

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

FEMALE IMPERSONATION AND PATRIARCHAL RESILIENCE

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FEMALE IMPERSONATION AND PATRIARCHAL RESILIENCE  
IN EARLY STUART ENGLAND

By CHANTELLE THAUVETTE, B.A., M.A.

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in  
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
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## ABSTRACT

In seeking to explain why male authors assumed female pseudonyms in seventeenth-century literature, this dissertation explores male-to-female cross-dressing in Jacobean drama, effeminizing representations of parliament in Civil War propaganda, and parodies of women's sexualized, political speech during the Interregnum and Restoration periods. My dissertation concludes that the sexualized female persona evolved over the course of the seventeenth century as a vehicle through which male authors could critique rival iterations of patriarchal hierarchy forwarded by Stuart kings and by parliament without challenging their own positions of masculine privilege within those hierarchies.

My first chapter explores the political critiques of Jacobean absolutism embedded in the cross-gender performance narratives of Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* (1609) and the anonymous play *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* (1620). In my second chapter I link male-to-female drag's ability to critique an absolutist patriarchal paradigm to the satirical attacks on parliamentary models of polyvocal patriarchal rule in 1640s print. My final chapter investigates how female authors often find themselves shut out of the political discussions that female impersonations spark by taking up Sarah Jinner's almanacs of 1658-60. Jinner's almanacs combine predictions of rampant sexual wantonness with a critique of the waning Protectorate regime. I examine how the pseudonymous response to those almanacs from "Sarah Ginnor" depoliticizes Jinner's sexual commentary on the Protectorate government.

Sexualized female personae, I argue, could empower authors to critique patriarchal hierarchies without overturning patriarchy itself. My research interrogates the disproportionate power pseudonymous female personae offered to male critics in their attempts to reform political systems they perceived as flawed without undercutting the privileges such systems conferred on high-ranking men. Understanding the role disorderly female sexuality plays in political critiques of the Stuart monarchs and the English parliament provides a richer understanding of the mechanisms which made patriarchal Stuart political culture resilient in the face of intense challenge.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION ..... 1

    Male-to-Female Cross-dressing as Patriarchal Critique

    Voice, Ventriloquism, and Impersonation

CHAPTER ONE: MALE-TO-FEMALE CROSS-DRESSING AND PATRIARCHAL  
CRITIQUE IN *EPICOENE* AND *SWETNAM THE WOMAN-HATER* ..... 27

    Boy-Actors, Female Bodies, and Amazonian Wives in *Epicoene*

    Amazonian Disguise and Female Erotic Agency in *Swetnam the  
    Woman-Hater*

CHAPTER TWO: MASCULINITY, SEXUALITY, AND THE POLYVOCAL  
PARLIAMENT OF THE ENGLISH CIVIL WARS ..... 85

    Gender, Sexuality, and Polyvocality in Caroline Politics

    Mock Petitions and the First Civil War

    Female Parliaments and the Second Civil War

CHAPTER THREE: POLITICS OF FEMALE IMPERSONATION IN THE INTER-  
REGNUM ALMANACS OF SARAH JINNER AND SARAH GINNOR ..... 157

    Identifying “Sarah Jinner” in the Almanac Market of the 1650s

    Sexual Content and Gendered Authorship: Analyzing Scholars’ Responses to  
    Ginnor’s Response

    Jinner’s Silences and Jinner’s Successes as a Voice of Republican Critique

CONCLUSION ..... 201

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 217

## **Introduction**

This project explores the role of female impersonation in ensuring the resilience of Stuart patriarchal hierarchies as they faced intense moments of crisis in mid-seventeenth-century England. Assuming a female persona might seem to put an individual at a disadvantage in a patriarchal culture which devalued female speech. But, as this study shows, female impersonation proves surprisingly empowering for a number of discourses which sought to critique the early Stuart kings and Commonwealth and Protectorate leaders between the regicide and the Restoration. Each chapter of this dissertation contextualizes female impersonation as a form of critique specific to its immediate political context, beginning with Jacobean drama that challenges father figures and kings, moving to porno-political satires of the 1640s which portray the dysfunctional relationship between the king and parliament, and ending with astrological predictions that condemn the crumbling Protectorate government on the eve of the Restoration.

The female personae I examine represent for the most part deliberate attempts to embody disorderliness (sometimes figured as promiscuity, sometimes figured as violent, noisy, or boisterous behaviour) in order to critique perceived disruptions to patriarchal order. Because the early Stuarts integrated patriarchal structures of the family into their models of kingship, I will argue that unruly women became prime cultural signifiers of political protest to the early Stuart



regime. Ideally speaking, political power during the Jacobean and Caroline periods flowed in a continuous chain from God to the king to his male nobles, and so on, trickling down to male heads of households and their dependants. James I deliberately encouraged this ideal in promoting tracts like *God and King* which “insists on obedience to kings based on the ‘natural’ and divinely sanctioned subjection of children to parents.”<sup>1</sup> As Su Fang Ng writes, “James commanded all schools and universities as well as ministers to teach the work, and directed all households to purchase a copy.”<sup>2</sup> Ng notes that the “analogy also worked in reverse,” so that while “kings claimed paternal authority,” in tracts like *God and King*, “fathers claimed to be kings of their domains in domestic handbooks.”<sup>3</sup> Although the actual distribution of political power was far more complex than this ideal suggests, the model itself provided the vocabulary to legitimize and naturalize social and familial hierarchies at a fundamental level.<sup>4</sup> The householder’s status as king of his own domicile, family, and dependents was traditional throughout early modern England and the Stuarts promoted the analogy to emphasize the traditional aspects of their model of kingship with the result that notions of family hierarchy became highly politicized. With husbands, fathers, and kings functioning as icons of social order, we should not be surprised that unruly womanhood should prove such a powerful vehicle for social, cultural, and political critique in the early Stuart era.

Although only a handful of scholars have studied female authorial personae as a broader phenomenon, work by social historians on gender inversion and festive cross-dressing informs my approach to early modern female authorial personae. I discuss the relevance of this work on cross-dressing in the first section of this introductory chapter, exploring in particular whether festive cross-dressing challenges or restores social order and theorizing that the female personae I study can be tools for political protest that nevertheless have at their core a conservative, disciplinary function. In the next section I explore the intersections between my project and work on female authorship and female voice. While the plays, pamphlets, and almanacs I study all assume a female persona and/or feature female characters, their authorship was likely male in most cases. I argue that we should draw a distinction between the constructed, artificial nature of female personae which satirize Stuart political hierarchy and female-authored perspectives on early modern patriarchal oppression, and that both perform their own kind of work in early Stuart culture.

### **Male-to-Female Cross-dressing as Political Critique**

Natalie Zemon Davis, Peter Burke, David Cressy, and other cultural historians have long debated whether the cross-dressing and inversion intrinsic to early modern festive rituals challenge a dominant social order or subtly reinforce

it by enabling subordinate groups to vent their antisocial impulses at regular intervals.<sup>5</sup> While literary critics such as Jean Howard and Marjorie Garber have argued that cross-dressing challenges the established social order, Cressy and Bernard Capp have used records of instances when men were arrested for cross-dressing to assert that authorities generally perceived cross-dressing to be harmless so long as disruptions to class and gender hierarchies were limited to festive occasions.<sup>6</sup> Garber, who theorizes cross-dressing in literature from the early modern period to the twentieth century, argues that “one of the most consistent and effective functions of the transvestite in culture is to indicate the place of what I call 'category crisis,' disrupting and calling attention to cultural, social, or aesthetic dissonances.”<sup>7</sup> This dissertation extends such discussions of inversion and social order by exploring how the patterns of resistance and critique embedded in festive cross-dressing were productively taken up in Civil War print and subsequently in Interregnum almanacs.

Male-to-female cross-dressing seems to have been either less prevalent or less frequently prosecuted than female-to-male cross-dressing, based on the archival findings that Cressy and Capp relay. Cressy’s and Capp’s evidence adds nuance to Howard’s and Garber’s claims that cross-dressing was a transgressive practice by demonstrating how authorities tolerated it in certain contexts.<sup>8</sup> In contexts like the commercial stage, for instance, female impersonation was all but naturalized (a phenomenon I discuss at more length in Chapter One). Cressy and

Capp suggest that in practice cross-dressing was not especially transgressive. Capp recounts for instance that “When Katherine Jones appeared before the Bridewell governors on 3 January 1624, after being arrested by the constable of Fleet Street in men’s apparel, she insisted that ‘she did it in merrymen’” and “[t]he governors accepted it was simply a New Year frolic, and discharged her.”<sup>9</sup> A young Frenchman named Loydall caught in women’s clothing was released under similar circumstances in July 1607 after his wife and neighbours affirmed that “he did yt upon a merrymen to fetch oysters and without [sic] any other cause.”<sup>10</sup> Cressy likewise concludes in his analysis of the Thomas Salmon case that Salmon, a young servant, passed himself off as a maid in order to join his mistress’s young daughter-in-law at the “post-delivery lying-in,” where he “understood that there would be good cheer... and that, as usual, the drinking, eating, and gossiping would be enjoyed exclusively by women.”<sup>11</sup> “He simply wanted some of that good cheer,” Cressy reasons, remarking that “[h]is cross-dressing, from this perspective, was a response to scarcity, a means to temporary betterment, comparable to that of certain disadvantaged women who are known to have passed themselves as men.”<sup>12</sup> Salmon’s cross-dressed penetration of the birth room was serious enough to warrant a trial in ecclesiastical court but not serious enough to warrant more than a formal penance. Festive license was thus informally extended to those cross-dressers who affirmed that their cross-dressing served no purpose other than a few hours’ entertainment. The instances of

dramatic and textual female impersonation I study belong to this tradition of festive cross-dressing which licensed individuals to adopt female personae so long as the context was for entertainment and the individuals were not genuinely trying to pass themselves off as a member of the opposite sex.

Given this early modern tolerance for male-to-female cross-dressing we might conclude that female impersonation in plays, satirical Civil War pamphlets, and almanacs might be dismissible as nothing more than a lark – a staging of disorder intended only to entertain readers with parodies of disorderly female behaviour of the kind they enjoyed in festive contexts. But while the female personae I study do seek to entertain and amuse their readers, I will be exploring the serious political and social messages their parodies convey. Specifically, I will be investigating how disorderly female personae critique patriarchs for their inability to control unruly women in the first place. These female personae take down individuals who misuse their power as patriarchs but reinforce the patriarchal system itself at the same time by embodying a disruption to it that lasts only until the moment the reader sees through the persona, rejects its outlandish claims as satire, and gains a new perspective on the returned status quo as a result of the persona's jarring message.

Since the disorderly female personae I study are, for the most part, constructed in order to be rejected in favour of a return to a more traditional vision of patriarchal order (marked by female silence), the kinds of patriarchal critiques

they can accomplish are limited. Although Davis's disorderly "Woman on Top" could function as a symbol of female resistance, the specific instances of female impersonation analyzed in this study are perhaps best considered as separate from women's struggles against the patriarchal limitations placed on them. As this study will show, parodic female personae do not for the most part aim to bring about equality between the sexes or aim to ameliorate women's lives. While those struggles certainly took place in early modern England, I will argue that the work female impersonation accomplishes tends to reinforce a patriarchal status quo that polices forms of extreme misogyny (as we will see in the first chapter's discussion of tyrannous patriarchs and kings) but also preserves cultural assumptions about female inferiority. Female impersonations, as I will demonstrate, use stereotypes about femininity to trope the disorder female impersonation seeks to redress. Although female impersonation did not occasion revolutionary rejections of early modern patriarchal hierarchy, my dissertation will demonstrate that the small-scale critiques of patriarchal abuses provided communities, and especially males of subordinate status, with a way to enforce checks on patriarchal institutions and individual patriarchs themselves.

Let us turn briefly to the Braydon Forest riots of 1631 as an informative example of female impersonation that demonstrates the ways a community could use performances of disorderly femininity to critique specific aspects of Stuart patriarchal rule while leaving its basic sexist assumptions intact. The inhabitants

of Braydon Forest in Wiltshire violently protested against the enclosure of Crown lands sold to London merchants in the 1620s. Three men later deemed the ringleaders of the protests assumed the persona of “Lady Skimmington” during the riots and cross-dressed as women to lead 1,000 other men and women in the destruction of enclosures and property. Subsequently, the three “Skimmingtons” were fined £500, a higher fine than anyone else arrested at the riots received, and “ordered set in the pillory at the Western assizes dressed in women’s clothes.”<sup>13</sup> As Buchanan Sharp remarks, the Privy Council “feared that Skimmington was everywhere” in the early 1630s.<sup>14</sup> Misleading reports that a single man named Jack Williams was travelling from forest to forest under the alias of Lady Skimmington and inciting the inhabitants to riot spurred the Privy Council to order the capture of Williams alias Skimmington. As Sharp argues, the Privy Council misread the situation in assuming that “Skimmington” was the alias of a single individual. Sharp demonstrates that there were likely three unconnected men named Jack Williams participating in enclosure riots in different locations, but the name “Skimmington” itself was not an invented alias but the name of a female persona well known in the Western midlands through the tradition of the Skimmington ride and adopted as a symbol of local enclosure protest by several groups of protestors.<sup>15</sup> While most of the female impersonations I analyze are fictional or authorial constructions, the Braydon Forest riots present us with a case in which men literally adopted the name, clothing, and disorderly violent

demeanour of a female persona in order to critique what they perceived to be the Caroline court's abuse of its power.

The sale of Crown lands which triggered the enclosure riots was an attempt on the part of Charles I's administration to settle royal debts without having to call parliament into session to approve a tax increase.<sup>16</sup> The ensuing riots over the sale and enclosure of lands in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, and Dorset, known as the Western Rising, nearly constituted open rebellion against the Caroline regime and resulted in massive property damage, although as Sharp argues the rioters themselves were "concerned solely with the pressing local issues of disafforestation and enclosure" in their communities and "had no intention of overturning the government."<sup>17</sup> While the government mistook the isolated riots of the Western Rising for an organized rebellion orchestrated by a handful of Lady Skimmingtons, the politicization of Skimmington rides in the 1630s signals the relevance of gender and sexuality as symbolic tools for the Braydon Forest rioters to reconfigure their relationship to the Crown.

"Skimmington" and "Skimmington riding" derive from a regionally-specific tradition of charivari which targeted households in which wives beat their husbands and/or cuckolded them. The ritual had many variants across seventeenth-century England, but David Underdown writes that in the Wiltshire and Somerset areas "female dominance, represented by the wife's beating of the



husband, was the offense, surrogates for the offenders (preferably the next-door neighbours) acted out the proscribed behaviour.”<sup>18</sup> As Underdown describes, the ritual involved putting “the ‘husband’ in the position of humiliation, riding backwards on horse or donkey and holding a distaff, the symbol of female subjection, while the ‘wife’ (usually a man in women’s clothes) beat him with a ladle.”<sup>19</sup> Sharp draws clear parallels between the enclosure riots at Dean and Braydon forests, noting that “Skimmington was not the *alias* of any one individual: it was common property and was only utilized in those areas – Braydon and Dean – where it represented a genuine expression of the community’s outrage.”<sup>20</sup> As Christina Bosco Langert relates with respect to Skimmingtons, “[c]ross-dressing provided a battleground for the contestation between individuals, communities, and the state over the ownership of land” and “one’s social and gendered identity.”<sup>21</sup> As a fictional persona, Lady Skimmington operated as a means for communities to critique power relations within a specific household, punishing those who did not meet a common standard of patriarchal control. Yet in the Caroline period men also began to assume the Skimmington persona as a means to critique the English aristocracy who sold their traditional control of the common lands to wealthy London outsiders. For the male commoners of the Western midlands, Langert argues, assuming the female persona of Lady Skimmington became a form of resistance to royal prerogatives, an assertion of a local tradition which symbolized the local community’s right to control the land.

Although the festive traditions of the Skimmington upheld a conservative view of patriarchal hierarchy in the household, Skimmingtons in the Caroline period came to embody a subversive challenge to class hierarchy in the English state. The Lady Skimmington persona – like the cross-dressed characters in Jacobean plays, 1640s satirical pamphlets, and 1650s almanacs I explore in this dissertation – provides “the framework for lawful lawlessness – an open space for dissenting non-hegemonic voices to represent themselves.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Voice, Ventriloquism, and Impersonation**

Focusing on female impersonation as a vehicle for male protests does risk marginalizing women by re-excluding them from political conversations they accessed with great difficulty in the seventeenth century. As Mihoko Suzuki demonstrates in *Subordinate Subjects: Gender, the Political Nation, and Literary Form in England, 1588-1688*, women were active participants in seventeenth-century political movements. Whether female impersonation advocates for small-scale reform at the expense of female-authored critiques is a question each chapter will explore with reference to the specific contexts of the impersonations in question. In general, however, this project proposes that female personae are capable of performing critiques which do not necessarily diminish the status of female authorship or female speech by speaking “for” women. Rather, I will

argue that female authorial personae, in their recognizable artificiality, were identifiable as tropes of gender inversion and were not likely to be mistaken for female authors. Regarding the case of Sarah Jinner in the 1650s, I will argue that female authors might even have had reason to *assume* carefully constructed female personae in order to attract audiences interested in the kinds of satirical political critique they could read in 1640s porno-political pamphlets. Since disorderly female personae were not likely to “pass” as women, their messages posed less risk of eclipsing the female-authored perspectives and female voices of other political texts.

Questions of early modern women’s silence and voice which intersect with my project received ample attention in the 1990s and early 2000s through several collections of essays, such as Danielle and Elizabeth Clarke’s *This Double Voice’: Gendered Writing in Early Modern England* (2000) and Kate Chedgzoy, Melanie Hansen, and Suzanne Trill’s *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing* (1997). My project builds most substantially on Elizabeth D. Harvey’s *Ventriloquized Voices* (1992), for like Harvey I am interested in understanding the politics of assuming female authorship in early modern English print. *Ventriloquized Voices* provides the most thorough theorization of male authors writing in what Harvey terms a female voice. Harvey studies in particular discourses in which male authors assume a female persona and perspective, like the voice of Sappho or the voice of a feminized Folly, and

discourses where male authors write over female perspectives and experiences, such as in the vernacular gynaecology and midwifery manuals of the seventeenth century. Harvey points out that “[i]n male appropriations of feminine voices we can see what is most desired and most feared about women and why male authors might have wished to occupy that cultural space, however contingently and provisionally.”<sup>23</sup> In articulating the female voice as a “cultural space,” Harvey outlines an approach she terms “tactical essentialism.” Harvey’s approach acknowledges post-structuralist theories which challenge the primacy of the author in the creation of textual meaning and French feminist theories which deny the essential nature of gender and language while at the same time arguing that the gender of an author can be a productive site of critical inquiry. I seek likewise to balance a non-essentialist view of gendered authorship while maintaining that the performed and perceived gender of a text’s authorship contributes to that text’s meaning for the reader.

For Harvey, the difference between male and female authors does not concern identity or essential difference but instead concerns imbalances in political agency and access to political, cultural, and social discourses. Harvey repeatedly rejects the essentialist premise that “men cannot know what it is to be a woman and therefore should not speak on their behalf (no matter how beneficent their motives are),” but argues that we cannot overlook the “ethical and political” implications of men speaking for women in a patriarchal system which affords

power and privilege disproportionately to male speakers.<sup>24</sup> As she writes, “we can still adhere to a conviction that women and men (and their respective voices) are not politically interchangeable.”<sup>25</sup> In this respect we might productively draw parallels between Harvey’s tactical essentialism and recent work by transgender theorists, who argue that poststructuralist and queer accounts of gender’s fluidity ignore how pervasive gender binarism and transphobia dramatically shape a person’s lived experience, making their willingness or ability to conform to one gender or the other crucial to securing their quality of life, agency, and access to political, cultural, and social capital.<sup>26</sup> Harvey argues ultimately that since men’s access to discourse greatly overpowers women’s in the seventeenth century, “ventriloquism is an appropriation of the feminine voice, and that it reflects and contributes to a larger cultural silencing of women.”<sup>27</sup> For Harvey male ventriloquism is not a matter of male authors being unable to assume a female perspective; instead, Harvey questions the effect such appropriations have on early modern women’s marginalization.

My project continues Harvey’s work but uses different case studies to further complicate her picture of appropriation. Harvey uses the term “voice” as a means of locating the gendered speech of a text firmly in the gendered body of the author. She justifies the connection she draws between an author’s body and textual meaning by asserting that her approach best suits the specific texts she analyzes and that “although much of post-structuralist theory has striven to

divorce the author's body (and voice) from his (or her) writing, the constructed voices within the texts I will be considering vigorously reassert their feminine bodily origins."<sup>28</sup> The texts I have chosen, by contrast, construct femininity in highly exaggerated, stereotypical, and parodic ways which signal to readers that their authors only pretend to feminine bodily origins. To borrow an analogy from queer and performance theory, Harvey's ventriloquized voice constitutes an author's attempt to "pass" as a woman while the female personae I study are better understood as "drag" performances intended to highlight the highly constructed nature of gender. Does assuming a female persona appropriate a female voice and silence women if readers *recognize* that an appropriation is taking place? The answer, I will demonstrate, depends on the specific context of the impersonation.

I have chosen to use the terms "persona" and "impersonate" in order to maintain focus on the artificiality of the feminine figures I analyze and to highlight that authors of either sex could assume constructed personae for the purpose of critique or social satire. The verb "to impersonate," in its seventeenth-century form, meant to "invest with a supposed personality; to represent in a personal or bodily form; to personify."<sup>29</sup> The verb "to personate," however, holds in the seventeenth century many of the connotations we have come to associate with the word "impersonation": "To assume the person or character of another person), *esp.* for fraudulent purposes; to pretend to be, to act the part of" another

person.<sup>30</sup> I use the terms “personae” and “impersonation” to connote a pretense – an appearance that simulates but does not replicate an underlying reality.

Although *impersonate* seems a relatively new term in the late seventeenth-century, the concept of “personation” as “the dramatic or literary representation or depiction of a character” in the late sixteenth-century and as “the action of assuming a character, or of passing oneself off as someone else, esp. for fraudulent purposes” in the early 1620s covers roughly the same ground and speaks particularly well to the artificiality that characterizes the female personae I will analyze.<sup>31</sup>

Each of the three chapters of my dissertation focuses on a different set of impersonations which respond to a different political and social context. Moving chronologically through the reigns of James I and Charles I and ending just a few years into Charles II’s reign with Sarah Jinner’s 1664 almanac, my dissertation attempts to trace how female impersonation transitioned from a disciplinary festive performance tradition like the Skimmington ride to a tool of male-authored political satire in the 1640s to a vehicle for female-authored political critique in the final years of the Interregnum. The first chapter explores dramatic representations of female disguises in two Jacobean plays: Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene* (1609) and the anonymous *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* (1620). I argue for a distinction between the female impersonations of boy actors, who strive to pass as female characters, and the male-to-female disguise plots of *Epicoene* and

*Swetnam*, which take on parodic qualities more akin to those of drag performance. Looking at the characters of Dauphine, Epicoene, and Lorenzo, I propose that drag – defined as a parodic or otherwise self-reflexively artificial performance of gender – offers younger men the opportunity to critique their elder male relatives for taking their power as heads of households (and, in *Swetnam*'s case, as head of state) to misogynistic extremes. Female impersonations, which in these plays shame and reform elder male authorities, offer in the grander scheme a vehicle for subordinate males to critique their patriarchal superiors and reform the patriarchal systems they hope to one day inherit. In both plays, groups of women like the Ladies Collegiate in *Epicoene* and the female court in *Swetnam* usurp patriarchal, all-male institutions in open defiance of their exclusion from these institutions. Rather than attempt to repress these women, the plays' young male heroes reform the patriarchs of their respective social households/kingdoms. Dauphine and Lorenzo's schemes challenge traditional patriarchal prerogatives, like Morose's right to marry and disinherit his nephew in *Epicoene* and Atticus's right to choose his daughter's husband and carry out the death sentence she receives from the Sicilian court. Yet Dauphine's plan to have Morose marry a boy and Lorenzo's plan to defend his sister by disguising himself as her female defender, while transgressive on the surface, work to preserve patriarchal assumptions about sex, gender, and patrilineal inheritance by punishing their elders' immoderate behaviour without reforming the system that affords Morose and Atticus such



privileges. When order is restored both young men can ascend to power, access their familial wealth and status, and eventually perhaps become heads of households if they marry or patriarchal heads of their extended families. Neither Dauphine nor Lorenzo seem like ideal patriarchal figures in the plays, as both behave outside the norms of respectable adult masculinity, but by the end of the play they do both manoeuvre their way into positions of high financial and social privilege.

The second chapter shifts from mild critiques of Jacobean patriarchy couched in fiction to all-out attacks on England's warring leaders in 1640s political satire. I argue that authors use female personae in popular pamphlets in ways reminiscent of female disguises in Jacobean drama: to call attention to a problem in the patriarchal system and attempt to rectify it while forestalling a complete overhaul of that patriarchal system. In the case of Civil War political satire, I argue, female personae serve to critique the lack of univocal patriarchal authority in the English government. The chapter first analyzes mock petitions, which seem to parody female-authored petitions but which assume a collective, sexualized female voice to address general concerns about parliament's dysfunctional relationship with the king that are separate from the specific complaints female-authored petitions raise about parliamentary decisions and interventions in Ireland, London, and abroad. Representations of parliaments as female in satirical petitions like those of *The Parliament of Ladies* and the *Mistress*

*Parliament* series, which I explore in the second section, critique parliament as a polyvocal institution by personifying it as a disorderly, sexualized female body. By shaming the king as an irresponsible husband and parliament as a promiscuous wife, these personae hold up the male head of household as the ideal symbol of order and blame Charles I and the individual members of parliament for their lack of masculine self-control (preserving the actual offices while condemning the men who hold them). The speech of the sex-crazed pseudonymous female personae I study in this chapter facilitates a rejection of radical republican ideologies of polyvocality and insulates Stuart ideals of univocal patriarchal hierarchy from the ideological challenges they faced throughout the 1640s. While female personae often critique the king and the members of parliament as unsatisfactorily masculine, I argue that disorderly female personae reinforce the necessity for the institutions of the monarchy and the parliament themselves to rein in chaos and ensure a prosperous future for England.

In the third chapter of the dissertation I shift to the final years of the Protectorate to investigate the almanacs of Sarah Jinner and her impersonator, the pseudonymous Sarah Ginnor. In this final chapter I explore in more depth whether women could use the disorderly female persona, and the sexual content that becomes strongly associated with it in the 1640s, to formulate their own critiques of the early Stuart political system. Modern critics argue that Jinner's career was threatened by a pseudonymous parody of her 1658 almanac which impersonated

Jinner's and trivialized female authorship and astrology. I contend, however, that Jinner's career as an almanac compiler stalled in 1664 because the Stationers' Company and its licensors took her seriously as an author and a critic of political corruption. By comparing the ways Jinner and her impersonator treat sexual and political topics, I conclude that Jinner constructs a female authorial persona that uses sexual satire to critique the Protectorate government, while Ginnor's impersonation depoliticizes Jinner's sexual content by isolating it from its political context in an attempt to undermine the power such female personae (and female authors) held.

By selecting very specific case studies – two Jacobean plays, two particular subgenres of royalist political satire, and the four almanacs of one compiler – I have limited the scope of my project to contexts in which female impersonation enables patriarchal critique. This project does not explore the full range of male-to-female cross-dressing in early modern England nor does it suggest a cohesive narrative about what that cross-dressing might signify. In focusing on drama and cheap print authorship, for instance, this project leaves out discussions of fictional cross-dressing plots that recur in prose romances like Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and Mary Wroth's *Urania* in which men dress in female disguises to penetrate female spaces for sexual reasons. These kinds of plots, which also appear in anonymous ballads like *Sport upon Sport* and in plays like Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World My Masters* (1608), James Shirley's *A Bird in*

*a Cage* (1633), and Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668), feature cross-dressing as a ruse to further a male character's sexual ends. While the female impersonators I analyze critique the patriarchal system, these fantasies of access to female spaces and female bodies seem more interested in profiting secretly from the loopholes for promiscuity embedded in an early modern patriarchal system which assumes that sex between women is inconsequential and subsequently does not regulate all-female spaces in the ways it regulates other spaces. Female disguise plots which focus on access fantasies challenge a binary view of sexuality and gender in ways that are perhaps more transgressive and visionary than the disorderly female personae I investigate (which parody predictable misogynist stereotypes to absurd extremes). Since access fantasy disguise plots concern extended moments where male characters "pass" as women and the female personae I examine in this dissertation typically perform parodic drag,<sup>32</sup> these two forms of female impersonation deserve study as related but ultimately separate phenomenon. For the purposes of this project, I focus on female impersonations which have at their root the political and disciplinary functions of festive cross-dressing traditions like Skimmington rides.

Another limitation of this project is that with the exception of the third chapter it cannot account for women's experiences of patriarchal oppression. By focusing on instances of female impersonation I risk re-marginalizing female authors in favour of male authors. Since many of the texts I analyze are

pseudonymous, there is a small chance that some of the parodic female personae were written by women. But even if we suppose that some of the pseudonymous pamphlets and the anonymous *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* had female authors, the texts still construct stereotypical female personae – like the sexually insatiable virgins in *The Virgins Complaint* of 1642 or the righteous, angry Amazon Atlanta in *Swetnam*– based on pre-existing misogynist tropes rather than attempting to provide the kinds of nuanced critiques of politics and patriarchal culture that appeared in female-authored Civil War petitions like *The Humble Petition of Many Hundreds of Distressed Women, Tradesmens Wives, and Widdowes* of 1642. Sarah Jinner’s Interregnum and Restoration almanacs, which critics accept as female-authored and which combine a deliberately constructed authorial persona with a critique of the Protectorate, stand as the exception. While Jinner’s case demonstrates that by the mid-seventeenth century women could use tropes of female and sexual disorder in order to critique patriarchal hierarchy in the ways that men could, Jinner’s limited time as an almanac compiler also suggests that her position was difficult to maintain.

Although women’s resistance falls largely outside the scope of this project, then, this study of female impersonation provides insight into how the connection between sexuality and politics forged by the family-state analogy invested figures of disorderly femininity with the power to critique the early Stuart court and hold patriarchal elites accountable to their subordinates. In

seeking to understand how men critiqued their patriarchal superiors – agitating against changes to traditional relationships as the Braydon Forest Skimmington protestors did with respect to enclosure, or as the female mock petitioners did to parliament by assuming the king’s role as head of state in the mid-1640s – this project also illuminates some of the reasons why the radical rhetoric of the Civil Wars periods, which envisioned a far more representative system of government, did not yield lasting political change for England. The female persona, I will demonstrate, is a vehicle for small scale critiques aimed at fine tuning a patriarchal system in crisis with incremental reforms that improve the patriarchal subordinate’s experience. *The Parliament of Ladies*’s argument that monogamous marriage should be abolished and other radical critiques seem to advocate the overthrow of the current system. But the fact that such radical critiques come from satirical female personae softens their radical edge, making them palatable as satire. The status quo of the early Stuart monarchy seems like a desirable alternative to the anarchy the female personae propose. Thus although many of the female personae I study appear on the surface to be figures of resistance, most serve to make patriarchal models like the monarchy and the family resilient in the face of widespread challenge from radicals and visionaries. Female impersonation’s potential for reform may not ultimately benefit women, but it is still useful for an understanding of how patriarchies might be subject to

incremental change from within, change initiated by the subjects it privileges instead of those whose needs and powers it disavows.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ng, *Literature and the Politics of Family in Seventeenth-century England*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ng notes that “the family-state analogy has been read as fundamentally conservative and authoritarian, if not absolutist” (1). Her work demonstrates, however, that seventeenth-century “authors could appeal to different conceptualizations of the relation between family and state for a variety of political ends. The family-state analogy proved to be enduring and its deployment was not simply a mark of social conservatism. Rather, it was a sign of the politicization of literature” (7).

<sup>5</sup> See Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*; Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*; and Cressy, “Gender Trouble and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England.”

<sup>6</sup> See Howard, “Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England”; Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*; and Capp, “Playgoers, Players and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern London: The Bridewell Evidence.”

<sup>7</sup> Garber, 16.

<sup>8</sup> Cressy’s article responds to Howard’s analysis of female-to-male cross-dressing as transgressive in early modern Europe with an analysis of male-to-female cross-dressing that shows that cross-dressing was generally accepted and infrequently prosecuted. Capp’s analysis of the legal charges brought against male and female cross-dressers supports Cressy’s thesis but Howard’s thesis provides compelling evidence that women’s attempts to pass as men were regarded as a more threatening cultural phenomenon than individual cases brought against male and female transvestites might lead us to believe.

<sup>9</sup> Capp, “Playgoers, Players and Cross-Dressing,” esp. 165.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 167.

<sup>11</sup> Cressy, 450.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>13</sup> Sharp, *In Contempt of All Authority: Rural Artisans and Riot in the West of England, 1586-1660*, 108.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 105.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 103-4.
- <sup>16</sup> Part of Braydon Forest was sold in 1627 to the Crown Jeweler, Philip Jacobsen, to settle a debt the king owed Jacobsen for jewels. Sharp, 90.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 96-8.
- <sup>18</sup> Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion*, 102.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 102.
- <sup>20</sup> Sharp, 105.
- <sup>21</sup> Langert, "Hedgerows and Petticoats: Sartorial Subversion and Anti-enclosure Protest in Seventeenth-century England," 119.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 132.
- <sup>23</sup> Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts*, 32.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 12.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 13.
- <sup>26</sup> See Stephen Whittle's foreword to *The Transgender Studies Reader*, where he argues that "It is all very well having no theoretical place within the current gendered world, but that is not the daily lived experience. Real life affords trans people constant stigma and oppression based on the apparently unreal concept of gender. This is one of the most significant issues that trans people have brought to feminist and queer theory," xii.
- <sup>27</sup> Harvey, 12.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 3.
- <sup>29</sup> *OED Online*, "personation, n.," 2.a.
- <sup>30</sup> *OED Online*, "personate, v.," 3.b.
- <sup>31</sup> *OED Online*, "personation, n.," 1, 2.
- <sup>32</sup> With the notable exception of Epicoene, who passes until the final scene of the play when Dauphine reveals her to be a boy.





## **Chapter One: Male-to-Female Cross-dressing and Patriarchal Critique in *Epicoene* and *Swetnam the Woman-Hater***

Why did men assume female personae in seventeenth-century popular culture? Although I ask in Chapters Two and Three why authors assumed a sexualized female voice in popular print, the question of why men assumed female personae at *all* requires an answer first. The all-male casts of the commercial theatres in pre-Restoration England have kept female impersonation at the forefront of queer and feminist readings of early modern English drama, but a connection between female impersonation on the stage and female impersonation in print has yet to be theorized. This chapter focuses on a type of cross-gender performance that has received very little critical attention: the phenomenon of the male actor playing a male character who assumes a female persona. The trope of the male character assuming a female disguise to infiltrate a female space or court a female partner recurs frequently in prose romances like Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, Mary Wroth's *Urania*, and others.<sup>1</sup> Discussions of male cross-dressing on the stage, however, overwhelmingly focus on the transvestism of boy actors playing female characters while paying little attention to the handful of male characters who appear in female disguise or dress as part of the plot. These diegetic cross-gender performances, as noted in this dissertation's introduction, emerge from a tradition of festive cross-dressing. Their ability to

unsettle audiences' expectations and highlight contradictions in audiences' assumptions about gender separates them from the meta-diegetic cross-dressing of boy actors who seem to "pass" almost effortlessly as female characters so long as playwrights do not call attention to their masculine sex. While boy actors pass, the cross-dressing plots I explore in this chapter feature characters who assume female identities but have their male sex revealed by the end of the play. Moreover, whereas in most cases the passing boy actors do not seem to overtly threaten hierarchies of patriarchal privilege with their passing, the conspicuously male performances of femininity of the type that I discuss here serve most often to disrupt or challenge figures of male authority, be they fathers, dukes, or other older male relatives, as part of a broader social commentary on Jacobean patriarchal authority. That the plays I examine are comedies and tragi-comedies explains their interest in challenging and critiquing an established order, but in this chapter I seek to clarify how and why male-to-female cross-dressing, and parodic drag in particular, becomes such an important vehicle for critiquing elite masculine authority during the Jacobean period.

By looking at moments where male characters assume feminine disguises in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* and the anonymous *Swetnam the Woman-Hater Arraigned by Women*, I will demonstrate that drag empowers male characters like Lorenzo (who adopts an Amazonian disguise) and Dauphine (who engineers Epicoene's Amazonian drag performance) to critique patriarchal society in ways

that would not be socially acceptable or effective had the critique come from female characters like the Ladies Collegiate or the all-female court. Looking specifically at the ways that male critique of women's sexual commodification proves effective when coming from someone perceived to be in female drag, I further suggest that in early Stuart England drag served as an effective way to challenge specific abuses within a patriarchal system while at the same time buffering that system against a more radical (female-led) critique.

### **Boy-Actors, Female Bodies, and Amazonian Wives in *Epicoene***

Much has been written on cross-gender performance in seventeenth-century drama, most of which takes up three central, overlapping threads of critical inquiry related to the all-male stage of early modern England:<sup>2</sup> 1) the fluid gender and sexuality of the boy actors who played female roles, 2) the transgressive sexuality of plots in which boy actors playing female roles assume male disguises and engage in romantic relationships with male characters (e.g., *Twelfth Night*), and 3) the challenge the boys' fluid gender and sexuality onstage posed to the perceived stability of binarized gender and sexual identities offstage. As a context for female impersonation, the practice of casting boys as women appears to have been so specifically tied to the commercial stage that it does not seem to have greatly impacted perceptions of female impersonation off the stage. Although women performed on continental stages throughout the early modern

period and English women continued to perform as amateurs in their communities and households and to dance non-speaking roles in masques at the courts of James I and Charles I,<sup>3</sup> English women did not appear on English commercial stages until the Restoration. Thus, every play performed on a commercial stage in early modern London was an MTF cross-gender performance of a sort, although critics like Orgel suggest that the boys who played female roles were considered to be much closer to femininity, having not fully grown into manhood yet.<sup>4</sup> As Jennifer Drouin points out in her work on differentiating cross-dressing, drag, and passing as critical terms, “cross-dressing” in a Shakespearean context “is simply a response to the practical constraint of the interdiction of women’s bodies on stage, a question of clothes make the woman, analogous to props and settings that create deadly weapons and exotic locales.”<sup>5</sup> In Drouin’s view, theatrical cross-dressing neither subverts gender roles nor manifests queer sexuality, since the audience knows and expects the female characters to be boys misrepresenting themselves. If audiences took any notice of cross-gender casting on the commercial stage, then its presence might well have been designed to de-sensitize audiences to the potent heterosexual themes of a performance. For antitheatricalists concerned that audience members would be compelled by a play’s amorous scenes to immediately enact the passions they’d witnessed from the stage, having all amorous interactions take place between male actors and boy actors was a step towards defusing heterosexual male excitement (oriented as it was presumed to be

towards the female form exclusively). Whether this worked, and boy actors really did fail to “pass” as sexually desirable women, is impossible to determine. That boys like Clerimont’s boy in *Epicoene* appear as objects of male and female sexual desire suggests that there was something inherent to boyhood’s gender fluidity that held an erotic charge.

Erotic desire for boys – often expressed by female characters like Olivia in *Twelfth Night* or Lady Haughty in *Epicoene* but insinuated in close relationships between male characters like *Twelfth Night*’s Orsino, *As You Like It*’s Orlando and their cross-dressed boy pages – is something the all-male stage conceals but also encourages through its tradition of enabling boys to pass as women without actually becoming women. For Stephen Orgel, who is more interested in the question of *why* English theatres and audiences supported all-male casts when most continental theatres cast women in female roles, male cross-dressing is not a neutral fact of stage history audiences routinely overlooked but a calculated management of an audience’s erotic desire. Boy actors, Orgel argues, protect audiences from the greater danger of female sexuality on stage. Although anti-theatricalists deplored the practice of casting cross-dressed boys in feminine roles because they believed it incited the spectator’s lust, Orgel convincingly argues that “the love of men for men in this culture appears less threatening than the love of men for women: it had fewer consequences, it was easier to de-sexualize, [and] it figured and reinforced the patronage system.”<sup>6</sup> “The reason always given for the

prohibition of women from the stage was that their chastity would thereby be compromised,” Orgel continues, but behind this reason he sees “a real fear of women’s sexuality, and more specifically, of its power to evoke men’s sexuality” in a way that might render men less rational, less authoritative, and less “masculine” by the society’s own standards.<sup>7</sup> Boy actors, theoretically, protected male spectators from experiencing excessive sexual desire for the heroines of any given play.

The question Orgel poses – whether boys impersonating women pose a greater threat to English patriarchal hierarchy than do women themselves – is one I will explore at length in the coming chapters where pseudonymous parodies of female writing sometimes work to discourage women’s participation in politics and popular print. Orgel argues ultimately that boy actors were perceived as less threatening than women themselves might have been on the commercial stage. The threat Orgel traces in the antitheatrical literature of the period concerns an audience’s sexual/affective response to an actor’s body – to the meta-performance of gender and sexuality that underlies the text of a play. Orgel finds that anxieties about the female body’s affective power over spectators override anxieties about the cross-dressed male body so that while antitheatricalists find both objectionable, the cross-dressed male body emerges as the safer vehicle through which to tell the erotically-charged and often explicitly sexual stories of the early modern commercial theatre.

Orgel's framing is ultimately useful in considering how an audience might respond to female impersonation in other contexts (in print, for example) but my focus on diegetic cross-dressing asks slightly different questions about the subversive potential of women in early modern drama. If we can dismiss cross-gender casting as an extended kind of "passing" in which we as an audience agree to overlook the discrepancy between an actor's sex and the gender of the character he performs, then how does the introduction of older male characters performing in drag affect the audience's perceptions of passing?<sup>8</sup> In scenes where male characters in drag interact with female characters, do female characters still pose a more potent threat to social order and patriarchal hierarchy because of their sexuality? Or do men pose more of a threat because they can perform all of the disorderly, outspoken behaviours of women without the liability of having a female body?

Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* valorizes and eroticizes boys who can easily adopt and discard feminine identities while constructing the female body (which does not itself appear on stage) as a liability for anyone trying to make it in the status-driven London world of the play. *Epicoene* was first performed by the Children of her Majesty's Revels, a boys company, in December 1609-January 1610.<sup>9</sup> The play was performed entirely by boy actors but boy characters like Clerimont's boy from act 1 scene 1 and Epicoene highlight the erotic charge boys carry within the play's portrait of London society. While most of the boy actors perform the



somewhat-fixed gender of their characters, Epicoene and the boy play boy characters able to convincingly and erotically take on feminine qualities without actually becoming women. Clerimont's servant, whom Clerimont's friend Truewit refers to as Clerimont's "ingle at home,"<sup>10</sup> recounts to Clerimont as Clerimont is dressing that the women at the Ladies Collegiate "play with me, and throw me o' the bed, and carry me in to my lady, and she kisses me with her oiled face, and puts a peruke o' my head, and asks me an'I will wear her gown, and I say no, and then she hits me a blow o' the ear, and calls me innocent, and lets me go" (1.1.12-6). The boy's dialogue concerns an averted heterosexual encounter between himself and the Ladies Collegiate, but in performance Clerimont's undress and the sense that he and Clerimont are together in a semi-intimate space might well emphasize a homosexual erotic charge between the boy and Clerimont, both of whom are played by young men. Clerimont's jealous response to the boy's story – "Well sir, you shall go there no more" – suggests perhaps that Clerimont is put out to find himself no longer young and androgynous enough to appeal to the Ladies; his reaction at 1.1.17 – "No marvel if the door be kept shut against your master when the entrance is so easy to you" – suggests that he might wish himself to be in the boy's position. Clerimont seems drawn to Lady Haughty but the song he writes for the boy to sing in the first scene of the play is loaded with barbs against cosmetics and fashion that are certain to offend her by spelling out an ideal of natural, unadorned beauty to which she does not adhere. Given that

this dialogue takes place during a dressing room scene, where Clerimont has presumably been adorning himself throughout, his position may come across as laughably hypocritical or as a sign of the double standards that governed male and female beautification practices. Clerimont's song may be conventional, and it may simply express his frustration that Lady Haughty prefers pliant boys to young men. Then again, if we read Clerimont's rejection of women's fashion more meta-theatrically as a rejection of clothing, cosmetics, and other exterior signifiers of femininity that the boy actors playing the Ladies of the Collegiate wear, then perhaps Clerimont is not rejecting women but is instead rejecting female disguise – the disguises his fellow actors put on to perform as the Ladies Collegiate, for instance.

Where the boy's body passes into multiple spaces, roles, and identities, the female body (or, rather, the fictional female bodies of the Ladies Collegiate) proves to be a distinct liability in *Epicoene*. While dresses and wigs are at the core of Lady Haughty's erotic play with Clerimont's boy, on the bodies of the Ladies themselves dresses, wigs, and cosmetics become shameful facades to conceal the repulsive female bodies beneath. Clerimont criticizes Lady Haughty's elaborate beauty regimen, crying "A pox of her autumnal face, her pieced beauty!" (1.1.72). He then bids the boy to sing a song about powdered and perfumed ladies for whom "All is not sweet, all is not sound" and calls for women to abandon "all th' adulteries of art" and make "simplicity a grace" (1.1.82, 88,

84). Truewit responds to Clerimont's song with a defence of women's art in their beautification (so long as they perfectly conceal their underlying bodily flaws and defend from intruders the private space in which they get themselves ready).<sup>11</sup> But his support for artificial beauty products reveals underlying assumptions about adult women's bodies as always already flawed, decaying, or deformed. In act 4, for instance, he opines to Clerimont that "Women ought to repair the losses time and years have made i' their features with dressings" and goes on to list the ways a woman might conceal a lack of height, a misshapen foot, sour breath, or rotten teeth (4.1.29-30). While boys, in part because of their youth, make female clothing and cosmetics seem erotic, adult female characters in female clothing draw censure even from their would-be suitors, and do not seem to command nearly the same erotic appeal boys like Epicoene and Clerimont's boy do. A boy's impersonation of a woman, the play implies, might actually be much more arousing than a woman herself.

Truewit sees cosmetics as instrumental to women's self-worth, a way to "repair the losses of time" by recouping the 'loss' (presumably) of erotic capital. But as Edith Snook writes in *Women, Beauty and Power in Early Modern England*, "Beauty practices," including women's writing on beauty, cosmetics, and hair styling, "were a form of knowledge that allowed women to participate in scholarly culture, to raise politically knowing sons, to exert control within a household and community, to be creative and ethical with their own appearance

and encourage the same in others.”<sup>12</sup> “Attention to appearance,” Snook argues, “could provide a means to express female subjectivity and self-governance.”<sup>13</sup> Lady Haughty’s preoccupation with cosmetics, which in Truewit’s view appears to be an attempt to recover fading erotic capital, might alternatively read as a bid for increased social capital through self-expression and consumption. Truewit compares the work of beautification to the work of a gilder in terms of its secrecy – “You see gilders not work but enclosed. They must not discover how little serves with the help of art to adorn a great deal” – but the reference to gilders’ “work” reminds us simultaneously that beauty for women is a form of craftsmanship that can confer economic and social privileges. If Epicoene is as sexually appealing as the other characters’ reactions to her would have us believe, then Dauphine and Epicoene may have schooled themselves in conventional feminine beauty practices. The peruke mentioned in the dramatic reveal of Epicoene’s sex is likely to have been only one of many costume, makeup, and gestural choices coordinated by Dauphine and Epicoene (and by the acting company) to create Epicoene’s female persona.

To have Clerimont remark upon Lady Haughty’s reliance on cosmetics might also reinforce the play’s dichotomy between the aged, imperfect female bodies of the Ladies Collegiate and the ideal body of the young male, which needs no private, chemical alterations to be sexually desirable. When Clerimont’s boy sings Clerimont’s song praising “Robes loosely flowing, hair as free / Such sweet

neglect more taketh me” he highlights his own unadorned beauty, his refusal to put on Lady Haughty’s makeup in erotic play, and his master’s disgust that Lady Haughty “wipes her oiled lips upon [him] like a sponge” (1.1. 85-6, 75). The song calls for ladies to appear unadorned, while the beautiful lady who appears in the play turns out to be another boy character called on to perform feminine beauty. Epicoene’s youthful male body can construct feminine beauty through clothing, hair, and cosmetic choices but whereas Clerimont and Truewit imply that women apply cosmetics to conceal inadequacies, Epicoene has no physical vulnerabilities to compensate for. Although Clerimont in act 4 comments to Truewit that “Lady Haughty looks well today, for all my dispraise of her i’ the morning” (4.1.26-7) and that he will come around to Truewit’s way of thinking that art enhances female beauty, Clerimont’s complimentary assertion triggers for Truewit a long list of ugly conditions cosmetics can conceal. Truewit’s defence of cosmetics does not put the audience in mind of beauty – it instead reminds the audience of all the imperfections that lie beneath a woman’s exterior appearance. Truewit and Clerimont’s debate over cosmetics is conventional, but in *Epicoene*, where actors really do use cosmetics and clothing to conceal bodies that are at odds with their exterior appearances, the references to cosmetics remind audiences that women, like actors, often construct personae for themselves by manipulating their outward appearance. From Truewit’s perspective the charge against women is not that they are false, it is that the female body sorely needs artificial enhancement to cover its

basic rankness: its “fat hand and scald nails,” its “sour breath,” (a complaint Otter levels at his wife as well), its “black and rugged teeth” (4.1.34-8). Lady Haughty advises in act 4 scene 3 that “ladies should be mindful of the approach of age,” acknowledging that as a woman’s youth and desirability fades her ability to enjoy suitors will diminish (35). While the aged Morose can interview young brides, a lady of the College aims to spend her erotic capital while she is young before she “may live to lie a forsaken beldame in a frozen bed” (4.3.38). Even the Collegiate women, whose power resides in their sexual and financial independence, still seem to expect that their options will narrow once their value as objects of desire diminishes. The male body’s status as an erotic object also diminishes with age, explaining perhaps why Lady Haughty finds Clerimont’s boy more desirable than Clerimont himself. But since patriarchal hierarchies value senior males more highly, male bodies continue to enjoy access to power in ways women do not once their erotic capital is exhausted. Thus while Lady Haughty and Epicoene both create enhanced female personae through clothing and makeup, removing Epicoene’s disguise reveals a young male body coded in early modern England and in the play as desirable and empowered. Removing Lady Haughty’s carefully constructed exterior, on the other hand, would expose a flawed, aging female body and cause Lady Haughty’s erotic capital to plummet in the eyes of gallants like Clerimont and Truewit.

The play's bias toward female impersonators over biological females appears also in its portrayals of the two Amazonian wives who have yet to join the Collegiate: Epicoene and Mistress Otter. Both wives achieve in their marriages an unseemly dominance that shames and even injures their husbands.<sup>14</sup> But while Mistress Otter, the adult female character, remains irredeemably monstrous to the trio of young male wits, Epicoene, the boy posing as Morose's ideal bride, charms everyone around him/her with her outspoken wit even as she defies her husband's will. Mistress Otter transgresses far more egregiously than Epicoene does when she physically assaults her husband, but the remarks her husband makes about her body are de-humanizing: drunk and unaware that Truewit has brought Mrs. Otter within earshot, Otter calls his wife "a scurvy *clogdogdo*: an unlucky thing, a very foresaid bear-whelp, without any good fashion or breeding," a "*Mala bestia*" whose expensive outer appearance conceals a rank, malodorous body (4.2.65-6). Morose exclaims in horror that he has married an Amazon – "a Penthesilea, a Semiramis" – but he at least grants his wife humanity where Otter ranks his wife lower than the bears and horses that adorn the cups he fought to bring to Morose's wedding feast (1.1.48-9). Epicoene, the boy trained up by the androgynously-named Dauphine Eugenie to pass as a woman, draws her husband's scorn as an outspoken virago but unlike Otter s/he remains the focus of male sexual attraction and female interest. Her suitors Daw and La Foole may be the gulls of the play, but their amorous overtures reinforce to the other characters and to the audience

how convincing Epicoene's femininity is (while retroactively suggesting to the audience that they actually desire femininity more when it is performed by an androgynous boy). Age certainly must factor into any possible comparison between Mistress Otter and "Mistress Epicoene," as Epicoene is the lone young maiden character of the play and Mrs. Otter and the other Ladies are, we presume, several years her senior (5.4.92). Yet the parallels between the two wives create an interesting tension between Mistress Otter as a mannish woman who cannot fully achieve the position of male head of household she wishes – she beats her gossiping husband but is then chased out of Morose's house by the phallic threat of Morose's sword – and Epicoene, the womanish man playing a mannish woman who can be redeemed by the revelation of his underlying boyhood, which makes his Amazonian behaviour a jest. The play-text gives frustratingly little to indicate how the characters present in the final scene react to Dauphine's scheme, so it is difficult to draw conclusions about female impersonation and homoerotic desire from this final revelation scene. Although most of the cast is on stage, only the three gallants speak. Morose, the Ladies, Epicoene, Daw, and La Foole say nothing and Dauphine asks them nothing. Dauphine does ask his two companions, Clerimont and Truewit, to comment, but only Truewit celebrates Dauphine's triumph, turning it into a joke and moral lesson at the expense of Daw and La Foole, perhaps as a means of distancing himself from them and distracting an



audience who might remember that of all the men enamoured with the silent woman only he and Daw have kissed and been kissed by her (3.5.3-5).<sup>15</sup>

What conclusions does *Epicoene* offer about female impersonation on the Jacobean stage? First, it supports the theory that the cross-dressing done by boy actors was not necessarily drag – that is to say, the fact that an early modern audience knows that all of the female costumes on stage conceal male bodies does not mean that the boys who played women were not capable of passing as women to their spectators. *Epicoene*'s passing, the play leads us to believe, is flawless and invisible to the other characters and leads modern critics to suspect that such passing was also invisible to early modern playhouse audiences who presumably might have shared Morose's surprise in the final scene at the reminder that *Epicoene* is a fictional role performed by a boy. *Epicoene*'s performance does not seem to falter at any point, nor is she an especially parodic version of femininity when set against Mistress Otter. For an audience accustomed to overlooking any gender discrepancy between an actor's sex and the role that actor performs, there is also no reason to believe *Epicoene*'s passing would have attracted attention unless the actor and/or the company chose to draw attention to it in performance.

The satirical portrayals of the women in power, however, who Truewit says exert a "*hermaphroditical* authority," (1.1.68) lead Helen Ostovich to consider the rich possibilities of casting "larger, older boys" to play Mistress Otter and perhaps the Ladies Collegiate as "grotesques."<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Mistress Otter in

particular comes off as an extreme and one-dimensional parody of a class-climber and an overbearing wife and the scene in which she beats her husband mimics the kind of domestic disorder that was sometimes addressed in communities by cross-dressing rituals like the Skimmington ritual discussed in my introduction. The second thing *Epicoene* tells us about MTF cross-dressing in Jacobean drama, then, is that if we look at the ways cross-dressing, passing, and drag function within the plots of the plays themselves we can see that males who perform femininity sometimes hold on to their masculine privilege from beneath their disguise. Epicoene's performance as an overbearing wife receives much more sympathetic treatment than Mrs. Otter's does, perhaps in large part because Epicoene is rewarded for having temporarily and cleverly performed disorderly womanhood. Mistress Otter's aggressive desire to rise up the ranks of London society (expressed in her violent attempts to ameliorate her low-class husband's manners) seems natural to a male head of a household but irreconcilable with her unchanging sex. While women clearly engage in social climbing in early modern drama, Mistress Otter's efforts to control her husband and gain membership in the exclusive Ladies Collegiate signal to the audience that her transgressive masculine dominance is boorish, and not sophisticated like Lady Haughty's. While Epicoene as an androgynous boy can pass as a woman, Mistress Otter's attempts at masculine authority come off as a monstrous drag performance that transgresses both gender and class distinctions. And Dauphine, the author of

“Epicoene,” the supposedly-silent female persona he can use to trap Morose into marrying, reaps the fullest reward for orchestrating disorderly female behaviour.

As *Epicoene* demonstrates, MTF passing and the phenomenon of the boy actor performing a female role are not necessarily transgressive. If passing itself were transgressive, we might expect Dauphine and Epicoene to be shamed at the end of the play by the revelation of Epicoene’s sex. Instead, the characters who accepted Epicoene as a female (and the audience who accepted her as a female character) are stunned and possibly shamed at having been tricked. Drouin invests FTM passing practices with more subversive potential than drag in her articulation of early modern dramatic cross-dressing because “passing is always subversive at the moment of its exposure” and often risks violent reprisal.<sup>17</sup> The moment of exposure in *Epicoene* is subversive because it reveals Dauphine’s plot to compel Morose into reinstating him as his heir, but the exposure is restorative too in that it frees Morose from his marriage to a ‘woman’ he cannot control. Epicoene’s unruly femininity turns out to be a female persona crafted and paid for by Dauphine and performed by a witty boy. The moment of exposure in *Epicoene* is thus a moment to contain gender transgression, not provoke it. Mistress Otter’s Amazonian masculinity, on the other hand, is only contained to the extent that an audience sides against her for her aggressive behaviour and class-climbing and not against her husband. Their conflict, and Mrs. Otter’s conflict with the College of Ladies she wishes desperately to impress, remains unresolved in the play. Thus

while MTF passing is a useful tool for Dauphine in his bid to secure his place in the lower echelons of the upper class, cross-gender performances like Mrs. Otter's which tend to slip into parodic drag serve to trope disorder and punish women's attempts to rise above their own class- and gender-based oppressions. Such MTF performances of disorderly femininity, when they shift from instances of passing to instances of drag, demonstrate how MTF impersonation scapegoats women for an unruliness and social mobility that the culture at large finds both fascinating and terrifying.

MTF drag in a festive context often upholds, rather than challenges, patriarchal structures, as it does in Skimmington rituals in which the cross-dressed Lady Skimmington enacts violent, problematic dominance over an abased husband as a means of reinforcing the community's standards of appropriate male dominance and female subservience in marriage. In *Epicoene*, however, cross-dressing does not serve to reinforce patriarchal marriage norms. Morose, the play's figure of inadequate masculine authority, seeks a marriage that is rigidly patriarchal in that he expects his silent future wife to have literally zero input on their family affairs. Morose fails to control Epicoene in their marriage, but Epicoene's sudden lack of silent modesty signals that Morose has been tricked. Dauphine's scheme uses cross-dressing to sabotage and finally invalidate his uncle's legitimate wish to perform the ideal duty of a patriarch and produce heirs to inherit his estate. The play celebrates masculine wit and energy, but it does not

in fact celebrate patriarchy, if we take patriarchy to mean the social order in which senior males rule hierarchically over subordinate younger men, women, children, and servants. In fact, Dauphine's scheme to make himself his uncle's heir seems to forestall the work of seeking a fortune for himself through marriage or work and thereby establishing himself as a patriarch. In the final scene of the play Morose appears chastened and punished but in no way converted or changed by the critique that his desire for a silent, completely subservient wife has received. Suffering the shame of having married a female impersonator (although perhaps the revelation comes as a relief, since it means the end of his unhappy marriage), Morose remains silent. Like Mistress Otter, Morose is humiliated for his perceived failure to perform his proper role in his marriage and remains shamed but unredeemed. Epicoene's cross-dressing critiques Morose's intolerance of noise and his self-centred insistence that he alone be allowed to speak,<sup>18</sup> but it ultimately rewards Dauphine for working out a scheme of inheritance that bypasses women completely and undermines marriage as the core unit of patriarchal social order.

### ***Amazonian Disguise and Female Erotic Agency in *Swetnam the Woman-Hater****

Although MTF passing serves in *Epicoene* as a means to shame Morose, the ineffectual patriarch, MTF cross-dressing – and drag in particular – can also

be a powerful tool in redeeming patriarchs who have become tyrannous. Women characters who play boys/men, like Rosalind in *As You Like It*, gain considerable masculine privilege through their masculine disguises but use this privilege in the main to restore a disrupted social order that their older male counterparts have jeopardized. Jonson's play deals with the problematic nature of (Morose's) patriarchy by silencing the older male patriarch and in effect excluding him from the denouement. *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*, another play in which a male protagonist, Lorenzo, adopts an Amazonian female disguise for nearly all of the play,<sup>19</sup> highlights the role that drag can play in recuperating an old patriarch (in this case Lorenzo's father, the King of Sicily) into a restored patriarchal order.

The restorative disguise plots of *As You Like It* and *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* bring about social cohesion through the transformation of older male patriarchs in ways that contain female sexuality and agency within a Christian heterosexual, reproductive logic. Whereas we understand how masculine disguise might empower female characters like Rosalind and others to take on tyrants and usurpers, however, the paths to empowerment through female disguise are far less clear and consistent. Looking specifically at MTF drag's restorative role in *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*, I will argue that female impersonation enables characters to perform a kind of social critique of patriarchy focused on the regulation of female erotic agency. Lorenzo, the cross-dressed prince in *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*, illustrates that cross-dressing can be both a tool for reforming a

gender system in crisis (a crisis exemplified by the male character's need to cross-dress in the first place) and a mechanism for restoring that system to order (by restoring the character to his position of masculine privilege). I will explore how the prince's cross-dressing might clarify what it meant for men to assume female personae in self-referential, parodic ways, and what role this kind of drag plays in organizing, conducting, and controlling sexual energies which pose a threat to patriarchal order.

*Swetnam the Woman-Hater* throws Swetnam, a character based on the pamphlet controversy's misogynistic instigator Joseph Swetnam, into the plot of a popular fifteenth-century Spanish novelette by Juan De Flores that was adapted and translated multiple times into English, French, and Italian over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>20</sup> Swetnam's first appearance reveals that he has been exiled from England and is on the run from the mobs of women who object violently to his pamphlet. He takes refuge in Sicily as a fencing master working under the alias of "Misogynos" until he finds a way to insert himself into the Sicilian court as the champion for men in the romance plot's battle of the sexes. Ann Rosalind Jones posits that, ironically, "the popularity of Swetnam's pamphlet, rather than silencing women, gave them a justification for writing against it" and that "the public space opened up by popular printing legitimates new roles for women."<sup>21</sup> The play, Jones argues, does the opposite and shuts down opportunities for women's public critique of misogyny by making Swetnam

into little more than “a comic butt.”<sup>22</sup> “[T]he stage figure [of Swetnam] in no way measures up to [the female responders’] verbal portrait of [him] as a producer of strangled, inflated prose,” Jones writes; “[t]he forensic skill and *ad hominem* challenges of the pamphlets are suppressed by the visual and kinetic requirements of dramatic action.”<sup>23</sup> Leonida and Lorenzo’s star-crossed love affair, which actually consumes more stage time than the titular Swetnam plot does, “subordinates the analysis of misogyny and the defence of women to issues of princely virtue and proper kingship.”<sup>24</sup> My analysis of *Swetnam* differs from Jones’s argument in that I see the romance plot and the Swetnam pamphlet plot working together to create a different kind of anti-patriarchal critique than existed in either source. Lorenzo, as the cross-dressed prince, provides the bridge between the female defences of women key to the Swetnam plot and the issues of princely virtue and kingship that animate the romance plot. But while Jones suggests that issues of kingship distract or take away from a critique of misogyny, I would argue that issues of proper kingship go hand in hand with the play’s critique of misogyny, since the issues at stake in King Atticus’s tyranny concern his son’s gender and his daughter’s sexuality. Pairing the tragic novelette and the comic pamphlet controversy works therefore to illustrate that overt misogyny – whether it takes the form of open hostility towards womankind, violence against women, or tyrannical control over women’s sexuality – is a legitimate threat to patriarchal order that must be countered and disarmed in order to facilitate a more covert,



systemic misogyny which affords disproportionate agency to adult men. King Atticus, like Morose, holds extreme beliefs about how far his authority as a patriarch extends (Morose is only willing to marry a silent woman and Atticus agrees to execute his daughter after she has premarital sex) and it is up to his younger male heir to correct and soften these beliefs through MTF disguise plots. Morose, given his advanced age and character flaws, may be beyond reform and as a householder without a wife and children the impact of his misogyny will be limited. But Atticus's tyranny, the play demonstrates, can have deadly consequences. While Jonson does not reform or redeem Morose in any significant way in *Epicoene*, the final act of *Swetnam* is dedicated to Atticus's re-education and redemption. In this act, Lorenzo's female disguise and his use of theatricality more generally bring about change in the king. While the play does curb women's ability to effectively critique patriarchal privilege from the outside, it highlights instead the means by which the extremes of patriarchal privilege might be attacked from within, as the play puts forward a prince in women's clothing as its hero.

The play opens with the news that Atticus's eldest son, Lusypus, has died, and that his second son, Lorenzo, went missing eighteen months before at the battle of Lepanto and has either died or been made a Turkish captive. Atticus's extreme grief at the loss of his two sons sets up the central tragicomic plot of the play by putting intense pressure on Atticus's remaining heir, Leonida. Since her

“female Sexe cannot inherit here,” Atticus notes that “One must enjoy both her and Sicilie,” conflating possession of her sexuality with possession of the throne (1.1.90-1). By the end of this first scene, Atticus has ordered his councillor, Nicanor, to confine Leonida and see that she be “Princely vs’d; but no accesse / By any to her presence, but by such / As we shall send, or giue commandment for: / Tis death to any other dares attempt it” (1.1.167-70). Ultimately, however, when her true love Lisandro does scheme his way into her chamber and her bed, it is Leonida that the Sicilian court condemns to death. Because Atticus is unwilling, as a father, to intervene or challenge the misogynistic ruling of his court on the question of which sex is more guilty in matters of love, Atticus proves that he is unfit to rule Sicily. Upholding the court’s sentence that women (i.e., Leonida) are to blame in matters of love turns Atticus into a tyrant in the eyes of his people, in part because a patriarch’s relationship with his dependents was a powerful metaphor for a king’s relationship with his subjects. He argues convincingly that as a king and patriarch, he must be impartial and uphold the sentence of the court, but his inflexibility in meting out the court’s misogynistic punishment proves to be a serious flaw in Sicily’s patriarchal order.

Misogyny taken to its furthest extremes, as Jones points out, encourages public outcry against the system. This outcry spills forth in act 4 of the play, when the women of Sicily band together to put Swetnam on trial for his role in Leonida’s sentencing, but whether their acts against Swetnam constitute an act

against the system deserves further exploration. Either way, the play demonstrates that women are not the only group who stands to gain by voicing objections to Swetnam's pamphlets. Patriarchs themselves prove to have a considerable stake in expelling overt and unruly misogyny from their domains. Atticus fails to defend his daughter against Swetnam's slander, but by assuming his Amazon disguise and championing his sister's cause against Swetnam, Lorenzo acts in his own self-interest. In the Swetnam pamphlet controversy, and indeed in *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*, masculine agents assume female personae as a means of dealing with the troubling implications of female sexual agency in a patriarchal system attentive to but anxious about female sexual pleasure as a function of female reproduction. Through his female disguise Lorenzo gains insights into the affective needs of his subjects and his future kingdom that are completely lost on the king, who sees his daughter's sexuality only in rigid terms of its political function. Lorenzo's drag performance provides a way of managing the threat Leonida's antisocial sexual desire poses to Sicily.

Before we are even introduced to Leonida, Atticus has portrayed her as a sexually disruptive force that threatens the stability of the land. Atticus's description of his own daughter rivals the misogynistic portrayal of female sexuality that Swetnam, a few scenes later, will construct in the trial at court. According to Atticus Leonida is "wanton, coy, and fickle too: / How many Princes hath the froward Elfe / Set at debate, desiring but her loue? / What

dangers may insue?” (1.1.162-5). Later we learn that several suitors have already killed themselves because Leonida refused them – a detail which resonates against Leonida given how heavily the first scene of the play emphasizes the grief and turmoil the death of the young princes brings to Sicily. Although we might read her as an unobtainable Petrarchan mistress, Leonida holds a destructive power that seems to be far more immediate, violent, and threatening than is typical of the stereotype. Leonida’s destructive power in the play is nevertheless a milder version of Isabell’s power in the 1608 multi-language translation of the play’s source text, *Histoire de Aurelio et Isabell*. In the De Flores source text Isabell is said to be so beautiful “that whatsoever man that was vnto the louely passions disposed, soudently when he had sene her, was constraigned to bide her seruante: and so streyghtly, that who beheld her, burned for her, suche that many died.”<sup>25</sup> The rash of deaths in the romance pressures the king to enclose his daughter in a castle in the countryside. Female sexuality, in both the source and the anonymous play, therefore poses a direct threat to society. In enclosing Leonida, Atticus arguably tries to ensure that there will be no further young male casualties.

Atticus’s motivations, however, seem far more self-serving than this. If what makes Leonida threatening is her erotic agency – her ability to choose or reject a suitor – then Atticus has the option of simply allowing her to *choose*. Atticus says of Leonida in the opening scene “She’s all the comfort we haue left Vs now; / She must not haue her libertie to match,” suggesting that his reasons for

enclosing her have far more to do with the danger she poses to Atticus's dynastic legacy than with the danger she poses to love-struck young men.<sup>26</sup> As we learn in the first scene, Leonida has already chosen the prince of Naples, Lisandro, as her husband. Atticus rejects Lisandro, whose princely status makes him a respectable match for Leonida, because of tensions between himself and the King of Naples, tensions which make the match either politically or personally unacceptable to Atticus himself. Atticus has no legal recourse (in England, anyway) to force his daughter to consent to a marriage she does not want, even if he objects to her choice, but if he believes Leonida to be "wanton, coy, and fickle" he perhaps assumes that she will be easily distracted from Lisandro. In charging Nicanor with her care, Atticus has actually put Leonida at greater risk. Nicanor's scheme to pester Leonida until she consents to their marriage enables a disguised Lisandro to infiltrate Leonida's chamber and reaffirm her devotion to him (on the pretense that the disguised Lisandro will advance Nicanor's suit). The logic behind confining Leonida to the castle is the patriarchal logic that views female reproductive potential as a commodity owned by a woman's male relatives. By confining Leonida's body, Atticus believes he will enforce chastity upon his daughter and block any attempts at producing a new heir to the throne. Pierre Bourdieu, a French theorist and anthropologist, writes about marriage in early modern France as a set of strategies designed to motivate and even indoctrinate individuals into preserving a family's land, wealth, and status through strict

control of heirs. Although French and English marriage traditions are not identical, Bourdieu's view of marriage as a series of strategic, transactional behaviours unconsciously incorporated into a community's daily routines provides a useful model to think through how early modern English audiences interpreted a character's attitudes towards marriage and partner choices. Bourdieu argues that for early modern families "all means were justified when it came to protecting the integrity of the patrimony."<sup>27</sup> Atticus's methods are extreme, but Leonida is the sole heir to the kingdom, and as Bourdieu notes, although heirs receive the highest privilege they also pay a high price by "subordinating [their] own interest[s] to those of the lineage."<sup>28</sup> As Bourdieu writes, parents, who "on other occasions, felt free to bend the custom in order to satisfy their own inclinations" by permitting their children to accumulate financial stakes "felt duty-bound to prohibit a misalliance and to force their children, regardless of feeling, into unions that were best suited to safeguard the social system by safeguarding the position of the lineage within that system."<sup>29</sup> In the first scene we likewise learn that Atticus has been permissive with his younger children in the past, allowing his younger son Lorenzo to go off to join the Christian League against the Turks and permitting his daughter to entertain a variety of foreign princes. While Atticus might under different circumstances put a higher priority on Leonida's freedom and feelings, her new and unexpected role as sole heir in

light of her brothers' reported deaths means that he must now require her to sacrifice her desires and her "libertie" to the service of the patrimony.

Bourdieu theorizes that in most cases marriage strategies function to keep individual desires in harmony with what best serves the patrimony. "A really well-designed marriage strategy," he writes, "tended to avoid conflicts between duty and feeling, between reason and passion, between collective interest and individual interest."<sup>30</sup> Upbringing, early learning, and social experiences "tended to model [individuals'] schemes of perception and appreciation, in a word, their *tastes*, which since they played as large a role in their selection of a sexual partner as in other areas, led them to avoid improper alliances, even aside from considerations of a properly economic or social nature."<sup>31</sup> First sons in particular were subject to the formative pressures of this system. Since Leonida has grown up with two brothers, though, she has not had the same formative conditioning that her elder brother Lusyppus, Atticus's first-born son, has had and rebels against her sudden change of status. While Lorenzo, the second-born son, would have been the closest substitute to Lusyppus by virtue of age, gender, and moulding, Leonida's sex makes her the least likely of Atticus's children to have been successfully conditioned to bypass her personal preferences in marriage for the sake of preserving the patrimony. As the daughter of a king who already has two male heirs, Leonida's choice of Lisandro (a prince of the neighbouring kingdom of Naples) is an appropriate one since it might productively strengthen

the relationships between their kingdoms of Sicily and Naples without disrupting either family's patrimony or upsetting the balance between the two families. Now that she is Sicily's sole heir, however, Leonida endangers Sicily with her desire for Lisandro because Leonida as Lisandro's wife would be subordinate to Lisandro and would thus make Sicily subordinate to Naples, a prospect Atticus rejects.<sup>32</sup> The conflict of the play arises, then, not because of the chaos of forbidden love (although this is a common trope of early modern drama and proves key to the original romance plot) but because the deaths of Lusyppus and Lorenzo necessitate an abrupt shift in the royal family's marriage strategy that the family struggles to cope with. If patriarchal hierarchy did not subordinate Leonida to her husband, Leonida could assume her brothers' position as heir to the throne without jeopardizing Sicily's political independence. It is only because marriage is patriarchal, in other words, that Leonida's erotic agency is problematic. Facing the death and disappearance of its two male heirs, Sicilians could challenge their laws against female inheritance to retain Leonida as an heir equal to either of her brothers. Rather than reform laws which benefit male heirs, Lorenzo in his Amazon disguise reforms Sicilian attitudes towards female sexuality, demonstrating how female impersonation in *Swetnam* helps patriarchal systems stay resilient in the face of challenges to its fundamental inequalities.

Leonida's imprisonment, for all that it is a sound marriage strategy, does not ultimately curb her erotic agency. Lisandro gains access to Leonida's chamber



with the help of Leonida's maid the pair pledge their lives to each other, and after Loretta's instruction that Lisandro "look my Ladie dye no Nun" the couple exits (we can presume) to have sex offstage (2.2.100-4).<sup>33</sup> Leonida and Lisandro are soon betrayed, caught, and put on trial to determine which of them should receive the death penalty and which should merely be banished for seducing the other. As in the novelette, the trial of the two young offenders escalates into a trial of the sexes, where the question before the court becomes whether men or women bear the ultimate responsibility for lustful, extramarital sexuality. Summons go out for male and female champions to defend their respective sexes at the trial and Swetnam's misogynistic rhetoric is an easy substitute for the rhetoric of Affranio, the knight who champions men in the novelette. Putting the cross-dressed prince Lorenzo into the role of the female champion, however, presents a striking departure from the source. Hortensia, the female champion in *Aurelio et Isabell*, is a learned woman experienced in love and not an Amazon. She presents a righteous defence of women, and a condemnation of the trial, but she performs none of the deception, manipulation, and stagecraft Lorenzo performs as Atlanta to turn the tragedy into a comedy. The novelette is pure tragedy – the king adamantly sacrifices his daughter to an abstract notion of justice despite his queen's pleas for mercy, Aurelio throws himself onto the fire in order to take Isabell's place in the last seconds before she is about to be put to death, and after Aurelio dies Isabell throws herself into a courtyard of lions to be devoured alive.

Hortensia, the queen, and her gentlewomen take their revenge on Affranio (who has hypocritically fallen in love with Hortensia) by torturing him for days, tearing him apart, throwing him onto the fire, and then collecting his ashes to wear around their necks as a token. *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* rejects this brutal ending. Although Leonida is led to her execution and Lisandro tries to kill himself, both lovers live and the king learns the value of mercy. Swetnam is tormented, but repents at the end of the play and is redeemed. That Lorenzo/Atlanta almost single-handedly effects the tragicomic turn of the play suggests that the playwright's choice to adapt his role from female champion to cross-dressed prince is crucial to the play's overall message about the problematic extremes patriarchy like Atticus resort to in policing female erotic agency and preserving patrimony.

Lorenzo returns to Sicily in disguise in scene 3 of the first act, after Atticus has given him up for dead and refuses to let any of the nobles go out to search for him. Whether he returns in disguise because he is ashamed at having been defeated and captured at Lepanto or not, he tells Iago, his sole confidant, that he intends to stay in disguise to “observe the times and humors of the Court” (1.3.103) since “Happy's that Prince, that ere he rules shall know, / Where the chief errors of his State doe grow” (1.3.117-8).<sup>34</sup> Lorenzo's disguise in this scene is that of a nondescript male, but in act 3 scene 2 Lorenzo abandons this unremarkable disguise for the far more attention-drawing disguise of Atlanta the

Amazon. The stage directions make it clear to the reader of the play that Atlanta the foreign female is actually Lorenzo the native male (3.2.*sd*), and Lorenzo's expressed intent to travel in disguise through the kingdom that he will one day inherit (1.3.102-3) should also lead the audience to suspect that Atlanta the Amazon is the prince in disguise, even if they do not recognize that the characters are played by the same actor.

I have argued elsewhere that Lorenzo's Amazon disguise serves as a vehicle through which he reasserts his masculinity after his capture by Turks at the battle of Lepanto.<sup>35</sup> But while I have read Lorenzo as an emasculated figure whose gender is in transition, I think it is also possible to read Lorenzo productively as a man in drag – a man whose performance of femininity is “almost but not quite” right, to borrow Drouin's definition of drag, in that its Amazonian elements self-referentially draw attention to the instability and artificiality of the gender it is attempting to perform. Lorenzo's Amazon disguise is perhaps no more convincing of femininity to the audience than a Wiltshire man disguising himself as Lady Skimmington would be to a Wiltshire crowd. The Amazon, like the Skimmington, is a fiction of female subjectivity that parodies female agency and renders female violence burlesque. As drag performances they both subvert and subtly reinforce the norms which regulate a binary view of gender. “Given the entrenched associations between women and weakness and all the other cultural constraints imposed upon women,” Valerie Wayne writes, “the

amazon, who combined masculine strength with feminine sympathies, was one of the best available candidates to perform the disorderly woman and mount an effective defence of women against men’s physical and verbal attacks.”<sup>36</sup>

Morose’s shock at Epicoene’s “Amazonian impudence” seems disproportionate and ridiculous in the context of his marriage – Epicoene is only speaking to guests and welcoming visitors into what is now her house, behaviours that the rest of London society would not typically consider Amazonian at all (3.5.34). But the trope of the Amazon signals even in *Epicoene* that Epicoene’s performance of outspoken femininity is a challenge and corrective to Morose’s misogynistic views about marriage. Lorenzo’s Amazon disguise, which enables him to enter public debates, challenge misogynists to duels, and direct important state ceremonies like the execution of Leonida and a masque for the king and court as a woman demonstrates to an even greater extent how MTF cross-dressing and drag in particular can temper extreme misogyny like Swetnam’s and Atticus’s and reinforce a milder system of patriarchal order in which women will be less compelled to rebel or agitate for social change.

Wayne notes how disappointing it is that Lorenzo should reinforce the limitations placed on women, further emphasizing their inability to defend themselves from misogynist invective and indeed from the kinds of restrictions and violence Leonida suffers. To borrow from Harvey’s articulation of the ventriloquized voice, Lorenzo “uses the metaphor of woman as a lever for

dismantling certain patriarchal values, but, unlike the heroine he ventriloquizes, he simultaneously partakes of the very privilege he seeks to expose.”<sup>37</sup> Still, although Lorenzo is a flawed and imperfect feminist hero, we might be encouraged by the way Lorenzo in drag manages to champion female sexual freedom within a culture fundamentally anxious about female sexuality’s destructive powers. While in *Aurelio et Isabell* female sexuality and male desire are a self-perpetuating cycle of destruction, destroying friendships between men, destroying young men in their prime, destroying lovers, and eventually even destroying men like Affranio who pretend to be impervious, Lorenzo/Atlanta recuperates female sexuality and teaches the people of Sicily (including his father) to embrace it as a pro-social force for good through elaborate, affective acts of performance.

Although Lorenzo states early in the play that he plans to adopt his disguise to observe the court, he quickly intervenes in the court’s affairs when a call goes out for a female champion to defend Leonida in the upcoming trial. Lorenzo’s intercession at the trial proves unsuccessful, though. In the trial he opts, as Sovernam and Munda did, to counter Swetnam’s attacks against womankind with attacks of his own against mankind, losing his temper at one point and launching into invective so indecorous that the judges correct him. The court decides in Swetnam’s favour, and although the queen begs Atticus to intercede to save Leonida from execution, the king upholds the court’s ruling. Having failed to

convince the judges to spare Leonida, Lorenzo turns his attentions instead to changing the people's feelings towards Leonida through a moving, public dumbshow and a fake execution that lead them to re-evaluate the connection Atticus and Swetnam draw between female sexuality and violence.

Before the dumbshow, Iago is the only Sicilian nobleman to speak out against the king's decision to uphold the judges' ruling. When Sforza, another councillor, recounts the events of the trial to Iago, Iago immediately concludes, "to say the truth, / Both Sexes equally should beare the blame / For both offend alike" and is shocked to hear that the princess has been sentenced to death (4.1.11-3). "A sentence most vniust, and tyrannous," he exclaims, "'Twas cruell in a King, for such a fact; / But in a father, it is tyranny" (4.1.23, 31-2). Whether an audience would agree with Iago that Atticus is behaving like a tyrant is questionable. As unfeeling as Atticus appears to be in the trial scene, the stakes of Leonida's criminal pre-marital sex are important in a real, dynastic sense. Atticus has gone out of his way to surrender the decision to the courts of Sicily, and even if Lisandro were the guiltier of the two, killing him does nothing to solve the problem Leonida's deflowered body poses to Sicily's already imperiled dynastic monarchy. Moreover, the fact that Iago characterizes the sentence as tyranny does not mean that the rest of Sicily does. When Iago asks Sforza to "ioyne with me; we'le to the King / And see if wee can alter this decree, / Oh, 'tis a royal Princesse, faire and chaste!" (4.1.79-81), Sforza counters that "her disdaine, my

Lord, hath bin the cause / Of many hopefull Youths vntimely end; / 'Tis that has  
hardene'd both the Commons hearts, / And many noble Peeres” (4.1.82-5).

Putting aside Atticus's tyranny, Sforza suggests that it is Leonida's sexuality the  
people fear and her death that they prefer.

The dumbshow, however, changes the way the people of Sicily come to  
regard Leonida and the threat of her sexuality. After the sentencing,  
Lorenzo/Atlanta begs Atticus for the privilege of overseeing Leonida's execution  
to ensure that she will not “basely / Be hurried forth amongst vnciuill men”  
(3.3.285-6). Under Lorenzo/Atlanta's direction, the dumbshow that depicts  
Leonida's walk towards execution is neither hurried nor male-dominated; it  
features “two mourners, Atlanta with the Axe, Leonida all in white, her hair loose,  
hung with ribans, supported on eyther side by two Ladies, Aurelia [the queen]  
following as chiefe Mourner” (4.2.49-53). The sex of the two first mourners isn't  
specified, Lorenzo/Atlanta is in drag, and all of the actors on stage are male.  
Female characters still far outweigh male ones in this scene, however. As  
mourners, the characters onstage also claim a position powerfully associated with  
femininity in the public sphere. Patricia Phillipy writes that “in the absence of  
professional undertakers, early modern women were the most frequent and  
immediate attendants on bodies in death, fulfilling not only the emotive rites of  
mourning but also the more mundane tasks.”<sup>38</sup> “In light of these necessary  
material practices,” Phillipy argues, “the figurative association of women with

death takes on specific forms of ideological and affective power” that establish feminine mourning as “a recognized site of particularly volatile, powerful expression for women – fertile ground on which to establish their rights to public speech.”<sup>39</sup> While the judges silence women during the trial for their vocal support of Atlanta, reproaching them with the reminder “you have no voice in Court,” women’s silence during the dumbshow only heightens the affective power of their message as mourners (3.3.141). The message of the dumbshow is that although Leonida’s execution seems as though it will mend the torn social fabric of Sicily (for all the reasons I explained above), her death will actually disturb a more fundamental, natural order.

As the actors pass wordlessly across the stage, a “Song in Parts” paints Leonida’s death as a crime against nature. This song – the only song in the play – increases the affective power of Leonida’s impending execution and provides an opportunity to rethink the rationale that necessitates the beautiful young princess’s death. The text doesn’t specify when the song begins or who sings it, but if we imagine it as an accompaniment to the procession, which is directed to “pase softly over the stage,” we can imagine that the twenty-four lines of the song gave the procession reason to move slowly over the stage and to linger, allowing the audience to fully take in the weight of the violence about to be done (4.2.52-3). The lyrics also call on the audience to respond to Leonida’s death affectively rather than rationally (as Atticus fails to, and as the court failed to by reducing her



trial to a raucous and coarse battle of the sexes). The song uses the tropes of pastoral elegy to highlight how unnatural Leonida's death appears by creating a sense of empathy between the dirge singers and the natural realm in lines like "Let the Woods and Valleys ring / Ecchoes to our sorrowing" (4.2.55-8). The song then re-writes Leonida's beauty so that it comes to signify youth and vitality rather than destruction and death. The singers refer to Leonida as Nature's "chiefest prize," in which "All the Stocke of beautie dies" (4.2.65-6). What "cruell heart can long Forbeare to sing this sad" song, the singers ask the audience, appealing to them to let themselves be caught up in the sadness and feel pity for Leonida (4.2.67-8). The singers call on "Fawnes," "Siluans," "Nimphes," and "Sauage Beasts" for empathy, and all of these creatures take Leonida's side, proving themselves "more milder then / The unrelenting hearts of men" (4.2.71-4). The dumbshow, like the trial, appeals to the Red Bull audience to become Leonida's judge and to rule on whether her sexuality presents a danger to Sicilian society that warrants her death.

Although we can't know that the dumbshow changed the way the historical audience viewed Leonida – we are probably best to assume that the audience was divided, perhaps even along sex lines, during the trial scene – we can observe a change in how the other characters within the play's fiction perceive Leonida's crime and Atticus's justice after the dumbshow. After a brief interlude involving Swetnam and Swash in which Swetnam's lust for Atlanta

rekindles the cycle of destructive sexual desire that doomed Leonida, the playwright shifts our attention back to the Sicilian court with a very short scene between “two gentlemen” discussing the fates of Leonida and Lisandro. The way the gentlemen frame Leonida’s execution as a tragedy differs significantly from the way Sforza framed it a few scenes earlier as the will of the people. The first gentleman remarks that Leonida’s beheading was “The wofull’st sight that ere mine eyes beheld” and calls it “a piece of the extremest Iustice” (4.4.6). “A sight of greife and horror,” the second confirms, and adds that “in a Father” the act was most extreme (4.4.6-8). Whereas before only Queen Aurelia and Iago censured Atticus and pleaded to save the princess, now the gentlemen, speaking for the Sicilian nobility, adopt the perspective of the song in noting the sad horror of Leonida’s death and confirming that it was a more extreme punishment than they expected (despite Atticus and Sforza’s belief that it was what they, the people of Sicily, wanted). If we suppose that the reactions of the Sicilian people are intended to inform, echo, or elicit the same reaction the play wishes to elicit from the theatre’s audience, then the dumbshow also changes the audience’s perspective on Leonida. The next scene brings this horror to a new height when a guard enters and reveals Leonida’s corpse. The sight of Leonida’s body triggers Lisandro’s suicide, the only suicidal behaviour from a male suitor we actually see in the play. Lisandro’s attempted suicide ironically threatens to negate the protection Leonida’s death might have provided to the young men so prone to

dying for her when she was alive. As these two scenes illustrate, the dumbshow marks a turning point in the play where the destructive power that had been invested in Leonida's body shifts to the royal body of Atticus, the patriarch turned tyrant, soon being displaced onto Swetnam, the far more accessible embodiment of the misogyny that led the people of Sicily astray during the trial.

Lorenzo/Atlanta's initial deception – his drag performance – comes to represent the powers of deception and stagecraft more broadly as a force of social critique. As we learn by the end of the play, Lorenzo/Atlanta manipulates the people of Sicily into believing that Leonida was executed and that Lisandro died from his self-inflicted wounds when really Lorenzo/Atlanta saved them both. Lorenzo/Atlanta then re-introduces them into the Sicilian court through his pastoral masque once Atticus and the people of Sicily realize the full extent of their mistake. Lorenzo/Atlanta receives an amorous letter from his former opponent, Swetnam/Misogynos, after the latter had stridently argued that women, not men, are chiefly to blame in matters of love. Lorenzo/Atlanta, with the help of the queen, organizes an elaborate trap to expose Swetnam's masculine bravado as mere talk and reveal his hypocrisy. In this scene and the female trial that follows it, Swetnam becomes the central target of an anti-misogynistic reprisal which makes him the receptacle for a female anger that should perhaps more rightly be directed at Atticus (who set the unfair terms of the trial in the first place). The women bind and prick Swetnam with pins, but unlike in the source they stop

before tearing him to pieces. Their punishment makes Swetnam into an example for future misogynists, but it also has a corrective effect: in the final lines of the epilogue, as the women lead in the muzzled Swetnam (referencing Speght's *A Mouzell for Melastomus*), Leonida forgives him to affirm that "Women are neither tyntannous, nor cruell, / Though you report vs so" and Swetnam replies "I now repent" (11-13). Swetnam has been rehabilitated, and Leonida's forgiveness works to build harmony between the sexes where in the novelette the women's final act is one of brutal revenge that ensures perpetual war. This harmony is clearly a restoration of a patriarchal status quo, as Swetnam promises to defend women with his sword (20-1) even though he now knows firsthand exactly how capable women are of defending themselves when they must.

As I have hinted, however, Swetnam's misogynistic rhetoric only fuelled Sicily's underlying problems with female sexuality. Atticus's decision to exert an uncompromising control over Leonida's marriage was, in theory, a sound marriage strategy. Its results, however, prove disastrous, as by the final act of the play Atticus has no heirs left to pass Sicily on to except for his wicked counsellor Nicanor. To restore patriarchal hierarchy the play does more than simply restore Lorenzo as the male heir (although that is the final solution the audience is set up to expect as soon as Lorenzo reveals himself to be alive in act 1). Instead, before Lorenzo discards his female disguise, he provides a way for Atticus to redeem himself and prove that he has changed. To create this opportunity Lorenzo/Atlanta

hijacks a masque he has been collaborating on with Atticus's evil councillor, Nicanor. This first masque provides Atticus with a way to repent publicly for his tyranny and then to restore the lovers he believes he has sent to death. The masque is designed to help Atticus see his flaws – ignorance, false suspicion, detraction, and cruelty – personified so that Atticus will come to the realization that “I am the King did sacred Iustice wrong.... It was my crueltie, not her [Leonida's] desert, that sacrific'd my Child to pallid Death” (5.3.79-82). From the first act the audience witnesses Nicanor's conviction that he should be king of Sicily, and by the final act of the play it seems likely that Nicanor is hoping that his masque will hasten Atticus's death by amplifying the king's grief. Since Nicanor has become the king's likely heir, Nicanor stands to gain the kingdom should the masque destroy Atticus's will to live. Yet when the figure of Repentance intercedes towards the end, she offers Atticus a way to cope with what he has done that departs from Nicanor's plans. When Repentance takes the stage and Atticus states “I do repent me, let this Sacrifice / Make satisfaction for those fore-past Crimes / My ignorant soule committed,” Nicanor seems unprepared for her to answer “'Tis accepted” and he exclaims “I am trapt. / Oh, the great Devill! Whose device was this?” (5.3. 107-14). Since Lorenzo/Atlanta was set to collaborate with Nicanor in the authorship of the masque (5.1.122-4), the audience can guess that Lorenzo has set this trap to expose Nicanor and help Atticus face up to his personal flaws. Lorenzo's masque draws a powerful

emotional response from Atticus, who desperately says he will follow, call, and sue to Repentance on his knees for her forgiveness (5.3.100-3). Like the dumbshow, Lorenzo's stagecraft achieves its social effects by triggering an affective response in its spectators.

Once Atticus has repented, and had his repentance accepted, the next scene of the masque confronts Atticus with the same problem of antisocial sexuality he faced in act 3 so that this time, as judge, king, and audience, he can make the correct choice. The scene is pastoral, in an echo of the natural imagery of the dumbshow's song. Lorenzo appears disguised as Atlanta disguised as an old Shepherd, Lisandro (saved from death by Lorenzo/Atlanta's healing balm) appears as "Palemon," and Leonida (whose execution was faked) appears disguised as "Claribell," a "Siluan Nymph." Lorenzo, as the Shepherd, tells the story of Palemon and Claribell, a tale which closely resembles Lisandro and Leonida's story in act 2 down to the detail of the old decrepit man (an allusion to Nicanor) who pursues Claribell/Leonida to her ruin. Atticus asks the Shepherd/Lorenzo how he can help, and the Shepherd/Lorenzo begs the king to marry the two lovers. The king agrees and marries the characters before he realizes that he is actually marrying his daughter to the suitor he himself earlier rejected as inappropriate. The masque's particular solution to the problem of female erotic agency is not entirely encouraging: Atticus is not criticized for having imprisoned his daughter and having attempted to execute her for violating

her confinement; he is criticized for not realizing that Lisandro was the better choice than Nicanor. The lesson is that fathers should be more vigilant but no less controlling. As a tragedy, the play might have powerful things to say to its audience about the double standards which govern male and female sexuality. We might want to learn from this play that female sexuality is *not* so dangerous after all and that Leonida's trial was symptomatic of an underlying dysfunction in the Sicilian state. But as a tragicomedic ending, the play's resolution teaches us instead that female sexuality needs to be controlled by marriage as soon as possible and that fathers should adopt flexible marriage strategies (and hope to avoid catastrophic circumstances like the loss of two male heirs in quick succession).

Nicanor's masque, as a secretly-sinister gift for Atticus, emphasizes the close homosocial bond between kings and councillors, as Atticus calls Nicanor his "dearest Comforter" and invites him to "sit by vs to see what "new deuce" Nicanor's "loue / Hath studied to delight [his] Soueraigne" (5.3.50, 30, 33-4). Having failed to woo Leonida, Nicanor concentrates his efforts on becoming as close to Atticus as possible so that once Atticus dies he will stand to inherit the kingdom, reconfiguring inheritance as a function of strong ties between men and excluding women altogether. Lorenzo's inserted scene emphasizes instead the importance of exercising and conferring patriarchal power through the exchange of women, while simultaneously restoring Atticus to the role of appropriate

exchanger once he has proved capable of making the correct choice. While Atticus abused this role in the first act of the play by refusing Leonida's choice of a prince and placing her under his councillor Nicanor's control, changes to the masque give Lorenzo the opportunity to secure Atticus's role for himself through a dynastic lineage secured by women. After successfully restoring a heterosexual status quo in which marriage contains the potentially destructive powers of female erotic agency, Lorenzo finally discards his Amazon disguise and takes his place as prime beneficiary of Sicily's patriarchal order. What is remarkable about this play is not the way its comedic ending seeks to contain sexuality and reinforce gender norms – this is what comedic endings generically seek to do. What is remarkable is the role drag, as a theatrical deception, plays in bringing about this ending.

If we return to the notion of the Skimmington as a tradition of MTF drag whose function is to legitimize domestic violence so long as it comes from a husband and not a wife,<sup>40</sup> and to discipline female violence, then Lorenzo's role in leading the women of Sicily towards violent corporeal punishment for Swetnam seems to contradict the spirit of the Skimmington tradition entirely. Diane Purkiss argues that authors and printers might have published responses to Swetnam under female pseudonyms as a means of invoking the "theatrical figure of the unruly woman" akin to the "Woman on Top" Natalie Zemon Davis investigates in her examination of festive MTF cross-dressing. This unruly woman, in Purkiss's analysis, "signified and to some extent legitimated social and political



criticism.”<sup>41</sup> Since the pseudonymous names are puns on Swetnam’s name and pamphlet in ways that play directly into the citational rhetoric Purkiss associates with misogynistic entertainments like Swetnam’s pamphlet and *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*, “the names under which the pamphlets appear mean that though they purport to be by women, the reader is invited to see this as a penetrable screen/identity, a theatrical performance of femininity which indicates a joke at women’s expense.”<sup>42</sup> Reading these pseudonyms as “penetrable screens” which indicate “a joke at women’s expense” makes Sovernam and Munda’s pseudonymous authorship resemble a drag performance which draws attention to its own artificiality through parody. Lorenzo’s Amazon disguise in this context may have appeared to a Jacobean audience as another drag performance in response to Swetnam. While Purkiss suggests that the traditions of festive drag lead seventeenth-century men to take women’s political action less seriously, I think we can conclude from *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* that MTF drag on the commercial early modern stage can do its own distinct work, work which is both supportive of women’s sexuality to an extent and also supportive of a patriarchal status quo. We could conclude that Lorenzo’s drag is a second-rate imitation of female protest that devalues women’s political agency. We might also conclude, however, that as *drag*, Lorenzo’s efforts construct a temporary space outside of the binarized, patriarchal system of power, a space in which Lorenzo can self-reflexively criticize the system which affords him the privilege to speak without

losing that privilege. Female impersonation's potential for reform may not ultimately benefit women, but it is useful in understanding how patriarchies might be subject to change from within – change initiated by the subjects it privileges instead of those whose needs and power it disavows.

## Conclusion

In *Epicoene* and *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*, MTF drag exposes the counterproductive effects of overt misogyny, revealing it to be more unruly than women's sexuality itself. In both plays, obvious misogyny threatens social stability when patriarchs like Morose and Atticus cannot fully come to terms with the idea that female sexuality and female agency are not just a challenge to the patriarchal status quo that affords them privilege, but a fundamental and necessary part of it. If Morose had been able to reconcile himself to a wife who was not silent, he could have fathered his own heirs long ago and not fallen victim to Dauphine's plot. If Atticus had been able to adopt a more flexible marriage strategy and accept Leonida's choice of suitor, either before her confinement or after the damage was done, he could have avoided Nicanor's machinations and the problems caused by Swetnam's overt misogyny. Although both *Epicoene* and *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* feature female rebellion and resistance (through the Ladies Collegiate in *Epicoene* and the female court in *Swetnam*) the cross-dressed male characters who put on and remove femininity are the ones able to restore the

disrupted patriarchal order. Epicoene's passing and exposure serve to advance Dauphine. Lorenzo's drag serves to restore him to the succession.<sup>43</sup> Epicoene's and Lorenzo's styles of impersonation do differ – Epicoene's wit and subterfuge suit the witty satires characteristic of the Inns of Court audiences *Epicoene's* Whitefriars audience enjoyed, while Lorenzo's bold rhetoric and exceptional fencing skills create the sense of spectacle and fast-paced action the Red Bull audiences were reputed to crave.<sup>44</sup> Further, while Lorenzo assumes and discards a single, specific female persona, Dauphine's androgyny is far less discrete and episodic. He does not assume a female disguise himself as Lorenzo does, but this means he cannot shed the effeminate suggestion of his name in the same way Lorenzo can shed his effeminizing experience as a Turkish captive by shedding his Amazon disguise.<sup>45</sup> Despite the differences in the individual female personas, however, both plays mobilize female impersonation to achieve similar ends in critiquing flaws in patriarchal households.

Neither instance of MTF cross-dressing makes significant strides towards changing the patriarchal status quo or ameliorating women's positions within that status quo. Epicoene humiliates the College of Ladies who court her as a member, just as she humiliates the men who court her as a wife or mistress. Epicoene shares her assertiveness as a wife with Mrs. Otter (although Mrs. Otter takes her role as the dominant spouse to a more physically aggressive extreme) but overall the comparison between the two serves to demonize Mrs. Otter, whose behaviour

seems unchangeable and unnatural rather than the product of clever artifice. The plays reward the young men who have the wit to change their genders, much in the same way that the MTF cross-dressing plots of romances reward men who assume female disguises as a practical means to gain access to their beloveds.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the romance plots, however, MTF cross-dressing in these two Jacobean plays does not bring the males who cross-dress any closer to erotic fulfillment. Dauphine presents Epicoene as an object of desire but we get no glimpse into Epicoene as a desiring subject – partially because every word he speaks he speaks in his guise as a silent woman and we can connect nothing back to his male character but the few details Dauphine provides. We know a great deal more about Lorenzo's motivations from his asides and his conversations with his trusted councillor Iago, but Lorenzo is remarkably silent on matters of sexual desire. He turns Swetnam's desire for Atlanta, his female persona, to his advantage to catch Swetnam and put him on trial, but he shows no signs of desiring anyone himself. He is an agent for female erotic agency, but his actions are all in defence of the love between his sister Leonida and her suitor Lisandro. In a way this makes him the ideal heir in Bourdieu's analysis of marriage strategy, as he puts the preservation of the kingdom and his family's patrimony above all other personal concerns. By resuming his role as male heir he makes room within the family's marriage strategy for erotic desire but contains it in a marriage of secondary importance (as Lorenzo's marriage when and if it takes place will not

jeopardize Sicily's control over its assets the way a marriage between a female heir and an outside male would). While Lorenzo arranges for women to punish Swetnam in an all-female trial that operates outside of the Sicilian judicial system, the bulk of Lorenzo's efforts goes towards reforming the monarchy he will inherit one day – he stabilizes Sicily with his return to his masculine identity and his recuperation of his sister's destructive/dangerous sexuality but the play makes no move to address Lorenzo's own sexuality or how his disguise might impact the role he will assume one day as a husband and father. Although Lorenzo secures a place for sexual desire in Sicily, sexual desire remains tied to the social disorder Lorenzo adopted his disguise to correct. So long as Lorenzo, the patriarch-to-be, remains clear of it, sexual desire's threatening ability to make men lose their self-control (the core issue in debate during the trial scene) can continue to exist within a patriarchal hierarchy that requires males to retain control at all times.

Lorenzo's distance from the sexual complications that plague the other characters parallels Dauphine's. Both Lorenzo and Dauphine are motivated by the same desire to see themselves restored to their status as rightful heirs. Lorenzo's desire is more legitimate than Dauphine's, as he is Atticus's son and heir to a kingdom while Dauphine is only Morose's nephew and heir to money and a townhouse, but Lorenzo's Turkish captivity (which Atticus considers a fate worse than death for his son) presumably complicates Lorenzo's ability to resume his position as heir to the Sicilian throne. MTF drag in these two plays does not

develop the gendered or sexual complexities of the characters who assume female disguises; instead drag triggers and exposes the flaws in a patriarchal system where patriarchs like Morose and Atticus can overindulge and overreach the limits of their powers over others without facing any kind of effective check. The check on their power in both plays, we see, does not come directly from their wives, their councillors, their subjects, or their neighbours but from their male heirs, who have a vested interest in ensuring that the household they stand to inherit does not collapse and that its members do not revolt before they have a chance to take over. By channelling the condemnations of Morose and Atticus through the drag personae of Epicoene and Atlanta, Dauphine and Lorenzo are able to critique their elders for their patriarchal abuses without in effect challenging the patriarchal systems which they stand to benefit from later in life.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of male-to-female disguise plots in romances, see Winfried Schleiner's "Male Cross-Dressing and Transvestism in Renaissance Romances,".

<sup>2</sup> Natasha Korda has recently challenged the extent to which we might consider the early modern stage to be "all-male". While actors on the commercial stage were male, commercial theatres relied on female labour, female creativity, and female investment. See Korda, "The Case of Moll Frith: Women's Work and the 'All-Male Stage,'" and Korda, *Labors Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage*.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on female performance traditions, including accounts of professional female performers in the 1530s, see Stephen Orgel's, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*, pgs 4-8 and 11.

<sup>4</sup> Orgel, for instance, discusses pervasive cultural analogies between boys and women which derive from the Galenic model of sex-differentiation (see pgs 18-27). Orgel also notes that in the unofficial guild structure of early modern commercial theatre, where boys served as apprentices to actors who belonged to guilds, there was an "economic analogy between boys and women" as dependants which "overlaid a more essential [analogy]: boys were, like women – but unlike men – acknowledged objects of sexual attraction for men" (70).

<sup>5</sup> Drouin, "Cross-Dressing, Drag, and Passing: Slippages in Shakespearean Comedy," 25.

<sup>6</sup> Orgel, 49.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>8</sup> The term "boy" in early modern culture extended beyond puberty to what we would now consider young adulthood (ages 8-24, approximately).

<sup>9</sup> Ostovich, "Introduction to *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman*," in *Jonson: Four Comedies*, 233.

<sup>10</sup> Jonson, *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman*, in *Jonson: Four Comedies*, 1.1.22. All further references to the play will appear in parentheses in the text and will be to this edition.

<sup>11</sup> Truweit comments that "Many things that seem foul, i' the doing, do please, done" and relegates women's self-beautification to this foul, private, but ultimately pleasing realm. He opines that "A lady should indeed study her face when we think she sleeps; nor when the doors are shut should men be inquiring... Is it for us to see their perukes put on, their false teeth, their complexion, their eyebrows, their nails? You see gilders not work but enclosed. They must not discover how little serves with the help of art to adorn a great deal" (1.1.97-104).

<sup>12</sup> Snook, *Women, Beauty and Power in Early Modern England: A Feminist Literary History*, 7. Part One of Snook's book focuses specifically on rethinking "the common characterization of cosmetic practices in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England as dangerously unhealthy and women themselves as dupes destroying their health to decorate their faces with cosmetic products," exploring early modern political constructions of beauty in texts by Brilliana Harley, Mary Wroth, and other female authors (9).

<sup>13</sup> Snook, 7.

<sup>14</sup> The college itself, as a fictional institution where women live together apart from their husbands and do as they please, functions in many ways like an Amazonian community would in the early modern imagination.

<sup>15</sup> Stage directions indicate that Truewit “kisses the bride” in congratulations to Epicoene on her marriage. Epicoene “kisses him” in the stage directions and comments “I return you the thanks, Master Truewit, so friendly a wish deserves.” The friendliness of the kiss seems a pretense for stirring Morose’s jealousy as he immediately exclaims “She has acquaintance too!” (3.5.3-7). Daw kisses the bride in the next scene, and the stage direction indicates that Epicoene “kisses them severally [Daw, Haughty, Centaur, Mavis, and Trusty] as he [Daw] presents them” (3.6.5-10).

<sup>16</sup> Ostovich, “General Introduction,” 27.

<sup>17</sup> Drouin, 29.

<sup>18</sup> As critics often observe, Morose’s intolerance seems to extend to every kind of noise except the sound of his own voice.

<sup>19</sup> Male-to-female cross-dressing appears in several other early modern plays, including James Shirley’s *A Bird in a Cage*, Thomas Middleton’s *A Mad World My Masters*, William Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and others. These instances of MTF cross-dressing have not received significant attention as a trope, but are somewhat distinct from the pattern of MTF cross-dressing in *Epicoene* and *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* in that the instances are fairly isolated and episodic aspects of a larger plot, in which the characters spend most of their time on stage as males and assume female disguises diegetically for brief periods of time with the audience’s explicit knowledge that they are male characters in female disguise.

<sup>20</sup> See Barbara Matulka’s *The Novels of Juan De Flores and Their European Diffusion: A Study in Comparative Literature*, esp. chapter four, “The Influence of the *Grisel y Mirabella*.”

<sup>21</sup> Jones, “From Polemical Prose to the Red Bull: The Swetnam Controversy in Women-Voiced Pamphlets and the Public Theater,” 127.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 133.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 134.

<sup>25</sup> De Flores, *Histoire De Aurelio Et Isabelle, Fille Du Roy d’Escose, Nouuellement Traduict En Quatre Langues, Italien, Espagnol, Francois, & Anglois*, A2r.

<sup>26</sup> *Swetnam the Woman-Hater: The Controversy and the Play*, 1.1.159-61. All further quotations from the play will be taken from Coryl Crandall’s edition and references will be given in the text.

<sup>27</sup> Bourdieu, “Marriage Strategies as Strategies of Social Reproduction,” 127-8.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 130.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 129.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 140.



<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Although it was not impossible in England for a princess to inherit the throne, marry, and retain her authority as ruling sovereign (as Mary I did), Atticus notes that Sicily's laws specifically prevent women from inheriting the throne but that Leonida's husband would be able to claim it for himself.

<sup>33</sup> In the novelette, the couple consummate their "burning desires" as well before they are betrayed. The novel describes "many dayes that secretlye ynoughe of their loue with great pleasure they hadde inioyed." De Flores, B4r.

<sup>34</sup> Lorenzo's reasons for disguising himself are in this respect not unlike the Duke's reasons in *Measure for Measure*, and Lorenzo likewise discovers that sexuality and tyranny are at the root of his state's problems.

<sup>35</sup> Thauvette, "Masculinity and Turkish Captivity in in *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*."

<sup>36</sup> Wayne, "The Dearth of the Author: Anonymity's Allies and *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*," 227.

<sup>37</sup> Harvey, 40.

<sup>38</sup> Phillippy, "The Mat(t)er of Death: The Defense of Eve and the Female *Ars Moriendi*," 150.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>40</sup> See pages 10-11 of the introduction.

<sup>41</sup> Purkiss, "Material Girls," 84.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Lorenzo's Amazonian disguise serves to reform Sicily but it also reforms Lorenzo. Atticus in act 1 says he prefers to think that Lorenzo is dead rather than hope he has been taken captive at the battle of Lepanto. Turkish captivity, to Atticus, is a worse than death. Lorenzo's shame may explain in part why Lorenzo assumes the female disguise himself while Dauphine hires a boy to assume a female disguise. Although Dauphine Eugenie bears a feminine name and has earned his uncle's disapproval, he has not been effeminized to the point Lorenzo has as a returned Turkish captive.

<sup>44</sup> Distinctions between indoor playhouses like Whitefriars and outdoor playhouses like the Red Bull spring from the class distinctions between the affluent, educated clientele who could afford the higher admissions to indoor playhouses and the humbler, more raucous clientele of the outdoor playhouses. The Red Bull playhouse in particular earned a reputation in the seventeenth-century as a playhouse that catered to a boisterous and unrefined crowd. As Mark Bayer notes, "theatre historians and literary critics from the seventeenth-century to the present" have tended "to condescend toward the Red Bull and its audience, which apparently delighted in little more than 'loud clamors' and 'daily tumults'" (149). As Bayer argues, Red Bull plays served a key function in the plague-

ravaged Clerkenwell community by “[p]lacing the audiences in the middle of the action, engulfed and astounded,” offering “its less privileged patrons a total (albeit temporary) escape from difficult lives” (176).

<sup>45</sup> “Dauphine” means Princess and his surname, Eugenie, has a feminine ending incongruous with Dauphine’s sex.

<sup>46</sup> See Schleiner’s “Male Cross-Dressing and Transvestism in Renaissance Romances.”



## **Chapter Two: Masculinity, Sexuality, and the Polyvocal Parliament of the English Civil Wars**

In tracing the evolution of masculinity in her 2008 book *Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern English Literature*, Jennifer Vaught concisely synthesizes the critically accepted long view of pre-modern masculinity studies, which holds that the “pronounced cultural shift in the English aristocracy from a class of violent warriors to more civilized courtiers or gentlemen with comparatively little military experience gradually transformed literary standards of manhood in the Renaissance.”<sup>1</sup> Citing the work of Alexandra Shepard and Lawrence Stone, Vaught observes that “[p]erceptions of the softening aristocratic versions of manhood resulted in part from the change in profession for many-upper class Englishmen from the militaristic to the civilian arts” over the course of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> “A bloody or scarred body,” she posits, was by Shakespeare’s time “no longer the predominant sign of a man in a variety of genres.”<sup>3</sup> While this narrative speaks particularly well to the transformation of the male elite in the late sixteenth-century, it cannot account for the specific ways masculinity was (re)constructed in moments of acute social and political crisis like the English Civil Wars of the 1640s. If by the turn of the seventeenth century, as Vaught asserts, civilian arts had replaced military conquest as the chief arena in which to assert one’s masculinity, then what were the English people to make of

the bungled negotiations and resulting bloody conflicts that marked the 1640s? How did ideals of patriarchal masculinity shift and bend to compensate for the many attempts at a radical reconfiguration of the English political system?

As Diane Purkiss reminds us, “there is no one masculinity” specific to the English Civil Wars, “though any pocket of masculinity – a regiment, a republican group, a Cavalier drinking-party – will try to pretend that its ideology of masculinity is the only possible one.”<sup>4</sup> Building on Purkiss’s work, this chapter explores the multiple and competing iterations of masculinity constructed and critiqued in the satirical political discourses of the 1640s. I approach masculinity in this chapter by looking at the places where it is conspicuously absent or invisible – in porno-political pamphlets which assume female authorship, feature female characters in overwhelming majority, and explicitly use sexuality as a framework to engage with the political culture of parliament-controlled London in the 1640s. I borrow the term ‘porno-political’ from Susan Wiseman, who asserts the importance of reading sexual satire from the 1640s and 50s as engaged with contemporary political debates about republicanism and monarchism.<sup>5</sup> Looking at mock female petitions, the *Mistris Parliament* series of pamphlets, and the 1647 *A Parliament of Ladies*, I will argue that the sexualized female persona enables a fantasy of a single, unified patriarchal voice – a voice this persona appears to usurp but which never actually existed in the first place.

By funnelling the polyvocality and sectarianism of 1640s politics into sexualized female personae, the pamphlets I examine attempt to preserve and idealize a kind of civilian masculinity – defined by peace, measured speech, agreement, and decisiveness – that was no longer available after the breakdown of political hierarchy between the king and the king’s subjects. Polyvocality threatened patriarchal hierarchy by making visible the conflicts within the political system over how power should be divided between members of the patriarchal elite. As I discussed briefly in the introduction, James I promoted an analogy between the family and the state, encouraging his subjects to respect, love, and obey him as they would a father. Political power in this idealized model flowed in a continuous and linear chain from God, the ultimate father, to the king, to his male nobles, and so on, down to male heads of households who ruled over their dependants. The long parliament challenged this ideal by removing the king from his position in the chain of power – first symbolically in 1643 by creating its own seal of authority to rival the king’s and then literally in 1649 by beheading Charles I and blocking the succession of his heirs. Parliament unofficially assumed the king’s position as the ruling ‘body’ of England when Charles initially left London for Oxford in 1642, but it was ill-suited to sustain the univocal ideal of royal authority it had inherited. Parliament’s many bodies proved problematic to a political culture invested in the idea that political power flowed from the single, divinely-appointed body of the monarch.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter argues that porno-political discourse of the 1640s buttresses the masculine prerogative to power while simultaneously critiquing powerful men like the king and the MPs for their failures as rulers. It accomplishes this by preserving the offices and institutions of patriarchal authority, like the monarchy, parliament, and the male head of household, but depicting the males who occupy them as disorderly, sex-crazed women unworthy of the masculine offices they hold. Rather than portray the political status quo as the problem, in other words, pamphleteers portrayed the long parliament specifically as a perversion of parliamentary prerogative made un-masculine by its noise, its unruliness, and its inability to self-govern. Since the parodic sexualized female voice, unlike the fragmented parliamentary voice, was already an established image for threats to patriarchal hierarchy, porno-political discourse using the persona of the lustful woman translated the new threat into the terms of an old, known threat. The female personae of satirical Civil War pamphlets were drag performances composed of exaggerated stereotypes about female sexuality, and in many cases parodied existing female-authored texts in ways that highlighted their speakers' insincerity. Yet despite the shocking and disingenuous tone most of these pamphlets adopted, their humour delivered a legitimate critique of London's political dysfunction in the 1640s. Because the pamphlets do not easily pass as female-authored texts, they prompt their readers to continually question whether the arguments the personae make are facetious or serious. Like festive drag

performances, which make gender transgression a socially acceptable form of entertainment, the female persona's failure to pass as female assures readers that faux female-authored pamphlets are socially-acceptable entertainments. The notion that anything the female personae say in these pamphlets could be a joke, I argue, enables authors and readers to broach major flaws in England's political hierarchies without challenging the patriarchal assumptions of these systems in an outright and alienating manner. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, likening parliament to a lustful woman enabled writers and readers to vent frustrations and criticize parliament while continuing to idealize patriarchal hierarchy and the peaceful, familial bonds between subjects and king that parliament signified in ideal circumstances.

In the sections that follow, I examine two kinds of porno-political discourse, each of which uses lustful female personae to create a particular fantasy of patriarchal univocality that criticizes the current members of parliament while honouring the institution of parliament itself. Following the chronology of the First and Second Civil War conflicts, I divide my discussion into two sections.<sup>7</sup> The first section explores the mock petition phenomenon popular during the First Civil War (1642-7) which respond in part to women's increasing involvement in petitioning parliament. The second section focuses on texts published during the shorter Second Civil War (1648-9), which resulted in parliament's unprecedented resolution to execute Charles I on charges of treason and analyzes the derisive



portrayals of parliament as a lustful female body that gives birth to monsters. After briefly outlining the ways gender and sexuality inform my analysis of Caroline politics in the first section of this chapter, I first explore the mock petition phenomenon of 1642-7, in which authors adopt the univocal female voice of female-authored petitions but demand sex rather than religious or political reform. I explore how and why these mock petitions give pornographic accounts of an imaginary libertine past to comment on London's difficult present and impossible future under parliamentary rule. Second, I examine feminizations of parliament in the *Mistris Parliament* series of 1648 and Henry Neville's oft-reprinted *A Parliament of Ladies*, both popular during the Second Civil War. In *Mistris Parliament*, a pseudo-morality play broken up into multiple pamphlets, a female character named parliament confesses her sins and begs forgiveness as she labours to birth the monster of "Ordinance." The series represents parliament as a single female body in order to protect parliament as an abstract ideal perverted by the individual male members who have impregnated "her." *A Parliament of Ladies* depicts a self-appointed parliament of women which sets out to invert the hierarchy of the household (and the state by extension) by making husbands subject to the pleasure of their wives. In so far as the female parliament's failures mirror the failures of the long parliament of England – both bodies become factionalized, noisy, and ineffectual once they dispatch their common enemy – the parliament of ladies illustrates that polyvocal parliamentary procedure is itself an

exercise best suited for women and incapable of providing an alternative to traditional monarchical rule. So, while critics like James Grantham Turner read 1640s porno-political discourse as a means of discrediting women's burgeoning political activism and/or as royalist propaganda aimed at discrediting republican activism, I contend that porno-political print offers us the opportunity to explore how the Civil Wars occasioned a referendum on masculinity and its institutions of power.<sup>8</sup>

### **Gender, Sexuality, and Polyvocality in Jacobean and Caroline Politics**

In *Epicoene* and *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*, female impersonation served to highlight the flaws at the very top of the patriarchal system – in Atticus the king and father of *Swetnam*, and on a smaller scale, in Morose, the head of the household and fortune-holder in *Epicoene*. While conflicts between elders and their heirs are a staple of comedy, the plots of *Epicoene* and *Swetnam* take on a particular political resonance when compared to each other in the context of the Jacobean court and Jacobean ideologies of political hierarchy like the family-state analogy which puts the king in the position of the father to his subjects. While neither play explicitly critiques James I, the critiques of Atticus's and Morose's misogyny, which leads to their abuse of their position as heads of their households, alludes to a subtle political critique of James I as a king/father. For

example, in analyzing the woodcut featured on *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*'s 1620 title page, which features an indoor female court that doesn't match the outdoor female court enacted in the play, Valerie Wayne argues that the image connects the trial of Swetnam the misogynist to a "confrontation between the misogynist James I and a revived Elizabeth I, who is surrounded by female supporters for the purpose of arraigning the king's retrograde attitudes towards women."<sup>9</sup> As Wayne points out, the presence of women in broad brimmed hats in the illustration defies the king's 1620s demand that women be shamed for wearing masculine fashions, referencing James's reputation as misogynist. "The provision of Swetnam's name beside the male figure would protect it from any charge that it was an outright image of the king," Wayne writes, "But those who perceived the parallels between Swetnam and James," and perhaps between Atticus and James, "could find the title page and the play especially relevant to the current controversy over how women were permitted to appear and behave."<sup>10</sup> While Atticus and Morose face resistance from their subjects and subordinates and are compelled to change, however, James limited his interactions with his parliament and attempted to cement his authority as England's divinely appointed (and thus irreproachable) sovereign.

Wayne and Simon Shepherd trace several parallels between the Sicilian royal family in *Swetnam the Woman-Hater* and James I's own family, noting that both have two sons and a daughter, and that as Shepherd has pointed out there is a

potential parallel between the death of Atticus's eldest son, announced at the beginning of the play, and the death of James I's eldest son Henry in 1612.<sup>11</sup> Shepherd sees in Lorenzo's Amazonian disguise a nod to Elizabethan imagery and the hope of a restored "Henry surrogate" who "dresses as an Elizabethan-type Amazon to fulfil his political role. On Lorenzo are focused the sort of hopes that were associated with Henry, the restoration of justice and the blessing of true love."<sup>12</sup> Given that the play was performed and printed while Charles I was the heir apparent we might also see in Lorenzo the hope that a second-born son like Charles I could rouse himself from the weakness and effeminacy implied by Lorenzo's Turkish captivity and echoed perhaps in Charles's childhood rickets, restore himself to his full masculine privilege by performing deft acts of swordsmanship and statecraft, and bring justice and stability to a grieving kingdom. While the patriarchal reform and hope of restoration Lorenzo achieves does not quite materialize in England itself, discourses of masculinity and sexuality traced in the previous chapter carry forward into Caroline England as important tools through which to critique Charles I and the 1640s Caroline political regime, as the MTF drag performances of the commercial stage give way to scurrilous political satires dominated by parodic female personae.

Charles I inherited James I's political culture of divine-right rule, which he exploited during his own reign, but in the years before the Wars he had largely withdrawn himself from "the public practice of kingship," weakening the

connection between himself and his subjects by limiting their right to petition him personally and by retreating from requests that he exercise “his power to heal, notably by touching for scrofula, known as ‘the King’s evil’.”<sup>13</sup> In the eleven years of what historians term the “personal rule” between the parliament of 1628 and the short parliament of 1640, Charles I preferred to rule by royal prerogative, exerting his constitutional powers to raise money without having to consult parliament (taxes required parliamentary consent).<sup>14</sup> As Michael Braddick and others remark, there was nothing unconstitutional about Charles I’s personal rule and it did facilitate a decade of peace and relative political stability in England. Rising costs of the Bishops’ Wars in Scotland eventually required Charles I to call parliament in 1640, triggering the series of events which would result in the First Civil War, but the years of the personal rule provided a baseline for future visions of a univocal patriarchal authority centralized within the body of a single ruler. To critique parliament in parliament-controlled 1640s London was not necessarily to endorse the king, but the specific critiques levelled at parliament, including accusations of war-lust, inchoate speech, dividedness, and indecisiveness, held parliament to the standards of rule Charles I had set as an absolutist monarch, against which parliament was found severely deficient.

As Purkiss, Turner, and others observe, Civil War propaganda used highly gendered and sexualized terms. The pamphlets which use a female voice as their platform for political commentary, and which are the focus of this chapter, do so

in large part to critique parliament, although anti-royalist propaganda appeared too in newsbooks and popular pamphlets. The ubiquitous nature of the family-state analogy, wherein the king was a figurative father to his subjects and a husband to the parliament, makes sexuality an indispensable cultural register through which to re-theorize fractured political relationships. Since patriarchal norms of male sexual continence make female inconstancy and insatiability the predominant signs of antisocial sexual desire, the sexualized female persona can also express what its royalist authors perceive as an antisocial desire for political anarchy through metaphors of sexual promiscuity. As Ng notes, “the republican challenge to absolutism was at its heart also a challenge to the rule of the father, and so a challenge, even if a partial one, to patriarchy.”<sup>15</sup> Some authors chose to counter this republican challenge by defending absolutism, but others countered it by parodying and filtering a republican worldview through a sexualized female persona, offering their readers a fantasy of patriarchal family hierarchy overturned by female unruliness so that they might reject it and support patriarchal political hierarchy reinstated. Thus, the female persona in porno-political satire came to represent the polyvocal, disorderly, factious parliament, making the court (largely absent in these satires) seem orderly, productive, and masculine by comparison. Feminizing and sexualizing the polyvocal parliament as a loud, obnoxious whore became, in porno-political royalist propaganda, a means of declaring parliament unfit to govern England.

Under a single king the polyvocality of parliament worked to the kingdom's advantage (theoretically) by representing the different voices of the king's most valued subjects.<sup>16</sup> Although much collaborative work and negotiation went into royal proclamations, their format deliberately obscures this work so as to emphasize the king's voice as the authority which gives the proclamation weight. Kings were to collaborate with parliament where feasible, and Charles I had been "personally involved in both the elections and legislative process" of James I's 1621 and 1624 parliaments in preparation for his future role, but he became increasingly contemptuous of parliament once he took the throne.<sup>17</sup> Parliament likewise became increasingly suspicious of Charles once he became king.<sup>18</sup> As parliament moved to place limits on the king's power (most notably by forwarding the *Petition of Right* (1628) demanding that the king heed the rights of parliament set out in the Magna Carta), relations between parliament and the king rapidly deteriorated. The members of the long parliament were initially united in bringing their grievances to the king and in urging the king to dismiss his councillors and rely instead on the voices of parliament for guidance. When neither the king nor parliament backed down from their demands, disagreement within parliament on how to proceed amplified existing religious and economic rifts among members (MPs) which would eventually give rise to full-fledged factions. By the end of the First Civil War in 1647, parliament was so divided that Charles I was able to work the noble-backed Presbyterian faction and the army-

backed Independent faction against each other to negotiate peace terms more favourable to him.<sup>19</sup> Even after the army-led purge of parliament in 1648 crippled the Presbyterian faction, making way for the regicide, new rifts formed within the remaining Independents. Unwilling to dissolve itself after more than a decade in power, the long parliament of 1640 met its end in 1653 when Oliver Cromwell called in soldiers to clear the house. At the next parliament the majority of the MPs resigned and pledged their support to Cromwell, ushering in an autocratic Protectorate which consolidated its power in the single, male figure of the Protector.

Without painting over the complex differences between Charles I's reign and Cromwell's rule, we can say that the Protectorate achieved stability in England much the way Charles I's personal rule did – by centralizing power symbolically into a single, male voice. In practice Cromwell's power as England's "Protector" was no more dominated by a single voice than the king's power had been: both men had advisors and worked in concert with councils to rule the country. Cromwell rose from the House of Commons as a military general to become a spokesman for the soldiers of the New Model Army in their struggles to receive compensation from parliament and secure their religious freedom against what they perceived as the popery of Anglican and Presbyterian worship. When Cromwell commanded the parliament to disband in 1653 it was not his voice alone but the soldiers backing it which ended the thirteen-year parliamentary



session. Charles's and Cromwell's power bases may have been different, but the model of political hierarchy was in principle quite similar. Just as a king's ability to "speak" for his country relies on his ability to command and compel his noble subjects, Cromwell's ability to "speak" for England relied on his ability to command and compel the New Model Army.

If political power had overshadowed military power as the dominant ideal of patriarchal masculinity in the decades leading up to the Civil Wars, the establishment of the Protectorate should have reinstated military might as the superior masculine ideal. Yet in separating itself forcefully from the long parliament by effectively removing its ministers from their offices, Cromwell's Army-backed Independent faction highlighted instead the ineffectiveness of civilian government and undermined the masculine credibility of the only recently ascendant civilian art of politics. Parliament's success on the battlefield, the time-honoured testing ground of masculine virtue, seems ironically to have nullified parliament's claims to masculine superiority in the political arena in the long term once the Army had fractured away from the governing body itself. Yet as Purkiss has argued, Cromwell's military prowess came to signify a type of masculine excess which displayed "a curious tendency to tip over into problematic femininity through tropes of loss of control."<sup>20</sup> Royalist depictions of Cromwell relentlessly emphasize his bodily excesses, from his large nose to rumours of his adultery and "[e]ven avidly or determinedly pro-Cromwell writers apparently

could not simply settle into celebrating Cromwell's efficacy on the battlefield and his military prowess, his abstemious lifestyle and religious devotion" for fear that such arguments would invoke the royalist portrayals of Cromwell's masculine excess instead.<sup>21</sup>

If Oliver Cromwell's military career failed to earn him recognition as the genuine "patriarchal fantasy" Purkiss argues he might seem to be on the surface, we might conclude then that the military ideal of masculinity did not prove entirely viable in the 1640s. How then were masculine ideals of military action and political negotiation reconciled among the body of the male elite who were neither idealized as statesmen nor as warriors? Since much has already been written about Cavalier masculinity, particularly in the context of the Restoration,<sup>22</sup> I devote much of my attention in the rest of this chapter to the gendering of non-royalist members of parliament which worked itself out in the popular London press of the 1640s.

Before the sixteenth century, parliament drew on a male elite defined by landownership and the concomitant military service it owed to the king. As service at court came to replace service in battle and the aristocracy began to liquidate their assets to support expensive lifestyles, the composition of the English electorate and the English parliament shifted. To vote in the 1640s, a man had to own property valued at more than forty shillings. For the newly-wealthy merchant classes, land was widely available and inflation had increased property

values so that over the 1620s and 30s the “electorate extended increasingly downward, including in most areas of the middle class.”<sup>23</sup> A progressively more diverse electorate led to a progressively more diverse House of Commons, especially since in 1604 the House of Commons gained “the power to rule on the legality of elections and to determine the right of membership in the House,” a power which “crippled the court’s efforts to nominate its own candidates for parliament and opened the field for opposition.”<sup>24</sup> The House of Commons, where most of the Roundhead leaders (though not all) held their seats, and which would form the backbone of the “rump” parliament responsible for abolishing the House of Lords and executing the king, had strong ties to the wealthy middle class and to what Elizabeth Skerpan calls the “godly” segment of the middle class which began to believe itself “called to public affairs” out of religious duty.<sup>25</sup> Many members of the House of Commons became military men, and many became shrewd political negotiators, but before the Civil Wars compelled them to become these things many of them might have defined themselves in masculine terms as heads of households, not warriors or statesmen.

Tracing masculine ideals in the conduct literature of the Tudor-Stuart period, Shepard writes that “the household was represented as the primary site of male authority.... Heading a household was associated with the mastery not only of a man’s self, but of his subordinates and his resources, and in this way it was often equated with manhood itself.”<sup>26</sup> Unlike military service or service at court,

heading a household was presented as a “portion of the patriarchal dividend to which all adult males might aspire, and it was often approached as the precondition of men’s political involvement with the wider community.”<sup>27</sup> If heading a household was indeed the masculine ideal most relevant to the MPs of the long parliament, we might better understand parliament’s masculine inadequacies (in the eyes of its critics) as its failure to centralize power along the patriarchal hierarchy of the family-state analogy. For while each MP might fulfill the conduct-literature ideal of the good head of household in his private life, there exists no model for how householders of relatively equal power should coordinate and share power in the absence of a single, higher patriarch. Although parliament assumed the king’s role as head of state, parliament – as a fractious assembly of householders vying for dominance – may have seemed like no head at all. MPs stood as rulers of their own ‘little Commonwealths’ at home, but in parliament they were (in theory) supposed to adopt a subordinate (hence, feminized) position to the king while nevertheless managing affairs concerning the ordering of the household-state. While parliament sought to make itself England’s new patriarch, many seem to have regarded parliament’s ascendancy as akin to a wife trying to overthrow her husband’s rule. That porno-political satire should make use of authorial drag is less than surprising in this context, since the parodic female personae of the genre function like Skimmington rituals to shame households in which the husband is not the dominant ‘head’ and thereby reinforce normative

patriarchal hierarchy. That neighbours played such an active role in Skimmington rituals (often serving as cross-dressed surrogates for offending husbands) suggests that a disturbance in the marital dynamic of one household necessitates community intervention to ensure the stability of patriarchal order throughout. Likewise, the female persona in porno-political satire in the 1640s becomes a tool through which the broader community could intervene to critique the dysfunctional relationship between parliament and the king, focusing on the problematic nature of the conflict itself rather than on the individual failings of any one party.

Beyond the correspondence between Lady Skimmington and the sexualized female personae of 1640s print, though, attacks against parliament which use the analogy of the state as household to criticize parliament's ability to govern England reach out to broader questions about the perceived naturalness of patriarchal hierarchy. Because, as Shepard writes, "[t]he self-government expected of manhood was the basis of men's claims to authority," attacks on parliament's ability to govern found fertile ground in attacks on parliament's masculinity.<sup>28</sup> Yet gender-based attacks posed a problem for anti-parliamentarians, for to attack parliament's ability to govern could open up critique of the patriarchal assumption that elite male householders *were* best suited to govern the state. Such critiques did arise from the system's "subordinate subjects" in the form of apprentice and women-led petitioning (involving large,

public demonstrations) against parliament.<sup>29</sup> If neither the king nor the male elite elected to parliament could prove themselves effective and capable of governing the country, the cultural assumptions which worked to naturalize patriarchal hierarchy should have lost substantial force. As the Restoration's reestablishment of patriarchal hierarchy makes clear, however, they did not. Katherine Gillespie and Phyllis Mack see the roots of twentieth-century feminist activism in women's mid-seventeenth-century political writing,<sup>30</sup> and the seventeenth century in general saw women's increased participation in print culture, but political representation remained the privilege of the male elite.<sup>31</sup> What preserved the patriarchal hierarchy in the midst of so much criticism of its traditional institutions? In the next two sections I will argue that satirical female personae in mock petitions and female parliament pamphlets served to channel criticism towards the flawed men in control of patriarchal institutions like the monarchy and the parliament and to preserve the figure of the individual head of household as an ideal of masculinity.

### **Mock Petitions and the First Civil War**

In the early 1640s, several female-authored petitions found their way into print as pamphlets and in newsbooks. Female petitioners themselves often drew more attention than their petitions, however, as they assembled in the thousands to

deliver them to parliament. Petitioning, akin to demonstrating, required a significant amount of coordination and effort, since “[a]part from the composition and publication of the document itself,” organizers “had to gather signatures, adopt and distribute the marching colours that identified their demonstrations as ceremonial processions (white for peace, sea-green for levelling), and move coherent masses of women by water and land.”<sup>32</sup> “Obligatory references to female weakness” in female petitions, Turner notes, “were further belied by the oral and physical vigor of the demonstrations themselves, which besieged the Parliament building, mounted the stairs, broke staffs of office, and confronted increasingly violent efforts to control them.”<sup>33</sup> As *Mercurius Civicus* reported in August of 1643, “about two or three thousand Women, most of them of the inferiour sort” gathered “under the pretense of presenting a petition to both Houses of Parliament for peace” but carried themselves so “uncivilly towards divers Members of the House, and others, using many horrid execrations,” so that “at last from words they fell to blowes, insomuch that upon their insolent abusing of divers men of quality, the trained Band and the two Troops of Horse were forced to fall amongst them for feare of further danger.”<sup>34</sup> Newsbooks are hardly objective historical sources,<sup>35</sup> and phrases like “continuyng their outrageous courses in casting stones and brickbats, they [the petitioners] occasioned the more violence to be used towards them, wherein divers of them were dangerously hurt” suggest that we may never get an accurate picture of how or why exactly this petition became

violent. While female petitioners clashed aggressively with parliament, female-authored petitions received equally hostile treatment in print where anonymous and pseudonymous satirists appropriated the format and characteristics of female petitions as a source of pornographic humour. Turner aptly characterizes mock pamphlets as responding “somewhat hysterically to serious Utopian discourses by women”<sup>36</sup> and Turner’s *Libertines and Radicals* argues persuasively that pornopolitical print is “a deliberate attempt to confront and neutralize women’s efforts to establish their own institutions.”<sup>37</sup> Looking first at female-authored petitions as a genre, and then at three mock petitions of the early 1640s, I will demonstrate that mock petitions present fantasies of sexual disorder as a means of investing social and political order in the patriarchal structure of the family. The pseudonymous lustful female petitioner preserves the male head of household as the ultimate masculine ideal, even as “she” laments that there will be no men left in London to fulfill this ideal should the (feminized) chaos of war continue.

### *Women’s Petitioning and its Responses*

Critics typically assume that mock petitions are male-authored and that petitions delivered by groups of women are female-authored, but neither assumption can claim much evidence to support it.<sup>38</sup> The term “mock petition” has become commonplace among critics referring to a series of petitions which imitate the collective feminine voice of female-authored petitions but which



develop different arguments supported by sexually explicit anecdotes. Given that women signed and delivered petitions written either collectively or on their behalf, the question of female authorship may be secondary to the broader question of whether female-authored petitions put forth women's concerns in a voice any more specific to female experience than mock petitions do. Assuming that female-authored petitions offer an unqualified glimpse into the experiences and concerns of 1640s women risks underplaying the political strategy and rhetoric at work in women's political activism. Exploring the rhetoric of female-authored petitions does, however, provide a useful frame of reference through which to separate the reactionary elements of mock petitions from the elements invented to communicate the mock-petitioner's own political message.

*The Humble Petition of Many Hundreds of Distressed Women, Tradesmens Wives, and Widdowes* (1642),<sup>39</sup> for instance, possesses several features common to female-authored petitions and absent in mock petitions, such as the speakers' emphasis on their sense of obligation and their commitment to a set of shared religious convictions rather than to their material and emotional needs. *The Humble Petition* begins with an account of all the women's unanswered petitions and an unwavering declaration that "having received no satisfactory answer as of yet, inforceth us once againe to Petition this Honourable House for answer to the same, in granting your Petitioners their just desires and requests."<sup>40</sup> Stating that they have been *forced* to petition implies that

under ideal circumstances they would rather abstain from voicing their concerns publicly, and even if this is not the case it is an effective rhetorical move designed to capitalize on the irregularity and perceived unseemliness of women's public speech by making female activism another symptom of the disordered state the petitioners seek to redress.<sup>41</sup> The women, wives, and widows begin their petition by laying out the financial hardships they suffer "through the great decay of Trading," but the reforms they seek emphasize their desire to protect their religion even above their economic or personal interests, petitioning that relief be sent to Protestant settlers in Ireland and that England be "put into a present posture of Warre" against the Catholic rebellion in Ireland.<sup>42</sup> Female-authored petitions, of which *The Humble Petition* is typical, tend to express concern for the spiritual direction of the state, not for the health (or pleasure) of its individual members. Religion was easily the most contentious issue of the Civil Wars, and female-authored pamphlets make their opinions on religious issues known first and foremost while mock petitions treat religion as a static, moral backdrop against which to promote procreation as a spiritual duty.

When the female-authored petition *A True Copie of the Petition of the Gentlewomen, and Tradesmens-wives in and about the City of London* does mention sex, it is to compel parliament to intercede on behalf of Protestant women in Ireland, where the petitioners assert that Irish soldiers employ rape as a weapon of war.<sup>43</sup> Of Ireland and the continuing "insolencies of the Papists and

their abettors,” the petitioners remark that “the thoughts of [these] sad barbarous events, maketh our tender hearts to melt within us, forcing us humbly to Petition to this honourable Assembly.”<sup>44</sup> The petitioners turn female frailty into a rhetorical advantage, first excusing the disruptive nature of their public speech by encoding it with an obligation to speak against Roman Catholicism and then by tying their public speech to the feminine work of mourning in crying out for the suffering of innocent Protestant women “whose Husbands or Parents” were not “able to rescue” them from the conflict.<sup>45</sup> “[W]e wish wee had no cause to speake of those insolencies, and savage usage and unheard [sic] of rapes, excercised upon our Sex in *Ireland*,” the petitioners write, and ask “have we not just cause to feare that they wil prove the forerunners of our ruine, except Almighty *GOD* by the wisdom and care of this *Parliament* be pleased to succor us”?<sup>46</sup> Sexuality – namely the “barbarous” and violent sexuality of the Catholic soldiers – is a subject which the women associate strongly with their religious and ethnic others, and about which they provide no explicit details that might serve to rouse a potentially libidinous reader’s interest.

Since the threat against their chastity (combined with the Catholic threat against their souls) obliged the authors of this petition to take public action, for parliament to comply would be to remove the women’s obligation and herald a return to the status quo of male speech and female silence. Yet this is not the argument the petitioners make in *A True Copie*. Having presented their case that

the House of Commons should intercede on their behalf to convince the House of Lords to “purge both the Court and Kingdome of that great Idolatrous Service of the Masse” so as to avoid drawing “downe a greater curse upon the whole Kingdome,” the petitioners lay out a series of arguments supported by scripture to legitimize women’s right to petition parliament.<sup>47</sup> “We doe it not out of any selfe conceit, or pride of heart, as seeking to equall our selves with Men,” they write, “But according to our places to discharge that duty we owe to God, and the cause of the Church, as farre as lyeth in us, following herein the example of the Men, which have gone in this duty before us.”<sup>48</sup> Putting God always above the king and parliament, who in 1641 were proving themselves increasingly fallible, the female petitioners express that they feel themselves duty-bound to band together in a single voice to defend England against popery. Parliament’s inability to reach a univocal agreement on the matter of religious reform creates a kind of political vacuum that female petitioners feel they have an obligation to fill. Newsbook accounts of violent clashes between female petitioners and parliamentary forces imply a certain extremism among female petitioners, but female-authored petitions themselves tend on the whole to read as politically conservative and measured in their requests for parliamentary action. That women in the thousands expressed their obligation to physically petition parliament may have been radical enough, and a comment on their lack of faith in parliament’s ability to govern the country, but they do not agitate for a whole-scale reform of patriarchal hierarchy.

In many cases, it seems that female petitioners gathered to lend support to a particular faction within parliament, as the petitioners of *A True Copie* gathered to support the House of Commons in pressuring the House of Lords. The response we have to such efforts, however, illustrates parliament's inability to marshal such support in productive ways. The pamphlet reprint of *A True Copie* includes a copy of the petition as well as a record of parliament's response, delivered by John Pym, a vocal puritan MP. According to the pamphlet, Pym "came to the Commons doore, and called for the Women, and spake unto them,"<sup>49</sup> thanking them for their petition and declaring that they "shall (*God* willing) receive from us [the House of Commons] all the satisfaction which we can possibly give to your just and lawfull desires."<sup>50</sup> Having thanked them, however, he then instructs them to

repaire to your Houses, and turne your Petition which you have delivered here, into Prayers at home for us; for we have bin, are, and shall be (to our utmost power) ready to relieve you, your Husbands and Children, and to perform the trust committed unto us, towards *God*, our King and Countrey, as becometh faithfull Christian and Loyall Subjects.<sup>51</sup>

The reply could illustrate parliament's unwillingness to accept women as participants in political culture, since Pym not only asks that the women leave the House of Commons but also that they turn their energy to praying inside their homes and put their trust in their MPs. Marcus Nevitt notes that Pym's "authoritative remark strives to reinforce a gendered segregation of social space and discursive activity across class hierarchies and to translate the register of

women's political engagement into the (patriarchally oriented and endorsed) language of devotion."<sup>52</sup> But Pym's statement also does the ideological work of painting over the differences between the petitioners and the parliament, as if their goals are aligned, at a time when parliament itself was highly divided. Pym's "us" is just as fictional a conceit as the "we" of the large petition, except that in Pym's case historical records of parliamentary factionalism give us reason to doubt that Pym's "us" includes all of parliament, or even all the MPs of the House of Commons.

Pym himself was a divisive figure, instrumental in documents like the *Petition of Right* and *The Grand Remonstrance* which emphasized the king's accountability to parliament, and a vocal advocate of radical religious reform.<sup>53</sup> While Pym, as a puritan committed to removing papist corruption in the church and among the king's councillors, likely shared and encouraged the concerns the gentlewomen and tradesmen's wives express in *A True Copie*, Pym could not speak for the majority of MPs. Why then, when thousands of female petitioners at the door might possibly put pressure on those MPs not aligned with Pym's goals, does Pym send women to pray at home? Part of the reason lies perhaps in the political threat such organized petitions present to parliament in general. The fact that women organize and mobilize themselves politically in such numbers, and present such a united front, reflects poorly on a parliament which cannot reach an accord with the king on pressing matters of religious reform and foreign policy

due to its inner divisions. In dismissing the female petitioners and painting parliament as a united body committed to serving God, the king, and the country (as if such service were clear and simply defined), Pym strives to maintain parliament's role (and the role of the male political agent) as the guarantor of social order and hierarchy against an alternative vision of English politics in which all subjects are able to organize and make demands of their leaders. Pym seeks to neutralize the alternative view of England's political future that the female petitioners present, even though the specific terms of that future – a rigorously Protestant state – serve his own interests. As the second wave of female-authored petitions which followed the Second Civil War in 1647-8 demonstrates, Pym was not successful in the long term.<sup>54</sup>

*Mock Petitions and Civil War Fantasies of Restored Patriarchal Order*

Nevitt argues that the mock petitions which followed the first wave of female-authored petitions in 1641-2 would, like Pym's response to female petitioners, attempt to restrict and reframe women's political voice, rewriting "material need ... as sexual appetite" and transforming "the desire for political agency" into "an insatiable and apparently collective libido."<sup>55</sup> Yet while these mock petitions do parody female-authored petitions in their titles and basic layout, they present a vision of England (and London in particular) that is so at odds with that of most female-authored petitions that they depart from the realm of parody

and become fictions in and of themselves. Mock petitions adopt a narrative style, rather than the argumentative style of genuine petitions, recounting in sexually explicit terms the urban lifestyle made impossible by the Civil Wars and pleading for a return to the status quo of excess and debauchery. The female speakers of mock petitions, driven by sexual starvation, insist that England's future prosperity lies in their ability to conceive future generations of English gentlemen, and that with the suitable men too busy fighting in the country to fornicate with them in the city, England faces the future collapse of its population. Mock petitions therefore open a space to critique the male parliament's handling of the Civil Wars while at the same time idealizing patriarchal rule and depicting men as victims of war, personified as a devouring female in more than one mock petition.

While mock petitions borrow obviously from female-authored petitions, their borrowings from complaint literature, whore dialogues, and other popular genres often go unremarked. Early precursors to the mock petition, like *The Virgin's Complaint* of 1642, which does not style itself as a petition but which adopts a collective female voice to protest the First Civil War, use the complaint form to invoke many of the tropes which become hallmarks of the mock petition genre. Complaint literature, particularly complaint poetry which featured "fallen women" and other female characters as the principal speakers, became a "literary craze" among male poets towards the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>56</sup>

Conventionally, complaint literature "tell[s] of a legendary figure who returns



from the dead to recount her misfortunes through an extended monologue, one that wavers in tone between vindication, shame, and vengeance.”<sup>57</sup> *The Virgins Complaint*, which recounts the misfortunes of living “sundry virgins of the City of London,” does not replicate the usual formula but instead adapts it to address in a fictional context women’s increasingly public political voice as petitioners.

With respect to its attitude towards time, *The Virgins Complaint* provides a link between the established complaint genre (popular in the late 1500s and dealing with the past suffering of its speakers) and the emerging female petition phenomenon (popular in the 1640s and outlining the measures to take to avoid the future suffering of its speakers). Rather than lament past wrongs as the female speakers of complaint poetry do, the virgins<sup>58</sup> complain that War is consuming all of the sexually desirable men in England and obstructing the system of sexual exchange which gives order to the virgins’ lives. With all of their “sweethearts” gone off to war, the virgins are made “with open mouths and free endeavours of all the best parts about us” to “turne [their] owne solicitors” and list their present and “increasing miseries.”<sup>59</sup> Sexual innuendo pervades the pamphlet in sentences like this where women’s “mouths” and “parts” refer at once to the organs of speech and to female genitalia so that ‘solicitation’ refers both to arguing one’s position publicly and to making one’s body publicly available for sex. The virgins declare that “we are more damnified by these wars then any, but those who have true feelings of our cases, can imagine,” and as readers are thus invited to “feel”

the virgins' "cases," cases meaning both their plight and their genitals. The pamphlet then launches into a description of what life in London is like in the absence of its able-bodied, virile young men. Driven by green-sickness, which "feed[s] upon" the virgins "more ravenously than a Vulture, deflowering and penetrating the precious colour of [their] complexions" and afflicting them with "hideous and deathful longings, such as are oftentimes prejudicial to our wits, which indeed depend rather on the satisfaction of our wills and bodies than of our souls," the virgins are forced to settle for the touch of "frosty-bearded Vsurers" and "bungling fumlbers."<sup>60</sup> The virgins recount that before the wars they "used to walk to *Islington* and *Pimlico*, to eat Cakes, and drinke Christian Ale on Holydayes" with all of the gentlemen, courtiers, Cavaliers, able prentices, and handsome journeymen that the city had to offer.<sup>61</sup> They were "inforced to allure with sheeps eyes, winks, and other provocations, the younger Gentlemen of [their] fathers shops," but they "never turned suitor away, had hee but a nose on his face."<sup>62</sup>

The virgins call for an end to the Civil Wars, so that they may be relieved of their "long solitude, And [of] keeping their Virginities against their Wills."<sup>63</sup> Rather than engaging in political discourse and addressing the conflicts which motivate the Wars, the virgins blame war itself by personifying it as a sexual rival "far more ravenous and greedy then wee *Maid*s are after *Mans* flesh."<sup>64</sup> By opposing "War' alone, the virgins conspicuously hold no political or religious

stake in the conflict between the Roundheads and the Cavaliers. Religion surfaces only to lend scriptural support to the virgins' sexual desire as a means of fulfilling "the commandment given to [their] first parents, *increase & multiply*."<sup>65</sup> The virgins lament lost opportunities for sexual dalliances, not marriage and procreation, but they raise a coherent anti-war argument in observing that "since we cannot have our wonted conjunction in a faire way, who are the breeders of the Kingdome, there must needs be a great want of man-kind in all this Realme, they still decreasing, as being slaine, and dying manifold other deaths, and few or none springing up to supply their rooms."<sup>66</sup> Although much of the sex the virgins recount seems more recreational than procreational, pornographic humour blends into political commentary when the dearth of men gives rise to the vision of a future in which "men shall be so scarce, that women must be confined to their husbands and glad they can have them too; and when before one woman (by report) would have served twenty men, one man must be faine to serve twenty women, and yet all they can do not sufficient to content us maids."<sup>67</sup> That wives should be forced to rely and depend on a single husband after the war whereas they previously depended on many suitors reads as assertion that a multitude of men (like parliament) serving one woman (England, or London) leads to disorder. In light of parliament's implied failure, we might infer that the rule of a single man (like the king) could reign in the disorderly sexual impulses of London

women and wipe out the debauched London society that the virgins are nostalgic for.

The virgins allude to the absence of male bodies in London, but their fantasy of a future London devoid of men also becomes a powerful political statement about the absence of masculinity in the more abstract, patriarchal sense. Turning the First Civil War, which represents a fundamental breakdown of patriarchal hierarchy into a sexual rivalry between women over men, removes responsibility for the war from the parliamentary and royal governments themselves. War, like a wife serviced by multiple husbands when allowed to roam unchecked, makes an easy scapegoat for whichever figurative ‘husband’ or single voice of patriarchal order comes to quell her. That this ‘husband’ is missing in action provides an uncertain, apocalyptic vision of England’s future. The addition of the “mournfull Dittie,” a two verse song which appears at the end of the second edition of the pamphlet printed a month after it first appeared in January of 1642, remedies the absence of masculinity by appealing to its masculine readers to fill the void. The Dittie begins by addressing any reader who has felt “pittie” in reading the “Dittie” to “Doe your endeavours / To cure our fevers.”<sup>68</sup> Rather than call for an end to the Civil Wars, however, the virgins call to their readers “If you be men to heale us body and soule, / Give us some oyle of man to make us whole.” The later pun on ‘whole’ – “Only one thing which makes us thus condole, / the oyle of man can cure us in the hole” – invites male readers to produce semen

after reading the pamphlet much the way an actor might invite applause at the end of a play.<sup>69</sup> The pamphlet calls on readers to produce “oyle of man” by masturbating to the pamphlet’s arousing content, but it also puts out a more socially cohesive call for men to return and “cure” women of their greensickness. Since the disorderly public actions and speech of the virgins, War, and the wives of the pamphlet are all perceived to be motivated by women’s unmet sexual needs, the call for male readers to perform sexually is a figurative call for men to return from the Wars and reassert control over women, thereby reasserting a patriarchal order disrupted by conflict between rival patriarchs. The virgins are less interested in proposing a solution to the conflicts between Charles I and the parliament, and more interested in convincing the gentlemen, tradesmen, and other middle-class men to give up their martial and political pursuits against one another and return to their duties as heads of household (duties which include satisfying their wives and fathering children).

The mock petitions of 1642-3, such as *The Resolution of Women of London to Parliament* and *The Mid-wives Just Petition*, adopt the petition format but share many of the tropes and jokes of *The Virgins Complaint* (1642). *The Resolution*, for instance, outlines women’s joy that husbands have gone to war because now that they are gone women may “drink, feast, and walk abroad; and if we have a mind to it, keepe and maintaine a friend, that upon occasion may doe us pleasure.”<sup>70</sup> Although these women petition parliament to continue rather than end

the war, they voice the same desire for perpetual sexual pleasure that the virgins did. *The Midwives Just Petition* (1643) reprises the sexualization of war, threatening that “wives may no longer spare their husbands to be devoured by the sword, but may keep them fast locked within their own loving armes day and night, perfecting their embraces in such a manner as is not to be expressed freely, but may be easily conceived by the strong fancy of any understanding women.”<sup>71</sup> Calling on the “strong fancy” of “understanding” women highlights the role fantasy plays in fleshing out the sexual innuendo of these mock petitions, and although the speakers appeal to female fantasy specifically, the pamphlet ultimately fulfills the patriarchal fantasy that women are preoccupied with sex to the exclusion of almost all other topics. Neither pamphlet adopts a clear political position, but both employ a sexualized, collective female persona to emphasize the disruptive effects of the Wars in London.

*The City-Dames Petition* likewise combines sexual fantasy with political commentary by using the collective female voice of city women to portray 1647 London as a sexual wasteland and constructing Caroline London, by contrast, as a place of unlimited sexual opportunity. *City-Dames* signals its porno-political nature first through the names of its “authors,” Mrs. L. Stradling, Ma. Lecher, Sa. Lovesick, P. Horne, Mrs. E. Overdooe, A. Troublesome, and others. Stradling et al. call for the Cavaliers’ return to London, hoping that they will bring back the riotous fun and loose morals London currently lacks. Despite its seemingly-

royalist position, however, the pamphlet is largely bi-partisan in its willingness to poke fun at both the Cavaliers for being oversexed gallants and at parliament by depicting it as a woman impregnated after “lying so long with the Commonwealth.”<sup>72</sup>

The city-dames<sup>73</sup> begin by raising seemingly legitimate concerns about the interruption of trade, the expense of the continuing war, and parliament’s accountability to Londoners, whose support fuelled the Second Civil War and who stand to lose the most should parliament be defeated.<sup>74</sup> As evidence to support their anti-war arguments, Stradling et al. provide narratives which juxtapose a lush atmosphere of excess and consumption before the war with desolate scenes of London emptied of its men. The city-dames’ shops, “which heretofore were fragrant as the springs first showers, occasioned by gallants frequent visits,” are now “like houses haunted with spirits,” they recount.<sup>75</sup> The city-dames likewise long for the days when “every Citizens wife of any quality, was occupied in her several vocation,” when their husbands might “freely take the aire, or go to their country houses, whilst we had those at our command to act their parts in the City, which was a good contentment (good soules) to them.”<sup>76</sup> The London described before the Civil Wars is a gallant’s fantasy and a husband’s nightmare, although within the fictional context of the narrative the city-dames assure the reader that the husbands are content to let their wives sleep with “those at [their] command,” be they their household servants or the nobles, knights, and

gentlemen customers who frequent their shops.<sup>77</sup> City-husbands, the dames write, are loath to “bee forced ... to work at night” and appreciate other men’s assistance in satisfying their wives.<sup>78</sup> While most historians would argue that the Civil Wars *produced* a golden age of sexual excess by triggering Charles II’s continental exile and the subsequent libertine culture of the Restoration, Stradling et al. argue that the Civil Wars spell the *end* of sexual libertinism and the beginning of a bleak, pleasure-less future. “But now the case is altered,” the city-dames complain, “let us have ever so good commodities not a chapman is left to cheapen, which will occasion a horrible inconvenience in time; we shall not have a sonne but of the City breed, borne with a what doe you lacke? In his mouth, or the issue of some fowle mouthed fellow.”<sup>79</sup> With the departure of their wealthy clientele, the city-dames see a future in which they will be reduced to intercourse with chapmen, who hawk goods with cries of “what doe you lacke?” They likewise predict that they will be cheapened as commodities (punning both on their social value as respectable wives and on the sense of ‘commodity’ as vagina), cheapened by the low birth of their sexual partners (as compared to the higher class suitors they had enjoyed before), and robbed of what upward social mobility they possessed as merchants’ wives.

Visions of a future generation of Londoners debased by foul-mouthed, noisy children might seem to provide a disincentive towards extramarital sexuality, although such visions are counteracted by a pro-sex fantasy of



widespread female sexual availability which asserts that women will always seek sexual intercourse, even when desirable partners are no longer available. Indeed, a future London emptied of socially and sexually desirable men seems like it would make a horrible setting for a pleasurable erotic fantasy *unless* its readers believed themselves to be part of that class of undesirable men and enjoyed imagining that wealthy women might soon find them irresistible. Since abstinence is never an option for these greensick faux-female petitioners, the absent Cavaliers and the parliament who will not let them return to London take the blame for failing this future, “City breed” generation. Without courtiers, knights, and merchants to father them, these children will not grasp the graces of masculine comportment but will instead conduct themselves in noisy, foul-mouthed ways. They might at worst behave as the authors believe socially inferior chapmen do, but the model of chapman behaviour the pamphlet presents also resonates as a depiction of men in parliament, who like chapmen talk noisily and publicly over one another. The City-bred sons will pose a threat to patriarchal order, as they will lack the fundamental qualities of deference, civility, and self-restraint which mark elite masculinity as a position of high social privilege. The return of elite men might avert such a future, but since by 1647 it is clear that many soldiers would never return from the wars, the corruption of English masculine stock seems inevitable. *The City-Dames Petition* therefore borrows a female voice *not* to challenge men’s

exclusive rights to positions of political power, but to lament the fact that after the wars there would *be* no suitable men to fill these positions.

*The Humble Petition of many Thousands of Wives and Matrons of the City of London*, which alludes to *The Virgins Complaint* and appeared at around the same time in February 1642, mobilizes this same argument that continued hostilities forestall the conception of an honourable generation of Englishmen. Unlike the 1647 *City-Dames Petition*, however, the *Thousands of Wives* petition hyper-sexualizes its speakers in far more subtle ways. The pamphlet begins by setting sex at distance from the argument at hand, invoking agricultural metaphors which serve as polite euphemisms rather than obscene descriptions in sentences like: “it is not unknowne to the whole kingdome of England ... that Wives are those who people and replenish the Common-wealth with inhabitants,” since “it is impossible, that fields alone without corne should bring forth fruit, or that corne should multiply without being cast into good ground: so it is impossible mankinde should be continued, or succession maintained, without the help of Wives.”<sup>80</sup> Sex obliquely referenced here guarantees the thousands of wives their stake in England’s political future and legitimizes their political voice through their future sons. The speakers challenge the “many malicious and ungracious reports cast upon us Women,” “all which aspersions we returne upon the vile and scandalous Authors, who in the height of their Wine have branded us with these ignominious calumnies.”<sup>81</sup> The wives engage in entertaining *ad hominem* arguments, opposing

misogynist invective by attacking the masculine virtue of the individual misogynists in question. Yet as the pamphlet continues, its tone shifts dramatically, as the wives explain that the “scandalous Authors” have defamed them “because we would not permit them to lime their twigs at our Plum-trees, nor to inoculate our stocks with their grafts.”<sup>82</sup> The speakers retain the agricultural metaphor, but they move from discussing conception, a pro-social expression of marital sexuality given that they speak as “wives,” to discussing adulterous sexual activity where specific words like “twigs” and “Plum-trees” stand in for genitalia. The reference to *The Virgins Complaint* on the title page suggests that *The Humble Petition* was not genuinely authored by women, but it experiments with a female perspective in ways that make it similar to female-authored petitions and similar to what the mock petition genre would become by 1647.

The fantasy of pre-war London that the thousands of wives present differs in some respects from that of the virgins or the city-dames in that it focuses on procreative sexuality, but the recurring ties between agricultural fertility, sexual fecundity, and prosperity turn Civil War London into the same recognizable wasteland without its men. The thousand wives lament that “wheras before the beginning of these wars, each of us good Wives, either by the due benevolence of our Husbands, or the charitable assistance of our friends, whome we respected in the nature of Husbands, could every yeare for the most part bring forth fruit in due season, without lying idle like fallow and untilled fields,” their husbands and

friends' departure means "we walk desolate like Widdowes, with our bellies flat."<sup>83</sup> The "common harlots" are still "having some customers" in "this dearth of mans flesh," but the wives are doomed to "wander" since "not one man among a hundred, since the departure of the Courtiers and Cavaliers ... hath so much honesty as to aske a married woman the question or offer his body to her service."<sup>84</sup> The wives paint a fantasy of pre-Civil War libertine life that resembles that of the city-dames but focuses on the sexual pleasures of London entertainments rather than the avenues for sexual trade offered by the city-dames' shops. The wives, like the city-dames, had husbands who provided stability and comfort and "friends" who "used with such pleasure to solace and recreate our [the wives's] bodies at Tavernes and other places, paying for our going in to playes, and installing us in triumph in the halfe crowne boxes."<sup>85</sup> The pamphlet idealizes a debauched vision of city life where wives are sexually available to anyone who can afford to entertain them, husbands are uninterested or unable to limit their wives' sexual availability, and children are celebrated and secure in the households they are born into regardless of paternity. In the Civil War present, where wives can find no desirable partners, they can only "be beholding to those who have the palsie in all their joynts, decrepid old men, that cannot lift up any part about us, nor stand at all to elevete our directions for paines and aches." Women must "in the meantime tyre our soules, and consume the flesh of our bodies within pinings and mental conception, such as may call to our

remembrance only to trouble our fancies,” meaning essentially that they must imagine or fantasize “the past banquets we used daily and nightly to taste, when as they say we eat sweet meats with spoones and rioted in dainties.”<sup>86</sup> Given the strong connection between producing food and producing offspring in the pamphlet, the “past banquets” the women conjure up take on connotations of sexual consumption and fertility, emphasizing the lush possibilities of sexual pleasure in the past, the base and unfruitful of sex in the present, and the impossibility of satisfying procreative sex in a future populated by the bastard children of common whores.

The petition concludes with the wives’ reflections on such a future should parliament not call an end to the Civil Wars. They fear that their husbands will die, but they also fear that if they “should lose these Husbands, that we shall not suddenly get new ones, for though we care not much for them, yet we know, according to the old Proverbe, *that seldome comes a better*, and therefore we should gladly rest ourselves contented with these we have.”<sup>87</sup> Here they express through their sexual relationships a broader social conservatism by asserting that they should hold on to their ‘husbands,’ key figures of top-down patriarchal order, even though they are discontented with them. They then suggest that

surely this taking away of our friends, whom we set in the first place and our Husbands from us, was a judgment of Heaven upon us for our sinnes and iniquities; for before, when each of us had a loving and kinde husband as ever laid leg over woman, we were not contented with them, but still

desired change... and so hath happened to us as to covetous wretches, who striving to increase their state lose all they had before.<sup>88</sup>

The end of *The Humble Petition* has the thousands of wives and matrons themselves taking the blame for the Civil Wars as a “divine judgement” on their failure to find satisfaction with their husbands. That they “desired change” in this context means that their desire for their husbands plus “a friend or two or three in a corner besides” has turned their paradise of entertainments into a fallen, barren place.

The pamphlet taps into traditional narratives of original sin to a clear political end. The notion of multiple male partners pleasuring a single woman undoes the patriarchal structure by which there should be a series of single rulers – husbands – ruling over a host of multiple dependents. Since the friends are explicitly the “Courtiers and Cavaliers” of London, they defy the so-called “natural” social hierarchy by dallying with women and vying against each other when they should be working to be or become heads of households. That the thousands of wives desired multiple *friends*, and not a single man to supplant a husband, also connotes a desire for either a decentralized male order where no single man possesses an ultimate authority or, perhaps more threateningly, a centralized female order where women command all of the economic and sexual resources of men. From either perspective, in desiring change the wives have in essence abandoned a monarchical system for a more republican model of

relations. If we see the wives as an analogy for parliament, which abandoned its marriage to the king so that it could enjoy the affections and entertainments of multiple partners, the pamphlet is making the political statement that parliament should not forsake the king to go searching for a “better” head of state who will not come. By ceding central authority and power to an admittedly less satisfying husband, England could have saved itself from Heaven’s judgement and enjoyed a feast of sexual delights.

Mock petitions such as these present fantasies of seeming sexual disorder as a means of theorizing equally unreal ideals of social and political order. Fantasies of sexual promiscuity before the Wars appear to signal order through their attention to fertility, male potency, and female discretion while wartime sexual starvation, bodily decay, and women’s public speech signal political disorder. If we read these mock petitions as royalist texts, we can observe the seemingly contradictory discourses of political conservatism and sexual libertinism co-mingling in the petitions’ nostalgia for a libertine Caroline period that will not come into recognizable existence until the Restoration. If we read these mock petitions as anti-royalist texts, however, we can also discern a fundamental discomfort with the excesses and abuses of elite urbanites which is displaced onto elite urban women in particular.

The particular mock-female petitions I have explored in this section satirize the petition genre by using it as a vehicle to provide a sexual fantasy of

urban life. But while the mock-petitions provide readers with a pleasurable sexual fantasy, I contend that they also provide a political fantasy that fulfills the ideological needs of the patriarchal order it appears to be satirizing. The petition, as a genre which seeks to influence the future by motivating those in positions of power to take particular action, provides a glimpse into the kinds of political fantasies sparked specifically by the breakdown of the existing political hierarchy between king and parliament. As Suzuki writes in the introduction to *Subordinate Subjects*, “more than a century before the French Revolution, the petitions by apprentices and women in England give expression – however inchoate – for perhaps the first time to an egalitarian imaginary and democratic pluralism. By the very act of petitioning, both groups were claiming political rights they did not possess.”<sup>89</sup> These porno-political petitions mock genuine female-led petitions, but they do not primarily attack women’s imagined political right to protest. Instead, mock petitions often end up curiously validating female protest by empowering female voices as vehicles for other political messages which are quite separate from the original messages of the petitions they mock. Where female-authored petitions typically give an account of past and present social disorder, violence, and sin as a means of convincing parliament to take measures to ensure an ordered, peaceful, and virtuous future, mock petitions by contrast imagine an idealized past marked by excessive and often immoral pleasures and petition for a restoration of this former time. From a modern vantage point, the future presented



by the mock petitions seems closest to the eventual outcome of the Civil Wars. With Charles II's restoration, libertine culture flourished in England and made possible the sexual freedom and luxury consumption the mock petitioners wanted. Ironically, the mock petitions' political message seems to prompt a reader to reject the obviously-faux-petitioners, who parody femininity rather than pass as female petitioners, and to reject their debauched fantasy of pre-war London, no matter how enjoyable it might seem. In recognizing the mock petitions as drag performances and as fantasies of extramarital, non-reproductive sexual relations which would have disastrous consequences if realized, readers are meant to reject radical attempts to reform the English political system and to embrace pre-war patriarchal hierarchy. Yet in satirizing populist female activism, mock-petitions seem to have hit almost by accident on a vein of politically conservative yet liberal fantasy of what London life might offer.

### **Female Parliaments and the Second Civil War**

Suzuki observes two distinct phases in women's active Civil War petitioning, one in 1642 when women "joined the general petitioning against the decay of trade and against episcopacy" and a second phase in 1648-9 when "Leveller women petitioned against the imprisonment of their leaders."<sup>90</sup> Mock petitions, ranging from c. 1642 to 1647, respond to the first phase of female

petitioning. The second phase of petitioning, which reflects the growing influence and importance of the reformist Leveller movement in London, coincides with a series of texts published in late 1647-8 which critique parliament by feminizing it in personified form or by feminizing its members.<sup>91</sup> In this subsection of my chapter, I read first the *Mistris Parliament* series of 1648 and then Henry Neville's *A Parliament of Ladies* (1647) to explore how portrayals of parliament as a promiscuous woman and of a parliament composed of disorderly women (respectively) operate as a means of both political critique and patriarchal fantasy.<sup>92</sup> While imagining the parliament of England as a sexualized woman turns a disparate, abstract political body in flux into a knowable voice easily critiqued and dismissed, the feminizing of parliament also reifies masculinity as the 'naturally' dominant gender by demonstrating that it was not the patriarchal institutions which failed. Rather, it was the men who temporarily occupied those institutions who failed to live up to a properly masculine ideal. By giving parliament the persona of a lustful woman, satirists were able to critique the men who held positions of power in England without critiquing the patriarchal system which reserved these positions of power for elite men.

The *Mistris Parliament* series consists of five pamphlets published in May-June<sup>93</sup> of 1648 which present in dialogue form the story of how a pregnant Mrs. Parliament gives birth to a monster attended by the personified Mrs. London, Mrs. Truth, Mrs. Sedition, Mrs. Synod, etc. The series coincided with a

particularly tumultuous moment near the conclusion of the Second Civil War. In the five-week span of the pamphlets' publication, parliament's army resolved at a general meeting to "call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for the blood he had shed,"<sup>94</sup> 2,000 men petitioned parliament to restore King Charles I, carrying with them over 30,000 signatures in one of the largest organized protests of the period, and rioting led by royalist agitators broke out in Kent, reaching the outskirts of London.<sup>95</sup> Thomas Fairfax (army commander-in-chief) successfully quelled the Kentish uprising by early June before it reached London, but in light of parliament's fears that London might also rise against them should petitioners and agitators flood into the city, parliament sealed London off from the rest of the country, blocking off the London bridge and cancelling ferry services.<sup>96</sup> Royalist propaganda, including royalist satires like the *Mistris Parliament* series, therefore capitalized on a volatile moment in the spring of 1648 when it looked like the tide might turn in favour of the royalist forces.

As royalist propaganda, the series represents parliament as a woman in order to insult its members and attack their masculinity. The first pamphlet, *Mistris Parliament Brought to Bed of a Monstrous Childe of Reformation*, introduces Mrs. Parliament as "a Gentlewoman of "quality and breeding" now "to be despised by every sause-boxe boy, and loose fellow to make Rimes as they call them, and sing-songs of her, making of her a Whore."<sup>97</sup> Parliament, the Nurse recounts, has "imprisoned her Husband" (referring to Charles I, who was

imprisoned on the Isle of Wight), “prostituted her body to a very Eunuch, that had nothing to help himself with at all,” “followed the Camp,” and has since “turn’d up her tayle to every lowsy Ill-dependent Rascall in the Army; Sir Thomas [Fairfax] himself and king Cromwall too, a very Town-Bull, and committed flat fornication with Broom-men, Tinkers, and Channell-rakers.”<sup>98</sup> The fantasy of an adulterous, indiscriminate parliament willing to couple with the lowest of the low in English society conveys the long parliament’s disorderly conduct in an entertaining and embarrassing way.

John Crouch, the likely author of the pseudonymous *Mistris Parliament* series, uses sexual promiscuity as a means of theorizing the political problems of polyvocality within the English Parliament. In 1648 Presbyterian MPs still struggled against the army-supported Independents, the House of Lords struggled against the House of Commons only to see most of their members purged, and the Leveller movement created factions and divides within the army-Independent groups over proposed reforms. The fantasy of parliament as a female body turns a body composed of men at odds with one another into a unitary body. Imagining parliament as female and pregnant emphasizes not only that parliament should obey the king but that parliament should be a vessel to nurture the king’s policies. Parliament should, in the traditional family-state analogy, be governed and impregnated by her husband, which makes her promiscuity a comment on the lack

of a central, guiding direction among the parliament of England's actual policy makers.

Turning the parliament of England into a promiscuous woman therefore serves to turn a disparate political body into a single, flawed entity in possession of a conscience and able to be held accountable for crimes and sins committed. Indeed, once the Nurse has recounted Mrs. Parliament's sexual deviance the pamphlet shifts away from the celebration of Mrs. Parliament's sexual exploits to the punishment she receives in the form of a monstrous child. The Nurse calls in Mrs. London as a midwife, but London refuses to help, cursing Mrs. Parliament to "languish still" and bring forth "the bastard Issue of thy own Lust thy own self, which was begot in obscenity."<sup>99</sup> Mrs. Parliament confesses her sins and begs for London's prayers as she enters labour, but she still delivers a monster by the pamphlet's end. Purkiss analyzes this pamphlet at length in her consideration of monstrous birth narratives published during the Civil War period, arguing that Mrs. Parliament's monstrous birth "symbolises and enacts the troubled state of the kingdom."<sup>100</sup> Mrs. Parliament not only gives birth to a monster at the end of the pamphlet, she also spends much of her labour vomiting up foul-smelling signs of her sins, from the gold she received for selling out her God, King, and soul, to "the accused Declaration against [her] King,"<sup>101</sup> to the "innocent blood" of those high ranking officials parliament sentenced to death.<sup>102</sup> As Purkiss observes, "Mrs. Parliament's extrusion of the horrors within her positions the female body

as cause of and sign for disorderly rule, and the loathsome smells and pollutions she emits are signs of political as well as physical corruption.”<sup>103</sup> The monstrous child itself has “a deformed shape without a head,” “great goggle eyes,” “bloody hands growing out of both sides of its devouring panch,” and the feet of a “Beare.”<sup>104</sup> We learn in a later pamphlet that this monster grows up to become “Ordinance,” an allegorization of the bureaucratic tool through which parliament exerted its power over England.

While for Purkiss the monster “substitutes for a more unsettling display of the open female body itself,” we can add further dimension to Purkiss’s reading by exploring the political implications of the monster’s features. The monster’s headlessness alludes to the king’s unnatural absence in state affairs by playing off the allegory of the body as a state where the ruler should be the head. The monster’s mix of animal features also suggests that it is the product of multiple fathers. The nurse’s account of Mrs. Parliament’s sexual adventures makes the possibility of multiple fathers seem credible, but we might also remember that parliament’s body allegorizes multiple men, so that the monster’s cross-speciation might reflect the internal multiplicities within parliament herself. That the monster is born headless further demonstrates that a polyvocal body made up of men vying for control of parliament can only produce corrupted instruments of power which lack vision, leadership, and decisiveness. The class differences between the men Mrs. Parliament associates with – from her royal husband to base tinkers and

channel rakers – likewise serve to make parliament’s claims to represent the people of England seem dangerous, as if any man in England might use the parliament as a vessel to bring his own political aims to fruition. Parliament’s “sexual unruliness,” Purkiss argues, “is crucial for the royalist politics of the dialogues,” as “Mistress Parliament’s adulterousness reinstates the notion that social order is dependent on female fidelity to the husband; as in the monster pamphlets, a monstrous swerve away from reproduction is the consequence of a feminine instability that refuses its proper role of container or receptacle for the agency of man.”<sup>105</sup> We might add that the allegorization of parliament *as* a receptacle for the agency of man is an equally political statement about the nature of ordered, patriarchal rule.

Although the pamphlet focuses on condemning and punishing Mrs. Parliament to promote royalist rebellion in London, representing parliament as a woman also surprisingly enables readers to idealize parliament’s potential purity. As an institution given a single voice and soul, Mrs. Parliament can confess, suffer, and be redeemed in the pamphlet in ways that parliament as an institution cannot be. Further, giving parliament a single, female voice also enables the fantasy that parliament actually *is* a body capable of making reasonable choices and behaving like an individual when in reality parliament is the sum of a collection of individual opinions and agendas. Extracting grandees like Fairfax and Cromwell as independent agents and possible fathers of the monster, when

they should logically have been subsumed within parliament's body of her 'Army' suitor, also makes it possible to blame individual members for parliament's decisions rather than blame the faceless institution itself.

While John Crouch depicts parliament as an unruly woman's body, Henry Neville depicts parliament as a body of unruly women in *A Parliament of Ladies* (1647), illustrating that there was more than one move to feminize parliament in response to the political uncertainty of 1647-8. *A Parliament of Ladies* critiques parliamentary process and mocks the long parliament by demonstrating how easily MPs can overstep the bounds of their traditional role and get carried away by endlessly re-imagining how to reform the state. Set in ancient Rome, and inspired perhaps by Aristophanes's play *Assemblywomen*, Neville's narrative begins with a young boy named Papirium returning from a day at the senate with his father. When the boy's mother asks him what decisions the senate made that day, the boy, "apprehending" that he was "not to reveal" senate affairs to those not allowed to enter the exclusively male space, "remained silent."<sup>106</sup> "[B]ut his mother," the narrator continues, "importuning him, and threatening him, with the rod, that unless he would acquaint her with all their proceedings, she would whip him soundly," forces Papirium to tell his mother something of the senate's proceedings.<sup>107</sup> The boy lies to his mother about what the senators resolved, fearful of the "prejudice that might happen, if he should have revealed the Secrets of the Senate."<sup>108</sup> To preserve his masculine power by containing the secret while



his mother attempts to assert her parental power over him by beating it out of him, Papirium tells his mother “that they had made a Decree, and establish it, that it should be lawfull for every man to have two Wives.”<sup>109</sup> Caught between masculine privilege and youthful vulnerability, he invents a statute legalizing polygamy that would undermine the hierarchical structure of the household by introducing multiple wives to destabilize his mother’s power.

To block the senate’s polygamy legislation, Papirium’s mother summons the women of Rome to her parlour and together they form their own female parliament to rival their husbands’ senate. The boy’s misinformation makes the female parliament’s radical re-imagination of patriarchal hierarchy possible, but it contains it as well by making the reader party to the knowledge that patriarchal hierarchy was never in any danger to begin with. The women’s arguments against polygamy, however, have discernible implications as a critique of the polyvocal politics of 1640s England, implications which reach beyond the narrative frame of the pamphlet. Initially, and to the sarcastic surprise of the unsympathetic narrator, the parliament of ladies seems orderly: “every one took their places according to their degrees: and which was a wonder among Women, they suffered one to speak at once.”<sup>110</sup> The problems the parliament of ladies identify with polygamy unfold in a likewise orderly fashion. The ladies agree that they do not oppose the measure out of sexual jealousy but on the grounds that it will be a waste of resources and will eliminate a wife’s ability to effectively manage her husband’s

household. As the mother of the boy says, “shall a man desire to have to have two Wives, that (alas) with all he can doe, can hardly please one? Nay, grant them to two, in time they will grow to ten, from ten to twenty, and then what a racket there would be, who should rule the Roast[sic]?”<sup>111</sup> Although the women have formed a parliament in order to concentrate their political voice and power, their arguments against polygamy ironically reveal their fears that their households will become polyvocal parliaments of wives, and that this will interfere with their ability to manage their households in peace. In order to prevent such parliaments and maintain their status as single, univocal forces within their households, they resolve to counter the senate’s bogus resolution by proposing that every woman have two or three husbands – exchanging polygamy for polyandry.

The move to create parliaments of husbands accountable to a single wife seems like an inelegant solution to the problems of noise and disorder they assert that polygamy will raise. But the switch to polyandry neatly emphasizes the gender reversal that informs the humour of the pamphlet in ways that a steadfast defence of heterosexual monogamy would not. While up to this point the ladies pass more or less as believable women, at this point the characters begin to slip into parodic drag. Individual lines within the pamphlet, such as “we have tongues to tell our own Tales, and our Tales shall be heard and handled” capture the sexually explicit, parodic strategy of the pamphlet, which is to mix sincere-sounding proto-feminist rhetoric with sexual puns that undercut women’s

credibility and sincerity – essentially putting the sexualized female voice into the mouths of the imagined proto-feminists.<sup>112</sup> The misogynistic joke at the heart of the pamphlet is not that the women believe the boy's lie, however; it is that they believe that the answer to the boy's mother's question of "who should rule the Roast" is the wife, when most patriarchal authorities would answer that while a wife rules a household, a husband ultimately rules over a wife. Believing that their husbands have abused their power in the senate to threaten family stability, the parliament of ladies extrapolates a new vision of what society might look like if multiple men were to serve women. By re-envisioning the fundamental structure of marriage, even if they have been provoked to do so through false information, the parliament of ladies stands in for the parliament of England, which likewise had to imagine a new world order after it broke its traditional union with the king.

Initially the parliament of ladies in the pamphlet is a model of univocality, decisive action, and order. Class lines are clearly drawn between higher and lower houses, but every woman seems content to maintain the hierarchies between them that govern social action outside parliament for the sake of their common cause. The parliamentary decorum lasts until they have resolved to replace polygamy with polyandry and exchange patriarchy for matriarchy, but once they have agreed on this course of action and begin to "consult" on how they will enact laws to "rest the power in men for wrongdoing their wives, that thence forward they might live in more ease, pride, pomp, and liberty," decorum gives way to a series

of frivolous, tangential, and sexually explicit arguments and personal narratives.<sup>113</sup> Elenor Ever-crosse requests that a “Law might be made, that no woman should suffer her selfe to be thumpt but as she ought to be,” blending a call for stronger laws against domestic abuse with a tacit encouragement of sexual violence.<sup>114</sup> Dorothy Doe-little “hold[s] it requisite also, that every woman of sense should take delight to please her eye with the most curious objects, either of such pictures as we like, or such men as we love,” making men the objects of sexual exchange.<sup>115</sup> Bridget Boldface imagines reversing the typical operation of *couverture* by which wives exist as their husband’s property by arguing that “If the Husbands be ours, then their goods are ours, their Lands ours, their Cash and Coyne ours” to use in establishing comfortable lives for themselves at home while their husbands work. “Why, when they be prodigall abroad,” Boldface says, “should we be penurious at home? Nay, let us eat good fare, keepe good fires, want nothing.”<sup>116</sup> Women seek to invert the patriarchal hierarchy on all points, imagining a legal system which makes male pleasure secondary to female pleasure, but in each case the ladies of the parliament seek power to abuse it. The members of the parliament of ladies concern themselves with consumption, leisure, and luxury at the expense of their husbands and in this way set themselves up to seem more exploitative than their husbands because of the perceived unnaturalness of their position on top.

The women's ability to gather and share common stories of spousal oppression and abuse provides them with a unifying sense of empowerment that enables their political voice. But the parliament of ladies, like the long parliament, fractures along class lines once they confront the source of their unifying resentment. As consultation on the laws of the new matriarchy continues, Rachel Rattlebooby longs for silk gowns and satin petticoats that her husband cannot provide (and which sumptuary laws may prohibit her from wearing given that her husband says they are "above my Calling").<sup>117</sup> Rattlebooby proposes that if a woman should marry a second man above her station, she and her husband should gain the status of this second husband.<sup>118</sup> At this proposal, the members disagree loudly. Neville writes that "some were unwilling that it should passe, yet the major part were so fully bent, that it was set downe by the she-Scrivener in Paper, and after in Parchment, to be endorsed."<sup>119</sup> This unleashes more dissent and discussion of a particularly graphic nature concerning how women might use men for sex, support, and comfort until finally the narrator recounts that the "general silence" grew "to a mere confusion: for the rest having much matter to utter, some got up to the tongues end & had not the patience to stay the time, and take their turns: but all of these who had not yet spoke, tumultuously breaking out into clamour, every one desiring to be heard first, and the more they were heard, the less they were understood."<sup>120</sup> Papirium's mother finally calls for silence, the session concludes, and the articles are agreed on, but in setting out for the senate

house the narrator specifies that they have “no common pace.” The parliament then comes face to face with a puzzled and “amazed” senate, which, upon discovering “how all this business came about” through Papirium’s mother, dismisses the women completely: “some laught, some lowred, some reserved for pleasure, to others for perplexity; but in conclusion, they greatly condemned their wives levity and inconstancie, but indulgently commended the Lads silence and taciturnity.”<sup>121</sup> Revealing Papirium’s deception restores order by making the very premise of the parliament of ladies’s claim to power unsound.

The joke of *A Parliament of Ladies* seems on the surface to be that the women of Rome delude themselves into thinking they can invert patriarchal hierarchy and assert their own superiority over their husbands. Their predictable failure reaffirms the patriarchal distribution of power and maintains the status quo in that regard. In so far as the parliament of ladies operates as an allegory for the long parliament, however, Neville accomplishes a complex critique of parliament’s intentions to make England a more efficient and equitable place in light of its limitations as a polyvocal assembly of individuals across social classes. Both parliaments are capable of finding common ground in uniting against their perceived oppressor, but both suffer from an inability to maintain a consensus and from deep-rooted class distinctions which make it impossible for them ultimately to re-imagine a political world without oppression. Whether the husbands in the senate *are* the ideal rulers of Rome seems ancillary to the point the pamphlet

makes that a parliament of ladies, like parliaments in general, provides no feasible alternative to the traditional institutions of power it attempts to replace.

That Neville couches this social commentary in bawdy stories of women seeking multiple sexual partners speaks perhaps to the powers of fantasy, like festive drag performance, to provide a safe space for radical re-imaginings of the status quo. In the end, the joke may be that the long parliament is so like the parliament of ladies that the Roundheads might as well be women themselves, usurping positions of power that rightly belong to a higher male authority (the king and his appointed councillors). Or, perhaps more cynically, the joke may be that despite the good intentions of its members, a republican system of government which attempts to represent and serve all segments of its populace will inevitably sap the masculine authority from its members until they become noisy, boisterous, and dismissible (i.e., feminine). Although the parliament of ladies disbands as quickly as it was founded, the pamphlet itself had a long life, reappearing twice before the Restoration and once again during the exclusion crisis of the 1680s. The pamphlet's ability to safely critique parliamentary procedure, and in particular its ability to demonstrate the consequences of a parliament which gets so carried away with itself that it oversteps its assigned boundaries (as parliament arguably did in 1680 by demanding that Charles II remove his Catholic brother from the line of succession), may have served as a convenient means of venting frustrations during times of acute political crisis.

Ultimately, to depict parliament as a woman was, first and foremost, to bring attention to the masculine failings of its MPs by criticizing their ability to act and govern in decisive, rational ways. To depict parliament as a promiscuous woman constantly seeking sexual satisfaction outside “her” allegorical marriage to the king was to level the charge of whore against her, making her disorderly, problematically public, and transgressive. As Turner argues in *Libertines and Radicals*, the mid-seventeenth century “whore” operates as a cultural idea “confronted (and constituted)” by a set of “ritualized insults” which make the whore “at once definitely *low* and fluidly unclassifiable... leaky in every sense, unruly because outside the marital or parental control of one man, ribald, coarse, lacking the restraints required by the increasingly self-conscious Civilizing Process, loose-mouthed as well as open flapped,” and so on.<sup>122</sup> “*Whore* is a fighting word,” Turner writes, “a cutting remark,” and although he specifies that it cuts through “the exterior shell of honour and good fame that every citizen needed to maintain her social standing,” he also refers quite literally to the practice of slashing the faces of accused whores and prostitutes.<sup>123</sup> For Turner the graphic marking of “whores” functions as the root of all *pornographia*, as pornography in the modern sense seeks to “pry open or cut into” a woman’s “respectable exterior, to reveal the expected story of sexual exposure and conquest.”<sup>124</sup> Thus, to call parliament a whore was more than an allegorical or political critique; it was a



means of conjuring a figurative body for an immaterial institution so that that body might be shamed, punished, and otherwise disciplined.

## **Conclusion**

The sexualized female persona in satirical 1640s pamphlets does not reflect women's or men's reactions to the political crises of the 1640s. Other avenues, like petitions, pamphlets, newsbooks, and letters were available for those with opinions to express. Instead, these satirical works adopt pseudo-female perspectives that defy credulity in their outspoken wantonness, inviting the reader to read them as parodies of female texts and/or as grotesque drag performances of feminine behaviour. Porno-political discourse certainly engaged with the political issues of its immediate context, but as I have demonstrated throughout this chapter the pseudonymous female persona served as a site onto which authors could displace their frustrations with the current male elite without challenging patriarchal institutions like parliament, the monarchy, and the heterosexual, monogamous family. If the Civil Wars debased the militaristic ideal of masculinity through the unprecedented scale of their violence, and challenged the civic ideal of masculinity by exposing the ineffective squabbling of its political leaders, the ideal of the male head of his own household remained as the symbolic refuge of patriarchal privilege. After 1649, in the years leading up to the

Protectorate, soldiers (who exerted their force against parliament to agitate for arrears and religious reform) and MPs (who were refusing to disband parliament and call new elections) seemed increasingly corrupt and threatening. The male householder's responsibilities – to maintain order in his domain, protect his dependents, and impregnate his wife – proved to be a far more manageable means of communicating, maintaining, and reinforcing patriarchal hierarchy in the midst of radical political reform. The chaotic landscapes of porno-political fantasy, from non-existent libertine pasts, to present sexual wastelands, to polyandrous futures, all attempt to re-envision the interrupted Caroline period in ways which maximize antisocial (that is to say non-marital and non-procreative) sexual pleasure. As porno-political discourse, however, these antisocial fantasies are in constant tension with their pro-social antithesis, which is the preservation of the sexual and political status quo through the patriarchal institution of marriage. The sexualized female persona, who comes to embody radical political reform in most of the texts I have explored in this chapter, encourages readers to reject that political reform as ultimately antisocial and to choose a return to marriage and patriarchal hierarchy instead. As Jennifer Drouin argues, drag performances, although they flout gender norms, are not necessarily as subversive as passing when their gender transgression takes place within a proscribed time and space.<sup>125</sup> The parodic nature of the female personae and institutions I explored in this chapter exist, like drag, in a festive, fantasy-laden context that allows them to critique their social

landscape and explore alternatives without seriously committing to any kind of permanent reform.

Although porno-political discourse tends, thus, to be royalist and socially conservative, it can be unexpectedly radical too at times in its willingness to attack the manhood of the parliamentarian male elite. The lustful mock petitioners, Mrs. Parliament, and the parliament of ladies may have been intended to shock and horrify readers at the prospect of a total collapse of patriarchal hierarchy, but as extrapolated fantasies of a world devoid of safe, authoritative patriarchal figures they nevertheless imagine radical alternatives to patriarchal hierarchy which enable at least a measure of critique of that patriarchal system.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Vaught, *Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern English Literature*, 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> Purkiss, *Literature, Gender, and Politics During the English Civil War*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> See Wiseman, “‘Adam, the Father of All Flesh’: Porno-Political Rhetoric and Political Theory in and After the English Civil War.” For more recent analyses of pornography as an early modern discourse, see the introductions of Ian Frederick Moulton’s *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* and Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-Century England*. Pornography, Moulton and Toulalan demonstrate, was not a distinct genre before the eighteenth-century and explicit representations of sexuality existed most commonly alongside content we would associate with other genres like political satire. In writing about seventeenth-century texts, then, the hybridity of the term “porno-political” serves as a key reminder that the pamphlets I analyze could be both erotically affecting and politically rousing.

<sup>6</sup> The extent to which individual subjects at all levels of society felt invested in divine right rule cannot be accurately gauged, since to challenge the divinely appointed status of the king publicly would have attracted grave consequences. Clues to enduring investment in the idea of the king's divine status, however, appear in parliament's insistence up until the Second Civil War that the king's councillors bear all responsibility for the king's unpopular decisions, a stance which maintains the king's perfection and attributes his corruption to the lower men who surround him. Parliament's initial demands were that the king's power be limited but that the political hierarchy itself remain largely unchanged.

<sup>7</sup> Several taxonomies compete to define the 1638-52 period, the drawbacks of which are a frequent source of debate among historians who find that the term "English Civil War" oversimplifies an uneven decade of hostilities and peace negotiations that extended well beyond England and into Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. For the purposes of this chapter, which focuses on texts published in London in the early 1640s and 1648 respectively, I have opted to define the period in terms of a First Civil War (which began in the summer of 1642 with the first violent clash between the king and the fleet at Hull, after years of rising hostility between the king and the parliament) and a Second Civil War (which began in December of 1647 when the peace negotiations that followed the King's surrender at the end of the First Civil War stalled and the King renewed his royalist force with Scottish backing).

<sup>8</sup> See Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics, and Literary Culture, 1630-1685*, 78. Turner does read pornographic satire of the 1640s-1680s more generally as "a deliberate attempt to confront and neutralize women's efforts to establish their own institutions – an attempt that frequently unravels, either by paying an unintended tribute to women's achievement, or by feminizing the norms that supposedly serve as a touchstone" (xiii).

<sup>9</sup> Wayne, 236.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 237.

<sup>11</sup> Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama*, 213.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 215.

<sup>13</sup> MacInnes, *The British Revolution, 1629-1660*, 75.

<sup>14</sup> As Braddick notes, "Doing without Parliament was not in itself a violation of constitutional principle. The institution had no continuous existence, but was an assembly called at the royal will for a particular purpose .... Parliaments could provide money (only parliaments could grant taxation) and legislation. They might also offer counsel on the basis of wide knowledge of the affairs of the kingdom, and give voice to the grievances of the subjects, asking for redress from

the monarch.” See *God’s Fury England’s Fire*, 56.

<sup>15</sup> Ng, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Although members of parliament were elected, parliament was by design not economically or socially representative of the English population as a whole. The electorate was expanding in the 1640s, as the minimum property requirement became more attainable, but Braddick estimates that perhaps “only one in three adult males had the right to vote in 1640” (56).

<sup>17</sup> See Kyle, “Prince Charles in the Parliaments of 1621 and 1624.” As Kyle writes, Charles had by his ascension “become an experienced parliament-man” and had “promoted some of the more important bills in the period,” but had also used parliament “as his own forum to achieve his personal aims. In essence, in manipulating parliament on a variety of levels – elections, legislation, grand political designs, and in the removal of those opposed to his policies – Charles had shown the highest court in the land little respect. He treated it simply as an instrument of his own ‘personal rule’ and perhaps therein set the pattern for the later 1620s” (621).

<sup>18</sup> See Young, “Charles I and the Erosion of Trust, 1625-1628.”

<sup>19</sup> Ultimately Charles abandoned negotiations with both sides in favour of striking at parliament again with the backing of the Scottish army and triggering the Second Civil War.

<sup>20</sup> Purkiss, *Literature, Gender, and Politics*, 136.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-3.

<sup>22</sup> Turner’s books *Libertines and Radicals* and *Schooling Sex: Libertine Literature and Erotic Education in Italy, France, and England 1534-1685* devote considerable attention to gender and sexuality in libertine culture.

<sup>23</sup> Skerpan, *The Rhetoric of Politics in the English Revolution 1642-1660*, 38.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. The rump parliament was formed after Colonel Pride’s Purge in December of 1648. Soldiers forcibly prevented MPs of the Presbyterian faction from taking their seats in the house, putting the Independent, Army-backed faction in control.

<sup>26</sup> Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*, 70.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> I borrow this term from Mihoko Suzuki’s *Subordinate Subjects*.

<sup>30</sup> See Katharine Gillespie’s *Domesticity and Dissent in the Seventeenth Century: English Women Writers and the Public Sphere* and Phyllis Mack’s *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England*.

<sup>31</sup> See Marcus Nevitt’s *Women and the Pamphlet Culture of Revolutionary England*, esp p.5.

<sup>32</sup> Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, 39.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. An account of staff breaking appears in a 1642 newsbook, *Divrnull Occvrrnces, Or, the Heads of the Proceedings in both Houses of Parliament*. See Raymond, *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England: 1641-1660*, 43.

<sup>34</sup> Raymond, 133. Raymond cites *Mercurius Civicus* 11, 3-11 August, 1643 in *Making the News*.

<sup>35</sup> As Raymond writes in *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649*, newsbooks developed “relatively explicit political allegiances” within the first years of their existence (1641-2) and although they “retain[ed] pretensions to the language of objectivity” in the early years of the First Civil War, sectarianism and sensationalism increased once newsbooks began to compete with one another for increased market share (25).

<sup>36</sup> Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, xiii.

<sup>38</sup> In general, we can reliably distinguish genuine petitions from mock petitions based on the presence of publication information in the former, but we cannot reliably know the gender of the authors of either genre. The question of how female petitions were written and whether such petitions were collaborative has yet to be studied in depth, but Andrea Button argues that royalist women petitioning parliament individually for the pardon of their husbands or for their subsistence as widows may have relied on royalist, Anglican clergy members as advisors, editors, and perhaps ghostwriters. See Button, “Royalist Women Petitioners in South-West England.”

<sup>39</sup> *Early English Books Online* dates the pamphlet to 1642, the date printed on the title page, but an annotation next to the printer’s date reads 1641 rather than 1642 and the ‘2’ in the printer’s date has been crossed out. The annotation may be Thomason’s, as this is one of the many ephemeral pamphlets in his expansive collection.

<sup>40</sup> Anon, “The Humble Petition of Many Hundreds of Distressed Women, Tradesmens Wives, and Widdowes,” 10.

<sup>41</sup> Critics debate whether the rhetoric of obligation and reluctance female petitioners use is a ritualized trope, is designed to legitimize a petition by making its petitioners seem less transgressive, or reflects women’s acceptance of their subordinate position. I support Suzuki’s claim that “while scholars largely focus on the *rhetoric* of the petitions, arguing that women still accepted their subordinate status as wives, I will suggest that ... the women’s use of the *form* of the petition in making and publishing their demands as subalterns belies their rhetoric of deference and indicates that they did not necessarily acquiesce to the position of wives included in the political person of their husbands,” *Subordinate*

*Subjects*, 145.

<sup>42</sup> “The Humble Petition of Divers Well-affected Women,” 10.

<sup>43</sup> The war in question is not the First Civil War but the Irish Rebellion which began when Ireland’s Catholic gentry organized an uprising against Protestant settlers in Ireland.

<sup>44</sup> Smith, Suzuki, and Wiseman, “A True Copie of the Petition of the Gentlewomen, and Tradesmens-wives in and about the City of London,” 13.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> These words are italicized in the original so as to distinguish them as narration. I have un-italicized them here.

<sup>50</sup> Smith, Suzuki, and Wiseman, 16.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>52</sup> Nevitt, 166.

<sup>53</sup> Braddick, 125-7. As Braddick notes, Pym in the early years of the long parliament “was a significant but not quite dominant figure.... His views were compelling, but not universally held,” 126.

<sup>54</sup> Petitions by Leveller women in particular show that women’s claims to political agency intensified over the 1640s. In “The Humble Petition of Divers Well-affected Women,” the petitioners ask the House of Commons “can you imagine us to be so sottish or stupid, as not to perceive, nor to be sencible when dayly those strong defences of our Peace and welfare are broken down,” and “[w]ould you have us keep at home in our houses when men of such faithfulness and integrity... are fetcht out of their beds and forced from their Houses by Souldiers?” (36).

<sup>55</sup> Nevitt, 167.

<sup>56</sup> Wall, *The Imprint of Gender*, 251.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>58</sup> For convenience, and lacking any information concerning the authorship of *The Virgin’s Complaint*, I will from this point forward refer to “the virgins” as the speaker/authors of the pamphlet although male authorship seems likely.

<sup>59</sup> Anon., *The Virgins Complaint*, 2.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 2-3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>63</sup> These words appear in the full title of the pamphlet: *The Virgins Complaint for the loss of their Sweet-Hearts by these Present Wars, And their owne long solitude, and keeping their Virginities against their Wills*.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. A version of this argument also appears in a 1642 mock petition, *The Humble Petition of many Thousands of Wives and Matrons of the City of London*.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Anon., *The Resolution of the Women of London to Parliament*, A2r.

<sup>71</sup> Anon., *The Mid-wives just petition*, A2v.

<sup>72</sup> Stradling et al., *The City-Dames Petition in The behalfe of the long afflicted, but well-affected Cavaliers*, 4.

<sup>73</sup> I refer to the city-dames as the authors for the sake of convenience, since the authors are unknown, but note that the “city-dames” of the pamphlet likely do not represent the perspective or experiences of women living in London in 1647.

<sup>74</sup> Stradling et al. get at this point through a series of trenchant rhetorical questions, demonstrating that while much of this mock petition works to entertain its readers with sexual situations and sexual puns, mock petitions are simultaneously serious engagements with the political culture of their day.

Stradling et al. write that “in justice we ought to have our desires answered in some measure, for who paid for the Scots (those beggarly Saints) after they were invited to begin this warre, but the City? Who continued this warre but the City? Or who are like to be undone by this war but the City?” *The City-Dames Petition*, 2. The claims the pamphlet makes about London’s importance are not overstated and the authors’ frustrations at parliament’s failure to bring the conflict to a resolution are palpable.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Anon., *The Humble Petition of Many Thousands of Wives and Matrons of the City of London*, A2r-v. Thomason dates this pamphlet ‘Feb 4 1642’, although the printer dates it 1643.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, A2v.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, A3r.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, A3v.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, A3r-v.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, A4r.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.



<sup>89</sup> Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects*, 2.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>91</sup> The Leveller movement was very influential in London and within the New Model Army in 1648, and successfully pressured the Independent faction of parliament to break from the presbyterian faction within parliament and negotiate separately with Charles I in the aftermath of the second Civil War. Levellers sought to make both the king and parliament more accountable to the people of London and advocated for religious tolerance.

<sup>92</sup> Variations on this pamphlet were published in 1647, including an anonymous, undated pamphlet entitled *An Exact Diurnall of the Parliament of Ladyes* which parodies a newsbook format. The pamphlet I examine in depth is Henry Neville's, which models its plot on Aristophanes's comedy, *Assemblywomen*.

<sup>93</sup> I use Thomason's annotations to date these pamphlets.

<sup>94</sup> qtd in Kennedy, *The English Revolution 1642-1649*, 99.

<sup>95</sup> Bennett, *The Civil Wars in Britain and Ireland 1638-1651*, 299.

<sup>96</sup> Kennedy, 105.

<sup>97</sup> Melancholicus [pseud.], *Mistris Parliament Brought to Bed of a Monstrous Childe of Reformation*, 4. The *Mistris Parliament* series was published under the pseudonym Mercurius Melancholicus. John Crouch and John Hakluyt both wrote newsbooks and pamphlets under the pseudonym 'Mercurius Melancholicus', but Crouch is believed to have written the *Mistris Parliament* series. Crouch was a Smithfield bookseller and writer who wrote multiple anti-puritan satires and royalist newsbooks. The name Mercurius Melancholicus parodies the titles of the more legitimate newsbooks, *Mercurius Britannicus* and *Mercurius Civicus*.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Purkiss, *Literature, Gender, and Politics*, 182.

<sup>101</sup> Melancholicus [pseud.], *Mistris Parliament Brought to Bed*, 5.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>103</sup> Purkiss, *Literature, Gender, and Politics*, 182.

<sup>104</sup> Melancholicus [pseud.], *Mistris Parliament Brought to Bed*, 8.

<sup>105</sup> Purkiss, *Literature, Gender, and Politics*, 182-3.

<sup>106</sup> Neville, *A Parliament of Ladies*, A2r.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, A2v.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, A4r.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, B1r.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, B1v.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, B2v.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, B2v-B3r.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, B4v.

<sup>122</sup> Turner, *Libertines and Radicals*, 9.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 5. Women designated as “whores” might also suffer “showers of filth, insulting graffiti, broken windows, mass assault, and rape” (24). See also pp. 24-37.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>125</sup> Drouin remarks specifically on the distinctions between drag and passing with regards to context and space, writing that “[p]assing, a street practice that does not benefit from the contextual protection afforded to theatrical cross-dressing (and even, but to a lesser extent, cabaret drag) is constantly subjected to the policing gaze of surveillance and to discipline if that gaze penetrates the illusion.” The lack of protection often occasions violence, Drouin argues, but the violence is indicative of the contexts in which gender subversion will and will not be tolerated. See Drouin, “Cross-Dressing, Drag, and Passing: Slippages in Shakespearean Comedy,” 3-4.



### **Chapter Three: Politics of Female Impersonation in the Interregnum Almanacs of Sarah Jinner and Sarah Ginnor**

Having studied the ways male characters and authors assumed female disguises and pseudonymous female personae in the earlier decades of the seventeenth century, I turn in this chapter to Sarah Jinner, recognized as the first female almanac compiler, and her impersonator, Sarah Ginnor. In Chapter One I discussed the benefits of adopting a disorderly, Amazonian persona for male characters like Lorenzo, Epicoene, and Dauphine as a means to reform a disordered patriarchal order. In Chapter Two I proposed that pseudonymous authors likewise found sexualized female personae expedient as a means of shaming patriarchal institutions like parliament and reinforcing the male head of household as the primary figure of patriarchal authority and integrity. This final chapter builds on the previous two by exploring whether women themselves were able to use sexualized personae as tools for patriarchal critique. Were women able to use representations of disorderly female sexuality to critique the failings of a flawed patriarchal system? Or did such female personae only prove effective when their parodic, sexualized, or otherwise-excessive transgressions made it clear to readers that such personae were fictional projections of the authors? In other words, did female personae only work as vehicles for critique when these

figures somehow failed to pass as women and slipped into a kind of authorial drag recognizable to the reader?

To understand the dynamics of female impersonation, drag, and passing as they pertain to gendered authorship, this chapter studies two examples of a sexualized female persona – one created by the author of Sarah Jinner's 1657-64 almanacs (accepted by critics as female-authored) and one created by the author of Sarah Ginnor's mock almanac (accepted by critics as male-authored). Based on the burlesque, parodic humour of Ginnor's almanac, critics often perceive this text as an attack on female authorship and female authors as hyper-sexualized and trivial. But since the hyper-sexualization of pseudonymous female personae in Civil War print provides a surprising amount of political commentary when read closely, the assumption that the hyper-sexualization of female authorship automatically constitutes an attack on female-authored texts as inconsequential bears further investigation. Looking at the ways the four almanacs published under Sarah Jinner's name between 1658 and 1664 combine seditious republican political predictions with sexually explicit predictions of venery, I propose that the Jinner author and her<sup>1</sup> publishers embraced the sexualized female personae of Civil War print for their marketability and potential to legitimize political critique against tyrannous political hierarchies like the Protectorate regime in its final years, constructing a new female persona in their likeness. While the Ginnor author does strive to trivialize Jinner, I will argue that it is Jinner's political content that the mock almanac reacts most strongly to, not Jinner's status as a

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

female author or her text's use of explicit sexual content. As case studies in female impersonation, Jinner and Ginnor provide opportunities to explore questions of gendered authorship, reception, and genre expectation, and to consider how critics' approaches to these questions have changed over time. Since we possess no solid facts about either Jinner or Ginnor beyond what the texts themselves can tell us, we as critics can only speculate about the sex of either author. Such speculation invites reflection on the criteria we use to make determinations about an author's sex, and how such determinations affect how we as modern readers receive and write about a text.

After decades of women's contributions to the early modern publishing industry having been ignored, the references to Jinner and other female almanac compilers which began in Bernard Capp's landmark study of early modern almanacs, *Astrology and the Popular Press* (1979), brought Jinner's almanacs to scholars' attention. Since Capp's work, other almanac scholars like Alan S. Weber, Louise Hill Curth, Adam Smyth, and Timothy Feist have studied seventeenth-century women's roles in writing, printing, and annotating almanacs. Acknowledging that Jinner's authorship is uncertain, and noting that Capp's evidence is slight, these critics nevertheless cite Capp to defend the Jinner author as the first female almanac compiler.<sup>2</sup> I do not wish to assert that the Jinner author was male, but the evidence neither supports nor denies assertions about Jinner's sex. The notion that Jinner's almanac was authored from start to finish by one woman, as I will demonstrate in the next section, supports modern ideas about

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

gendered authorship that clash with the practices of mid-seventeenth-century almanac production. With no data on the Jinner and Ginnor authors besides that created in their texts, and given that almanacs as a genre invested considerably in creating marketable authorial personae that only sometimes represented the identities of their authors, the only compelling reason to assume that the Jinner author is female and that the Ginnor author is male rests on essentialist assumptions that men write a certain way while women write another: that, for instance, men write pornography while women write gynaecological reference materials, or that men use gender satire and sexual humour while women write in consistently serious and sincere tones. While scholars of Jinner strive to elevate Jinner's works from obscurity by emphasizing how ground-breaking her almanacs were, the assumptions that inform the distinctions critics make between "Sarah Jinner" the first female almanac compiler and "Sarah Ginnor" the harassing male impersonator need evaluating as work on Jinner's almanacs and other ephemeral women's writing moves forward.

This chapter interrogates the construction of female authorship by comparing Jinner's almanacs, which "pass" to critics as female-authored, to the pseudonymous Ginnor almanac, whose burlesque tone leads critics to identify it as a male-authored parody – a drag performance, in other words. The first section of this chapter establishes the contextual details of authorship and production in the almanac market of the late 1650s and evaluates the existing evidence concerning the Jinner author. The second section examines recent modern critical

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

distinctions between the Jinner and Ginnor personae that connect the presumed gender of each author to the presence or absence of sexually explicit humour and gender satire in their respective works. I argue that on the topic of sexuality these two female personae have more in common than critics usually recognize, despite a few subtle differences in how each persona frames the legitimacy of female authorship. Finally, I will demonstrate in the final section of this chapter that the important distinctions to be made between Jinner and Ginnor concern not the issue of sexuality, which is where critics typically divide them, but the issue of politics. In this section I explore the ways in which Jinner uses sexual discourse to critique Cromwell's Protectorate in its final years, and demonstrate that it is not by bringing up sexuality but by decoupling sexuality from politics that Ginnor attempts and fails to neutralize Jinner.

### **Identifying “Sarah Jinner” in the Almanac Market of the 1650s**

Almanacs were produced and sold in seventeenth-century England in massive quantities. “In the 1660s, for which detailed evidence survives,” Capp writes, “sales averaged about 400,000 copies annually, a figure which suggests that roughly one family in three bought an almanac each year.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the ubiquity of the genre, very little has been written about early modern almanacs. The ephemeral nature of almanacs means that they have not survived in great numbers – they were designed for everyday use and in most cases were discarded



PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

once they were no longer current. Their popularity, however, allows us to get a fuller picture of the shared beliefs, perspectives, and opinions people shared across a range of backgrounds. Jinner’s almanacs, as I will demonstrate, cross genres, borrow from established traditions, construct authorship, and manage reader expectations in ways specific to the conditions of almanac production in the 1650s. To analyze Jinner’s authorship and Ginnor’s response I must therefore briefly situate both almanacs in the contexts of their publication.

As Capp writes, almanacs were successful “because [they] filled a wide variety of roles, cheaply and concisely,” serving not only as calendars but as gifts, farming advice, and home reference texts on subjects as diverse as history, husbandry, politics, and medicine.<sup>4</sup> Early modern almanacs at their most basic functioned as calendars for an upcoming year, and ranged from single page “sheet” almanacs “commonly seen [posted] on screens and doors” in Elizabethan England to octavo-sized “book” almanacs which were usually two or more full sheets long.<sup>5</sup> Early modern almanacs also served (as modern calendars and day planners do) as places in which to keep track of important dates and records, especially since almanacs were a source of note paper in an age when paper was a costly commodity. Readers could have their almanacs bound with blank pages on which they could keep accounts, notes, and diaries, and might even buy almanacs that came already bound with blanks, but they might also use the marginal spaces of the almanacs they purchased for note keeping, making almanacs very personal and interactive texts.<sup>6</sup> Sarah Jinner’s almanacs are all book length and contain

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

lengthy prose predictions and lists of medical recipes in addition to the ephemeris tables found in all book length almanacs. Book almanacs typically began with a preface to the reader followed by a semi-standardized calendar of the upcoming year consisting of twelve ephemeris tables that listed the days of each month in connection with the future positions of the sun, moon, and planets. The ephemeris tables varied from almanac to almanac, but most enabled readers to track the days of a given month with their corresponding days of the week, moveable feasts and saint's days, as well as upcoming solstices, lunar cycles, expected weather conditions, and sometimes predictions about local or world events (space permitting). Beyond the ephemeris tables, contents varied from almanac to almanac but often included a section of prognostications and a section of supplementary reference materials focused on the needs and interests of the compiler's ideal readers.

Understanding the regular contents and conventions of seventeenth-century almanacs allows us to quickly identify Ginnor's 1659 *The Womans Almanack* as a fraud. Ginnor's almanac bears a convincing title and title page, although the Ginnor woodcut image is far cruder than the engraving that appears on Jinner's almanac. The woodcut had also appeared twice before on scurrilous pamphlets and was perhaps recognizable to readers who'd read those pamphlets before.<sup>7</sup> But even if readers were fooled by the title page, Ginnor's almanac would have been a full sheet too short of the minimum two sheet length of a book almanac to trick anyone who picked it up off the shelf into thinking it was Jinner's

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

almanac. Although Ginnor’s preface somewhat convincingly passes for that of an almanac, readers would have noticed immediately that the twelve ephemeris tables – the most crucial and defining aspect of any almanac – were missing from Ginnor’s slim volume. Those who purchased this almanac thus likely did so recognizing that it belonged to the genre of “burlesque” almanacs Capp traces back to 1591, which attacked the vaguely-worded prognostications of judicial astrologers by providing mock predictions laden with platitudes.<sup>8</sup> Despite the hostility of burlesque almanacs towards astrology, the *Poor Robin* series of mock almanacs, which began in 1664 and ran well into the eighteenth century with the Stationers’ Company’s approval, demonstrates that there was a steady market for mock almanacs as well as for real ones (partially, Capp supposes, because the *Poor Robin* series did provide the useful ephemeris tables a reader could find in legitimate almanacs).

Burlesque almanacs like Ginnor’s and others attacked the lengthy prose predictions called “prognostications” that detailed events of political, religious, and social significance in the coming year. Satirists mocked prognostications for their conventional platitudes and lack of specificity, but vague phrasings were in part an adaptation to shifting standards of almanac censorship in the seventeenth century. Almanacs and astrology writing had a long history of political involvement and censorship before the seventeenth century, as prognostications tended to hint at (and sometimes blatantly project) social unrest, war, and the downfalls, illnesses, and deaths of important figures of state.<sup>9</sup> In a bid to exert

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

some control over the political content of almanacs, King James I in 1603 granted the Stationers' Company a monopoly over almanac production that lasted until the eighteenth century (profits from almanacs, as well as primers and psalters, went to the English Stock, a corporation founded to support the poorer members of the guild but which produced large profits for members who owned shares of it).<sup>10</sup>

The burden of censorship thereafter fell largely on the Stationers' Company, which was "legally liable for almanac content that ran afoul of the government" and thus protected its privileges by appointing licensers of their own to select and approve only almanacs which contained prognostications that adhered to mainstream religious and political views or were couched in obscure and vague phrasings.<sup>11</sup> As the Civil Wars demolished any notion of a unified "mainstream" and dismantled the Star Chamber responsible for enforcing English censorship laws, almanacs of the 1640s became as vehemently partisan as the newsbooks of the same period.<sup>12</sup> "Though a degree of governmental control was gradually restored," Capp writes, under the Protectorate and Restoration governments "political speculation remained an important feature in the more popular almanacs throughout their later history."<sup>13</sup>

Almanacs published in the 1650s were generally favourable towards the Cromwellian regime and promoted social order (selected and edited as they were by licenser John Booker, who supported the parliamentary cause in the 1640s). Sarah Jinner's critique of the Protectorate and her projections of civil unrest stand out, by contrast, as quite radical for the political climate of 1657, although they

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

are neither as specifically worded nor as extreme as Lilly's or Booker's 1640s predictions. Given the politically conservative tone of most late 1650s almanacs, Ginnor's burlesque response to Jinner might plausibly constitute an attempt to defuse Jinner's political radicalism as much as it constitutes an admonishment to female authors (an argument that I will explore in further depth in the third section of this chapter).

While most almanacs including Jinner's comprise three main elements – calendars, prognostications, and husbandry advice – almanacs also included specialized reference materials their readers might find useful. The specific collection of reference materials presented often provides a sense of the kind of ideal readership an author hoped to attract. While most almanacs including Jinner's included monthly husbandry advice on when to plant crops, geld livestock, or harvest specific plants, as well as guidelines on when it was safe to “take physic” or have one's blood let (believed to be dangerous in the summer months especially), Jinner's almanac specialized in reproductive medicine as well and included pages of recipes designed to assist women through every step of childbearing, from conception to lactation. Jinner also provided multiple recipes which contained known abortifacients like pennyroyal and mugwort, as well as anaphrodisiacs for men and women to help them resist sexual desires in times when couplings were not astrologically prudent.<sup>14</sup> Although Jinner's preface and prognostication make no attempt to exclude a male readership, the recipes predominantly target gynaecological and obstetric issues, suggesting that the

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

Jinner author did envision a female readership. Jinner’s almanac may have appealed to a readership of rural medical practitioners unable to afford the larger medical reference texts, however. Illustrations of the “zodiacal man,” an astrologically labelled anatomy of a human body, appear in Jinner’s almanac. Capp asserts that images of the zodiacal man were in constant demand despite their crudeness because they were “probably the only work of reference available to a vast number of unqualified physicians” in English villages far from urban centres.<sup>15</sup> Jinner’s predictions might have proved similarly useful to women caring for others in a domestic setting or to practitioners caring for others more professionally. The practical information almanacs provided attracted readers priced out of the market for larger reference works, and by specializing in a particular kind of reference material – reproductive medicine in Jinner’s case – almanac compilers and their printers could differentiate themselves from the other almanacs on the market in a given year and compete by capturing a niche section of the market.

The licensers the Stationers’ Company appointed to oversee the English Stock chose to authorize for publication only a select few of the numerous almanacs submitted to them annually; in this way the Company tightly controlled competition and maximized profits.<sup>16</sup> Since ephemeris tables did not vary greatly between almanacs, almanacs went after niche markets by tailoring their predictions and supplementary materials to appeal to certain specific groups, but they also used titles, authorial personae, and other indicators to attract the specific

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

kinds of readers they were targeting with their specialized content. “Although the term *marketing* did not exist in the seventeenth century,” Curth writes, “I believe the Stationers’ Company approached the production of almanacs through a similar decision-making process. It is clear that different titles were written to appeal to readers with varying levels of literacy, wealth, and sophistication, and although most almanacs were printed in London, many targeted specific regional audiences from Dover to Durham.”<sup>17</sup>

To Curth’s comments I would add that among the marketing tools available to the Company in the seventeenth century, authorial personae stand out as the driving force in creating a brand and loyal customer base. Many seventeenth-century almanacs marketed themselves on the personal reputation and fame of their astrologers, but once those astrologers died the Stationers’ Company was much more likely to hire an anonymous compiler to continue the series under the dead astrologer’s name than to launch a new series of almanacs under the new compiler’s name. Other almanacs, like the *Fly* series and the *Poor Robin* series, operated under pseudonymous authorial personae handed down over the course of decades so that, as Feist writes, in 1712 “Richard Saunders, the deceased human being, competed for shillings side-by-side with Poor Robin, the fictional character.”<sup>18</sup> As Feist concludes, “for early modern almanacs, the author’s name functioned as a brand name, not a source attribution,” and “customers gravitated to a given brand name because it signified content, not authorship.”<sup>19</sup>

We can expect then that even though Jinner never achieved the level of brand name recognition a long-running almanac series maintained, the Company may have chosen the Jinner author because her female authorial persona (signalled by her name and the prominent engraving of a young woman on the cover of her almanac) could signal to an audience that she had specific and interesting expertise to offer as a woman. We might also conversely conclude, however, that given the Company's focus on developing almanac series as brands based on specific and sometimes fictional or pseudonymous authorial names, "Sarah Jinner" might best be thought of as a constructed authorial persona designed to sell as many almanacs as possible rather than a female astrologer providing us a female perspective on life in the 1650s.

Beyond Jinner's almanacs, scholars have uncovered only a single reference to a "Sarah Gunner" as a practicing astrologer. The reference occurs in the [1690s] memoir of Henry Herbert, a soldier who mentions "Sara Gunner" in the context of a farcical anecdote Herbert recounts to embarrass his commanding officer. Herbert tells numerous stories about how this officer callously avoids all situations in which he might be wounded or killed, and names Jinner as a prop in a joke about the officer's gullibility and self-importance. Herbert muses that "if Sanders or Sara Gunner have cast [the commanding officer's] nativity water and foretold that he should be great with great men, why should [he] flatter and fawne upon all great men and kisse their arses if the fates decree him to be soe? What reason is there that a person of that extraordinary hopes should, like on[e] of the



PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

common people, expose himself to more than ordinary hazards?”<sup>20</sup> The name Sanders presumably refers to Richard Saunders, a practicing astrologer and almanac compiler of the late seventeenth century. Based on this reference to Gunner/Jinner in connection with Saunders, Capp has argued that Jinner was in fact a practicing astrologer in the 1670s (nearly two decades after her almanacs were published). Lacking other evidence, most critics have supported Capp’s assertion. Looking at the humorous and irreverent context in which the name appears, however, and taking into account that the reference is not actually an anecdote or an encounter with Jinner but rather a hyperbolic joke that mocks narcissists like the commanding officer who put undue stock in the favourable things astrologers tell them about themselves, we may think it overly hasty to accept Herbert’s text as evidence that Sarah Jinner was a practicing astrologer. The fact that Jinner/Gunner’s name appears alongside Saunders’s name lends the reference some credibility, but given the context, it seems possible that Herbert names Gunner/Jinner in order to enhance his joke by referring to an astrologer readers already had a hard time taking seriously. The joke may be that the hypocritical commanding officer proves himself to be foolish by trusting the predictions of astrologers, who are well-known charlatans as a group, and doubly foolish trusting Saunders and Jinner/Gunner in particular. Given the spelling of “Gunner” and the context of Herbert’s joke, Herbert might as plausibly be referring to “Ginnor,” the author of the mock almanac, whose parodic and trivializing imitation of Jinner’s astrological predictions complements Herbert’s

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies  
disdain for judicial astrology. While Herbert’s text certainly does not disprove assertions that the Jinner author was a practicing female astrologer, Herbert’s joke is not a very solid foundation on which to rest such assertions either.

Capp’s arguments that Jinner “may have been a woman of independent means, publishing simply for personal satisfaction,” and that she “was more probably a medical practitioner,” however, are much easier to credit based on the information available about the early modern almanac market.<sup>21</sup> Capp reasons that since “most almanac compilers received only a pittance for their copy,” and so many compilers went to the effort of compiling almanacs because “such publications were a very effective means of publicizing their professional services,” the odds that Jinner might also have been a medical practitioner of some sort are high.<sup>22</sup> Jinner’s medical knowledge may have come from her experience, but it might also have come from a familiarity with gynaecological and obstetrical manuals which towards the second half of the seventeenth century were increasingly available to the public in vernacular translation. Jinner recommends in 1659 that her readers purchase *The Secret Miracles of Nature* (1658) and *The Woman’s Counsellor* (1657), both of which are translations produced by her publisher, John Streater, and Weber notes that some of the medical recipes Jinner includes in her almanac are taken verbatim from *The Woman’s Counsellor*. Weber concludes along with Capp that Jinner was a medical practitioner, “working firmly within a learned and written tradition of medicine, not a folk-herbalist or oral body of knowledge as one might expect

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

judging from the popular nature of the almanac."<sup>23</sup> Although we can use information about almanacs to build a more detailed picture about Jinner's background, however, none of these details tells us anything conclusive about Jinner's sex. As Harvey persuasively argues in *Ventriloquized Voices*, male authors dominated seventeenth-century reproductive medical writing despite the fact that most practitioners were female.<sup>24</sup> So although the Jinner author's choice of topic does correspond with women's medical issues it does not necessarily exclude male authorship. Likewise, although women did not write on the topic of reproductive medicine as frequently as men did, women made up the majority of the field's practitioners, whether serving formally as midwives or simply preparing, sharing, and applying home remedies to the members of their households and communities. We might also entertain the possibility that, since the two books Jinner promotes and excerpts in her almanacs were actually published by her printer John Streater, the almanac's focus on reproductive medicine came about not only due to the Jinner author's interest or expertise in reproductive medicine but also in part as a means to promote Streater's more expensive books.

I am not proposing that we treat the Jinner almanacs as pseudonymous works, nor am I arguing that we presume male authorship of Jinner's almanacs as I argued in Chapter Two with reference to the pseudonymous porno-political texts like the mock petitions which assumed parodic female personae. But I do hope to illustrate that when and if women entered popular print genres, we have no reason

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

to believe that they were not just as capable of writing under calculated authorial personae as their male counterparts were, and that modern views of a single, identifiable authorial voice that reflects the experiences of its author clashes with the early modern almanac genre's specific trends and practices. Early modern almanacs as a genre present fantasies of a single authorial voice despite many layers of editing and collaboration between often anonymous or pseudonymous compilers, licensers, and senior members of the Stationers' Company.<sup>25</sup> The fact that we know next to nothing about the Jinner author means that we lose very little by making her a less central focus of critical investigations. Within the context of the almanac genre, letting the Jinner author's identity and sex fade into the background enables us to ask questions about female authorship that we do have the evidence to answer. These questions focus not on Jinner as an author but on the kind of persona the Jinner author and the Company of Stationers thought readers were mostly likely to buy year after year.

### **Sexual Content and Gendered Authorship: Analyzing Scholars' Responses to Ginnor's Response**

As I have demonstrated in earlier chapters, female personae in popular print were often powerfully associated with sexuality. For an almanac marketing itself as a guide to reproductive health, this connection between female personae and sexual topics was a strength. There was, however, a risk that a female

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

astrologist persona would be taken less seriously than a male astrologist persona. Just as the connection between women and sexual topics could lend authority to Jinner's knowledge of reproductive medicine, the connections between female speech and loose sexuality could open Jinner to accusations of sexual impropriety and misconduct. Because of this connection, as I argued in my examination of women's petitions, female petitioners of the 1640s tended to steer clear of sexual topics in their political writing only to have their politics turned into lust in the parodies that followed. Although a female persona like Jinner's would attract readers' attention in a crowded almanac market, that attention was not guaranteed to be the right kind of attention. Yet so long as the attention translated into sales, we can imagine that Streater and Jinner were willing to bear the risks. While I have argued in previous chapters that the sexualized female personae of satirical pamphlets were useful to male authors like Neville (author of *A Parliament of Ladies*) who wished to critique patriarchal authority without compromising their male privilege, I explore in this section of the chapter whether the presence of explicit sexual content in a text that purports to be female-authored necessarily signals that the work is in fact a male-authored impersonation.

Jinner and Ginnor provide us with a fascinating opportunity to explore these questions about the assumptions surrounding sexual content and female authorship because although in many ways Jinner's and Ginnor's personae overlap with each other, critics tend to emphasize firm distinctions between the two on the issue of sexuality. These firm distinctions often serve to establish the

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

pseudonymous status of Ginnor’s text, but bring with them a series of modern critical assumptions about gendered authorship that I wish to unpack and evaluate. Critics continue to emphasize differences between Jinner’s and Ginnor’s almanacs because while 1658 almanac customers would likely not have mistaken Ginnor’s short burlesque almanac for Jinner’s longer, licensed one, Ginnor’s almanac did manage to pass as Jinner’s during the compilation of the Short Title Catalogue, where Ginnor’s almanac is still listed as authored by Jinner.<sup>26</sup> Critics, perhaps in response to this persistent and problematic attribution, tend to bring up Ginnor’s almanac only to assert its illegitimacy as a female-authored almanac. Weber, for example, who has conducted the most extensive research on Jinner and the handful of other female almanac compilers, emphasizes Jinner’s authenticity as a serious female practitioner and author in order to set her almanacs apart from Ginnor’s “pornographic”<sup>27</sup> imitation. In distinguishing Ginnor from Jinner on the basis that Ginnor writes pornography while Jinner writes gynaecological reference, however, Weber tends to overlook the ways Jinner herself writes frankly and explicitly about sexuality in the prognostication section of her almanac, ways which have little to do with the medical advice she provides in the recipes that follow the prognostications. Distinctions between Jinner and Ginnor on the basis that Jinner writes medically about sexuality while Ginnor writes pornographically are even more problematic, as we will see, given that nearly all of Ginnor’s “pornographic” content is plagiarized almost word for word from Jinner’s 1658 almanac. Remarking on the irregularities of Jinner’s final 1664

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

almanac (lack of title page and lack of extensive prognostications), Curth argues that the 1664 almanac was written by someone other than the original (female) Jinner author and singles out the presence of recipes designed to treat male impotence and take the edge off venery in women and men to support her assertion that these entries “must have been written by a man.”<sup>28</sup> Both Curth’s and Weber’s determinations of gendered authorship equate the presence of sexual content with male authorship and gynaecological content with female authorship, but tend to underplay just how much sexual content the Jinner almanacs include.

Did early modern readers share modern critics’ instincts to see sexual content as male-authored parody or did sexual content “pass” more believably, during this period, as the product of a female pen? Much of modern critics’ discomfort with sexualized female personae like that of Jinner, I would argue, has its roots in lingering cultural assumptions that equate women’s sexual expression with misogynistic degradation. Because misogynist beliefs held that women were lustful and sexually insatiable and because these beliefs resulted in women’s wide-scale oppression, feminist critics approaching these texts are perhaps wary of hyper-sexualizing female authors. Fears of hyper-sexualization assume, however, that women’s connection to sexuality serves only to shame and disempower them. Certainly in most cases sexuality *was* a tool of misogynistic oppression, but as my project has attempted to demonstrate, there are rare instances in which expressing female sexuality offers an individual the opportunity to speak out against oppressive hierarchies and shame those in power.

Jinner addresses her readers' low expectations of female authorship in the opening words of the preface to her first almanac with concern only that she will not be taken seriously as an educated astrologer. "You may wonder to see one of our sex in print, especially in the Celestial Sciences," she begins, acknowledging readers' immediate skepticism with "I might urge much in my defence, yea, more than the volume of this Book can contain."<sup>29</sup> The prologue is only two pages long, but thoroughly defends women's moral and intellectual equality with men. Much of the defence borrows from traditional *querelle des femmes* defences of women and rejects misogynistic commonplaces to argue that women have "souls as well as men, though some witty Coxcombs strive to put us out of concert of our selves, as if we were but imperfect pieces, and that Nature intending a man, when the seminal conception proves weak, there issues a woman."<sup>30</sup> Jinner adds her own erudite arguments, picking up on the misogyny inherent in early modern discourses of reproduction and conception and rebutting them with her own knowledge of Aristotle's two-seed model of conception. As Jinner writes, since "Aristotle affirms, that woman doth contribute to the formation matter as well as place," meaning she contributes seed as well as her womb to a child's creation, "Mankind is preserved by woman." Jinner then makes the point that what separates men and women is not intellectual ability but access to schooling, and positions herself as one of the privileged few to overcome those barriers.<sup>31</sup> Jinner's defence not only works to unsettle a reader's skepticism that a female compiler might publish an almanac, it also demonstrates the author's education



PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies  
and intelligence with its savvy use of common female defence tropes and its innovative use of Aristotle (who himself was far from a feminist) to invert misogynistic arguments about female inferiority.

Ginnor's preface in *The Womans Almanack* of 1659 also begins with a defence of female authorship, a defence that in many ways appears more vigorous than Jinner's. "Courteous Reader," Ginnor begins, "The gift of learning being so little set by in these days amongst those of our Sex, is the chief invitation which hath caused me to publish this final Tract, thereby to stir up others, not to let their great worth with other learned Authors of our Sex ly in obscurity."<sup>32</sup> Ginnor's defence takes up women's lack of access to education, the exact issue Jinner addresses in her preface, although Ginnor's phrasing of "so little set by ... amongst our Sex" suggests perhaps that it is women's lack of inclination towards education that is to blame, not lack of opportunity. Ginnor also adapts distinct phrases and key ideas from Jinner's 1658 preface to construct her more aggressive defence. Ginnor's proposal to stir up others and prevent female authors from obscurity echoes Jinner's encouraging call of "why should we [women] suffer our parts to rust? Let us scowre the rust off, by ingenious endeavouring the attaining higher accomplishments."<sup>33</sup> Jinner, however, prudently ducks accusations that she seeks genuine social change, clarifying in the very next sentence "This I say, not to animate our Sex, to assume or usurp the breeches: No, but perhaps we should shine in the splendor of vertue, it would animate our Husbands to excel us: so by this means we should have an excellent World."<sup>34</sup> Ginnor offers no apologies or

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

disclaimers to her defence of women's equality. Since most defences of women's equality, especially those authored by women, included apologies or other disclaimers, Ginnor's unapologetically radical assertions might have signalled to readers that she was not seriously advocating for female equality but was instead using a pseudonymous female persona to satirize female defences by exaggerating their arguments. Ginnor's remarks on women's equality in her preface emphasize in stronger terms than Jinner's women's anger at being cast as inferiors ("Why then should we suffer these Cater-pillers to eat up our vine?"). Ginnor couples this anger with farcical threats of a female uprising ("Let me tell you, it is as lawful for us to be Judges & plead our own Causes in our own gowns as Lawyers to plead for others.") Ginnor also amplifies Jinner's cheeky comment that if wives pursue intellectual work it will spur their husbands on to "excel" them by writing that in taking up astrology women will "animate [their] husbands to excel [them]," which will keep them in their wives' "studies" when they had rather been in an Alehouse. Ginnor adds a cryptic bit of sexual innuendo to her remarks about husbands, writing that wives will find their lives more "comfortable" and "pleasant" when they have their husbands in their studies and are able to make them "sensible where the sign lies."<sup>35</sup> While Ginnor's persona is an outspoken critic of misogyny, her lack of subtlety and education, as well as her base desires to overturn male hierarchy in order to receive more regular sex from her husband, align her recognizably with the parodic, sexualized female voice of 1640s political pornography.

Yet although Ginnor's persona is clearly more parodically sexual than Jinner's, the differences between Ginnor and Jinner remain somewhat subtle, for although Ginnor's excessively outspoken defence of women makes Jinner seem conservative by comparison, Jinner herself also speaks out with references to transgressive female exemplars. Despite the conventional nature of Jinner's defence, for instance, the section of the defence in which Jinner lists exemplars of female virtue to bolster her legitimacy as a female author highlights primarily Amazonian women. "How many Commonwealths have been managed by women," she asks, "as the Amazones? Did not Semiramis set the Babylonian Kingdom in great Glory?" Amazons, as I discussed briefly in Chapter One, were figures of contested femininity as women usurping masculine roles and masculine clothing without passing as males. The reference to Semiramis, an Assyrian goddess of Greek mythology who impersonated her son in order to lead his army and rule over Babylon, similarly gestures to a kind of femininity which assumes a dominant position by adopting features of masculinity. Amazons and Semiramis both held contested positions within early modern culture. On the one hand the Amazons of antiquity were respected as a lost, noble middle-eastern civilization (noble so long as it stayed lost). On the other hand, when Morose in *Epicoe* calls his wife a "Semiramis," the moniker is not a compliment: Morose condemns her lack of feminine modesty out of the recognition that to him she poses a violent threat.<sup>36</sup> While I have so far explored moments when male authors assume artificial female personae, authors like Jinner emphasize that for women (if we

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

accept Capp's evidence that Jinner was female) gender bending and drag were also important ways of overcoming barriers placed against women writers. After listing ancient Amazon queens, Jinner moves to the less controversial but still abstractly Amazonian Elizabeth I, invoking this queen's intelligence and virtue: "I fear me I shall never see the like again, most of your Princes now a dayes, are like Dunces in comparison of her: either they have not the wit, or the honesty that she hath."<sup>37</sup> Jinner's more recent examples (the Countess of Newcastle and Katherine Phillips) and famous female practitioners of physic (the Countess of Kent and Maria Cunitia) are not especially Amazonian, but Jinner's preface suggests that Amazons are examples of women who prove themselves competent and even superior to men in an arena in which men strive to keep women from gaining proficiency (battle for Amazons; wit and science for Englishwomen). By using Amazons as her example Jinner means to cement her authority, but she also calls to mind the clear sense that she is overstepping the bounds of her gender, as Ginnor threatens to do outright in the preface to her mock almanac.

Jinner's list of examples illustrates a connection between her authorial persona as a female almanac compiler and Amazonian drag (Amazonian drag defined as the act of assuming masculine habits and behaviours while making one's feminine sex plain). Given what little detail readers expected to know about almanac compilers, the Jinner author could easily have concealed her sex and passed as a man if she or her publishers thought her sex would prove to be a liability. Instead, the Jinner author and her publishers chose to create a female

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

authorial persona knowing they might have to defend her competency as an astrologer. This choice suggests that the perceived value of the female perspective outweighed such costs. While the Jinner author could have passed as a male author, she instead puts on the intellectual habits she and her readers code as masculine while using Amazon examples to communicate and place value on the discrepancy between masculine habits and the women who perform them.

Jinner's authorial persona ultimately maintains enough feminine modesty and deference to be taken seriously, despite controversial references to Amazons, but Ginnor's persona plays up stereotypes of female unruliness. These stereotypes lend further credit to misogynistic assumptions that women are not capable of the discipline and self-control male scholars possess and should therefore be steered away from intellectual pursuits. Ginnor mocks Jinner's citational rhetoric, for instance, writing "I need not quote them [referring to Jinner's list of famous female queens and authors] for I think few of our Sex so ignorant but they have been either read or heard of them."<sup>38</sup> But in failing to quote the names Ginnor misses the point of Jinner's list, which is not to provide readers with new information but to demonstrate her intellectual and educational credentials to her readership. The Ginnor author makes Ginnor, Jinner, and female authors by extension *seem* naïve and uneducated. Ginnor's attempt to discredit Jinner does not hold up to close scrutiny, however. Ginnor fails to expose Jinner as an intellectual fraud.

Jinner's prefaces in the following years' almanacs offer no further defences of female authorship. Jinner does, however, return in 1659 to defend the inclusion of sexually explicit content in her almanacs. Weber argues that Ginnor's sexual humour "precisely realizes Jinner's fears about the misappropriation and misunderstanding of her text by male readers." But Jinner herself shows little fear or misapprehension about the sexual content of her almanacs and even defends such content in the preface to her second almanac. She is "encouraged" to write again, she explains, "seeing that [her first almanac] was so well accepted" last year.<sup>39</sup> She does, however, hint that some took offence at her sexually explicit content and that as a result this year she will be "avoiding such Language, as may, perhaps be offensive to some, whose tender Ears cannot away with the hearing of what, without scruple, they will do."<sup>40</sup> Jinner thus acknowledges a critique of her work but turns that critique immediately back upon her readers, whose offence seems at best like needless prudery and at worst like hypocrisy. "It is not fit the world should be deprived of such helps to Nature, for want of which, many by their Modesty, suffer much," Jinner continues, likely referring to the recipes at the back of her almanac which will help women care for themselves and any children born as a result of the many astrological instances of wantonness Jinner predicts in her prognostications. When Jinner again advises readers to buy the gynaecological manuals she excerpts in her almanacs, she does so in order to provide sanitary or healthful information, so "that those parts might be kept in good case and serve to the mutual comfort of man and woman."<sup>41</sup> Jinner does

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies contextualize the sexually explicit information she provides as gynaecological, but she demonstrates no squeamishness towards sexuality and reproves those who do.

While as modern critics we might see Jinner drawing a distinction here between what critics have identified as Jinner’s gynaecological “helps to nature” and Ginnor’s pornographic pastiche, we have no evidence to suspect that Jinner would have drawn such a distinction or have feared her readers’ misapprehension on the subject. Distinctions between gynaecology and pornography did exist in seventeenth-century England, but they remained blurry until the eighteenth century. The 1660 pornographic text *The Practical Part of Love*, for instance, describes a library of erotic works on whose shelves Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* and English pornographic pamphlets like *The Crafty Whore* sit next to “all sorts books of Midwifery, as *Culpepper’s Midwife, the compleat midwife, the birth of Mankind, Child-birth, &c.*”<sup>42</sup> While gynaecological manual authors like Thomas Raynalde in 1545 exhorted readers to “use everything herein entreated of the purpose wherefor it was written,” meaning specifically, as he outlines, to aid in childbirth and not shame women with lewd conversation,<sup>43</sup> Jinner gives her readers no such directions on how they should read her sexual content: only that they should not take offence at its presence. Modern critics, writing in a culture with well-established boundaries between gynaecological content and pornographic content which render the former respectable and the latter degrading

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies  
have a tendency to read more into such distinctions than early modern readers  
would have.

Weber identifies the Ginnor almanac as the "product of a male pen" based on the fact that "[i]n addition to parodic weather predictions, gender satire runs throughout the work."<sup>44</sup> What goes unrecognized in Weber's analysis, however, is how much Jinner herself adopts a satirical and stereotypical view of gender in her predictions, and how much sexual humour she includes when forecasting events. Ginnor's prediction that "Venus in the 12 house in exaltation, applying to combustion with the Sun, denoteth that women will be more free then usual in bestowing the P— on their Clients,"<sup>45</sup> is only slightly different from Jinner's 1658 prediction that "Venus in the twelfth house, in exultation, but applying to combustion with the Sun, signifieth that end women will be more apt than ordinary in bestowing the Pox upon their Clients." The most significant difference Ginnor introduces is the obscuring of the word "pox," which makes Ginnor's phrase *less* explicit than Jinner's (though perhaps more titillating).<sup>46</sup> Ginnor's entire prognostication is likewise plagiarized from a small excerpt of Jinner's 1658 prognostication for the year, with only small wording changes. Ginnor's almanac does include a page or so of sexually explicit material that does not originate from Jinner, but in the main when critics discuss Ginnor's pornographic content, they are discussing words the Jinner author in fact published.

Weber writes that the Ginnor almanac "provides important evidence for the reception of Jinner's legitimate works, and women's medical writing in



PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

general” by “[r]einforcing misogynistic stereotypes of females as lascivious and sexually deceitful.”<sup>47</sup> Again, however, many of the outright misogynistic and stereotypical comments Ginnor has to make about women are taken from Jinner. Jinner writes that “Mercury to a quartil of Mars (& Pisces and Gemini, giveth some of our sex (that are not payed with virtue) a rare faculty of scolding, in other some muteness and sullenness,” reinforcing the negative stereotype that women either talk too much (and are labelled scolds) or talk too little (and are labelled sullen) with little-to-no safe middle ground.<sup>48</sup> Although astrologers typically believed individuals had a measure of free will and could resist the pull of the stars, Jinner discounts women’s abilities to control their sexual urges, telling her readers to “beware marrying in the spring, for Scorpio being in the seventh house intercepted, denoteth unseemly wantonness and lightness in women.”<sup>49</sup> Ginnor changes Jinner’s “muteness and sullenness” to “sullenness and perverseness,” and adds “lechery” to Jinner’s “wantonness” and “lightness,” but these slight intensifications do not significantly reduce the misogynistic assumptions of Jinner’s predictions. Ginnor’s almanac does supplement Jinner’s predictions with additional jokes about female sexual insatiability, including an astrological image of three overlapping circles of the moon and clouds that bear passing resemblance to male genitalia and writing below it “the happiness of our Sex doth appear in most splendour, when the Moon appears so clouded, as in this following Figure, dark nights being to us as a fountain, whence flows all our mirth, joy, pleasure, sports, and melodious recreations.”<sup>50</sup> But Jinner’s

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

descriptions of planets like Venus “in corporeal conjunction,” “exultation,” and “combustion” can all likewise be read both as astrological terms and as explicit sexual puns, especially since Venus represents not only the planet but the goddess of love and sexual desire. The Jinner author and the Ginnor author thus share a sense that misogynistic humour about women’s sexual insatiability is appropriate for a female-authored almanac that focuses on women’s issues. Whether these predictions would have appealed to women readers is another matter, but both authorial personae include misogynistic jokes as part of their almanacs’ attractions.

The most significant distinction between Ginnor and Jinner ultimately is that while Ginnor’s text provides misogynistic jokes, sexual jokes, and astrology jokes, it provides little else. Jinner’s explicit predictions concern extramarital sex, but they also concern conventional marital sexuality, politics, foreign affairs, and religious controversies. Ginnor’s almanac removes the surrounding predictions, stopping in fact just short of Jinner’s 1658 advice to women on when to marry. Jinner’s advice often concerns promiscuous women (wantons) and men, as in the prediction for the Sun’s entrance into Libra in 1658, where with “Venus being in Scorpio, I fear me that the naughty wantons of our sex as well as the other sex will be peppered with the pox, and if so, wo be to your Noses; it is malignant to catch it at this time.”<sup>51</sup> But in the next sentence she offers advice to chaste, married women on when best to conceive, noting that “In this Figure, the Dragon head being in Sagittary denoteth fruitfulness to honest women.”<sup>52</sup> Jinner’s

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

predictions echo the religious, moral strictures which govern sexuality in society – the wantons receive malignant, disfiguring venereal diseases from their astrologically-ordained urges to copulate, while the honest (married) women receive children. But there’s a certain equality in tone by which Jinner seems to take both iterations of female sexuality – the wanton whore and the honest wife – as a given. Ginnor includes the prediction of wantons and venereal disease from Jinner’s original almanac but omits the mention of honest women and children. Jinner’s recipes also provide a context for the sexual predictions that Ginnor cannot replicate. While Jinner’s almanac certainly does contain passages which mobilize misogynistic stereotypes about female sexuality, it addresses female sexual desire and provides tips for women on how best to manage such desires, among the multiple other functions the almanac performs. Ginnor’s almanac, on the other hand, appeals primarily to an audience interested in sexual and astrological humour and drawn by the perceived connection between authorial female personae and sexually explicit content. Thus, while Ginnor effectively reproduces a certain element of Jinner’s almanacs, her almanacs cannot pass for Jinner’s because her almanacs do not recreate the complex interplay of genres and tones that Jinner’s almanacs strive to balance. Since Jinner’s almanac like all almanacs sought to fill “a wide variety of roles, cheaply and concisely,” there is no reason for the Jinner author to object to using a female authorial persona to its full benefit in attracting readers interested in sexually explicit material as well as readers interested gynaecological reference.<sup>53</sup> The profits the Company and the

Jinner author hoped to make in appealing to both groups clearly outweighed the danger of offending potential customers sensitive to explicit sexual content.

### **Jinner's Silences and Jinner's Successes as a Voice of Republican Critique**

Jinner's 1658 almanac must have sold well enough for the Stationers' Company to renew her license the following two years, but Jinner's almanacs never became a long-running series. None appear between 1660 and 1662 (although critics speculate that these almanacs may have existed and have not been preserved). The Company published an almanac for 1664 under Jinner's name, but Curth casts doubts on whether this text was authored by the original Jinner author, as it lacks many of the features (title page illustration, preface, prognostications) that Jinner's earlier almanacs possessed.<sup>54</sup> Did Jinner's novelty as a female almanac compiler simply fade? Was the Jinner author cowed by Ginnor's parody, which was published sometime in 1659 either before or after Ginnor was compiling her almanac for 1660?<sup>55</sup> Were readers unsettled or alienated by Ginnor's parody, causing Jinner's sales to drop off? Harvey's paradigm of the ventriloquized voice holds that the phenomenon of men writing as women constitutes "an appropriation of the feminine voice" that "reflects and contributes to a larger cultural silencing of women."<sup>56</sup> My findings in the previous chapters have tended to support Harvey's thesis, as sexualized female personae seem to shut down opportunities for female-led resistance and female-authored

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

political critique in *Epicoene*, *Swetnam the Woman-Hater*, and Civil War political pamphlets. If we view Ginnor's pamphlet as an instance of ventriloquism, we might conclude that Ginnor's attempts to discredit the Jinner persona specifically and female authors more broadly succeeded in ruining the Jinner author's career despite her attempts to continue in the face of criticism. While we cannot definitively gauge Ginnor's effect on the Jinner author or on the Jinner almanac's sales, however, this final section will explore an alternate hypothesis for Jinner's silence. It was not Ginnor's parody which shut the Jinner author out of the almanac market, I posit. Rather it was the Jinner author's success in harnessing a sexualized female persona for political critique that made her almanacs too risky a venture to continue under the censoring oversight of the Stationers' Company's licensing system. Assuming the Jinner author was female makes this a rare instance in which a female author adopts the unruly sexualized female persona as a means to offer salient republican critiques of patriarchal hierarchies that concentrated power in the hands of a few corrupt male elites.

While Jinner's female persona would have drawn attention, Jinner's politics would also have set her almanacs apart from more mainstream ones, and the combination of her novel female persona and her striking republican politics would have served to draw like-minded readers into purchasing her titles. Capp writes that although almanacs in the 1640s marketed themselves by appealing to political partisanship, offering prognostications that would appeal to either

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

royalist or parliamentary supporters the way newsbooks would, censorship tightened gradually between the regicide and the Protectorate.<sup>57</sup> Jinner's almanacs in the late 1650s offer a distinctive republican (anti-Cromwellian) slant that make her, along with Nicholas Culpeper, one of only two almanac compilers to criticize the Protectorate regime in print.<sup>58</sup> Jinner does not announce herself as a republican anywhere in the preface or title page of her work but the presence of her printer's name, John Streater, on the title page, would have hinted at her republican bias since Streater was a strident republican pamphleteer and printer of John Tanner's equally strident 1650s republican almanacs. The Stationers assigned the work of printing almanacs to various members of the company, so Streater and Jinner may not have had a directly collaborative relationship, but the Company could not have paired Jinner with a more complementary printer than Streater, who not only shared her republican beliefs but also specialized in the printing of medical texts that Jinner excerpted in her recipes and encouraged her readers to buy. While Jinner's name was likely unknown at the time of her first almanac's publication, Streater's would have helped attract the two specific and different niches of readers Jinner's almanacs would most appeal to: those interested in cheap gynaecological information *and* those with republican political leanings.

Almanacs were typically due to the Stationers' Company in July and were sold in late October, so in establishing a political context for an almanac the timeframe to consider is the summer of the preceding year the almanac was

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

compiled for. Compilers based their predictions on complex astrological laws and not on their own partisan hopes for a specific outcome, but, as Capp writes, “the high degree of subjectivity in astrological judgements” made it easy for political astrologers to consciously or unconsciously “manipulat[e] the stars into party allegiance.”<sup>59</sup> “Where the textbook stated that a particular conjunction foreshadowed the death of a ruler, or some upheaval in the church,” Capp argues, “the almanac-maker was willing to publish a specific and partisan judgment on an individual party or sect ... stretching rather than breaking astrological laws.”<sup>60</sup> The specific political context in which almanacs were compiled thus plays a role in how compilers might have interpreted the astrological data they calculated for a coming year. Further, the illusion of distance provided by the act of projecting a future that was still mutable may have enabled compilers to subtly comment on the tensions and conflicts of recent times without risking charges of sedition.

Jinner’s predictions for 1658, for instance, reflect and subtly comment on the political situation of the summer of 1657. 1657 was a particularly bleak year for republicans, though perhaps not as bleak as 1653, when the republican Commonwealth government of the rump parliament fell to Oliver Cromwell’s military coup. Republican ideology rose to its peak in the early 1650s, after the regicide, when the parliamentarians set out to design a new commonwealth to replace England’s monarchical system. Republicanism, like the populist Leveller movements, embraced the role of common citizens as active participants in government. When Cromwell forcibly disbanded the rump parliament in 1653,

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies  
transforming an admittedly dysfunctional Commonwealth into a Protectorate,  
hopes for radical republican reform suffered extensively. By the summer of 1657,  
the promise of a representative, participatory Protectorate government had long  
since dissolved, and efforts to limit Cromwell’s power or bring him under some  
kind of parliamentary oversight had failed. In June of 1657, after rejecting  
petitions from parliamentarians to accept the crown (which would define and limit  
the Protector’s powers based on precedent), Cromwell had himself installed as  
Lord Protector for life with the new right to appoint his own successor.

Jinner’s monthly prediction for January 1658 – “The Commonalty every  
where vered, endeavour to pry into affairs of State for which they are checked by  
the Frowns of Authority” – calls to mind the situation of the spring of 1657 and  
predicts that nothing will change significantly in the intervening months. The  
“Commonalty” refers to citizens without rank in its most basic meaning, but may  
also refer to the House of Commons, whose position in government is to represent  
the interests of those people. The Commons’ attempt to “pry” by trying to bind  
Cromwell’s powers with a new constitution (the *Humble Petition and Advice*)  
failed, as the final revised version of the *Humble Petition and Advice* that  
Cromwell signed actually centralized Cromwell’s powers in a compromise that  
frustrated both parliament and the army.<sup>61</sup> But despite failed attempts in 1657,  
Jinner predicts that the commonality will continue to pry in the coming year. If we  
interpret “prying” to constitute more direct interventions from the common  
people, we might note that in April of 1657, as Cromwell and parliament



PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

negotiated Cromwell's reappointment, militant Fifth Monarchists staged an armed uprising in London and were defeated. Jinner's predictions thus reflect back subtly on the failed interventions of the previous year but encourage continued militancy among groups like the Fifth Monarchists and the Levellers who claim to represent the interests of the "common" people (the rank and file of the army, the religious minorities persecuted by the majority, and those without rank who sought to have more of a political voice).

Aside from offering encouragement, however, the prediction also comments on the tensions between "Authority," or the Protectorate government, and the people it originally set out to represent. While the common people have to "pry" into affairs of state that as a republican Jinner believes do and should concern them, the government "frowns" at the commonalty's efforts to participate without giving them fair consideration. The Protectorate's abuse of its prerogatives seems especially hypocritical in light of the fact that Cromwell and many of his supporters fought against King Charles I on the charges that *he* abused his own prerogatives and expected to rule England without seriously consulting with his subjects' political representatives. While astrologers and almanac compilers frequently predicted civil unrest during this period, Jinner's wording suggests that both the people and the state are overreaching their positions – that because the people are prying and the state is frowning, no harmonious balance can be achieved. This imbalance in the political section, as I

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies  
will discuss shortly, trickles down to affect a myriad of other factors that keep  
England in a state of disorder, from the weather to women's chastity.

Jinner's predictions for 1659 illustrate the same cynical lack of faith in the Protectorate government. In her prognostication for the coming year, Jinner writes that "Governors and Princes are very powerful in their Councils and Resolutions and are very much ayded by this Position [of the stars], in their putting in execution their Arbitrary commands to the detriment of the people."<sup>62</sup> The tone of the relationship described between government and people illustrates again that Jinner dismisses any potential harmony between the highest government officials and the common people. In the 1659 predictions, however, Jinner critiques only the Governors as "arbitrary" and makes no mention of the commonalty trying to pry or assert rights she feels it is not owed. Jinner does present an optimistic outlook on future generations of low-ranking civil servants and magistrates, however, writing that "The Undertakings of the people shall have very great success, Most of the children that are born this year shall be of more noble and generous dispositions then ordinary, more fit for Magistracy and publike Trust, more apt to gain Estates, and more ingenuous fitter to be made Councillors, and to study the Sciences, then those that have been born for many years last past."<sup>63</sup> While the royalist mock petitions of the 1640s feared a generation of city-bred sons who would grow up without aristocratic graces, Jinner voices the republican view that locates England's hope for good government in the distribution of power amongst new generations of people. Instead of investing her hopes in any

one powerful leader, she looks forward to a generation of individuals who, guided by generosity, judgment, and scientific rationality, rather than by the privileges of wealth or birth, will grow up to regain the public trust.

While Jinner carefully maintains a semblance of matter-of-fact neutrality in the prognostication section of her almanacs, hinting at political biases only in subtle word choices, the monthly observations for the 1659 and 1660 almanacs make her anti-government position far clearer. In the 1659 predictions for October, for instance, after she conveys that “The Eminent contend about dividing the spoil of the Inferiour, who standeth still the while, A misery not the Last, that Mankind is too often cast into,” she counsels her readers to arm themselves “to avoid the evil of it, else you must arm with patience to submit to it.”<sup>64</sup> Jinner quickly asserts herself in the first person in the next line to inform her readers (and her censors) that “I speak of no other Arms, lest I should be taken to be a Trumpet to precede Rebellion.”<sup>65</sup> Yet she “venture[s]... that a people are not bound to obey well, when Governors do not govern well.”<sup>66</sup> Jinner’s critique of frowning authority, arbitrary government, and otherwise tyrannical powers opposed to the people’s liberty and prosperity makes it plain enough here that she would hold no English citizen bound to obey the Protectorate government under these standards. In the following month’s observations she comments that “The great Ones” in London, by which she means the rich and powerful, “are jealous of their condition, and much question their safety, which hath no other foundation than the humour of the people.”<sup>67</sup> As Lois G. Schworer remarks in her analysis

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

of women's public political voice in England, Jinner is one of a handful of female authors to base "her criticism of Cromwell on a theory of government," in these lines "[r]eflecting knowledge of a theory of rebellion."<sup>68</sup> Jinner's critique of the Protectorate regime in the prognostications near the beginning of her almanacs morphs into rationalizations for popular riot in the smaller print of the monthly astrological observations at the back (which move from a tone of predicting the major events of the coming months to actively trying to inspire her readers to help overthrow the government).

The lack of harmony between people and government across all three almanacs extends to manifestations of disorder across a range of other issues. As Jinner remarks in her 1659 almanac, astrological signs of intemperance in the weather breed political discord as well, so that in January's astrological observations she comments that "The Season is not more turbulent and unconstant then the Affairs of State."<sup>69</sup> Alongside correspondences between the seasons and political changes, Jinner interprets the alignment of the planets and stars in 1659 to mean rises in "excessive covetousness" and greed, in "most miserable and wicked murder and cruelties," in "Diseases of the belly, trouble of the mind, Shipwracks, Tempests, and Thievery." Finally, she ties wholesale social and moral disaster to sexual disorder, writing that "Venus being in the 7th house also prognosticateth terrible Adulteries and Fornications, the loss of abundance of Maiden-heads, and the desire of old women to young men."<sup>70</sup> While Jinner's prognostications in the 1658 almanac were organized into astrological

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

observations that would interest “the Publick” (i.e., those which concerned political change), followed by alignments of the cosmos that would interest “more particularly our Sex” (those which concerned sexuality), the subsequent almanacs make no such divisions between the public’s concerns and the concerns of women, and they make fewer distinctions between political and sexual topics. The “terrible adulteries” Jinner predicts for 1659 due to Venus’s position are put on a seemingly equal plane with the “wicked murders” brought by Mars, and both serve to highlight that when one element of the social fabric is in disarray all other elements suffer.

In her analysis of an April eclipse Jinner extends the general prognostication for the year to the specific astrological event, writing “I cannot promise too much honesty of our Sex, but something more then ordinary this year,” and advises seamen on the day of the eclipse “who are of any repute and credit, that intend Wedlock, not to look so low as the blew Apron, but have higher thoughts” and assures them “good successe in their amorous Courtings.”<sup>71</sup> Jinner’s commentary on sexuality, therefore, does not serve solely to appeal to women readers with specific material tailored for them, nor does it serve solely to titillate and amuse readers with descriptions of sexual encounters to come. Jinner’s sexual predictions are part of the almanac’s broader attempt to promote its political view of England as a nation suffering under a tyrannous and arbitrary government.

While specific political predictions are vaguely phrased to avoid censorship and meet the Stationers' Company's standards, veiled political commentary combines with the other signs that the country is in a serious crisis to create a strong critique of the Protectorate government's ability to rule the country in a fair, judicious, and harmonious manner. The sexual predictions of wantonness are part of Jinner's republican message that Protectorate England is out of control, just as the antics of the promiscuous Mistress Parliament in the popular pamphlet series of 1648 conveyed a royalist message that the parliamentary leaders were not up to the task of replacing the king as head of state. Jinner uses sexuality for a variety of purposes in her almanac, but one of those purposes is to signal to her readers that the patriarchal system is in crisis. For the pseudonymous female personae of the Civil Wars, the very presence of sexualized female voices in popular discourse was itself a sign that patriarchal hierarchies were failing. Jinner, however, enacts a separation between illicit sexuality (which takes place in the future among her readers) and her own authorial persona, which acts as an observer and interpreter of the future but never quite a participant. Jinner thus manages to use the connections between disorderly sexuality and political critique of failing patriarchal hierarchy without having such a critique rebound on her to delegitimize her position as a female almanac compiler.

The 1660 almanac predicts much of the same political turmoil, but projects (accurately, as it turns out) that most of the strife will be internal to the government and not between the government and the common people. Jinner's

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

prediction for January 1660, for instance, is that there will be “Little action, but much Debates and Consultations, tending to Action. If any be, it will break forth with much violence. Some are struck with blindness of the Eyes; but more with blindness of the Mind.”<sup>72</sup> The 1660 almanac was compiled in the summer of 1659 after Richard Cromwell succeeded his father Oliver as Protector in September of 1658, struggled to find a means to keep Protectorate finances afloat without antagonizing either the army or the parliamentary factions, and abdicated in late May of 1659.<sup>73</sup> While Jinner criticizes the arbitrariness of the Protectorate government and its abuse of power, she views the parliamentary England of the past as a place of futility and senseless violence. Jinner’s prediction that in February 1659 “Several men of good wit and Genius will rise; but when risen, they have no Lease of their Honours: There is nothing here that is permanent,”<sup>74</sup> projects that other men may rise to try to fill the vacuum left by Oliver Cromwell and the kings before him, but expresses a general cynicism towards all figures of authority.

Jinner’s 1660 almanac is the most overtly political, but also the most pessimistic. If it went to press in July, as most almanacs did, then Jinner was writing while England was once again under control of the rump parliament that had overseen Charles I’s defeat and regicide. Fears of royalist uprisings were high throughout the spring and early summer of 1659, but the largest and most successful royalist rebellions took place in August. By the time readers could purchase Jinner’s 1660 almanac in October of 1659, parliament had temporarily

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

suppressed most of the royalist uprisings but was hard-pressed to keep the army on its side due to the large sums owed in pay arrears and long-standing political conflicts between army officers and MPs. Jinner's predictions warn against siding with the army, whose "Souldiers declineth Reputation and grow weak in the opinion of most men: the Nation struggleth to arrive at Liberty; but particular Interest preventeth it as yet."<sup>75</sup> Jinner concludes her 1660 almanac with a monthly observation for December that, instead of confidently predicting the future, reflects back on the three almanacs she has written and expresses doubtful hope that the political situation will improve. She writes that "Since I first writ, I have had nothing but sad Tidings, Changes, and Overturnings to prognosticate: I hope this year will determine of those dangers, that we shall be no more subject to those uncertainties, which are the bringers forth of Misery and Want to this Nation."<sup>76</sup> We may plausibly suppose that in the increased upheaval of 1660, which brought an army-led coup, armed conflict, and finally the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy, Jinner was either too preoccupied or too dejected to write an almanac for 1661.

We might also plausibly suppose, however, that the gap in Jinner's almanacs in the early years of the Restoration consists of a form of censorship. Jinner, and the Stationers' Company who licensed her almanacs, risked serious repercussions if censors decided that her predictions about the downfall of the government constituted or were meant to incite actions against the government. As she writes in her 1660 almanac, she is taking precautions against charges of



PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

ensorship: “It is not convenient nor safe to particularize either persons or things: therefore we shall take the liberty to set forth things in the modest and most generall terms, that thereby we may avoid offence and danger, that other wise will fall inevitably upon us” from the “evil minds of those in Power.”<sup>77</sup> Announcing one’s intentions to conceal controversial predictions in general terms seems like precisely the sort of gesture that might draw a censor’s attention (although it was also typical of the almanac genre, which sought to attract readers with promises of controversy). In Jinner’s case, however, the “general terms” she promises fail to thoroughly conceal her hostility towards the ruling powers. Although we have no record that she was among those compilers who were censored, it is entirely possible that the Stationers’ Company chose not to license her almanacs in the early 1660s in order to avoid facing the ire of the newly restored Stuart government. That the Restoration brought about a change in the Stationers’ almanac licensor from the parliamentarian John Booker to the royalist George Wharton may also explain why Jinner’s almanacs fell briefly out of favour.

While the Ginnor almanac’s parody of Jinner’s female authorial persona attacked Jinner’s legitimacy and authority as a female astrologer, it seems likely that the reason Jinner’s almanac series ended was that censors and the Stationers’ Company *did*, in fact, take her political predictions seriously. Jinner’s final 1664 almanac, the only almanac of hers published during the Restoration, contains sexual and gynaecological recipes but no political predictions. Jinner’s prognostication does project that many “Theeves shall have ill success in their

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

undertakings” and that many men will “contemn Marriage” and pursue women only for lust’s sake, thus perhaps hinting very distantly at disapproval for Charles II’s Cavalier court, but the monthly observations that in previous almanacs were full of political predictions are in the 1664 almanac filled only with husbandry advice.<sup>78</sup> The 1664 almanac also removes many of the elements that defined Jinner’s female authorial persona. The image that appeared on all three previous almanacs – a fine, engraved portrait of a young attractive woman – does not appear on the 1664 almanac. The 1664 almanac includes no authorial preface, and it might be plausible that the almanac was composed by someone other than the Jinner author were it not for the presence of the Jinner author’s characteristically unapologetic sexual content and pessimism in the prognostication. Missing its political commentary and female authorial persona, the 1664 almanac does not seem to have been a great success, for the series was not renewed.

Ginnor’s response to Jinner’s 1658 almanac was to isolate Jinner’s sexually explicit material and cast away Jinner’s political and social observations entirely. While Ginnor’s parody insults Jinner’s range as an author and astrologist, it also renders Jinner a more containable threat to patriarchal hierarchy by insisting that her interests in women and sexuality make her a frivolous astrologist unworthy of serious consideration as a political voice. In fact, those interests in sexuality, I have argued, were anything but inconsequential to her critique of the Protectorate regime. While parodic female sexuality proved a useful political tool for the authors of 1640s porno-political rhetoric, Ginnor’s pamphlet is strikingly

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

apolitical. Except for a chronology of “Some memorable Accidents happened since 1639,” which traces the dates of the Civil Wars and Interregnum periods from the beginning of the long parliament to the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658, the almanac makes no references to political figures, leaders, or factions of any kind. Unlike most elements of Ginnor’s almanac this list of political events carries no perceivably satirical or humorous purpose. The first *Poor Robin* almanac of 1664 (which began the long-running series of Stationers’-approved burlesque almanacs) included many satirical chronologies which joked about the discrepancies between “Loyal” royalist chronologies and “Fanatick” chronologies which traced the devil’s influence in English politics.<sup>79</sup> Although chronologies afforded opportunities for parody and satire, Ginnor shies away from political commentary and offers a standard, neutral account of the relevant dates and events.

Ginnor’s chronology does neatly encapsulate, however, what has been a highly tumultuous period in English history in which nearly all forms of traditional hierarchy and authority faced substantial challenges. The twenty-year period is marked by battles, executions, military coups, and deaths. The presence of Ginnor’s parodic voice on the almanac market is in and of itself a signal of the troubled times of 1659, when in the absence of a stable patriarchal head of state female authors like Jinner are able to publish alongside male compilers with prefaces that assert the intellectual equality of the sexes. Rather than use the parodic female persona to mount a coherent political critique, the Ginnor author

PhD Thesis – C. Thauvette; McMaster University – English & Cultural Studies

instead attempts to neutralize Jinner’s efforts. Given that Ginnor’s chronology ends with the death of Cromwell in September 1658, however, it seems likely that Ginnor’s faux almanac did not deter Jinner from publishing a follow-up almanac in 1660 after Ginnor’s almanac had been published. Jinner’s almanac series ended, I propose, because she ran afoul of licensers or censors, and not because she failed to find an audience as a female compiler writing on an unwholesome topic like sexuality. If we accept this theory, we can then view Jinner as the first writer to find acceptance and/or pass as a female author while successfully harnessing female sexuality as a tool for political critique.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Although I assert a distinction between “the Jinner author,” whose sex is ultimately unknown, and “Sarah Jinner,” I will refer to the Jinner author as “her” given that there are no compelling reasons to doubt that the Jinner author was female and critics refer to Jinner as female.

<sup>2</sup> Although Weber makes reference to one scholar, Ann Geneva, who challenged the Jinner author’s female authorship in an unpublished conference paper, he provides this citation only to establish a ground for his argument that Jinner was female. Weber, “Women’s Early Modern Medical Almanacs in Historical Context,” 360. Weber cites a note in Mack’s *Visionary Women*, p. 84, n.122.

<sup>3</sup> Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500-1800*, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>6</sup> As Adam Smyth writes, “the almanac becomes a conduit, a temporary storehouse for records which are then passed on, and it is useful to think of almanacs as one point in a dense network of texts. Diarists often seem to have generated a life through this process of transferring material, revising and expanding records with each movement, employing the almanac as an early (although not necessarily initial) site of recording,” “Almanacs, Annotators, and

Life-Writing in Early Modern England,” 222.

<sup>7</sup> The portrait appears on the title page of two anonymous pamphlets: the undated *Cupids Master-piece, or, The Free-school of Witty and Delightful Complements* and *The Ladies Remonstrance* (1659). *The Ladies Remonstrance* styles itself after the 1640s mock petitions and combines highly explicit sexual content with a critique of the rump parliament.

<sup>8</sup> Capp, *Astrology*, 33.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>10</sup> See Feist, “The Stationers’ Voice The English Almanac the Early Eighteenth Trade Century in the Early Eighteenth Century,” 10. Feist writes that the 1603 patent “proved to be the Company’s “goldmine, a source of significant commercial and political power for nearly two centuries. King James had intended the monopoly to provide £200 yearly for the Company’s poor, but the Stock produced profits far above this amount, and the excess benefitted shareholders rather than the poor” (10).

<sup>11</sup> Feist, 56.

<sup>12</sup> As Capp recounts, astrologers William Lilly and John Booker were so influential in stirring up popular sentiment for the parliamentary cause that they were “invited to join the troops at the siege of Colchester in 1648, and passages from Lilly's almanac were read to encourage the English soldiers invading Scotland a little later.” *Astrology*, 75.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 67.

<sup>14</sup> The recipes included varied slightly from year to year and were excerpted in part from the longer medical reference works Jinner recommends her readers purchase. As Weber notes, “These receipts indicate that Jinner was developing a woman’s medicine concerned with the physical, emotional and psychological needs of her patients,” see “Introductory Note,” p. xiii.

<sup>15</sup> Capp, *Astrology*, 64.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 42-3. As Capp remarks, “The market for almanacs was not infinitely expandable. The Company recognized that excessive expansion would result merely in more unsold copies at the end of the year, and accordingly restricted the number of titles and copies printed. Aspirant authors sent their work to the Company which referred it to one of the established London astrologers” but “[t]he chances of acceptance were slight” (42).

<sup>17</sup> Curth, “The Medical Content of English Almanacs 1640-1700,” 260.

<sup>18</sup> Feist, 49.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 48-9.

<sup>20</sup> Herbert, “Captain Henry Herbert’s Narrative of His Journey Through France with His Regiment, 1671-3,” 349.

<sup>21</sup> Capp, “Jinner, Sarah (fl. 1658–1664),” n.p.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>23</sup> Weber, “Introductory Note,” xii.

<sup>24</sup> Harvey writes about the “appropriation of the midwives’ voices in the obstetrical books of the early seventeenth century, which are spoken almost exclusively by men, who, however sympathetic to women and female midwives, nevertheless effect a kind of usurpation” (92). The first English midwife to write an obstetrical manual, Jane Sharp, would not publish it until 1671.

<sup>25</sup> Almanacs, as I and other critics have noted, were branded as the products of their compilers but this branding obscures the amount of collaboration and borrowing that went into their production. Almanacs series often began as submissions from a single compiler but were then often continued by other anonymous compilers under the original name long after that original compiler ceased to write for the series. Further, not all compilers were responsible for producing the entire contents of their almanacs; some compilers wrote only the prognostication sections of their almanacs and used standard sorts (the ephemeris tables) provided by the Stationers’ Company. Many compilers like Jinner did not actually write the reference material they included in their almanacs but instead curated it and reproduced from other works without clearly identifying sources. Licensers who chose which almanacs to publish were responsible for ensuring that the content of each almanac was acceptable and could censor even the most commercially acceptable almanacs, requiring that offensive lines be cut or modified. Senior members of the Stationers’ Company responsible for the profitability of the English Stock had direct influence on which almanacs were produced, which authors were hired to write for which series, and how the profitable series were distributed among their members for printing.

<sup>26</sup> The current electronic edition of *Early English Books Online* edition includes a note in the record questioning whether the almanac is pseudonymous but the work remains attributed to Jinner.

<sup>27</sup> Weber, “Introductory Note,” xxi.

<sup>28</sup> Curth, *English Almanacs, Astrology and Popular Medicine: 1550-1700*, 69.

<sup>29</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication for the Year of Our Lord 1658,” 17.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Jinner argues in “An Almanack and Prognostication... 1658” that women “have as good judgment and memory and I am sure as good fancy as men, if not better,” although “it is the policy of men, to keep us from education and schooling” (17).

<sup>32</sup> Ginnor [pseud.], “The Womans Almanack,” 253.

<sup>33</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication... 1658,” 18.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ginnor [pseud.], “The Womans Almanack,” 253.

<sup>36</sup> Jonson, 1.1.48-9.

<sup>37</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication... 1658,” 17.

<sup>38</sup> Ginnor, 253.

- <sup>39</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication... 1659,” 59.  
<sup>40</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>41</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>42</sup> Anon., *The Practical Part of Love*, 40.  
<sup>43</sup> Raynalde, *The Birth of Mankind*, 22.  
<sup>44</sup> Weber, “Women’s Early Modern Medical Almanacs,” 386.  
<sup>45</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication... 1658,” 20.  
<sup>46</sup> Ginnor [pseud.], “The Womans Almanack,” 254.  
<sup>47</sup> Weber, “Women’s Early Modern Medical Almanacs,” 386.  
<sup>48</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication... 1658,” 20.  
<sup>49</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>50</sup> Ginnor [pseud.], “The Womans Almanack,” 261.  
<sup>51</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication... 1658,” 21.  
<sup>52</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>53</sup> Capp, *Astrology*, 23.  
<sup>54</sup> Curth, *English Almanacs, Astrology and Popular Medicine: 1550-1700*, 69.  
<sup>55</sup> Ginnor’s reference to Cromwell’s death means that the almanac was published sometime after September 1658. Jinner would likely have already compiled her 1659 almanac and submitted it for printing before Cromwell’s death. If Ginnor’s mock almanac was published in the late fall of 1659 it is possible that Jinner had already compiled her almanac for 1660 as well by the time Ginnor’s parody was released.  
<sup>56</sup> Harvey, 12.  
<sup>57</sup> Capp, *Astrology*, 85.  
<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 87.  
<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 59.  
<sup>60</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>61</sup> Hutton, *The British Republic 1649-1660*, 73-4.  
<sup>62</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication... 1659,” 62.  
<sup>63</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>64</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication... 1659,” 79.  
<sup>65</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>66</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 80.  
<sup>68</sup> Schwoerer, “Women’s Public Political Voice in England 1640-1740,” 65.  
<sup>69</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication... 1659,” 75.  
<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 62.  
<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 63.  
<sup>72</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack or Prognostication for the Year of Our Lord 1660,” C1r.  
<sup>73</sup> Hutton, *The British Republic 1649-1660*, 114-20.  
<sup>74</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack or Prognostication... 1660,” C1r.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, C4v.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, B1r.

<sup>78</sup> Jinner, “An Almanack and Prognostication for the Year of Our Lord 1664,”  
109.

<sup>79</sup> Anon., *Poor Robin* A3v-4r.





## Conclusion

Anthropologists studying rituals which invert sex roles typically agree, according to Natalie Zemon Davis, that cross-gender performances “are ultimately sources of order and stability in a hierarchical society. They can clarify the structure by the process of reversing [it],” and they “can correct and relieve the system when it has become authoritarian,” but “they do not question the basic order of the society itself.”<sup>1</sup> Davis challenges this view with particular reference to male-to-female cross-dressing and argues that “the image of the disorderly woman did not always function to keep women in their place. On the contrary, it was a multivalent image that could operate, first, to widen behavioural options for women within and even outside of marriage, and second, to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and women in a society that allowed the lower orders few formal means of protest.”<sup>2</sup>

In tracing the role of female impersonation as a tool for political and social critique, I have largely found that disorderly female personae shame the individual men at the very top of a political or familial hierarchy for their misconduct but do not agitate for a whole scale reform of patriarchal hierarchy. Because many of the authors who assume these female personae were presumably men, I have argued that female personae served in early Stuart England as a

vehicle for authors to critique the Stuart patriarchal system's inequalities while at the same time safeguarding the masculine privilege that system afforded males for themselves. In Chapter One I argued that *Epicoene's* Dauphine used a female impersonator and *Swetnam the Woman-Hater's* Lorenzo used a female disguise to pinpoint and/or correct weaknesses in their households/kingdoms so that they might strengthen their position as future patriarchs by protecting and maintaining their inheritances. In Chapter Two I traced female impersonation's increased politicization as a tool for authors to debate parliament's relationship with the king through the sexualized lens of the family-state analogy. Female personae in Civil War porno-political print, I demonstrated in that chapter, present a critique of political and militarized ideals of masculinity and locate the masculine ideal in a head of household who can properly rein in the chaotic sexuality of his wife. Sarah Jinner's 1658-60 almanacs, I argued in Chapter Three, carry forward the politically-charged associations that explicit sexual discourse and female authorial personae acquired in the 1640s to critique the Protectorate government. Over the course of the early to mid-seventeenth century, then, female impersonation evolved from its roots as a disciplinary tool for communities to critique problems within individual households (as it was in its Skimmington incarnation) and moved out of performance and into print to enable broader political critiques of the state as a household out of order.

The disorderly female persona in Jacobean and Caroline England thus seems to have been a tool for male authors to perform a limited critique of patriarchal hierarchy. Jinner in the late 1650s, however, managed to use it in ways Restoration censors and others found legitimately threatening. While Jinner scholars have in general attempted to distance Jinner from the disorderly pornographic aspects of her persona that her imitator Sarah Ginnor emphasized in *The Woman's Almanack*, Jinner's pornographic content within the broader context of female impersonation in early Stuart England connects her to traditions of political protest that trace back to Skimmington riding and the Braydon Forest riots of the 1630s. While these traditions of female impersonation and protest were nearly always male-led, Jinner (if we accept that she was a woman) demonstrates that by the 1650s women themselves were beginning to find power in staging disorderly female conduct in print. If Davis is right that women enjoyed "widen[ed] behavioural options" in the early modern period in part through performances of disorderly women on top, my dissertation adds to this insight the specific claim that female impersonation widened those options within print culture itself.

Female impersonation does not ultimately have a transformative effect on early modern English culture, however. Jinner's attempts to harness the political power of the disorderly female persona result in Ginnor's depoliticizing imitation, in the absence of political material from her final 1664 almanac, and in the

discontinuation of her almanac series. But the broader political context of Jinner's almanacs – the crumbling Protectorate regime and the incipient Restoration – explain in part why efforts to achieve more transformative change through the disorderly female persona stalled in the final years of the Interregnum. Charles II and the Restoration court separated themselves from the Puritan Protectorate regime in part by embracing a libertine philosophy of disorderly sexuality. Displays of promiscuity and bodily pleasure in Restoration culture could be patriarchal and gendered, but the discourse of disorderly femininity itself seems to lose its edge as a critique of patriarchal hierarchy in the 1660s. While sexualized female personae in the early Stuart period critiqued patriarchal authority by positing that the promiscuity of Charles I and the members of parliament was an emasculating flaw, for instance, insinuations of promiscuity levelled at Charles II would not have registered in the ways they had a few decades earlier. Thus, while female impersonation may have temporarily opened a window for women to participate in satirical critiques of patriarchal hierarchy, political events ensured that this window was soon shut.

As a tool of social critique, further, female impersonation may have contributed in part to the preservation of existing political and patriarchal hierarchies through the challenging years of the Civil Wars and Interregnum. While many predicted that radically different systems would replace the Stuart monarchy, the satirically apocalyptic visions of London without men in *The City*

*Dames Petition* served, as I have demonstrated, to make readers appreciate an idealized vision of a libertine Caroline London that had ostensibly been lost. This vision of the lost Caroline London, as I discussed briefly, bears more than a passing resemblance to the libertine London Charles II would later restore. Sarah Jinner’s almanacs, likewise, predict futures that are bleak, chaotic, and full of “Arbitrary” and unconstitutional governmental structures which assume control of England for themselves and oppress the people they are meant to represent. Although Jinner does not mention the potential return of the monarchy, her pessimism might well make readers long for the relative stability of the Jacobean and early Caroline periods. In this way, finally, one of the most interesting things female impersonation enables in early Stuart England is a kind of discourse that immunizes readers from rhetorics of revolution. By advocating for small reforms of patriarchal abuses, and by blaming patriarchal oppression on a few misguided or flawed patriarchs, female impersonation makes early Stuart patriarchal hierarchy resilient to change and explains perhaps why Charles II was able to restore so much of the political culture that had existed in England before the regicide.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Davis, 130.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 131.



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