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Restoration

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BAWDS, BABES, AND BREECHES

Regendering Theater after the English Restoration

Implications for Perceptions and Treatments of Gender in English Society

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ABSTRACT

Restoration England (1660~1720) was a raucous time for theater-making. After an 18-year Puritanical ban on the theater, and with the restoration of the worldly Charles II to the throne, English theater underwent a pivotal rebirth. At this time, women were allowed to act on the public stage for the first time, an event carrying enormous implications for gender roles. This paper argues that actresses posed a threat to the patriarchal hierarchy that was in place at this time. Their unique position in professional theater and unusual access to a public voice not available to the rest of women enabled actresses to subvert restrictions placed on their sexuality and public gender roles. As such, the first English actresses transgressed traditional patriarchal norms and had to be subjugated to prevent social disorder; this was primarily achieved through sexualization of their stage roles, association with prostitution and the satisfaction of the male 'gaze.'

Did not the Boys Act Women's Parts Last Age?
 Till we in pitty to the Barren Stage
 Came to Reform your Eyes that went astray,
 And taught you Passion the true English Way
 Have not the Women of the Stage done this?
 Nay took all shapes, and used most means to Please.¹

I. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

In 1660, Charles II was restored to the throne after about 20 years of civil war and a Puritanical Commonwealth in England. This was a momentous event that had reverberations extending far beyond simple political consequences. When restored to the throne, broadminded Charles reinstated the theaters of London after an eighteen-year ban by the Puritans, instigating an unparalleled increase in the production of plays and the publication of articles publicly discussing the theater – a reawakening of English drama.² Also, theater took its place as “public art,” fed primarily by audiences expecting entertainment, stimulation, and sometimes enlightenment, and ultimately came into its own as a medium of popular culture.³

Significantly, Charles also sanctioned the casting of women on the public stage – something that had previously been socially and legally frowned upon. The new presence of women on the English stage had enormous effects on the world of English theater and the development of what we categorize as “Restoration Theater,” especially comedy, as a style and mode. Women on the stage “reshaped dramatic form at a time

¹ Epilogue to Settle's *The Conquest of China by the Tartars* (1676), spoken by leading lady Mary Lee. Cited in

² Mita Choudhury, *Interculturalism and Resistance in the London Theater, 1660-1800: Identity, Performance, Empire* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2000), 17.

³ Frances M. Kavenik. *British Drama, 1660-1779: a Critical History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 1.

when theater was the most public and debated literary venue,” though not by bringing a “feminine delicacy” or “compassion” as was initially anticipated.⁴ When women were allowed on the English stage, they were given a public voice as performers. But even with this new potential power to uproot social gender norms through theatrical performance, the first English actresses were unable to transform gender roles in a society that was so dominated by patriarchal norms. In fact, women on the Restoration stage were hugely sexualized, in both straight and cross-dressed roles, by playwrights and audiences - ultimately perpetuating the patriarchal gender norms. Just as theater stimulates and bolsters culture, this subversion of women on the stage reflected and reinforced a broader driving out of women from public life. Actresses posed a threat to the patriarchal hierarchy because their unique position and anomalous access to a feminine public voice was a source of empowerment for them – as such, they transgressed traditional patriarchal norms. Because of this, the actresses themselves had to be subjugated, often through sexual exploitation primarily in their stage roles but also in their personal lives, to prevent social disorder.

The actresses of the Restoration period are a much-overlooked or under-appreciated topic by historians of gender and of theater. Much more attention has been paid to their predecessors, the “boy actors” of the Renaissance – the younger male actors who played women’s roles onstage – because the gender complications are seen to be

⁴ J. L. Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 89, 126; Jean I. Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3.

“richer.”⁵ Not only is scholarship quite limited, but it is also a contentious area.

Restoration history is primarily written through the circulation of well-known anecdotal evidence by scholars, which rarely includes representations of actresses, or women for that matter, and becomes an incomplete and biased narrative of women’s lives that is canonized.⁶ This severe lack of primary source material is one of the main factors in the disagreement among Restoration scholars, since there can be many different analyses of the same sources. Indeed, one is hard-pressed to find anything beyond a brief mention of women on stage in diaries or papers, and the relevant play material – prologues and epilogues written for specific performances – are largely edited out of available modern play texts. Some sources are even rare enough to not be in a published format at all. As such, it is impossible for scholars to establish a clear, concise, and widely accepted school of thought on the subject. There are then necessarily flaws and holes with all attempts at understanding.

The earliest scholarship is represented by J.H. Wilson’s *All the King’s Ladies* (1958). The book is patronizing and completely coded by the gender norms of Wilson’s early 20th century generation, and thus limiting to the future of the topic – it did not raise any questions or prompt any further scholarship for many years.⁷ Katherine Maus’ 1979 article, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood’: Sexual Ideology and the Restoration Actress” was the next milestone in the subject area, and representative of early feminism and focuses

⁵ George E. Haggerty, “The Queen was not shav’d yet’: Edward Kynaston and the Regendering of the Restoration Stage,” (*The Eighteenth Century* 50, no. 4: 2009), 309.

⁶Kirsten Pullen, *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and In Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25-27.

⁷ John Harold Wilson, *All the King's Ladies; Actresses of the Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1958.

on and emphasizes the ultimate subordination of the actress.⁸ The article is revisionist, challenging and rejecting the previous romanticized notions surrounding actresses and Restoration theater. However, the arguments are quite thin, and Maus does not substantiate a lot of her claims. Post-feminist scholarship on the topic includes Elizabeth Howe's *The First English Actresses* (1992).⁹ While problematic, it is one of the first books devoted specifically to the first women on the English stage. More recent scholarship, though scanty, raises more questions than conclusions, and much of this research is quite narrow in focus and scope. One of the key differences in the way scholars approach the topic is whether they view the actresses as being empowered by their new position and possessing some degree of agency, or as simply being exploited by their surroundings.

This paper will extend the dialogue by focusing on the first English actresses and placing them within the larger context of what happened to English women in the public sphere socially and economically during the late seventeenth century. It will also focus specifically on the subjugation of actresses as a result of their threat to patriarchal order, and how any agency they might have used to alter gender hierarchy was negated by the treatment of their sexuality on stage. Ultimately, I am working with the same limited sources as other Restoration scholars, but am also bringing in other sources from a wider societal perspective. The complex way in which actresses affected the world of Restoration Theater can be seen in many different aspects of the theater world. By examining boy players, the effect of women on the dramatic literature, the emerging

⁸ Katharine E. Maus, "'Playhouse Flesh and Blood': Sexual Ideology and the Restoration Actress" (*ELH* 46, no. 4: 1979), 595-617.

⁹ Howe, *First English Actresses*.

female sexuality and the “gaze of the audience,” and public reactions and debate about the new actresses, I hope to expand the conversation about Restoration actresses.

II. RENAISSANCE THEATER CONVENTIONS, POLITICAL UNREST, AND THE RETURN OF THE KING

Theatrical conventions in England during the Renaissance, and up to the ban on theater in 1642, famously included that of the travesti “boy players.”¹⁰ This was during a time when it was considered unacceptable for women to act upon the public stage, so boys were trained to play women instead. The standard system for training these actors was an apprentice system stemming from the all-male tradition of early European theater (Greece, Rome, early Italy) – a system that propagated and perpetuated itself.¹¹ One of the driving reasons behind this was that boys had opportunities for training in oratory and singing denied to women.¹² Men were eager to preserve acting as a site for male employment.¹³ There was also a prestige surrounding the “acknowledged quality of English male performance” at home as well as abroad.¹⁴ Additionally, there is a scholarly debate surrounding the way female roles were written during this period – some argue that female characters were dramatically stereotyped in order to demean and misrepresent women, while others argue that the female characters indicate how

¹⁰ Travesti, translating to “disguised,” refers to any portrayal of a character by a performer of the opposite sex.

¹¹ Michael Shapiro, “Introduction of Actresses in England: Delay or Defensiveness?” in *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage*, ed. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russel, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 178-186.

¹² David Mann, *Shakespeare's Women: Performance and Conception* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2.

¹³ Shapiro, “Delay or Defensiveness?” 185.

¹⁴ Mann, *Shakespeare's Women*, 3.

adept boy players were, being able to play complex femininity.¹⁵ Indeed, both arguments can be true.¹⁶

While this model of men playing women onstage was a successful theatrical model, it was not without its controversy.¹⁷ Many Puritan preachers – who fell under the umbrella of “anti-theatricals,” hating all aspects of theater – were infuriated by the use of boy players. The basis for this was biblical: “...neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.”¹⁸ They were also convinced that the practice encouraged homosexuality. Philip Stubbes (in 1583) and John Rainolds (in 1599) both wrote about their scruples – Stubbes concerned that playgoers would go home together “very friendly...and play the sodomites, or worse,” and Rainolds warning against the “filthy sparkles of lust to that vice the putting of women's attire on men may kindle in unclean affections.”¹⁹ This was the main thrust of the anti-theatrical attitude of the Renaissance, which likely accounted for the notion that women would add virtue to the stage.

Meanwhile, a political storm began to brew in England during the reigns of James I and Charles I. Both monarchs temporarily dissolved Parliament while on the throne, and by 1629 Parliament was fully dismembered. Charles ruled without Parliament until 1640, when the Scots raised a rebellion. However, the Parliament he assembled was hostile to his rule, and ultimately the forces led by Oliver Cromwell in the English Civil

¹⁵ See Mann, *Shakespeare's Women*, 4 for more complete discussion.

¹⁶ Many of Shakespeare's plays use cross-dressing female characters as a device (*Twelfth Night*, *Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*). While these female characters are complex and rich, they are also heavily gender coded and must be portrayed as stereotype in order to convey an exaggerated performance of gender.

¹⁷ See Jean E. Howard's "Cross-Dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England" in *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-dressing* ed. Lesley Ferris (London: Routledge, 1993), 21.

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 22:5, King James Version.

¹⁹ Bruce R. Smith, ed. *Twelfth Night: Texts and Contexts* (New York: Bedford St Martin's, 2001), p. 275-276.

War (1642-1651) overcame Charles, and he was executed for high treason early in 1649. The “Commonwealth” period, during which time Cromwell and his son served as Lord Protector of the republic, was marked by its strong and severe puritanism. In 1642, the Puritans closed theaters in England. Theater-makers in England responded with a satirical “Actor’s Remonstrance” addressed to “God Phoebus-Apollo” in 1643. Indignant at being shut down, despite attempting to appease Puritanical masses, the anonymous author promises to commit to inflated and hilarious reforms to earn back the right to a source of income:

“Finally, we shall hereafter so demeane our selves as none shall esteeme us of the ungodly, or have cause to repine at our action or interludes: we will not entertaine any Comedian that shall speake his part in a tone, as if hee did it in derision of some of the pious, but reforme all our disorders, and amend all our amisses, so prosper us Phoebus and the nine Muses, and be propitious to this our complaint.”²⁰

When Cromwell’s son succeeded him as Lord Protector in England, he was too weak to uphold his father’s strict hold on the country, and was defeated by friends of Charles II, who had been banished to the continent during the Interregnum, staying mostly in France. Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, initiating the Restoration period in England.²¹

Along with Charles, newly restored to the throne, came the continental sensibilities he grew accustomed to during his banishment. Traditionally, he is described as returning to England to “free his society from the shackles of Puritanism,” bringing along his love for “regularly attending the theatre and engaging mistresses first

²⁰ Anonymous, *The Actors Remonstrance, or Complaint: For the silencing of their profession, and banishment from their severall Play-houses*. Pamphlet. London: Edward Nickson, 1643 (From University of Oregon Library, *Renascence Edition*), 4-5.

²¹ For the purposes of this paper, the term “Restoration” as a period refers to 1660 to about 1720.

noticed on the stage.”²² He reopened the theaters by granting two initial patents, one to William Davenant and his “King’s Servants,” and the other to Henry Killigrew and his “Duke’s Company.”²³ Colley Cibber outlines the events following the re-opening of theaters in his autobiography (1740), describing the “eager appetites from so long a fast” and the advent of the actress as two “critical advantages” actors of the Restoration stage possessed.²⁴ In 1664 Charles sent a letter to both Davenant and Killigrew regarding the use of women actresses:

“...we do hereby straightly charge and command and enjoin that from henceforth no new play shall be acted by either of the said companies containing any passages offensive to piety and good manners.... And we do likewise permit and give leave that all the women’s parts to be acted in either of the said two companies for the time to come may be performed by women, so long as these recreations, which by reason of the abuses aforesaid were scandalous and offensive, may by such reformation be esteemed not only harmless delights but useful and constructive representations of humane life to such of our good subjects as shall resort to see the same”²⁵

In the letter, Charles implied that the introduction of women on the stage would ‘reform’ the theatre. Charles also cleverly found a reason for having female parts played by women that was just as morally undeniable as the original prevention of having them on stage – by arguing that it was just as offensive for the male sex to wear skirts as it was for the female sex to display itself in public.²⁶ The two theaters also retained close links with the king and court particularly during the 1660s and 1670s.²⁷

By the late seventeenth century, England saw a breakdown of rural community structures, predominantly agrarian, and a gradual restructuring of the social order that

²² Ivan Bloch, from *Sexual Life in England Past and Present* (1938) quoted in Pullen, *Actresses and Whores*, 24.

²³ Colley Cibber, and William Hazlitt, *Colley Cibber* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1914), 51.

²⁴ *Idem*, 51-52.

²⁵ Charles II, “Letters Patent for Erecting a New Theatre,” in *A Restoration Reader* ed. Howard James Holly (Port Washington, London: Kennikat Press, 1971), 165-166.

²⁶ Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 89-90.

²⁷ Howe, *First English Actresses*, 6-7.

created much social instability, a consumer society.²⁸ This also caused a general redistribution of wealth and educational opportunities across a much broader spectrum of social classes and individuals.²⁹ Thus, these socioeconomic changes undermined the traditional patriarchal role of the family – indeed, later in the seventeenth century, some women began to plead for education beyond domesticity.³⁰ Actresses seem to fit into this progressive model of the revaluation of women’s status, since they were largely granted the same privileges as actors.³¹ But this is ambiguous: the employment of actresses did not actually coincide with a “broadening of general female participation in public life.”³² In fact, women lost a lot of ground with the socioeconomic changes – so many of the previously ‘female’ occupations were encroached upon by men, and women were less and less likely to run businesses independently from their husbands; as a result, there were few alternatives outside domesticity or prostitution.³³ For the most part, women did not refuse what society still considered their primary calling – the breeding of children and domestic life.³⁴ Few women were able to overcome the narrow parameters of what was acceptable for them to be in the patriarchal society.

Males ruled over females in domestic, ecclesiastical and civil life, so women’s only real response tended to be obedience to the patriarchal system. Wife beating was tolerated and woman’s most intimate space – her soul – was regulated by the

²⁸Susanne Scholz, *Body Narratives: Writing the Nation and Fashioning the Subject in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 4; Jones DeRitter, *The Embodiment of Characters the Representation of Physical Experience on Stage and in Print, 1728-1749*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 3.

²⁹ DeRitter, *The Embodiment of Characters*, 3.

³⁰ Idem, 3; Charlotte F. Otten, *English Women's Voices, 1540-1700*, (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1992), 4.

³¹ Maus, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood,” 600.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Otten, *English Women's Voices* 221.

ecclesiastical male hierarchy.³⁵ Economically, women were abused through desertion or by exploitation; actresses faced this as well – their wages were significantly lower than men’s even though their presence on stage was a large part of Restoration theater’s commercial success.³⁶ As Charlotte Otten argues, it “was assumed by the patriarchy that strategies had to be devised to suppress women and to keep them powerless.”³⁷ The diary of Elizabeth Freke (1671-1714) is a fantastic but dismal example of how women could be taken advantage of economically.³⁸ Her husband, who abandoned her several times over the course of their marriage, confiscated her property, appropriated her money and tried to coerce her into selling her estate so he could purchase property in Ireland. Most of Freke’s life was then spent in poverty.

The Restoration period is also universally characterized by its emphasis on sexuality, at least in the upper social circles. The danger of female sexuality is perhaps most prominent in these circles, since an immense concern of the nobility’s was the preservation of family ties and social status through inheritances. When Charles II made his illegitimate son by Nell Gwyn, Charles Beauclerk, into a duke, “he threatened the sanctity of a genetically “pure” peerage;”³⁹ this threat implicated women’s reproductive power, lower-class as well as upper-class, a power that required checking and suppression.

³⁵ Idem, 11, 15.

³⁶ Idem, 14-15; Howe, *First English Actresses*, 27.

³⁷ Otten, *English Women's Voices*, 15.

³⁸ “Diary of Elizabeth Freke,” in *English Women's Voices*, 22-24.

³⁹ Matthew Shifflett, ““As Newly Ravish'd”: The Actress as Sexual Spectacle in the Late Stuart Theatre,” in *Public Theatres and Theatre Publics*, ed. Robert B. Shimko and Sara Freeman, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 188.

BOY PLAYERS AFTER THE RESTORATION

Interestingly, there was some brief resistance from the pre-Commonwealth actors to recruit new boy players and rekindle the old system of travesti apprenticeship. As a result, for a short period of time it was acceptable for both men and women to play female roles on stage.⁴⁰ The reasons for the discontinuing of the use of boy players are complex and worth exploring. Katherine Maus argues that the “perceived unsuitability of male actors for female roles is really more a symptom than an explanation of changing attitudes,” but offers no explanation herself.⁴¹ Marjorie Garber, however, claims that actresses weren’t brought in to be real women at all:

“the substitution of female actresses for boy actors is not a naturalizing move that returns theater to its desired condition of mimesis, replacing the false boy with the real woman. It is, instead, a double substitution – a re-recognition of artifice – something tacitly acknowledged by Restoration critics when they praised the women for playing female roles almost as well as the boy actresses did...”⁴²

Garber’s claim is an extremely fascinating one, and is certainly supported by the way actresses were treated on stage and the roles written for them. The success of actresses over boy players is also a noteworthy angle, though the usual explanation is that women more plausibly portrayed females on stage, which is problematic since it necessarily assumes that “naturalism is an obvious and desirable goal in theatrical representation”; “naturalism,” though, is a historically and culturally conditioned ideal, and to apply it to the Restoration would be anachronistic.⁴³ For male actors, especially boy actors, this meant that some major adjusting had to occur. Male Restoration actors

⁴⁰ Mann, *Shakespeare's Women*, 2.

⁴¹ Maus, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood,” 597.

⁴² Marjorie B. Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 126.

⁴³ Maus, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood,” 595-596. “Naturalism” as a theatrical movement did not occur until the nineteenth century.

began to have a reduced pool of roles to choose from, playing only male characters – though they might play “in skirts” (in comedic female roles) for a broad comic effect, as in the Renaissance.⁴⁴ Masculinity in male roles became more definitive and limited with the rise of the actress, and was reinforced by patriarchal society at large.

The last famous boy player was Edward Kynaston, whose specialty was the “pathetic heroine.”⁴⁵ Pepys saw Kynaston perform on more than one occasion, then in his twenties, and described him as both the “prettiest woman in the whole house” and as the “handsomest man in the house,” suggesting a sense of male desire on Pepys’ part.⁴⁶ John Genest called him a “compleat stage beauty” and wondered whether any woman that succeeded him could have “touched the audience so sensibly as he had done.”⁴⁷ But within a few years it was already passé and anachronistic to use boy players, and Kynaston was fortunate enough to possess enough talent to play engaging male roles until he retired in 1699. His unique position of shifting from female to male roles shows how more than one version of masculinity and femininity could function at a time, as well as how gender, both masculinity and femininity, was re-codified by the Restoration theater.

III. THE EFFECT OF ACTRESSES ON DRAMATIC LITERATURE

There can be no question that the introduction of the actress was the biggest and most important influence on the dramatic literature and performance of Restoration

⁴⁴ Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 132.

⁴⁵ Haggerty, “The Queen Was Not Shav’d Yet,” 312.

⁴⁶ Samuel Pepys, William Matthews, and Robert Latham, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 2 ed, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 7. Entry from Jan. 7, 1661.

⁴⁷ John Genest, *Some account of the English stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*, (New York: B. Franklin, 1965), 31.

Theater. The new actresses hardly brought a feminine delicacy or compassion to the theater, as might have been expected. Thomas Killigrew promised that “female fictions embodied by beardless women” would be “useful and instructive.”⁴⁸ Instead, they had much to do with the persistent cynicism in writing and performance, as well as a streak of self-conscious exhibitionism, and it can only be concluded that the chief effect of women on dramatic literature was to push it in the direction of sex and sensuality.⁴⁹

There was little attempt to create righteous, high-minded female roles at the beginning of the Restoration period. Actresses really had very little to do with the development of female roles at all – playwrights and theatre-owners largely manipulated the development of female roles. The “sexual realism” of real women portraying onstage females proved popular and immediately erupted into the generation of new types of plays.⁵⁰ Richard Steele, author of the daily publication *The Spectator*, commented on the capability of women to improve a dull play:

I, who know nothing of women but from seeing plays, can give great guesses at the whole structure of the fair sex, by being innocently placed in the pit, and insulted by the petticoats of their dancers; the advantages of whose pretty persons are a great help to a dull play. When a poet flags in writing lusciously, a pretty girl can move lasciviously, and have the same good consequences for the author.”⁵¹

It is very clear from this statement, as well as the types of roles written for new actresses that the actress quickly became useful on stage as an exploitable sex object.⁵² Entries from Samuel Pepy’s diary indicate how theatrical tastes were changing

⁴⁸ Elin Diamond, "Gestus and Signature in 'The Rover,'" (*ELH* 56:1989), 522.

⁴⁹ Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 89; Maus, "Playhouse Flesh and Blood," 598; Kavenik, *British Drama*, 25.

⁵⁰ Shifflett, "As Newly Ravish'd," 190.

⁵¹ Richard Steele, quoted in Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 91.

⁵² Interestingly, the first professional female playwright, Aphra Behn had no qualms with exploiting her sex in explicit sex scenes in her comedies and seems to have been especially fond of inserting bedroom scenes and

from the spectator's point of view. In September of 1662, he saw Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, a hugely popular play pre-Restoration, at the King's Theatre and abhorred it, calling it an "insipid, ridiculous play;" what he did enjoy was the "good dancing and handsome women."⁵³ He also remarks on a production of Thomas Killigrew's *The Parson's Wedding* in October of 1664 that was acted by an all-female cast; he describes it as a "bawdy, loose play" but he was quite "glad of it."⁵⁴ It would seem that this bawdiness was encouraged right from the beginning of the Restoration period by theater-makers.

Whatever the type of play, the actress' most important quality was her beauty; many actresses were required to do little more than pose on stage in order to be gazed upon and desired by male characters and spectators.⁵⁵ There was a very early tendency to exploit the actress, and indeed it was a first consequence of her "visible assets – her shoulders and breasts were a valuable commodity" in an age of full-length dresses.⁵⁶ Actresses wore loose shifts and lacy décolletage under corsets – making her spine straight and her breasts prominent; this was similar to what women in the court would wear, though unlike the high-necked frocks that the majority of lower class women wore.⁵⁷ A device invented for Restoration theater was the "bosom as letterbox" – concealing a letter in one's bodice is a recurring incident, primarily drawing comic

characters in an 'undress' into earlier dramas, even though her plays often assert the rights of women in a patriarchal society (Howe, *First English Actresses*, 55).

⁵³ Samuel Pepys, "Diary of a Playgoer," in *A Restoration Reader*, 167. Entry from Sept. 29, 1664.

⁵⁴ Idem, 289, 294. Entries from Oct. 4, 1664 and Oct. 11, 1664.

⁵⁵ Howe, *First English Actresses*, 39.

⁵⁶ Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 92.

⁵⁷ Idem, 99.

attention to a lady's *décolletage*.⁵⁸ A different device that emerged was the "couch scene," in which the actress would lay enticingly, as well as defenseless – used in John Crowne's *The History of Charles the Eighth of France* (1671) and Samuel Pordage's *Herod and Mariamne* (1671).⁵⁹ These devices are complicated in terms of gender roles: while these actresses and the characters they played onstage were being exploited for their bodies, there is also a degree of empowerment in their transgressions of traditional femininity, especially in the "bosom as letterbox" ploy.

Sexual exploitation of the actress manifested most violently in a device used increasingly by Restoration playwrights – that of portrayals of rape in tragedy. It became for the first time a 'major feature' of Restoration English tragedy - it appeared quite regularly in plays after Thomas Porter's *The Villain* (1662), but from 1594-1625 it occurred in only 9 plays.⁶⁰ Rape was used to give an otherwise pure, virginal heroine a sexual quality as an effective means for exposing female flesh. In this way, it fused "arousal and titillation with spectacles of sexual violence."⁶¹ In the beginning of John Dryden's *Amboyna* (1673), the heroine is dragged off, raped, and tied to a tree with her breasts exposed.⁶² By the 1680s, a whole sub-genre had developed, that of "she-tragedy," that centered on the pathetic victimization of a virtuous but suffering female protagonist.⁶³ It is unclear from playwrights what the primary objective was for audience reactions to portrayals of rape on stage, but it is most likely that titillation at the carnality

⁵⁸ Idem, 92.

⁵⁹ Howe, *First English Actresses*, 39.

⁶⁰ Idem, 43.

⁶¹ Shifflett, "As Newly Ravish'd," 191.

⁶² Howe, *First English Actresses*, 45.

⁶³ Idem, 39; Haggerty, "The Queen Was Not Shav'd Yet," 311.

and subjugation of women showed onstage gratified specific male desires related to the bawdy behavior of the audience themselves.

But women's effect on comedy was much more significant, and most scholarship agrees that women enormously extended the scope of the sexual comedy that would develop into the genre we call "Restoration Comedy." In this genre, actresses were especially empowered by the roles they played, which were particularly transgressive – female characters in comedies were strong, manipulative, sexual beings. This genre is marked by its sexual explicitness and moral subversion, a huge departure from earlier decades. The issue of marriage arises repeatedly in plays and verse of the period, reflecting the male dominance over Restoration women – not only was the typical marriage loveless, but once married, the female characters lose both independent identity and control of their fortunes.⁶⁴ A significant quantity of Restoration comedy deals with a "perception of sexual inequalities in society," taking small steps in the direction of social progress in terms of gender.⁶⁵ However, Restoration theater was still governed by the "provocation and satisfaction of male sexual pleasure" – male promiscuity had become the national institution within which actresses had to function, so progress was quite limited.⁶⁶ Comedy is also, however, characterized by its attention to the individual actors and actresses – this was the age of *performer's* theater, as opposed to that of the dramatist or director.⁶⁷ One of the indicators of the nature of Restoration comedy was the development of personalized prologues and epilogues, spoken primarily by

⁶⁴ Diamond, "Gestus and Signature," 525.

⁶⁵ Howe, *First English Actresses*, 174.

⁶⁶ Alison Findlay, Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, and Gweno Williams, *Women and Dramatic Production, 1550-1700*, (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), 140.

⁶⁷ Howe, *First English Actresses*, 17-18, 66.

actresses, creating familiarity between player and spectator.⁶⁸ These personalized speeches gave actresses a large degree of independence in comedies – their personalities were given a chance to shine for their audience, and in introducing and concluding comedies, actresses had the opportunity to comment on the plays – as such, they ruled the genre.

BREECHES ROLES

As the model of Renaissance male travesti practice became outdated and undesirable, the same logic did not hold for female travesti practice. The Restoration saw the development of a new type of female role: the breeches role. The term “breeches role” encompasses *both* characters that were female and cross-dressing in the context of the play as well as male characters that were simply played by women in a specific production. Nearly a quarter – 89 of 375 – of plays produced from 1660-1700 featured or utilized the device of a breeches role.⁶⁹ Indeed, a large number of new plays were contrived specifically to feature an actress in provocative breeches – a sensational way to display as much of the female anatomy as possible. Marion Jones provides the most concise progression of the types of roles that appeared during the Restoration period:

“First, of course, came revivals of old plays with parts written for boys playing women, where the plot demanded assumption of male disguises at times during the action: with the advent of actresses, titillating denouements with bared bosoms and flowing tresses became popular, and new plays were written to exploit this ‘disguise penetrated’ motif. Next... came the ‘roaring-girl’ type of part, where the heroine adopted men’s clothes as a free expression of her vivacious nature: prologues and epilogues were sometimes given

⁶⁸ *Idem*, 91.

⁶⁹ *Idem*, 57; Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 134.

by favourite actresses in men's clothes with no other apparent reason than to provide the same arbitrary thrill."⁷⁰

The practice proved an immensely powerful playhouse attraction and popular with audiences.⁷¹ A state of dress, titillating both by "mere fact of a woman's being boldly and indecorously dressed male costume and, of course, by the costume suggestively outlining the actress's hips, buttocks and legs," could be as erotic as the state of undress, and was an easy way to entertain audiences.⁷² It also provided a useful opportunity for the exposure of the actor's true sex – a revelation that sometimes included exposing breasts on stage. Some of the notable comedies that took advantage of the "necessary revealing of the breeches-wearer" scenes were Thomas Rawlins' *Tom Essence* (1677), Wycherly's *The Plain Dealer* (1677), and Aphra Behn's *The Younger Brother* (1696).

It seems that as long as the novelty of using a cross-dressed actress outweighed the importance of the actual portrayal of a man, "realness" onstage was degraded as a central characteristic of theater. Indeed, there was no attempt to portray anything other than a stylized masculinity, and it was "central to the effect that the actress's femininity showed through."⁷³ As Jean Howard argues, actresses were depicted as anatomically different from men, and their lack of "masculine perfection" justified their subordination to the male figure.⁷⁴ Pepys, in February of 1663, noted his observation at a performance his discernment of Moll Davis in disguise: "in boy's apparel, she having very fine legs,

⁷⁰ Marion Jones, 'Actors and Repertory', in *The Revels History of Drama in English*, Volume V, 1660-1750 (London, 1976), 148-149.

⁷¹ Shapiro, "Delay or Defensiveness?" 187; Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 134.

⁷² Howe, *First English Actresses*, 56.

⁷³ Pat Rogers, "The Breeches Role," in *Sexuality in Eighteenth Century Britain*, ed. Boucé, 255.

⁷⁴ Howard, "Cross-Dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle," 24.

only bends in the hams, as I perceive all women do.”⁷⁵ Actresses who undertook these roles did not risk losing any glamour or sex appeal, but usually faced quite the opposite.⁷⁶ The cross-dressed actress seems to constitute a “historical possibility for pleasure in sexual and gender ambiguities.”⁷⁷ As such, cross-dressed actresses also represented a social threat in their transgression – gender was not supposed to be ambiguous, but largely binary at this time. This transgression was certainly empowering for actresses, who were allowed and encouraged to play male characters and embrace the sexual freedom of males in front of an audience and contravene sexual roles.

In medieval and early modern periods sumptuary laws existed that attempted to regulate who wore what, and on what occasion.⁷⁸ These were put in place in part to prevent the flaunting of wealth through “conspicuous consumption” as well as to place boundaries on class – displays of the incorrect social designation was transgressive, and violations of the rules of apparel break down class distinctions.⁷⁹ However, travesti actors were allowed to violate these laws governing dress and social station on the “safe space” of the stage during the Renaissance and beyond.⁸⁰ In this way, transgression was checked by the especially insular nature of the theater during the Restoration. Cross-dressing threatened the strictly normative social patriarchal

⁷⁵ Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 138. Entry from Feb. 23, 1663.

⁷⁶ Rogers, “The Breeches Role,” 249.

⁷⁷ Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 127.

⁷⁸ Garber, *Vested Interests*, 21.

⁷⁹ Ibid; Howard, “Cross-Dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle,” 23.

⁸⁰ Garber, *Vested Interests*, 35; Historically, the theater has been a safe-house for “unconventional behavior.” Although its public nature has required it to endorse norms, its space is specially licensed to harbor unorthodox individuals and otherwise inadmissible conduct [Laurence Senelick, *Gender in Performance: the Presentation of Difference in the Performing Arts* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992), xi.]

hierarchy, and by displaying it on stage through the increasingly popular travesti roles it was visible to a degree in public society.

This makes the rise of the breeches role that much more paradoxical – and created the need to subjugate the transgressors. Since cross-dressing women in society were linked with prostitution and sexual appetite, it is easy to see how actresses were similarly linked and branded.⁸¹ Requiring actresses in breeches roles to show off their legs, and often expose their breasts in revealing their true sex, kept them in a constant territory of novelty or cheap thrill. So while they were hugely empowered by playing breeches roles, actresses who did so were still suppressed by playwrights and theater owners, as well as by the paying public, through the over-sexualization of breeches roles.

THE PLAIN DEALER

William Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer* (1677) is one of the most famous Restoration comedies, and considered Wycherley's masterpiece along with another comedy of his, *The Country Wife* (1675). *The Plain Dealer* is much more obscene both visually and in language than his other comedies, and was condemned by many of his more conservative contemporaries. The play is full of overtly sexual content, with both male and female characters jilting, seducing, and wickedly manipulating each other. In the play, the sea-captain Manly gets revenge on his unfaithful lover Olivia with the help of the disguised Fidelia (camouflaged in breeches). As is characteristic of many Restoration comedies, the names of the characters are allegorical – Manly, the main

⁸¹ Howard, "Cross-Dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle," 21-22.

character, is stereotypically proud, surly, and self-righteous despite being blind to his intended bride Olivia's infidelity: she is secretly married to his best friend Vernish. Olivia is ironically named, the name meaning the offering of an olive branch, while Fidelity's character is quite aptly named, being completely faithful to Manly, to whom she is entirely devoted.

In breeches disguise, Fidelity acts as Manly's right-hand-man, helping him to see and understand how Olivia is betraying him through a convoluted plot involving midnight trysts and white lies that spin out of control. In the play, marriage is exploited for attempts at manipulation of fortunes, rather than made for love or romance; this is shown in the appropriation of Manly's fortune by Olivia through an engagement agreement, as well as the marriage proposal from young Freeman to the rich Widow Blackacre.⁸² In the course of the action, Olivia throws herself at the disguised Fidelity, Manly (who at this point hates Olivia) sleeps with Olivia under the guise of a younger man, and having discovered Fidelity's true sex Vernish tries to sleep with her; all three meetings are typical of the liberal sexual liaisons of Restoration comedies.⁸³ Both Olivia and Vernish find out about each other's sexual connections and become greatly offended.⁸⁴ At the climax of the action, a fight is about to ensue when Fidelity faints, putting herself in a vulnerable state (much like the "couch scenes" utilized in many tragedies) and is discovered when Manly tries to revive her, affording an opportunity for

⁸²William Wycherley, *The Plain Dealer*, ed. Leo Hughes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 1.1.529-548, pg. 33-34; 2.1.913-954, pg. 72-73.

⁸³ Idem, 4.1.94-103, pg. 110; 4.1.110-118, pg. 110; 4.2.375-410, pg. 399-400.

⁸⁴ Idem, 5.1.64-72, pg. 141; 5.2.125-156, pg. 150-151.

the revelation of her true sex.⁸⁵ In the end, Fidelia confesses all, but there is no marriage to establish a resolution – Manly simply offers, “then, take forever my heart.”⁸⁶ With all of these characteristics in mind, is easy to see how *The Plain Dealer* makes an effective case study for Restoration comedy and the ways that female characters were crafted for early English actresses.

IV. THE RESTORATION AUDIENCE AND THE ACTRESS HERSELF

The makeup of the audience of Restoration Theater is a highly contentious area among extant scholarship. While it is tempting to think that Restoration theater was enjoyed by a large variety of people from the different echelons of society, as Frances Kavenik argues, it seems much more likely that at least the early Restoration audiences were made up mostly of the Restoration court, though lower classes attended to some smaller degree.⁸⁷ On the societal spectrum there was the majority of the population, whose sexual lives were dramatically circumscribed by puritanism, domestic and economic reasons.⁸⁸ At the other end was the Restoration court, which was mostly male, whose sexual libertinism and licentiousness was ubiquitous.⁸⁹ The Court was made up of nobility and the evolving bourgeoisie, and in contrast to the rest of society were liberated and empowered by their promiscuity. The playhouses were on a

⁸⁵ *Idem*, 5.3.85, pg. 168.

⁸⁶ *Idem*, 5.3.122, pg. 169.

⁸⁷ Kavenik, *British Drama*, 19. She argues that the variety of theater-goers included “royalty and courtiers, gentlemen and women, foreign visitors, wealthy merchants and their wives, middle-class tradesmen, apprentices, lawyers, Freemasons, soldiers, sailors, and a sprinkling of pickpockets and prostitutes” from the beginning.

⁸⁸ Roy Porter, “Mixed Feelings: The Enlightenment and Sexuality,” in *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain* ed. Paul Boucé (Totowa, N.J.: Manchester University Press, 1982), 2-3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Pepys is a prime reflection of court life, following the pattern of sexual promiscuity set by his sovereign lord.

“pleasure circuit” that included brothels and gaming-houses; there is no reason to doubt that playwrights aimed their humor at the highest social level and better-paying audience members.⁹⁰ All of the evidence points to a significant distinction about Restoration theater – the social range of its audience was the narrowest in the history of public theater, and this ‘homogeneity’ allowed author and audience to create inside jokes for themselves in their social comedies.⁹¹ Based on Colley Cibber’s account, this narrow audience was very receptive of Davenant’s and Killigrew’s new companies – he describes the “publick’s high estimation, delight particular support, and concern of the court” and “personal cognizance” of the royalty to theatrical issues.⁹²

The audience also enjoyed the drama of Restoration theater on two levels – as spectators of the onstage action and as participants in their own drama in the boxes and pit. Very unlike today’s reverent hush convention, audiences in this period were lively, loud, and often uncommonly ill-behaved – it was normal for spectators to jump onstage, or occasionally fight duels during the play, and for the girls selling oranges to the crowd to rival the onstage action with their sales.⁹³ Most of the women in the audience also participated in the act of theatrical disguise – mask and fan were important among a lady’s personal accouterments – and women took to wearing whole-face masks, seductively obscuring the reality beneath.⁹⁴ In this way, female performance was not limited to the actresses on stage. A large proportion of theater-goers in this period were

⁹⁰ Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 7. Pullen, *Actresses and Whores*, 38.

⁹¹ Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 7.

⁹² Cibber, *Colley Cibber*, 51

⁹³ Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 8-10; Howe, *First English Actresses*, 7.

⁹⁴ Styan, *Restoration Comedy in Performance*, 107-118; Maus, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood,” 609-610.

regular patrons, and would know each other as well as members of both companies, and thus very familiar with the modes of drama and players' specialties.⁹⁵

The actress made a notably later appearance on the public stage in England than many European countries. Women had been acting in France, Italy and Spain by the latter half of the sixteenth century, yet it took until the latter half of the seventeenth century to relinquish the convention of boy players in England.⁹⁶ The possible reasons for the lateness of the arrival of actresses are numerous but largely unexplored – but the preservation of traditions seems the most plausible. The all-male tradition of European theater, at first upheld by Greeks, Romans and Italians, was attractive to English theater companies before the Restoration, and the apprenticeship system that trained actors was ideal for perpetuating itself.⁹⁷ Men were also eager to preserve acting as a site for male employment.⁹⁸ However, with the distraction of the Civil War and Interregnum – during which public theater itself was disrupted – it is easy to see how the actress, with Charles II's help, was finally able to be received in England without much controversy.

The actress herself unfortunately has no voice to inform current scholarship – because of the extreme lack of sources she remains a cipher.⁹⁹ The accuracy of the scanty extant biographical information is dubious, but most early Restoration actresses likely came from the “ranks of “dowerless daughters” of the genteel poor, that is, from impoverished middle-class families and some cases from royalist families ruined by the

⁹⁵ Howe, *First English Actresses*, 7, 91.

⁹⁶ *Idem*, 19.

⁹⁷ Shapiro, “Delay or Defensiveness?” 178-186.

⁹⁸ *Idem*, 185.

⁹⁹ Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 12.

civil war.¹⁰⁰ The recruitment of actresses was also problematic because no woman with serious pretensions to respectability would tolerate a stage career, and yet the profession demanded more than women of the brothel class – memorizing lines, singing, dancing, and emulating a lady’s behavior – leaving a narrow middle stratum of society from which actresses could be drawn.¹⁰¹ There is evidence to suggest that at least the very famous actresses, like Elizabeth Barry, Anne Bracegirdle, and Susanna Verbruggen, were not able to sustain traditional marriages, often participating as mistresses for men of the Court.¹⁰² Nell Gwyn, arguably the most remembered actress of the Restoration stage (though perhaps more for her title as “mistress to the monarch,” Charles II), was the daughter of a “fruiterer in Covent Garden” and a testament to how lower-class women could change their lot through acting.¹⁰³

Many actresses often did become involved in sexual liaisons with male spectators, and a few even became prostitutes on leaving the stage. There were a few, however, who were praised for fending off their admirers, like Anne Bracegirdle.¹⁰⁴ She is suspected of secretly marrying playwright William Congreve, who had been keeping her as a mistress, but there is no actual record of it. She was known for her offstage virtue, making her more fit for innocent female characters. However, the link between the “actress” and the “whore” is a matter that needs some discussion. According to traditional histories, actresses were largely called “whores” but the term itself is problematic. As Kirsten Pullen argues, “historical narratives may limit the understanding

¹⁰⁰ Shapiro, “Delay or Defensiveness?” 188-189.

¹⁰¹ Howe, *First English Actresses*, 8.

¹⁰² Shapiro, “Delay or Defensiveness?” 189.

¹⁰³ William Oldys, “Some Account of Mrs. Gwyn,” in *A Restoration Reader*, 132.

¹⁰⁴ Shapiro, “Delay or Defensiveness?” 189.

of agency and power in the lives of historical subjects” by extirpating the possibility they exercised some control over their lives.¹⁰⁵ Further, she suggests that the link between whores and actresses is an anachronistic reading of “whore,” arguing that “accusations of whorishness might better be regarded as discursive limits to female agency rather than empirical truth” – the term “whore” applied to so many Restoration actresses mitigates the threat posed by their socially and sexually transgressive behavior on stage.¹⁰⁶ Using this reading of the term “whore,” there is still the potential of empowerment for actresses; acknowledging actresses as a threat that required mitigation recognizes that they possessed a degree of power. Labeling actresses as whores, Pullen goes on, was an attempt to “limit the threat to class hierarchy their position as aristocratic mistresses indicated as well as downplay their entry into the public sphere,” as well as insuring that “focus remained on their sexuality, not on their professional status or possible influence on statecraft.”¹⁰⁷

By the end of the seventeenth century, the way the English public was seeing the actor or actress was shifting. The actress’ very existence “belied the boundaries between the public and the private.”¹⁰⁸ Rather than the anonymous individual without validation of their name on a playbill, the actress, as well as the actor to a lesser degree, was surfacing as a personality, an object of public curiosity and celebrity.¹⁰⁹ As such, Restoration Theater didn’t really challenge actors to conform to fictional roles; instead it

¹⁰⁵ Pullen, *Actresses and Whores*, 23.

¹⁰⁶ *Idem*, 24.

¹⁰⁷ *Idem*, 25.

¹⁰⁸ Shifflett, “As Newly Ravish’d,” 187.

¹⁰⁹ Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 24; Maus, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood,” 598. This change probably had to do with the larger cultural shift of the rise of the novel and the new fascination with individual character and individual psychology (Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 24).

provided empowering opportunities for actors' and actresses' self-expression, as well as a "unique celebration of female personality."¹¹⁰ Despite the difference in backgrounds, actresses would have felt comfortable around these figures because they were largely portraying the behavior and antics of the Restoration Court. Many actresses became mistresses to members of the Court, resulting in a clique-like atmosphere in theaters during the early Restoration. Within this privileged society, there was a much higher degree of sexual freedom across genders and classes that wasn't experienced by the majority of the English people. This sort of sexual freedom in their personal lives accorded actresses quite a bit of power that wasn't accorded to other women, but these actresses were also confined to their small social circles and were thus less offensive to the patriarchal hegemony.

V. PUBLIC REACTION AND DEBATE

As many scholars have noted, there is a surprising lack of evidence for any public reaction to the new phenomenon of the English actresses, other than the focus on their sexuality. Pippa Guard examines this particular issue, noting that there is no evidence of the kind of attacks that the first actresses might have inspired from anti-theatrical Puritans, nor is there any suggestion of a debate among the educated gentry that attended early Restoration theater companies.¹¹¹ Indeed, avid theater-goer Samuel Pepys only wrote a single sentence to mark the moment when he first "saw women come upon the stage" in January 1661: "...And after that, I to the Theatre, where was

¹¹⁰ Maus, "Playhouse Flesh and Blood," 599.

¹¹¹ Pippa Guard, "A Defence of the First English Actress," (*Literature and History* 15, no. 2: 2006), 1.

acted Beggars bush – it being very well done; and here the first time that ever I saw Women come upon the stage.”¹¹² There are only a handful of contemporary references to the first extant actresses, and only three known sources that meditate at any length on her arrival.¹¹³ These are Thomas Jordan’s 1664 “Prologue to Moor of Venice,” the revised 1662 patent from Charles II (which allowed two theater companies to reopen and resume business), and Richard Walden’s ‘Io Ruminans’ written between 1661 and 1664.

Thomas Jordan, who wrote a prologue apparently for a performance of Othello in 1660, introduces “the first Woman that came to Act on the Stage.” His prologue implies that spectators’ first reaction would be to wonder about the morals of a woman who allowed herself to pursue such a profession:

“Do you not twitter Gentlemen? I know
 You will be censuring, do’t fairly though;
 ‘Tis possible a vertuous woman may
 Abhor all sorts of looseness, and yet play;
 Play on the Stage, where all eyes are upon her,
 Shall we count that a crime France calls an honour?”

But in the epilogue, Jordan calls for open minds of the audience, in order not to detract other women from taking the stage, for this first reception was critical:

“As far from being what you call a Whore,
 As Desdemona injur’d by the Moor;
 Then he that censures her in such a case
 Hath a soul blacker then Othello’s face:
 But Ladies what think you? For if you tax
 Her freedom with dishonor to your Sex,
 She means to act no more, and this shall be
 No other Play but her own Tragedy;
 She will submit to none but your commands,

¹¹² Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 5. Entry from Jan. 3, 1661.

¹¹³ Guard, “A Defence of the First English Actress,” 1.

And take Commission onely from your hands.”¹¹⁴

From this prologue and epilogue set, it would seem that the earliest plays featuring women were not as bawdy as they would become in the next few years. This is probably because many of the early Restoration performances were of plays written before the Restoration period, and thus had a very different flavor; Shakespearean dramas couldn't be further from Restoration comedies in terms of content, style, character types, and language. This early limited bawdiness on stage is echoed in Charles II's letters patent.

These letters patent from Charles II to Davenant and Killigrew in 1662 contain the next reference to the arrival of the English actress. In the letters, quoted fully above, Charles II not only officially sanctioned the re-opening of the theaters conditionally, but officially decreed that “henceforth women should play women's parts.”¹¹⁵ Much of the patent seems to be euphemized for the public, though, since the King himself very much encouraged and took part in the often profane or scandalous lifestyle reflected in many plays of the Restoration. Indeed, many of the plays written during the Restoration period would have been considered quite explicit, containing overt sexual content not previously sanctioned, compared to past plays of the Renaissance and before.

Io Ruminans, a poem which is a defense of the stage and the actress, is the third and most sustained discussion of the new actress phenomenon, but it is a source both unpublished and unavailable. Guard, however, summarizes the poem, written in three parts between 1661 and 1664 by Richard Walden. Anne Gibbs (who married and

¹¹⁴Thomas Jordan, *A royal arbor of loyal poesie: consisting of poems and songs digested into triumph, elegy, satyr, love, & drollery*, (London: Printed by R. Wood for Eliz. Andrews, 1664), 21-23.

¹¹⁵ Howe, *First English Actresses*, 25.

became better known as Anne Shadwell) was considerably more respectable as a professional in her field than many of her peers, acting in Sir William Davenant's Duke's Company and maintaining her reputation for virtue, despite acting mostly in comedies.¹¹⁶ Largely a defense of Anne Gibbs, a particular actress for whom Walden seemed to have had a lot of regard, *Io Ruminans* constructs the actress as both a “highly skilled professional and a paragon of domestic virtue,” a “kind of priestess of the temple, and her performance of virtue, both publicly and privately, is essential to her function.”¹¹⁷ Walden’s poem decisively expresses the model of “virtuous professionalism,” to which the new actress should aim.¹¹⁸

With only these few contemporary references to the first actresses on the English public stage, and no evidence of any protest, it is difficult to come to any conclusions about the general public opinion surrounding the arrival of actresses. Pepys describes a performance he saw in February of 1661, briefly highlighting how the performance by the actress enhanced his play-viewing experience:

“...Thence the two others and I, after a great dispute whether to go, we went by water to Salisbury-court Play-house; where not liking to sit, we went out again and by coach to the Theatre and there saw *The Scorneful Lady*, now done by a woman, which makes the play appear much better then ever it did to me.”¹¹⁹

But as Elizabeth Howe argues, women were not accepted as automatically superior to boys in the performance of female roles: the way that female characters were written by Shakespeare and other pre-Restoration playwrights indicates that boys were able to portray complex female characters and there is evidence to suggest that the audiences

¹¹⁶ Kate Bennett, "Oxford DNB article: Shadwell, Thomas." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, accessed December 3, 2012, www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/25195.

¹¹⁷ Guard, "A Defence of the First English Actress," 7, 15-16.

¹¹⁸ *Idem*, 16.

¹¹⁹ Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 35. Entry from Feb. 12, 1662.

had little to complain about with regard to their performances.¹²⁰ Considering this, it is quite surprising that there was so little commotion in reaction to the first women on stage.

VI. THE EMERGING FEMININE SEXUALITY AND THE 'GAZE'

Even from the beginning of the Restoration period, there was a marked obsession with the sexual nature and behavior of women in general. Pamphlets, poems, prefaces, reviews, and dramatic materials alike all focus incessantly on the sexual nature and behavior of women in the theaters, both on stage and in the audience.¹²¹ This apparently new emphasis on feminine sexuality and identity becomes the 'other' as defined against the corresponding masculine sexuality. It also empowers the actress to a degree, acknowledging her greater freedom of sexuality and the clout that goes along with that. Additionally, it necessitates the struggle for the "continuance of male dominance" through the subjugation of the actress.¹²² This struggle manifested both in males' exploitation of the actress and in a containment of their sexualization through the narrow nature of Restoration Theater.

Initially, many conservatives with antitheatrical tendencies had hoped that women's presence onstage would influence English drama to eliminate "obscene and corrupt aspects... and encourage the adoption of purer standards for theatrical spectacle;" by this logic, actresses were introduced in order to help the dramatic arts with their virtue, and this sentiment was echoed, sincerely or not, in Charles' letters

¹²⁰ Howe, *First English Actresses*, 19.

¹²¹ Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 5.

¹²² Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 21.

patent.¹²³ The actress was in a unique position, much more empowered than women in the general society, with her claim to public notice and professional participation in a male-dominated public sphere. But the connection between prostitution, or exhibition of female sexuality, and the theater had always been a strong one, so the suspicions that quickly arose surrounding theater and prostitution during the Restoration can be “considered two manifestations of the same anxiety.”¹²⁴

The Restoration audience’s concern with actresses’ sexuality is notable from contemporaries like John Dryden on.¹²⁵ Thus, the “representation of women became of necessity a representation of sexuality” onstage, which carried serious social and political implications: sociopolitical stability was dependent on patrilineal control of female sexuality, through their ability to produce legitimate lines of inheritance.¹²⁶ The theatrical aspects of sexuality – “the possibility of feminine seductiveness and deception” – threatened the hierarchical system and the means by which power and property were handed down.¹²⁷ With this in mind, women expressing sexuality onstage made a perfect storm for patriarchal hierarchy. Jean Marsden’s description of the inevitability of female sexuality as a paramount social issue is the most succinct: “with the preservation of property and privilege dependent on male control of female sexuality, *unrestrained women represented the potential for complete social*

¹²³ Maus, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood,” 597.

¹²⁴ Idem, 602-603.

¹²⁵ Idem, 601. John Dryden (1631-1700) was a massively influential English poet, literary critic, translator, and playwright who dominated Restoration England’s literary circles.

¹²⁶ Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 5.

¹²⁷ Maus, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood,” 612; Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 5.

*disintegration.*¹²⁸ These were the stakes for actresses of the Restoration, and the motivation for the patriarchal society to keep them in line.

Theater always reflects reality, but the Restoration stage held up a mirror only to the “glittering surface of society represented by the beau monde.”¹²⁹ It embodied the rampant sexual misbehavior, and the related drunkenness, intrigue, and mischief that dominated the court of the early Restoration. And the performances were likely more bawdy than the texts themselves, already full of lewdness – the desire to arouse was “matched by a self-conscious desire to shock.”¹³⁰ Thus theater becomes dangerous not only as representation, but as a representation before an audience.¹³¹

The “gaze of the audience” has always carried serious social implications for spectatorship. However, considering the nature of the rise of the Restoration actresses, the ‘gaze’ complicates gender issues – even more so since it is more of a representative and symbolic area than something concrete and physical. The performance of gender also becomes complicated when placed on stage – actors must be concerned with conveying not their personal gender code but a “set of signals that are at once more abstract and more graphic than those transmitted in standard social intercourse.”¹³² The inscription of gender as “allure,” becomes one of theater’s most potent attractions and most dangerous features.¹³³ Since audiences after 1660 were largely male-dominated, the ‘gaze’ of the audience was controlled by the male, collectively, causing the woman on stage to become its object, and a commodity displayed for “erotic impact” for both

¹²⁸ Idem, 13. Emphasis mine.

¹²⁹ Hanford, *A Restoration Reader*, 163.

¹³⁰ Ibid; Porter “Mixed Feelings,” 3.

¹³¹ Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 22.

¹³² Senelick, *Gender in Performance*, ix.

¹³³ Idem, xii.

the characters within the play and those in the audience.¹³⁴ A commodity available to the 'gaze' becomes marketable, and this is precisely what happened when women took the stage.

This also carries implications for female audience members – how they were affected by the sexualized portrayal of women onstage could influence their own sexuality. As Kristina Straub argues, the gender hierarchy in place “legitimizes the spectatorial rights of male audience members over female,” and thus also legitimizes the commodification of actresses.¹³⁵ The new “pattern of public intimacy” also invited a voyeuristic interest in actresses’ lives, and helped to codify “eroticized visual dynamics” in Restoration Theater.¹³⁶ The erotic commodification of Restoration actresses subjugates them by placing a higher value on their feminine sexuality than on their abilities or talents in their profession.

After 1660, theater was a highly visual medium, even more so than it had been before the English Civil War. It used spectacles of all kinds to attract audiences – it was “on the stage, not on the page, that drama’s potential to sway public emotion could be realized” – often this spectacle was achieved through making a show of actresses and their sexuality.¹³⁷ Almost-contemporary theater-maker Colley Cibber remarked on the way this kind of spectacle was received and encouraged by audiences:

“...the additional objects then of real, beautiful women, could not but draw a proportion of new admirers to the theatre... And however gravely we may assert, that profit ought always to be inseparable from the delight of the theatre... how can we hope that so choice a commodity will come to a market where there is so seldom a demand for it? It is not to the actor, therefore, but to

¹³⁴ Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 8. A tangential but fascinating matter is what the gaze of the audience meant for pre-Restoration boy players and the erotic impact of their objectification.

¹³⁵ Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 8.

¹³⁶ Shifflett, "As Newly Ravish'd," 187-188.

¹³⁷ Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 8-9.

the vitiated and low taste of the spectator, that the corruptions of the stage (of what kind soever) have been owing. If the publick, by whom they must live, had spirit enough to discountenance and declare against all the trash and fopperies they have been so frequently fond of, both the actors and the authors, to the best of their power, must naturally have serv'd their daily table with sound and wholesome diet."¹³⁸

Cibber blames the audience for the “low taste” and suggests that Restoration theater was self-consciously pandering to those low tastes in order to sustain itself. Not everyone, however agreed with Cibber, and a considerable piece of society – antitheatricalists – placed the blame elsewhere for the lowbrow content of theater.

The professionalization of women in the theater is often associated with the alleged moral breakdown of the theatrical world during the Restoration period. Antitheatricalists have generally contested the idea that performance of fiction is innocent, but English actresses specifically were accused of the “same kind of hypocrisy” because of the perceived “discrepancy between female appearance and female reality.”¹³⁹ To the Puritan mind, the “presence of women on stage was an affront to feminine modesty, but more damning was the fact that the means of illusionism... involved specifically female vices,” so that the “nature of theatrical representation, like the “nature” of woman, was to ensnare, deceive, and seduce.”¹⁴⁰ Antitheatrical tracts also expressed an “unconcealed fear” of the audience’s gaze – the intrinsic “erotic link between sight and body” – especially female spectators, and the way their reactions to what’s on stage could affect family and state.¹⁴¹ The gaze of female audience was then seen as acutely problematic and dangerous from the patriarchal point of view. The argument additionally characterized the audience lust by its disorder – whether caused

¹³⁸ Cibber, *Colley Cibber*, 52, 63.

¹³⁹ Maus, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood,” 604.

¹⁴⁰ Diamond, “Gestus and Signature,” 523.

¹⁴¹ Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 18, 21.

by women on stage or by plays, it was easy to blame the new actresses for disorder.¹⁴² However, the antitheatrical pamphlets reflecting pre-Restoration attitudes seem to be much more extreme than the attitudes of society as a whole.¹⁴³

It wasn't until 1698 that a concise view about the new theatrical practices was published. In his "*Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*," puritan Jeremy Collier finds fault with many of the conventions of Restoration theater, especially the use of women on the stage. Collier's response to the theater following the restoration of Charles II was perhaps the most famous response, part of the first flood of print that lasted from 1695-1699, with a second burst following in 1704.¹⁴⁴ Collier's "*Short View*" also continued to be cited by antitheatricalists in the next two centuries.

His response to Restoration theatrical practices is characterized by an emphasis on the potential evil of spectatorship. He claims that though theater itself is not evil, it can provoke an evil response when abused; concerns over profanity and blasphemy are nothing to the depravity that can result from watching actors represent "Love Intrigues" and "all Manner of Lewdness."¹⁴⁵ He complains about the playwrights' tendencies to "make women speak smuttily," as well as representing women as "silly, and sometimes mad, to enlarge their liberty and screen their impudence from censure."¹⁴⁶ He equates the "immodesty of [the stage]" to actresses' unnatural openly sexual behavior.¹⁴⁷ Collier also criticizes the lewd prologues and epilogues written, calling most of them

¹⁴² Maus, "Playhouse Flesh and Blood," 606.

¹⁴³ Idem, 608.

¹⁴⁴ Jonas A. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 221.

¹⁴⁵ Jeremy Collier, "A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (1698)," in *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy*, 2nd edition, ed. Scott McMillin, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 496-498.

¹⁴⁶ Collier, "A Short View," 496-497.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

“scandalous to the last degree.”¹⁴⁸ His issue with them was that prologues and epilogues were usually spoken by women – “to make it the more agreeable, Women are Commonly pick’d out for this Service.”¹⁴⁹ Additionally, prologues and epilogues put fiction into reality, disrupting the audience’s suspension of disbelief and directly communicating with them.¹⁵⁰ He felt this was simply too dangerous. He was interested in subverting the entire theatrical establishment for reasons enflamed by the introduction of actresses. Collier represents a small but very vocal minority view, a view that is substantially informed by patriarchal hierarchy.

VII. CONCLUSIONS – THE IRONY OF THE ACTRESS’ NEW “PUBLIC VOICE”

Actresses’ presence on the English stage vastly complicated gender issues during the Restoration, and the circumstances surrounding the developments in society in contrast to what happened on stage was often paradoxical and ironic. Even as women in society were experiencing more of a withdrawal from public life, actresses became the anomaly with their visible presence and access to a public voice. Both Alison Findlay and Katherine Maus have remarked on this ‘anomalous’ existence.¹⁵¹ In the emerging new model of sexual relations, woman began to be “defined as the opposite” to man.¹⁵² But actresses were caught between definitions of their sexuality as “public by profession but private by gender” – as actresses, they faced their sexuality being displayed on stage, but as women their sexuality was supposed to be kept self-

¹⁴⁸ Idem, 498.

¹⁴⁹ Idem, 497.

¹⁵⁰ Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, 28; Howe, *First English Actresses*, 93.

¹⁵¹ Maus, “Playhouse Flesh and Blood,” 601; Findlay, *Women and Dramatic Production*, 123.

¹⁵² Howe, *First English Actresses*, 21.

contained.¹⁵³ Thus the actresses' figure becomes a site of "ideological contradiction," necessitating public representation and regulation.¹⁵⁴ The "conventional patriarchal thrust of late seventeenth-century sexuality" is largely unexplored, but largely reinforced in histories of the period.¹⁵⁵

Actresses, embodying a new ideology of "oppositional, separate spheres for men and women," transgressed the limits imposed on gender and sexuality by patriarchal society.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, the anatomical gender difference of actresses, in comparison to the 'male ideal,' was produced and emphasized to justify their subjugation.¹⁵⁷ This is most obvious in the ideology behind breeches roles – the emphasis of this convention was on the transparency of the illusion, and the erotic effect was achieved by sexualizing actresses through cross-dressing and revealing the actress' true sex.

The male anxiety generated by the threat of female sexuality is the basis on which a male order is established that can "marginalize or erase the specter of female power."¹⁵⁸ Subjugation of the dangerous actress was achieved largely by creating a sexual object of the actress on stage; this was achieved by playwrights and theater makers who emphasized the sensationalism and spectacle of the actress through devices like "couch scenes," "letterbox bosoms," and portrayals of rape onstage. All of these devices sexualized the actress, and lent themselves to diminishing her as a force for social change. If she was labeled as a "whore" or otherwise "sexually promiscuous,"

¹⁵³ Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 89-90.

¹⁵⁴ Idem, 89.

¹⁵⁵ Pullen, *Actresses and Whores*, 30.

¹⁵⁶ Straub, *Sexual Suspects*, 89.

¹⁵⁷ Howard, "Cross-Dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle," 24.

¹⁵⁸ Pullen, *Actresses and Whores*, 29-30.

she became associated with prostitution, making her cheap and thus weakening her social power through the isolation that accompanies stigmas.

Actresses also possessed a relationship with the audience that no male actor could imitate and in turn, became stars.¹⁵⁹ In one sense, through this public intimacy, actresses became like religious effigies with which the public craved to communicate as “between a supplicant and a god” – a desire which is in the end unachievable and leads to the modern notion of “star-gazing.”¹⁶⁰ This obsession with the figure of the actress led to anxiety surrounding the threat of the actress’ sexuality, and ultimately the actress herself, supplanting the male figure and sexuality. In this way, the actress was uniquely empowered by her life on stage in ways that other women couldn’t imagine.

The first English actresses occupied an exceptional place in English society in comparison with the rest of women. In their position, they were able to subvert traditional restrictions on their public gender roles and sexuality through their participation in public theater, their display of a freedom of sexuality onstage, transgressing societal norms through cross-dressing in breeches roles, and becoming some of the first English celebrities. All of these subversions empowered the actress and created in her a threat to the patriarchal hierarchy. One could argue that England experienced a small sexual revolution during the Restoration, although mostly limited to the upper echelons of society. However, the Restoration saw no feminist revolution. Restoration theater remained a contained “workshop of the commodification” of

¹⁵⁹ Howe, *First English Actresses*, 171.

¹⁶⁰ Shifflett, “As Newly Ravish’d,” 189.

women.¹⁶¹ The attempts of the patriarchal hegemony to subjugate women onstage manifested in the over-sexualization of female roles, the association of the actress with prostitution, the isolation within the subcultural world of Restoration Theater, and the ultimate satisfaction of the male 'gaze' that ultimately reinforced degradation and sexual exploitation. But the achievement of the Restoration actress is still significant – she made woman an unstoppable presence on stage, and created a foundation on which the succeeding generations could build, and upon which they are still building.

¹⁶¹ Diamond, "Gestus and Signature," 534.

Primary Sources

Anonymous. *The Actors Remonstrance, or Complaint: For the silencing of their profession, and banishment from their severall Play-houses*. Pamphlet. London: Edward Nickson, 1643. From University of Oregon Library, *Renascence Editions*.

This document is a parody of a real complaint, but speaks quite a bit to the frustrations felt by those who were involved in the world of theater and the way they were affected by the closure of theaters in 1642. It will be important for context and enriching the summary of the events leading up to the Restoration of Charles II.

Cibber, Colley, and William Hazlitt. *Colley Cibber*. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1914.

Colley Cibber gives a concise but important overview of the history of the stage from 1660. He outlines the events that are substantiated by other sources and gives some insight on the arrival of women. Born right after the Restoration, Cibber is commenting on events that happened before his own time, but his account is going to be really helpful in establishing context, as well as providing some key comments on actresses.

Collier, Jeremy. *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698). In *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski* ed. Bernard Frank Dukore. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974.

This is one of the most significant antitheatrical criticism documents, and acted as a model for much of the subsequent outcries against theater. In the statement, Collier speaks to the immodesty, profaneness, and immorality of the stage. It will be useful in what it says specifically about women on stage.

Hanford, James Holly. *A Restoration Reader*. Port Washington, London: Kennikat Press, 1971.

This substantial sourcebook will provide many of the primary sources for my topic. These include the letters patent Charles II granted for reestablishing theater, a more summarized version of Pepys' entries regarding the theater, as well as several letters to and from actors, directors, and producers of Restoration theater. It is difficult to say at

this point how many of these letters I will use, but I have no doubt that this resource will prove invaluable.

Jordan, Thomas. *A royal arbor of loyal poesie: consisting of poems and songs digested into triumph, elegy, satyr, love, & drollery*. London: Printed by R. Wood for Eliz. Andrews, 1664.

This collection of poetry contains some important comments and observations about actresses published only 2 or 3 years after they took the stage in England. They are some of the only commentary or reaction to the advent of actresses in Restoration theater, making them one of my only sources for the discussion of the apparent lack of public reaction.

McMillin, Scott. *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy*. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997.

This book has both authoritative texts of six Restoration comedies as well as several shorter primary sources like epilogues, essays, and commentary. There is also a section of modern criticisms by scholars. There are many pieces in this sourcebook that I will be able to use and apply to my topic.

Otten, Charlotte F. *English Women's Voices, 1540-1700*. Miami: Florida International University Press, 1992.

This sourcebook features primary sources both about and written by late sixteenth- and seventeenth century women of society at large. The introductory material is also very useful for summarizing what was happening for women during this time period.

Pepys, Samuel, William Matthews, and Robert Latham. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*. 2 ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

The diary of Samuel Pepys is arguably the most important primary source for the decade directly after the Restoration of Charles II. Pepys details the events of his life, and was luckily a frequent playgoer. He offers some observations about actresses on stage, and records when he sees them first, as well as significant productions featuring women.

Smith, Bruce R. ed. *Twelfth Night: Texts and Contexts* (New York: Bedford St Martin's,

2001), p. 275-276.

Includes some useful quotations from contemporary ecclesiastical men besides Jeremy Collier in response to theater and the use of boy players.

Wycherley, William. *The Plain Dealer*, ed. Leo Hughes. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967.

This play is one of the most famous Restoration comedies, and a prime example for the way female characters were crafted for the first actresses, making it a perfect case study. It was probably performed in 1674, originally published in 1677.

Secondary Sources

Barish, Jonas A. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

This book is an overview of antitheatrical criticism over the huge span of western theater and explores some of the reasons behind it. There is a chapter dedicated to the same antitheatrical vein as Jeremy Collier's famous essay, which is contemporaneous to the Restoration theater world.

Bennett, Kate. "Oxford DNB article: Shadwell, Thomas." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/25195 (accessed December 3, 2012).

This is an entry on a biography database containing important information for Anne Shadwell, who was a quite famous early English actress and married to the playwright Thomas Shadwell.

Bouc e, Paul. *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Totowa, N.J.: Manchester University Press, 1982.

This is a collection of essays and articles about eighteenth century sexuality in England. The articles by Roy Porter and Pat Rogers are the most relevant to my thesis, and discuss sexuality of actresses and breeches roles.

Choudhury, Mita. *Interculturalism and Resistance in the London Theater, 1660-1800*:

Identity, Performance, Empire. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2000.

This book has several very specific chapters about different intercultural and socially problematic issues faced in theater after the Restoration. Ultimately, this book is unusable, other than general introductory comments, as it focuses on very particular aspects and ignores the ones that I'm looking at.

Comensoli, Viviana, and Anne Russell. *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Similarly, this book is a collection of specific essays on topics that are not really in the range that I am looking at, especially being a book about Renaissance theater rather than Restoration theater. There is, however, one essay on actresses that explores the reasons for the lateness of the actress' arrival on the English stage.

Davis, Tracy C. "Review: First English Actresses." *TDR* 38, no. 3 (1994): 193-195.

This review of Howe's *First English Actresses* will likely be referenced in my historiography section.

DeRitter, Jones. *The Embodiment of Characters the Representation of Physical Experience on Stage and in Print, 1728-1749*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994.

This source contains summaries of demographic, socioeconomic and sociopolitical changes that occurred during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Diamond, Elin. "Gestus and Signature in 'The Rover'." *ELH* 56 (1989): 519-41.

This article shows how theater apparatus objectifies the actress for a male audience and how it works to establish the erotic preoccupations of the entire culture.

Findlay, Alison, Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, and Gweno Williams. *Women and Dramatic Production, 1550-1700*. Harlow, England: Longman, 2000.

This book is a revisionist examination of women's roles in theater during Renaissance and Restoration theater. It is wider than my own scope, and much of it is not applicable to my topic. But there are some important comments about the Restoration theater audience that will be useful.

Garber, Marjorie B. *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

This book is more along the lines of a gender theory source. It deals with broader topics and time periods than I'm looking at, but a lot of the theoretical material about cross-dressing can be applied more broadly to my topic and looking at breeches roles specifically.

Genest, John. *Some account of the English stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*. New York: B. Franklin, 1965.

This is a source bordering between primary and secondary. As it was first published in 1832, it is decidedly not a firsthand account, but it is also not quite a secondary source. It outlines the events of what happened in the world of theater after the Restoration, but ultimately is not a very useful resource for my topic.

Guard, Pippa. "A Defence of the First English Actress." *Literature and History* 15, no. 2 (2006): 1-19.

This article delves into the very few primary sources that remark on the arrival of the English actress, focusing on one in particular that is very rare. Since I cannot get the source itself, I intend to use this article and its analysis of the document in a discussion on the apparent lack of public reaction.

Haggerty, George E. "'The Queen was not shav'd yet': Edward Kynaston and the Regendering of the Restoration Stage." *The Eighteenth Century* 50, no. 4 (2009): 309-326.

This article examines Edward Kynaston, one of the last successful 'boy players' after the Restoration and how he adapted in the rapidly changing theatrical circumstances. It also briefly discusses the objectification of women on stage. This article also points out some of the holes in the scholarly attention paid to this area, which is important for the historiography of my topic.

Howard, Jean E. "Cross-Dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England." In *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-dressing* ed. Lesley Ferris. London: Routledge, 1993. 20-46.

This chapter looks at an earlier time period than I am ultimately interested in, but it offers some interesting sociological commentary on cross-dressing and gender that will be quite useful to me.

Howe, Elizabeth. *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama, 1660-1700*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

This book is completely devoted to the topic I am looking at, one of the few large-scope works to do so. While it does have some issues (as shown by many reviews) it will still be an enormous source for my topic. It contains a great deal of information regarding the exploitation of actresses and the use of breeches roles.

Jones, Marion. 'Actors and Repertory', in *The Revels History of Drama in English*,

Volume V, 1660-1750 (London, 1976), pp. 148-9.

This book provides a succinct and interesting description of the evolution of roles written for actresses during the Restoration.

Kavenik, Frances M. *British Drama, 1660-1779: a Critical History*. New York: Twayne

Publishers, 1995.

This book takes a very detailed look into several Restoration plays and analyzes them critically. Since I'm not focusing on specific plays themselves, there isn't a lot for me to use, but he does include some very good information about the audience and the nature of theater as public art.

Loftis, John Clyde. *Restoration Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism*. New York: Oxford

University Press, 1966.

This book is mostly a collection of essays on playtexts instead of the world of Restoration theater. As an antiquated and not-easily-accessible text, there is little to gather outside of general comments.

Mann, David. *Shakespeare's Women: Performance and Conception*. Cambridge, UK:

Cambridge University Press, 2008.

This book examines the Elizabethan convention of 'boy players' and the construction of Shakespearean female characters. This is an important source for setting up what Renaissance theater was in order to show how abrupt was the change to the

conventions and advents of Restoration theater.

Marsden, Jean I. *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720*.

Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006.

This book explores the impact of the theatrical spectacle of female sexuality on the world of Restoration theater, looking at the ways in which their presence changed the representation of women and reshaped dramatic form. This will be one of the most important secondary sources for my research, since it deals with a lot of the same issues that I'm examining.

Maus, Katharine E. "'Playhouse Flesh and Blood': Sexual Ideology and the Restoration

Actress." *ELH* 46, no. 4 (1979): 595-617.

This article is about the ways in which women on stage were treated in relation to the way women in the rest of society were treated. It also discusses actresses' sexuality, antitheatricalism, and the unmasking of cross-dressed actresses, making it a very relevant source for my topic. It is also historiographically significant, being one of the earlier scholarly approaches to the topic but remains relevant and agreed with even to scholars writing today.

Orr, Bridget. "Review: Fatal Desire." *Comparative Drama* 41, no. 3 (2007): 386-389.

This review of Marsden's *Fatal Desire* will likely be referenced in my historiography section.

Payne, Deborah. "Review: First English Actresses." *Theatre Journal* 45, no. 3 (1993):

396-397.

This review of Howe's *First English Actresses* will likely be referenced in my historiography section.

Pullen, Kirsten. *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and In Society*. Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2005.

This book is most useful in its discussion of the categorization of many actresses as 'whores.' Pullen also argues that actresses did have and employ much more agency than they are usually given credit for. She also includes some interesting dialogue about historiography.

Scholz, Susanne. *Body Narratives: Writing the Nation and Fashioning the Subject in Early Modern England*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

This source contains useful summaries of demographic, socioeconomic and sociopolitical changes that occurred during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Senelick, Laurence. *Gender in Performance: the Presentation of Difference in the Performing Arts*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992.

This source contains generalized information about performing gender and the implications carried or inscribed within performances. It provides very helpful insight about 'gaze' theory and commodification.

Shifflett, Matthew. "'As Newly Ravish'd': The Actress as Sexual Spectacle in the Late Stuart Theatre." In *Public Theatres and Theatre Publics*. Ed. Robert B. Shimko and Sara Freeman. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012. 186-195.

This source discusses the nature of the actress as a spectacle, and includes quite a bit of useful information about 'the public' and the dangers and implications of 'star-gazing.' He details one particular incident in which an actress was kidnapped in an attempt to recreate the action of many Restoration dramas.

Straub, Kristina. *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992.

This source is most useful for discussing the denser terms of my topic and does a very good job of describing in sociological terms what was happening when the actress was introduced. It is a source that will provide much of the ammunition for my argument.

Styan, J. L. *Restoration Comedy in Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

This book provides overviews of all the developments and characteristics of Restoration theater. The most useful to me will be the sections on the audience and the actresses.

Wilson, John Harold. *All the King's Ladies; Actresses of the Restoration*. Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 1958.

This book provides some of the earliest academic scholarship surrounding actresses of the Restoration. It is also characterized by its lack of consideration for gender issues and is typical of a previous generation of academia.