British Empire at risk. To bolster his claim, the author links effeminacy to a divine punishment, raising the stakes for gender transgression: “Have we not Sins enough of our own, but we must eke ‘em out with those of Foreign Nations, to fill up the Cup of our Abominations, and make us yet more ripe for Divine Vengeance”

(52). Apparently, there are certain national sins attributed to each nation and adopting the sins of other nations, notably France, will weaken England even from a divine perspective.

Having established the foundation of his argument against effeminacy, the author then links effeminacy to sodomy and sodomy to female homoeroticism. In making such a move, the author links the masculinity that men perform (or do not perform) to women in a way that no other author I discuss does. The other authors are concerned with the effect female masculinity has on normative masculinity, whether it compromises men's exclusive claim to masculinity, disrupts the notion of sex complementarity, etc. But in reversing this connection, this text serves as further evidence of the connection between the masculinity that men perform and the masculinity that women perform, particularly as that masculinity relates to homoeroticism (in men and women). *Satan's Harvest Home* illustrates how a lack of masculinity in men, induces homoeroticism in women. As with the previous passages, the author displaces the sin of effeminacy and sodomy outside of England:

But of all the Customs *Effeminacy* has produc'd, none more hateful, predominant, and pernicious, than that of the Men's *Kissing* each other. This *Fashion* was brought over from *Italy*, (the *Mother* and *Nurse* of *Sodomy*); where the *Master* is oftner *Intriguing* with his *Page*, than a *fair Lady*. And not only in that Country, but in *France*, which copies from them, the *Contagion* is diversify'd, and the *Ladies* (in the *Nuneries*) are criminally amorous of each other, in a Method too gross for Expression. I must be so partial to my own Country Women, to affirm, or, at least, hope they claim no Share of this Charge. (51)

The links the author makes here are clear: a mere kiss on the cheek between two men as a form of greeting is not a mere kiss because it comes from Italy, a country that nurtures sodomy. Then, the author moves north from Italy to France and from men to women, finding women there who, taking their cue from men, apparently engage in sex with one another. But we do not know what they do since, like Fielding, this author silences the women's actions. Although the author has no reservations about mentioning sex between men, sodomy, he finds sex between women less speakable, making female homoeroticism, it seems, more dangerous than sodomy. If effeminacy puts the Empire at stake, what effect does female homoeroticism have on the Empire? The author does not say, but his arguments suggest that it would fuel sodomy. Without women to woo, men would turn to men, just as sodomy taught women to turn to women. We can also surmise, given the author's fears of domineering mothers, that female homoeroticism would weaken the Empire because it would weaken men; women without need for men would likely feel empowered.

The author develops his argument (and fears) further in succeeding pages, solidifying the connection between sodomy and female homoeroticism. Despite initially affirming that English women do not have sex with each other as French nuns do, the author expresses his fear that perhaps such acts *are* possible among English women:

I hope the Ladies will not stand in need of any Advice from me; yet I could wish some among them would seem less amorous of one another; for tho' Woman Kissing Woman, is more suitable to their natural Softness, and indeed more excusable than the like Practice in the contrary Sex; yet it ought to be done (*if at all*) with Modesty and Moderation, lest Suggestions, which I hope are false, and

which to me seem improbable, should bring such Ladies under Censure . . . since they [women] themselves see how fulsome it is in Gentlemen, I hope they will abstain *from all Appearance of Evil*. (53-54)

In this passage, and in the previous one, the author hedges his bets. He wants to claim that female homoeroticism is not endemic to English women, yet his fears of same-sex eroticism (in both men and women) overwhelms his xenophobia, compelling him to warn against a sin he thinks and hopes does not exist in England. Like Fielding, he wants to silence knowledge of female homoeroticism, but he discloses, albeit obliquely, such knowledge in the hopes of controlling people's behavior. In his effort to silence and control discourse, the author contradicts himself by first suggesting that kissing may lead to sex, but he then says that sex between women is implausible. While trying to control the discourse of female homoeroticism, the author plants the idea in readers' minds, rendering his attempts at silencing discourse futile. In the end, the author merely calls for an abstention from the *appearance* of evil, suggesting that heterosexuality is merely a compulsory masquerade.

Although these passages are not explicitly about female husbands, they focus on sex between women, which is one of the most controversial aspects of female husbands. The author perhaps envisions female husbands throughout the above passages, since he concludes this portion of his text with a discussion of female husbands. In this final section, entitled "the Game of Flatts," the author suggests that female husbands and female homoeroticism have roots in exclusively female spaces, which he locates outside of England. This section begins with a claim that a credible informant has alerted him to a "most abominable vice" appearing "among the W—n of Q—y" (60). This location is

unknown, but it is supposed to be somewhere in England. An earlier reference in the text links the baths of Turkey, discussed here, to Twickenham. Felicity Nussbaum speculates that this is probably a reference to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, since she lived in Twickenham, detailed the baths in her *Embassy Letters*, and was called an Amazon by Pope (142). Donoghue also notes that the phrase the game of (or at) flats is a slang phrase for lesbian sex: “‘Flat’ or ‘flatt’ could mean a ‘foolish fellow,’ and ‘flat cock’ referred to a woman . . . So the phrase probably hints at foolish women deceiving each other with something of no real value in a sexual game, as well as the literal contact in tribadism of what the writer sees as women’s flat genitals” (261). The story retold here in “the Game of Flatts” section is A. G. Busbequis’s account of Turkish women in public baths. In the introduction to this story, the author reveals the possibility of female husbands in England, but by retelling Busbequis’s account rather than proceeding with a discussion of “the W—n of Q—y,” he silences the possibility of female husbands in England and displaces them onto Turkey, just as he linked sodomy to Italy and France. Although he says that he retells the Turkish story because readers may find his claim about the W—n of Q—y “incredible,” readers are ultimately left with a story about female husbands in Turkey, not England.

The story in the “Game of Flatts” ends with no commentary from the author, which is certainly odd given his propensity to denounce anything he deems aberrant. Perhaps the lack of commentary from the author stems from the way in which the female husband in this story is punished; her punishment seems to serve as commentary enough. An older woman, we are told, falls in love with a younger woman, and when she is unable to woo her as a woman, she cross-dresses and woos her as a man. The two

women marry, and after the ceremony, the female husband uncovers her sex to her wife; the wife tells her parents and the female husband is brought before a governor of the city. When the woman tries to explain that she was in love and that the governor cannot possibly “know the Force of Love,” the governor laughs at her and orders that she be drowned because she attempted “so notorious a Bestiality” (61). Although the author only provides commentary at the beginning of this story, we can still glean some insight into his response to the existence of female husbands. To begin, it is likely that he agrees with the punishment meted out here for the female husband, since earlier in the section on men the author recommended capital punishment for sodomy. Furthermore, this story seems to serve as a kind of precedent and warning against becoming a female husband. The implication is that what happened in Turkey could happen in England—just as sodomy moved from Italy, to France, to England. This story of a female husband in the Turkish baths also corresponds to the story about homoerotic nuns. In both cases, the problem is that women were permitted to congregate in an all female space without the rule of men. This section on the growth of sodomy has thus come full circle. At the beginning of the section the author warned that permitting women “Management of publick and private Affairs” (which would occur when men are not manly enough to manage household affairs themselves), would induce masculinity in women—turn them into cotqueans or domineering women. In this story “Of the Game of Flatts,” women were granted access to a public space that men were not permitted to enter. This space grants them independence from the rule of men, which then cultivates masculinity in some women. Without the rule of men, this story suggests, women may seek to obtain masculine power.

Catherine Vizzani

Giovanni Bianchi's recounting of Catherine Vizzani's exploits, and especially Cleland's comments in the Remarks section, perpetuate the notion that female husbands originated in countries outside England. The text was originally published in Italy in 1744, translated into English in 1751 with the title *An Historical and Physical Dissertation on the Case of Catherine Vizzani* and reissued in 1755 with the new title *The True History and Adventures of Catherine Vizzani*. Bianchi's text is part biography (though probably somewhat fictionalized) and part autopsy report. This text is important because it illustrates the dichotomous views of female husbands that existed in England and other European countries, and because it highlights the nationalistic response England had toward them: it was a sin imported from other countries, and it would diminish England's perception of itself as superior to other nations. While the Italian author openly proclaims Vizzani's desire for women and exhibits little concern for her behavior, the English translator, Cleland, seeks to silence her. This text also brings to light England's contradictory response toward female husbands. Often, texts about female husbands include a discussion about the cause of the woman's cross-dressing and wooing of women. If her interest in women could be linked to an abnormal childhood, a mental abnormality, or a physical abnormality (less common by the eighteenth-century), then the threat of homoeroticism could be safely explained away as a disorder, rather than as a legitimate expression of the woman's sexuality. In short, English authors hoped to make use of "ignorance effects," whereby they could claim that few (or no) women had sex with women because they desired women, since there was supposedly no evidence of such desire or they were ignorant of such women. In keeping with this national divide,

Cleland also exhibits an anxiety about Vizzani's interest in and sex with women, yet the narrative shows little interest.

The True History and Adventures of Catherine Vizzani is divided into two separate parts, with two different authors. The first part contains the biography detailing Vizzani's cross-dressing and interactions with women, and it also contains the autopsy results; Bianchi writes this biographical portion, though it is translated by Cleland. The second part, the "Remarks" section by Cleland, is a commentary upon Vizzani's life and on the way Bianchi tells her story. I will refer to these separate sections as "the narrative" and as "the Remarks" or "Cleland's remarks." The split between these two texts reflects the divergent responses each author has toward Vizzani and female husbands. Each author's responses to Vizzani reflects to some degree his country's attitudes toward female husbands, as evidenced by the parallels between this text and Fielding's. Both Fielding and Cleland cite the undue influence of other women as the cause of female husbands' desire for women, both employ silences, both emphasize the unfortunate end (though with different consequences) to the female husband's involvement with women, and both stress the moral function of their publications. Likewise, there are also parallels to *Satan's Harvest Home*. Both texts blame Italy as a nation of loose morals that breeds and tolerates sex between women, and both texts call upon Biblical law as an authority that condemns homosexual acts. All three of these texts maintain a rather consistent condemnation of female husbands and, to varying degrees, displace the root of female homoeroticism and female husbands onto other nations. I do not mean to suggest that Bianchi and Cleland are representative of their entire nation's views, but the divide between the two texts is consistent with other English authors'

responses to female husbands. Also, because this is a translation we do not know exactly what Bianchi said or whether he said it in the tone present in the translation. However, if Bianchi did not present Vizzani in a positive light and it is Cleland, through his translation, who presents Vizzani in this way, then this suggests all the more that Cleland was invested in constructing two very different responses to this female husband. Whether Cleland manipulated Bianchi's text or whether Bianchi really did construct Vizzani in a positive light, there is nevertheless a divide between these two texts, which represents the politics of the authors (or at least the politics of Cleland).

Although the details of Catherine Vizzani's life share some similarities with Mary Hamilton's life, the tone and manner in which the stories are told reflect the authors' different levels of comfort with their subject. While the narrative does not praise Vizzani as the female soldiers' texts do, its tone is generally one of amusement, though it is occasionally critical of her. Donoghue describes the tone as flattering: "Bianchi's basic liking for his heroine shines through the work. *Catherine Vizzani* is an example of the many translations from liberal continental authors which reached English readers and widened the margins of moral judgment" (80). Although Donoghue does not provide any evidence of the text expanding the "margins of moral judgment," the narrative presents Vizzani in a positive, or at least a neutral, tone. Unlike Fielding's sermon-like opening to Hamilton's text, the narrative introduces Vizzani's story in more sympathetic terms: "This the following Narrative will manifest, which is a pregnant Example of the shocking Ebullition of human Passions, yet, at the same Time, of a most firm Constancy and Daringness in a young Creature, tho' with a sad Alloy of Guilt and Precipitancy" (2-3). This initial frame of sympathy for a woman who acted in haste because of overwhelming

passion guides the telling of her story. As a result, the reader gets to know her as a sort of cross-dressed Don Quixote, rather than as “monstrous” or “unnatural,” and this opening frame sets the agenda for the remainder of the text.

Another important difference between this text and Fielding’s is the link between Vizzani and Sappho in the narrative. The narrative describes her as “a Girl, who, so far from being inferior to *Sappho*, or any of the other *Lesbian* Nymphs, in an Attachment for those of her own Sex, has greatly surpassed them in Fatigues, Dangers, and Distress” (2). By placing Vizzani in context with Sappho, indeed even emphasizing her superiority to Sappho, the narrative connects her to an historical tradition of women loving women, thus authorizing and legitimizing her sexual attraction to women, much like the lineage established for Snell as a female soldier. In essence, it acknowledges Vizzani’s desire for women, and it declares such desire to be something that has existed for centuries. From a contemporary perspective this is not an especially profound announcement (since sex between women was known to exist at this time), but given the efforts of most of these authors to silence sex between women the narrative’s approach to Vizzani represents a departure from the other texts I discuss in this chapter. Not only is there a name or classification for someone like Vizzani (thus she is not an anomalous freak), but her interest in women is also not just a product of the present age. Although other writers have dubbed women Amazons or linked them to Sappho, this is often done in a derogatory manner. But there is no such demeaning tone present in the narrative when it casts Vizzani as a lover of women. Its approach is the exact opposite of Cleland who seeks to silence knowledge of female homoeroticism and link it to a particular moment

and place in time, and this very different approach, I argue, primarily stems from the difference in nationality.

Since much of the concern about female husbands in eighteenth-century England focuses on detection and prevention, responses to female husbands tend to emphasize the cause of their behavior. The narrative, however, shows little concern for the cause of Vizzani's cross-dressing and desire for women. It simply reports that when Vizzani reached puberty, she showed little interest in boys, but "would be continually romping with her own Sex, and some she caressed with all the Eagerness and Transport of a Male Lover" (3). This early interest in women compels her to cross-dress in order to gain greater access to a girl. The girl's father discovers Vizzani and frightens her so much that she leaves town while still cross-dressed. From that moment until her untimely death at the age of 25, she passes as Giovanni Bordoni. Thus, unlike the female soldiers, Vizzani does not first cross-dress and then later use her disguise as a means of trying to seduce women (for real or for sport). Rather, Vizzani's interest in her own sex predates her cross-dressing, and her cross-dressing appears to be merely a means to an end. Whether this is true or not, the explanation the narrative gives us portrays Vizzani's cross-dressing and pursuit of women in a sympathetic light, contrasting sharply with the fictional explanation Fielding provides for Hamilton's cross-dressing: she was seduced by a Methodist woman.

The only effort the narrative makes to determine the cause of Vizzani's interest in women occurs in the discussion of the results of her autopsy. In the discussion of her clitoris, the narrative declares that it was "not pendulous, nor of any extraordinary Size, as the Account from *Rome* made it, and as is said, to be that of all those Females, who,

among the *Greeks*, were called *Tribades*, or who followed the Practices of *Sappho*” (43). This interest in Vizzani’s clitoris reflects the prevailing notion that women who desired women must have had an enlarged clitoris. Yet the findings support the earlier assumptions about her sexuality: her interest in women arose in her childhood and was not the product of a physical abnormality or the result of another woman’s undue influence. Moreover, the narrative makes it clear that Vizzani had absolutely no interest in men and preserved her chastity even though she shared beds with men, including one described as an “Adonis” (19). In this respect, the narrative’s characterization of Vizzani is akin to representations of female soldiers, who were also praised for maintaining the secret of their sex, despite sharing beds with men. Initially, it seems odd that the narrative would highlight Vizzani’s ability to keep her sex secret in the presence of men, since it makes it clear that she was attracted to women at an early age. But its focus on her ability to keep her sex a secret serves the important function of elevating Vizzani’s reputation; she remained pure (she did not have sex with men) even in the face of an Adonis-like temptation. This is an interesting rhetorical move, which marks this female husband as much more praiseworthy than the others I discuss, and in doing so, the narrative portion of the text does not rely on silence and disclosure to tell Vizzani’s story.

In contrast to the narrative’s lack of interest in the cause of Vizzani’s desire for women, Cleland devotes most of his remarks to this issue. While the narrative links Vizzani to a tradition of women loving women, Cleland describes her in terms that evoke Fielding’s language of “monstrous” and “unnatural”: “It should seem, that this irregular and violent Inclination, by which this Woman render’d herself infamous, must either proceed from some Disorder or Perversion in the Imagination” (53). By eliminating a

physical reason for Vizzani's desire for women, Cleland assumes the cause must be located in her mind and that other women must have corrupted her in her youth. But he does not suggest that she was indoctrinated into homoerotic behavior through a relationship with another woman; rather, she must have heard "obscene Tales that were voluntarily told in her Hearing, or by privately listening to the Discourses of the Women, who are too generally corrupt in that Country" (54-55). In locating Vizzani's desire for women in her nationality, Cleland establishes a binary between Italy and England and posits Italy as sexually permissive and England as the exemplar of morality. He implicitly suggests that had these Italian women silenced themselves, refrained from discussing sex, Vizzani would not have become a female husband; again, silence is linked to controlling women's sexuality. Cleland shares with Fielding and the author of *Satan's Harvest Home* a mistrust of foreign nations and a belief that foreign influences are linked to gender and sexual transgression. Specifically, Cleland claims that Italy has been "long distinguished" for its interest in "Discourses of this Nature" by which he apparently means discourses on queer anatomies. He goes on to say that Bianchi's neutral tone "does no great Honour to their Abilities [as learned men], and still less to their Morals" (51). However, Cleland admits that Italy has perhaps been unfairly maligned as a repository of all that is queer and immoral, and he attributes this immorality to Italy's warm climate: "[S]ince in a warm Country like theirs, where Impurities of all Sorts are but too frequent, it may very well happen that such strange Accidents may, from Time to Time, arise as highly to excite both Wonder and their Attention" (52). Even though Cleland somewhat excuses Italy's greater propensity for

such behaviors, he nevertheless makes it clear that such behaviors are indigenous to Italy; they are not common in England.

Despite Cleland's belief that Italians had more experience and interest in queer behaviors, the narrative presents Italians as taking interest in Vizzani's chastity, rather than her sexual experience. The narrative notes that few people knew of Vizzani's wooing of women. However, most appeared to be aware of her cross-dressing, since this is what piqued their interest in seeing her laid out in her funeral vestments. In fact, her burial was postponed because so many "turbulently opposed" it, particularly those who were religious. Thus, her popularity, like Hannah Snell's, is linked to her chastity. The narrative reports that the public "would have her to be nothing less than a Saint, having preserved her Chastity inviolate, amidst the strongest Temptations" (40). Although the public might have been less enthusiastic about her virginity had they known she wooed women, they nevertheless knew that she was a cross-dresser, since many had encountered her when she passed as a man.²³ Yet, her cross-dressing and being a female husband did not invalidate her status as a cause célèbre, suggesting that for some Italians female husbands were not as threatening as they were for many English men and women. Vizzani violates what for England was the rule for female masculinity—her masculinity served only herself. Therefore, by English standards, her masculinity cannot be excused in any way.

²³ Bianchi resists praising Vizzani to the extent that the public did because he knew that she had wooed many women and that her death was the result of an attempt to elope with a young woman. His rejection of her sanctity, however, does not appear to be linked to her desire for women, but rather to her somewhat promiscuous behavior. He states that, "a Woman's Sanctity not consisting only in preserving her Chastity inviolate, but in a uniform Purity of Manners, in which, how far *Catherine* excelled, is manifest from every preceding Line; accordingly, I urged that her making Love, and with uncommon Protivity [insolence] to Women, wherever she came, and her seducing at last two young Women to run away from their Uncle, were flagrant Instances of a libidinous Disposition" (41). Bianchi emphasizes her libidinous disposition more than her desire for and sex with women.

Vizzani's flagrant disregard for gender norms in order to serve her own sexual desires, is what so enrages Cleland. His caustic tone erupts at various moments throughout the text, including his own intervention into the body of the narrative. When the narrative describes Vizzani's masculine accoutrements, which it says, "raise the Reputation of her Manhood," Cleland interjects and excises portions of the narrative. Apparently, the narrative described Vizzani's dildos and whatever else she used in order to pass. But Cleland, mimicking Fielding's "matters not fit to be mentioned," refuses to translate these passages for his English audience and instead states in a parenthetical aside, "The Doctor [Bianchi] enters into a nauseous Detail of her Impostures, which is the more inexcusable, they not being essential to the main Scope of the Narrative. These, if agreeable to the *Italian Goût*, would shock the Delicacy of our Nation" (8-9). Like Fielding, Cleland silences the sexual aspects of Vizzani's life and justifies the use of such "ignorance effects" by invoking English morality. In doing so, he acts as the arbiter of English sexual mores. By concealing knowledge of female husbands and immediately imposing a judgment on them, Cleland dictates the terms of the debate and sets a standard to be followed—female husbands will be immediately condemned and they will not be discussed. He wants to compel the audience to be shocked (as Fielding does in *The Female Husband*) and to find female husbands an affront to *English* decency. Those who might possibly object to his interpretation risk aligning themselves with foreign countries because of the manner in which he frames knowledge of female husbands. In essence, those who possess or disseminate knowledge of them are linked to immorality and a kind of cultural treason.

The only time it is acceptable to discuss female husbands (or even just female masculinity), according to Cleland, occurs when a writer seeks to facilitate the discovery of female husbands or prevent them from wooing women. But the distinction between facilitating the discovery of female husbands and titillating readers is a fine line to negotiate. Cleland appears to be concerned with such problems given his insistence that the narrative “comes abroad with a good Intent, and with a real View of correcting, not a latent Design of corrupting the Morals of Youth” (62). He goes on to reproach adults who openly discuss sex in the presence of children and calls for the censoring of pornographic books. He reserves his most strident critique, however, for women who cross-dress. Interestingly, unlike the author of *Satan’s Harvest Home*, Cleland is not concerned with effeminate male fashion, even though he calls upon the authority of Biblical law, which also denounces male cross-dressing. One brief statement suggests why Cleland is so deeply concerned with female cross-dressing: “[Cross-dressing] is also looked upon as a great Crime by our Law, as well for political as moral Reasons” (65). Although “political Reasons” could mean any number of things, it is likely that it at least refers to men’s power, particularly within the public realm. When Cleland mentions his motivations for making this text available in England, he lists his desire to prohibit women from wearing men’s clothes, specifically in public places. This motivation, coupled with the previous statement about “political Reasons,” further suggests a fear of women’s access to power by entering into the public sphere as men. Such access to power disrupts the division of the genders and, as Fielding’s warnings in *The Jacobite’s Journal* imply, will disrupt the balance of power in the private sphere as well. In referring to the Bible, Cleland invokes notions of natural law and the most primary and

originary of gender divisions: those between Adam and Eve. Such a move calls upon the full force of religious, secular and natural law to regulate gender, sexuality, and the distribution of power. Cleland's remarks link female husbands to the complete disruption of the 'natural' and social hierarchy; female husbands compromise men's claims to superiority.

Some of the potential risks that female husbands pose to men are evident in the narrative. However, despite the sexual competition Vizzani poses to other men, the narrative is marked by a startling lack of a response from Italian men. Fielding's notion that women know each other better than men do and may prove to be more competent lovers than men surfaces in the narrative as well: "it was whispered about that *Giovanni* was the best Woman's Man, and the most addicted to that alluring Sex of all the Men in that Part of the Country" (11). Vizzani/Giovanni's father confirms her prowess when he is informed that his 'son' was injured in a dispute over a woman. Her father explains that Vizzani/Giovanni "was a Prodigy of Nature, and that, in his very Childhood, they had observed some astonishing Motions of Lust, which had unhappily gathered Vehemence with the Growth of his Body" (13). Vizzani's father recommends that "Nature must e'en take its Course"—in other words, Vizzani should be allowed to pursue women as much as she desires; she should be allowed to be a man. Her father does not express any concern that his daughter is cross-dressing or that she is pursuing and having sex with other women. When he informs the Canon, a Church figure, that his 'son' is actually a woman, the Canon chooses not to tell anyone, including the governor, for whom Vizzani had been working, and who had requested the intervention of the Canon. In short, none of the Italians who knew that Giovanni was a woman expressed concern with her cross-

dressing and wooing women. Certainly, some Italians would have disapproved of Vizzani, but the narrative only presents us with a positive response to her. If it skews our perception of Vizzani, it is because of the way the narrative constructs her. The disparity between the narrative and Cleland's "Remarks" illustrates a distinctly *English* response to female husbands and England's investment in maintaining strict gender norms.

In contrast, Cleland's "Remarks" section offers compelling evidence that he found female husbands threatening. Not surprisingly, his concerns mirror the issues Fielding raises. The "Remarks" section, in contrast to the narrative, is marked by the disquieting effects of the female husband. After discussing Vizzani, Cleland turns to a supposedly true story about an unnamed woman from an unnamed country. Apparently dissatisfied with her husband, the woman runs away from him, cross-dresses and woos women. Cleland describes her behavior as a "Freak of this Kind" (56), and he uses this story to address several problems that female husbands pose to men. First, this woman takes advantage of her husband's absence by leaving and taking a lot of money with her, which she is said to have "squandered." Like *The Female Husband*, this story implies that cross-dressing allows women unfettered access to the public realm, removes them from the control of men, and grants them financial freedom. Despite these very real concerns, the most serious consequence of this woman's behavior is the sexual threat she poses to men. The woman whom the female husband married was supposed to marry another man, but her friends had urged her to marry the female husband, to their later regret. Lest the reader take anything from this story except a strong warning, Cleland ensures that the female husband suffers for her usurpation of masculinity. Her husband has her confined "as a Lunatic" and she dies some years later, to the satisfaction of her

husband and her family, Cleland claims. The woman she courted also dies, though from shame, despite having been ignorant of her “husband’s” actual sex. Although female husbands pose an obvious threat to normative masculinity, Cleland emphasizes not only these threats, but also the threat to the women who marry female husbands. He makes wives culpable and suggests that they too will be punished, if not by the law, then by society. Why punish women who might have been ignorant of their “husband’s” sex? Among the possibilities is a fear that women were not ignorant of their husband’s sex, but chose female husbands knowingly.

Charlotte Charke

The most compelling representation of a woman who knowingly chose a female husband as a companion and possibly as a lover appears in *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (1755). Although English response to female husbands was generally contemptuous, in at least this one instance the response to an apparent female husband, Charlotte Charke, was inquisitive, arguably even positive.²⁴ Although we do not know for sure whether Charke’s relationship with Mrs. Brown was sexual, it certainly was loving. In her recent biography of Charke, Kathryn Shevelow speculates that they probably were lovers, and she describes their relationship as emotionally intimate: “Much tenderness is evident in her references to Mrs. Brown, and she often speaks of her ‘Friend’ in a lovingly proprietary kind of way. Their connection was undeniably deep and long-lasting (much longer than Charlotte’s marriages)” (326). Moreover, they

²⁴ I say “an apparent female husband” because unlike the women in the other texts I discuss, Charke does not explicitly state that she is engaged in a sexual relationship with her companion Mrs. Brown. However, her relationship with Mrs. Brown is suggestive of a romantic relationship and most scholars read it as such. Somewhat older criticism of Charke argues against a romantic relationship between Charke and Mrs. Brown. See for example Sallie Minter Strange, “Charlotte Charke: Transvestite or Conjuror?” *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research* 15 (1976): 54-59 and Fidelis Morgan, *The Well-Known Troublemaker: A Life of Charlotte Charke*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1988).

functioned as a husband and wife couple: “Charlotte played a masculine role to Mrs. Brown’s feminine one, according to the convention of her day; she behaved as a husband, Mrs. Brown as a wife” (Shevelow 326). And, importantly, others perceived them as a husband and wife couple (Shevelow 325). Thus, even if Charke’s relationship with Mrs. Brown was not sexual, it risked being perceived as such.

Charke and her text differ in many ways from the other female husbands and texts I discuss. One of the most obvious differences is that Charke’s text is an autobiography; she, not a male author, controls the representation of her, allowing her to construct herself ambiguously as a female husband. Her autobiography was published in installments and sold so well that it was published as a book, which went into two editions. Her story was also printed in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* from October to December of 1755.

However, this was not Charke’s first-person account. Instead, it was a third-person account rewritten for the magazine. As Hans Turley notes, the coverage devoted to Charke’s redaction exceeds that of any other book review for the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1755 (181). In short, Charke was popular, even though she was a female husband.

While several scholars have discussed how she constructs her identity in the text and whether or not her cross-dressing is subversive, my focus is on the way in which the public responded to Charke and her autobiography and why her general acceptance by the public diverges so sharply from other female husbands I discuss.²⁵ I argue that

Charke escapes the censure leveled at the other female husbands I discuss because she constructs her real life masculinity as an extended performance of her onstage breeches

²⁵ For different perspectives on whether Charke is subversive, see Erin Mackie, “Desperate Measures: The Narratives of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke,” *ELH* 58 (1991): 841-65 and Sidonie Smith, “The Transgressive Daughter and the Masquerade of Self-Representation,” *Introducing Charlotte Charke*, ed. Philip E. Baruth (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1998): 83-106.

roles, and in this respect she represents an instance where female husbands do not seem to pose a threat to normative masculinity or the nation.

Although Charke's popularity cannot be linked solely to the sales of her text, since *The Female Husband* also sold well, there are other factors that suggest Charke's cross-dressing and possible role as a female husband did not raise much suspicion. Before Charke published her autobiography, many of her readers likely knew her through her work on the stage or through her father, Colley Cibber, who was well-known as poet laureate and for his work in the theatre. The Cibber family had made itself known to the public through their stage performances and through the publication of their lives. Colley Cibber published his autobiography, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber*, in 1740, and Charke's brother Theophilus published his autobiography, *A Serio-Comic Apology for Part of the LIFE of Mr. Theophilus Cibber, Comedian. Written by Himself* in 1748. Both Charlotte's and Theophilus' texts are modeled after their father's and were likely perceived by the public as following in the tradition of his text. Given that Charke was already known for her stage work and given her family's public status, she already existed within the public realm—her name was known, people had seen her cross-dressed performances on stage, and they knew that she was linked to a very public family.

When it came to writing an autobiography, then, Charke was not entering the public realm in quite the same way that an unknown woman would. Therefore, exposing herself to the public eye and making herself a topic of discussion was not as scandalous or as risky as it might have been for other women. While Cleland fears the implications of women's cross-dressing, especially their access to the public realm, this is not a major concern for Charke, since she already circulated within the public realm and within the

public imagination. In fact, as Jean Marsden argues, Charke exploits her theatrical and public status by constructing a supposedly tell-all book that would reveal the private life behind the public figure: “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. This tension is established not simply by the fact of the theatre, as the Cibbers relied on the public’s desire to know the personal behind the public, but by the incessant intrusion of the mechanics of theatre into the private realm of autobiography and confession” (67). In other words, Charke purposefully misleads her readers into believing they are reading about her personal life, when she has merely constructed another self, which is no more private than the self they see on the stage. In doing so, she can profess to be revealing her most intimate secrets, when she is likely obscuring the most private elements of her life; those silenced aspects are rendered invisible to a public who believes they have access to her private life. Charke also employs “ignorance effects” as a means of controlling knowledge of her self. While other authors seek to silence discussion of sex between women to prevent women from becoming female husbands, Charke silences aspects of her life as a means of making herself, as a female husband, acceptable to her readers.

The manner in which Charke discusses her cross-dressing, or does not discuss it as the case often is, further displaces attention away from and occludes her queer behavior. Although Charke spent much of her adult life cross-dressed, she rarely draws attention to her attire.²⁶ In one reference to her cross-dressed appearance, she provides only an ambiguous reason for cross-dressing: “effected by Dint of a very handsome lac’d

²⁶ Shevelow estimates that Charke began cross-dressing in 1734 (188). Charke states in her narrative that she ceases cross-dressing permanently in 1753. Since Charke lived from 1713-1760, Shevelow’s estimate means Charke would have cross-dressed for almost half of her life.

Hat I had on, being then, for some substantial Reasons, EN CAVALIER” (47). What were these “substantial Reasons”? One can only speculate. Toward the end of her text, she once again draws attention to her cross-dressing, but her reasoning is mysterious: “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” (141). Could it then have concerned someone who was once living? Was it only out of financial necessity? Or could it have been because she wanted to pass as a man to attract women and maintain a seemingly heterosexual relationship? Again, we can only speculate, and Shevelov does not uncover any reasons either, stating that, “[Charke’s] own accounts of the circumstances under which she began to wear men’s clothes outside of the theatre are vague and contradictory. But she probably became an offstage cross-dresser gradually, at first wearing men’s clothes on occasion, and then more and more often until they became customary garb” (188). It stands to reason, then, that her audience was no more certain of her reasons for cross-dressing than we can be. Intentionally subversive or not, Charke’s treatment of her cross-dressing is vague and allows for various conceptualizations of her gender and sexual identity. Certainly, readers could have questioned whether she was a female husband, but since even some scholars refuse to acknowledge the possibility of queer relationships in the absence of direct evidence, it is likely that eighteenth-century audiences would have found her behavior odd, but not necessarily homoerotic. Charke’s ambiguous sexual identity suggests at least one reason why she was not so threatening to masculinity. Just as she played roles on stage, readers could choose to perceive her as playing a role offstage. In some ways, Charke’s text has more in common with the female solider texts than with female husband texts in that it is

possible for readers to excuse her relationship with Mrs. Brown as simply part of a role she was playing to support herself financially.

Although there is little evidence that audiences responded negatively to Charke's cross-dressing, we do know that some of her family members disapproved, since later installments reflect her family's response.²⁷ Charke makes a passing reference in her text to her family's disapproval: "My being in Breeches was alleged to me as a very great Error, but the original Motive proceeded from a particular Cause; and I rather chuse to undergo the worst Imputation that can be laid on me on that Account, than unravel the Secret, which is an Appendix to one I am bound, as I before hinted, by all the Vows of Truth and Honour everlastingly to conceal" (73). Again, Charke silences the real reasons for her cross-dressing, and instead couches her motivations within the context of truth and honor, which in effect elevates her cross-dressing by suggesting that it is linked to some higher moral cause. Were she cross-dressing for financial reasons only, it seems she would likely gain sympathy from her audience because she actively courts their sympathy, and has some success in gaining it, at other moments in her narrative, such as when she discusses her estranged relationship with her father.²⁸ However, she never appeals to the audience's sympathy or understanding regarding her cross-dressing, which suggests that financial reasons are probably not the sole motivation for her cross-dressing. Since few people with whom she comes in contact pose a serious objection to her cross-dressing, Robert Rehder concludes that her cross-dressing is not threatening to

²⁷ Those who disapproved were her father, eldest sister and son-in-law. Her sister Elizabeth, Theophilus and her niece were supportive. Robert Rehder, Introduction, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999): xxxi.

²⁸ Philip Baruth argues that she skillfully uses melodrama to court her audience's sympathy: "She is 'empowered,' that is to say, rather than mortified or chastened, to say that she has lost a father. The audience has been recruited emotionally and morally to her cause; Charke's desires are mirrored in the 'Hearts of every humane Breast'" (16).

society: "Much of the recent writing on gender claims that cross-dressing was considered threatening or disruptive to the social order . . . On the contrary, with few exceptions, her cross-dressing seems to be easily accepted, needing no comment, by everyone she encounters" (xxxix). Of course, some of the people with whom she came in contact would not have known she was cross-dressed because she would have simply passed. Furthermore, Charke may have censored any negative encounters she may have had. Such a move is consistent with the scarcity of direct references to her cross-dressing.

Rehder's suggestion that Charke's cross-dressing was "easily accepted" simplifies the construction of her identity and fails to take into account the way in which she manipulates the reader through silencing and disclosing aspects of her self. Joseph Chaney argues that by revealing some aspects of her transgressive life, she is able to eschew criticism and deflect attention away from herself, precisely because she appears to be revealing all to the reader: "If Charke is a gender rebel, she does not acknowledge the fact herself. Or, more precisely, she acknowledges her rebelliousness only in order to negate its meaningfulness. She purposely exposes her past self to mockery. And she knows that she can negate the meaning of her rebelliousness simply by representing it, for the mere representation of her former actions calls attention to their imprudence and futility" (207-8). Thus, we see in Charke's construction of self how the silencing and divulging of information is never a complete disclosure or concealment. Just as the male authors of the other female husband texts employed silence as a means of controlling discourse, Charke exercises power over the reader through the use of silence. She manipulates what might be evidence of heterosexuality or of female homoeroticism and allows competing selves to circulate within readers' minds. For example, Charke stops

cross-dressing permanently when she arrives in Bath.²⁹ When she leaves Bath six months later, she tells us that a rumor was spread all the way to London that she left Bath so that she could cross-dress again. Charke responds to this rumor with rancor: “I cannot avoid taking Notice of a malicious Aspersion, thrown and fixed on me as a Reason for leaving it; which was, That I designed to forsake my Sex again” (133). In the next paragraph, she conjectures that the rumor was spread to “make [her] appear ridiculous” (133). Given that Charke delights in wearing breeches, it is strange that she would feel mocked by such a rumor, but this is the sort of conflicting self she presents throughout the narrative. By disclosing some information while withholding other information, Charke can concede or refute any claims, since she neither affirms nor denies any sexual behaviors. Doing so allows her identity to be in play so that she cannot be definitively categorized as a female husband, which is why she is perhaps merely confounding to readers but not necessarily threatening. Moreover, by writing a supposedly tell-all book, Charke creates an *illusion of disclosure*, suggesting that if there were something to tell about why she cross-dressed and whether she was a female husband, she would have told her readers.

Charke employs a similar strategy of silence and disclosure when she discusses her relationship with her companion Mrs. Brown. Charke straddles the boundary between female husband and platonic friend with Mrs. Brown by referring to her through oblique references and rarely by name; generally, she refers to her as “my friend.” However, the two women are traveling companions, they raise Charke’s daughter together for a period of time, and they share their finances, including an inheritance that Mrs. Brown receives. Their shared finances offer some of the strongest evidence that they were not just friends. Although Mrs. Brown’s uncle has died, Charke acquires the

²⁹ Charke arrives in Bath in October of 1753. This occurs toward the end of her narrative.

inheritance, and Charke spends most of it. In another incident, Charke chooses to leave Bath, where she had been performing and earning money, and falls on hard times again, finding herself virtually penniless, to which she says, “My Friend, as she had great Cause, began, though in a tender Manner, to reproach me for having left *Bath*” (135). This sentence does not reveal any obvious intimacies between Charke and Mrs. Brown.

However, when read in a larger context, Charke’s decision to leave Bath (where she had an income) without a reliable source of income once she left, directly affects Mrs. Brown, who, in her frustrations with Charke’s choice, reproaches Charke. This “tender” reproach suggests a more intimate relationship, but it is ambiguous enough that Charke can defend it as a platonic statement. Lynne Friedli compares Mrs. Brown’s appearances in the text to the lack of personal information we learn about Charke: “The ‘personal’ or ‘private’ is largely silent, like the shadowy figure of her companion, Mrs. Brown, slipping quietly in and out of the text” (241). Such a silencing of her personal life, which is intimately intertwined with her relationship with Mrs. Brown, ensures that readers never truly know whether their relationship was sexual. Furthermore, because so much of her relationship with Mrs. Brown is absent from the text, Charke provides the reader with an impetus, even an excuse, for willful ignorance. In other words, even if readers believed that her relationship was threatening to masculinity, they could employ “ignorance effects” and refuse to acknowledge what is not explicitly articulated in the text. Charke’s own silencing of her relationship with Mrs. Brown simply encourages others to ignore it.

Although we may never know whether Charke’s relationship with Mrs. Brown was sexual, evidence of genital sex between the two women does not preclude an emotionally intimate relationship or even a physically intimate one, especially of the kind

I suggest might exist in the female soldier narratives. Regardless of the status of their relationship, Charke knew that her family and others disapproved of her cross-dressing and that, as the incident in Bath illustrates, she was bothered by others' censure of her. Moreover, Charke was performing in the vicinity of Somersetshire in 1746, when Mary Hamilton's trial occurred, and Charke and Mrs. Brown were also in Wells (the town in which Hamilton married Price and in which she was publicly whipped) several times.³⁰ It is likely that Charke would have heard about Hamilton. Since she wrote her narrative after all these events occurred, it is quite possible that Hamilton affected the construction of her self. Seeking to yield a profit from her book and to repair her relationship with her father, Charke would have been acutely aware of how she presented herself in print, such that her cross-dressing and relationship with Mrs. Brown did not overtly appear to be homoerotic. As a woman who spent her life performing, we should expect nothing less from her autobiography than a carefully constructed character who can be read simply as an eccentric actress with a traveling companion, or as a female husband who traveled about the country with her 'wife,' Mrs. Brown.³¹ And if we do read the relationship as sexual or romantic, then we have a woman who knowingly chooses a female husband and who prefers female masculinity to normative masculinity.

Obviously, Charke escapes the censure leveled at the other female husbands by the authors of those texts. Charke's text is also different from the others because we have a sense of its reception history. Since it was written in installments, it enabled her to

³⁰ For more on the connection between Hamilton and Charke, see Kathryn Shevelow, *Charlotte: Being a True Account of an Actress's Flamboyant Adventures in Eighteenth-Century London's Wild and Wicked Theatrical World*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005): 334.

³¹ Charke's identity was often in flux throughout her life. As Shevelow notes, Charke rarely traveled under the name "Charlotte Charke;" instead, she used various aliases, such as Charles Brown (324).

comment on readers' responses. In Charke, we have a female husband who not only avoids reproach, but who actually gains the sympathy of her readers.³² As I have argued here, Charke is not threatening as a female husband because of the way she constructs herself in her text. She is important to this discussion because the representation she constructs of herself suggests ways in which female husbands could be acceptable to eighteenth-century England. In this instance, Charke is acceptable because she reads as a performer, rather than as real person. In allowing women to perform breeches roles, society could play out various representations of masculinity, including female masculinity. However, as Charke's career illustrates, often the cross-dressed actress functioned as a means of questioning a character's masculinity, implying that women who perform masculinity are just *performing* masculinity, rather than *embodying* masculinity, as men were believed to do. Thus, society could play out different masculinities and fears of female masculinity, but once the performance ended, they could return to the safe notion that masculinity was the province of men. Given readers' interest in Charke, it seems eighteenth-century England was interested in exploring the boundaries of masculinity, but when those explorations included real world consequences, such as women usurping men's sexual role, they desired a masculinity defined by its association with the male body.

Charlotte Charke's exploits, as well as those of all the female husbands discussed here, occurred during the Enlightenment, a time when England sought to investigate and classify nature. Female husbands are at once fascinating oddities of nature and disturbing transgressors of a natural order that dictates femininity for women, masculinity for men

³² Although she does not gain their sympathy *because* she is a female husband, she does gain their sympathy *even though* she is a female husband.

and heterosexuality for everyone. At a time when the desire to classify everything according to a natural order dominated much intellectual thought, the female husband, by her very existence, unmoors the foundation of the natural order and calls the whole system of sex, gender, and heterosexuality into question. As I argued in the previous chapter, the female soldier narratives revealed women's ability to perform masculinity when given certain accoutrements, but for the most part their masculinity fades when they return to female dress. The female husband, however, crosses the one boundary that the female soldiers did not and that appeared to belong solely to men: the ability to have sex with women. While the female soldiers' masculinity could be deployed to elevate the masculinity of men and serve the nation, there are no such altruistic effects of female husbands' masculinity; their masculinity serves primarily themselves. And there is no comforting return to female dress imminent in these narratives (though it sometimes happens). Instead, when the accoutrements of masculinity are shed behind closed doors, female husbands perform their most subversive acts because they do not need a male body nor do they necessarily need the accoutrements of the male body.

Faced with such a destabilizing figure, most of the authors of these texts seek to reign in the subversive effects of female husbands by silencing their sexual activity, while also publicizing their existence, in hopes of preventing further cases. As Foucault argues, bourgeois society attempted to control sex through language: "As if in order to gain mastery over it [sex] in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present" (17). Thus, by employing narrative strategies that silenced women's ability to engage in sex with one another, these

authors hoped to eliminate a behavior that challenged their claims to masculinity and, more importantly challenged their dominance over women. Of course, they could have chosen to ignore female husbands altogether, which would suggest that female husbands are not a threat to masculinity. But writing about them, wanting to control responses to them or “deter” others from becoming female husbands, reflects an anxiety about female husbands in general and especially of their ability to have sex with women without possessing a male body. Despite their attempts to control the discourse about female husbands, such tactics, according to Foucault, merely elicit more discourse and more interest in the subject, as evidenced by the popularity of these texts (most of them sold quite well). And that interest, I argue, is connected to the way in which men gain power as men or through new notions of masculinity in the eighteenth century. As Carole Pateman argues, the social contract gives men a political right over women, and it grants them sexual access to women’s bodies. When female husbands perform the husband’s role, granting them domination over women and access to their bodies, they not only call into question whether a male body is necessary for performing the male role, they also challenge the foundation of patriarchy. Again, as Pateman notes, patriarchy is fraternal because it is based in the rule of husbands over wives. Thus, female husbands grant themselves access to power and enfranchisement because they are husbands.

That women could become enfranchised and obtain the power invested in the patriarchy, thus disrupting the social and political order, suggests why most of these texts are so vituperative. And perhaps it is the destabilizing possibilities of female husbands that effects an increasing intolerance of female masculinity as the century progresses. By the end of the century, a mere masculine swagger would raise the ire of society,

especially in the domestic novels that serve to concretize normative masculinity and femininity and ensure the dominance of husbands over wives.

Chapter 4: Undressing the Canon: Masculine Women in Sentimental Novels

A few days before Pamela marries Mr. B., she and Mr. B. attend a church service led by Mr. Williams, with whom Mr. B. has recently cancelled a debt. In his sermon, Mr. Williams preaches about charity and generosity, and Pamela says that “[Mr. Williams] treated the subject in so handsome a manner, (keeping to generals) that the delicacy of my master, who at first was afraid of some personal compliments, was not offended; and he called it an elegant and sensible discourse” (347). For half of the novel, Mr. B. is the cruel rake who tries to rape Pamela several times, make her his mistress, and when that does not work, he tries to trick her into a sham marriage. This same rakish Mr. B. later transforms himself into a man who would fear that Mr. Williams might draw attention to his charity and offend his delicacy. How do we account for this transformation? The change in Mr. B. can be linked, in part, to another masculine character, Mrs. Jewkes, whom Richardson offers as a model of an antiquated masculinity. When Mr. B. discovers that Jewkes’ masculinity terrifies Pamela, he uses her as a foil to prove to Pamela that his now reformed, more delicate masculinity is attractive. Indeed, once Pamela is convinced of Mr. B.’s delicacy and his emotional response to her letters, she immediately returns to him, despite having finally achieved her much-sought-after freedom, and she marries him shortly thereafter.

Besides Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54), Frances Burney’s *Evelina* (1778), and Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda*

(1801) depict heroines who choose sentimental men over more boorish characters.¹ Mrs. Jewkes, Miss Barnevelt, Mrs. Selwyn and Harriet Freke all perform a masculinity marked less by accoutrements (clothing,² swords, dildos) than by demeanor, behavior, and intellect. Their demeanor reads as masculine to the other characters because the women stride with confidence, lack manners and social refinement, and are aggressive in conversations. This masculinity represents a more early-modern and therefore antiquated masculinity, especially when read in contrast to sentimental masculinity.³ By “antiquated” or “boorish” masculinity,⁴ I mean a masculinity marked by physical strength (sometimes tested in duels), virility (sometimes expressed through rakish behavior), a lack of manners or propriety (this could include many things, such as rudeness in conversation and in public), and a lack of sensitivity toward others. Although the masculine women in these novels do not contend for the heroines’ love, the authors juxtapose their masculinity to that of the heroes, authorizing the heroes’ masculinity and making them more appealing in the eyes of the heroine. Even though all of the heroes prove their manliness by rescuing the heroines from brutish men,⁵ their sentimental masculinity, nevertheless, requires legitimation because it risks appearing effeminate.

¹ Richardson is obviously interested in the sentimental man, though this type of man is not present in *Clarissa*. Lovelace shares some qualities with Mr. B., but unlike Mr. B., Lovelace never reforms and never marries the heroine. Instead, he rapes her and in general exhibits qualities associated with what I define as an “antiquated masculinity,” though Lovelace is an extreme example of this masculinity.

² Although Harriet Freke wears trousers, her intent is not to pass as a man (even though she likes the way pants make her legs look) but to have the freedom of movement men’s clothes afford.

³ I define sentimental masculinity on page 198.

⁴ I use “antiquated” and “boorish” synonymously.

⁵ Sir Hargrave and Sir Clement abscond with the heroines in a carriage, but the heroines are rescued by Sir Charles and Lord Orville, respectively. Mr. Hervey rescues Belinda from marrying Mr. Vincent, a gambler and a drinker. Mr. B. essentially rescues Pamela from himself by abandoning his attempts to rape her and finally giving in to marrying her instead.

Sentimental masculinity could be legitimated through a comparison to male characters who also perform a boorish masculinity, such as Sir Hargrave, Sir Clement Willoughby, and Mr. Vincent. But comparing the heroes to masculine women is more effective since they are already assumed to be imitating masculinity. Since female masculinity, by eighteenth-century standards, is a copy, it is always outdated to some degree; as an imitation it comes after the “real” masculinity. That it is outdated, as is the case here, further invalidates the women’s masculinity and boorish masculinity in general. After all, what man would want to embody a masculinity that women imitate? As women performing an antiquated masculinity, these characters appear to be playing dress-up in a masculine fashion that has gone out of style. In short, normative masculinity has progressed and moved on from this earlier, brutish form.

At the same time that masculine women legitimize sentimental masculinity, they also help shore up a femininity intolerant of gender ambiguities as minor as a conversational style or a loud laugh. While the female soldier narratives worked to disassociate female masculinity from female homoeroticism, these novels link female masculinity *to* female homoeroticism. Ironically, the women of these novels are the least visibly masculine women I discuss (they do not cross-dress or attempt to pass as men as the female husbands and soldiers do), yet they are still suspected of desiring women. That these novels link female masculinity to female homoeroticism suggests the diminishing tolerance of female masculinity at the end of the century; female homoeroticism, then, is the bogeyman of female masculinity in that fears of an aberrant sexuality are used to deter masculinity in women.⁶ By implying a connection between

⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft makes a similar argument in the introduction to *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, though she focuses on masculine women not female homoeroticism. She says that the appellation of

female homoeroticism and female masculinity, these texts limit the possibilities of women's gender performance, thereby constricting what constitutes normative femininity. By century's end, female masculinity is marginalized in ways not seen with the female soldiers, such that fears of female homoeroticism obscure the challenges these characters present to normative femininity. Barnevelt, Selwyn and Freke express their discontent with normative femininity because it places women in a subordinate position to men. But because they challenge normative femininity, other characters (primarily men) easily discredit them and instead use the women as examples of the negative consequences of female masculinity. By placing feminist arguments in the mouths of masculine women, these texts connect feminism to female masculinity and female masculinity to female homoeroticism, suggesting that all three are aberrant and that only normative femininity will guarantee marriage, which is the key to a woman's happiness. In this way, female masculinity, losing its once celebrated status, legitimizes both normative masculinity and normative femininity.

The changing perspective on female masculinity and its connection to female homoeroticism as represented in literature mirrors shifting cultural notions of female masculinity. In the early modern period, women who cross-dressed were not usually suspected of desiring women. In fact, as Susan Lanser tells us, it was often quite the opposite: "For even though sex between women had long been connected to notions of a mannish anatomy, most references to women as 'masculine' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had nothing to do with homoeroticism. Indeed, the contrary worry—that women might engage in unlicensed sex with men—was often at stake when

masculine woman is a "bugbear" used to discredit the notion that women should be educated in matters other than sewing, music, dancing, etc.

women were accused of being ‘masculine’ in behavior, dress, achievement or personality” (25). In the early modern period, female homoeroticism was linked to hermaphroditism or “clitoral hypertrophy.” As Valerie Traub argues, tribadism (an early modern term for sex between women) in England is often linked to an abnormally large clitoris: “it is not the tribade’s inconstant mind or sinful soul but her uniquely female yet masculinized morphology that propels her to engage in, or is itself the effect of, her illicit behavior. Clitoral hypertrophy is posited as one cause of early modern tribadism, but perhaps more importantly, early modern tribadism is increasingly inconceivable without clitoral hypertrophy” (170). But in part because of scientific advances, the idea that hermaphroditism is connected to female homoeroticism begins to wane in the eighteenth century.⁷ Instead, according to Susan Lanser, female homoeroticism begins to be linked to female masculinity sometime in the eighteenth century: “In the face of faltering anatomical explanations, there emerged a construction of the sapphist not as secretly hermaphroditic but as visibly mannish—mannish in her public rather than private parts, mannish in her behaviors and accoutrements despite her self-presentation as female and her probably female anatomy” (30). As these sentimental novels illustrate, the woman who is masculine in demeanor but not in body emerges as a lover of women, or at least she is suspected of desiring women.

As the codes of female masculinity shift throughout the eighteenth century, notions of normative masculinity change as well. By the mid-to-late eighteenth century, many fictional and non-fictional texts promote sensibility as the model of masculinity. Critics most often apply the term “sensibility” to novels and distinguish it from similar terms, such as sentiment, sentimentality, and sentimentalism, all of which meant

⁷ Lanser, “Queer to Queer,” 22.

something slightly different from each other in the eighteenth century.⁸ Claudia Johnson defines “sentimentality” as that which is “understood throughout the eighteenth century itself to be a constitutive element of ‘polite culture,’ where ‘polite’ refers principally to the increased presence and deference to women in social life” (13). I follow Janet Todd’s definition of sensibility: “‘Sensibility’ is perhaps the key term of the period. Little used before the mid-eighteenth century, although Addison among others had employed it to suggest delicate emotional and physical susceptibility, it came to denote the faculty of feeling, the capacity for extremely refined emotion and a quickness to display compassion for suffering” (7).⁹ Philip Carter also emphasizes the connection between sensibility and delicacy: “Delicacy necessarily became an important aspect of the sentimental man, and one that commentators were obliged to address in their attempts to establish the manliness of feeling” (106). Likewise, G.J. Barker-Benfield links delicacy to sensibility: “Thus reformed, men were said to have ‘manners’ or the ‘delicacy’ expressing their politeness” (248). All the novelists I discuss use the term “delicacy” in reference to the heroines’ husbands, and I will trace this term through the four novels. While the male characters of these novels do not engage in some of the more typical behaviors associated with sensibility, such as the frequent crying and swooning present in Laurence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) and Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771), these men are delicate because of their ability to feel and respond to the suffering of others, especially the heroines, and their compassion for the heroines’ suffering makes them the most desirable men in the novels.

⁸ For more on the differences among these words, see Janet Todd, 7.

⁹ The adjective sentimental, as Janet Todd notes, often creates confusion because it can be used as the adjectival form of sentiment, sentimentalism, sentimentality and sensibility. When I use sentimental, I use it strictly as the adjectival form of sensibility.

Although nonfiction texts promote sensibility as a mode of masculinity, according to Todd, sensibility's greatest influence on masculinity was through fictional works, particularly sentimental novels (4). The preface to each of the novels I discuss states that the text intends to be a moral or example in order to teach the reader right behavior. According to Todd, this didactic function is especially evident in sentimental novels, which "showed people how to behave, how to express themselves in friendship and how to respond decently to life's expectations" (4). To accomplish this goal of instructing readers, sentimental novelists constructed female and male characters so idealized that, to use Barker-Benfield's term, female readers entered a "fantasyland." Although the dreamlike qualities of a character like Sir Charles Grandison make him less dynamic and compelling to many twenty-first-century readers, it was precisely his sensibility that many eighteenth-century readers, not to mention Harriet Byron, admired and found attractive.

The masculinity of all these men—Mr. B., Sir Charles, Lord Orville and Clarence Hervey—is attractive to the heroines because their sensibility is more compatible with female virtues, such as compassion, sincerity and openness of heart, than was the early modern masculinity. Despite this more feminine model of masculinity, Philip Carter argues that sensibility did not compromise a man's masculinity: "[A]n active promotion of new styles of sentimental manliness was seldom expected to blur gender boundaries" (101). While Carter's claim may be dubious, the masculinity of these fictional men survives intact, in part because they are compared to the masculine women. In contrast, the authors focus their criticism on the most aggressively masculine characters. As Barker-Benfield argues, the texts construct sensibility as the evolution of masculinity:

“By associating their targets quite frequently with the past—with the dueling warrior mentality of an earlier aristocracy . . . as well as with barbarism, sentimental reformers made their wishes reconcilable with progress, visible in the manners men were to exhibit in the new public pleasure centers—cum—marriage markets” (248). Thus, while sentimental masculinity is linked to progress, the aggressive, boorish behavior of the masculine women is retrograde and, by comparison, authorizes the sentimental masculinity of the husbands.

Sensibility, and its influence on masculinity, is not unique to England, but in some ways it parallels “sincerity,” which Gerald Newman argues is a distinctly English quality. Sensibility was evident in other nations, such as France, though it developed differently there than in England. According to Sarah Knott, “France, too, had its late eighteenth-century culture of sensibility. It was somewhat distinctive from the Anglo version: longer rooted in literature but perhaps more shallowly rooted in society, more secular and materialist, associated with the philosophes and *salonnières* and especially with Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his cult at Ermenonville” (41). In England, however, sensibility derives from many sources, including religious ones. It has roots in seventeenth-century conduct books and in moral reform societies, such as the Society for the Reformation of Manners. Religion’s influence on the development of sensibility establishes some connections to Newman’s notion of sincerity, which is distinguished by its moral code. Newman defines sincerity in the following ways, “Sincerity referred not only to moral character, the purity of the native self, but to the self’s utterances” (130), and “As the frank manner associated with it implies, sincerity meant a certain directness not only of speech and address but of opinion and action, logically based on a conception of behavior

consistently related to inward standards of purity and honesty” (131). Thus, to be sincere required morality, and to possess sensibility required a concern for others (especially their feelings) and in this way, the two terms have something in common. Each quality requires an inward feeling of morality or propriety that guides one’s actions with others. Sincerity and sensibility start with one’s inward self and extend outward, dictating one’s behavior. Gerald Newman argues that sincerity is a distinctly English quality: “‘Sincerity’ was the English National Identity, the specific pattern of values articulated at the heart of the whole ideological movement” (128). While I do not claim that sensibility was *the* English national identity, as Newman claims of sincerity, I argue that sentimental novels cultivate sensibility as one of the most important aspects of an Englishman’s masculinity.

Pamela

The first novel I discuss, *Pamela*, illustrates masculinity’s transformation from boorishness to delicacy through the character of Mr. B. It depicts Mrs. Jewkes’ masculinity as inhering both in her behavior and in her body. *Pamela* deviates from the other novels in that Mr. B. is both the brute male character and the sentimental man whom the heroine marries. Because Mr. B. must reform, unlike the other men who display sensibility from the beginning, *Pamela* employs a woman who is hyper masculine (masculine in demeanor and in body), such that her masculinity will contrast to Mr. B.’s rakish masculinity. Because Mrs. Jewkes is hyper-masculine and Mr. B. functions as both the rakish and sentimental man, the intensity of these characters exemplifies the dynamics of the relationship between the masculine woman and the sentimental man. Thus, *Pamela* serves as a model by which to read the other novels.

Since the novel is written through Pamela's perspective, she provides the physical description of Mrs. Jewkes and directs the reader toward perceiving Jewkes as not only masculine but as virtually a man. Though Jewkes' body repulses Pamela in part because she is fat and ugly, it is her phallic qualities that frighten Pamela: "She is a broad, squat, pousy, *fat thing*, quite ugly, if any thing human can be so called . . . She has a huge hand, and an arm as thick—I never saw such a thick arm in my life . . . She has a hoarse man-like voice, and is as thick as she's long; and yet looks so deadly strong . . . I shall be ruined, to be sure, if heaven protects me not; for she is very, very wicked" (152). Jewkes' hand and arm, in particular, because of their girth suggest a phallic nature. Indeed, Terry Castle argues that Pamela unconsciously perceives Jewkes as possessing a penis: "On the level of the symbolic plot, the fantasy that Pamela betrays in all of this would seem to be, most simply, that Mrs. Jewkes possesses a penis. The 'huge paw,' the 'gigantic hand,' that she obsessively notices is but one fetishistic version of the phallic displacement" (481). Mrs. Jewkes' body is so unmistakably masculine that Pamela fears Jewkes may be involved in her future ruin. Although Pamela likely means that Mrs. Jewkes would help facilitate her rape by Mr. B., she also suggests that unless heaven protects her from Mrs. Jewkes, Jewkes herself will bring about her ruin. Jewkes' wickedness, as Pamela calls it, stems both from her masculinity and from her sexually explicit behavior. Shortly after meeting Jewkes, Pamela declares, "So I am got into the hands of a wicked procuress . . . what a dreadful prospect have I now before me, in the hands of such a woman as this!" (145). Later, after one of her many emotional encounters with Mr. B., Pamela warns Jewkes to stay away from her, pleading with her to "let not my afflictions be added to by thy inexorable cruelty, and unwomanly wickedness" (222). Again and again, Pamela

finds Jewkes to be wicked because she is unwomanly and because she is masculine. From the outset, Richardson constructs female masculinity as a quality located in the body and as undeniably deviant—so deviant that a masculine woman is to be feared as a sexual aggressor.

Although Jewkes' masculine body distinguishes her from the other masculine women I discuss, her masculine behavior is a model of the women's masculinity in the other novels. Pamela fixates on her masculine demeanor, particularly when they first meet. She describes Jewkes as "barbarous," a "wretch" and as having "an air of confidence" and a "bold way." Pamela also interprets Jewkes' behavior as masculine because she exhibits what Pamela calls "impertinent" speech. Much of what Pamela describes as "bold" speech is sexually explicit. When Pamela argues that allowing her to be raped is worse than cutting her throat, Mrs. Jewkes responds by defending Mr. B. and his sexual desires: "how strangely you talk! Are not the two sexes made for each other? And is it not natural for a man to love a pretty woman? And suppose he can obtain his desires, is that so bad as cutting her throat?" (148). Pamela continues, "And then the wretch fell a laughing, and talked most impertinently, and shewed me, that I had nothing to expect either from her virtue or compassion. And this gave me the greater mortification; as I was once in hopes of working upon her by degrees" (148). Thus, Mrs. Jewkes is distinguished by her lack of maternal qualities; she is neither compassionate nor protective of Pamela. Her explicit way of discussing sex and her bold, impertinent speech in general marks her behavior as indicative of an antiquated masculinity, when men were free to engage in conversation without a concern for the propriety of their speech.

Having established Jewkes as masculine, Richardson then links her masculinity to female homoeroticism, creating a trend that succeeding novelists follow. Pamela is of course the vehicle through which Richardson creates this connection. One of her early encounters with Mrs. Jewkes leads her to suspect Jewkes' intentions. When Pamela learns that Mrs. Jewkes will be watching over her for Mr. B., she cringes. As Pamela details their first encounter, she is especially disturbed by the way in which Mrs. Jewkes gazes at her:

Then the wicked creature appeared, whom I had never seen but once before, and I was frightened out of my wits. Now, thought I, am I in much worse situation than I was at the farmer's. The naughty woman came up to me with an air of confidence, and kissed me, 'See, sister,' said she, 'here's a charming creature!' and looked in such a manner as I never saw a woman look in my life. (144)

It is clear from the beginning that Pamela associates Jewkes' impertinence and confidence with masculinity; this is evident from the passages I discussed earlier. Once Pamela has identified Jewkes as more masculine than feminine, she immediately suspects that there is something queer about her, particularly as it pertains to the way Jewkes "looks." Pamela moves from fearing Jewkes' brashness to fearing her gaze. The way in which Jewkes "looks" is odd to Pamela because she interprets this gaze as sexual, and she associates such gazes with men. Female masculinity and female homoeroticism become intertwined and will not be separated until Mrs. Jewkes, as masculine stand-in, is replaced by the "real" masculine figure, Mr. B. Although the masculine women in the other novels are not quite as exploitative as Jewkes, they nevertheless conform to the model Richardson establishes with her.

Pamela's fear of Mrs. Jewkes as a sexual threat comes to fruition, so to speak, in the subsequent scene. Jewkes forces Pamela to ride in a carriage with her, and again Pamela mentions her gaze. These stares lead to precisely what Pamela fears—another sexually laden physical encounter. Jewkes squeezes Pamela's hand and offers to kiss her. When Pamela bristles at this offer, she calls attention to the sexual dynamics between them and the homoerotic implications: "I don't like this sort of carriage, Mrs. Jewkes; it is not like two persons of one sex to each other" (145). Mrs. Jewkes responds, "'That's prettily said, I vow! Then thou hadst rather be kissed by the other sex? 'Ifackins, I commend thee for that!'" (145). Mrs. Jewkes' "carriage" or demeanor is not like "two persons of one sex to each other" because it has clearly stepped over the line and transgressed a sexual boundary. Although it would be perfectly acceptable for a woman to kiss another woman, Pamela assumes that Jewkes' offer is not merely platonic. Such an observation from a character who is defined by her purity, innocence, and lack of sexual knowledge is rather ironic. Yet, Pamela has a clear understanding of how two people of the same sex should act toward one another, indicating the importance of conformity to gender norms. Why is it that Pamela interprets Jewkes' offer for a kiss as a sexual overture?—because Pamela reads Mrs. Jewkes as masculine and equates her masculine "carriage" with homoerotic desires. A woman who is whisked off in a carriage with a man (who is not a relative) is often in a dangerous situation.¹⁰ That the two women are in a carriage together and that Pamela objects to "this sort of carriage" also suggests the heightened intimacy of the scene. Trapped within the carriage, Pamela cannot escape Jewkes' masculine "carriage" and the threats that lie therein. Her fears

¹⁰ Harriet Byron and Emma Woodhouse suffer similar plights at the hands of Sir Hargrave Pollexfen and Mr. Elton, respectively.

that Jewkes' intentions are not platonic are confirmed by Jewkes' response, which implies that if Pamela does not like the overtures from a woman, then she must instead prefer men. In this conversation, Mrs. Jewkes ensures that Pamela has little choice: either she must submit to the advances of a masculine woman or to the advances of a man.

Jewkes succeeds in kissing Pamela later, under the pretense of making up after an argument, and she uses that motivation to attempt another kiss, but Pamela resists, questioning Jewkes' intentions. This time an argument erupts after Mrs. Jewkes tricks Pamela out of her money. Pamela insults Jewkes, and Jewkes attempts to use this insult as an excuse to kiss Pamela: "Well, I now forgive you heartily; let's kiss and be friends!" but Pamela responds with "'Out upon you!' said I; 'I cannot bear you.' But I durst not call her names again, being afraid of the weight of her huge paw, which I have once felt" (169). Despite having agreed to kiss and make up the first time, Pamela appears to have caught on to Jewkes' intentions and the sexual tension of the carriage scene returns here, as does, correspondingly, a reference to Jewkes' phallic "huge paw." While Jewkes was able to kiss Pamela the first time under the guise of a reconciliation, here Pamela simply "cannot bear" the "weight" of such an affront from a masculine woman. Jewkes continues to function in this capacity as sexual aggressor until Mr. B assumes that role. Eventually, she becomes even more brutish in her masculinity than Mr. B., allowing him to juxtapose himself to Jewkes and position himself as an appealing alternative to her.

Parodies of *Pamela* also present Jewkes as a foil to Mr. B. and as the force that pushes Pamela toward heterosexuality, suggesting that Jewkes' role in this triangular relationship is central to the novel. *Pamela Censured*, a parody of *Pamela* published just

five months after Richardson's novel, plays up the homoerotic nature of Mrs. Jewkes' interactions with Pamela. After presenting the scene when Mrs. Jewkes tries to kiss Pamela in the carriage, the anonymous author responds with the following commentary: "There are at present, I am sorry to say it, too many who assume the Characters of Women of Mrs. Jewkes's Cast, I mean Lovers of their own Sex, Pamela seems to be acquainted with this, and indeed shows so much Virtue, that she has no Objections to the Male Sex as too many of her own have" (50-51). Jewkes' offer, in the original scene, to kiss Pamela, could be interpreted as a joke (since Jewkes does taunt Pamela throughout the novel), but this author reads the scene as homoerotic; Jewkes represents a real sexual alternative for Pamela, and one that she must reject for the eventually reformed Mr. B. This author's anxiety echoes the fear of female masculinity present in these novels. Female readers must be taught to turn away from masculine women and the possibility of female homoeroticism and toward heterosexuality. To make the change from a girl's mostly homosocial world to a heterosexual one less frightening, Richardson and the other novelists offer female readers sentimental men who are less threatening because their masculinity is defined by its delicacy. In this author's configuration, Pamela is not tempted by female homoeroticism and rightly chooses heterosexuality, making Pamela a model for all women to follow.

After experiencing Mrs. Jewkes' callous masculinity, and after observing Mr. B.'s delicacy and sensibility, Pamela begins to find Mr. B. and heterosexuality appealing. Although Mr. B. is no Sir Charles Grandison, he nevertheless transforms from attempted rapist to a reformed husband, who is proud to marry his servant. This change begins during the last attempted rape scene, when Mr. B. realizes that if he treats Pamela more

gently, he can get what he wants from her. In this scene, power transfers from Mrs. Jewkes to Mr. B. Although Mr. B. has control over Pamela from the start because he is her master, he uses Mrs. Jewkes as his proxy in the house, until this moment.¹¹ Even though Pamela is screaming, Jewkes encourages him to go through with the act: “Don’t stand dilly-dallying, sir” (242). Gender roles reverse in this scene, as the woman urges rape, while the man hesitates. This is the pivotal scene in Mr. B.’s transformation from rake to man of sensibility. Mrs. Jewkes’ desire for rape actually surpasses Mr. B.’s desire for Pamela. Tassie Gwilliam argues that at this moment Mr. B.’s antiquated masculinity transfers to Mrs. Jewkes: “Mrs. Jewkes tends to take over Mr. B.’s position as sexual villain; part of the scene’s sleight of hand involves the transfer onto Mrs. Jewkes of the most vicious aspects of Mr. B.’s desires” (43). This viciousness is evident in Jewkes’ second entreaty for Mr. B. to rape Pamela, and her surprise that he would forego his chance, once she recovers from her first fainting fit: “‘And will you, sir,’ said the wicked wretch, ‘for a fit or two, give up such an opportunity as this? I thought you had known the sex better. She is now, you see, quite well again!’” (242). Although this is hardly the first time Pamela faints in response to Mr. B.’s aggression, this time he sympathizes with her suffering, making this moment his first step toward sensibility.

¹¹ In *Clarissa*, Mrs. Sinclair functions in a similar way as Mrs. Jewkes. It is Sinclair’s idea to drug Clarissa, she is present during Lovelace’s rape of Clarissa, and she is described as masculine. In a letter Clarissa writes to Lovelace after the rape, while she is still drugged and delusional, she says of Mrs. Sinclair: “But Mrs. Sinclair may be a good woman—If you love me—but that you don’t—but don’t let her bluster up with her worse than mannish airs to me again! Oh she is a frightful woman! If she *be* a woman!—She needed not to put on that *fearful mask* to scare me out of my poor wits. But don’t tell her what I say—I have no hatred to her—It is only fright, and foolish fear, that’s all—She may not *be* a bad woman—but neither are all *men*, any more than all *women*, alike—God forbid they should be like you!” (894-895). Like Mrs. Jewkes, Mrs. Sinclair is also described as having huge phallic-like limbs, “She set her huge arms a-kembo” and she is described as having a “masculine air, and fierce look” (882). To some degree, Richardson utilizes masculine women as scapegoats who urge on the libertine men of these two novels, seemingly making their behavior unexclusive to men. However, these constructions do suggest that such qualities are a part of particular kind of masculinity that can manifest itself in either men *or* women.

As the scene continues, Mrs. Jewkes and her boorish masculinity are forced out, and Mr. B.'s rakish masculinity fades from his character, while he also becomes more gentle in his interactions with Pamela. This moment or scene of *ménage à trois* is, as Terry Castle terms it, "a moment of transference, of transformation" (484). Despite her aggressive masculinity, Mrs. Jewkes does not have the physical capacity to rape Pamela as a man could, but her urgency for Mr. B. to carry out this act attests to her personal investment in it. Jewkes' second plea for Mr. B. to carry out the rape sends Pamela into her second fainting fit and when she awakens, she discovers that Mr. B. has sent Mrs. Jewkes out of the room, honoring Pamela's request. Even though Mr. B. attempted the rape, Pamela is more afraid of Mrs. Jewkes than of Mr. B., and she asks not to see Jewkes for the rest of the day. The scene then concludes with a reconciliation between Mr. B. and Pamela that parallels the one between Mrs. Jewkes and Pamela when they kiss and make-up. Mr. B. first begs Pamela's forgiveness, "Pamela, give me but your hand, and say you forgive me, and I will leave you to your repose" and then he kisses her hand (243). Pamela describes Mr. B. as speaking "kindly" and pressing her hand "very tenderly." Ironically, this attempted rape and its denouement help Pamela begin to see Mr. B. as kind and as more attractive than she originally believed him to be. Henceforth, Mr. B. exercises more direct control over Pamela, and she begins to see him as the 'real' masculine figure, while Jewkes slowly fades into the background of the narrative. Gwilliam argues that Jewkes actually transforms from a masculine to a feminine woman: "Mrs. Jewkes almost literally shrinks; from the monstrously hermaphroditic and monstrously maternal presence of the novel's first half she becomes an overweight, vulgar, but essentially unthreatening female servant. Without B's mastery—and B's

desires—inflating her, and without the burden of Pamela’s search for a substitute mother, Mrs. Jewkes dwindles and becomes (uncomfortably) feminine and (awkwardly) servile” (44-45). As Jewkes shrinks from the narrative, the phallic representations of her shrink as well. There are no more references to her “huge paw” after this scene.

As Mr. B. begins his transformation from rake to man of sensibility, Pamela compares Jewkes’ masculinity to his and concludes that masculinity is not synonymous with aggression and violence. Although Mr. B. posed the greatest threat to Pamela and was responsible for her confinement, she instead focuses on Mrs. Jewkes’ treatment of her. Essentially, she projects all her fears of Mr. B. onto Mrs. Jewkes, which allows her to find Mr. B. attractive and even delicate. She even learns to distinguish masculinity from men or that there are different types of masculinity. She comes to this conclusion when Mr. B. finally frees her, and when she writes to her parents, she has nothing negative to say about Mr. B.: “Yet this pleases me too: he was so good, he would not let Mrs. Jewkes speak ill of me, and scorned to take her unwomanly advice. O what a black heart has this poor wretch! So I need not rail against *men* so much; for my master, bad as I have thought him, is not half so bad as this woman!” (281). This passage establishes Pamela’s motivation for returning to Mr. B., despite his cruel treatment of her. Cruelty, Pamela learns, is not exclusive to men, and, more importantly, aggression and violence are not inherent qualities of masculinity, but rather of certain types of masculinity. In recognizing that men can be compassionate, Pamela begins to move toward perceiving men as attractive. Instead of seeking comfort from women, such as Mrs. Jervis (and hoping for it from Mrs. Jewkes), Pamela learns to seek comfort and protection from men. Of course, this does not happen immediately, but her return to Mr. B., which brings about

their engagement, occurs just a few pages after Mr. B's letter to her. As Pamela learns, she need not fear men in general, but rather an antiquated masculinity that makes men rakes and women lovers of women.

While Pamela continues to draw comparisons between Mr. B. and Mrs. Jewkes that flatter him, Mr. B. capitalizes on them, using Mrs. Jewkes to display his new sensibility. Arguably, Mr. B. is just as manipulative of Pamela as he transforms into a man of sensibility as he was when he tried to rape her; the difference lies merely in his tactics. In the second half of the novel, he manipulates Pamela's emotions through apologies, flattery, and emotional pleas, which exemplify his sensibility. When Mr. B. decides to send Pamela back to her parents, Mrs. Jewkes announces Pamela's departure and asks him if he has anything to say to "the girl, before she goes?" (279). Mr. B. responds with, "Who bid *you* say *the girl*, Mrs. Jewkes, in that manner? She has offended only me! . . . when I have such proof, that her virtue is all her pride, shall I rob her of that?" (279-280). Although Pamela asserts ad nauseam that her virtue is her pride, suddenly Mr. B. respects her and criticizes Mrs. Jewkes for not doing the same. In response, Pamela dramatically drops to her knees praying to God to bless Mr. B. and vowing that she and her parents will pray for him for the rest of her life. Thus, Mr. B. distinguishes himself from Mrs. Jewkes by being sympathetic to Pamela, Pamela rewards him by praying for him, and Mr. B. informs Pamela in a letter that her sympathy for him only increased his respect for her: "for still, that melodious voice praying for me at your departure, and thanking me for my rebuke to Mrs. Jewkes, hangs upon my ears, and delights my memory" (286). Indeed, her praying for him is the motivation for his writing to her and asking her to return, which of course she does. His defense of her to Mrs.

Jewkes and his delight in her praying for him convinces Pamela that he has begun to reform into a man of sensibility.

Having recognized that both his and Mrs. Jewkes' aggressive tactics have only intensified Pamela's protection of her virtue, Mr. B. attempts an emotional plea to win her over, reflecting his new more delicate character. Mr. B. continues to draw a distinction between Jewkes and himself, hoping Pamela will too, even though his treatment of Pamela was worse than Jewkes'. He says in a letter to her, "After you were gone, I ventured to look into your journal. Mrs. Jewkes' bad usage of you, after your dreadful temptations and bruises, affected me greatly" (285). In the remainder of the letter, he begs Pamela's forgiveness and expresses emotions indicative of his newfound delicacy: "Let me see you can forgive the repeated attempts of a man who loves you more than he loves himself" (286). The letters Mr. B. writes to Pamela when she is en route to her parents are so markedly different from the behavior Mr. B. previously exhibited that Pamela almost instantaneously falls in love with him and forgets all about the attempted rapes. She says in a letter to her parents regarding the change in Mr. B., "but *now*, to find him capable of so much openness, so much affection, nay, and of so much *honour* too, I am quite over-come But to be sure, I must own to you, that I shall never be able to think of any body in the world but him! Presumption! you will say; and so it is: but love, I imagine is not a voluntary thing—*Love* did I say!" (283). The qualities that Pamela now associates with Mr. B., openness, affection, and honour, are hallmarks of his sentimental masculinity. Pamela is not swayed simply because Mr. B. has stopped trying to rape her. If that were the case, her change of heart would have

occurred once Mr. B. allowed her to return to her parents. Instead, Mr. B.'s expressions of affection and openness with his emotions are what appeal to Pamela.

Mr. B.'s turn toward sensibility continues as he reads Pamela's journals and becomes ill in response to her suffering. An illness caused by emotional suffering is, according to Todd, characteristic of sensibility: "[Sensibility] appears physically based, a quality of nerves turning easily to illness" (7). Mr. B. suddenly recovers from his illness when Pamela returns. His comment regarding his illness is more characteristic of an eighteenth-century heroine, than hero: "Life is no life without you! If you had refused to return . . . I should have had a very severe fit of it, I believe; for I was taken very oddly, and knew not what to make of myself: but now I shall be instantly well . . . for this lovely creature is my doctor, as her absence was my disease" (291). Mr. B.'s physical descent after reading of Pamela's suffering symbolically represents the demise of his libertine self. No self-respecting rake would claim that he could not live without a servant girl who has refused him many times. Mr. B.'s recovery thus effects both a physical and psychic change. As Pamela notes, "He seemed much amended in his health, as well as, I bless God for it, in his heart" (292).

Out of the ashes of a rake rises a man of sensibility, transformed by distancing himself from the masculine Mrs. Jewkes. As Mr. B. gains Pamela's affections, the interactions between him and Pamela parallel previous scenes between Pamela and Mrs. Jewkes, except that Mr. B. treats Pamela delicately. Thus, the transference of power from Jewkes to Mr. B. and the transformation of Mr. B. from libertine to man of sensibility are complete and are signaled by Pamela's approval of him. Although their ride in the carriage recalls Pamela's ride with Mrs. Jewkes, the outcome is entirely

different. Instead of forcing himself on Pamela, as Mrs. Jewkes did, Mr. B. is obliging and affectionate and when he kisses Pamela, his advances are not unwanted. Rather, Pamela says he “honoured me by kissing my hand” (306). Eventually, in the scene with which I began this chapter, Pamela describes Mr. B. as possessing delicacy, and this characterization of him continues in the sequel to *Pamela*, where Pamela continues to delight in Mr. B.’s “delicacy.”

With Mr. B.’s position as the sole masculine figure secured, Mrs. Jewkes fades into the background of the narrative and her once homoerotic masculinity transforms into a more maternal femininity. Since Mrs. Jewkes served her purpose as foil to Mr. B. and jailor to Pamela, her masculinity is unnecessary, so Richardson returns her to a safe, heterosexual femininity, making her now a maternal protector of Pamela. At Pamela’s wedding, Mrs. Jewkes kisses Pamela again, but this time she kisses only her hand. As Pamela interprets it, this kiss contains none of the latent homoerotic possibilities of the previous kisses and Pamela actually welcomes it: “had she kissed my cheek, I should not have been displeased” (376).¹² Mrs. Jewkes’ complete transformation occurs when she defends and protects Pamela from Lady Davers. Throughout the narrative, Pamela often complained that Jewkes was “unwomanly” and lacked maternal qualities. But when Lady Davers slaps Pamela and is about to box her ears, Mrs. Jewkes suddenly appears, steps between Davers and Pamela, and declares, “Your ladyship knows not what you do: indeed you don’t. My master would never forgive me, if I suffered, in his house, one he

¹² In the 1958 Norton edition of *Pamela*, edited by William M. Sale, Jr., (this “edition” does not mention which edition of *Pamela* it is, but Eaves and Kimpel believe it goes back to a duodecimo edition published a few months after Richardson’s death), the above passage reads a bit differently. In this edition, Pamela initiates the physical contact: “Mrs. Jewkes would have kissed me at the chapel-door; but I put my arms about her neck, for I had got a new recruit of spirits just then; and kissed her, and said, Thank you, Mrs. Jewkes, for accompanying me” (365). This version certainly shows a Pamela who is quite comfortable with Mrs. Jewkes, and one could even read Pamela’s actions as suggestive of homoerotic affection for Mrs. Jewkes.

so dearly loves, to be so used; and it must *not* be, though you are Lady Davers” (419).

These lines are quite a departure from the Mrs. Jewkes who called Pamela “unwomanly” and questioned her virtue.

As the scene progresses, Mrs. Jewkes continues to defend and protect Pamela from the masculine Lady Davers. Richardson depicts Davers as loud, controlling, aggressive, and physically abusive. She embodies precisely the antiquated masculinity that Jewkes once did. As Catherine Craft-Fairchild notes, “Lady Davers, as she unleashes her violent rage against her brother’s marriage through physical assaults on Pamela, might also be considered a subtle instance of improper masculinity in a woman” (188). In this reversal of roles, Jewkes now assumes a maternal role, while Lady Davers plays the masculine woman who seeks to abuse Pamela and usurp the authority of Mr. B. Mrs. Jewkes’ protection of Pamela at the hands of an abusive masculine woman marks her complete transformation from masculinity to femininity. She no longer represents a threat to Pamela or to heterosexual gender norms.

Published in 1740, as sensibility becomes a dominant mode of normative masculinity, *Pamela* presents masculinity’s transformation from an antiquated, violent mode into a sentimental one in which men feel the sufferings of women. Although it is a transitional text, *Pamela* also serves as a model for later novels, in which men display similar sympathetic qualities. Moreover, the masculine women in the later novels also parallel Mrs. Jewkes. Jewkes enabled Mr. B. to cast off his violent masculinity and embody a more feminine one, but not one that reads as effeminate. By distancing himself from Jewkes’ violence in his letters to Pamela, Mr. B. adopts a new masculinity that centers on protecting women. In that protective role, Mr. B. avoids emasculation because

he functions as a husband/father figure, making the transition for the heroine, from daughter to wife, much easier. Once Pamela recognizes that Mr. B. wants to protect her from the violence of Mrs. Jewkes, her fear of rape by Mr. B. vanishes, and she willingly submits to him. Thus, Jewkes becomes a repository for the negative qualities associated with masculinity. Tassie Gwilliam argues that Jewkes helps maintain gender difference: “The last half of *Pamela* presents strategies . . . [for] reasserting the clarity of gender difference. That reassertion requires the scapegoating of Mrs. Jewkes as avatar of gender instability and representative of the violence of male desire” (49). Jewkes does indeed represent a violent masculinity, but, importantly, this violent desire is no longer present in Mr. B. Thus, I argue, that Jewkes’ more significant role in the novel is to help facilitate the change in Mr. B.’s masculinity. Once Mrs. Jewkes has served her purpose in aiding Mr. B.’s transformation and in authorizing Mr. B.’s sensibility, she must be disarmed. So Jewkes shrinks into a feminine, maternal woman and is of little importance to the latter half of the narrative. The shrinking and even disappearance of the masculine woman, once she has served her purpose, occurs in each of these novels, leaving the sentimental man without any challenges to his masculinity.

The History of Sir Charles Grandison

Miss Barnevelt, the masculine woman in Richardson’s *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, functions similarly to Mrs. Jewkes (her masculinity serves as a contrast to the hero’s sensibility), but unlike Jewkes she directly challenges normative femininity and encourages the heroine to do so as well. Miss Barnevelt serves as an example of a misguided femininity that the male characters and even the female characters deem unattractive. Although Barnevelt espouses feminist arguments that find some acceptance

in the later eighteenth century, Richardson uses her masculinity and her homoerotic desire to discredit her challenges to heterosexual gender norms and to endorse normative masculinity and femininity. He accomplishes this in part through a debate between Sir Charles and Charlotte Grandison late in the novel. Through her deviance and through other characters' negative responses to her, Barnevelt illustrates the need for conforming to gender norms. The fact that Richardson needs to endorse normative gender roles and discredit gender deviance suggests that these ideas *are* in need of defense and that they do not read as natural to everyone. This defense is necessary, I argue, because female masculinity troubles the notion of a naturalized masculinity and the patriarchy it supports. If sex complementarity and heterosexuality were contested by eighteenth-century society, there would be no need for Richardson and the other novelists to represent the masculine women, even if only to discredit her. That she needs discrediting suggests that she presents a credible challenge to gender and male dominance.

Since Sir Charles enters the narrative as the perfect man of sensibility, he does not need to reform his masculinity, like Mr. B., so he does not need Miss Barnevelt as a foil to prove his worthiness to the heroine. However, because his delicacy makes him so sympathetic to the feelings of women, he needs to assert his dominance over women, lest he be viewed as effeminate. Even though sensibility became a dominant form of masculinity in the mid to late eighteenth century, sentimental novelists still felt compelled to remind readers that delicacy, the expression of emotion, crying, etc. were not effeminate qualities, as Philip Carter notes: "The frequency with which readers of sentimental fiction and advice literature were informed that tears were *not* unmanly reminds us that this shift in attitudes is better understood as a struggle in which

successive generations sought to overcome a traditional and much reiterated equation of emotion and expression with (feminine) weakness” (106). Rather than showing the man (through a negative example) how to appeal to women, as Mrs. Jewkes does, Miss Barnevelt helps Sir Charles prove the necessity of heterosexual gender norms that privilege masculinity and compel women to display humility, modesty, and passivity, particularly in the presence of men.¹³

Miss Barnevelt’s introduction to the narrative immediately establishes her as masculine and more specifically as performing an antiquated masculinity. Harriet Byron describes her first impression of Barnevelt in a letter to Lucy: “The third was Miss Barnevelt, a lady of masculine features, and whose mind bely’d not those features; for she has the character of being loud, bold, free, even fierce when opposed” (1:42). Although Miss Barnevelt is somewhat physically masculine, her masculinity is defined largely by her personality. Her bold ferocity links her to an antiquated masculinity that contrasts sharply with Sir Charles’ sensibility. However, Barnevelt is not physically violent, like Jewkes; rather, she enjoys challenging others to a mental duel of sorts and her target is often men and gender norms. That she speaks her mind and is not shy when arguing marks her speech as “free” in a way that is not expected of women nor tolerated for very long. Since Richardson uses only Harriet’s comments to introduce Barnevelt, he encourages readers to share Harriet’s perception of her. If we trust what Harriet says about Barnevelt, we should read her as aberrant because she is masculine.

¹³ Margaret Doody outlines these qualities as characteristics that the moral woman of the eighteenth century possessed. Doody says, regarding these qualities in women: “The position of women was a subject of debate in the eighteenth century, but there was an accepted theory on the subject to which appeal could readily be made” (15). The accepted theory, according to Doody, stems largely from conduct books. She cites those written by Richard Allestree as particularly important in the eighteenth century, and she derives the abovementioned qualities from his texts. Her discussion of conduct books is in her chapter on “The Approach to *Pamela*.” I argue that these same qualities are also relevant to *Grandison*.

We should not trust Harriet, however, because although Richardson often seeks to equate Barnevelt's masculinity with female homoeroticism, just as the other authors do, he allows Barnevelt to voice an understanding of herself that conflicts with his protagonist's description of her. The passage above, which introduces Barnevelt to the narrative, concludes with the following statement: "[She] affects at all times such airs of contempt of her own sex, that one almost wonders at her condescending to wear petticoats" (1:42). Certainly, there are misogynist men who seek wives in eighteenth-century novels, but this depiction of Barnevelt implies she despises women so much that she hates being connected to them in any way. But on the next page, Harriet provides us with another description of Barnevelt that both corresponds to and contrasts with the passage above because it contradicts itself: "No-body, it seems thinks of an *husband* for Miss Barnevelt. She is sneeringly spoken of rather as a *young fellow*, than as a woman; and who will one day look out for a wife herself. One reason indeed, she every-where gives, for being satisfied with being a woman; which is, *that she cannot be married to a WOMAN*" (1:43). Like the passage above, this passage also implies that Barnevelt is a misogynist. That statement contradicts the previous claim that Miss Barnevelt is so masculine she will eventually look for a wife. The discrepancy could be attributed to the different perspectives from each character: one represents what Miss Barnevelt thinks of herself (she is glad that she cannot marry a woman) and the other reflects what Harriet thinks of her (Barnevelt will look for a wife). However, Richardson wrote both of these statements, and so Richardson creates the contradiction, which perhaps is indicative of eighteenth-century society's struggle to understand female masculinity. The representations of masculine women, especially in these novels, vacillates between

suggesting a woman is masculine because she desires other women and suggesting that she dislikes women.

Barnevelt's alleged happiness at never having to marry a woman appears to stem from her frustration with women who conform to gender norms that dictate women's subordination to men. This frustration is evident in her praise of Harriet's intelligence, wit, and spirited challenge of the pedantic Mr. Walden. However, as I will show, Barnevelt's challenge to normative femininity is defused because she and her non-normative gender are linked to homoeroticism. When Mr. Walden asks if she has any knowledge of the learned languages, Harriet claims she does not even know what they are, so he asks if she has knowledge of Latin or Greek, and she responds: "Who, I, a woman, know any thing of Latin and Greek! I know but one Lady¹⁴ who is mistress of both; and she finds herself so much an owl among the birds, that she wants of all things to be thought to have unlearned them" (1:49). Harriet appears to be mostly sincere when she suggests that a mere woman would not know Latin or Greek, but the second sentence suggests that even if she did, she would not reveal such knowledge, since society would think her odd. Indeed, she does not say that Elizabeth Carter wished she had not learned the classical languages, but that she wished others *thought* she had "unlearned" them. According to Harriet, the problem is society's perception of educated women, not of a classical education itself. Even though Mr. Walden's views are not taken seriously by anyone else because he is so arrogant and obnoxious, Harriet says that many men share one of his beliefs about women: "And you, Sir, said, that you had rather (and I believe most men are of your mind) have a woman you could teach" (1:51). Earlier, Mr. Walden

¹⁴ The lady Harriet refers to is Elizabeth Carter, who knew Latin and Greek and translated Epictetus. Richardson printed her translation of Epictetus in 1758.

said that he prefers such a woman, rather than one who would “think herself qualified to teach [him]” (1:49). Obviously, Mr. Walden would not prefer a woman more intelligent than him because he fears he would be subordinate to her. Harriet’s points here are important because she articulates a feminist argument that questions men’s belief that they are intellectually superior to women and, therefore, entitled to dominate women, and statements such as these are what Miss Barnevelt responds to at the end of the debate.

As the conversation continues, Harriet challenges Mr. Walden’s notion of how a woman should behave, pointing out that normative femininity places women, especially those who acquire an education, in a double-bind. Mr. Walden questions why Harriet feigned ignorance when he asked if she knew the classical languages and she responds, “Well, Sir, and would you have me be guilty of an ostentation that would bring me no credit, if I had had some pains taken with me in my education? But indeed, Sir, I know not any-thing of those you call the learned languages. Nor do I take all learning to consist in the knowledge of languages” (1:51). Harriet makes three important arguments here. First, she points out that women who are educated and display their intelligence are considered pretentious, even if they are not being pretentious. Next, she questions the labeling of Latin and Greek as the “learned” languages, and finally she challenges his definition of what constitutes learning. These are significant arguments because Harriet disputes key aspects of men’s claim to intellectual superiority. Essentially, she argues that normative femininity requires a woman to obscure or even feign ignorance, particularly in men’s company, otherwise a woman might appear “ostentatious,” and because women are forced to appear less intelligent in front of men, men believe they have a right to dominate women.

Although Miss Barnevelt does not say which specific parts of Harriet's defense of women and women's intelligence appeal to her, she seems to respond to the general tenor of Harriet's arguments. After competently holding her own in the debate with the Oxford-educated Mr. Walden, Harriet appears emboldened and she puts Sir Hargrave in his place, after he expresses an unwelcome flirtation. This defense of women, and more importantly Harriet's willingness to publicly challenge two men, delights Miss Barnevelt, as Harriet tells us: "She profess'd that I was able to bring *her own sex* into reputation with her. Wisdom, as I call it, said she, notwithstanding what you have modestly alleged to depreciate your own, proceeding thro' teeth of ivory, and lips of coral; give a grace to every word. And then clasping one of her mannish arms round me, she kissed my cheek" (1:57). Barnevelt's frustrations with women stem from her belief that they lack wisdom or that they are afraid to appear wise, lest they become "an owl among birds." As a result, Barnevelt views herself in hierarchal relationship to other women because she refuses to conform to female gender norms that dictate women's submission to men. But when Harriet shows she is capable of debating Mr. Walden and Sir Hargrave, Barnevelt seems to believe she found another woman like herself, one who champions women's intelligence. That she believes herself superior to other women and is critical of women when they "depreciate" themselves, suggests that Barnevelt dislikes women who believe they are inferior to men. This is perhaps why she is happy she cannot marry a woman because she finds women who conform to normative femininity inferior to her.

Richardson seems to advance a feminist argument through Harriet's comments to Mr. Walden and Sir Hargrave, and these comments lead Miss Barnevelt to perceive a kinship between herself and Harriet. Such an alliance, however, is dangerous because if

Richardson wrote a friendship between Harriet and Barnevelt into the novel, he would dramatically alter the type of femininity he advocates for women. The simplest way for Richardson to defuse a connection between his heroine and the masculine woman is to suggest that Barnevelt's interest in Harriet is purely sexual. Indeed, Barnevelt's praise of Harriet is couched in homoerotic terms. Richardson later follows this encounter with a letter from Harriet to Lucy in which Harriet pretends to be Barnevelt writing about Harriet's conversation to a fictional male friend, Bombardino:

'Well but, my dear Bombardino, I am now to give you a description of Miss Byron. 'Tis the softest gentlest, smiling rogue of a girl—I protest, I could five or six times have kissed her, for what she said, and for the manner she spoke in—For she has been used to prate; a favour'd child in her own family, one may easily see that. Yet so *prettily* loth to speak till spoken to!—Such a blushing little rogue!—'Tis a dear girl, and I wish'd twenty times as I sat by her, that I had been a man for her sake. Upon my honour, Bombardino, I believe if I had, I should have caught her up, popt her under one of my arms, and run away with her. (1:69)

In Harriet's version of the events, Barnevelt's praise of her speech and wisdom are absent, and instead, Barnevelt's actions are linked solely to her homoerotic desires. Although she did kiss Harriet after praising her, it is a kiss on the cheek and is a congratulatory gesture. Given Barnevelt's raucous demeanor, a mere kiss on the cheek does not seem out of the ordinary for her. Because Richardson rarely gives a voice to Barnevelt and privileges Harriet's interpretation of the event, he encourages readers to perceive Barnevelt's motivations as homoerotic.

By casting Barnevelt in homoerotic terms, rather than feminist terms, Richardson discredits both female masculinity and Barnevelt's challenge to gender norms. Even when Barnevelt speaks of her affinity for men, she desires the "wrong" kind of man: "I, for my part, like a brave man, a gallant man: One in whose loud praise fame has crack'd half a dozen trumpets. But as to your milk-sops, your dough-baked lovers, who stay at home and strut among the women, when glory is to be gain'd in the martial field; I despise them with all my heart" (1:62). The men that Barnevelt admires perform an antiquated masculinity, grounded in the heroics of battle. Her vision of men does not correspond to the novel's hero, Sir Charles, who, while not a "milk-sop," is at home among women and does not need his masculinity loudly proclaimed. Although Barnevelt's masculinity might have been acceptable earlier in the century, at this point, her masculinity and her notion of masculinity are outdated. One of Harriet's early comments about Barnevelt aptly captures how we should view her: "An odd creature, my dear! But see what women get by going out of character. Like Bats in the fable, they are look'd upon as mortals of a doubtful species, hardly owned by either, and laughed at by both" (1:43).¹⁵ Thus, Barnevelt is too masculine to be a woman, but cannot be a man because she is the wrong sex.

Barnevelt's challenge of gender norms is discredited because she is masculine and desires women, and it seems that she could be removed from the narrative with little problem. And in terms of the plot, this seems to be true, since Barnevelt only speaks in the first volume and is merely referred to in two other volumes. However, Richardson

¹⁵ "Bats in the fable" is a reference to L'Estrange's *Aesop* (1692), number 40. The fable is about a bat that first claims it is a mouse in order to escape a weasel and later claims it is a bat (not a mouse) in order to escape a second weasel. Harriet implies that Barnevelt is neither a man nor a woman. She changes her identity as the bat changes its species.

resurrects her in Volume Six so that the voice of authority in the novel, Sir Charles, can dismiss her challenge to gender norms while also validating his own sentimental masculinity, suggesting both that Barneveldt presents a compelling challenge to masculinity and that masculinity needs validating. We already know that Sir Charles possesses a delicate sensibility, since both Harriet and Sir Charles refer to his delicacy several times. Harriet tells us that he “wants not *delicacy*” (2:305), she twice praises his delicacy in dealing with Lady Clementina (2:607-608), and she says that his delicacy makes him “afraid” to reveal his emotions lest he embarrass Harriet (3:151). Even Sir Charles refers to his own delicacy in pursuing Harriet, “I could not else, either for the sake of *your* delicacy or my own, *so soon* have made proposals” (3:313). Certainly, Sir Charles’ delicacy makes him attractive to women because he is so sensitive to their emotions.

Unlike the rakish Mr. B., however, Sir Charles risks being read as effeminate (because of his delicacy) unless he can establish his authority and natural claim to dominance over women. Since the sentimental man could be read as effeminate, as Janet Todd argues, “The archetypal man of feeling created by Mackenzie, Sterne and Goethe came to seem effete and sexually enervated or dishonest” (133-34), Sir Charles must distinguish himself from the effeminate man of the mid-to-late eighteenth century, the fop, and also prove the deviance of female masculinity. His first mode of attack focuses on women’s intelligence. Mrs. Selby asks Sir Charles if women could equal men “in their attainments,” if they had the same education. Sir Charles acknowledges that women do not have equal learning time as men, but then he says that women do not have “equal genius’s [sic].” Charlotte responds, speaking to Harriet: “If they had equal genius’s,’

brother. Very well. My dear Sister Harriet, you see you have given your hand to one of the Lords of the creation—Vassal! bow to your Sovereign” (3:246). As the model of femininity in the novel, Harriet refuses to challenge Sir Charles or endorse Charlotte’s comment; she says nothing. Although Charlotte takes a feminist stand here, she is not nearly as radical as Miss Barnevelt, and by the end of the novel she becomes less bold, submitting to her role as a wife. As Margaret Doody explains, “Richardson means the reader to agree with Harriet, and Aunt Nell, and the rest, in thinking Charlotte’s conduct wrong, and not becoming in a wife” (291). Doody argues that by the end of the novel Charlotte’s role changes: “In the [Restoration] plays the female tyrant subsides gracefully, acknowledging the claims of good nature, principle, and social duty. Richardson explores this theme further by showing his spirited Charlotte in the process of dwindling into a wife” (292). The implication is that *even Charlotte*, one of the novel’s most outspoken critics of marriage, acquiesces to the expectations of her gender, giving in to societal pressure.

To support his argument that women are intellectually inferior, Sir Charles appeals to nature and a general parsing out of roles and attributes by sex. In this part of the argument, he uses Miss Barnevelt as an example of a woman who performs the ‘wrong’ gender: “Can there be characters more odious than those of a masculine woman, and an effeminate man? . . . women, whose minds seem to be cast in a masculine one; whence your Barnevelts, my dear, and most of the women who, at such places, give the men stare for stare, swing their arms, look jolly; and those married women who are so kind as to take the reins out of their husbands hands, in order to save the honest men trouble” (3:247). Sir Charles casts men and women in specific roles determined by their

gender and is troubled by anyone, woman or man, who strays outside prescribed bounds.¹⁶

Miss Barnevelt functions as the epitome of the masculine woman who refuses to acknowledge men's superiority and fails to back down from their power. Sir Charles' description of such a woman even conforms to the description of Barnevelt (and the masculine women in general in the novels I discuss here). Because of the impact Barnevelt had in the first volume (Sir Charles remarks in this conversation that Harriet mentioned Miss Barnevelt in a letter to him), here Sir Charles uses her to endorse normative femininity and normative masculinity, citing the need for men to hold the reins in the relationship. Although Mr. Walden makes the same argument in volume one, that men are intellectually superior to women, no one pays much attention to him because he is so arrogant, but when Sir Charles defines masculinity as the province of men and establishes men as superior to women, no one contests this argument, not even any of the women, except Charlotte.

Eventually, Sir Charles reveals precisely what is at stake for men and their masculinity, if women were to behave like Miss Barnevelt. Drawing upon religion and nature as authorities, Sir Charles espouses the primacy of sex complementarity: "Yet it is my opinion, that both God and Nature have designed a very apparent difference in the minds of both [sexes], as well as in the peculiar beauties of their persons. Were it not so,

¹⁶ Mrs. Croft in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* does exactly this, take the reins from Admiral Croft, in order to prevent them from toppling over. However, for Austen, such independence from women is not something to be feared, but rather serves as a model for the heroine, Anne, to follow. The Crofts marriage is quite egalitarian and yet still a happy one; Austen clearly diverges from Richardson's notions of gender. The passage reads as follows: "But by coolly giving the reins a better direction herself, they happily passed the danger, and by once afterwards judiciously putting out her [Mrs. Croft's] hand, they neither fell into a rut, nor ran foul of a dung-cart; and Anne, with some amusement at their style of driving, which she imagined no bad representation of the general guidance of their affairs, found herself safely deposited by them at the cottage." Jane Austen, *The Complete Novels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1276.

their offices would be confounded, and the women would not perhaps so readily submit to those domestic ones in which it is their province to shine”(3:248). Not only does Sir Charles claim that women are more attractive by being domestic, but he also admits that masculinity in women (a result of the sexes being confounded) would make women unlikely to “submit” to their domestic duties. Thus, Sir Charles recognizes the threat female masculinity poses to masculinity and all the rights and power therein. He also recognizes the need to ensure women’s adherence to normative femininity, since femininity is integral to men’s dominance over women. Thus, when Miss Barnevelt applauds Harriet in volume one for arguing on behalf of women and for eschewing gender norms that dictate her submission to men, Barnevelt endorses female masculinity as an alternative to normative femininity and threatens to disrupt the whole system of gender that invests authority in men. However, by having Sir Charles discredit female masculinity, making masculine women owls among birds, Richardson attempts to disarm the threat of female masculinity, knowing that his female readers would likely respond well to his hero and preserving the notion of gender complementarity, which ensures heterosexuality and patriarchy.

The threat of female masculinity, according to Sir Charles, corresponds to a parallel fear of effeminate men. In the passage above, Sir Charles mentions effeminate men as the other odious character along with masculine women: “What are the distinguishing characteristics of the two Sexes? And whence this odiousness? There are, indeed, men, whose minds, if I may be allowed the expression, seem to be cast in a Female mould; whence the fops, foplings, and pretty fellows, who buz about your Sex at public places” (3:247). If much of men’s superiority to women lies in their minds, the

men whose minds are cast in a female mold divest themselves of authority and threaten the hold that other men have over women, making it easier for women to “take the reins” from men. Sir Charles also distinguishes his sentimental masculinity from an effeminate, foppish masculinity, implying that sensibility is not synonymous with a lack of power. In a passage from James Fordyce’s *Sermons to Young Women* that bears striking resemblance to Sir Charles’s statement, Fordyce perceives effeminacy and female masculinity as equal threats to the notion of sex complementarity:

I confess myself shocked, whenever I see the sexes confounded. An effeminate fellow, that, destitute of every manly sentiment, copies with inverted ambition from your sex, is an object of contempt and aversion at once. On the other hand, any young woman of better rank, that throws off all the lovely softness of her nature, and emulates the daring intrepid temper of a man—how terrible! (1:104)

Although effeminate men are to be reviled, Fordyce does not specify why effeminacy is wrong, except to say that it is an inversion of sex. However, he is specifically bothered by the masculine woman’s “daring intrepid” manner. A woman who possesses these qualities, like Miss Barnevelt, will not easily submit to a man. Her fearlessness and lack of softness not only challenge the notion of sex complementarity, but more importantly, they grant women the fortitude to resist the rule of men, especially if they have become “effeminate fellow[s].” Both Sir Charles and Fordyce connect effeminacy to female masculinity and the fear and horror each man expresses at such a loss of power is evident in the language they use, such as “odiousness,” “contempt,” and “how terrible!” Indeed, Fordyce implies that effeminacy in men is a kind of contagion that manly men must immediately “aver[t] at once,” as if they too might become effeminate simply by

being in the presence of effeminate men. Likewise, Sir Charles applies a kind of guilt by association when he derides men who “buz” about women. Fordyce and Richardson actually invest female masculinity with considerable power to affect the gender performances of women and men.

For a character who occupies so little of Richardson’s voluminous novel, Miss Barnevelt is a looming figure in the construction of normative masculinity and femininity. Among the many people that Harriet meets, she devotes several letters to discussing Barnevelt and even apparently writes about her to Sir Charles, who uses Barnevelt as the main example of gender gone awry. Despite his attempts to discredit the masculine woman, Richardson comes back to her again and again in each of his novels, giving her a new role and devising a new strategy to dispense with her masculinity. Although critics have had little to say about Barnevelt, most who do discuss her, dismiss her, as no doubt, Richardson would hope we would do. Tassie Gwilliam, for example, reads Miss Barnevelt’s role in the novel as limited: “Barnevelt’s open, cheerful violation of her prescribed gender role seems to be a dead end; her desire does not stand in for the desire of a powerful male in the fiction, as does that expressed by Mrs. Jewkes, for example” (118). This argument, however, presupposes that Barnevelt’s subversive possibilities exist only if she functions as a male stand-in. Although she does serve Sir Charles’ ends when he advocates conformity to gender norms, Miss Barnevelt nevertheless offers an alternative to normative femininity that threatens normative masculinity. Indeed, I argue that Richardson’s continued interest in female masculinity reflects its greater visibility (and perhaps future viability) in eighteenth-century society and the very real threat that it poses to a masculinity defined by superiority to women.

For the most part, Richardson does disarm the threat that the masculine woman poses in his novels, but his use of such a character also increases awareness of female masculinity and the alternative she presents to normative femininity. Thus, Richardson unwittingly promotes the visibility of female masculinity.

Evelina

Mrs. Selwyn, the masculine woman in Frances Burney's *Evelina*, holds a less derisive place in the novel than Mrs. Jewkes or Miss Barnevelt do in Richardson's novels. This is in part because Mrs. Selwyn serves as a guardian for the heroine, rather than as a captor or as irritating company and because she is instrumental in determining Evelina's parentage and bringing about her marriage to Lord Orville. Unlike the other masculine women I discuss, she is not written out of the narrative, nor does her character dramatically change, as Mrs. Jewkes' does. She also does not display any obviously homoerotic qualities; although she often teases the heroine, she never flirts with or kisses her. Despite her important function in the novel, Mrs. Selwyn is not well-liked by Evelina or most of the other characters because of her masculinity, and she is given a number of monikers, such as "queer," "odd," and "Amazon." While I am not arguing that Mrs. Selwyn desires women, she is, nevertheless, queer because of her masculinity, and this queerness puts her at odds with heterosexual norms. She is queer, or strange in the eighteenth-century sense because she refuses to conform to normative femininity, which includes heterosexuality. She is not married, she expresses no romantic interest in men, and this coupled with her masculinity renders her suspect. Although the other characters in the novel do not read her as a lover of women, they do not read her as heterosexual either. Thus, she exists in a third space of indeterminate sexuality. That a

woman could be read as masculine and of indeterminate sexuality because she is intelligent, challenges men, and refuses to conform to gender norms, but *does not desire women*, illustrates the extent to which a strong, intelligent woman threatens heterosexual norms.

Like Mrs. Jewkes and Miss Barnevelt, Mrs. Selwyn serves as a foil to the hero. Lord Orville, like Sir Charles, enters the narrative as the model of sensibility. He is paternal, “delicate,” and sensitive to Evelina’s feelings. In contrast, Evelina and others find Mrs. Selwyn wanting in delicacy, making her neither a proper woman, nor a proper man. Because sensibility shifts masculinity toward the feminine, femininity must shift as well in order to counterbalance masculinity and preserve the heterosexual/gender binary; Selwyn, however, does not preserve sex difference. Unlike the female soldiers and female husbands who proved to be better men than ‘real’ men were, Mrs. Selwyn enables Lord Orville to be the better man. Her antiquated masculinity emphasizes and legitimizes Lord Orville’s move toward sensibility. Evelina juxtaposes Selwyn’s loud, swaggering masculinity to Lord Orville’s delicacy and finds Lord Orville *more* desirable because of his delicacy, especially when Evelina compares his companionship and protection to that of Mrs. Selwyn. When placed in contrast to each other, Lord Orville’s delicate masculinity becomes normative, while Mrs. Selwyn’s gender becomes queer.

When Mrs. Selwyn enters the narrative, to act as a guardian for Evelina, Evelina describes her in terms that scorn her masculinity. Mrs. Selwyn not only possesses masculine qualities, but she has also lost feminine qualities. Like the other masculine women I discuss, Selwyn is constructed as an extreme; there is no balance between her masculine and feminine qualities. The consequence of this, as Evelina see it, is that Mrs.

Selwyn lacks the maternal qualities Evelina demands in a guardian, and as a result, Selwyn is ill-suited as a protector, making Evelina uncomfortable:

Mrs. Selwyn is very kind and attentive to me. She is extremely clever; her understanding, indeed, may be called *masculine*; but, unfortunately, her manners deserve the same epithet; for, in studying to acquire the knowledge of the other sex, she has lost all the softness of her own. In regard to myself, however, as I have neither courage nor inclination to argue with her, I have never been personally hurt at her want of gentleness; a virtue which, nevertheless, seems so essential a part of the female character, that I find myself more awkward, and less at ease, with a woman who wants it, than I do with a man. She is not a favorite with Mr. Villars, who has often been disgusted at her unmerciful propensity to satire. (269)

Evelina dislikes being in Mrs. Selwyn's presence, which she states throughout the novel, because her masculinity elicits discomfort. Evelina is "more awkward" and "less at ease" with a woman who lacks "gentleness," or who is aggressive. Evelina's fear of Mrs. Selwyn parallels Pamela's fear of Mrs. Jewkes. As Evelina has learned through society, "want of gentleness" is a quality that is an "essential part of the female character" and its opposite, aggressiveness, must be an essential part of the male character. Although Evelina does not like aggression in anyone, she at least expects it in a man. Once this quality appears where it naturally should not, Evelina is ill at ease and does not know what other qualities Mrs. Selwyn may unexpectedly possess. Because gender at this late point in the eighteenth century is concretized as a natural outgrowth of sex, and because it is such a rigid system, the appearance of one unnatural quality in an individual must

either call into question the naturalness of the sex/gender system or open the door for the possibility of other unnatural qualities within that individual.

This passage also expresses what is most problematic about Mrs. Selwyn: her masculine intelligence. At first, Evelina appears to praise Mrs. Selwyn's intelligence, which she believes is like a man's. But for a woman to be clever like a man quickly becomes faint praise. When Evelina discusses Mrs. Selwyn's manners, she finds they are just like her cleverness. They deserve the same "epithet"—they are masculine—implying that a woman who possess a man's cleverness is subject to derision. Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that Burney employs Mrs. Selwyn as a means of representing other options for women: "Fanny Burney, disclaim[s] responsibility for Mrs. Selwyn through her heroine's disapproval, yet allows her to remain a provocative image of female intelligence and force. The novelist thus suggests that she is aware, although she has not yet fully acknowledged it, that Evelina's choices, proper as they are, do not exhaust the tempting possibilities for intelligent women" (52). Burney may allow for women's intelligence, but not for the open display of it. Mr. Villars' disgust at Mrs. Selwyn's "unmerciful propensity to satire" reflects what the problem is: Selwyn does not censor herself, particularly in the company of men. Instead, Mrs. Selwyn often makes men the butt of her jokes, placing herself in a position of superiority to them.

Just a few pages after Mrs. Selwyn enters the narrative, she meets Lord Merton, Mr. Coverley, and Mr. Lovel. In this first of three encounters with the men, she challenges their assumption that women are merely social and not intellectual beings, and as a result, the men question her gender. When Evelina informs Lord Merton that she will not be at the assembly that evening, he questions how she will possibly pass the time.

Mrs. Selwyn replies, “[T]he young Lady *reads*,” something, she says, he will “think very extraordinary” (275). Mrs. Selwyn’s point here is not so much about reading, but rather about expectations of women based on gender norms. Since she thinks Merton is a “confirmed libertine,” she assumes that he views women as easily manipulated and as intellectually inferior to himself. She essentially taunts him and plays the role of the submissive woman, displaying her “unmerciful propensity for satire.” After Lord Merton tells her that she cannot possibly criticize him (because he believes he is above reproach, especially from her), she replies, “Heaven forbid I should ever entertain so idle an expectation! I only talk, like a silly woman, for the sake of talking; but I have by no means so low an opinion of your Lordship, as to suppose you vulnerable to censure” (275). The obvious satire of this comment, especially in the last line, indicates that Mrs. Selwyn does not view herself as a silly woman who speaks idly. Rather, she is playing to his expectations of a woman in order to censure him without his realizing it.

Mrs. Selwyn’s comments lead to Lord Merton’s suspicion that there is something amiss about her. At one point during the conversation, he turns to Evelina and asks, “is that queer woman your mother?” (275). Certainly, he is not suggesting that she desires women, since that meaning of queer will not come into circulation until some two centuries later, but he suggests something beyond the simple odd or strange that queer signifies. The *OED* lists the first definition of queer as, “Strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric, in appearance or character. Also, of questionable character, suspicious, dubious.” Certainly, Mrs. Selwyn is strange or odd, but she also reads as suspicious (or suspiciously non-normative) and dubious because of her masculinity. Evelina’s response to his question also suggests that Lord Merton thinks Mrs. Selwyn is more than just odd:

“Good Heavens, Sir, what words for such a question!” (275). Evelina is disturbed by the idea of Mrs. Selwyn being her mother, but she also emphasizes Merton’s diction. If he were merely implying that she was odd, Evelina would not likely object to his choice of words as much as she does. Mrs. Selwyn’s comment to the men toward the end the conversation affirms her dubious nature: “‘Don’t be apprehensive, Gentleman,’ said Mrs. Selwyn, drily, ‘I am not romantic,—I have not the least design of doing good to either of you’” (275). Although the men’s rude behavior would make them unattractive to most women, Mrs. Selwyn’s admission that she is not a romantic distinguishes her from most women and reflects her lack of interest in men in general. She is interested in helping Evelina get married, but she never expresses such interest for herself.

After this initial meeting, Mrs. Selwyn mocks the men on other occasions, and she especially enjoys flaunting her superior intelligence. She even goads them into a debate: “I am sure you cannot be afraid of a weak *woman*?” (290). The confrontations build to a climax in which the men ultimately speculate about her gender and sexuality. When Lady Louisa complains of being weak, Lord Morton assures her she is, on the contrary, “merely delicate” and he adds that “the devil take me if ever I had the least passion for an Amazon” (361). This comment opens the door for the other men to criticize Mrs. Selwyn’s masculinity and question her sexuality, since the term “Amazon” raises both issues. Looking at Mrs. Selwyn, Mr. Lovel says “for I have an insuperable aversion to strength, either of body or mind, in a female” (361). Mr. Coverley chimes in with “Faith, and so have I . . . for egad I’d as soon see a woman chop wood, as hear her chop logic” (361). Finally, Lord Morton concludes with “So would every man in his senses . . . for a woman wants nothing to recommend her but beauty and good-nature; in every thing else

she is either impertinent or unnatural. For my part, deuce take me if ever I wish to hear a word of sense from a woman as long as I live!" (361). Although these men are hardly models of sentimental masculinity, they nevertheless reflect a view that is consistent with other representations of female masculinity in these novels.¹⁷ It most clearly parallels the conversation in *Grandison*, when Harriet agrees with Mr. Walden that most men want a woman whom they can teach, rather than a woman who can teach them. To invert such a relationship, with the woman teaching the man, suggests an inversion of gender roles with the woman playing the man's role. Although the men do not openly suspect that Mrs. Selwyn desires women, their conception of gender and gender roles confounds their understanding of Selwyn's sexuality.

As this conversation continues, Mrs. Selwyn pushes the bounds of what is acceptable behavior in a woman, leading the men to ponder her indescribable, queer qualities and the challenge she presents to heteronormativity. She says to the men, in a continuation of the previous conversation, "no man ought to be connected with a woman whose understanding is superior to his own. Now I very much fear, that to accommodate all this good company, according to such a rule, would be utterly impracticable, unless

¹⁷ Kristina Straub extends this argument further. She argues that Lord Merton's behavior has the ability to influence social convention and others' perception of women. In her discussion of the foot race that occurs between the two old women (to settle a bet between Lord Merton and Mr. Coverley), Straub argues, "Although most of the company does not share Merton's irresponsible opportunism about women (indeed, many of them are women), he determines to a large extent what the group does, thereby making his cruelty into a small-scale social convention" (46). Even though Lord Orville seems disconcerted by the use of old women in the race for Merton's and Coverley's enjoyment, he does not speak out against the men. These silences from the other characters, especially from Lord Orville, who is normally quick to defend women, have the effect of endorsing Merton, Lovel, and Coverley's beliefs, even if unintentionally. Straub argues that the characters' roles in society are what ultimately govern their behavior: "the old women's race finally makes clear another social/sexual truth: even those who openly despise such games are made complicit in them by the rules for accepted behavior governing their roles" (48).

we should chuse subjects from Swift's hospital of idiots" (362).¹⁸ Selwyn's comment suggests that the men are far below her intelligence and are only capable of discussing topics appropriate for idiots. Lord Merton and Mr. Coverley are left speechless, but Mr. Lovel responds with, "Pon honour, that lady—if she was *not* a lady,—I should be half tempted to observe,—that there is something,—in such severity,—that is rather, I must say,—rather,—*oddish*" (362). As the stuttering and the dashes indicate, Mr. Lovel is clearly at a loss for words, and he is unable to articulate or to think about the quality that Mrs. Selwyn possesses. Lovel's inability to articulate what is "*oddish*" about her is indicative of the way in which queerness functions outside a heterosexual epistemology of sex, gender, and sexuality.

Selwyn's masculinity tells us something about how masculinity functions in the eighteenth century. According to Judith Butler, "[Women] maintain the power to reflect or represent the 'reality' of the self-grounding postures of the masculine subject, a power which, if withdrawn, would break up the foundational illusions of the masculine subject position . . . women must become, must 'be' (in the sense of 'posture as if they were') precisely what men are not and, in their very lack, establish the essential function of men" (*Gender Trouble* 45). Because Selwyn reads as masculine and of indeterminate sexuality, she does not reflect a lack for Mr. Lovel or any other man; thus, she challenges "the illusions of the masculine subject position." Mrs. Selwyn is incomprehensible to men because she lacks, not a penis, but rather masculinity's complement: femininity, which, by its subordination, signifies men's power and domination. What Selwyn

¹⁸ The footnote from Edward Bloom's edition speculates that Mrs. Selwyn is referring to "St. Patrick's Hospital in Dublin for 'lunatics and idiots' which was made possible by Swift's legacy of £10,000-£11,000" (420).

reflects or represents is literally unutterable for Mr. Lovel because her gender exists outside of a heterosexual matrix.

The incomprehensibility of Mrs. Selwyn is also reflected in Evelina's estimation of her. Although Lovel, Merton and Coverley are not admirable men and we should be suspicious of their opinions, Evelina draws conclusions similar to theirs. Twice she describes Selwyn's conversational style as physically aggressive, "She is so penetrating, that there is no possibility of evading to give her satisfaction" (321) and "Mrs. Selwyn quite overpowered me with the force of her arguments" (323). Selwyn is a kind of verbal libertine who uses her intelligence and words as weapons of control with women and men. Evelina tells us several times that she "dreads Mrs. Selwyn's raillery." Although she is masculine, Selwyn does not perform the kind of masculinity (sensitivity) that women find attractive. Twice Evelina prefers Mrs. Mirvan over Mrs. Selwyn's because Mrs. Mirvan is more delicate (317, 337). Thus, Mrs. Selwyn fails to perform normative femininity *and* normative masculinity because she performs an antiquated masculinity rather than a sentimental one.

When Evelina compares Mrs. Selwyn to Lord Orville, Selwyn fails as a protector, and as a result, she authenticates his sentimental masculinity. On several occasions, Mrs. Selwyn leaves Evelina to fend for herself socially, leaving Evelina feeling abandoned and without a maternal protector: "[Mrs. Selwyn] does not, with a distinguishing politeness, raise and support me with others . . . she is herself so much occupied in conversation, when in company, that she has neither leisure nor thought to attend to the silent" (294). Lord Orville, however, does attend to her needs, rescuing her from social situations, especially when Mrs. Selwyn has abandoned her. On one such occasion, Evelina informs

us that Mrs. Selwyn “reserved herself for the gentleman,” leaving Evelina alone and feeling ostracized: “Yet, all together, I felt extremely uncomfortable in finding myself considered in a light very inferior to the rest of the company. But when Lord Orville appears, the scene changes: “he came up stairs at last, and seeing me sit alone, not only spoke to me directly, but drew a chair next mine, and honoured me with his entire attention” (289). Lord Orville swoops in and saves Evelina from embarrassment (because no one would talk to her), and again Evelina compares Mrs. Selwyn to Lord Orville: “Mrs. Selwyn, is too much engrossed in perpetual conversation to attend much to me, Lord Orville seems to regard me as a helpless stranger, and, as such, to think me entitled to his good offices and protection” (296). Mrs. Selwyn fails as a protector because she is too focused on herself and the company of men. Lord Orville, however, demonstrates concern for others, reflecting his sensibility.

As Mrs. Selwyn continues to disappoint Evelina as a guardian, Lord Orville continues to be attractive. What makes the protection and guidance Lord Orville offers so alluring to Evelina is that he offers it in a fraternal way. From Evelina’s perspective, he wants to protect her solely because it is the proper thing for a gentleman to do, rather than because he has amorous intentions. Judith Newton refers to Orville as a “fiction . . . who has all the vapid perfection of wish fulfillment” (39). For the frightened, naïve heroine cautiously negotiating the marriage market, a fraternal, sentimental masculinity is safe and attractive. The benign and sibling-like way in which the two interact seems, at first, to suggest that a love match between them would not occur, especially since Lord Orville asks Evelina to view him as a brother: “allow me to be your friend; think of me as if I were indeed your brother and let me entreat you to accept my best services, if there is

any thing in which I can be so happy as to shew my regard” (315). Later, Lord Orville asks Evelina: “Am I not your brother . . . and must I not enquire into your affairs?” (318). Of course, acting as her brother allows Lord Orville to become intimately involved in Evelina’s affairs, as he proposes, and thus allows him to ingratiate himself with her. This loving, delicate way of interacting with her contrasts sharply to Mrs. Selwyn’s brash tactics, which embarrass Evelina.

A brotherly Lord Orville also possesses a masculinity and sexuality that are not frightening. Evelina need not worry that he is ill-intentioned, like other men who lack sensibility. Poignantly, she tells us, “As a sister I loved him . . . so *feminine* his delicacy, and so amiable his nature” (261). This feminine masculinity permits Evelina to love him without fearing the consequences because the love is so innocent or delicate. Delicacy is used to describe Lord Orville more than any other character (Evelina is a close second), and more than half of the uses of the term in the novel apply specifically to him.¹⁹ But the danger in being described as delicate so frequently is that Lord Orville risks being read as effeminate. Indeed, Susan Staves argues that it is difficult to separate male delicacy from female delicacy: “Delicacy becomes more problematic when we think of it as implying weakness and modesty or when we ask whether the same delicacy is being recommended for both sexes. Like many other eighteenth-century novels, *Evelina* sometimes seems to deny significant differences between its masculine ideal and its feminine ideal” (19). But *Evelina* establishes at least one difference between male and female delicacy: male delicacy requires men to protect women, and this is a sign of

¹⁹ Evelina most often describes Orville as possessing or employing delicacy, saying that he has “high-bred delicacy” (172), that he offers his coach “with so much delicacy” (96), and that he has a “delicacy of conduct” (330). And Mr. Villars asserts that Orville always behaves with “so strict a regard to delicacy” (267).

strength. Lord Orville's delicacy does not read as weakness or effeminacy. Since Mr. Villars functions as a voice of authority and advocates normative gender roles (he praises and scorns those who do and do not follow gender norms), his opinion of Lord Orville is an important indicator of Orville's masculinity, and he tells us that Orville lacks a "false and pretended delicacy" (116). Mr. Villars' observation is important because it distinguishes Orville from foppish men, who were viewed as possessing a pretended delicacy; therefore, Lord Orville may be delicate, but he is not weak or effeminate. And, as we know from Mrs. Selwyn, more typically masculine qualities like aggression and forcefulness do not make one a suitable protector. Ironically, Mrs. Selwyn's hyper-masculinity makes her a poor protector of Evelina.

Since masculinity in the late eighteenth century is defined by delicacy and sensibility, it is not surprising that Mrs. Selwyn's boorish masculinity would be out of place. It is especially aberrant because her public displays of intelligence and wit place her outside of a masculine and feminine context. While *Evelina* does not proscribe intelligence in women, it does discourage the blatant display of intelligence, particularly in the company of men. Such displays of intelligence, as Mrs. Selwyn shows us, render a woman an oddity whose gender is incomprehensible. Although some critics argue that Mrs. Selwyn may be read quite positively because she represents a hope for women's empowerment, these critics also concede that such possibilities ultimately are not developed. Kristina Straub argues that Selwyn's problem is that she functions in a male world and seeks affirmation from men, who will never give it to her: "Mrs. Selwyn's verbal talents create a gap in the novel's system of conventional moral judgment: Evelina's criticism of Selwyn points out, albeit negatively, the possibility for real power

and value—if she were to act in a female context, and hence be judged on grounds of her value to other women instead of men” (28). Judith Newton argues that Evelina’s criticism of Selwyn allows Evelina to distinguish herself from Selwyn’s satirical critiques of men and society: “To deprive Evelina of satire, of course, is to deprive her of power. But, since abdication of power is a traditional preparation for marriage, Burney despite her inner conflicts, continues to endorse the status quo. What one senses then, in the condemnation of Mrs. Selwyn is a preparation for matrimony, an attempt to mitigate our sense that Evelina has been powerful, because satirical” (49). Mrs. Selwyn’s insistence on maintaining power, through her “propensity to satire,” leads to her characterization as masculine and as Amazonian. The message is clear: intelligent, powerful women are masculine and sexually suspect and yet their antiquated masculinity is important to legitimizing the sentimental hero.

Belinda

Although all of the masculine women in these novels are ridiculed, none is derided as much as Maria Edgeworth’s Harriet Freke, who is physically punished for her masculinity. Various characters describe Mrs. Freke as a “man-woman,” and as purposefully “disturb[ing] the peace” of others; even Mrs. Freke describes herself as such, shouting, “Who am I! Only a Freke!”²⁰ She cross-dresses and passes as a man three times in the novel (though she was not intending to pass), and she despairs when she cannot dress in men’s clothes after her injury in the “man-trap,” a trap obviously

²⁰ Edgeworth’s use of “freke” is curious because it implies either an antiquated denotation or a usage that would not come into circulation until decades later. The *OED* defines this particular spelling of “freke” as “Properly, one eager for fight; a warrior, champion; but usually a mere poetic synonym for ‘man’.” This definition accurately describes Harriet. However, the last citation for this usage is 1605. The meaning of “freak” in the eighteenth-century (there is no eighteenth-century listing for “freke”) is a “capricious prank.” The meaning of “freak” as “abnormal” does not appear until 1847 and is primarily an American usage.

meant to punish her aberrant gender. Virtually every character in the novel berates and vilifies her, and even those who are initially her sympathizers (Lady Delacour and Clarence Hervey) eventually turn against her. In short, Edgeworth constructs female masculinity as reminiscent of earlier eighteenth-century models: Harriet Freke actually seems to want to be a man, given her proclivity for male attire and male activities, such as hunting and riding, and her attraction to and interest in women; Edgeworth depicts her as more than subtly desiring women. Her masculinity makes her dangerous to heteronormativity, but her greatest threat lies in her ability to recruit and corrupt other women into performing masculinity. Like Miss Barnevelt and Mrs. Selwyn, Mrs. Freke is very vocal in her attack on normative femininity, especially female delicacy. But unlike the other novels, which merely threaten the consequences of aligning oneself with a masculine woman, *Belinda* is the only novel of the four to enact the grave consequences of befriending and imitating a masculine woman. In depicting the consequences of female masculinity, Edgeworth vilifies female masculinity more than the other novelists and attempts to discredit thoroughly Freke's challenges to normative femininity.

Why would Edgeworth attack female masculinity so vociferously, while endorsing normative femininity, and why would she belittle women who seek to be independent? These are puzzling questions indeed especially when we consider that Edgeworth was intelligent, a novelist, never had children, never married, and was an advocate for women's education. She was not quite the normal woman of her time. An important event separates *Belinda* from the other novels, and that is the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Although the publication of Wollstonecraft's text is not the sole difference between these novels,

Vindication and the negative responses to it (and to Wollstonecraft herself) are one of the major factors that shaped Edgeworth's portrayal of female masculinity. The fact that she titles one of her chapters "Rights of Woman" is a nod to Wollstonecraft's text, but many critics, such as Catherine Craft-Fairchild and Lisa Moore argue that Freke's arguments do more to discredit feminism than to advance it. In contrast, Kathryn Kirkpatrick argues that Freke is a distorted representation of a feminist that Wollstonecraft herself discusses in order to distinguish between her (Wollstonecraft's) own arguments and the arguments of those who claimed that she advocated a complete upheaval of gender roles. In other words, Freke is not meant to discredit Wollstonecraft's arguments, but rather is intended to legitimize them because they are not nearly as radical or ridiculous as Freke's. This may be Edgeworth's intention, but I do not think she unequivocally accomplishes this in her depiction of Harriet Freke, especially in this chapter. Mrs. Freke is, yes, ostracized by all the characters and is written out of the narrative, but her challenge to gender norms remains. Edgeworth presents the reader with arguments disputing the rationale of female delicacy and its importance in keeping women under male control. While most eighteenth-century readers may not have accepted these arguments, surely some would have, and more importantly, Edgeworth gives the reader an alternative to gender norms.

Although I argue later for a recuperative reading of Harriet Freke, she does also authorize sentimental masculinity because Edgeworth constructs her as freakishly masculine. If Mrs. Freke's challenge to female delicacy were uncontested, she would discredit normative femininity *and* normative masculinity. However, Edgeworth employs Mr. Percival and Clarence Hervey as the patriarchal voices of authority, much like Sir Charles and Lord Orville, who lecture the heroine on the risks of eschewing

gender norms. Though they focus on the dangers for women, inherent in this warning are the threats to men. When Mrs. Freke argues against delicacy in women because it subjugates women to men, Mr. Percival must respond, otherwise delicacy in men would seem all the more unusual and there would be no basis for men's dominance over women. Like Sir Charles, Mr. Percival uses Freke as an example of gender gone awry. By discrediting her gender, he simultaneously discredits her arguments against delicacy, and he legitimizes male delicacy. Percival, like Lord Orville, conveys the idea that gender norms are moving toward delicacy and that a woman who moves away from delicacy, toward an antiquated masculinity, is queer or odd. Thus, when Belinda's future husband Mr. Hervey is described as delicate, he does not seem effeminate, but rather appropriately gendered. Harriet Freke does help authorize normative femininity and masculinity, but at the same time, her arguments against female delicacy and her power to seduce women into performing masculinity pose a challenge to heteronormativity.

Harriet Freke's first appearance in the narrative leaves little doubt of her masculinity and of her potential to corrupt others. She first appears in the chapter entitled "Lady Delacour's History," wherein the history focuses largely on Delacour's former friendship with Mrs. Freke. Having dissolved her friendship with Freke, Lady Delacour does not hesitate to emphasize Freke's unseemly qualities. She describes Harriet as having "bold masculine arms," and as being "always at ease; and never more so than in male attire, which she had been told became her particularly. She supported the character of a young rake with such spirit and *truth*, that I am sure no common conjurer could have discovered any thing feminine about her" (47). Lady Delacour's description of her as a "young rake" reflects Freke's total rejection of normative femininity and her power to

corrupt others, especially, women. Though Delacour perhaps partially refers to Mrs. Freke's appearance and manners when she calls her a rake, Freke's pursuit of women (Lady Delacour, Belinda and Miss Moreton) also implies the sexual denotation of the word. Even though Freke does not openly engage in homoerotic acts, her interest in women appears to be more than platonic, as I will discuss. Edgeworth's description of Mrs. Freke constructs her as a predator who resists people's attempts to control her.

Having established Mrs. Freke's potential to corrupt women, Lady Delacour explains her attraction to Freke at a time when, not coincidentally, Delacour had abandoned her "natural" role as wife and mother. Lady Delacour casts herself as a woman who had already strayed from her appropriate gender role and was particularly susceptible to the allure of Harriet Freke: "You see I had nothing at home, either in the shape of husband or children, to engage my affections. I believe it was this 'aching void' in my heart which made me, after looking abroad some time for a bosom friend, take such a prodigious fancy to Mrs. Freke" (43). Of course, Delacour did have a husband and a child, but she chose to ignore her duties to the domestic sphere (just as her husband ignored his), which should have been not only her primary concern, but according to eighteenth-century notions of femininity, her primary source of pleasure. Instead, Delacour derived pleasure, which in this confession to Belinda she recants, in being in the public, rather than the private realm. By abandoning her duties to her family, Delacour makes herself prey to the allure of female masculinity because it taps into her latent desire for freedom from her gender role and from men. Delacour's new behavior inevitably leads toward a challenge of heteronormativity, as Lisa Moore argues: "The usurpation of male-gendered clothing and behavior by women, then, produces a

dislocation in the social organization of sexuality. Female homoeroticism disrupts heterosexual norms, calling into question the gendered terms within which the domestic space is organized” (94-95). This is precisely what happens in the Delacour home. Lady Delacour’s friendship with Harriet Freke causes a rift in her relationship with her husband (and daughter) and results in Lady Delacour becoming the de facto head of household. Notably, one of the projects of the novel is for Belinda to turn Lady Delacour’s interests back toward their appropriate place, the domestic, and restore Lord Delacour’s proper place as head of his family.

As she continues with her history, Lady Delacour describes Harriet Freke’s seduction of her, which allows Freke to usurp male sexual power. Lady Delacour describes the first time she met Harriet as if it were the first meeting of lovers: “she struck me the first time I met her, as being downright ugly; but there was a wild oddity in her countenance which made one stare at her, and she was delighted to be stared at—especially by me—so we were mutually agreeable to each other—I as starrer, and she as staree . . . You will not believe it; but her conversation at first absolutely made me, like an old fashioned fool, wish I had a fan to play with” (43). Part of Harriet’s allure resides in her appeal as a spectacle, as an object to be looked at, which is, obviously, a traditionally feminine quality. Lady Delacour, then, takes on the role of subject, which places her in a traditionally masculine role—further moving her away from her gender role. At the same time, Delacour also adopts the behavior of a smitten young woman, who is embarrassed by her attraction to Harriet and hides this feeling by playing with her fan. Despite being the one who is looked at, Freke gains power over Lady Delacour, allowing Freke to assume the traditionally masculine role as well.

This divergence away from heteronormative relationships grounded in a dominant/submissive model is perhaps what empowers Harriet Freke and gives her the confidence to dismiss femininity altogether. Lady Delacour tells Belinda that Harriet's charm lies in her confidence: "Harriet Freke had, without comparison, more assurance than any man or woman I ever saw. She was downright brass—but of the finest kind—Corinthian brass—She was one of the first who brought what I call *harum scarum* manners into fashion. I told you that she had assurance—*impudence* I should have called it, for no other word is strong enough . . . to my astonishment, all this *took* surprisingly with a set of fashionable young men" (43). Lady Delacour's description mirrors other descriptions of masculine women in that she focuses on Mrs. Freke's bold demeanor. However, this is the first time in the novels I discuss that a character praises the masculine woman for her brazenness. Even though Delacour has already severed her relationship with Freke at this point, her assertion that Freke is like "Corinthian brass" reveals a nostalgia for Freke's masculinity; note that Delacour does not retract her praise of Freke. As Lady Delacour informs us, she was not the only one who approved of Harriet's manners. That Mrs. Freke was able to bring her own code of manners into fashion, influencing even men, suggests just how powerful she was within the fashionable set of society. Harriet Freke is dangerous because she wields the power to affect social conventions and because she disregards gender norms, placing her outside the system of heterosexuality and outside of men's control. Men have little means of governing her behavior, and given her appeal with women, she obviously has the ability to influence other women's gender practices.

Harriet Freke's ability to discourage other women from conforming to normative femininity comes to fruition in her relationship with Lady Delacour. Delacour is not just taken by Harriet's "harum scarum" manners, she feels compelled to imitate them as well. Lady Delacour says that she risked losing Harriet if she did not follow her manners: "If I had not taken a heart of grace, and publicly abjured the heresies of *false delicacy*, I should have been excommunicated [by Harriet]" (43). This is the first reference to Freke's resistance to delicacy, a subject she will take up in earnest in her debate with Mr. Percival. Freke believes that delicacy promotes weakness in women, and she requires her friends to decry it as well. Her ability to influence the beliefs and behaviors of others is clear from the language, "heresies" and "excommunicated," that Lady Delacour uses. In converting others to her "church," Freke contests one of the most defining characteristics a proper lady should possess. In a note about this passage in the Oxford edition of *Belinda*, Kathryn Kirkpatrick states, "Wollstonecraft spoke out against false delicacy in *Vindication* as part of a general over-refinement in women that rendered them 'weak, artificial beings trapped in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone' (81). Here the concept is misread and trivialized by the fashionable set, a segment of Wollstonecraft's audience for whom the advice was intended" (488). Wollstonecraft may have intended her comments toward the fashionable set like Lady Delacour and Harriet Freke, but I do not think Harriet trivializes and misreads female delicacy. She seems quite aware that female delicacy implies dependence. As Sir Charles Grandison claims, it is nature that makes women delicate and dependent on men for protection: "Why has nature made a difference in the beauty, proportion, and symmetry, in the *persons* of the two Sexes? Why gave it delicacy, softness, grace, to that of the woman—as in the Ladies

before me; strength, firmness, to men; a capacity to bear labour and fatigue; and courage to protect the other?" (6:247). Harriet Freke resists this notion that women are naturally delicate because female delicacy links women to men and ensures their dependence on men. Freke may be brash, but her objection to delicacy is not trivial.

This initial objection to female delicacy becomes the focus of Harriet's conversation with Mr. Percival. In what is perhaps the most controversial chapter in the novel, "Rights of Woman," Harriet lays out objections to delicacy that most critics find unconvincing, and many cite this chapter as the strongest evidence of the ridiculousness of Harriet's character. For example, Catherine Craft-Fairchild says of Freke's arguments: "Harriet Freke makes little sense on the subject; her maxims and slogans are an incoherent pastiche of the writings of several intellectuals. Mrs. Freke's ranting, which ends in her splitting her dress, is like her wielding of weapons: it makes both her and the labouring women on the barricades who also shouted 'Vive la liberté!' appear ridiculous" (195). Lisa Moore argues that Harriet is unconvincing and ineffective as an agitator for women's rights and that her arguments are "firmly and reasonably opposed by Mr. Percival . . . Defending such female virtues as decency, delicacy, and shame, Mr. Percival thoroughly discredits Harriet Freke's position. Importantly, this scene also discredits her activity as such: by establishing the necessity of opposing Mrs. Freke's opinions, it also argues for opposing her actions" (91). Finally, Kathryn Kirkpatrick argues that Freke functions as a scapegoat: "In her uneducated mind, feminism is a jumble of undigested phrases. Although some critics have argued that this chapter on Mrs. Freke was meant as an attack on Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays, the point Edgeworth was making was far more subtle. For Harriet Freke is the 'bugbear' who neither frightens nor takes in

Edgeworth's heroine. She is the trumped-up terror of Wollstonecraft's 'masculine woman' (xix-xx). Harriet Freke's brash *manners* may make her the bogey man/woman of Wollstonecraft's feminism, but the actual *objections* she levels at normative femininity are not insubstantial; they are, however, well outside the norm of eighteenth-century society.

Critics easily dismiss Freke's arguments because of the way in which she articulates them, in her bold style, but the content of her arguments is substantive and draws upon well known, though controversial, eighteenth-century thought. Although I agree with Lisa Moore that this conversation illustrates the necessity for men (and also women, if they want to marry) to oppose Harriet's arguments in order to maintain heteronormativity, I disagree that Mr. Percival "thoroughly discredits" Harriet's arguments. Craft-Fairchild's observation that Harriet speaks in a "pastiche of the writings of several intellectuals" is technically correct; however, Mr. Percival's arguments are also a pastiche of other intellectuals' writings. Colin and Jo Atkinson document the sources for virtually all of the arguments that Freke and Percival make, and each character draws largely upon two men whom the authors describe as representing "the two major schools of English thought throughout the century" (109). Freke represents Bernard de Mandeville's ideology, and Percival represents that of the third earl of Shaftesbury. According to the Atkinsons, Bernard de Mandeville believed that, "all such ideals as virtue, honor, shame, and politeness were shams, pretenses that altered as fashion and occasion required" (109). In contrast, Shaftesbury represents the status quo of Edgeworth's time, and he believed that there are certain foundational values that persist throughout time. The Atkinsons align Mandeville's ideas with those of William

Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Mary Hays, and they align Shaftsbury with Hannah More, James Fordyce, and Thomas Gisborne. Godwin, Wollstonecraft and Hays obviously advocated greater equality between the sexes. More, Fordyce, and Gisborne were much more conservative and called for separate spheres for the sexes.

While Mandeville's philosophy was controversial, it was not discredited in the eighteenth century. Leslie Stephen describes Mandeville's philosophy as "shrewd" and as indicative of "great philosophical acuteness" (33). Mandeville was disliked by some because his theories of human nature were cynical, though not misanthropic. He viewed humans as base in nature, and he viewed virtue as a construct forced upon humans through religion. But he did not view humanity as doomed because of their nature. Stephen argues that Mandeville almost delights in it: "Mandeville shares Swift's contempt for the human race; but his contempt, instead of urging him to the borders of madness, merely finds vent in a horse-laugh . . . He is a scoffer, not a misanthrope. You are all Yahoos, he seems to say, and I am a Yahoo; and so—let us eat, drink, and be merry" (34). This notion of laughing at humans' foibles and taking pleasure in them, rather than standing in judgment of others, corresponds to Harriet Freke's arguments with Mr. Percival.

Freke's argument with Percival begins with a discussion of female shame, which Freke believes illustrates the performative rather than essential nature of femininity. The discussion begins with Mrs. Freke declaring that politeness and virtue are "hypocrisy." This comment reflects Mandeville's beliefs that politeness is a sham and changes with the winds of fashion. Next, Harriet argues that, "shame is always the cause of the vices of women" (229). She tries to bring Belinda into the conversation by asking what she

thinks about all shame being false shame. When Belinda merely blushes, Percival comments that her blushes “speak *for* her,” and this prompts Harriet to assert that “Women blush because they understand” (229). This very astute observation supports Harriet’s argument that women pretend to be ashamed or embarrassed because that is what people, especially men, expect of them. If women were so innocent and naïve, they would not know to be embarrassed. Thus, shame is performative and a compulsory component of femininity. From Freke’s perspective, shame is a vehicle for silencing women and perpetuating men’s dominance.

Having established the premise of her argument, Freke attacks the core of normative femininity, delicacy, and she argues that delicacy ensures women’s misery and submission to men. As Mr. Percival tries to defend women’s blushing, Harriet interrupts him and cries, “This is just the way you men spoil women . . . by talking to them of the delicacy of their sex, and such stuff. This *delicacy* enslaves the pretty delicate dears” (229). Harriet insists that by telling women that they are delicate, men reinforce female delicacy and ensure their dominance over women. This construction of female delicacy implies that men are altruistic, and it conceals the machinations of the patriarchy, enslaving women to men. Mr. Percival, however, slyly claims that delicacy “enslaves us [men],” implying that women’s delicacy obligates men to protect women, but that statement merely reinforces women’s dependency on men and makes men appear benevolent in their subjugation of women. Colin and Jo Atkinson support Freke’s critique of female delicacy: “In a sense, she was attacking the late 18th century’s growing sentimentality which, as we can now see, enslaved women by making them preoccupied with what was delicate—‘feminine’ in today’s term. This cult of delicacy had already led

to bowdlerism long before Bowdler, and in conversation as well as in books. Mrs. Freke was correct, in fact, when she said that ‘delicacy’ was demeaning women” (112). Harriet Freke’s arguments regarding female delicacy and its role in sustaining men’s power over women threaten to disrupt the gender hierarchy that positions masculinity and men in a superior role to femininity and women. As Mr. Percival admits, “[T]he same conduct in ladies which best secures their happiness most increases ours” (230).

Mr. Percival’s admission that delicacy in women “most increases” men’s happiness (despite claiming earlier that it enslaves men), reveals his investment in gender codes that privilege men and conceal their power. As this conversation draws to a close, Mr. Percival defends what he calls the “decent drapery of life,” referring to the manners and codes that dictate behavior and aligning himself with a very conservative notion of society. When Harriet makes a suggestion about how to improve society,²¹ Mr. Percival fears the consequences of altering societal rules and asks: “but you would not overturn society to attain it? would you? Should we find things much improved by tearing away what has been called the decent drapery of life?” (230). Percival’s comment stems from Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), wherein Burke argues that tearing away “the decent drapery of life” destroys the illusions of power and strips those in positions of power down to a level such that they are no different from those over whom they rule. Given Burke’s notion that society should be governed according to a natural order determined by God, which posits men at the top of the hierarchy, it is not surprising that Percival would quote from Burke. Burke’s resistance to altering what he

²¹ Harriet suggests that men be taught to say “Horns! horns! I defy you” (230). To which Percival initially responds with, “This would doubtless be a great improvement” (230).

perceived as the natural order of society is precisely the ideology Percival espouses.²²

The evocation of Burke also links Percival to anti-Jacobin thought, while Harriet's comments, such as "Vive la liberté!" and the ripping of her clothes at the end of this scene link her to Jacobitism.²³ Given the notion that Jacobin women were perceived as masculine usurpers of male authority, Edgeworth's characterization of Harriet in this chapter aligns Harriet with a radical ideology as an attempt to discredit her challenges to the patriarchy.

Although Edgeworth employs Harriet Freke as a means of endorsing the status quo (through negative example), Freke nevertheless illustrates the very constructed nature of society's codes of conduct despite what Edgeworth may have intended. Her response to Percival's comment about the "decent drapery of life" is that drapery is "the most confoundedly indecent thing in the world" (230). Then, in what is intended to be a comic scene to mock Harriet, she "violently" stands up and accidentally tears some of her clothes. This conclusion to their conversation gets at the core of Harriet's beliefs and at why she is so controversial for polite eighteenth-century society. Harriet is not interested in compulsory behavior of any sort; she does not feel the need to conform in order to appease society. However, for Mr. Percival, how others perceive him is rather important. That Harriet Freke defies the "drapery of life" reveals her position from the margins and her efforts to shrug off the aims of a society seeking to enforce codes of gendered behavior. The "drapery of life" serves as the institutionalizing power of the center to

²² Burke's resistance to altering the natural order is evident in statements such as the following from *Reflections*: "Believe, me, sir, those who attempt to level, never equalize. In all societies, consisting of various descriptions of citizens, some descriptions must be uppermost. The levelers, therefore, only change and pervert the natural order of things; they load the edifice of society by setting up in the air what the solidity of the structure requires to be on the ground" (43).

²³ For more on Harriet's Jacobin qualities, see Lisa Moore *Dangerous Intimacies* (91-92) and Colin and Jo Atkinson "Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, and Women's Rights" (113).

control, script, and prescribe behavior. At the same time, it veils its workings from public view, as if it exists as a norm independent of human construction, as if the values it represents are somehow eternal human truths, rather than culturally and historically specific conventions. In short, Harriet resists Percival's notion that there is a natural order governing our behavior even as the times change. Thus, by extension, Harriet's beliefs challenge Burke's ideology.

Despite Edgeworth's construction of Harriet Freke as a marginalized oddity, Edgeworth (perhaps unwittingly) also allows Freke to contest the righteousness of societal norms, specifically in the character of Lady Anne Percival. Despite what the Percivals argue, conformity to gender norms does not always ensure happiness, even for the heroine. The narrator's depiction of Harriet's torn garments suggests that the reader should be embarrassed for or perhaps even horrified by Mrs. Freke. The fissure of her garments represents her being wrenched from the center, from the powers of society, in effect predicting her eventual downfall at the end of the novel when she is caught in the "man-trap" and isolated from society. But Harriet dismisses the ripping of her garments and merely laughs that the trappings of society, the drapery of life, have been torn and shed. What is horrifying to the other characters about Harriet Freke is that she seems to want to unravel the fabric of heteronormative society. After she and Belinda leave the company of Mr. Percival, Harriet sees a chest of drawers and inquires into whose they are, hoping that they belong to Lady Anne. As Harriet expresses her desire to get into Lady Anne's drawers, another scene that draws attention to Harriet's latent desire for women,²⁴ she tells us that she "delight[s] in hauling good people's opinions out of their

²⁴ Edgeworth employs a few puns in this scene. In the previous paragraph, Harriet says of Lady Anne: "I suppose the prude was afraid of my demolishing and unrigging her" (231). The "unrigging" is clearly

musty drawers, and seeing how they look when they're all pulled to pieces before their faces" (231). Here, Harriet evokes the metaphor of tearing clothes as a means of unveiling culturally constructed codes of behavior, which she seeks to expose. At this point in the novel, Lady Anne has come to represent the model of feminine behavior for Belinda to follow. Therefore, Harriet's desire to lay bare Lady Anne's adherence to gender norms and societal conventions is a desire to strike at the heart of all that Harriet finds reprehensible and hypocritical. The Percivals' later misjudgment of Mr. Vincent's character indicates precisely what Harriet rails against in this conversation. Those who conform to societal codes and look good in "the decent drapery of life" often mask their own hypocrisy, dressing it up in the culturally constructed codes of behavior.

Although I recognize that Edgeworth did not intend Harriet Freke to be read as a radical character who advances the cause of women's rights, what I intend with my reading is to show how Freke challenges the dominance of heterosexuality and how we can read her in a less derisive light than most contemporary critics read her. Moreover, I think that Freke's arguments, particularly her observations about the Percivals, place the text at odds with itself in that the character we are not supposed to take seriously poses problems for the novel's agenda in advocating gender norms. In other words, I read Harriet Freke as a character who deconstructs the discourse of Edgeworth's novel. However, I also recognize that Harriet Freke probably did not have this effect on many eighteenth-century readers. Instead, she likely functioned as a warning to women of the consequences of performing masculinity. This is particularly evident in the male characters' response to Harriet's masculinity and her relationships (be they intimate or

intended to mean "undressing," as Belinda's response makes clear: "'There seems to have been more danger of that for you than for any body else,' said Belinda, as she assisted to set Mrs. Freke's *rigging*, as she called it, to rights" (231).

not) with other women. Despite many critics' dismissal of Harriet Freke and her arguments in the chapter "Rights of Woman," other characters nevertheless contend with the challenges she poses to heteronormativity and its grounding in nature. If she were merely ridiculous, she would be easy to disregard, but like Miss Barnevelt, the male characters continue to discuss her masculinity, especially with Belinda, to ensure that Freke does not seduce other women to be masculine as well. She may serve a cautionary role in the novel, but the fact that she is there at all, that she must be contended with and can only be removed by physical force, reflects the significant challenge she makes to both masculinity and femininity.

Edgeworth, like Richardson and Burney, uses her male characters to endorse normative femininity and, implicitly, normative masculinity. Shortly after Harriet's debate with Mr. Percival, Belinda, Mr. Vincent and Mr. Percival see her with her new companion, Miss Moreton. In this scene, Mr. Percival condemns female masculinity and encourages Belinda to follow normative femininity lest she become an outcast like Miss Moreton. After Belinda sees Miss Moreton with Mrs. Freke, she expresses pity for Moreton and wonders if she is with Harriet against her will. Mr. Percival launches into an explanation of Miss Moreton's history, suggesting that, just like Lady Delacour, Miss Moreton is only with Harriet because she strayed from her gender role and because Harriet exploited her vulnerability:

She is certainly to be pitied, but also to be blamed . . . You do not know her history. Miss Moreton ran away from her friends to live with this Mrs. Freke, who has led her into all kinds of mischief and absurdity . . . [Miss Moreton] was persuaded by Mrs. Freke to lay aside her half boots, and to equip herself in men's

whole boots; and thus she rode about the country, to the amazement of the world.

These are trifles: but women who love to set the world at defiance in trifles,

seldom respect it's [sic] opinion in matters of consequence. (252)

Percival places the blame for Miss Moreton's aberrant behavior squarely on Freke. Even though Miss Moreton ran away and is "to be blamed," Mr. Percival describes Freke as an enabler of female masculinity, who encourages women to usurp male privilege. Once a woman aligns herself with other masculine women and begins wearing men's apparel, she is on the slippery slope toward losing society's respect. Percival, therefore, links female masculinity to a defiance of society's opinions and rules regarding appropriate behavior. Belinda immediately learns the lesson Percival intends, and replies: "What a lesson to young ladies in the choice of female friends!" (252). Indeed, what a lesson for female readers, too, who cannot fail to understand the dangers of female masculinity.

Mr. Percival concludes Miss Moreton's history with an admonition to women, stating that women are culpable for the misdeeds of other women. He dismisses the real challenge women like Harriet Freke pose by framing her masculinity as a game and then as an act intended to hurt others: "It is difficult in society . . . especially for women, to do harm to themselves, without doing harm to others. They may begin in frolic, but they must end in malice. They defy the world—the world in return excommunicates them—the female outlaws become desperate, and make it the business and pride of their lives to disturb the peace of their sober neighbors" (253). According to Mr. Percival the problem lies not with a system that compels heterosexuality and "excommunicates" those who do not follow it, a rather harsh punishment, but instead with those who merely like to be defiant. Furthermore, he tells us, women are more imprisoned by this system because

their behavior, more so than men's, is likely to affect others. This admission reflects the power of female masculinity to harm others. From Mr. Percival's perspective, masculine women like Mrs. Freke may harm others, like Miss Moreton, but they also have the power to harm men by questioning men's natural claims to masculinity.

Mr. Hervey also endorses the notion that women are responsible for other women's gender, implying that women can help police other women's gender aberrance by being role models of normative femininity. Earlier in the narrative, when Lady Delacour is still trying to recover her reputation and has not fully returned to the domestic sphere, Mr. Hervey encourages Belinda's friendship with Delacour because Belinda is a model of femininity: "[Lady Delacour's] connexion with that Mrs. Freke hurt her more in the eyes of the world, than she was aware of . . . If lady Delacour had been so fortunate as to meet with such a friend as miss Portman in her early life, what a different woman she would have been!" (166). Indeed, Lady Delacour's connection with Belinda is the catalyst for her return to her domestic duties. At the urging of Belinda, she repairs her relationship with her daughter and her husband and lets her husband assume a more masculine role in their relationship. The other characters blame Mrs. Freke's masculinity for Lady Delacour's abandonment of her family and duties to them. Lady Delacour returns to her "appropriate" feminine role, but she does not shrink into an entirely submissive wife, nor does Lord Delacour become a tyrant, but Edgeworth sends a clear message that the Delacour household is better off after Lady Delacour assumes a more traditionally feminine role. Lady Delacour's conversion also illustrates Mr. Percival's claim that female delicacy secures women's happiness and increases men's happiness.

Through Mr. Percival and Mr. Hervey, Belinda learns the risks of female masculinity. Discouraging masculinity in women also helps to legitimize Mr. Hervey's sensibility. When Mr. Hervey extricates himself from his relationship with his ward, Virginia, he handles himself with a delicacy reminiscent of Sir Charles and his relationship with Clementina, showing sympathy for Virginia's feelings: "The artless familiarity of her manner, and her unsuspecting confidence, amounting to almost credulity, had irresistible power over Mr. Hervey's mind; he felt them as appeals at once to his tenderness and his generosity. He treated her with the utmost delicacy" (372), and later, "The happiness of his life and of hers were at stake, and every motive of prudence and delicacy called upon him to command his affections" (374). Mr. Hervey took on the responsibility of caring for Virginia and pledged to marry her, but his affections for Belinda present a conflict of emotions for him. While an unreformed Mr. B. probably would have ravished Virginia and tricked Belinda into a sham marriage, Mr. Hervey reflects the masculinity of the time, and he places women's feelings and needs above his own. He stands in sharp contrast to Mrs. Freke, who is described as having practically abducted Miss Moreton and treated her violently.²⁵ Like the other masculine women, Harriet Freke's version of masculinity is not only wrong for a woman, it is also wrong for a man, and her aggressive, insensitive behavior makes male delicacy appealing to women, without appearing effeminate.

As the latest novel I discuss, *Belinda* perhaps best illustrates the move toward more restrictive gender norms that occurs at the end of the century. Its hero does not

²⁵ When Mr. Percival and Belinda see Mrs. Freke and Miss Moreton on the rocks, Belinda cries, "Look how Mrs. Freke drags her up by the arm!" and Belinda fears she too is in danger of being seized by Freke: "she has vowed a vengeance against me, she might take a fancy to setting me upon that pinnacle of glory" (250).

need to reform, like Mr. B., because he already possesses sensibility, and the masculine woman does not merely threaten to corrupt other women, she actually does corrupt them so the readers can see the consequences of female masculinity. But, importantly, *Belinda* also shows us the power of redemption, when Lady Delacour reforms by returning to her naturally feminine role in the domestic sphere. In fact, Lady Delacour becomes an important voice for normative femininity in the novel because she knows the perils of having once been masculine: “I, amongst others, took it for granted, that the woman who could make it her sport to ‘touch the brink of all we hate’, must have a stronger head than most people. I have since been convinced, however, of my mistake. I am persuaded that few can touch the brink without tumbling headlong down the precipice” (44). Referring to Harriet Freke in this passage, Lady Delacour informs us that she once stood in awe of Harriet’s rejection of gender norms and societal rules (“the decent drapery of life”), but she realized that Harriet’s complete rejection of gender norms led to her complete rejection from society. Instead, by the end of the novel, Lady Delacour happily returns to the domestic sphere and, showing how much she has reformed, she even helps convince Belinda of Mr. Hervey’s delicacy at a time when Belinda doubts him: “I protest I am only puzzled to know, whether I shall bind them up [Mr. Hervey’s letters to her] with Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey*, or Fordyce’s *Sermons for Young Women*” (271). Before reforming her gender, Lady Delacour would have scoffed at Mr. Hervey’s Sterne-like sensibility and would have derided his preachy Fordyce-like tone, but now that she realizes the dangers of female masculinity, she endorses male delicacy and normative gender roles.

Lady Delacour’s reference to James Fordyce’s *Sermons to Young Women* is not incidental. Fordyce’s *Sermons* was enormously popular (it was reprinted fourteen times

between 1767-1814), and it significantly influenced society's notions of gender. *Sermons* is very conservative in its prescriptions for gender, and it suggests grave circumstances for women who do not follow them.²⁶ Fordyce also spoke about female masculinity and its effect on men: "A masculine woman must be naturally an unamiable character . . . To the men an Amazon never fails to be forbidding" (104-105). As these novels illustrate, the masculine woman is, indeed, forbidding to men because she threatens to disrupt heteronormativity and men's claim to superiority, which guarantees their power over women. Fordyce suggests the homoerotic appeal of the masculine woman, who he states, "shall sometimes succeed strangely with the women" (105). He cannot understand why masculine women would "succeed" with other women, yet the answer seems to be that some masculine women offer some women a model of less restrictive gender roles. Although Mrs. Jewkes and Miss Barnevelt are repulsive to the heroines, Mrs. Selwyn is less objectionable and Mrs. Freke captures the attention of Lady Delacour and Miss Moreton, illustrating that, indeed, some masculine women are attractive to other women.

By the late eighteenth century, society's tolerance and even celebration of female masculinity waned. The backlash response to female masculinity leads to the more strictly defined femininity that we see at the end of the century. By the late eighteenth century, a woman's behavior marks a her as masculine (whereas earlier it was primarily her cross-dressed appearance that defined her masculinity), making it easier to define a woman as unsuitably masculine. Although some of the masculine women in these novels are described as masculine in appearance, others are not, but are still considered masculine and possibly homoerotic. In expanding what constitutes female masculinity,

²⁶ Such a situation unfolds in *Pride and Prejudice*. Lydia Bennett interrupts Mr. Collins while he reads from Fordyce's *Sermons* because she finds them boring. Later, her liaison with Wickham almost ruins her and the whole family because of her failure to follow the gender norms Fordyce advocates.

more women can be censured for it; thus, tolerance for female masculinity shrinks. However, as Harriet Freke's character illustrates, despite society's best attempts to marginalize and punish female masculinity, the masculine woman cannot be eradicated. Although these authors' attempt to discredit thoroughly female masculinity, the masculine women articulate compelling challenges to normative gender codes, and their mere presence in these novels reflect society's inability to eliminate female masculinity. Indeed, these novels promote the visibility of female masculinity. Although Britain would continue its attempts to eradicate female masculinity, the masculine woman's influence on normative femininity *and* masculinity cannot be written out of society as easily as the masculine woman is written out of a novel.

Conclusion: The Construction of (our) Modern Masculinity?

Throughout this study, I have traced the shifting ground of masculinity in the eighteenth century, and I have argued for the inclusion of female masculinity in the construction of normative masculinity. Indeed, I have demonstrated the ways in which female masculinity often exceeded the masculinity performed by men and encouraged bravery and patriotism in men, the ways in which it challenged the naturalized connection between maleness and masculinity, and the ways in which female masculinity enabled sentimental masculinity. Furthermore, I contended that the construction of masculinity is deeply imbricated with the development of nationalism and of Britain's Empire. Thus, I have argued that in order to understand normative masculinity in the eighteenth century, we must examine female masculinity as well.

The first half of the century marks a time when the construction of masculinity was affected primarily by class struggle between the aristocracy and the rising middle class. Each class sought to define itself as the model not simply of masculinity, but more specifically of *English* masculinity. And each class sought to effect such a construction by claiming a disinterested gender performance, summed up in J.C. Flugel phrase the "great masculine renunciation," though to say a disinterested gender performance perhaps overstates the case a bit because men in the eighteenth century did not consider themselves "gendered," and as the century progressed they moved further away from a masculinity that was in any way conspicuous in either appearance or behavior.

During the Restoration, the aristocracy largely defined what constituted masculinity and because of the Stuart court's associations with France that masculinity was very French-influenced. To be masculine in the Restoration meant largely to copy

the styles of Frenchmen, but it also included more fluid sexual boundaries than would be present in the mid-to late eighteenth century. To be a libertine, indeed even to be effeminate, during the early part of the century denoted a different kind of manliness from that of the later eighteenth century. And an effeminate man at the beginning of the century was likely to be deemed effeminate because he ingratiated himself too much with women, not simply because he was unmanly, though effeminate could connote a lack of manliness.

Although it would be oversimplifying to say that standards of masculinity in the Restoration and early part of the eighteenth century were lower than in the mid-to later part of the century, it might be more accurate to say that masculinity during this period included a diverse array of normative representations. But by the middle of the century, these broader definitions of masculinity became more sharply defined, pushing out representations and behaviors newly deemed ‘aberrant,’ such as sodomy and sartorial choices that tended toward a French style. Although sodomy was not quite ‘normative,’ it also was not quite deviant in the early part of the century. Likewise, in the later eighteenth century, effeminacy strictly defined a man who was unmanly—unmanly because his attire was too ostentatious, or because he had sex with men, or simply because his manners were overly done, impolite and made others uncomfortable.

From our contemporary perspective, sodomy’s ‘aberrance’ and inclusion in a definition of effeminacy in the eighteenth century may not seem unusual, nor, likely, does the notion that a great attention to one’s attire was considered effeminate. But perhaps our easy acceptance of this shift in notions of masculinity and sexuality expresses as much about ourselves and our cultural-political moment as it does about the eighteenth

century. In other words, these beliefs may seem familiar and ‘normative’ because, though they arose in the eighteenth century, they continue to influence our notions of masculinity today.

As I have argued, the notion that a masculine man must adhere to heterosexuality and to sartorial austerity is relatively new to the eighteenth century. While these are not the only markers of masculinity in the eighteenth century, they are important because they signify masculinity in visual and behavioral ways, which (seemingly) made it easier to identify who was a man and who was manly. These visual and behavioral markers became important as men sought to distinguish themselves from others whom they deemed less manly; such distinctions were made primarily along class lines. Although the aristocracy attempted to maintain power in general and thus also over notions of masculinity, it could not escape a legacy of French influence, and middle-class men capitalized on this weakness, quickly adopting the three-piece suit, instituted by Charles II for standard aristocratic wear, as their own.

Middle-class mercantilism and nationalism also cohere in the form of military service, especially in the Royal Navy, with the mercantile marine providing many thousands of men, whom Linda Colley argues were “indispensable for the operation of [Britain’s] naval power” (65). Given the need for such a large number of men, we can begin to see why this particular historical and cultural moment enabled and promoted female masculinity in the form of female soldiers and sailors.

The narrative of Hannah Snell offers a prime example of female masculinity’s influence on the construction of normative masculinity. Snell succeeds in battle—while men are portrayed largely as womanizers or are absent from descriptions of battles,

suggesting that Snell was the prime example of masculinity during battles. Since the author frames Snell's actions in a "dastardly age of . . . Effeminacy," when men no longer sought glory on the battlefield, the text implicitly calls upon men to return to this once vaunted age of valor and masculinity, and to do so as Britain increases its colonial possessions. Throughout the text, the author often mentions Snell's participation in battles in the East-Indies, thereby suggesting the role that men *should* play on the nation's behalf. Whether it is Christian Davies beating up men and embarrassing them, or Jenny Cameron having to rally Charles Edward, or Hannah Snell plucking a ball out of her groin so that she could continue to serve Britain, these female soldiers perform a masculinity that exceeds the abilities of the men and actually teaches them how to be manly and patriotic. In performing masculinity so successfully, the female soldiers elevate the standards of masculinity by goading men to be as masculine as these women are.

While the female soldier texts teach men how to be courageous and patriotic, the female husband texts reveal the importance of marriage to a man's masculinity. As Thomas King argues, a man's role as husband and his access to his wife's body contributed to what constituted normative masculinity in the eighteenth century. And, as we know from Carole Pateman, the social contract must be understood as underwritten by a sexual contract: men's rights and political power are linked to their conjugal rights. Thus, a man's role as a husband is not only tied to his masculinity, but it is also connected to his enfranchisement, privileging marriage as one of the most important aspects of a man's masculinity.

Since sexual access to women's bodies invested men with power, the female husbands' usurpation of male conjugal right posed a threat to male power. This threat is especially evident in the female husband texts authored by men, which express deep anxiety toward female husbands. Through their anxiety that women might perform the sexual role of men, as well as or better than men, these texts illustrate the importance of being a husband in the construction of masculinity. While men could dismiss a cross-dressed woman whose masculinity was grounded in external appearances, they could not ignore a woman who passed primarily because of her sexual performance. By passing as men, cross-dressed women removed themselves from the bonds of the sexual/social contract, placing themselves outside of male power and eliminating the link between the female body and men's access to power. By passing as *husbands*, female husbands exceeded this disruption of power and enabled their own access to political power and all the privileges conferred upon men through their access to women's bodies. Thus, female husbands posed a two-fold threat in disrupting what constituted masculinity in the eighteenth century.

Female husbands were not the only ones who challenged male power; in some cases their wives did so as well. In *The Female Husband*, Fielding suggests that Mary Hamilton wants to marry a widow so that she might obtain her fortune, but perhaps more worrisome to Fielding is the ease with which the widow is willing to ignore patrilineage: "[I]nstead of hiding her own head for fear of infamy, [the widow] was actually proud of the beauty of her new husband, for whose sake she intended to disinherit her poor great-grandson, tho' she had derived her riches from her husband's family, who had always intended this boy as his heir" (38). Thus, Mary Hamilton's conjugal rights grant her

access to wealth and power, but, Fielding seems to imply, equally as troubling is the fact that women/wives are complicit in this exchange. In other words, it is not just female husbands' usurpation of male power that seems to be a concern here; wives' disruption of male power through marrying female husbands, whether knowingly or unknowingly, was equally distressing.

These female husband texts offer several insights into the construction and status of masculinity. First, although each of these texts articulates a primary agenda to denounce female husbands, they also express a counter discourse (intentionally or not) that illustrates the anxiety of these (mostly male) authors. For at the same time that they implicitly ask readers to ridicule the female husbands for their 'imitation' of masculinity, the authors also represent them as successful in passing as men, in wooing women, and in pleasing women. Thus, these texts represent a masculinity that does not require a male body, even to perform a sex act, and in so doing they expand our notions of masculinity in the eighteenth century to include some female bodies. The inclusion of the female body is perhaps not as odd as it may seem, since the female body—and the feminine—must be invoked when defining “male” and “masculinity.”

This reliance on the female, both in the definition of masculinity and in men's enfranchisement, grants women an important role in the construction of masculinity. Though subjected to men, women were also integral to men's power; women could not possess official political power themselves, but their conjugal unions with men and men's access to their bodies enabled men's power. In this way, women conferred power upon men but could also grant such power to female husbands, as evident with the widow whom Mary Hamilton married. Hamilton's marriage to this widow also reveals women's

role in maintaining patriarchy (in this case patrilineage). Although I will not contend that female husbands cause other women to abandon gender norms, these texts sometimes suggest a connection between a marriage to a female husband and a feminine woman's willingness to disregard some patriarchal gender norms, such as the widow in *The Female Husband*, suggesting that female husbands present a challenge to both masculinity and femininity.

In the final chapter, I examined the function of masculine women in the construction of sentimental masculinity in men. At the end of the century, masculinity is still primarily defined by heterosexuality and by a husband's dominance over his wife. However, that dominance is softened by the men of sensibility who display sympathy and an awareness of women's feelings. But in being able to sympathize with women, the man of sensibility risks appearing too soft, too feminine in his distance from the rakish masculinity of the early part of the century.

However, Lord Orville, for example, does not read as effeminate. Instead, his sensibility is legitimized through a comparison to the masculine woman, Mrs. Selwyn. While once the standard of masculinity, Selwyn's brutish masculinity is used as a point of reference in the novel to illustrate the evolution of normative masculinity and to obscure the subjugation of women under patriarchy. Pamela, Harriet, Evelina, and Belinda all embrace their submissive wifely role in exchange for the protection and security their husbands provide. Thus, in these novels, women foster men's (especially husbands') masculinity, by adhering to codes of femininity and by policing other women's gender performances.

Although female masculinity does function in the construction of normative masculinity and supports patriarchal power, it does not serve a singular function in the eighteenth century. Throughout this dissertation, I have examined female masculinity's influence in the shifting definitions of normative masculinity, but I have also documented the ways in which female masculinity deviates from normative masculinity. In chapter two, I illustrated the ways in which the female soldiers seek intimate relationships with other women that are not bound by a mere sexual encounter. Rather, all of the female soldiers I discuss, despite initially demonstrating romantic interest solely for men, seek out intimate relationships with women and express an ardor for these women that is unparalleled in their relationships with their male lovers. While men in these narratives use their relationships with women to bolster their masculinity, the female soldiers use their masculinity to initiate relationships with women, and in almost every encounter with a woman, the female soldiers use their status as men to help other women, rather than take advantage of them.

A similar scenario plays out in the female husband texts, though here the women use their masculinity to gain access to other women's bodies, not just to establish an emotional intimacy. Although Fielding portrays Mary Hamilton as a womanizer whose interest in women is grounded in her greed and pleasure in masquerade, Hamilton generally leaves women because she anticipates being found out, not because she is a love 'em and leave 'em libertine. The same is true of Catherine Vizzani and Charlotte Charke. Both women use their masculinity to initiate relationships with women and to ensure that such a relationship can continue. There is no suggestion that these women use their masculinity as a means of subjugating their 'wives.' And, in at least Charke's

relationship, she is seen working through financial and other problems in an egalitarian way with Mrs. Brown.

Finally, the masculine women in the domestic novels offer perhaps the most provocative performances of masculinity in the sense that they use their masculinity as a platform to attack patriarchal gender roles. Eighteenth-century readers may not have been encouraged to like these characters, since they do not conform to normative femininity, they question gender norms that, as Harriet Freke says “enslave” women, and they challenge men in public debates, but these qualities make them just as compelling as the protagonists; they open up a space for debate about the function of gender norms in the eighteenth century. Even though these ideas are not permitted a full debate within the pages of the novels, they nevertheless raise the issue of women’s subjection to men and offer readers an alternative perspective on normative femininity. In these texts, female masculinity has a potentially liberating effect on women. Although the ways in which Harriet Freke goes about trying to liberate women from the shackles of patriarchy may be wrong-headed, the motivation for her behavior lies in a desire to free women from the “enslavement” of normative femininity. While Belinda is content to ensure her husband’s masculinity and therefore his power over her by conforming to normative femininity, Harriet Freke attempts to challenge patriarchal power by encouraging Lady Delacour and Miss Moreton to abandon their feminine roles.

Given these various representations of masculinity throughout the century, what can we surmise from the changes in masculinity and from female masculinity’s role in them? And what, if anything, can they tell us about our notions of gender? At this point, I want to return to an issue I gestured toward earlier: our position as twenty-first century

scholars attempting to understand the complexity and function of gender in the eighteenth century. I said that perhaps our willingness to accept the connection between sodomy and effeminacy in the eighteenth century might reflect our contemporary notions of gender (and sexuality). Likewise, perhaps our difficulty in accepting the ways in which female masculinity shaped normative masculinity and was even celebrated, albeit in very specific circumstances, reflects our own contemporary biases and difficulties in divorcing sex from gender. Even though many scholars accept the theory of gender as a performance, they are still willing to attribute certain qualities to men and women based on their sex and, as a result, we impose this same thinking on other eras, such as the eighteenth century. Perhaps this imposition occurs because we often view the passage of time as 'progress,' suggesting that we have moved beyond the politics and ideologies of previous eras. But what these texts show us are the ways in which masculinity and femininity during the eighteenth century were more flexible and interdependent than we had previously thought. What this portrait of masculinities illustrates is a culture still working through what it means to be masculine (and feminine) and contemplating who gets to embody that masculinity, as it were, because certainly men were not the only ones performing masculinity during the eighteenth century, nor were they always the most masculine. Indeed, in some ways, eighteenth-century England's response to masculine women, such as the female soldiers, exceeds even our own boundaries of acceptable female behavior. Although the United States, as a nation, at one time celebrated female masculinity, it no longer does so, not even in the limited ways that eighteenth-century England did. Recognition of eighteenth-century notions of female masculinity can teach as much about our own.

The U.S. celebrated female masculinity in the same ways that eighteenth-century England had and under strikingly similar social and political conditions. During a time of national crisis, when the nation was involved in World War II, what amounted to female masculinity was encouraged through government propaganda; specifically, the U.S. government encouraged women to take on traditionally masculine roles, especially in the work force. We see such propaganda in the iconic image of Rosie the Riveter (1942), which functions similarly to “The Female Volunteer” (1746). Although the broadside aims at goading men into the service, and Rosie encourages women to join the war effort, the inclusive “we” of “We Can Do It” illustrates how female masculinity was used to mobilize men and women to fight the war. Norman Rockwell’s representation of Rosie for the 29 May 1943 cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* accentuates her masculinity even more than does the original image. Rockwell’s Rosie sports overalls, sits with a large rivet gun in her lap, dirt and a confident look on her face, and her foot atop a copy of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. Although women were in the military during World War II, they were not engaged in combat, but this Rosie resembles a female soldier through her appearance and large combat-like gun. And it was through the efforts of real life Rosies, who were willing to don pants (perhaps for the first time in their lives) and perform a man’s job in factories, that the country was able sustain its forces and win the war.

Once the war was over, a similar pattern of shifting gender norms unfolded in the U.S., just as it did in England toward the end of the eighteenth century. Gender roles became more rigid and women were expected to express their nationalist pride by giving up their jobs for men and taking on their new jobs as homemakers. No longer were women expected to be masculine, and if they maintained their independence, they could

be accused of abandoning their femininity. A government pamphlet entitled “Boy Meets Girl in Wartime” warns women that they should not expect their new freedoms to continue indefinitely: “The war in general has given women new status, new recognition . . . Yet it is essential that women avoid arrogance and retain their femininity in the face of their new status . . . In her new independence she must not lose her humanness as a woman. She may be the woman of the moment, but she must watch her moments” (May 69). Gender roles began returning to pre-war norms, and women were encouraged in subtle ways to stay at home. For example, in the documentary *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, one woman recalls that recipes in ladies’ magazines during the war were quick and easy to prepare, but after the war, recipes became more complex and time consuming, requiring women to spend more time in the home. Women were also held responsible for maintaining and teaching gender norms, or in some cases, failing to do so. In *Generation of Vipers* (1942; republished 1955), Philip Wylie, sounding much like the author of *Satan’s Harvest Home* (1749) contends that overbearing and overprotective mothers were smothering their children and creating weak, effeminate boys. This concern about effeminate men in the 1950s, was, as in the mid-to late eighteenth century, linked to fears that a man might be homosexual; such men are our modern day mollies.

What we can glean from this moment in American history, then, is the sense that we too are still working through these issues of gender, and that our sense of ‘progress,’ of moving beyond the gender norms of the eighteenth century, is perhaps overestimated. As scholars, we must not distort literature and history through our contemporary lens, but at the same time, we must not flatten out the complexities of a historical moment, assuming that it must be retrograde in comparison to our present moment. Although

masculinity in the eighteenth century, at times, does seem antiquated compared to our contemporary notions of it, it was also a fluid category in the eighteenth century, and this state of flux represents a more dynamic notion of masculinity than perhaps contemporary scholars have previously held. The shifting ground of masculinity is especially evident when viewed in light of female masculinity's contributions to the construction of normative masculinity.

Throughout this study, I have sought not only to illustrate the shifting ground of masculinity in the eighteenth century, but more importantly I have sought to create a space in which we include female masculinity in our discussion of normative masculinity. Even though centuries have passed since the eighteenth century, we still usually default to the notion that masculinity is the province of men, and we often perceive female masculinity as somewhat imitative of the 'real' masculinity performed by men. But what I have argued here is that female masculinity is not imitative but rather constitutive of normative masculinity. In some instances, female masculinity may, through a contrast, serve as a means of sharpening definitions of masculinity, but in other cases it provides a foundation for notions of masculinity. That these same shifting notions of eighteenth-century masculinity recur in similar ways in the U.S. in the 1950s suggests that female masculinity's role in the construction of masculinity is not localized to a specific historical moment, but rather continues to function in the development of masculinity, and it must be considered if we hope to develop a full understanding of masculinity and its function in any society.

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